

Fortnightly

# The Truth International

Islamabad - Karachi

15<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Deadly attacks on Gaza

Humanitarian Safe Zones Targeted by Israel

SCO Summit 2024

A Comprehensive Analysis

New IMF loan

A Dilemma for Pakistanis

## Pager and Walkie-Talkie Blasts Expose Perils of Using Gadgets



## Foreign Affairs

Did Israel work with US to booby-trap Lebanon's pagers and walkie-talkies? By Mahnoor Saleem – Page 04



Escalation of Deadly Attacks on Gaza: Humanitarian Safe Zone Targeted Amid International Scrutiny By Romana Afsheen – Page 08



EU blames Iran for missiles supply to Russia: E3 and US slap sanctions amid denial By J. Choudhry – Page 10

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of Government Meeting 2024: A Comprehensive Analysis By Kanwal Munir – Page 13



Us Presidential Race: Harris Vs. Trump—The First Debate and The Crucial Swing States By Kanwal Munir – Page 16

Donald Trump survives second assassination attempt: Who is the shooter? By Harry Choudhry – Page 19



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Web: www.thetruthinternational.com

Price: Rs. 435

### Publisher:

Muhammad Fahad Thaheem

### Printer:

Masha Allah Printers

Basement # 9, Ratta Mansion, Fazal e Haq  
Road, Blue Area, Islamabad.

### Design & Layout:

Abdul Qadir

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The US Ambassador Donald Blome launched the Recharge Pakistan initiative Sept 10 - TTI Report – Page 21



Spanish civil war By Hina Kashif – Page 22

## Politics

PTI adopts a stiff stance against Govt's injustice with party leaders and unwanted changes in Constitution By Hina Kashif – Page 24



## Economy

New IMF loan and dilemma for Pakistan By Javed Mahmood – Page 27



Watch new currency note designs as SBP makes them public – Page 31



Pakistan's Ambitious Public Sector Overhaul: Rightsizing, Privatization, and the Impact on State-Owned Enterprises By Romana Afsheen – Page 32

The renewable energy sector is growing at a breakneck pace - Special Report by TTI – Page 35

US and Pakistan Collaborate to Promote Investment, Showcasing Dynamic Pakistani Firms and Sparking Investor Interest - TTI Report – Page 39



## National

President and Prime Minister pay tribute to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah By Harry Javed – Page 40



Defence and Martyrs Day Commemorated In Ankara - TTI News – Page 41

## Sports

FIFA's anti-racism crossed-arms gesture to discourage racism in matches By J. Choudhry – Page 43



Shujahat Jadoon: A Blind Athlete Sets a Record in the Karakoram Ultra-Khaplu League - By J. Choudhry – Page 46



# Did Israel work with US to booby-trap Lebanon's pagers and walkie-talkies?



By Mahnoor Saleem

A series of explosions on Tuesday and Wednesday shook Lebanon, killing at least 26 people and injuring over 3,000, according to security and health officials. A preliminary investigation into Tuesday's explosions revealed that hundreds of pagers had been booby-trapped, a security official stated. While the probe is still in its "early stages," a judicial official confirmed that security services continue to investigate the blasts, which have been attributed to Israel.

The New York Times reported that Israel conducted a covert operation targeting Hezbollah by smuggling explosive materials into pagers manufactured in Taiwan. The operation, revealed by American and other officials, involved tampering with pagers ordered by Hezbollah from Gold Apollo, a Taiwanese company.

According to officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, the shipment primarily consisted of AR-924 model pagers, though it included three other models from the same company. The explosives, weighing between one and two ounces, were concealed near the devices' batteries, with a remote trigger

mechanism embedded to allow the explosives to be detonated from a distance.

## Pagers Sabotage

At 1230 GMT on Tuesday, the pagers received a message that appeared to be from Hezbollah leadership but instead triggered the embedded explosives, officials said. The devices reportedly beeped for several seconds before detonating.

"Data indicates the devices were pre-programmed to detonate with explosive materials placed near the battery," a Lebanese official said. The investigation is now focused on identifying the type of explosive used and tracing the shipment's origins.

Some pagers were being inspected when they exploded, but "most were destroyed and burned," the security official noted. The official also ruled out the possibility that the explosions were caused by overheated lithium batteries, stating that the blasts were too powerful to result from battery malfunction. A source close to Hezbollah, speaking on condition of

anonymity, said the pagers were part of a recently imported shipment that appeared to have been "sabotaged at the source."

## Israel-US Connection

Israeli media has suggested "coordination" between Israel and the US regarding the pager explosions, despite Washington's earlier denials. According to KAN, Israel's official broadcasting channel, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant had two phone calls with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin—one just before the first wave of pager explosions and another before the second wave.

Despite these reports, the US has denied any involvement in the blasts.

## A History of Sabotage

The timeline of when the pagers were ordered and arrived in Lebanon remains unclear. While Israel has yet to confirm or deny responsibility for the explosions, it has a history of cross-border sabotage and cyberattacks.

Previous examples include Israel's use of Pegasus spyware, developed by the

NSO Group, to hack the phones of activists, journalists, and political leaders globally. Another instance is the Stuxnet worm, a sophisticated malware used to sabotage Iran's nuclear program, marking one of the first known uses of cyber warfare to cause physical damage.

These incidents underscore Israel's advanced capabilities in espionage, cyber operations, and sabotage, impacting countries around the world.

## More devices exploding across Lebanon: What's happening?

One day after thousands of pagers exploded across Lebanon, another wave of blasts from handheld devices such as walkie-talkies, laptops, and radios has killed at least 14 people and injured 450.

On Tuesday, pagers belonging to Hezbollah members, preloaded with explosives, detonated, killing 12 and injuring nearly 3,000.

## Escalating Blasts

On Wednesday, reports of simultaneous explosions quickly spread via messaging apps, with images of destroyed walkie-talkies and burning buildings shared online. The new blasts occurred in southern Beirut suburbs and the southern city of Tyre.

Videos and images from social media showed vehicles ablaze and smoke rising from residential areas. Al Jazeera correspondent Ali Hashem witnessed a car explode during a funeral in southern Lebanon, noting it appeared to be caused by an internal device, not a drone strike.

"There have been several explosions across southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs, this time involving walkie-talkies rather than pagers," Hashem said. He described chaos, with ambulances rushing to pick up the injured as more explosions spread panic.

## What Exploded?

Various devices reportedly detonated, including walkie-talkies, mobile phones, laptops, and solar panels. Some vehicles also exploded, though it remains unclear whether the vehicles themselves were the

source of the blasts or if something inside caused the explosions.

## The Exploding Walkie-Talkies

The devices identified as walkie-talkie radios were IC-V82 models, manufactured by Japan's ICOM. These radios have a much longer range than standard walkie-talkies and are often used by amateurs rather than commercial or emergency services. Speculation remains about how these radios were rigged to explode. Some observers have compared the blasts to Tuesday's pager explosions, suggesting the devices might have been tampered with during the supply chain, preloaded with small but powerful explosives.

## Israel Blamed, But No Comment

Hezbollah and the Lebanese government have blamed Israel for the explosions. Israel has not officially commented on the attacks. Israeli media have reported "coordination" between Israel and the US regarding the explosions, though Washington has denied involvement.

## Psychological Warfare and Chaos

These attacks represent a serious security breach for Hezbollah, creating widespread panic in Lebanon. People have been discarding their devices or taking them to shops to check for safety. Hezbollah's communication systems remain operational, with older pagers unaffected, according to security analysts. At one hospital, the Lebanese army used a controlled detonation to neutralize an unexploded device discovered in an ambulance.

## What's next?

"This attack by Israel is being seen in Lebanon as a terrorist attack because it has instilled terror," Al Jazeera's Imran Khan reported from Beirut. He noted the confusion and fear gripping Lebanon as Israel's strategy of delayed, coordinated blasts seems to have succeeded in spreading panic.

"This may only be the beginning, and we could see more phases of this attack unfold," security analysts warned, as the situation remains volatile.

## Japanese firm says radio model production linked to Lebanon explosion discontinued a year ago

On Thursday, Japanese company Icom clarified that it had ceased production of the radio model reportedly involved in the recent explosions in Lebanon, a decision made nearly a decade ago.

"The IC-V82 is a handheld radio that was produced and exported, including to the Middle East, from 2004 until October 2014. It was discontinued about 10 years ago, and since then, no units have been shipped from our company," Icom said in a statement. The company added, "The production of the batteries required for the radio has also stopped, and a hologram seal, used to identify genuine products, was not present. Therefore, it is not possible to verify whether the product involved was originally shipped by us."

Icom emphasized that all their radios are manufactured under strict quality control at Wakayama Icom Inc., their production facility in Wakayama Prefecture, ensuring that no unauthorized parts are used. Additionally, the company stated that they do not manufacture radios outside Japan.

## Related Incidents in Lebanon

In the second wave of explosions within 48 hours, Lebanese officials reported that 20 people were killed and over 450 injured on Wednesday in Hezbollah-controlled areas. A source linked to Hezbollah mentioned that walkie-talkies used by its members detonated in Beirut, with similar reports emerging from southern and eastern Lebanon.

This followed Tuesday's coordinated blasts of hundreds of pagers used by Hezbollah, resulting in 12 deaths, including two children, and injuring nearly 3,000 people—a large-scale attack widely attributed to Israel. While Israel has remained silent on the matter, the White House has urged all parties to avoid escalating the situation further.



## Russia condemns Lebanon pager blasts warns of worsening tension

Moscow on Wednesday condemned the deadly attacks in Lebanon, where pagers used by Hezbollah exploded almost simultaneously across the country, warning that the blasts could further destabilize the already "volatile" situation in the region.

Hezbollah and the Lebanese government have accused Israel of orchestrating the attack, with analysts suggesting that explosives were likely hidden in the devices during their production or delivery. Israel has yet to comment on the allegations.



Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov remarked, "Whatever the cause, this incident is clearly escalating tensions. The region is already in a precarious state, and events like this have the potential to ignite further conflict."

## Earlier, Russia's Foreign Ministry also condemned the explosions in Lebanon.

"We strongly denounce this unprecedented attack on Lebanon and its people, which represents a grave violation of its sovereignty and a blatant disregard for international law through the use of unconventional weapons," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova.

Zakharova further warned that "with

tensions rising along the Lebanese-Israeli border, such reckless actions pose a serious threat, potentially triggering a dangerous new escalation." She called for "all parties involved to show restraint."

Russia, which has close ties with Iran, a major backer of Hezbollah, has repeatedly expressed concerns over the risk of a broader conflict erupting in the Middle East.

## Taiwan's Gold Apollo clarified that the pagers involved in the explosions in Lebanon were manufactured by BAC

Taiwan's Gold Apollo clarified that the

pagers involved in the explosions in Lebanon on Tuesday were not manufactured by them, but rather by a company called BAC, licensed to use the Gold Apollo brand. Apollo explained that the AR-924 pager model was produced and sold exclusively by BAC. Initially, Hsu Ching-Kuang, Gold Apollo's founder and president, suggested that BAC was located in Europe, but later declined to specify its exact location. During Hsu's meeting with reporters, police officials arrived at the company's office.

In a statement, Gold Apollo emphasized, "We only provide brand trademark authorization and have no involvement in the design or manufacturing of this product." Hsu reiterated, "The product was not ours. It only carried our brand."

The explosions, which killed at least nine

people and injured nearly 3,000, were connected to pagers used by Hezbollah members. Photos of the damaged devices showed characteristics resembling Gold Apollo products. A senior Lebanese security source indicated that Hezbollah had ordered 5,000 pagers from Gold Apollo.

Hezbollah reportedly adopted pagers to avoid Israeli detection, according to sources familiar with the group's operations. Hsu expressed uncertainty about how the devices were rigged to detonate. Hezbollah, which is supported by Iran, announced that it had launched a "security and scientific investigation" into the explosions. Both a senior Lebanese security official and another source suggested that Israel's Mossad agency had planted explosives inside the 5,000 pagers ordered by Hezbollah months earlier.

## Mojtaba Amani, the Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon, sustained injuries in a pager explosion

Mojtaba Amani, the Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon, sustained injuries in a pager explosion in Beirut, which is being linked to a broader Israeli cyber attack affecting both Lebanon and Syria.

The explosion was part of a coordinated cyber offensive that targeted several locations across the region. Ambassador Amani, who suffered light injuries, has been hospitalized in Beirut for treatment. Alongside the ambassador, two other staff members from the Iranian embassy were also injured in the blast.

The Iranian embassy confirmed the injuries through a social media post from the ambassador's spouse, who assured the public that the injuries were not severe. This attack marks a significant escalation in the ongoing regional tensions and highlights the increasing use of cyber warfare in the conflict.

The incident underscores the growing vulnerability of diplomatic missions as tensions between Israel and its adversaries intensify. While the Iranian government has not yet issued an official response to the attack, the situation is being closely monitored.

## Israel's spy agency planted explosives inside 5,000 pagers imported by Hezbollah

According to a senior Lebanese security source and other informants, Israel's Mossad spy agency carried out an unprecedented operation involving the planting of explosives inside 5,000 pagers imported by Hezbollah.

This covert operation came to light following a series of devastating detonations across Lebanon on Tuesday, resulting in the deaths of nine people and injuring nearly 3,000, including Hezbollah fighters and Iran's envoy to Beirut. The pagers, which had been ordered from Gold Apollo, a Taiwan-based company, were believed to be from this manufacturer.

However, Gold Apollo clarified that the devices were actually produced by a European firm licensed to use its brand. Despite the brand confusion, the explosive nature of the pagers was confirmed by the Lebanese security source, who stated that the devices had been tampered with at the production level by Israeli agents.

The modified pagers, identified as model AP924, were intended for Hezbollah's use as a low-tech communication tool to evade Israeli surveillance. The explosives, concealed within the pagers, were activated by a coded message sent to the devices, causing 3,000 of them to detonate simultaneously. The explosives were hidden so discreetly that they went undetected by Hezbollah for months, with up to three grams of explosives packed into each device. The Israeli military has declined to comment on the incident, and images of the destroyed pagers, which featured a format and stickers consistent with those of Gold Apollo, have been analyzed but did not elicit a response from Israeli officials.

This operation represents a significant breach of Hezbollah's security and has been described by experts as a major counter-intelligence failure for the group. The timing of the attack coincided with heightened tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, exacerbated by ongoing conflicts along

Israel's northern border with Lebanon since the Gaza conflict erupted on October 7.

## Who authorized pager-explosions?

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu authorized the detonation of wireless communication devices, or pagers, in Lebanon during security discussions with top ministers and intelligence leaders earlier this week, according to a report by the Israeli news site Walla.

The report, citing unnamed senior American officials, indicated on Tuesday that Israel was behind the explosions in Lebanon, which resulted in nine deaths and nearly 3,000 injuries, including 200 in critical condition. This came despite efforts by Netanyahu's office to distance itself from a now-deleted social media post by his advisor, Topaz Luk, which hinted at Israel's involvement in the attacks.

Pagers, commonly used by civilians and healthcare workers for communication, are compact, battery-powered devices that receive text messages, audio, and visual signals.

Walla reported that the operation "disabled a significant portion of Hezbollah's military command and control infrastructure."

Hezbollah confirmed that at least two of its members were killed, and many others were injured in the blast. Israeli authorities acknowledged the heightened risk of a major escalation on the northern border and stated that the military is on "high alert" for a large-scale retaliation from Hezbollah.

An unnamed Israeli source told the website that the decision to target the pagers was made earlier in the week during Netanyahu's consultations with senior ministers and leaders of the defense and intelligence communities.

## Hezbollah vows to retaliate

Lebanon's Hezbollah has vowed to retaliate after attributing the recent pager explosions, which resulted in at least eight fatalities and injured 2,750 people, to Israeli actions.

The explosions primarily affected Hezbollah fighters and included injuries to Iran's envoy to Beirut.

Lebanese Information Minister Ziad Makary condemned the detonations—used for communication by Hezbollah—as an act of "Israeli aggression." Hezbollah declared that Israel would face "its fair punishment" for these attacks. The Israeli military, which has been engaged in ongoing cross-border conflict with Hezbollah since the outbreak of the Gaza war last October, refrained from commenting on the explosions.

However, an Israeli military spokesman confirmed that Major General Herzi Halevi met with senior officers to evaluate the situation, emphasizing the need for continued vigilance.

Hezbollah described the incident as the "biggest security breach" it has faced in nearly a year of conflict with Israel. The explosions occurred in southern Lebanon, particularly in areas known as Hezbollah strongholds.

Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad reported that among the injured, 200 individuals were critically hurt, many of whom were Hezbollah fighters, including the son of a member of the Lebanese parliament, Ali Ammar. Ammar condemned the incident as Israeli aggression, stating, "We will deal with the enemy in the language it understands."

The situation has further escalated, with Hezbollah losing over 400 fighters in Israeli strikes over the past year, including top commanders. Iran's ambassador to Lebanon sustained a minor injury in the blasts and is currently hospitalized for observation.

In a related development, Israel's domestic security agency announced it thwarted a Hezbollah plot to assassinate a former senior defense official, highlighting the ongoing tensions.

Hezbollah has expressed a desire to avoid a full-scale conflict with Israel, contingent on resolving the ongoing Gaza war, which remains a point of contention in the region.



# Escalation of Deadly Attacks on Gaza: Humanitarian Safe Zone Targeted Amid International Scrutiny

*The Euro-Med Monitor further highlighted that between 2023 and 2024, over 14,000 MK-84 bombs were transferred from the United States to Israel. This revelation has sparked heated debates over the role of U.S. weaponry in the ongoing violence, with critics arguing that the U.S. is complicit in the destruction and loss of civilian lives in Gaza.*

By Romana Afsheen

The ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine has once again escalated to devastating levels, drawing widespread international condemnation. In a particularly harrowing incident, Israeli airstrikes recently targeted a designated "humanitarian safe zone" in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis. The strike resulted in widespread destruction and significant casualties, reigniting concerns about the growing humanitarian crisis in the region. The situation has prompted calls for urgent intervention and accountability from international human rights organizations and foreign governments.

## Israeli Airstrikes Target Refugee Camp in Khan Younis

In the early hours of Tuesday morning, Israeli airstrikes devastated a refugee camp in the al-Mawasi area of Khan Younis, a location Israel had designated as a "humanitarian zone." According to local reports, Israeli warplanes dropped MK-84 bombs—highly powerful, U.S.-supplied munitions—on the densely packed refugee camp, killing at least 40 Palestinians and injuring dozens more. The bombs, weighing 900 kilograms each, created craters as deep as nine meters, reducing entire tent structures to rubble.

This attack targeted displaced civilians, many of whom had sought refuge in the camp after fleeing other areas of Gaza, which have been subject to continuous bombardment since the conflict intensified in October 2023. The destruction was so severe that entire families were buried under the debris of destroyed tents, highlighting the grave humanitarian impact of using high-impact munitions in densely populated areas.



## International Outrage and Condemnation

The international community, human rights organizations, and humanitarian groups have expressed outrage at the targeting of a site designated for civilian protection. The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, based in Geneva, condemned the airstrike as a gross violation of international law. In its statement, the organization emphasized that Israel's use of U.S.-supplied MK-84 bombs in densely populated civilian areas constitutes an egregious breach of the laws of armed conflict. The bombs are capable of causing massive damage, exacerbating the already dire conditions for displaced civilians who have limited access to basic necessities like food, clean water, and medical supplies.

The Euro-Med Monitor further highlighted that between 2023 and 2024, over 14,000 MK-84 bombs were transferred from the

United States to Israel. This revelation has sparked heated debates over the role of U.S. weaponry in the ongoing violence, with critics arguing that the U.S. is complicit in the destruction and loss of civilian lives in Gaza. The human rights organization also criticized the broader international community for its inaction, stating that silence on these "unprecedented massacres" effectively emboldens Israel to continue its military operations with impunity.

## The Humanitarian Impact of the Conflict

The refugee camp in Khan Younis, like many others in Gaza, has become a symbol of the larger humanitarian crisis engulfing the region. Since the conflict began, countless civilians have been displaced, forced to live in makeshift tents and endure unbearable conditions with limited access to essential resources. The blockade on



Gaza, imposed by Israel, has further exacerbated these hardships by restricting the entry of food, medicine, and other life-saving supplies.

In addition to the airstrikes on Khan Younis, a separate Israeli attack targeted the Al-Taba'een School in Gaza City, which had been serving as a shelter for over 6,000 displaced individuals. This strike resulted in the deaths of at least 100 people, many of them women and children. Human rights organizations have raised concerns that Israel's continued targeting of civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and places of worship, may constitute war crimes under international law.

Despite a recent United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire, the violence has persisted. The UN, along with various humanitarian organizations, has warned of the devastating toll the conflict is taking on Gaza's civilian population, particularly children. According to UNICEF, children make up more than half of Gaza's population, and many of them have been directly affected by the airstrikes, either through injury, death, or psychological trauma.

## U.S. Complicity and Diplomatic Maneuvering

The involvement of U.S.-supplied weapons in the conflict has reignited debates over the United States' role in the violence. As Israel's largest military supporter, the U.S. has long provided advanced weaponry and financial assistance to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). The recent use of MK-84 bombs, however, has brought renewed scrutiny to these military transactions, with critics arguing that the U.S. bears a share of the responsibility for the civilian casualties in Gaza.

In response to growing international criticism, Israel has launched a diplomatic effort to counter legal challenges stemming from its military actions in Gaza. Sources from media outlets such as Axios and Walla have reported that Israel's foreign ministry has directed its diplomats in the United States to engage U.S. policymakers and South African officials in an attempt to derail a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The case,

initiated by South Africa in December 2023, accuses Israel of violating the 1948 Genocide Convention through its military operations in Gaza.

According to classified cables, Israel's foreign ministry has urged diplomats to emphasize the potentially severe consequences of the case, including trade sanctions against Israel. The Israeli government is reportedly seeking to leverage its relationships with U.S. lawmakers, governors, and Jewish organizations to apply pressure on South Africa and dissuade it from pursuing the genocide accusation.

## South Africa and International Legal Action

South Africa's legal action against Israel has garnered significant international attention, particularly as other nations, including Türkiye and 12 additional countries, have joined in supporting the case. The ICJ case argues that Israel's military actions in Gaza, which have resulted in the deaths of over 41,000 Palestinians—many of them women and children—amount to genocide under international law.

The deadline for South Africa to submit its justification for continuing the case is October 28, and diplomatic efforts from Israel are intensifying as that date approaches. Human rights organizations and legal experts have stressed the importance of pursuing accountability for potential war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. If successful, the case could lead to increased international pressure on Israel and further complicate its diplomatic relations with countries that oppose its military actions in Gaza.

## Tensions in the West Bank and Broader Geopolitical Implications

While the focus of international attention remains on Gaza, the conflict has also intensified in the West Bank, where tensions have reached alarming levels. The European Union's chief diplomat, Josep Borrell, has voiced concerns that the ongoing violence in Gaza is contributing to a dangerous escalation in the West Bank,

warning that the region could become a "new Gaza." He accused Israel of deliberately fueling violence in the West Bank, undermining the Palestinian Authority, and provoking aggressive responses with the aim of annexing both Gaza and the West Bank.

Since the outbreak of the conflict in October 2023, over 662 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli forces or settlers, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. During the same period, retaliatory attacks by Palestinians in the West Bank have resulted in the deaths of 23 Israelis, including security personnel. The European Union has also reported a sharp rise in settlement-building activity, with over 490,000 Israelis now living in settlements deemed illegal under international law.

The West Bank remains a critical flashpoint in the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israeli settlements, which have expanded significantly in recent years, are seen as a major obstacle to peace and a key factor in the ongoing violence. Human rights groups such as Yesh Din have documented a record number of attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in 2023, further intensifying tensions in the region.

## The Urgent Need for International Accountability

As the violence in Gaza and the West Bank continues to claim lives and displace civilians, the international community faces mounting pressure to take meaningful action. The use of U.S.-supplied bombs in Gaza, the diplomatic maneuvering at the ICJ, and the escalating violence in the West Bank all underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Calls for accountability are growing, with human rights organizations, governments, and legal experts stressing the urgent need for effective international intervention. Without accountability and a concerted effort to address the root causes of the conflict, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the broader region will only continue to worsen, with devastating consequences for civilians on both sides.

# EU blames Iran for missiles supply to Russia: E3 and US slap sanctions amid denial

*The West has been cautioning Tehran against providing missiles to Russia, and the EU has previously imposed sanctions on Iran for supplying drones to Moscow for the conflict in Ukraine. Should the reports be confirmed, Stano stated that Brussels would “respond swiftly and in coordination with international partners” to implement “new and significant restrictive measures against Iran.”*



By J. Choudhry

The European Union announced that it had received intelligence from its allies indicating that Iran had supplied ballistic missiles to Russia. If these reports are verified, the EU warned of potential new sanctions against Tehran.

EU spokesman Peter Stano stated, “We are aware of credible information provided by our allies regarding the delivery of Iranian ballistic missiles to Russia.” He added that further investigation with member states is underway, and if confirmed, the delivery would mark a significant escalation in Iran’s support for Russia’s illegal war against Ukraine. Last week, the Wall Street Journal reported that the United States had informed European allies about Iran’s shipment of short-range ballistic missiles to Russia.

When asked about the report, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov rejected the possibility of receiving missiles from Iran.

“We have seen the report, but such information is not always accurate,” Peskov said. He acknowledged Iran as an important partner and emphasized the ongoing development of trade and cooperation between the two countries.

The West has been cautioning Tehran against providing missiles to Russia, and the EU has previously imposed sanctions on Iran for supplying drones to Moscow for the conflict in Ukraine. Should the reports be confirmed, Stano stated that Brussels would “respond swiftly and in coordination with international partners” to implement “new and significant restrictive measures against Iran.”

## Moscow denies allegations

Russia has denied allegations that Iran has supplied missiles for use in the Ukraine war, following reports from multiple Amer-

ican media outlets that made the claim without providing evidence. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded to the reports, telling Russian media, “Not all such information corresponds to reality.” Peskov acknowledged seeing a Wall Street Journal article on the matter but added, “Iran is an important partner for us. We are developing trade and economic relations, as well as cooperation and dialogue in various areas, including sensitive ones, and we will continue to do so in the interests of both our countries.”

The Wall Street Journal and other American outlets, citing unnamed sources, claimed on Friday that Iran had allegedly supplied Russia with hundreds of short-range ballistic missiles to support its military operations in Ukraine. Iran’s Foreign Ministry also rejected the accusations, reiterating that Tehran has not been involved militarily since the start of the Ukraine conflict.



"As has been emphasized repeatedly, the Islamic Republic of Iran opposes war and supports a political solution to resolve the differences between Russia and Ukraine, aiming to end the military conflict," Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said.

Russia has described Iran as an "important partner" while avoiding direct denial of reports that Tehran has been supplying short-range ballistic missiles to Moscow's forces in Ukraine.

The comments came as the European Union claimed it had "credible information" regarding Iran's missile shipments to Russia, further intensifying concerns over Tehran's growing involvement in the conflict.

While Russia refrained from confirming the allegations, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov emphasized the strong bilateral ties between the two nations, stating, "Iran is our important partner," and highlighting ongoing trade and economic cooperation.

The Wall Street Journal first reported the missile supplies last Friday, with the EU echoing these claims and suggesting potential new sanctions against Tehran if confirmed. Iran, however, strongly denies the accusations.

Brigadier Fazlollah Nozari, a senior commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, dismissed the reports as "psychological warfare," asserting that Iran is not

aligned with any party in the Ukraine conflict.

Despite Iran's denial, the claims have sparked international concern, with the US and NATO expressing apprehension about the impact such arms transfers could have on Ukraine and broader regional stability.

While the White House has yet to verify the reports, Kyiv has warned that the deepening military relationship between Iran and Russia poses a threat not only to Ukraine but also to Europe and the Middle East.

## Ukraine protested against Iran

Ukraine's foreign ministry said it had summoned a senior Iranian diplomat to warn of "devastating and irreparable consequences" for bilateral relations if reports that Tehran had supplied Russia with ballistic missiles were correct. A senior Iranian official denied the reports earlier on Monday, describing them as "psychological warfare". A European Union spokesperson described the information as "credible".

CNN and the Wall Street Journal reported last week, citing unidentified sources, that Iran had transferred short-range ballistic missiles to Russia, as Moscow continues to wage war in Ukraine more than two and a half years after its 2022 invasion.

The Ukrainian foreign ministry said on Telegram it had summoned Iran's charge

d'affaires, Shahriar Amouzegar, and warned him in "harsh form" about the consequences for relations if delivery of the missiles was confirmed.

Earlier, Brigadier Fazlollah Nozari, a senior Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander, was quoted by the Iranian Labour News Agency as saying: "No missile was sent to Russia and this claim is a kind of psychological warfare."

"Iran does not support any of the parties to the Ukraine-Russia conflict," Nozari said.

Western and Ukrainian officials have dismissed such denials in the past, saying there is overwhelming evidence that Iran has supplied items such as Shahed drones to Russia. EU foreign affairs spokesperson Peter Stano said in an email: "We are aware of the credible information provided by allies on the delivery of Iranian ballistic missiles to Russia."

He said that if confirmed, "This delivery would represent a substantive material escalation in Iran's support for Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine". EU leaders had previously made clear they would "respond swiftly and in coordination with international partners, including with new and significant restrictive measures against Iran" to such a step, Stano added. Another European official said the U.S. had shared information on the reported transfer with allies and was likely to make it public soon.



"I cannot confirm the reports that the transfer has happened," White House spokesperson John Kirby said in Washington. Such a scenario would have a deleterious effects on both Ukraine and the Middle East, he added. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he had seen the report but that not all such reports were correct.

"Iran is our important partner, we are developing our trade and economic relations, we are developing our cooperation and dialogue in all possible areas, including the most sensitive ones," Peskov told reporters.

Ukraine said last week that deepening military cooperation between Tehran and Moscow was a threat to Ukraine, Europe and the Middle East, and called on the international community to increase pressure on Iran and Russia.

That language was echoed by a NATO spokesperson, who said the Western military alliance was aware of the media reports but would not be drawn on whether they were accurate.

"As Allies have stated previously, any transfer of ballistic missiles and related technology by Iran to Russia would represent a substantial escalation," the spokesperson said.

Moscow has accused Kyiv's allies of escalating the war by providing weapons used in Ukraine's recent incursion into

Russia's Kursk region and has threatened to respond.

### E3 and US slap sanctions on Iran

The United Kingdom, France, and Germany, known as E3 countries, have announced sanctions against Iran over the supply of missiles to Russia.

The foreign ministers of the three countries announced in a joint statement today that they would slap sanctions on Iran Air and sanction entities and personnel associated with the supply of missiles.

The announcement comes shortly after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said at a joint press conference with British Foreign Secretary David Lammy that Iran has supplied Russia with ballistic missiles for use in the war on Ukraine. He dubbed it a "dramatic escalation" and said the United States would impose sanctions on Iran for the supply of missiles.

The joint statement released by the German foreign ministry stated that the three countries' foreign ministers strongly condemn Iran's export and Russia's procurement of Iranian ballistic missiles. They dubbed it a "direct threat to European security".

### Russia denies allegation

Russia has denied allegations that Iran has

supplied missiles for use in the Ukraine war, following reports from multiple American media outlets that claimed without providing evidence.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded to the reports, telling Russian media, "Not all such information corresponds to reality." Peskov acknowledged seeing a Wall Street Journal article on the matter but added, "Iran is an important partner for us. We are developing trade and economic relations, cooperation, and dialogue in various areas, including sensitive ones, and we will continue to do so in the interests of both our countries."

The Wall Street Journal and other American outlets, citing unnamed sources, claimed on Friday that Iran had allegedly supplied Russia with hundreds of short-range ballistic missiles to support its military operations in Ukraine.

Iran's Foreign Ministry also rejected the accusations, reiterating that Tehran has not been involved militarily since the start of the Ukraine conflict.

"As has been emphasized repeatedly, the Islamic Republic of Iran opposes war and supports a political solution to resolve the differences between Russia and Ukraine, aiming to end the military conflict," Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said.





# Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Heads of Government Meeting 2024: A Comprehensive Analysis



By Kanwal Munir

## Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), founded by the People's Republic of China in 2001, has grown into a pivotal multilateral forum emphasizing political, economic, and security collaboration among its member states. The upcoming SCO Heads of Government Meeting, scheduled for October 15-16, 2024, in Islamabad, Pakistan, represents a critical juncture for the organization. Hosted by Pakistan, this meeting is expected to be a landmark event, highlighting the SCO's expanding influence in global diplomacy. As Pakistan assumes the rotating chairmanship of the SCO Council of Heads of Government, the summit will not only focus on pressing regional and global issues but also underscore the organization's ability to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among diverse nations. This meeting will serve as a testament to the SCO's growing importance on the international stage and its role in shaping geopolitical dynamics in the 21st century.

## The SCO: Structure and Objectives

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was established to foster regional stability, economic development, and security cooperation among its member states. Initially formed to address regional challenges, the SCO has expanded to include eight core member states: China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Iran, the latest addition, joined the organization to enhance its strategic reach. The SCO functions through several key bodies, with the SCO Council of Heads of Government (CHG) being the second-highest decision-making entity within the organization. The CHG plays a crucial role in shaping policies and coordinating activities related to economic and security issues among member states. By facilitating dialogue and collaboration, the SCO aims to create a stable and prosperous regional environment, addressing both bilateral and

multilateral challenges that impact its diverse membership.

## Key Objectives of the SCO:

1. **Regional Security:** Combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
2. **Economic Cooperation:** Enhancing trade and investment among member states.
3. **Cultural and Humanitarian Exchange:** Fostering mutual understanding and cooperation in cultural and humanitarian issues.
4. **Political Dialogue:** Promoting dialogue and coordination on global and regional issues.

The 2024 Heads of Government Meeting

## Event Details

The SCO Heads of Government Meeting in

October 2024 will take place in Islamabad, Pakistan, highlighting the country's role as the current holder of the rotating chairmanship of the SCO Council of Heads of Government (CHG). This significant summit will be preceded by a Ministerial Meeting and multiple rounds of Senior Officials' Meetings. These preparatory sessions will address a range of cooperative efforts among SCO member states, covering financial, economic, socio-cultural, and humanitarian aspects. This event underscores Pakistan's pivotal role in advancing the SCO's agenda and fostering collaborative engagement within the organization.

## Invitation and Expected Participation

The Pakistani Foreign Office has confirmed that invitations have been extended to all heads of government of the SCO member states. This includes Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose participation remains uncertain due to the historically strained relations between India and Pakistan. The Foreign Office has expressed hope for the attendance of all member states, underscoring the importance of this summit in fostering dialogue and collaboration.

## Agenda and Focus Areas

The October summit will address a range of issues central to the SCO's mission. The primary focus areas include:

1. **Financial and Economic Cooperation:** Discussions will likely center on enhancing economic ties, addressing trade barriers, and exploring investment opportunities among member states.
2. **Socio-Cultural Collaboration:** The summit will emphasize cultural exchanges and humanitarian cooperation to strengthen mutual understanding and support regional development.
3. **Humanitarian Issues:** The meeting will also address humanitarian challenges, including responses to natural disasters and public health crises.

## Key Themes of the Summit:

Certainly! Here are the key thematic areas

discussed at the 19th meeting of the Heads of Judiciary of the SCO in bullet points:

### 1. International Human Trafficking:

- a. Addressing the global challenge of human trafficking.
- b. Developing coordinated strategies for prevention and suppression.

### 2. Mediation in Civil Cases:

- a. Exploring effective mechanisms for resolving civil disputes through mediation.
- b. Promoting peace and stability within and between member states.

### 3. Protection of Property Rights:

- a. Ensuring the protection of property rights.
- b. Addressing disputes related to property ownership and use.

### 4. Development of Administrative Justice:

- a. Enhancing administrative justice systems.
- b. Improving governance and legal processes across member states.

### 5. Application of Digitalization and New Technologies in Judicial Processes:

- a. Leveraging technology to enhance judicial efficiency and transparency.
- b. Utilizing digital tools and platforms in legal processes.

## The Impact on India-Pakistan Relations

One of the most anticipated aspects of the 2024 SCO Heads of Government Meeting is the potential participation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi's attendance at this high-profile event holds considerable significance due to the intricate and often contentious history between India and Pakistan.

The relationship between India and Pakistan has been marked by longstanding disputes, particularly over the Kashmir region, which has been a focal point of

conflict between the two nations. Diplomatic engagements have seen several high-level interactions, but tensions frequently resurface, complicating bilateral relations. The SCO summit in Islamabad presents a unique opportunity for direct dialogue between the leaders of these two countries. Modi's presence could symbolize a commitment to fostering improved relations and addressing contentious issues in a multilateral forum.

If Prime Minister Modi attends the summit, it could potentially serve as a platform for both nations to engage in meaningful discussions, possibly leading to a thaw in relations and paving the way for future diplomatic engagements. Conversely, Modi's absence might underscore the ongoing challenges in India-Pakistan relations and the complexities of navigating bilateral diplomacy. The decision on Modi's participation is likely to be closely scrutinized and could have far-reaching implications for the SCO's role in mediating regional tensions and fostering cooperation among its member states.

## The SCO's Role in Global Diplomacy

The SCO has evolved from a regional cooperation platform to a significant player in global diplomacy. The organization's influence extends beyond its member states, impacting global political and economic dynamics.

## China and Russia's Influence

China and Russia, as the leading powers within the SCO, play a crucial role in shaping the organization's agenda and strategy. Their leadership ensures that the SCO remains a relevant and influential entity in international affairs. The upcoming summit provides an opportunity for both countries to assert their diplomatic strategies and showcase their commitment to regional and global stability.

## Challenges and Opportunities

The SCO faces several challenges, including differing national interests among member states and geopolitical tensions.



The organization's ability to navigate these challenges while maintaining cohesion and advancing its objectives will be critical. The summit in Islamabad will be a test of the SCO's capacity to address these issues effectively and strengthen its role in global diplomacy.

## The 19th Meeting of the Heads of Judiciary

In addition to the Heads of Government Meeting, the SCO also conducts meetings of judicial leaders. The 19th meeting of the Heads of Judiciary was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from May 22 to 24, 2024. This meeting was attended by judicial leaders from SCO member states, with Belarus participating as an observer.

## Thematic Sessions and Joint Statement

The 19th Heads of Judiciary meeting featured five thematic sessions:

1. International Human Trafficking
2. Mediation in Civil Cases
3. Protection of Property Rights
4. Development of Administrative Justice
5. Application of Digitalization and New Technologies in Judicial Processes

A Joint Statement was signed by the participating judiciaries, reflecting their commitment to collaborative efforts in these areas. Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa of Pakistan attended this meeting, marking the second time a Chief Justice from Pakistan participated in an SCO judicial meeting.

## Diplomatic and Cultural Significance

The meeting in Tashkent also underscored the diplomatic and cultural significance of SCO gatherings. Chief Justice Isa and Pakistan's Ambassador to Uzbekistan, Mr. Ahmed Farooq, were honored with a meeting with the Chairman of the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan, Mr. Bakhtiyar Islamov. Chief Justice Isa received a commemorative watch featuring the 'Monument of Independence' of Uzbekistan and the Humo bird (Simurgh), a symbol from the Sufi poem "Conference of the Birds" by

Fariduddin Attar. This gesture highlights the cultural and diplomatic exchanges fostered by SCO meetings.

## Pakistan's Chairmanship and Diplomatic Stance

As the rotating Chair of the SCO Council of Heads of Government, Pakistan's role in hosting the 2024 summit is of considerable importance. The country has emphasized its commitment to fostering good relations with all nations and rejecting bloc politics.

## Diplomatic Engagement

Pakistan's Foreign Office has reiterated that the country does not align with any international bloc but seeks to maintain positive

Pakistan has been active in strengthening strategic partnerships. For instance, during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to Tajikistan, the Pakistan-Tajikistan Strategic Partnership Agreement was signed, focusing on bilateral cooperation in political, trade, energy, security, and people-to-people contacts. This agreement underscores Pakistan's broader diplomatic strategy and its role within the SCO framework.

## Conclusion

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Heads of Government Meeting in October 2024 represents a crucial event for regional and global diplomacy. As Pakistan prepares to host this significant



relations based on mutual respect and non-interference. This stance is crucial as Pakistan prepares to host the SCO summit and engage with member states on various issues. The emphasis on diplomacy and cooperation reflects Pakistan's strategic approach to international relations.

## Addressing Unilateral Reports

Pakistan has also addressed concerns related to unilateral reports on religious freedom issued by the US Department of State. The Foreign Office spokesperson, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, rejected the reports as politically biased and incomplete. Pakistan asserts its commitment to protecting religious rights and freedoms as enshrined in its constitution.

## Strategic Partnerships

In addition to hosting the SCO meeting,

the summit, the focus will be on advancing cooperation among member states and addressing key issues impacting the region. The participation of global leaders, including the uncertain attendance of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will be closely watched.

The summit provides an opportunity for dialogue and collaboration, potentially influencing bilateral relations and broader international dynamics. The SCO's ability to address regional and global challenges while maintaining cohesion and advancing its objectives will be a testament to its effectiveness as a multilateral platform.

As the SCO continues to evolve, the 2024 Heads of Government Meeting in Islamabad promises to be a pivotal moment in shaping the organization's future and its role in global diplomacy.

# Us Presidential Race: Harris Vs. Trump—The First Debate and The Crucial Swing States

*In US presidential elections, the outcome is decided by the Electoral College, where each state has a certain number of electors based on its population. Winning the majority of these electoral votes is crucial. As such, the narrow margins in these swing states highlight the intense competition and the potential for any single debate or campaign event to shift voter sentiment.*



By Kanwal Munir

As the 2024 US presidential election draws closer, the race between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump remains incredibly tight. Recent polls released just two days before their first—potentially only—televised debate, show the candidates in a neck-and-neck battle. Despite Trump's criminal convictions and his role in attempting to overturn the 2020 election results, he retains a firm base of support. On the other hand, Harris, who only entered the race after President Biden's exit in July, has quickly emerged as a formidable contender. However, the polls indicate that the race remains undecided, with no clear frontrunner.

## Polling Overview

The latest polling data highlights a competitive race. A New York Times/Siena College poll reveals that Trump leads Harris nationally by a narrow margin of 48 to 47 percent, which falls within the margin

of error. This close margin underscores the uncertainty of the election outcome, which will ultimately be decided by key swing states rather than the national popular vote.

In crucial battleground states, the polls show Harris with a slight edge. She is narrowly ahead in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, while tied in Nevada, Georgia, North Carolina, and Arizona. A CBS News/YouGov poll corroborates this, showing Harris leading by one percentage point in Michigan and Wisconsin and tied in Pennsylvania. These swing states are critical as their results will likely determine the overall outcome of the election.

The importance of these swing states cannot be overstated. In US presidential elections, the outcome is decided by the Electoral College, where each state has a certain number of electors based on its population. Winning the majority of these electoral votes is crucial. As such, the narrow margins in these swing states

highlight the intense competition and the potential for any single debate or campaign event to shift voter sentiment.

## The Upcoming Debate

The first debate between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump, scheduled for Tuesday, September 10, 2024, at 9:00 PM local time, is poised to be a pivotal moment in the campaign. Taking place at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, the debate will be moderated by ABC News anchors David Moyer and Lynsey Davis. This debate, the only one scheduled between the two candidates, could play a significant role in shaping voter opinions and influencing the final outcome of the election.

Trump, known for his confrontational style, will face pressure to moderate his behavior, especially given Harris's status as a mixed-race candidate aiming to become the first female president. Harris, on the



other hand, must utilize the debate to effectively connect with voters and address concerns about her relatively short campaign run. This debate represents a significant opportunity for Harris to define herself more clearly to the electorate and to contrast her vision with Trump's.

## Key Issues and Expected Highlights

### Climate Change and Environmental Policy

Climate change remains a crucial issue for many voters. Harris, who has emphasized environmental concerns in her campaign, will likely outline her vision for combating climate change. Her platform may include strategies for renewable energy, environmental regulations, and international climate agreements. Harris's approach is expected to focus on aggressive measures to reduce carbon emissions and transition to a green economy, reflecting the broader Democratic commitment to addressing climate change.

Trump, who has faced criticism for his environmental policies, is expected to defend his administration's approach, which has focused on deregulation and economic arguments. His responses are likely to highlight the economic benefits of his policies and argue that environmental regulations should not come at the expense of economic growth and energy independence. The debate will provide an opportunity for Trump to defend his record and counter Harris's climate agenda.

### Immigration and Border Security

Immigration will be a prominent topic of discussion. Harris may advocate for a more humane and orderly immigration system, building on the policies of the Biden administration. This could include proposals for reforming asylum processes, addressing the root causes of migration, and improving border management. Harris's stance will likely emphasize compassion and practicality, aiming to balance security with humanitarian considerations.

Trump is likely to emphasize his hardline stance on border security and immigration enforcement, framing it as essential for national security and economic stability.

His approach will likely focus on building a stronger border wall, increasing deportations, and implementing stricter immigration policies. The debate will be an opportunity for Trump to reaffirm his commitment to these policies and to appeal to his issues of national security and sovereignty.

### Crime and Law Enforcement

Crime and law enforcement are key issues in the current political climate. Harris, with her background as a former Attorney General, is expected to push for reforms aimed at reducing racial disparities and increasing police accountability. This may include proposals for police reform, criminal justice reform, and measures to address systemic issues within law enforcement agencies.



Trump will likely highlight his administration's achievements in lowering crime rates and supporting law enforcement, positioning himself as a strong advocate for public safety. He may argue that his policies were effective in reducing crime and supporting the police, contrasting his record with Harris's proposed reforms. The debate will provide a platform for Trump to emphasize his strong stance on law and order.

### Healthcare

Healthcare remains a top concern for voters, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Harris will probably discuss her plans for expanding healthcare access, including support for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and potential new initiatives. This could involve proposals for expanding Medicaid, reducing prescription drug prices, and improving access to affordable care.

On the flip side, Trump's healthcare agenda will likely focus on his administration's efforts to reduce drug prices and promote free-market competition in healthcare. He may argue that his policies have made healthcare more affordable and accessible, while also criticizing Harris's proposals as potentially leading to higher costs and increased government involvement. The debate will allow both candidates to present their visions for the future of healthcare in the United States.

## Campaign Dynamics and Public Perception

The campaign has been marked by dramatic developments, including President Biden's withdrawal and Trump's near assassination. These events have

contributed to the chaotic nature of the election, with Trump narrowly surviving an attack and Harris stepping into the spotlight as the new Democratic nominee.

Polls indicate that both candidates retain a solid base of loyal supporters, with the country almost evenly divided. Harris's campaign has been working to overcome her relative lack of recognition compared to Trump, who has a well-established national profile. Her campaign has been focusing on building momentum and connecting with voters, especially in the crucial swing states.

Harris has faced criticism for running on a platform of vague optimism and unity, with some accusing her of lacking concrete policy proposals. In response, her campaign recently released a detailed policy page covering issues such as unions, cost-of-living, and healthcare. This move aims to address concerns and provide voters with a clearer understanding of her policy

positions. By presenting specific policy proposals, Harris hopes to differentiate herself from Trump and appeal to voters looking for a clear vision for the future.

Trump, meanwhile, has continued to make controversial statements and threats. On his Truth Social platform, he has warned of severe consequences for those involved in alleged election fraud and criticized the Democrats' handling of the 2020 election. His rhetoric and campaign style continue to polarize public opinion and drive his base's enthusiasm. Trump's focus on attacking his opponents and stoking fears about election fraud reflects his strategy of mobilizing his base and positioning himself as a defender against perceived threats.

## Preparing for the Debate

Both candidates have been preparing extensively for the debate. Harris has engaged in mock debates, practicing with a stand-in Trump to refine her responses and approach. This preparation aims to help her handle Trump's provocative style and effectively communicate her policy positions. Harris's campaign has also been working on strategies to address potential challenges and ensure that she can make a strong impression during the debate.

Trump, on the other hand, has focused on policy briefings and strategic advisement, opting to skip mock debates with Harris.

His preparation has involved reviewing key issues and developing responses to anticipated questions and criticisms. Trump's campaign strategy emphasizes reinforcing his message and countering Harris's arguments, while also maintaining his characteristic style and appeal to his base.

The debate will feature a standard format, with each candidate given opportunities to answer questions from the moderators and provide rebuttals. The goal is to ensure a fair exchange of ideas and minimize interruptions. The debate will be a critical test of both candidates' abilities to articulate their positions, handle tough questions, and connect with voters.

## Impact on Voter Sentiment

The outcome of the debate could significantly influence voter sentiment and sway undecided voters. Harris is expected to use the debate to strengthen her public image and address uncertainties about her candidacy. A strong performance could boost her chances in the battleground states that are crucial for winning the election.

For Trump, the debate presents an opportunity to solidify his position as the Republican frontrunner and counter any lingering doubts about his candidacy. His performance will be closely scrutinized, and he

will need to balance his provocative style with a more measured approach. Trump's ability to manage his rhetoric and present a coherent vision for the future will be key to his success in the debate.

## Conclusion

The first debate between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump is set to be a landmark event in the 2024 presidential race. With both candidates preparing rigorously and the stakes higher than ever, the debate could have a profound impact on the election's outcome. As the nation tunes in, voters will be watching closely for persuasive arguments and clear visions for the future of the country. The debate will likely shape the final push toward Election Day and may determine the direction of American politics for years to come.

With the election still a toss-up, the debate is an opportunity for both candidates to make their case to the American people and address the pressing issues facing the nation. The outcome of this debate could be a turning point in the campaign, influencing voter perceptions and potentially altering the trajectory of the election. As Harris and Trump go head-to-head, the stakes are high, and the impact of their performance could resonate far beyond the debate stage, affecting the final decision of voters across the country.





# Donald Trump survives second assassination attempt: Who is the shooter?

*The suspect, identified as 58-year-old Ryan Wesley Routh, was arrested after Secret Service agents opened fire near Trump's Florida golf course. A high-powered AK-47-style rifle, equipped with a scope and a GoPro camera, was recovered at the scene.*



By Harry Choudhry

An apparent assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump during a golf outing in Florida has shaken his presidential campaign, which has already been marred by violence. This marks the second such incident in two months, raising serious security concerns. On Sunday afternoon, U.S. Secret Service agents opened fire on a man who was spotted aiming an AK-style rifle through a fence while hiding in bushes near Trump's West Palm Beach golf course. The FBI characterized the incident as an attempted assassination on the GOP nominee.

In a similar event at a Pennsylvania rally in July, Trump was grazed by a bullet when a gunman gained access to an unsecured roof and opened fire, killing one Trump supporter and injuring two others. While the Secret Service has been working to ensure Trump's safety at his campaign rallies, which often attract large crowds, less attention has been given to his security during downtime at his own clubs and properties. Law enforcement has long been aware of vulnerable spots

along the perimeter of his golf course, where golfers, including Trump, are visible from behind the fence.

Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw acknowledged that security around the golf course had been relaxed since Trump is no longer president. "He's not the sitting president. If he was, we would have had this entire golf course surrounded. But because he's not, his security is limited to areas deemed necessary by the Secret Service," Bradshaw explained.

## Secret Service Response

Law enforcement officials commended the swift actions of the Secret Service agents protecting Trump. One agent, tasked with staying one hole ahead to scan for threats, noticed the gunman's rifle barrel sticking out from the fence and "immediately engaged" the suspect, according to Bradshaw. Senior Trump campaign advisers Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles praised the Secret Service in an email to

campaign staff, emphasizing that "President Trump and everyone accompanying him are safe thanks to the great work of the United States Secret Service."

Unlike most former presidents, Trump's official residence is at Mar-a-Lago, a club in Palm Beach, which presents unique security challenges compared to private estates with taller fences or gated communities.

## Investigations and Reactions

Secret Service spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi announced that the agency is working closely with the FBI, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, and other law enforcement agencies to investigate the incident. The attack immediately prompted calls for answers from lawmakers.

Rep. Elise Stefanik, a key Trump ally, expressed relief that the former president was unharmed but questioned how an assassin could come so close to him again.



The bipartisan task force investigating the earlier security failure in Pennsylvania also expressed concern, with Reps. Mike Kelly (R-Pa.) and Jason Crow (D-Colo.) condemning political violence and seeking answers.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, one of Trump's GOP primary rivals, announced that his state would launch its own investigation. "The people deserve the truth about the would-be assassin and how he was able to get within 500 yards of the former president and current GOP nominee," he stated in a social media post.

## Who is the shooter?

Former U.S. President Donald Trump

narrowly escaped an alleged assassination attempt on Sunday, according to the FBI.

The suspect, identified as 58-year-old Ryan Wesley Routh, was arrested after Secret Service agents opened fire near Trump's Florida golf course. A high-powered AK-47-style rifle, equipped with a scope and a GoPro camera, was recovered at the scene.

Routh, who had been hiding in shrubbery near the property, fled in a black car after shots were fired by Secret Service agents. Thanks to critical information from witnesses, authorities were able to track the vehicle and arrest Routh. Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw confirmed during a press conference, "We have

somebody in custody right now that is a potential suspect."

## Who Is Ryan Wesley Routh?

Routh, a former construction worker from Greensboro, North Carolina, has no military background but has shown a strong interest in armed conflict.

He previously gained attention for his social media posts expressing his willingness to "fight and die" in Ukraine following Russia's 2022 invasion. He frequently called for civilian intervention in global conflicts on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Signal.

In one post, Routh pledged his commitment to the Ukraine conflict, and his Signal profile echoed his belief that "civilians must change this war and prevent future wars." His WhatsApp bio also advocated for global human rights and democracy.

Routh reportedly traveled to Ukraine in 2023, claiming to support the war effort and recruit Afghan soldiers. His criminal record includes a 2002 arrest in Greensboro, where he barricaded himself in a building with a fully automatic weapon. The outcome of that case remains unclear. The investigation into the attempted assassination is ongoing as authorities continue to explore Routh's background and motivations.





# The US Ambassador Donald Blome launched the Recharge Pakistan initiative Sept 10

## TTI Report

Blome said, “I’d like to take a moment to acknowledge our host, the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services — an independent, first-of-its-kind research and training facility for parliamentarians, constructed with funding from the United States. PIPs has provided training to more than 800 parliamentarians and staff, and conducted hundreds of policy research projects for members of parliament.”

“I am delighted to be here as we join our partners in launching Recharge Pakistan — an ambitious climate initiative that will strengthen flood resilience and improve water security in some of Pakistan’s most vulnerable communities,” he added. The US Ambassador also said that the groundwater is critical to providing families with clean drinking water, irrigating crops, and raising livestock. Much like a battery, groundwater powers the land, enables crops to grow, and provides clean water so people can not only survive but thrive.

As a result of the climate crisis, nature is losing its ability to recharge the battery. Hard ground does not capture water. Instead, water runs downhill along the surface and turns into floods that devastate people’s lives and livelihoods. But it doesn’t have to be that way. We can restore and rebuild nature’s ability to capture rainwater, filter it, and return it to the ground — making it available for families, farmers, and livestock. And that’s exactly what we’ll do — together with our partners — through Recharge Pakistan.

Recharge Pakistan’s network of green infrastructure projects will rehabilitate floodwater channels, rerouting excess water away from where people live and work. It will reforest and restore wetlands to prevent dangerous runoff. It will revitalize the soil’s ability to absorb excess water and store it underground. It will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 52,900 tons of carbon dioxide. And it will replenish the water supply by creating 127 new groundwater storage basins.

All told, Recharge Pakistan will reduce flooding hazards for more than 50,000 hectares. It will provide Pakistani families, businesses, and farms access to clean, fresh water year-round. And it will improve the livelihoods of 687,000 people and indirectly benefit more than seven million people across the provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh.

The United States’ partnership with Pakistan on water management has a long history dating back to the 1960s. Our collaboration on the Mangla, Tarbela, Gomal Zam and Satpara dams provides more than 95 percent of Pakistan’s water storage capacity, generates clean energy, mitigates floods, and bolsters Pakistan’s economy.

In recent years, through the U.S.-Pakistan “Green Alliance” framework, we’ve partnered with both industry and the Government of Pakistan on renewable energy, smart agriculture and water



management. Our efforts have created new opportunities for Pakistani businesses to access climate financing from offshore, opening up new opportunities and creating jobs. We have supported startup businesses to bring new technologies and skills to Pakistan’s labor force. The United States has provided \$5 billion to the Green Climate Fund. And together, we are bringing new investment in renewable energy to help Pakistan achieve its ambitious goal of reaching 60 percent renewable energy by 2030.

“Recharge Pakistan” builds on that strong partnership, with an additional \$5 million U.S. contribution that demonstrates our enduring commitment to building a brighter, more prosperous future for the Pakistani people.

As the fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, according to the Global Climate Risk Index, Pakistan is already feeling the effects of the climate crisis every day. 2022’s devastating floods displaced more than eight million people and caused more than \$15 billion in economic damage. Rising temperatures have taken a toll on Pakistan’s majestic glaciers. And Pakistani farmers have seen crops wither under droughts.

But by coming together, we can help communities adapt, mitigate, and even reverse some of the worst impacts of climate change. And we can do it in a way that lifts up local communities.

I’d like to thank the team at the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination and the WWF, whose hard work over the past five years with affected communities to identify project sites, and build out plans, laid the groundwork to make the ideas behind Recharge Pakistan a reality.

Building a coalition of common action is critical to meeting the climate crisis head-on. And the United States is proud to join forces with Coca-Cola, the Green Climate Fund, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Government of Pakistan on this landmark initiative.

The United States will continue to broaden and deepen our partnership with Pakistan to protect climate-vulnerable communities, and build a greener, more prosperous and climate resilient future.

# Spanish civil war

*When Ideologies and identities tore a nation*



By Hina Kashif

The Spanish Civil War 1936–1939 was one of the most significant and tragic conflicts of the 20th century. It was a battle not just for political power but for the very soul of Spain. With Spain becoming a bloody testing ground for competing ideologies—fascism and communism. It was a fierce confrontation that pitted neighbor against neighbor, split families, and devastated a nation. But why did Spain descend into such brutal conflict? The answer lies in a complex web of political, social, and economic tensions that had been brewing for decades.

Spain in the early 20th century was a country riddled with deep divisions. The monarchy, weakened by decades of political instability, struggled to maintain control. The working class sought reforms and independence, particularly in urban centers and regions like Catalonia and the Basque Country. By 1931, the monarchy was overthrown, and the Second Spanish Republic was declared. Initially, it seemed like a beacon of hope, but its attempts to implement democratic reforms weakening the Church's influence, and enhancing labor rights created bitter opposition from conservative factions. The division between left-wing Republicans and right-wing

nationalists widened into a chasm that ultimately led to civil war.

The Republicans were loyal to the left-leaning Popular Front government of the Second Spanish Republic, and consisted of various socialist, communist, separatist, anarchist, and republican parties, some of which had opposed the government in the pre-war period. The opposing Nationalists were an alliance of Falangists, monarchists, conservatives, and traditionalists led by a military junta among whom Francisco Franco quickly achieved a preponderant role.

Shortly after the Popular Front's victory in the 1936 election, groups of officers, both active and retired, got together to discuss a coup. On July 17, 1936, this military coup, led by General Francisco Franco, ignited the civil war. The coup aimed to overthrow the left-leaning Republican government and was quickly supported by conservative factions, monarchists, the military, and the Catholic Church. These forces were the Nationalists who sought to restore traditional values and suppress the growing influence of communism and anarchism. On the other side were the Republicans an uneasy coalition of socialists, communists,

anarchists, and liberals fighting to defend the republic and push for a more egalitarian Spain.

The Spanish Civil War was not fought in isolation. It became a battleground for the larger ideological conflicts of the time which exposed the political divisions across Europe. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany quickly threw their support behind Franco's Nationalists, providing military aid, including troops, aircraft, and weapons. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union supported the Republicans with arms and advisors, although their aid was less substantial than the assistance Franco received. International brigades—volunteers from across Europe and the Americas—also joined the Republicans, seeing the fight in Spain as part of a larger global battle against fascism. Britain and France led a political alliance of 27 nations that pledged non-intervention, including an embargo on all arms exports to Spain. The United States unofficially adopted a position of non-intervention as well, despite abstaining from joining the alliance. The League of Nations' reaction to the war was influenced by a fear of communism, and was insufficient to contain the massive importation of arms and other war resources by the fighting factions.



The Spanish Civil War engendered massive political violence, carried out by both sides on the battlefield and on city streets. It proved to be a breeding ground for mass atrocities, carried out by belligerents eager to eradicate their ideological opponents. The Nationalists waged a brutal war against the Republic's supporters. Republican women were raped or were publicly humiliated by having their heads shaved. By 1940, more than 500,000 individuals were rounded up and sent to about 60 concentration camps. Large numbers of prisoners were conscripted for forced labor or to fight in Franco's army or tried by military courts.

The war ended with a Nationalist victory on April 1, 1939; Franco would rule Spain as a ruthless dictator until his death in 1975. Spain was left in ruins, its economy shattered, and its people divided. The wounds of the civil war would take decades to heal, and the legacy of the conflict still resonates in Spanish society today.

The fighting and persecution resulted in several million Spaniards being displaced. Many fled areas of violence for safe refuge elsewhere. Only a few countries, such as Mexico and the Dominican Republic, opened their doors to Spanish refugees.

When the Spanish Civil War ended in 1939, with Franco's victory, some 500,000 Spanish Republicans escaped to France, where many were placed in internment camps in the south, such as Gurs, St. Cyprien, and Les Milles. Following the German defeat of France in spring 1940, Nazi authorities conscripted Spanish Republicans for forced labor and deported more than 30,000 to Germany, where about half of them ended up in concentration camps. Some 7,000 of these became prisoners in Mauthausen; more than half of them died in the camp.

### Republican strength/Casualties:

1936 strength:

446,800 combatants

31 ships

12 submarines

13,000 sailors

1938 strength:

450,000 infantries

350 aircraft

200 tanks

### International volunteers

59,380 international volunteers

3,015 Soviet technicians

772 Soviet pilots

Casualties

110,000 killed in action (including executions)

100,000–200,000 civilians killed inside the Nationalist zone

Nationalist's strength/casualties:

1936 strength:

58,000 soldiers

68,500 gendarmes

16 operational ships

7,000 sailors

1938 strength:

600,000 infantries

600 aircraft

290 tanks

### International volunteers

70,000–75,000 Italian volunteers

16,000 German volunteers

~10,000 Portuguese volunteers

Casualties

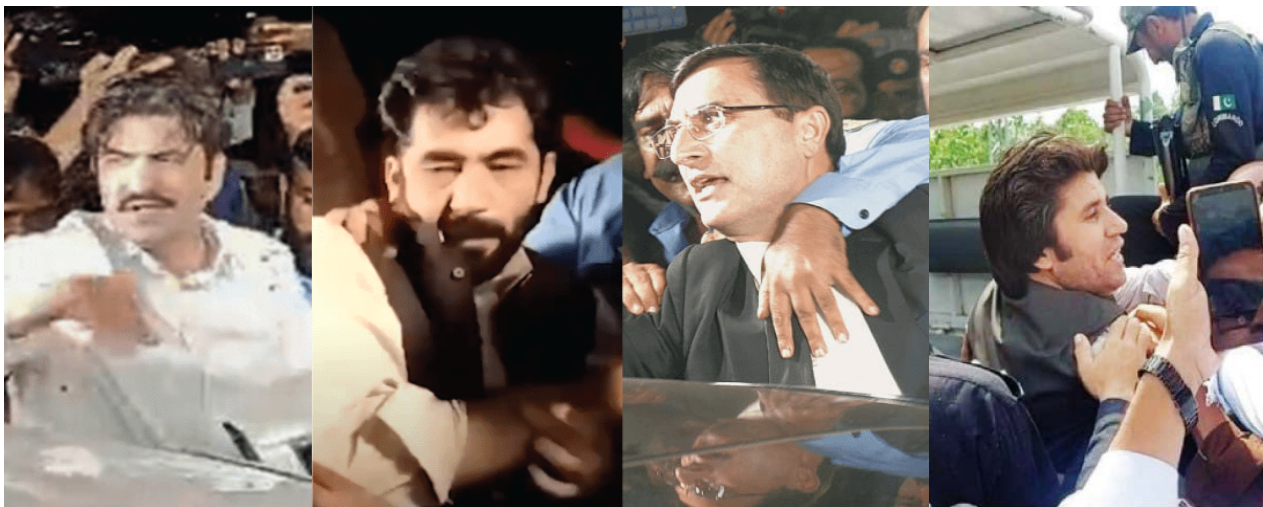
90,000 killed in action

50,000–72,000 civilians killed inside the Republican zone



# PTI adopts a stiff stance against Govt's injustice with party leaders and unwanted changes in Constitution

*Finally, the court granted bail to arrested PTI MNAs after the Islamabad High Court declared null and void their eight-day physical remand. It led to the release of the detained MNAs of the PTI and they were able to join the session of the National Assembly.*



By Hina Kashif

Almost all the leaders of Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf have adopted a tough stance against the government's policies to arrest and harass the PTI leaders and modify the Constitution for its vested interests. Fiery speeches of Ali Amin Gandapur, Asad Qaiser, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, Ali Muhammad Khan, and other PTI leaders indicate that they are not going to tolerate victimization of the party leaders, workers, and any undesirable change in the Constitution. The party leaders demonstrated a tough resistance to the proposed constitutional amendments, giving a tough time to the government.

The fury of the key PTI leaders especially Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur at the recent rally of the party in Sangjani in Islamabad was loud and clear evidence of PTI leaders' frustration against the policies of the government and the establishment.

Meanwhile, a day before Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) highly anticipated rally in Islamabad, President Asif Ali Zardari signed the "Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Bill, 2024"

into law. The bill, aimed at regulating public gatherings, came into effect just two days after being passed by the Senate and National Assembly, despite strong protests from PTI lawmakers. The new law granted the district magistrate authority to regulate or ban public gatherings in the federal capital, with penalties of up to three years in prison and/or a fine for participating in an "unlawful assembly." Repeat offenders faced potential sentences of up to 10 years.

Under the bill, police officers, following the district magistrate's instructions, could order any assembly threatening public peace to disperse, and participants were required to comply.

Meanwhile, PTI held its public rally the following day (Sunday) after relocating the event to an open space at the junction of Margalla Road, Iran Avenue, and GT Road in Sangjani. This change was confirmed by a notification from the district magistrate, who granted permission for the event at the new location, 200 meters from the original site. The routes and conditions previously established for the rally remained the same.

Initially, the district administration had granted PTI permission to hold the rally on September 8. However, the party faced internal criticism for failing to hold a previous event in Islamabad on August 22 after it was canceled, and the administration sealed roads citing security concerns.

PTI leaders Gohar Ali Khan and Azam Swati stated that the August 22 rally had been postponed on the advice of party founder Imran Khan following a meeting with him in Adiala Jail. However, divisions within the party emerged when Imran's sister, Aleema Khan, contradicted these claims, expressing doubts about the current leadership's intentions to free Imran from jail. In an audio clip, she questioned Swati's early morning visit to Imran.

PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar announced that the rally had already begun and that allied parties would join the public gathering. He mentioned that, due to rally preparations, he was unable to meet Imran Khan and claimed that two PTI workers had been arrested. He called on the administration not to create obstacles as the event





had been authorized.

Islamabad was under a virtual lockdown as authorities implemented strict security measures ahead of a major Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) rally scheduled for that day. To control movement and ensure safety, 29 key locations throughout the city had been sealed off, restricting access to several important areas. Police initiated a crackdown on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers after the deadline for their highly anticipated rally at the outskirts of the federal capital expired on Sunday.

The rally, which began amid tight security in Sangjani on the outskirts of Islamabad, saw participants gathering at the venue despite roadblocks. Multiple caravans, led by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, made their way to the city. PTI was eventually permitted to hold the gathering on September 8 under a no-objection certificate (NOC) issued earlier in the week, following two prior postponements in July and August due to revoked permissions. These delays had drawn significant criticism from party leaders and supporters.

That morning, the Islamabad district administration heightened security and closed several main routes into the capital, with the "Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Bill, 2024," which President Asif Ali Zardari had signed into law just a day before the rally. PTI leader Hammad Azhar addressed the crowd, accusing the current government of obstructing the rally out of fear of Imran Khan and his supporters.

Azhar also hinted at the launch of a movement in Punjab, led by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, and urged PTI workers to "be ready." He noted that much of PTI's leadership in Punjab was currently imprisoned, paying tribute to detained leaders like Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Umar Sarfraz Cheema.

Firebrand politician Sher Afzal Marwat echoed these sentiments, announcing plans to hold rallies in Punjab for Imran Khan's release and to uphold the rule of law and the Constitution. "We will bring 50,000 people from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into Punjab within a week," he declared, adding that they would even march on foot and face any obstacles, including tear gas.

As PTI leaders addressed the crowd, the Islamabad district administration issued a notification stipulating that the rally must conclude by 7 p.m.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, led by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, issued a two-week deadline on Sunday for the release of its leader, Imran Khan, during a major rally in Islamabad. The event, held in the Sangjani locality, saw significant clashes between PTI supporters and police.

Gandapur declared that if Imran Khan was not released within the stipulated time, PTI would take matters into their own hands. His speech was met with enthusiasm from the rally attendees, who had gathered despite roadblocks and heavy security measures. The rally had been allowed under a no-objection certificate (NOC) after multiple postponements due to revoked permissions, drawing criticism from various quarters for the delays.

The Islamabad district administration issued a directive mandating that the rally conclude by 7 PM. Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon warned that failure to adhere to the deadline would result in violations of the NOC. Following the deadline, police began dispersing the crowd, leading to confrontations where PTI workers threw stones at officers, injuring several, including Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shoaib Khan.

In response to the crackdown, PTI leaders, including former federal minister Hammad Azhar, criticized the government and signaled plans to expand their movement to Punjab, urging their supporters to prepare for further demonstrations.

PTI leader Muhammad Ali Khan and firebrand politician Sher Afzal Marwat called for increased activism in Punjab, promising significant rallies and actions if their demands were not met. They expressed frustration over the imprisonment of PTI leaders and the suppression of their rallies.

A wave of arrests swept through the Parliament House, targeting several members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

According to sources, all MNAs present in the building were detained to prevent their

escape. Among those arrested early that morning were Zain Qureshi, Hamid Raza, and Waqas Akram. Reports indicated that before the arrests took place, the lights in the Parliament House had been turned off.

The three MNAs had been at the Parliament House's Service Center and had even eaten inside the building. Senior leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), including the party's chairman, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, were arrested by Islamabad Police on Monday amid an intensified crackdown following a rally in the capital's Sangjani area.

Sher Afzal Marwat was detained while leaving a National Assembly session, and Shoaib Shaheen was apprehended at his residence. Barrister Gohar Ali Khan was taken into custody outside the parliament in what appeared to be a coordinated operation.

Additionally, Marwat's private security guard was arrested for allegedly resisting the police during the operation.

In a related development, President Zardari modified the code of conduct for rallies in Islamabad.

Authorities sealed off the Red Zone in Islamabad, raising concerns that more PTI leaders could be targeted. Police stated that the arrests were linked to an FIR filed after the Sangjani rally, which had exceeded the time limits imposed by authorities.

Further arrests of key figures, including Umar Ayub and Zartaj Gul, were anticipated. Police cited a range of charges, including violating rally rules, clashing with police, and delivering anti-state speeches at the gathering.

PTI members Ali Muhammad Khan and Aamir Dogar managed to leave Parliament House without incident, while other leaders, including Barrister Gohar, Zain Qureshi, and Waqas Akram, returned to the National Assembly seeking protection from the ongoing crackdown.

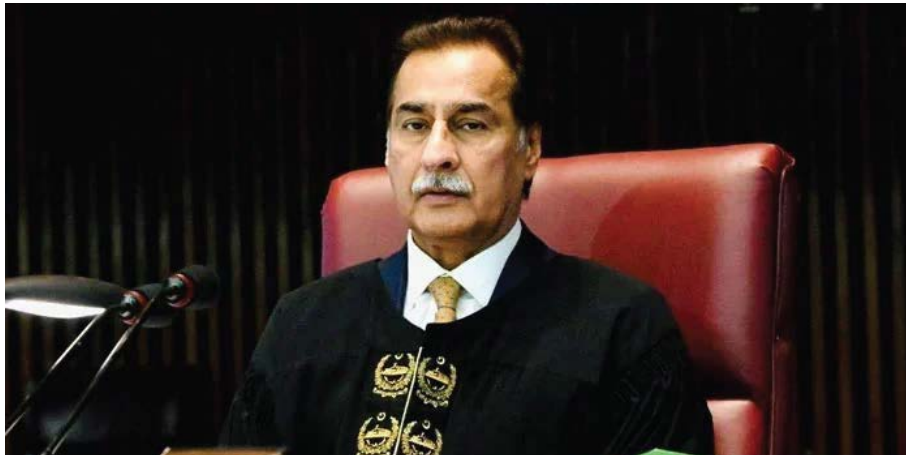
PTI sources confirmed that Zartaj Gul narrowly avoided arrest, escaping by vehicle. Police were actively pursuing her and other leaders such as Hammad Azhar, Naeem Haider Panjutha, Khalid Khurshed, and Kanwal Shauzab, all of whom had attended the rally. Islamabad Police notified Punjab authorities about PTI



leaders from the province involved in the Sangjani rally. Cases were registered against several individuals, including Seemabia Tahir and Raja Basharat, at the Noon and Sangjani police stations.

The FIR alleged that PTI workers had attacked police with stones and batons when security forces attempted to prevent the rally from deviating from its approved route. In response, law enforcement used tear gas to disperse the crowd and arrested 17 activists on-site.

These arrests were carried out under the newly enacted Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Bill, 2024, which regulated public gatherings and demonstrations. Sher Afzal Marwat's arrest was reportedly made under this law, with further arrests of PTI leaders from Punjab expected soon.



National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq called for decisive action following the recent arrests of multiple PTI lawmakers, both within and outside the Parliament House. Addressing the assembly on Tuesday, Sadiq emphasized the need for accountability, stating, "Action must be taken over what occurred in parliament last night."

Sadiq ordered the retrieval of CCTV footage from all entry points and internal areas of the Parliament House, including gate numbers one and five, the cabinet side gate, and inside the building. He expressed his frustration, noting that he had witnessed several disturbances during his tenure, including the 2014 alleged attack on Parliament House. At that time, he had filed an FIR against the involved party and indicated he would take similar steps if necessary.

The Speaker summoned Ali Muhammad Khan, Syed Naveed Qamar, and Azam

Nazeer Tarar for a discussion to address the situation, urging them to resolve the matter through dialogue.

Additionally, PTI MNA Ali Muhammad Khan provided all relevant footage from the incidents in question. Other key figures, including Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party President Abdul Aleem Khan, JUI-F's Noor Alam Khan, MQM's Aminul Haq, Rana Sanaullah, Shandana Gulzar, and Sahibzada Hamid Raza, were also part of the ongoing consultations.

Sadiq also called in the Islamabad police chief, along with the DIG and SSP, instructing them to present details of the cases against the assembly members involved.

National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq

suspended several key security personnel from the Parliament House, including the sergeant-at-arms, due to negligence related to the recent arrests of PTI lawmakers. Sergeant-at-Arms Ashfaq Ashraf was suspended for four months for failing to ensure the security of the Parliament House. Additionally, four other security staff members—Waqas Ahmed, Obaidullah, Waheed Safdar, and Muhammad Haroon—were also suspended for not adhering to security protocols.

These suspensions followed Speaker Sadiq's decision to establish a high-level investigation committee on Tuesday to examine the arrests of PTI MNAs within the Parliament House. The suspended Sergeant-at-Arms Ashfaq Ashraf had been initially set to lead this committee.

The committee was tasked with conducting a comprehensive review of the incidents

leading to the arrests and presenting a detailed report with findings and recommendations to the Speaker. It was instructed to gather all relevant evidence, including CCTV footage, to identify anyone who might have compromised the dignity of the Parliament House.

Speaker Sadiq emphasized the importance of maintaining the Parliament's dignity, warning that those responsible for undermining it would face severe consequences.

On September 10, Islamabad police arrested several PTI leaders for allegedly violating standard operating procedures (SOPs) during a rally in Sangjani and for not adhering to the event's deadline. The arrests occurred late Monday night, with PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar, Sher Afzal Marwat, Shoaib Shaheen, Zain Qureshi, Sheikh Waqas Akram, and 12 other members taken into custody.

An anti-terrorism court granted bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members of the National Assembly on Monday, September 16. The MNAs had been detained following a PTI rally in the capital on September 8.

The released legislators included Sher Afzal Marwat, Zain Qureshi, Sheikh Waqas, Ahmed Chattha, Aamir Dogar, Yousaf Khan, Naeem Ali Shah, Awais Haider Jakhar, Shah Ahmad, and Zubair Khan. The Islamabad police had intensified their crackdown on PTI leadership, arresting party Chairman Gohar Ali Khan, Sher Afzal Marwat, and Shoaib Shaheen on September 9, after the National Assembly session.

In response to the rally, the capital city administration decided to take action against Imran Khan's party for breaching regulations during the public event. The National Assembly Speaker issued production orders to allow the arrested members to attend parliamentary sessions, and the Parliament Lodges were designated as a sub-jail for the detained MNAs.

Finally, the court granted bail to arrested PTI MNAs after the Islamabad High Court declared null and void their eight-day physical remand. It led to the release of the detained MNAs of the PTI and they were able to join the session of the National Assembly.



## New IMF loan and dilemma for Pakistan



By Javed Mahmood

Finally, the International Monetary Fund has included Pakistan in its 25th of September agenda, after hectic efforts by the government of Pakistan. Instead of giving some relief to Pakistan in its new loan program, the Fund's officials kept on asking the government to fulfill upfront all conditions, including the harshest ones such as a massive hike in gas and electricity rates and Petroleum Development Levy (PDL).

This does not seem enough for the IMF people as they are pushing the government to throw a mini-budget bomb on Pakistanis to cover the shortfall in the tax revenue collection in the first two months of the ongoing fiscal year (July and August 2024). The IMF was supposed to release the first tranche of the new program in July or August, but the Fund delayed it and insisted on rescheduling foreign loans payable to China, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and other friendly countries.

Interestingly, every time the govern-

ment borrowed money from the IMF, each time the decision-makers said that it could be the last program, but this seemed to be a dilemma for Pakistan and the people of the heavily indebted country.

On September 13, 2024, Pakistan announced that it had resolved all outstanding issues with the IMF, paving the way for the approval of a \$7 billion loan this month probably on Sept 25. The government is also preparing to impose stricter measures on existing taxpayers after making concessions to traders. As part of its efforts to boost revenue, the government has drafted amendments aimed at preventing income tax return filers from purchasing assets if their declared cash balances and income are less than the cost of the assets. This step follows an analysis by the new Federal Board of Revenue chairman, which revealed that out of nearly six million filers for the tax year 2024, only about 45,000 filers reported an annual income exceeding Rs10 million.

"Thank God, all issues have been amicably resolved with the IMF, and the board will finalize these matters this month," said Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb. His statement ended months of uncertainty regarding the approval of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF), which had been pending a final board decision for two months.

IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack confirmed that the board will meet on September 25 to consider approving the \$7 billion loan package that is part of a 37-month deal to support Pakistan's economic reforms. Although the loan deal will bring economic challenges, its implementation is expected to provide much-needed economic and political stability in the country. The government has also planned new legislation to boost tax collection, which has been falling short of the targets agreed upon with the IMF.

## Mini-Budget on the Way Out

The government believes that many of the six million income tax filers—particularly business individuals, associations of persons, and companies—have underreported their assets and incomes in their annual filings. The government plans to target these taxpayers to increase revenue, while non-filers will continue to face higher tax rates on asset purchases. Despite this, the government has not eliminated the non-filer category, which discourages people from joining the tax net. Proposed amendments to the Income Tax Ordinance will restrict filers from purchasing assets such as homes, plots, and cars if their declared assets do not justify the cost. Filers will also be denied access to their bank balances if their withdrawals fall short of the amounts declared in their tax returns. These measures are expected to take effect on October 1. The FBR is also considering giving access to taxpayers' financial information to government departments and commercial banks, which will be used to enforce these new regulations.

These proposals come shortly after the government conceded to retailers, exempting them from the requirement to disclose their bank accounts and assets. The business community has already started establishing operations overseas to avoid heavy taxation, with salaried individuals paying up to 39% of their gross income in taxes and business individuals facing around 50% taxation on their net income. Despite the limited tax base and the burden on existing taxpayers, the government is preparing additional measures to tighten tax enforcement.

Initially, the FBR plans to pre-populate income tax returns for nearly two million federal, provincial, and state-owned enterprise employees to encourage compliance. The FBR will also target business individuals who are already filers but are believed to be underpaying taxes. Among the 3.7 million filer business individuals, 2.4 million did not pay income tax last year. Only 20,000 filers reported annual incomes exceeding Rs10 million, while 921,000 reported less than that.

Out of the two million salaried filers, about

630,000 earned below the Rs 600,000 annual income tax threshold. Around 15,000 salaried individuals with annual incomes over Rs10 million paid Rs93 billion in income tax, while another 1.3 million declared less than Rs10 million and paid Rs157 billion in taxes. Interestingly, there are 80,000 registered companies, but fewer than 6,000 declared annual incomes over Rs10 million, contributing 99% of the total income tax paid by all companies. Meanwhile, 47,000 companies filed nil returns, and 26,000 reported incomes below Rs10 million. The FBR intends to focus on these companies. Among nearly 100,000 associations of persons, fewer than 5,000 declared annual incomes of Rs10 million or more, while 60,000 reported no income. The FBR will also target these associations as part of its crackdown on underreporting taxpayers.

## July-Sept FBR target

Pakistan is likely to introduce a mini-budget due to challenges faced by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in achieving its tax collection targets. The FBR is expected to collect Rs 2,654 billion in taxes for the first quarter of the fiscal year 2024-25. Out of this, Rs 1,190 billion is required to be collected in September 2024 alone. The potential shortfall in meeting these targets could influence the IMF to pressure Pakistan into implementing a mini-budget as part of the conditions for finalizing a \$7 billion loan deal. Therefore, the Pakistani government is reportedly considering several measures to enhance tax collection efforts. These include stricter enforcement against tax defaulters and potential amendments to the Finance Bill to address current deficiencies.

Additionally, there are concerns about individuals who fail to file their income tax returns by the September 30 deadline. Such individuals could be classified as late filers, leading to penalties including higher withholding taxes on income, increased vehicle token taxes, and additional taxes on property transactions. The proposed mini-budget could grant tax authorities increased powers to tackle non-compliance more aggressively.

Furthermore, the IMF has expressed concerns about the rising circular debt within Pakistan's power sector. During

recent virtual discussions, Pakistani authorities revealed plans to increase the circular debt by an additional 100 billion rupees in the current fiscal year. This development has added to the IMF's apprehensions and underscores the broader fiscal challenges facing the country. The introduction of a mini-budget is seen as a necessary step to address these fiscal pressures and secure the much-needed loan from the IMF. The government's ability to navigate these challenges effectively will be crucial in stabilizing Pakistan's financial situation and maintaining its relationships with international financial institutions.

## KSE-100 Index breaches 80,000 points level

On Friday (Sept 13), the KSE-100 Index showed a measured response to two major developments: the announcement of the IMF board meeting on September 25 and a 200 basis point cut by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). By mid-session, the index had risen by approximately 0.73%.

The market opened with a surge, spurred by optimism, but as the session progressed, profit-taking set in. Investors had reacted strongly to the confirmation that the IMF Executive Board would review Pakistan's \$7 billion bailout this month. Additionally, the SBP's aggressive 200bps policy rate cut—its largest in over four years—had boosted market sentiment, although the 80,000-point level remained a tough resistance point.

By noon, the KSE-100 Index had reached 79,597.89, gaining 580.28 points or 0.73%. Sectors that could benefit from the rate cut, are automobile assemblers, cement, commercial banks, oil and gas exploration companies, and power generation, and saw some buying activity. Analysts predict the PSX will recover gradually, although concerns remain about the government's ability to meet its tax targets and implement strict reforms, especially given the current political instability. Nevertheless, some experts are optimistic, expecting the index to push past these challenges and see further growth in the coming months. On Thursday (Sept 12), the KSE-100 had also closed higher, gaining 366 points to settle at 79,017.



## Remittances show robust growth in August

Workers' remittances from overseas Pakistanis remained robust in August 2024, reaching nearly \$3 billion, marking a 40.5% increase compared to the same period last year. This surge is largely attributed to the stable exchange rate of the rupee against the dollar and a rise in overseas employment, particularly in the Middle East, enabling more expatriates to send money home.

According to data from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), remittance inflows stood at \$2.94 billion in August 2024, up from \$2.09 billion in August 2023. However, inflows dipped slightly from a \$2.99 billion recorded in July 2024. Overall, remittances saw a 44% increase in the first two months of the current fiscal year (July-August 2024-25), totaling \$5.94 billion compared to the same period last year. The average monthly inflow of almost \$3 billion in the first two months of FY25 surpasses the FY24 full-year monthly average of \$2.68 billion, indicating that this growth trend may continue. According to analysts, the significant growth in remittances is primarily due to increased employment of Pakistanis in Middle Eastern countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE. They downplayed concerns about falling international oil prices negatively affecting remittances. They explained that current oil price declines are a part of market normalization rather than a sharp drop, adding that oil prices below \$70 per barrel are not a major risk to remittance inflows from oil-dependent countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which are key sources of remittances to Pakistan.

If oil prices dip below \$60 per barrel, inflows of remittances would remain stable. If remittances continued at the current pace of about \$3 billion per month, these inflows could hit a new record high of over \$35 billion for the full fiscal year FY25, compared to \$30.25 billion in FY24.

## SBP's decision to cut 200 Basis Points in the discount rate improves corporate sentiment

At its meeting on Sept 12, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to cut the policy rate by 200 bps to 17.5 percent,

effective from September 13, 2024. Both headline and core inflation fell sharply over the past two months. The pace of this disinflation has somewhat exceeded the Committee's earlier expectations, mainly due to the delay in the implementation of planned increases in administered energy prices and favourable movement in global oil and food prices. At the same time, the Committee acknowledged the inherent uncertainty related to these developments, which warranted a cautious monetary policy stance. In this regard, the Committee underscored the importance of the tight monetary policy stance in driving the sustained decline in inflation over the past year.



The MPC noted the following key developments since its last meeting that have implications for the macroeconomic outlook. First, global oil prices have fallen sharply, though they remain volatile. Second, SBP's FX reserves are around \$9.5 billion as of September 6, despite weak official FX inflows and continued debt repayments. Third, secondary market yields of government securities have declined noticeably since the last MPC meeting. Fourth, inflation expectations and confidence of businesses have improved in the latest pulse surveys, while those of consumers have worsened slightly. Lastly, the FBR tax collection during July-August 2024 was lower than the target.

Taking into account these developments as well as the potential risks to the inflation outlook and today's decision, the MPC

assessed the real interest rate to still be adequately positive to bring inflation down to the medium-term target of 5 – 7 percent and help ensure macroeconomic stability. This would be essential to achieve sustainable economic growth over the medium term.

## Real Sector

Recent high-frequency sales indicators reflect a moderate pick-up in economic activity. Domestic cement and POL sales (excluding furnace oil) increased by 8.5 percent and 6.8 percent on m/m basis in August, respectively. Latest business sentiment surveys also support this assessment of a moderate pickup, as

manufacturing firms reported increased capacity utilization during the past couple of waves. At the same time, the MPC noted that the outlook for the agriculture sector has weakened. This is attributed to an expected shortfall in cotton production from the government's target, given the decline in area under cultivation and a substantial drop in cotton arrivals by end-August 2024. On the other hand, the Committee observed that the continued ease in inflationary pressures and the unfolding impact of recent policy rate cuts will support the growth prospects in the industry and services sectors. On balance, therefore, the real GDP growth outlook remained in line with the MPC's earlier assessment of 2.5 – 3.5 percent for FY25.

## External Sector

In July 2024, elevated workers' remittance inflows and a substantial improvement in export earnings offset an increase in imports and helped contain the current account deficit to \$0.2 billion. This robust trend in workers' remittances continued in August as well. The global macroeconomic environment also turned favorable as manifested by the substantial softening of crude oil prices and relative easing of global financial conditions. Going forward, import volumes are expected to increase, in line with the ongoing domestic economic recovery. However, the improvement in the country's terms of trade, mainly driven by softening crude oil prices, is expected to contain the overall trade deficit in FY25.

Also, export earnings are expected to remain stable as the growth in high-value-added textiles is expected to compensate for the likely reduction in rice exports. The MPC observed that these factors, along with robust workers' remittances, are expected to keep the current account deficit within the projected range of 0 – 1 percent of GDP in FY25. This contained current account deficit, along with the realization of inflows planned under the IMF program, will help further strengthen SBP's FX reserves.

## Fiscal sector

During July-August FY25, FBR tax collection grew by 20.5 percent. The MPC noted that the pace of tax collection in the remaining months of FY25 needs to be significantly higher than the current rate to meet the revenue target for the fiscal year. Meanwhile, the fiscal consolidation achieved in the past couple of years has supported monetary policy in bringing inflation down and restoring overall macroeconomic stability. As a result, the gross public debt to GDP ratio has recorded a significant improvement, declining from 75 percent at end-June 2023 to 67.2 percent at end-June 2024. Going forward, the MPC expected that the fiscal consolidation would continue through reforms aimed primarily at broadening of tax base and curtailing PSE losses (particularly by addressing energy sector issues), which would create additional space for social and development spending.

## Money and credit

The broad money (M2) growth decelerated to 14.6 percent as of August 2024, from 16.1 percent in June, primarily due to more than seasonal retirements in private sector credit (PSC) and commodity operations financing. The growth in reserve money, after remaining subdued during FY24, somewhat reversed, but is still lower than its historical trend.

From the liability side, deposits remained the mainstay of M2 growth. The MPC emphasized that the planned official FX inflows will be critical for the government to reduce its reliance on the domestic banking sector, improve the NFA, and create space for lending to the private sector. The MPC also viewed that the currently subdued growth in PSC may pick up with the ease in financial conditions.

## Inflation outlook

Maintaining its downward trajectory, headline inflation eased to single digit to 9.6 percent y/y in August 2024 from 12.6 percent in June 2024 at the time of the last MPC meeting, while core inflation declined to 11.9 percent from 14.1 percent. The Committee assessed that this decline reflected the impact of contained demand, reinforced by improved supplies of major food items, favorable global commodity prices, and delay in upward adjustments in administered energy prices.

At the same time, the MPC assessed the near-term inflation outlook to be susceptible to some risks. Core inflation is still high and consumers' expectations increased further in the latest survey. Also, uncertainty is stemming from the timing and magnitude of adjustments in administered energy prices, the future course of global commodity prices, and any additional taxation measures to meet the shortfall in revenue collection.

On balance, the Committee viewed a possibility of FY25 average inflation falling below the earlier forecast range of 11.5 – 13.5 percent.

However, this assessment is contingent on achieving the targeted fiscal consolidation and timely realization of planned external inflows.

## Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal claims \$27 billion investment by four countries

Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal reaffirmed on Sunday that four friendly nations have committed to investing \$27 billion in Pakistan over the next five years. He outlined the investment plans: Saudi Arabia intends to invest \$5 billion, while the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait will each contribute \$10 billion. Additionally, Azerbaijan has pledged to invest \$2 billion.

Earlier this month, the Planning Minister made similar statements at a press conference in Lahore, explaining that these countries would channel the funds through various mega projects under the Special Investment Facilitation Council.

"It is essential to capitalize on these investments by ensuring policy continuity and reforms," he emphasized.

The minister highlighted the government's commitment to implementing socio-economic and judicial reforms to drive economic progress. He also stressed that no one would be allowed to compromise Pakistan's peace and stability. Criticizing the PTI, Iqbal urged the party to participate constructively in Parliament rather than in street protests.

He further noted that China has expressed readiness for the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which includes the establishment of five new corridors focused on growth, livelihood, innovation, the green economy, and regional inclusive development. Iqbal also mentioned that a Danish company is preparing to invest \$2 billion in Pakistan's port infrastructure. He expressed concern that the PTI was allegedly trying to obstruct these investments, referencing the party's previous actions in undermining the IMF agreement.

Meanwhile, Jahanzeb Khan, the prime minister's adviser on special investments, recently stated that Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern allies could invest up to \$70 billion in various sectors.



## Watch new currency note designs as SBP makes them public



### TTI Report

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is pleased to announce the successful conclusion of the Art Competition for the designs of the new banknote series. The central bank has shared designs of new currency notes with the media and the general public.

We appreciate the local artists and designers who participated in the competition showcasing their creativity and talent in this important endeavor. After a rigorous evaluation process conducted by a committee of esteemed experts from relevant fields, the following designs, as tabulated at Annexure-A have been selected for the award of prizes:

Dr. Shery Abidi Rs.10 NDB031353; Mirza Sufiyan 2nd Rs.10 NDB030720; Haroon Khan 1st Rs.20 NDB031108; Syed Fawad Hussain; Rs.50 NDB031393; Ms. Memoo-na Afzal; Rs.100, Rs.5000 NDB031178; Ms. Hadiya Hassan; Rs.500 NDB030815; Ms. Aynce Zahra; Rs.500 NDB031111; Ms. Noureen Aslam; Rs.1000 NDB0313148; Karim Muhammad; Rs.5000 NDB031801.

The shortlisted designs are suggestive in nature and are being shared with international designers who have been shortlisted to work with SBP and finalize designs for the new banknote series.

The International designers, while drawing inspiration from the local art submissions, will, however, be free to employ their own design expertise and imagination to create final designs for the new banknotes series.

The SBP will ensure that the new banknote series reflects the rich cultural heritage and

progressive vision of our nation, and hopes the final designs fully reflects this collaborative effort. Winners will be awarded prize money, as per earlier announcement, to appreciate their contribution to this important national project.

Further details regarding the award ceremony will be communicated shortly. Once again, we extend our congratulations to the shortlisted participants and express our gratitude to all who contributed to this competition.



# Pakistan's Ambitious Public Sector Overhaul: Rightsizing, Privatization, and the Impact on State-Owned Enterprises



By Romana Afsheen

Pakistan's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have long been a significant financial burden on the national economy. These entities, many of which operate in critical sectors such as transportation, utilities, and agriculture, have struggled with inefficiency, mismanagement, and mounting debts. Over the decades, successive governments have poured billions into keeping these enterprises afloat, often at the expense of other pressing national priorities like infrastructure development, healthcare, and education.

As of recent years, the losses incurred by these SOEs have escalated to unsustainable levels. Reports indicate that the combined losses of Pakistan's SOEs reached nearly Rs 2 trillion (approximately USD 13 billion), contributing to the country's growing fiscal deficit. Among the biggest loss-makers are Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Pakistan Steel Mills, and the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). These entities have been dragging down public finances, compelling the government to take decisive action.

## Comprehensive Rightsizing Initiative: A Landmark Decision

In response to these mounting challenges, the Pakistani government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, has embarked on an ambitious rightsizing plan aimed at restructuring the public sector, particularly SOEs. This initiative, approved during a recent cabinet meeting, represents a fundamental shift in Pakistan's economic strategy, reflecting a renewed focus on efficiency, cost-cutting, and fiscal responsibility.

The decision follows recommendations from a high-level committee that was established to assess the financial viability of SOEs and propose measures for downsizing and restructuring. After a detailed review, the committee identified 33 SOEs that would face immediate closure, privatization, or transfer to other entities. This marks the beginning of a broader, phased approach to rightsizing the public sector,

with additional waves of reform expected in the coming months.

## Targets of the First Phase of Rightsizing

The first phase of the rightsizing plan will see the closure, privatization, or transfer of 33 state-owned enterprises. Among the key targets are:

1. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) – PIA has been a symbol of national pride but has struggled with financial woes for decades. The airline's accumulated debt, totaling Rs 800 billion (approximately USD 5.3 billion), has made it a significant liability for the government.
2. Pakistan Steel Mills – Once a key pillar of Pakistan's industrial base, the steel mill has been shut down since 2015, yet its workforce continues to receive salaries.
3. Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) – WAPDA,



responsible for the generation and distribution of electricity, has been plagued by inefficiency, theft, and circular debt, making it another target for restructuring.

In addition to these major enterprises, nine SOEs have been earmarked for mergers. This consolidation effort aims to streamline operations, reduce administrative costs, and improve the overall efficiency of the public sector.

## A Broader Strategy for Efficiency and Cost Reduction

The rightsizing initiative is part of a larger strategy to reduce the size and cost of the public sector. One of the key components of this strategy is workforce reduction. The government has announced plans to eliminate or declare redundant up to 150,000 positions, equivalent to 60% of the vacant regular posts in SOEs. This move is seen as a necessary step to enhance operational efficiency and reduce payroll expenses, which have ballooned over the years due to overstaffing and political patronage.

To mitigate the impact on affected employees, the government will set up a special committee comprised of retired superior court judges. This committee will have quasi-judicial powers to handle grievances related to the rightsizing process, ensuring that employees are treated fairly and that their concerns are addressed through a formal mechanism.

## Privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA)

One of the most high-profile components of the rightsizing initiative is the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). The national carrier, which was once considered among the finest airlines in the world, has fallen into financial disrepair, primarily due to mismanagement, political interference, and operational inefficiencies.

The privatization of PIA is expected to be completed by October 2024, with a bidding process currently underway. Prospective buyers will acquire a 75% stake in the airline, granting them majority control and

the ability to implement significant reforms. However, to ensure stability during the transition, the government has imposed a three-year moratorium on the resale of the airline. This condition is intended to prevent any speculative trading of PIA's shares and to ensure that the new owners are committed to turning the airline around.

## Operational Challenges for the New Owners

While the privatization of PIA presents an opportunity for financial recovery, the new owners will face significant operational challenges. One of the key requirements set by the government is the expansion of PIA's fleet, with at least 20 new aircraft needed to improve operational efficiency. Additionally, Rs 600 billion of PIA's debt will be transferred to a holding company, while the remaining Rs 200 billion will be absorbed by the new owners. This arrangement is designed to make the airline more attractive to potential buyers by easing the immediate financial burden.

However, concerns remain about the long-term viability of PIA, particularly given the airline's poor safety record, aging fleet, and stiff competition from international carriers. The new owners will need to implement significant operational improvements and financial restructuring to restore PIA's reputation and profitability.

## Social Impact of the Reforms: Protests and Concerns

While the rightsizing initiative promises to deliver significant cost savings and operational improvements, it has sparked widespread concern among employees and low-income citizens who rely on government services. One of the most controversial aspects of the reform agenda is the planned closure of the Utility Stores Corporation (USC), which operates 5,900 stores nationwide and provides essential goods at subsidized rates to 30 million low-income individuals.

The closure of USC has triggered protests in Islamabad, with employees and unions expressing deep concerns about job losses and the elimination of essential services for

the poor. Despite assurances from the government that no employees will be left without jobs, the protests have continued, reflecting deep-seated anxiety about the broader implications of the reforms.

In addition to USC, the government plans to close a total of 16 federal departments, including the Pakistan Engineering Council and the National Fertilizer Corporation. These departments have been given a timeline of one week to three months to complete their shutdowns, further fueling concerns about job security and the potential loss of critical services.

## Removal of Subsidies: A Threat to Social Stability?

Another key element of the government's reform plan is the elimination of a Rs 50 billion subsidy program that has allowed USC to provide essential goods at reduced rates. This subsidy has been a lifeline for millions of low-income families, particularly in the face of rising inflation and economic uncertainty. The removal of the subsidy raises questions about whether private entities will be able to maintain affordable services without government support.

Critics of the reform plan argue that the downsizing efforts disproportionately affect essential services, and that the privatization of USC will result in higher prices for basic goods, further burdening low-income citizens. These concerns are compounded by recent decisions to dismiss Metro service employees without compensation and to halt food programs in Punjab schools, leading to growing unrest in the country.

## Balancing Economic Efficiency with Social Responsibility

As Pakistan moves forward with its rightsizing initiative, the government faces the difficult task of balancing the need for economic efficiency with its social responsibility to protect vulnerable populations. While the reforms are aimed at reducing the fiscal burden of SOEs and improving governmental efficiency, the potential social fallout from job losses, subsidy removals, and privatization efforts cannot be ignored.

To address these concerns, the government will need to ensure that adequate social safety nets are in place to support those affected by the reforms, particularly low-income families who rely on government services like USC. Additionally, the formation of grievance committees and the establishment of a Civil Service Reforms Committee are positive steps toward ensuring that the rightsizing process is carried out fairly and transparently.

## Looking Ahead: The Future of Pakistan's Public Sector

The next few months will be critical in determining the success of Pakistan's ambitious rightsizing initiative. As the first phase of reforms is implemented, the

scrutiny, especially in sectors where state-owned enterprises (SOEs) provide essential public services. Many of the targeted SOEs, such as the Utility Stores Corporation (USC), provide subsidized goods to millions of low-income households. If the privatization or closure of these enterprises leads to service disruptions or increased costs, it could disproportionately impact the most vulnerable segments of the population. To prevent this, the government must ensure that any transition from public to private management is smooth and that service quality is maintained. There will be a need for robust regulatory frameworks to oversee private operators, particularly in sectors where the public depends on affordable goods and services.

Furthermore, public sentiment will play a pivotal role in shaping the broader

initiative reflects the government's commitment to a measured and deliberate restructuring process. This staged implementation will allow the government to assess the impact of the reforms in real time and make necessary adjustments. By initially focusing on a set number of SOEs and ministries, the government can gather data on the outcomes, including cost savings, operational efficiencies, and the social impact, before proceeding with subsequent phases. Ministries such as Commerce, National Food Security, and Science and Technology will be part of later phases, allowing the government to apply lessons learned from the first phase to these key sectors. This approach minimizes the risk of systemic shocks while offering the government time to fine-tune its strategies based on practical experience.

Ultimately, the long-term success of the rightsizing initiative will depend on the government's ability to manage the social and political risks associated with large-scale downsizing. The political landscape in Pakistan is characterized by powerful unions, opposition parties, and civil society organizations, all of which may resist efforts to downsize the public sector if the reforms are seen as disproportionately harming workers or vulnerable populations. The government must anticipate and prepare for potential backlash by offering compensation and support to those affected, ensuring that the restructuring process is fair and inclusive.

A successful rightsizing initiative could lead to a leaner, more efficient public sector that is financially sustainable and better able to deliver essential services. This will not only reduce the fiscal burden on the government but also create space for private sector growth and increased foreign investment. However, if mismanaged, the reforms could result in widespread job losses, deteriorating public services, and social unrest, which would undermine the government's efforts to stabilize the economy and improve governance. Therefore, the coming months will be crucial in determining whether the government can balance economic imperatives with social responsibility, ensuring that the public sector emerges stronger, more cost-effective, and capable of serving the needs of the population.

government will face the challenge of carefully balancing economic efficiency with potential social and political fallout. Monitoring the impact on employees will be crucial, as significant workforce reductions, including job losses and relocations, are likely to trigger both individual and collective grievances. The establishment of the special grievance committee, comprising retired superior court judges, will need to function effectively, offering employees a fair and transparent mechanism to resolve disputes and concerns. However, beyond the legal framework, ensuring adequate social protection measures, such as severance packages, retraining programs, and unemployment benefits, will be critical to mitigating the negative consequences of downsizing.

Service delivery will also come under

acceptance of the rightsizing initiative. Public reaction, especially from affected workers, unions, and low-income communities, will significantly influence the perceived legitimacy of the reforms. The government's communication strategy will be critical in explaining the rationale behind the restructuring, its long-term benefits, and the measures being taken to address any negative short-term effects. The ongoing protests by USC employees, who fear job losses and reduced access to subsidized goods, exemplify the potential for unrest. To avoid widespread social discontent, the government will need to engage with stakeholders, address their concerns through dialogue, and ensure that reforms are implemented in a way that minimizes disruption to essential services.

The phased approach of the rightsizing





# The renewable energy sector is growing at a breakneck pace

*In some places, when renewable energy production outstrips demand, energy prices have even dipped below zero. “This lowers the potential for spot market earnings for producers and highlights the need for complementary investments in flexibility and storage capacity,” the IEA reports.*



## Special Report by TTI

The global renewable energy sector is growing at a breakneck pace as world leaders invest record amounts in expanding clean energy technologies and infrastructure. The International Energy Agency (IEA) projects that energy investment around the world will exceed USD 3 trillion for the first time in 2024. A significant portion of this money is going toward solar photovoltaics, for which investments have eclipsed all other generation technologies combined.

While this explosive growth in renewable energy production capacity is great news for the climate, it could spell short-term trouble for global energy security if mismanaged. Solar and wind energy are variable, meaning that their production levels fluctuate according to the weather, time of day, and the seasons. The inconsistency of production places a significant strain on electric grids designed for a steady and easily manipulated supply of fossil fuels and has created newfound issues with energy markets.

In some places, when renewable energy production outstrips demand, energy prices have even dipped below zero. “This lowers

the potential for spot market earnings for producers and highlights the need for complementary investments in flexibility and storage capacity,” the IEA reports.

Put simply, energy storage is utilized to capture and stockpile excess energy when supply outstrips demand and feed that energy back into the grid when demand outstrips supply. This stabilizes inflows and outflows to the grid while also mitigating market volatility through a process known as arbitrage, among other key energy security services. In other words, energy storage is the backbone of the renewable revolution.

Indeed, energy storage is heating up to be “clean energy’s next trillion-dollar business” according to a recent report from the Economist. Markets for energy storage are growing at a rapid clip in the United States, Europe, and China. Emerging markets are lagging far behind in energy storage investments, but at a global level energy storage is set to be a massive and massively lucrative industry.

Law firm Morgan Lewis describes the storage sector as “the technology that will

cash the checks written by the renewable energy industry,” and goes on to describe that “the global energy storage market will continue its rapid growth, with an estimated 387 gigawatts (GW) of new energy storage capacity expected to be added by 2030—a 15-fold increase in global energy storage capacity compared to the end of 2021.”

It is estimated that to reach zero-emissions targets, the worldwide installed capacity of battery storage will need to grow to more than a terawatt (TW) by 2030, and nearly 5TW by 2050. For context, last year’s capacity totalled less than 200 gigawatts (GW). The writing is on the wall, and battery storage investments are on the rise, set to exceed USD 50 billion in 2024 according to the IEA.

While energy storage investments are booming, there is still some uncertainty about the best energy storage methods. The sector is relatively nascent, and many promising technologies are in the research and development phases. Currently, pumped hydro makes up more than 90% of the globe’s current high-capacity energy storage, but creating new pumped hydro

facilities is costly and requires specific topographical conditions.

Lithium-ion battery storage is rapidly growing and is currently favored as a much less expensive, more flexible option. However, lithium-ion batteries are only capable of short-term energy storage, measured in hours, while true energy security will require the ability to store renewable energy for weeks and months at a time. However, lithium-ion battery technology is improving, and they're currently extremely cheap as the market remains oversaturated even with the boom in storage demand.

As investment in energy storage increases, technologies will keep improving, and as technologies keep improving, investment and employment will increase in turn, creating a positive feedback loop for what is sure to be a fast-growing sector for a long time to come.

## Importance of Clean Energy

Green energy, derived from renewable and sustainable sources like wind, solar, hydro, and geothermal power, is crucial in addressing global environmental, economic, and social challenges. Here are some key reasons why green energy is globally important:

### 1. Combatting Climate Change

- Green energy significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions, which are the primary drivers of climate change. Unlike fossil fuels, renewable energy sources emit little to no carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) during electricity generation, helping to mitigate global warming.

### 2. Reducing Air Pollution

- Fossil fuel combustion releases pollutants like sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter, which contribute to poor air quality and adverse health effects. Green energy sources produce clean electricity, improving air quality and public health.

### 3. Energy Security and Independence

- By diversifying the energy mix with renewables, countries can reduce their dependence on imported fossil fuels,

increasing energy security. This reduces vulnerability to price fluctuations and geopolitical tensions related to energy supply.

### 4. Economic Growth and Job Creation

- The green energy sector is a major driver of economic growth, offering job opportunities in areas such as manufacturing, installation, maintenance, and research. The transition to renewable energy creates new industries and supports sustainable economic development.

### 5. Sustainable Resource Management

- Renewable energy sources, like sunlight, wind, and water, are abundant and naturally replenished. Unlike finite fossil fuels, green energy promotes the responsible use of Earth's resources without depleting them for future generations.

### 6. Technological Innovation and Investment

- The push for green energy fosters technological advancements in energy efficiency, storage, and grid management. This innovation drives down the cost of renewables, making them more accessible and competitive with conventional energy sources.

### 7. Global Environmental Preservation

- Green energy helps preserve ecosystems by reducing the need for destructive practices associated with fossil fuel extraction, such as mining, drilling, and deforestation. It also reduces the impact on water resources, as many renewable energy technologies use minimal water compared to fossil fuel-based power plants.

### 8. International Cooperation and Climate Agreements

- Green energy is central to meeting global climate commitments, such as the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit the rise in global temperature. International cooperation on renewable energy projects helps foster peace and collaboration between nations.

In conclusion, green energy is essential for creating a more sustainable, healthier, and equitable world. It addresses urgent

environmental concerns while promoting long-term economic stability and global energy security.

While green energy offers numerous benefits, its development faces several challenges that can hinder its widespread adoption. Here are some of the key challenges:

### 1. Intermittency and Reliability

- Solar and wind energy are intermittent, meaning they only generate power when the sun is shining or the wind is blowing. This variability can lead to reliability issues, making it difficult to meet energy demand consistently.
- Energy storage technologies like batteries are improving, but large-scale, cost-effective storage solutions are still in development to address this issue.

### 2. High Initial Costs

- Although the costs of renewable energy technologies are declining, the initial capital investment for infrastructure, such as solar panels, wind turbines, and grid upgrades, can be significant.
- Governments and private sectors may face financial barriers when making the switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

### 3. Grid Infrastructure and Integration

- Existing electricity grids were built around centralized fossil fuel plants, and integrating decentralized renewable energy sources requires substantial upgrades.
- Smart grids, energy storage, and grid balancing technologies are necessary to handle the variability of renewable energy and ensure a stable supply.

### 4. Land and Space Requirements

- Renewable energy projects, especially wind farms and solar power plants, require large areas of land or water. This can lead to competition for land use, particularly in densely populated areas or regions with agricultural needs.
- Offshore wind farms help mitigate this issue, but they come with higher costs and logistical challenges.



## 5. Resource Availability and Geographic Limitations

- Certain renewable resources, like wind, sunlight, and geothermal energy, are not evenly distributed. For example, solar energy is more abundant in equatorial regions, while wind energy is more available in coastal or high-altitude areas.
- Some countries or regions may have limited access to specific renewable resources, requiring additional infrastructure to transport energy over long distances.

## 6. Environmental and Ecological Impacts

- While green energy is far more environmentally friendly than fossil fuels, certain projects can still impact ecosystems. For example:
  - Wind turbines can affect bird and bat populations.
  - Hydropower dams can alter river ecosystems and displace communities.
- Careful planning is needed to minimize ecological disruptions.

## 7. Supply Chain and Material Constraints

- The production of renewable energy technologies depends on rare earth minerals like lithium, cobalt, and nickel, which are used in batteries and solar panels. Mining for these materials can lead to environmental damage and human rights concerns.
- Supply chain disruptions or shortages of these materials can slow the expansion of green energy.

## 8. Energy Storage and Technology Development

- Efficient and affordable energy storage solutions are essential for managing the intermittency of renewables. However, current battery technologies are expensive, and scaling them up for widespread use remains a challenge.
- Ongoing research and development are needed to improve storage capacity, longevity, and cost-effectiveness.

## 9. Regulatory and Policy Challenges

- The transition to green energy requires strong government policies, incentives, and regulations to encourage investment. In some countries, fossil fuel subsidies or weak renewable energy policies create barriers to green energy adoption.
- International cooperation is also essential to create a supportive global framework for renewable energy development.

## 10. Public Acceptance and NIMBYism

- Although green energy is broadly supported, specific projects may face opposition from local communities. For instance, "Not In My Backyard" (NIMBY) attitudes can arise against wind turbines, solar farms, or hydro-power installations due to perceived impacts on landscapes, noise, or wildlife.
- Engaging communities early in the planning process is crucial to address concerns and gain public support.

## 11. Skilled Labor and Workforce Transition

- The green energy sector requires a highly skilled workforce. However, there can be a shortage of trained professionals to install, maintain, and operate renewable energy systems.
- Transitioning workers from fossil fuel industries to renewable energy jobs is also a challenge that requires training programs and social support.

## 12. Economic Transition from Fossil Fuels

- The shift to green energy threatens industries and economies heavily reliant on fossil fuels. This can lead to job losses, regional economic declines, and political resistance from vested interests in coal, oil, and natural gas sectors.
- Managing the economic transition, often referred to as a "just transition", requires careful planning to avoid socioeconomic disruptions.

In summary, while green energy is key to a sustainable future, overcoming these

challenges will require coordinated efforts in technology development, policy-making, infrastructure upgrades, and public engagement.

The green energy sector, while vital for addressing environmental issues and reducing reliance on fossil fuels, also carries certain risks that must be considered. Here are some of the key risks associated with the development and expansion of the green energy sector:

### 1. Technological Risks

- **Energy Storage Limitations:** Green energy, particularly solar and wind power, relies heavily on energy storage solutions to mitigate intermittency. Current battery technology has limitations in terms of cost, efficiency, and capacity, posing risks to grid reliability if demand outpaces storage advancements.
- **Grid Integration Challenges:** Integrating renewable energy sources into existing power grids can be complex and costly. The grid must be upgraded to handle decentralized and variable energy inputs, and failure to do so could lead to blackouts or inefficiencies.

### 2. Financial Risks

- **High Upfront Costs:** The initial capital expenditure for setting up renewable energy infrastructure, such as wind farms and solar arrays, is often high. Without proper financial planning or incentives, projects may face delays, underfunding, or failure to materialize.
- **Market Volatility:** Renewable energy markets are still evolving, and rapid changes in technology, policy, or market demand could lead to fluctuations in investment returns. Additionally, the phasing out of subsidies for green energy in certain regions could create financial instability for companies reliant on government support.

### 3. Supply Chain Risks

- **Dependence on Rare Materials:** The production of solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries requires materials like lithium, cobalt, and rare earth metals. These minerals are often sourced from politically unstable regions, leading to potential supply chain disruptions and price volatility.

- **Environmental and Ethical Concerns in Mining:** The extraction of these materials often has negative environmental impacts, including habitat destruction and water contamination. Moreover, labor practices in some mining regions raise ethical concerns about worker exploitation and child labor.

#### 4. Environmental Risks

- **Ecosystem Disruption:** While green energy is far cleaner than fossil fuels, large-scale renewable energy projects can still disrupt local ecosystems. Wind farms can impact bird and bat populations, hydropower dams can alter river ecosystems, and large solar farms can affect desert wildlife.



- **Waste and Decommissioning:** Solar panels and wind turbines have a finite lifespan, and there is a growing concern about how to manage the waste generated by decommissioned equipment. Improper disposal of these materials can result in environmental contamination.

#### 5. Regulatory and Political Risks

- **Policy Uncertainty:** The green energy sector is often reliant on government policies and subsidies. Changes in political leadership or policy priorities can result in reduced funding or regulatory support, destabilizing the sector.
- **Inconsistent Global Regulations:** While some countries strongly support renewable energy, others may lag behind in implementing green energy policies. Inconsistent regulations across regions can complicate international investments and project development.

#### 6. Geopolitical Risks

- **Resource Control:** As renewable energy technology relies on specific minerals, countries that dominate the production of these materials may have significant geopolitical leverage. Conflicts over resource access or political instability in resource-rich regions could disrupt the global supply of critical components.
- **Energy Security:** While green energy can enhance energy independence, countries that lack sufficient renewable resources (such as consistent sunlight or wind) may become dependent on technology imports or energy imports from neighboring countries, raising security concerns.

#### 7. Economic Transition Risks

- **Job Displacement:** The shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy may lead to job losses in traditional energy sectors like coal, oil, and natural gas. If not managed carefully, this could result in significant economic hardship for regions dependent on fossil fuel industries.
- **Infrastructure Costs:** The transition to green energy requires significant infrastructure investments, including upgrading the power grid and building new transmission lines. If these costs are not properly managed, they could lead to financial strain on governments and private companies.

#### 8. Community and Social Risks

- **Public Opposition (NIMBYism):** While most people support green energy in principle, specific projects may face opposition from local communities due to concerns about aesthetics, noise, or

land use. Wind farms, for instance, are sometimes resisted due to their visual impact or potential health concerns (e.g., "wind turbine syndrome").

- **Inequitable Access:** The green energy transition could exacerbate social inequalities if access to clean energy is unevenly distributed. Rural, low-income, or marginalized communities may face barriers to accessing renewable energy sources, leading to energy inequality.

#### 9. Technological Dependency and Cybersecurity

- **Cybersecurity Threats:** As green energy grids become more reliant on digital technologies, smart grids, and automation, they may be vulnerable to cyberattacks. Disruptions in these systems could lead to widespread power outages or compromise critical infrastructure.
- **Technology Lock-in:** The rapid pace of technological advancement could lead to older renewable energy infrastructure becoming obsolete. Investments in outdated technologies may not provide long-term returns, creating financial risks for companies and governments.

#### 10. Market Competition and Overcapacity

- **Oversupply and Price Pressure:** Rapid expansion of renewable energy, particularly in solar and wind, could lead to oversupply in some regions, driving down electricity prices and making it harder for projects to remain profitable. This may discourage future investment in the sector.
- **Global Competition:** The global renewable energy market is highly competitive, with countries like China dominating the manufacturing of solar panels and batteries. Companies in other regions may struggle to compete, leading to economic imbalances and market disruptions.

In summary, while green energy is essential for a sustainable future, the sector faces a range of risks, from financial and technological challenges to environmental and social concerns. Addressing these risks will require careful planning, strong regulatory frameworks, and continued innovation to ensure the green energy transition is both sustainable and resilient.



# US and Pakistan Collaborate to Promote Investment, Showcasing Dynamic Pakistani Firms and Sparking Investor Interest



## TTI Report

The United States and Pakistan continue to strengthen their longstanding partnership through innovative economic initiatives. The recently concluded Pakistan Investment Roadshow, organized by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under its Investment Promotion Activity, exemplified this collaboration by showcasing the potential of Pakistani firms to U.S. investors in New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

The roadshow is a key part of USAID's broader mission to promote economic growth in Pakistan by attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and enhancing bilateral trade between the two nations. The series aimed to raise \$15 million in FDI commitments by connecting 27 curated Pakistani firms with U.S. investors eager to explore emerging markets. These firms, representing sectors such as artificial intelligence, Healthtech, Fintech, Edtech, Agritech, Climatetech, and Software as a

Service, captivated investors with their innovative solutions and potential for scaling globally.

In New York, the Founder's Panel Discussion highlighted Pakistan's tech ecosystem, featuring prominent CEOs and founders discussing technology trends and investment challenges. The San Francisco event, a hub of technology innovation, allowed Pakistani firms in AI, fintech, Healthtech, and more to present their cutting-edge solutions to Silicon Valley investors. In Washington, D.C., the symposium spotlighted trailblazing women entrepreneurs, emphasizing their role in driving social and economic change.

USAID's Assistant Administrator for Asia, Michael Schiffer, emphasized that "We're cultivating deeper, more lasting relationships with private sector partners, from small businesses to large corporations. USAID's 'Investment Promotion in Pakistan' activity is a prime example of this

work—how we work to unlock greater resources dedicated to taking on the world's greatest challenges."

Afsheen Shakoor, USAID's Project Management Specialist, emphasized the significance of the roadshow, stating, "These events have not only spotlighted the remarkable innovation and talent coming from Pakistan but have also paved the way for deeper U.S.-Pakistan economic ties. The strong participation from U.S. investors reaffirms the incredible opportunities for collaboration and growth."

As the roadshows conclude, USAID remains committed to building on the momentum generated by these events, fostering sustainable investment flows, and supporting long-term economic growth in Pakistan. The shared vision of the United States and Pakistan to drive innovation, job creation, and economic progress continues to strengthen the partnership between the two countries.

# President and Prime Minister pay tribute to Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah

*Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in his message, described Jinnah as one of history's most visionary leaders and statesmen. He praised the Quaid for leading the Freedom Movement for the Muslims of the subcontinent and establishing the world's first Islamic ideological state.*



By Harry Javed

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif highlighted the enduring importance of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's "guiding principles" and "vision" for Pakistan's prosperity as the nation commemorated the 76th death anniversary of its founding father on Wednesday (Sept 11). In his message to the nation, President Zardari called on the people to embrace Jinnah's principles of "unity, faith, and discipline," emphasizing their role as a beacon for Pakistan's development.

Similarly, Prime Minister Shehbaz urged the nation to recommit to building a peaceful, just, and equitable Pakistan in line with Jinnah's vision.

On the occasion, top Sindh officials, including Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, and Interior Minister Ziaul Hasan, visited Mazar-e-Quaid in Karachi. They were joined by Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori, Chief Secretary Asif Haider Shah, and other provincial ministers to pay their respects, with the chief minister and governor laying a floral wreath at Jinnah's tomb.

## President and Prime Minister's Messages

In his message, President Zardari expressed confidence that by following

Jinnah's teachings, Pakistan could become strong and prosperous. He paid tribute to Jinnah, emphasizing that the nation owes its existence to the Quaid's relentless efforts for the creation of a homeland where Muslims could live with dignity and exercise their political, cultural, and religious rights.

"Quaid-e-Azam was a visionary leader who united the Muslims of India under one banner," Zardari said. "His vision for Pakistan was inherently democratic, based on a state where all citizens, regardless of religion, would be equal before the law."

He further highlighted that Jinnah's struggle laid the foundation for Pakistan's democratic system, which continues to inspire the country's pursuit of parliamentary democracy and communal harmony. Zardari also noted Jinnah's vision for a Pakistan founded on Islamic principles of democracy and socio-economic justice.

"Through his sheer determination, hard work, and advocacy, the partition of India became a reality. Today, we honor his efforts and recommit ourselves to upholding the values and ideals he championed," Zardari added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in his message, described Jinnah as one of history's most visionary leaders and statesmen. He praised the Quaid for

leading the Freedom Movement for the Muslims of the subcontinent and establishing the world's first Islamic ideological state.

"The Freedom Movement stands as a testament to Jinnah's political acumen and leadership, reflecting his commitment to democracy and the rule of law," Shehbaz stated.

The prime minister emphasized Jinnah's commitment to democracy, social justice, and equality, which laid the groundwork for a nation where every citizen could thrive despite cultural differences. He also highlighted Jinnah's focus on unity and faith, which continues to resonate within Pakistani society, reminding citizens that the country's strength lies in its diversity and inclusiveness.

As the nation honors Jinnah's legacy, Shehbaz stressed the importance of addressing contemporary challenges with the same determined spirit. He called on Pakistanis to work towards a future that reflects Jinnah's ideals of peace, justice, and opportunity for all.

"Let us renew our pledge to build a Pakistan that embodies the vision of our Founding Father — a nation where peace prevails, justice is served, and every citizen has the opportunity to flourish," the prime minister concluded.



## Defence and Martyrs Day Commemorated In Ankara



### TTI News

ANKARA: Pakistan's Defence and Martyrs Day was commemorated in Ankara, paying tribute and homage to the indomitable courage of the armed forces and martyrs who sacrificed their lives in successfully defending the motherland from threats to Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and stability. Turkish Minister of Trade H.E Prof. Dr Omer Bolat graced the occasion as chief guest and Commander Turkish General Staff (TGS) General Metin Gurak as guest of honour. Among other guests were Former Minister for Interior Mr. Efkani Ala, Member Parliament Dr. Hasan Sert, Governor Ankara Vasip Sahin, Former Chairman SSB Prof. Dr Ismail Demir, Turkish ambassador designate to Pakistan Irfan Neziroglu, Deputy Commerce Minister Mustafa Tuzcu, Deputy Chief of TGS General Kemal Yeni, high ranking Turkish civil and military officials, ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, defence & military Attaches, media persons and members of Pakistani community.

In his remarks, Turkish Minister of Trade H.E Prof. Dr Omer Bolat appreciated exemplary and historic bilateral relations, particularly flourishing defence ties and excellent cooperation between the armed forces of Pakistan and Türkiye. Referring to

Ambassador Junaid as his special friend, Minister Bolat appreciated his role in further strengthening of bilateral ties and economic cooperation between the brotherly countries. Minister Bolat highlighted that trade volume between Pakistan and Türkiye has increased by 42% in the first eight months of the year and both countries are committed to reaching the 5 billion USD trade target set by the leadership,

While highlighting the strategic Pakistan Türkiye partnership, Commander Turkish General Staff (TGS), General Metin Gurak paid tribute to the sacrifices of the martyrs and valour of Pakistan Armed Forces. He stated that mutual sharing of experiences and expertise in the defence industry between Pakistan and Türkiye would strengthen the defence of both countries and is also important for the regional and global peace and security.

Ambassador Dr. Yousaf Junaid began his speech with prayers for the Turkish Gendarmerie soldiers, who lost their lives in a road accident in Tunceli today. Highlighting the significance of September 6th, Ambassador Dr. Yousaf Junaid stated that over the past 77 years, three major wars were imposed on Pakistan, apart from several skirmishes and numerous rounds of

unprovoked clashes. Our perseverance has left a lesson that peace-loving, brave and self-respecting nations, determined to sacrifice lives for their country could not be defeated by force and belligerence.

Ambassador Junaid reiterated that Pakistan believes in dialogue over conflict and in cooperation over confrontation. Pakistan's aim is to create an environment, where all nations can prosper but unfortunately the non-resolution of Jammu and Kashmir is hampering the pace of positive development in the region. Resolution of the Kashmir dispute according to United Nations Security Council resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmir people is vital for regional peace and security, he added. Ambassador thanked the Turkish nation for standing with Pakistan and Pakistani people through thick and thin.

Pakistani nation commemorates Defence Day on 6th September each year to honour the sacrifices of Pakistan's valiant armed forces, their professionalism, dedication and devotion with which they have served the nation. The 1965 war stands out in Pakistani history as a symbol of unwavering national resolve, courage, strong will and unmatched spirit of sacrifice.







# FIFA's anti-racism crossed-arms gesture to discourage racism in matches

*FIFA has been actively fighting racial abuse and discrimination in football for years. In 2022, the organization launched the "No Discrimination" campaign at the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, which included displaying strong, clear messages against discrimination on stadium screens and pitch-side advertising boards.*



By J. Choudhry

FIFA has introduced a "crossed arms" gesture to combat racism during football matches, following its unanimous approval at the 74th FIFA Congress in Bangkok, Thailand, on May 17, 2024. This global gesture, signaling racist abuse, will be incorporated into football protocol starting with the FIFA Under-20 Women's World Cup in Colombia in 2024, FIFA announced on Friday.

The "No Racism" gesture, aimed at empowering players, referees, and team officials, will be integrated into the existing three-step procedure to address racist incidents during matches.

According to FIFA, when a player crosses their arms at the wrists, it will signal to the referee that they are experiencing racist abuse. The referee will then initiate the three-step process: stopping the match initially, suspending it if the abuse persists, and ultimately abandoning the game if the situation does not improve. FIFA

emphasized that this gesture will be applied at all its competitions as part of its zero-tolerance policy against discrimination.

"Fighting racism requires a united effort," said FIFA President Gianni Infantino. "Introducing the 'No Racism' gesture at the FIFA Under-20 Women's World Cup 2024 in Colombia is a crucial first step in empowering players worldwide. We anticipate this gesture being implemented globally to great effect," he added, noting that all 211 FIFA member associations had unanimously supported the initiative at the FIFA Congress.

Infantino also expressed gratitude to FIFA members for their "determination and efforts" in combating racism in football. He stressed the importance of working with governments and law enforcement to hold those responsible for racism accountable, stating, "We are now taking decisive and unequivocal action."

FIFA has been actively fighting racial abuse and discrimination in football for years. In 2022, the organization launched the "No Discrimination" campaign at the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, which included displaying strong, clear messages against discrimination on stadium screens and pitch-side advertising boards.

## FIFA wants 211 national football federations to make racist abuse a disciplinary offense

FIFA is urging all 211 national football federations to make racist abuse a disciplinary offense and is introducing a new crossed-hands gesture for players to signal such abuse to referees.

The global soccer body outlined its new strategy on Thursday after months of consultations with players affected by racism, including Real Madrid star Vinícius Júnior. The

crossed-hands gesture, which was first used publicly by U.S. athlete Raven Saunders at the Tokyo 2021 Olympics to symbolize solidarity among oppressed people, is now being encouraged by FIFA as a way for players to alert referees to racial abuse. Referees, in turn, would also cross their hands to show they are taking action.

However, the move received lukewarm support from Kick It Out, a British anti-racism group, which stated that instead of introducing new gestures, FIFA should focus on empowering players and teams to leave the pitch when necessary.



As part of FIFA's five-pillar approach to combat discrimination, teams whose fans or players commit racial abuse could face penalties, including forfeiting games, typically recorded as a 3-0 loss. These measures will be presented to FIFA's member federations at their annual meeting in Bangkok on Friday. FIFA President Gianni Infantino had promised earlier this year to address racism on a global scale, following discussions with players like Vinicius Júnior, who has been repeatedly subjected to racial abuse by fans in Spanish stadiums. In a tearful press conference in March, the Brazilian star spoke about the toll the abuse had taken on him.

"The time has come for football to unite and commit globally to addressing racism in the game," FIFA stated in a letter to its federations. FIFA also plans to establish a panel of players to monitor and advise on the implementation of these new measures worldwide.

Football has long struggled with racism in stadiums, with previous efforts including on-field responses and post-match

disciplinary actions. However, tougher sanctions, such as match forfeits, points deductions, or disqualification, have been deemed difficult to enforce and carry the risk of provoking further incidents. Some football authorities, particularly in Italy and Spain, have denied the extent of racism in their leagues. In some cases, investigations into allegations of racial abuse have been dropped due to insufficient evidence, leaving Black players who reported the abuse without recourse. Players who attempted to leave the field after facing racial abuse have even been penalized with yellow cards.

FIFA now wants referees to use the crossed-hands gesture to initiate a three-step process when racial or discriminatory abuse occurs. This process involves pausing the game to broadcast warnings in the stadium, removing the teams from the field if the abuse persists, and ultimately abandoning the game if necessary. Kick It Out acknowledged FIFA's intentions but noted that the three-step process has "failed to protect players for years."

FIFA is calling for this three-step procedure to be mandatory across all federations. Additionally, it is urging national federations to lobby their governments to criminalize racism, prosecute offenders, and promote anti-racism education in schools.

The crossed-hands gesture has a history in sports. Before Raven Saunders used it at the Tokyo Olympics, Ethiopian marathoner Feyisa Lilesa famously crossed his wrists above his head in protest against government oppression at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Saunders initially faced scrutiny from the International Olympic Committee for

making the gesture, which also celebrated diversity, but the investigation was paused following her mother's death.

Anti-racism campaigners have been actively working as concerns over racism, xenophobia, and far-right activity in and around football stadiums have escalated. In Italy, Lazio Rome's notorious fans racially taunted opposition players during their match against Dinamo Bucharest and targeted Senegalese international Dame N'Doye with racist abuse during a friendly against Panathinaikos. Newcastle United supporters directed Islamophobic chants at Middlesbrough's Egyptian forward Mido, accusing him of being a terrorist and shouting, "Mido, he's got a bomb, you know." In Hungary, former national coach Kalman Meszoly made a racist remark about African players in Hungarian clubs, saying they "have barely come down from the trees." Meanwhile, Croatian fans formed a fascist Ustase symbol during a match in Bosnia and Herzegovina, evoking the movement responsible for wartime atrocities against Serbs, Jews, and Roma during WWII. Additional reports of racist incidents have emerged from Austria, Germany, Lithuania, Montenegro, Russia, Scotland, Serbia, and Slovakia.

It's unclear whether these reports are increasing due to heightened media and public awareness or a growing far-right influence. Political fearmongering over immigration has worsened the situation. Over the past decade, awareness of racism in football has grown significantly, and many clubs, national associations, and international federations like UEFA and FIFA have taken disciplinary action against offenders.

In 1999, the Football Against Racism in Europe (FARE) network was formed by supporter groups, anti-racism NGOs, and ethnic community organizations from 14 European countries. At the time, racism inside football stadiums was rampant, and the issue was often ignored by football associations and public institutions. FARE was established to bring the problem to light, supporting grassroots organizations and elevating the voices of regular football fans. Today, FARE works with clubs, national associations, player unions, and public institutions across Europe to combat racism, homophobia, and sexism in



football. Over 300 grassroots organizations from 37 countries are now connected to the FARE network, coordinated by the Vienna Institute for Development and Cooperation (VIDC).

FARE became part of UEFA's Corporate Social Responsibility portfolio in 2001, receiving financial support for its projects and campaigns. Since then, UEFA has taken a proactive stance against racism, supporting FARE's 10-Point Plan of Action and launching initiatives to back anti-racism projects across its 53 national member associations.

One of FARE's key campaigns is the annual Action Week against Racism and Discrimination, held in October. This event raises awareness about racism in football and promotes a united front to combat it. Last year's Action Week saw over 700 events in 37 countries, with support from top football stars and widespread participation in campaigns like "Unite Against Racism" by all 32 UEFA Champions League teams. In Germany alone, 750,000 "Show Racism the Red Card" cards were distributed to fans.

FARE also runs other transnational projects, such as the Mondiali Antirazzisti, an annual anti-racism World Cup for fans and minorities in Italy, and programs in Eastern Europe to challenge racism, nationalism, and xenophobia. They also focus on

integrating Roma communities in Slovakia through football.

While racism in football is often seen as a European issue, it is a global problem. Countries such as Australia, Brazil, Israel, and Mexico have also reported incidents of racial abuse. Recognizing the global nature of the issue, FIFA partnered with FARE in 2006 to address racism worldwide. FARE collaborated with FIFA during the 2006 World Cup in Germany and surveyed all 207 FIFA member associations. FIFA also introduced stricter punishments for racist abuse, including Article 58 of its disciplinary code, which applies to all registered football clubs and players worldwide.

FARE's efforts go beyond addressing overt racism in stadiums. They also tackle institutionalized racism and the exclusion of ethnic minorities and migrants from administrative roles in football. Across Europe, minorities are underrepresented in stadiums, in football administration, and sometimes even in professional leagues. In countries like Italy, Spain, and Austria, restrictions on the number of foreign players on amateur football teams highlight ongoing discrimination.

FARE has also addressed the unequal football relations between Europe and Africa, a remnant of Europe's colonial past. Many young African players are "exported"

to Europe by unscrupulous agents, often ending up as illegal immigrants. FARE believes football has the power to unite communities and help integrate those affected by social exclusion. Their goal is to bring minorities closer to the game by ensuring their representation at all levels of football, from the playing field to administrative roles.

Evaluating the success of the anti-racism movement in football, it's clear that initiatives like FARE have made racism more visible across Europe. Increased media coverage and disciplinary actions reflect a growing awareness of the issue. FARE's work has connected diverse fan groups with ethnic and migrant organizations, pushing football governing bodies to take stronger stands against racism. They have also raised awareness of homophobia in football. However, challenges remain, with racial abuse and exclusion continuing both on and off the pitch.

Going forward, FARE's collaboration with UEFA, FIFA, and EU institutions will focus on eradicating racism in stadiums and promoting diversity within football's leadership. The ultimate goal is to see the same diversity in football's boardrooms as on the field. With a collective effort, international football organizations and other stakeholders can evolve a mechanism to overpower racial abuses in the stadiums and grounds during matches.





# Shujahat Jadoon: A Blind Athlete Sets a Record in the Karakoram Ultra-Khaplu League



By J. Choudhry

In what seems like an extraordinary feat, Shujahat Ali Jadoon, a blind young man, has made history by setting a record in the Karakoram Ultra-Khaplu League. Jadoon completed a grueling 21.1-kilometer marathon on the rugged mountainous trails of Khaplu Valley in Gilgit-Baltistan on 07th September 2024. This marks the first time a blind athlete has not only participated in the Karakoram Ultra but also finished a half marathon in under three hours, leaving the participants and organizers in awe.

The question on everyone's mind is: how did Shujaat Ali Jadoon achieve this remarkable milestone? Rabia Ali, a former medalist of the marathon and host of The Truth International's (TTI) YouTube channel, shared the captivating story. TTI, an Islamabad-based media outlet, partnered with the Karakoram Ultra, and Rabia Ali herself traveled from Islamabad to Khaplu Valley for the marathon held from September 5-8, 2024.

According to Rabia, this was the first time a blind athlete dared to participate in such a challenging event. Jadoon underwent extensive training before the race to prepare for the daunting task. Jadoon is not new to sports; he is an accomplished blind cricketer who plays at the Abbottabad Division level. Despite his visual impairment, he has an extraordinary ability to navigate his surroundings, especially in sports.

A Dubai-based Pakistani, a dedicated trainer accompanied Jadoon during his preparation, helping him acclimate to the difficult terrain of the marathon course. After rigorous training, Jadoon was finally given the green light to compete in the Karakoram Ultra-Khaplu League. Allowing a blind athlete to compete in such a demanding race posed significant challenges for the organizers, but through determination and hard work, they succeeded in making Jadoon's dream a reality. He was approved to run the half marathon (21.1 kilometers) as it was his first major running event.

Despite numerous setbacks and discouragements throughout his journey in sports, and in life, Jadoon persevered. The Karakoram Ultra organizers took up the challenge to help him succeed, and their efforts paid off spectacularly when Jadoon completed the marathon in less than three hours. His next goal? To participate in an international marathon. Rabia Ali revealed that the organizers are working to enable Jadoon's participation in the ADNOC Abu Dhabi Marathon on 14th December 2024.

We urge the concerned authorities to officially recognize Jadoon's achievement as Pakistan's National Half Marathon Record by a Visually Impaired Person and support him so he can represent Pakistan at international endurance events.

## Laudable role of Local Administration

Organizers of the Karakoram Ultra lauded the role of the local administration saying their help made the marathon successful.



All the administrators of the area deserve appreciation for enabling Endure Sports and the participants of the marathon to achieve their goals.

## Karakoram Ultra 2025

The next edition of the Karakoram Ultra will take place in January 2025 in Khaplu Valley, but in a different pattern, marking the second marathon organized by Endure Sports. According to Rabia Ali, The organizers aim to expand the event by inviting international athletes to compete.

## About the Karakoram Ultra (Khaplu League)

(Karakoram Ultra, an initiative of Endure Sports (Pvt) Limited <https://endure.pk>, is dedicated to showing the Softer-Image of Pakistan to the world by promoting Eco-Tourism, Community Development, and preserving nature by plantation at high altitudes through endurance sports. Khaplu League is the pioneering event of many future endeavors that are under vigorous planning by the organizers.)

Endure Sports held a four-day Karakoram Ultra (Khaplu League) from 5-8 September in Khaplu Valley. Khaplu League is Pakistan's first high-altitude trail running series. The event was set in Thalay Broq, at an altitude of 3,544 meters, within the scenic Khaplu Valley in Ghanche District, Gilgit-Baltistan. The Khaplu League features a 55.4-kilometer ultra-trail marathon and a 21.1-kilometer half-trail marathon, open to both male and female participants. To support local athletes, Endure Sports offered 20 free entries to participants from Gilgit-Baltistan, along with prizes for all finishers.

Meanwhile, in line with its commitment to environmental conservation, the organization plans to plant 200 fruit trees in 22 villages across Khaplu Valley and 1,000 Safeda plants under the glacier above the valley. The Khaplu League served as a pioneering event and a pilot run, setting the stage for future high-altitude trail running competitions in Pakistan. With the event, Endure Sports invites all running clubs and communities across the nation to participate, offering five free entries per club, and ensuring that participants have access to race support stations every 10 to 12 kilometers.

Through this groundbreaking event, Endure Sports continues its mission to bring together sports, unity, and environmental conservation, making a meaningful impact on both the sporting community and the environment in Pakistan.

## TTI becomes Media Partner of Endure Sports

Earlier, Endure Sports announced an exciting media partnership with The Truth International (TTI). The Truth International is an Islamabad-based media organization, running a website, a fortnightly magazine, a YouTube channel, and a Research

that provide opportunities for both aspiring and professional athletes. By fostering exceptional talent in endurance sports, Endure Sports aims to elevate the standard of these disciplines and seeks partnerships with sponsors to further enhance the quality and impact of its initiatives.

Central to Endure Sports' objectives is the promotion of sports in Pakistan, particularly through the provision of free coaching in long-distance endurance running for individuals of all age groups. The agency is dedicated to fostering unity by embracing diversity, ensuring that no discrimination occurs based on caste, creed, gender, color,



Department. The collaboration is set to offer enhanced insights and updates, furthering Endure Sports' mission to promote eco-friendly tourism, environmental protection, and community development through endurance sports.

Meanwhile, audiences were allowed to conduct exclusive interviews, behind-the-scenes content, special reports, and the opportunity to follow along as Endure Sports embarked on this remarkable journey.

## About Endure Sports (Pvt)

Endure Sports (PVT) Limited is recognized as a premier sports agency committed to the promotion of high-altitude trail running events throughout Pakistan. The organization's mission is to inspire athletes across the nation by hosting high-caliber events

religion, sect, or political affiliation. The "Fit, Clean, and Green Pakistan" initiative spearheaded by Endure Sports raises awareness on environmental hygiene, glacier preservation, drug abuse prevention, tree plantation, pollution control, and general health, contributing to the vision of a healthier and more environmentally conscious nation.

The mission of Endure Sports also includes elevating Pakistan's image on the global stage by representing the country at international sporting events and organizing competitions within Pakistan that meet international standards. Additionally, the agency is deeply invested in promoting eco-tourism, aiming to showcase Pakistan's rich cultural and natural heritage. A key focus is on engaging local communities, encouraging them to participate in sports and social causes that benefit society at large.



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