

Positive Post

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



Greenwich University
Pakistan - Mauritius

June in History

June 3, 1947: British Government decides to bifurcate British India, into two sovereign states – India and Pakistan

June 25, 1958: President Rule is proclaimed in East Pakistan.

June 14, 1961: Government takes over news agency, Associated Press of Pakistan (APP).

June 1, 1962: Soviet Union awards Lenin Prize to Faiz Ahmed Faiz for his literary contribution.

June 7, 1962: SUPARCO launches Pakistan's first weather rocket, Rebbar – I from Sonmiani.

June 8, 1962: National Assembly elected and begins its first session. Ayub Khan takes oath of first President of Pakistan under new constitution.

June 30, 1965: Pakistan and India sign accord on Rann of Kutch.

June 11, 1978: Altaf Hussain forms All Pakistan Muhajir Students Organization (APMSO).

June 21, 1980: Government starts collecting Zakat.

June 6, 1986: President Zia lays foundation stone of Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital in Rawalpindi.

June 15, 1988: President General Zia promulgates Shariat Ordinance making Sharia supreme law of the land.

June 18, 2017: Pakistan wins 2017 ICC Champions Trophy defeating India in the finals.

Pakistan's standing in the global rankings

Overview

Pakistan observed a slight improvement in the overall international rankings in 2018 covering socio-economic and political outcomes of the country. Several elements complemented the prospects including successful democratic transition, efficient counter-terrorism measures leading to enhanced peace and security, and foreign direct investment inflows under CPEC, among others. Albeit, decoupling economic growth from human development suggests that the country needs to enhance its scores in health, education and standard of living by ensuring political will, equitable financing and efficient governance to ensure parallel growth for marginalized segments as well. Civil and political liberties must grow hand in hand to ensure a conducive environment for democratic dialogue and accountability which ultimately supports its nation building process.

DEMOCRACY INDEX

Pakistan ranked 112th out of 167 countries in the Democracy Index scoring 4.17 out of 10 in 2018 compared to 4.26 in 2017.

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

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

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Pakistan ranked 150th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index scoring 0.562 out of 1.000 in 2018 compared to 0.560 out of 1.000 in 2017.

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

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

PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

Pakistan ranked 139th out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index scoring 43.24 out of 100 in 2018 compared to 43.55 in 2017.

Index from 0 (most press freedom) to 100 (least press freedom)

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

TERRORISM INDEX

Pakistan ranked 5th out of 163 countries in the Terrorism Index scoring 8.18 out of 10 in 2018 compared to 8.40 in 2017.

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

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

ECONOMIC FREEDOM INDEX

Pakistan ranked 131st out of 180 countries in the Economic Freedom Index scoring 54.4 out of 100 in 2018 compared to 52.8 out of 100 in 2017.

Index from 0 (repressed) to 100 (free)

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

Positive Post is a strategic effort to project achievement and contributions of Pakistan. While showcasing Greenwich University's cultural diplomacy initiatives, it also encapsulates a compilation of different developments complementing Pakistan's socio-cultural, economic and Political outcomes.

WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19

There have been more than 435,000 deaths and, in the Americas, Africa and South Asia; cases are still rapidly rising.

However, there are green shoots of hope, which show that together through global solidarity, humanity can overcome this pandemic.

We now have good examples of many countries that have shown how to effectively suppress the virus with a combination of testing, tracing, and quarantining patients and caring for those that get sick.

Lab capacity has been dramatically enhanced across the world to boost COVID-19 testing, which is critical for identifying where the virus is and informing government actions.

New mega hubs have been established that are now key to the distribution of personal protective equipment, which includes millions of masks, goggles, aprons and gloves; as well as other medical supplies.

Tech companies have developed applications that can assist with the critical task of contact tracing.

And there has been an enormous effort to accelerate the science around the pandemic.

Early on in the outbreak; on 11 February, WHO convened a Research and Innovation Forum on COVID-19, where hundreds of researchers came together from across the world with the aim of quickly developing quality diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines.

One of the key priorities identified was for the world to focus on accelerating research around treating patients with COVID-19. Specifically, researchers agreed to investigate existing drugs with potential, including steroids.

WHO also developed a core pro-

col, which has been adapted and used by researchers around the world.

And yesterday, there was the welcome news of positive initial results from the RECOVERY trial in the United Kingdom.

Dexamethasone, a common steroid, has been shown to have a beneficial effect on those patients severely ill with COVID-19.

According to the early findings shared with WHO, for patients on oxygen alone the treatment was shown to reduce mortality by about one fifth.

And for patients requiring a ventilator, mortality was reduced by about one third.

However, dexamethasone was shown to not have a beneficial effect for those with milder disease, who did not need respiratory support.

This is very welcome news for those patients with severe illness, these drugs should only be used under close clinical supervision.

We need more therapeutics that can be used to tackle the virus, including those with milder symptoms.

WHO has now started to coordinate a meta-analysis pooling data from several clinical trials to increase our overall understanding of this intervention.

And, we will update our clinical guidance to reflect how and when dexamethasone should be used to treat COVID-19.

I want to thank the United Kingdom government, the University of Oxford, and the many hospitals, researchers, patients and families who have contributed to this scientific breakthrough.

WHO will continue to work with all partners to develop other therapeutics and vaccines for COVID-



19, including through the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator.

Over the coming weeks and months, we hope there will be more treatments that improve patient outcomes and save lives. While we are searching for COVID-19 treatments we must continue strong efforts to prevent as many infections as possible by finding, isolating, testing and caring for every case; and tracing and quarantining every contact.

COVID-19 is affecting the whole world but it's important to remember that for the most vulnerable communities, this is just one of many threats they face.

We have consistently stressed the importance of ensuring essential health services continue, including routine vaccination and services for malaria, TB and HIV.

Today, I want to touch on Neglected Tropical Diseases, an issue I care deeply about.

NTDs are a group of 20 diseases including elephantiasis, sleeping sickness, leprosy, trachoma and intestinal worms that collectively wreak havoc on the poorest and most marginalized communities.

These diseases disfigure, disable and can kill, and they strike hardest in places of poverty and in remote areas where access to quality health services is extremely limited.

WHO and partners have developed a new roadmap, which moves away from single disease programmes to integrated approaches to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of neglected tropical diseases, as part of an overall movement toward universal health coverage.

The NTD roadmap puts greater ownership on national and local governments to drive action.

Like with COVID-19, it calls for greater collaboration between governments, academia, civil society and the private sector in order to boost innovation and access to health technologies.

I have seen first hand the courage of people who are living with NTDS, which is why I call on countries not to forget about the most vulnerable.

If there are no more cases in the next seven days, the Government of DRC will be able to declare the outbreak over.

The lessons learned and experience gained by Congolese health workers are now being applied to inform the Ebola outbreak response in the West of the DRC, as well as broader lessons on testing and contact tracing, which are directly transferable for tackling COVID-19.

Courtesy: World Health Organization

Quetta-Karachi highway plan shelved

Balochistan Finance Minister Zahoor Ahmed Buledi has said the federal government has shelved plans to build the Quetta-Karachi highway from the federal PSDP for the new financial year.

Buledi said Balochistan could not develop without the help of the federal government. He complained that this year, the least developed province of the country will get Rs30 billion less in terms of the NFC while the plan for construction of the Quetta-Karachi highway has also been dropped from the federal PSDP.

During a post-budget briefing in Quetta on Monday, Buledi said Balochistan's total budget for the current financial year is Rs465 billion, compared to Rs419 billion presented last year.



At present, 56 old and 900 new development schemes have been added in the PSDP.

“The Balochistan government has given tax exemptions in various sectors, including health and energy,”

Buledi said.

He added that 1,000 people have benefited under the Balochistan Endowment Fund while Rs3 billion has been invested in socio-economic packages.

The finance minister also said that a Rs1 billion health insurance scheme has been rolled out for government employees and another Rs560 million has been set aside for locust eradication.

Meanwhile, it has also been decided to set up border markets at 13 places to enhance border trade in Balochistan.

Buledi said the health budget has been increased by 40% while 38 Intermediate colleges have been refurbished. Meanwhile, 75% funds have been released for last year's development schemes.

Buledi said the budget deficit will be covered by improving the tax system. A new financial act will also be proposed for Balochistan.

Courtesy:

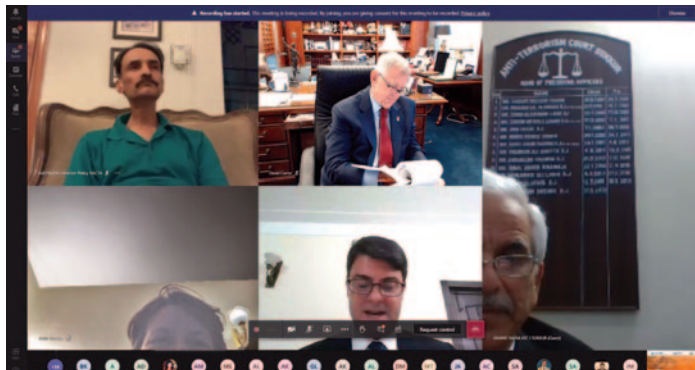
Tailoring South Asia Regional Toolkit for Judges in Pakistan

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in collaboration with the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), Sindh Judicial Academy (SJA) organized a virtual meeting for anti-terrorism judges from Sindh, Pakistan, on the South Asia Regional Toolkit for Judges: Supporting the Development of National Bench Books for the Effective Adjudication of Terrorism Cases.

The regional toolkit was developed by the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) with the active support and engagement of judges from all South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, including Pakistan. It elaborates and builds on relevant Security Council resolutions and international instruments on counter-terrorism.

It also provides practice-oriented guidance to judges and judicial training academies of SAARC countries on the foundations for effective adjudication, judicial management of proceedings and international cooperation in terrorism matters in the South-Asian region.

Recognizing that law enforcement



and criminal justice agencies in Pakistan face unique challenges and evolving threats posed by terrorism and its financing, UNODC is working in close partnership with stakeholders in the country under “Pakistan's Action to Counter Terrorism” (PACT) project, to deliver technical assistance to the police, prosecution and judiciary in the Province of Sindh to strengthen their collective response to preventing and countering terrorism. This project receives financial support of the European Union.

One of the key activities under the project involves customizing this toolkit in close consultation with the Sindh Judicial Academy for the anti-terrorism judges of Pakistan. During this initial online consulta-

tion meeting attended by over 20 anti-terrorism judges from Sindh, two United States District Court judges along with a magistrate from Australia participated as subject-matter experts.

“Pakistan has come a long way in the last decade in its criminal justice system's response to terrorism. Pakistan-UNODC cooperation is producing results through targeted training and tools. One such tool is “The South Asia Regional Toolkit”, customized for Judges in Pakistan, which will serve as a reference guide tailored towards meeting the needs of Judges in the country”, said Masood Karimipour, Chief of Terrorism Prevention Branch, UNODC. NACTA member Asif Paracha expressed appreciation for the techni-

cal assistance being delivered by UNODC under the framework of PACT.

The Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Anne Marchal from the European Union stressed the important role which judiciary plays in the criminal justice system especially in terrorism cases for upholding rule of law and human rights. She acknowledged the challenges judges encounter during the adjudication process and highlighted that the toolkit gives us an opportunity to learn from the knowledge and experiences of our fellow colleagues from this region for incorporating good practices during the proceedings.

Under the framework of PACT Sindh, UNODC is well-positioned to recognize the judiciary's needs for specialized national tools, specifically designed to address their unique and emerging requirements, said Jeremy Milsom, UNODC Country Representative. This initiative would also complement the Government of Pakistan and Sindh's efforts under the National Action Plan and the Provincial Rule of Law Roadmap initiatives.

Courtesy:unodc.org

Cement price likely to reduce by Rs14.5 per bag



The price of a 50-kilogramme (kg) cement bag is expected to fall by Rs14.5, as the government has slashed Federal Excise Duty (FED) on cement from Rs2 per kg to Rs1.75 per kg.

According to reports, the 0.25 per kg reduction will amount to Rs12.5 for a 50kg cement bag, which will decrease the price by another Rs2 due to savings on General Sales Tax (GST), bringing the total savings to Rs14.5.

Previously, Rs100 FED was being charged on a 50kg cement bag.

“We are happy that the government has reduced the excise duty. But we are disappointed that it did not remove it altogether. There is no justification for excise duty on cement. We hope the government will remove it as soon as possible,” Azam Faruque, Chairman of the All Pakistan Cement Manufacturers Association (APCMA), remarked

Courtesy:profit.pakistantoday.com.pk

SIUT opening dialysis unit in Larkana mid-August



It will be an extended part of the SIUT Chablani Medical Centre in Sukkur. Once this unit is operational, it is expected that it will be able to carry out 100,000 dialysis sessions to 950 patients every year. A water purification system has been installed and will be ready for use in a week. The local government’s drainage system project is also in its final stages.

Twelve dialysis machines have already reached Larkana and will be used for trial testing for two weeks. Patient monitors required for the high dependency unit are in the process of being installed while the radiology and pathology facilities

are almost completed.

According to the press release, the unit will be a functional branch of SIUT Sukkur.

The SIUT is the country’s largest public sector dialysis network which caters to 61% of Sindh’s dialysis patients. Around 8,000 renal failure patients benefit from the facility each year.

Currently, the SIUT has branches in Karachi and Sukkur where it provides free of charge dialysis. It conducted over 394,000 dialysis sessions last year. citynews.com.pk

UNODC-COPAK Initiates Virtual Training for Standard Operating Procedures on HIV Testing and Counselling for Prisons in Pakistan



The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) initiates Virtual Training for Standard Operating Procedures on HIV Testing and Counselling for Prisons in Pakistan.

Prisoners fall under the key population at high risk of contracting HIV. To prevent and treat PLHIV within prison settings, it is important that prison staff be well-equipped with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of conducting HIV Testing and Counselling (HTC).

‘Interventions for HIV/AIDS can be found in community settings; however within prisons the access to these services is very limited. To reach our target of ending HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, we need to improve the HIV interventions in prison systems,’ stated Dr Manzoor ul Haq, Programme Advisor DDR and HIV/AIDS, UNODC-COPAK.

To build the capacity of prison staff

in Pakistan on SOPs on HTC, UNODC-COPAK in collaboration with UNAIDS Pakistan is organizing periodic virtual trainings from 16 June to 10 July 2020.

These virtual trainings, to allow for interactive sessions, are divided on a weekly basis according to the four provinces of Pakistan. From 16 to 19 June the prison staff of Sindh – comprising Medical Officers, Women’s Medical Officers, Assistant Superintendents, Dispensers, and Constables are taking part in the training.

The focus of the virtual training is on the importance of comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment, and care programmes in prisons; modes of HIV transmission and its prevention; stigma associated to HIV; importance of psycho-social support for the prisoners; establishing HIV Testing and Counselling HTC Centres in prisons; Pre/Post Test Counselling; HIV Rapid Testing; Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP); referral, and linkages.

Courtesy:unodc.org/pakistan

Minal Khan is getting out of her comfort zone

Actor Minal Khan is getting out of her comfort zone and wants to bring versatility to her work.

Talking to Instagram, she said that challenging projects like the TV show *Jalan* brought out the best in her.

“It helped me test my limits and gave me a new sense of outlook,” she said. Khan thanked her co-stars Emaad Irfani, Areeba Habib and Fahad Sheikh along with the show’s director.

She said that she had “definitely



made friends for life working with these guys. Hope you guys enjoy the drama we all put in a lot of hard work.”

Pakistan's dollar account turns to surplus again

Pakistan's current account turned to a surplus of \$13 million in May, the State Bank of Pakistan said Wednesday. It is the second time in eight months that the country earned more dollars than it spent. The last time it happened was in October 2019, when the country showed a surplus of \$99 million.

Pakistan has long struggled to keep its dollar account in check and it was one of the biggest challenges the PTI faced when it came into power.

"Prior to these surpluses, the last time Pakistan recorded surpluses were in 2016 during the PML-N tenure when oil prices plunged below \$30 a barrel," JS Research's analyst Ahmed Lakhani said.

"The country recorded surpluses for three consecutive months in February, March and April of 2016."

The current account shows the country's dollar transactions – with dollars coming in and out of the



country's account and whether it received or lost more during a month or a period under study.

The current account or dollar account of Pakistan mostly remains in a loss because we spend more dollars than we earn, which is why it is commonly referred to as current account deficit (CAD) instead of current account balance.

Prior to the surplus in May, the country incurred a deficit or loss of \$530 million in April and \$1 billion in May of 2019.

The main reason behind the surplus in May has been a reduction in our trade loss. Trade loss or deficit shrank by \$296 million while remittances, also a part of current account, increased by \$80 million compared to April.

The current account deficit has narrowed to \$3.3 billion in the first nine months of fiscal year 2020, 73.6% down from \$12.5 billion during the corresponding period of last year.

"The IMF's program wanted us to reduce our current account deficit

to \$6 billion from \$12.5 billion," Lakhani said. "At least we have fulfilled IMF's that condition by reducing CAD to \$3.3 billion."

The notable sharp reduction in current account deficit is touted as one of the major successes of the current government. A high CAD is not sustainable because it leaves the country with fewer dollars in its reserves to pay for essential imports like oil and machinery.

To plug the CAD, the central bank has to use its dollar reserves or buy dollars from commercial banks, which increases the demand for the greenback and puts Pakistani rupee under pressure.

Since August 2018, the Pakistani rupee has depreciated by more than 25%. Though an achievement, the surplus came at the expense of choking our imports. Under the conditions set by the IMF, Pakistan had to clamp imports by raising duties and apply brakes in economic growth.

Courtesy:saama.tv.com

7 Pakistani Universities Made it to the QS World University 2021 Ranking List

Pakistani higher education standards continue to enhance each year. According to the newly published QS World University 2021 Ranking list, 7 Pakistani Universities made it to the 1000 list while 3 Universities are ranked among the top 500 Universities of the world.

According to the 2020 QS World University Ranking list, the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) was ranked 400, however, NUST significantly enhanced its quality of education and now ranked 355 in the newly published 2021 QS World University Ranking list.

LUMS, COMSATS Islamabad, UET Lahore, and University of Punjab are the other four universities in the top 1000 world universities ranking 2021.

The indicators considered in the



QS World University Rankings are academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty to student ratio, international faculty, international students, and citations per faculty.

Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences (PIEAS) was holding the top position in Pakistan according to the 2020 QS World University Ranking list however it has lost its position to

NUST and now ranked 2nd in the newly published 2021 QS World University Ranking list.

However, PIEAS has improved two points at the international ranking level. PIEAS was ranked 375 in the 2020 QS World University Ranking list but in the recently published 2021 QS World University Ranking list, PIEAS has been ranked 373.

Though Quaid-i-Azam University retained its third position in Pakistan however it hugely improved its ranking in QS World University 2021 from 2020.

Quaid-i-Azam University was ranked among the 511-520 in the 2020 QS World University Ranking list, however, it has been improved and ranked 454 in the 2021 QS World University Ranking list.

Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) ranked 651-700, COMSATS University Islamabad, University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore, and University of Punjab has been ranked between 801-1000 in the QS World University Ranking list.

Etihad Airways suspends flights from Pakistan



Etihad Airways suspended its flight operations from Pakistan, a day after several passengers who had travelled to Hong Kong by another airliner tested positive for Covid-19.

Etihad Airways is the third airline of the UAE after Fly Dubai and Emirates to have temporarily suspended its flight operation for outbound passengers.

An official of Etihad Airways, who didn't give his name, told Dawn that the outbound flights of Etihad Airways had been suspended till July 1. He didn't give any reason for the suspension of flight operations from Pakistan, but hinted that the suspension of outbound flights might be extended. However, he added, inbound flights would continue to operate for Pakistan.

Etihad Airways resumed its two weekly flights from Karachi and Lahore on June 13 after a gap of 55 days and was planning to operate flights from Islamabad. The airline earlier suspended flights to Pakistan on March 21 to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Meanwhile, refuting reports of suspension of its passenger services, a spokesman from Qatar Airways told Dawn that the airline's operations to and from Pakistan are continuing.

Earlier, Fly Dubai had suspended its flight operations for Pakistan till August 1 due to the spread of coronavirus. A senior official of Fly Dubai said special flights to repatriate UAE nationals were still operating from Pakistan.

Just a day ago, Emirates, which had been operating flights from Pakistan to Dubai, had temporarily suspended passenger service from the country until next week. However, Emirates will continue to operate repatriation flights into Pakistan as per announced schedule and continue to operate cargo services. A spokesman for the airline said: "Following the announcement of positive Covid-19 cases in Hong Kong relating to certain passengers who travelled on our flights, Emirates has taken the decision to temporarily suspend passenger services from Pakistan."

Courtesy: Dawn

Malala Yousafzai just graduated from Oxford

Nobel laureate and education activist Malala Yousafzai just graduated from the University of Oxford. She took to social media to share the good news.

"Hard to express my joy and gratitude right now as I completed my Philosophy, Politics and Economics degree at Oxford," she said in a post on Instagram. The 22-year-old shared that she didn't know what she was going to do next. "For now, it will be Netflix, reading and sleep," she

said.

Actor and producer Mindy Kaling congratulated Malala and said: "Enjoy you Netflix."

"Congratulations fren," said everyone's favourite Insta account Swineryy. While Blackish star Yara Shahidi commented and said: "Incredible." Celebrities such as Ali Sethi, Priyanka Chopra and many others also left encouraging comments on Malala's photos.

Contd. on Pg. 7

A Pakistani illustrator and comic book artist just gave his wife the best wedding present.



Since their wedding events were cancelled due to the global pandemic, artist Samad Rizvi, decided to make their wedding day special.

Taking to Instagram, he said: "Unfortunately our wedding got cancelled due to Covid-19. We waited 11 years for this day. Not being able to meet in person for 10 years was tough and we dreamed of our long awaited wedding to be nothing but perfect."

The couple had a simple nikkah at home and loved it as they always wanted a simple wedding but "the only thing that upset Amna was

that both our families live abroad and none of them were able to attend the wedding" due to travel restrictions.

According to Rizvi, he couldn't let this be Amna's only memory of their big day so he decided to do a little something for her.

"I made an illustration of our wedding for her and drew everything she couldn't have in her actual wedding. In a perfect world, both our families would have attended the wedding along with her cats," he said.

Courtesy: Dailytimes.com

Nadia Jamil talks about going bald



Actor Nadia Jamil opened up about her cancer treatment and losing her hair in an Instagram post over the weekend.

"Going bald when my hair started falling was a huge turning point in my life. It forced me to look myself in the face. Squarely. No more hiding," she said. "It also made me face the fears I'd built up within me over the years and decide to start working hard on becoming more independent, more fearless, even as

I decide to accept my fears and fragility."

According to Jamil, she likes her bald head "although sometimes it seems strange to me, sometimes I miss my mane". She added that she recently found the perfect wig. "I looked at all sorts of lovely wigs of all lengths and sized before I decided on this sleek beautiful blue one," she said, adding that she always wanted blue hair.

Pakistani microfinance recovers after coronavirus brought sector to grinding halt

Pakistan's microfinance sector is on the road to recovery, the head of the Pakistan Microfinance Network said this week, after the collection of loans ground to a halt in April as the South Asian nation came to terms with a fast-growing coronavirus crisis.

Alternative lending companies and microfinance banks across Asia have been scrambling to raise funds and stave off bankruptcy as they faced a wave of bad loans in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The Pakistani microfinance sector was also badly hit, industry experts say.

A study, published in the Oxford Review of Economic Policy, on the future of Pakistan's microfinance sector amid the coronavirus pandemic revealed that on average, week-on-week sales and household income both fell by about 90 percent, while 70 percent of microfinance borrowers reported that they could not repay their loans.

"In April, the recovery of some of our members [microfinance firms] dropped to 15 percent," Syed Mohsin Ahmed, the CEO of the Pakistan Microfinance Network (PMN), told Arab News.

"As the lockdown has eased since May 2020, the recovery has also improved by 60-65 percent."



Microfinanciers provide tiny loans to small-scale entrepreneurs. In Pakistan, the sector, which grew at an average rate of 40 percent between 2015-18, caters to the needs of around 7.3 million borrowers, according to PMN data. The gross loan portfolio of the sector stood at Rs308 billion, as per PMN's figures for March 2020.

Farid Ahmed Khan, the CEO of FINCA Microfinance Bank, told Arab News that 2019 was already a tough year for the sector due to double-digit inflation, high interest rates and rapid currency devaluation.

"To make things worse, in early 2020, COVID-19 brought about an unprecedented economic impact – immediately affecting the vulnerable and low-income sections of society, which this sector primarily deals with," Khan said.

In March 2020, Pakistan's central bank announced a relief package allowing debt rescheduling for borrowers from the microfinance, small and medium sized enterprise, corporate, retail and agricultural sectors. Under the package, payment was deferred for at least a year given that many borrowers were assumed to have lost 100 percent income.

"So far around 30 percent loans have been restructured," PMN chairman Syed Nadeem Hussain told Arab News. "The instalments are being prolonged to avoid undue pressure because of the circumstances caused by the pandemic."

While debt moratoriums come with their own set of problems, they also present an opportunity to reform the microfinance sector, experts say.

"Because of the moratorium offered on the loan portfolio, microfinance institutions will face liquidity and

cash-flow challenges," FINCA's Khan said.

"But this will force the institutions to review the cost structure, look for ways to control operational expenses and be extremely disciplined about resource utilization."

However, he said, microfinance players would be able to weather the coronavirus storm as lockdown restrictions continued to be eased. "Although current predicament is unparalleled in terms of magnitude and impact, the microfinance sector in Pakistan is resilient enough to cope with it," Khan said. "It will slow us down, but we will weather this crisis due to strong regulatory oversight and the inherent strength of the system."

Going forward, said Roshaneh Zafar, the founder and managing director of Kashf Foundation, measures needed to be put in place to tackle chronic liquidity issues of the sector.

"Liquidity is a very big risk for the sector as a whole and many efforts need to be made to address this both on an immediate basis and in the long run," Zafar said. "There is a need to build a risk mitigation fund for the sector in order to enable the sector to address future crises."

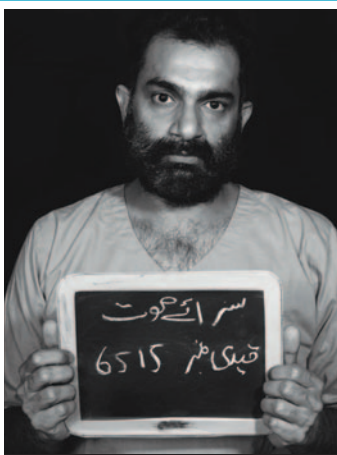
Courtesy:finca.pk

Sarmad Khoosat shares photo from JPP's No Time to Sleep

Actor and director Sarmad Khoosat took to Instagram to share a throwback photo from his role as Prisoner Z in Justice Project Pakistan's No Time To Sleep.

In the post, Khoosat wrote: "Throwback to the confinement and suffocation of this performance and how this quarantined life is imitating all those theatrics in these strange times."

Back in 2018, on World Day Against the Death Penalty, the JPP, in collaboration with Olomopolo Media and Highlight Arts, put together a 24-hour-long performance that was streamed live around the world. As part of the performance,



Khoosat spent 24 hours portraying a death row prisoner's final moments.

Courtesy:saama.tv.com

Contd from pg 6.....Malala Yousafzai just graduated from Oxford



Malala was born and brought up in the volatile Swat Valley and while taking the bus home from school, in October 2012, she, and two other girls, were shot by a Taliban gunman: she was hit in the head by a bullet, but survived and

eventually recovered.

In 2014, Malala became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her efforts for children's rights.

Fashion and the digital experience

Pakistan's first virtual fashion show went online, leaving one wondering whether the industry was ready for this transition or not.

The global coronavirus pandemic has thrown fashion into complete disarray. It's facing multiple threats that begin from major obstacles in supply chains caused by lockdowns, to retail vacuums resulting in a closure of brick and mortar stores. Just this week, Spanish retailer Zara announced the closure of 1200 worldwide stores to deal with financial losses. So basically, even if big brands manage to create new collections and manufacture the clothes, which in itself is a long shot, who's going to buy new clothes when there's nowhere to go? Consumers are currently more worried about keeping their jobs and surviving on pay cuts. Did I just say that the coronavirus pandemic has thrown fashion into complete disarray? Let me rephrase that. The coronavirus pandemic has thrown the whole world into complete disarray.

The impact of this mess has directly affected the fashion calendar, forcing international fashion councils to re-strategize and rethink the need for so many collections and so many fashion weeks a year. Shanghai and Moscow were amongst the first to take their fashion weeks online and this month, London Fashion Week will be the first major player to take its business online too. One has to hope that man's visceral relationship with fashion will eventually bring him back to it, eventually bringing fashion back to life.

Thinking ahead of the curve, and having witnessed the cancellation of fashion weeks scheduled to take place in Lahore and Karachi in April 2020, CEO of Catwalk Event Management & Productions, Frieha Altaf decided that a conscious effort

needed to be made to keep fashion going. She came up with a plan for Pakistan's first Virtual Fashion Show, in which designers would create small and personalized runways in their homes to showcase capsules of their latest collections that had been sitting in studios for the past two months. Some showed new collections and others showed classic pieces that would look good on film. To not seem insensitive or ignorant of the current situation because fashion is often accused of existing in a privileged bubble the show was given a purpose. Participating designers would send their clothes and accessories as gifts to medical front liners; perhaps this gesture would help brighten up their Eid, which is when the show was originally planned to be broadcast. It was postponed in respect of the tragic crash of PK8303, in which 97 precious lives, including Zara Abid one of industry's most loved models, were lost. An emotional tribute to Zara closed Episode One of the show.

Sensitive to the issue and conscious of the need of the hour, many of Pakistan's top names united and came onboard for the show, titled Catwalk Cares. The lineup included Khaadi, Maheen Karim, Amir Adnan, Huma Adnan, Shamaeel, Ismail Farid, Republic, Elan, Shehla Chatoor, Generation, Sania Maskatiya, Nida Azwer, Ali Xee-shan, Hussain Rehar, Sana Safinaz, Nomi Ansari, Faraz Manan, Sonya Battla and Asim Jofa, who has been actively manufacturing PPE gear for people and medical personnel across the country. Designers chose their models, who followed instructions given out by Nabila and her team on video calls, and recordings were directed by Asad ul Haq, who also prepared the final cut. It wasn't a live-stream, as an online fashion week would have been, but the pre-recorded program was developed

into three episodes, published at a fixed time on Har Pal Geo and Catwalk's official YouTube pages. Three half-hour episodes rolled out the prep as well as the pomp of the show. Both designers and their models sent out awareness messages as well as appreciation to the medical wonders that were saving lives at the risk of their own.

Barring a few teething problems, it all went well; the show certainly had its heart in the right place but left one with a simple question: did this Virtual Fashion Show have a sustainable purpose?

The ultimate purpose of any fashion show is to keep the business of fashion alive. And in order to be sustainable and even relevant to a virtual fashion show, fashion brands must have some sort of online presence. London is the first of the fashion capitals to transition. According to the schedule, brands will unveil new or existing product lines on the new www.londonfashionweek.co.uk site at specific time slots alongside links to look books, digital showrooms and e-commerce sites. Scheduled to roll out between June 12 and 14, by now one would know how successful the format was.

"Canceling London Fashion Week was never an option," Caroline Rush, the British Fashion Council chief executive, said in press announcements prior to the e-event. "The big question was around what sort of format it would take in lockdown."

London was quick to respond to the crisis but what happens in Pakistan, where fashion council heads have not even released a road map, let alone a survival plan. Have they even addressed the crisis at hand, you may ask. Frieha Altaf's virtual fashion show may provide a platform for designers to showcase their creativity



and keep themselves in the picture but it needs to have a checklist before it kicks further into action.

Participating designers must have online presence in the form of websites or e-commerce sites. It may seem shocking but many couturiers still operate from private studios, access to which should not be encouraged until the coronavirus has a cure, which may take anywhere to a year. Ready to wear brands, those that offer affordable clothes especially, should invest in trend videos and smart online marketing to create awareness and they should have online look books for their show collections, where consumers can order from. The time when designers got away with dramatic shows flaunting impractical collections that never made it from runway to retail is gone; there's no point showcasing clothes that won't go into production for sales.

This definitely is a time to rethink the basics. Fashion needs to make a smooth transition to the digital space, that much is a no-brainer. How it'll be done and effectively achieved is the bigger problem. Let's hope one sees the councils and industry well-wishers like Frieha Altaf bring in a much needed and overdue sense of unity. If not, the coronavirus will succeed in wiping out an industry that could have and should have been.

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