

### 'Why Be Rigid, Both Countries Must Think...': Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

Former Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has vouched for bilateral talks with India, even as India ruled out such a possibility during the ongoing Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Islamabad. In an interview the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman urged both nations to engage in dialogue on the side

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October 20 - 26, 2024

### Kazakhstan: 21st Cooperation Council with the European Union

The Cooperation Council between the European Union (EU) and Kazakhstan held its twenty-first meeting on Monday, 14 October in Luxembourg. During the meeting, both parties confirmed their commitment to deepening and widening their cooperation and to

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# Successful SCO meeting a major diplomatic win for Pakistan, PM

## NewsWire

Islamabad: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday hailed the successful hosting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Heads of Government meeting as a major achievement for Pakistan on diplomatic front. "Pakistan's diplomatic profile further strengthened internationally after successfully hosting this summit," the prime minister said while addressing a banquet organized in honor of senators of the government allied parties here. Congratulating the political parties' lead-

ers on successful conclusion of the SCO summit in Pakistan, the prime minister said all relevant institutes worked together as a team in this regard. He said before the SCO meeting, visit of the Chinese Premier also proved to be very successful. He specifically mentioned the crucial role of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar in making the event successful. He expressed confidence in the country's ongoing economic recovery and stability, asserting that the government will respond to its political opponents through tangible

development and prosperity in the country. The prime minister said due to the government's prudent policies, the country's economy had stabilized and it achieved the 2025 targets before time even in 2024. The prime minister said the inflation rate witnessed a quick decline in very short time. He said the government allied political parties worked diligently to ensure economic stability by setting aside their political interests. "You have all sacrificed your politics and worked hard, the results are economic stability and diplomatic successes," the prime minister conveyed to the leaders of coalition parties in the Senate. He said all political parties and the people had made sacrifices to help the country overcome difficulties. "All political parties and institutions are working together for the national development," he added. He said foreign remittances have also been witnessing consistent increase for last several months which reflected the confidence of the overseas Pakistanis on the incumbent government. Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, DPM Ishaq Dar, and government allied parties' senators attended the event.



# 50 well-preserved Viking Age skeletons unearthed in Denmark

## Celina Ali

In a village in central Denmark, archeologists made a landmark discovery that could hold important clues to the Viking era: a burial ground, containing some 50

discovered last year during a routine survey, ahead of power line renovation work on the outskirts of the village of Aasum, 5 kilometers (3 miles), northeast of Odense, Denmark's third-largest city.



"exceptionally well-preserved" skeletons. "This is such an exciting find because we found these skeletons that are so very, very well preserved," said archeologist Michael Borre Lundo, who led the six-month dig. "Normally, we would be lucky to find a few teeth in the graves, but here we have entire skeletons." The skeletons were preserved thanks to favorable soil chemistry, particularly chalk and high water levels, experts from Museum Odense said. The site was

Experts hope to conduct DNA analyses and possibly reconstruct detailed life histories, as well as looking into social patterns in Viking Age, such as kinship, migration patterns and more. "This opens a whole new toolbox for scientific discovery," said Borre Lundo as he stood on the muddy, wind-swept excavation site. "Hopefully we can make a DNA analysis on all the skeletons and see if they are related to each other and even where they come from."

# Bilawal sees constitutional court as panacea for Pakistan justice system

## Liaquat Ali

Hyderabad- Pakistan Peoples party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Friday a constitutional court based on equality would be established soon. He said the PPP would lead the efforts to win over all the political parties on its draft. In case of its failure in this regard, the PPP would spearhead the efforts to make the government-led move successful on the 26th amendment. He made these remarks while addressing the PPP rally in the city where he said the former premier Benazir Bhutto returned to the country with an ideology and she wanted the Pakistanis to get the basic necessities (roti, kapra, makaan) of life. He continued that it was one of the dreams of the deceased PM Bhutto to formulate a constitutional court bases on the charter of democracy and the purpose of this court would be to preserve the constitution of the country.



Talking about the constitutional court, he said the PM Bhutto wanted to achieve her vision because she knew in great details the justice system of Pakistan. That, PPP chief continued, almost every time, the courts in Pakistan have sided with the dictators and not with the constitution. For this reason, he said he wanted the Pakistanis to know that the PPP would make every efforts possible to formulate a constitutional court.



# Pakistan, China sign MoUs, inaugurate Gwadar airport during Premier Li Qiang's visit

**NewsWire**

Pakistan and China on Monday signed several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) in various sectors during Chinese Premier Li Qiang's visit to Islamabad, where he was welcomed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The two leaders also virtually inaugurated the Gwadar International Airport, a key component of the multi-billion-dollar CPEC project.

"The completion of Gwadar Airport is an important milestone," Premier Li said during the signing ceremony for several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation. He praised the collaborative efforts and dedication of both Pakistan and China in bringing the project to fruition.

According to Express News, Premier Li Qiang arrived at the Noor Khan Airbase on a four-day official visit. He was received with full honours, including a floral welcome and a 21-gun salute. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif personally greeted the

Chinese premier, and later hosted him at the Prime Minister's House for a luncheon in his honour.

At the Prime Minister's House, a formal welcome ceremony took place with the national anthems of both countries being played, followed by a guard of honour presented to Premier Li by Pakistan's armed forces.

Prime Minister Shehbaz and his Chinese counterpart held delegation-level talks at the Prime Minister's House.

The two leaders discussed a wide range of bilateral, regional, and global issues, focusing on strengthening the Pakistan-China strategic cooperative partnership.

During the meeting, both leaders expressed satisfaction with the growing ties between the two countries, which they described as rooted in "mutual trust and shared principles."

They reaffirmed their commitment to support each other on core issues and vowed to further enhance cooperation under the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).



# Pakistan, China vow to speed up ML-1 project

**Liaquat Ali**

Lahore: Pakistan and China have reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the upgrade of the Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway project, agreeing to prioritise the construction of the Karachi-Hyderabad section as part of phase one, in line

with the phased approach for the project's implementation.

In a joint statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both nations pledged to refine and optimise the construction plan for ML-1's Karachi-Hyderabad section and to formulate

feasible and sustainable plans for financing and implementation.

Pakistan expressed its deep appreciation for China's continued support in maintaining fiscal and financial stability. Both countries also praised the extension of the China-Pakistan

Bilateral Currency Swap Arrangement and agreed to further strengthen cooperation in the financial and banking sectors. They pledged to support each other within regional and international multilateral financial platforms.

The joint statement followed an official visit to Pakistan by Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang, who was invited by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. During the visit, which took place from Oct 14 to 15, Premier Li held talks with PM Sharif and also met President Asif Ali Zardari.

Pledge to support each other on regional, global financial platforms Both sides underscored that Pakistan-China relations have remained resilient and steadfast through the years, with their all-weather strategic cooperative partnership continuing to deepen since President Xi Jinping's historic state visit to Pakistan in 2015. After PM Shehbaz's official visit to China in June 2024, the two countries enjoyed even stronger political mutual trust, more vibrant cooperation, and closer strategic coordination, the statement said.

"The Pakistani side highly commends and firmly supports major visions and propositions put forth by President Xi Jinping, such as fostering a community with a shared future for mankind, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilisation Initiative," it said.

The two sides noted that in a transforming and turbulent world where major changes are

unfolding at a faster pace, the Pakistan-China relationship is of strategic significance, and any attempt to disrupt or undermine Pakistan-China cooperation is bound to fail.

Both countries agreed to maintain the momentum of exchanges under the strategic guidance of the top leaders for the development of bilateral relations. The Pakistani side also expressed congratulations on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to an upgraded version of CPEC by jointly building a growth corridor, a livelihood-enhancing corridor, an innovation corridor, a green corridor and an open corridor, and developing CPEC into a demonstration project of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

They also agreed to seek financial support to realign the Karakoram Highway's Raikot-Thakot section under the Framework Agreement. Recognising Gwadar Port as a critical hub for regional connectivity, the two sides expressed readiness to accelerate the development of auxiliary infrastructure to attract more cargo shipments. They also aimed to resolve water and power supply issues at the port as soon as possible.

Both the nations agreed to strengthen industrial cooperation suited to local conditions, and promote international cooperation on industrial and supply chains besides showing willingness to actively encourage Chinese companies to engage in investment and cooperation in Pakistan's mining industry.



# China ready to join Pakistan for closer community with shared future — Premier Li

**NewsWire**

Chinese Premier Li Qiang said here on Monday that China is willing to work with Pakistan to accelerate the building of a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era.

In his meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Li said that China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners, always understanding, trusting, and supporting each other.

Noting that Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Shehbaz in June and further planned the development of China-Pakistan relations, Li said that China has always placed such ties as a priority in its foreign policy and is willing to work with Pakistan to implement the important consensus reached by the two countries' leaders.

China is ready to continuously strengthen strategic coordination and deepen cooperation in various fields, and stride hand in hand with Pakistan on the path of modernization and national rejuvenation, he added. Li pointed out that China firmly supports Pakistan in safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity and taking a development path that suits its national conditions.

China is ready to work with Pakistan to build an "upgraded version" of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), accelerate the construction of major projects in areas such as railways, highways and ports, strengthen industrial integration, deepen practical cooperation in agriculture, mining, information technology, and energy, to ensure the bilateral cooperation benefit the people more broadly, he added.

It is hoped that Pakistan will continue to provide a good business environment for Chinese companies and try its best to ensure the safety of Chinese personnel, institutions, and projects in Pakistan, Li said.

China firmly supports Pakistan's counterterrorism effort, and stands ready to actively promote counterterrorism cooperation with Pakistan and help Pakistan strengthen its counterterrorism capacity building, he added. Li also said that China is ready to work closely with Pakistan in multilateral coordination and cooperation, jointly advocate an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, safeguard peace in Asia, and jointly promote regional development and prosperity.

For his part, Shehbaz extended his congratulations on the successful convening of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and spoke highly of China's tremendous development achievements under President Xi's leadership. The unbreakable Pakistan-China friendship has weathered the storm, and the Pakistan-China relations are the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy, he said.





# Italy's aircraft carrier docks in Karachi for defence forum



ity. The arrival of the Italian naval vessel aims to enhance discussions between key industries in both countries. Marilena Armellini, the Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, will conduct a press conference on the ship to brief attendees about the objectives of this visit.

Last year, Italian Navy Ship MOROSINI visited Karachi and conducted bilateral exercise with Pakistan Navy.

Upon arrival at the Karachi Port, the Italian navy ship was warmly welcomed by senior officials of the Pakistan Navy and the ambassador of Italy, a Pakistan Navy statement said.

On completion of the port visit, Pakistan Navy ship SHAHJAHAN with embarked helicopter



and PAF fighters carried out a sea exercise with a visiting Italian ship to enhance interoperability between both navies.

Concurrent to the ship's visit, Military Personnel of the Italian Navy Director Vice Admiral Andrea Gueglia visited Pakistan and called on Pakistan Fleet Com-

mander Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi.

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest and avenues for future collaboration to enhance regional maritime security were discussed.

**Celina Ali** The aircraft carrier's arrival focuses on fostering discussions on defence and security collaborations. An Italian aircraft carrier has arrived at Karachi port, marking a significant moment for industrial collaboration between Italy and Pakistan. The vessel, known as al

**Pino**, is equipped with advanced frigate technology and will be docked from 14 to 16 October. Today, a Defence Industry Forum is set to take place aboard the Italian ship. The event is organised by the Secretariat General of Defence and National Armament Directorate, with support from the Federation of Italian Companies for Aerospace, Defence and Secu-





# AI has potential to revolutionize education

**China Daily**

The world is in the midst of the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" and may soon enter the "Fifth Industrial Revolution". At the same time, the rapid development of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence has been impacting education at all levels, from primary and secondary to higher education.

Countries around the world are trying to find ways to more flexibly use AI in education, so as to impart education to students in remote areas and teach people the skills needed to build successful careers in the 21st century. China has become a leader in the application of AI in education and training by developing smart learning systems and intensifying research on AI. China is also working with other countries to advance the use of AI in education globally.

The fourth United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". In this context, organizations

such as UNESCO are exploring ways to use AI to realize the SDG4.

AI can be used to meet individual learners' needs and provide one-to-one tutoring for students, as well as to facilitate lifelong learning. To achieve the SDG4, online classes using AI can be organized to teach students in different parts of the world, translate the course content into students' preferred language, and allow the students to interact with the tutor. This is important for students who live in remote areas, scores of kilometers away from the nearest school.

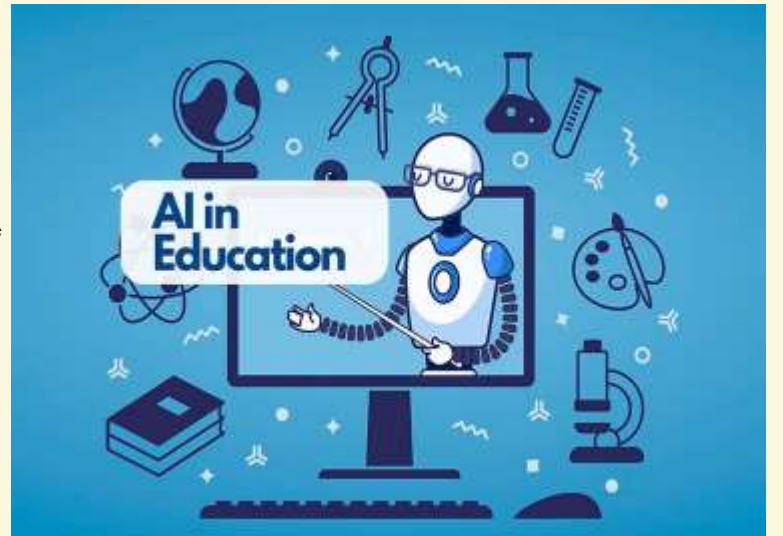
Also, teachers can use AI to prepare study materials for students and help them complete a certain course. AI can help teachers, too, to customize resources for learners so they can perform better. Researchers at the Beijing Advanced Innovation Center for Future Education and Beijing Foreign Studies University developed and implemented an automatic resource generation mechanism called "Learning Cell Model" to customize study materials and other resources for learners.

Studies show the Learning Cell Model can generate resources according to individual learners' needs and improve students' performance without increasing their cognitive burden.

An important area of research is the possible use of AI to facilitate language learning. Researchers from the Advanced Innovation Center for Future Education and the Beijing Normal University explored how an "automatic resource generation system" can help in teaching Chinese as a second language in schools.

The researchers developed a model to use AI to ensure the resources meet learners' needs, with studies showing the use of the teaching-learning model improved students' performance and their perception faculty. Students who were taught lessons using the model more actively participated in the course.

In addition to teaching languages, AI can also be used to help students of all ages and from different countries to learn about different cultures. Researchers from Beijing Foreign Studies University, Athabasca



University (Canada) and some Saudi Arabian universities have been exploring ways to use AI to help students from different countries learn from each other and know about each other's cultures while sitting in the comfort of their homes.

AI applications should be designed in a way that they benefit learners and educators, for which policies for learners, teachers and other staff in educational institutions should be in place. For example, there should be policies on factors such as data privacy and security, copyright, academic integrity, transparency and environmental concerns. A recent report by experts from Athabasca University and the Commonwealth of Learning identified 14 AI policies that staff at different levels of higher education institutions need to follow.

However, some educational institutions are reluctant to allow students to use AI because they think AI will not benefit them or it is not ethical to allow students

to use AI. But AI is here to stay, and educational institutions must accept AI as another beneficiary tool.

As we move toward the "Fifth Industrial Revolution", AI may develop the ability to think independently and become as creative as humans, and GenAI may become even more intelligent and capable of completing intellectual tasks like humans.

With the advancement of machine learning, AI systems may start developing original ideas that can be applied in complicated situations and contexts. AI has the potential to revolutionize education if designed and applied properly. The challenge for higher educational institutions is how to keep up with the rapid development of AI, particularly when it comes to devising suitable policies to impart education to the future generations.

The author is a professor at Athabasca University, Canada.



# Inclusive Shanghai Spirit guides SCO

**China Daily**

Chinese Premier Li Qiang attended the 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of Member States of the SCO in Islamabad and paid an official visit to Pakistan from Monday to Thursday.

The SCO heads of government meeting in Islamabad presented the opportunity to reflect on the significance of the SCO as a regional organization as well as its leadership which has been pivotal in shaping its future. Pakistan, under Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's leadership, presided over the SCO meeting in Islamabad, focusing on economic cooperation, environmental sustainability and cultural and people-to-people linkages. This reflects Pakistan's growing role in the SCO as a country committed to fostering regional stability and development. The SCO's focus on combating terrorism, facilitating economic integration, and intensifying people-to-people exchanges is in line with Pakistan's priorities. Hence, the country is well-positioned to contribute to the SCO's future growth.

It should be noted that under Chinese

President Xi Jinping's guidance, the SCO has adhered to the Shanghai Spirit, which emphasizes mutual benefit, consultation, and respect for diversity — a model that contrasts sharply with partnerships and alliances built on the basis of hegemony.

To begin with, the top Chinese leader has consistently emphasized the importance of multilateral cooperation, common development, peace and a more representative global governance system. He prioritizes regional peace and development through mechanisms such as the Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation. The treaty exemplifies the SCO's preference for peace and dialogue over conflict. The Islamabad meeting further strengthened these commitments, and explored new avenues of cooperation, particularly in economic and cultural exchanges.

Pakistan's participation in the SCO has been marked by a commitment to safeguarding regional security and promoting development, and the SCO meeting in Islamabad demonstrated the country's commitment to enhance multilateral coop-

eration in the region.

The organization has undertaken joint counter-terrorism exercises and border control operations, and established mechanisms to curb cybercrime, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime.

Pakistan, as a key player in these initiatives, has benefited immensely from the SCO's collective security framework, and the just-concluded meeting demonstrated its willingness to enhance security cooperation in the face of evolving threats.

Guided by the Shanghai spirit, the SCO has facilitated trade and investment among member states, with the resulting economic integration being a testament to the SCO's efficiency and its focus on improving the lives of peoples in other SCO member countries. Initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative have further enhanced economic connectivity, promoting infrastructure development, trade, and technological advancement across the region.

To Pakistan, the Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor offer significant opportunities for economic growth. In fact, the SCO meeting in Islamabad explored ways to further align the development policies of SCO member states in order to advance trade, increase investment and deepen digital cooperation. China's call for deeper integration in areas such as the digital economy, green energy and modern agriculture is particularly important for Pakistan, as it seeks to diversify its economy and create new growth drivers.

The SCO places great emphasis on cultural and people-to-people exchanges. This aspect of the SCO's work is crucial for fostering mutual understanding and friendship among its diverse member states. Initiatives such as the SCO University, SCO Youth Forum, and various cultural



and educational exchange programs have helped bridge the cultural divides and strengthen the bonds between the peoples of SCO member countries.

Pakistan's rich cultural heritage and its long history of friendship with China provide a strong foundation for these exchanges, with the Islamabad meeting giving Pakistan a great opportunity to expand people-to-people programs.

As the world undergoes profound changes, from shifting geopolitical dynamics to climate change, the role of the SCO in maintaining global stability has never been more important. The SCO is marked by a commitment to multilateralism and international justice.

Pakistan, as a member of the SCO, stands to benefit from this multilateral approach, not least because the organization provides Pakistan with a platform to engage with regional powers on an equal footing, addressing common challenges and seizing opportunities for

development.

China's vision for the SCO is one of shared prosperity and mutual respect, which ensures the SCO remains a key player in global governance, and a promoter of a fairer and more representative world order. As Pakistan takes its place at the forefront of the SCO, it is poised to play a vital role in shaping the future of this important organization, working alongside China and the other member states to build a more secure and prosperous world.

The author is president of the Belt and Road Initiative for Sustainable Development and an expert in multilateralism and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



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# Iranian ambassador lauds Pakistan for successfully hosting 23rd SCO summit

## Covert Report

Islamabad: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam on Thursday extended his congratulations to the government and people of Pakistan for the successful hosting of the 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of Governments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Islamabad.

In a statement issued on the occasion of Pakistan's Foreign Service Day, Ambassador Moghadam commended the well-organized event and the efforts of Pakistan's security personnel in ensuring its smooth execution.

"Hosting this important event, with the participation of various countries during a critical period, plays a significant role in strengthening regional multilateralism," the Iranian envoy stated. "It prepares the ground for creative initiatives and fosters a positive, proactive role in navigating the evolving global and regional developments."

He emphasized the importance of the SCO in creating an atmosphere of peace, stability, development, and trust not only among its members but also between the SCO and other regional and global multilateral mechanisms.

Ambassador Moghadam highlighted the vast opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Iran and Pakistan, as well as other member states, across diverse fields, including economic, security, and political sectors.

He expressed optimism that these multilateral initiatives would open new avenues for enhanced collaboration and mutual benefit.



# Dr. Majid Nadeem Gondal appointment an achievement for the Pakistani community



## Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri

High Commissioner of Pakistan, H.E. Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri Congratulates Dr. Majid Nadeem Gondal on being appointed to the inaugural National IMG (International Medical Graduates) Committee of Australia, representing the State of Victoria. A significant achievement for the Pakistani community!

Australia was amongst the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Pakistan in 1948. Pakistan-Australia relations are based on robust economic and developmental cooperation. Australia is a favoured destination amongst Pakistani students. Multi-sectoral engagement with Australia encompasses economic, trade, education, defence, Agriculture, climate and science and technology. Several political and economic mechanisms have been instituted to identify and focus on areas of cooperation.



# Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad visited Asia NOW



Captivating art work of 14 Pakistani artists was showcased under the umbrella of 'O Art Space' art gallery from Lahore. Titled "Chronicles Bound" it celebrates the artists who are integral to Pakistan contemporary art scene.



Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad visited Asia NOW a leading Paris art fair.

Ambassador met Omar Nabi, K.M. Naeem & Waseem Ahmad and organizers - terrific, unique & high quality creations of Pakistani artists on display.



# 'Why Be Rigid, Both Countries Must Think...': Bilawal Bhutto Zardari



title" in Pakistan to see improvement in its ties with India. Kakar said Pakistan's military, political parties and various other segments in the country desire forward movement in relations between New Delhi and Islamabad, but at the same time, there is a realisation of the ground realities.

"I don't think there is any expectation that there would be a breakthrough in bilateral relations," he said, replying to a question by the Indian media. Asked why Pakistan did not propose a meeting between the foreign ministers of the two countries if it seeks to improve bilateral ties, Kakar said the Pakistani establishment is also apprehensive of facing criticism from the opposition parties if it makes such a move. If anyone in this polarised political environment concedes an inch, then there may be fall-out for that, he noted.

There was an overall positivity around Jaishankar's visit here, said a senior Pakistani official on condition of anonymity.

It is the first time in nearly nine years that India's foreign minister travelled to Pakistan even as the ties between the two neighbours remained tense over the Kashmir issue and cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan. The last Indian Foreign Minister to visit Pakistan was Sushma Swaraj. She had travelled to Islamabad to attend the 'Heart of Asia' conference on Afghanistan held on December 8-9, 2015.



**NewsWire**

Former Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has vouched for bilateral talks with India, even as India ruled out such a possibility during the ongoing Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Islamabad.

chairman urged both nations to engage in dialogue on the sidelines of the SCO meeting. "Why be so rigid?" he questioned. "Both countries must think about having a bilateral talk on the sidelines of the Shanghai Commission Organisation (SCO) Summit. A conversation is necessary, whether today or tomorrow. Even if it is not in the context of the SCO, both countries have to resume bilateral talks sooner or later."



In an interview the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman urged both nations to engage in dialogue on the sidelines of the SCO meeting. "Why be so rigid?" he questioned. "Both countries must think about having a bilateral talk on the sidelines of the Shanghai Commission Organisation (SCO) Summit. A conversation is necessary, whether today or tomorrow. Even if it is not in the context of the SCO, both countries have to resume bilateral talks sooner or later."

Bhutto's comments come amid heightened tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. His comments came as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar arrived in the Pakistani capital to attend SCO's Council of Heads of Government (CHG) summit. On Tuesday, Pakistan's former interim Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that there is a "deep appeal



# Labourers, the unsung heroes who transformed Islamabad for SCO Summit

**Covert Report**

Islamabad: As Islamabad hosted the 23rd Council of Heads of Government (CHG) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit this week, a dedicated team of workers and labourers transformed the city into a vibrant spectacle. Their efforts in decorating, illuminating, and maintaining the city's landscape created a striking backdrop for the prestigious event, capturing the attention of visitors and residents alike.

Behind these impressive transformations were the unsung heroes, labourers who worked relentlessly, often under challenging conditions, to prepare the city for the global summit. Over the past few weeks, teams of workers, contractors, and planners, hailing from various regions of the country, worked late into the night, sometimes risking their safety amidst peak-hour traffic congestion, to ensure that the capital met the high standards required for the summit.



Amanat Ali, a painter working on footpaths, shared his

experience, "For the past 30 to 40 days, I've been decorating bridges, footpaths, and railings. It's been a tough job, working around the clock and at dangerous heights, often putting our lives at risk." Thanks to their hard work, Islamabad's roads and bridges now sparkle with vibrant decorations, colorful lights, and fresh flowers, giving the city a welcoming ambience.

Fayaz Hussain, a contractor overseeing the illumination



of overhead bridges, praised the team's resilience, "Despite challenging weather and tight deadlines, the workers stayed determined. Their extended hours and teamwork ensured we met the summit's timeline."

Farooq Ahmed, a motorist on the Islamabad Expressway, marveled at the transformation, "These bridges used to look so dull. Now, thanks to the SCO event, they

look amazing and the whole city shines."

Adil Baloch, a site supervisor at the Zero Point Bridge, remarked that the beautification was not just for the summit, it was for the people of Islamabad, "This project is about improving the city's beauty and enhancing the quality of life for our citizens," he said.



Umar Saeed, a painter from Lahore working on overhead bridges, took pride in contributing to the city's transformation: "It's fulfilling to know that our work has contributed to the nation's honour at such a significant event."

However, the labourers also faced financial struggles. Baba Razaq, an elderly worker, highlighted the difficulties of making ends meet with his daily wage of Rs 1,200, "It's tough to cover food and accommodation costs in Islamabad on such low pay, even though some of us earn a bit more based on expertise."

Asiya Malik, a journalist, stressed the importance of acknowledging the labourers' contributions: "As the spotlight shines on the summit, they are still engaged in the completion of remaining job. We must recognize the dedication of those working behind the scenes. Their efforts embody the spirit of resilience and community, proving that Pakistan can host major events with greater honour and prestige."

Zara Khan, a local resident, expressed her support for the beautification efforts, "The transformation of Islamabad has been incredible. It not only reflects the city's hospitality and readiness for the summit but also uplifts

the everyday experience of citizens. These improvements—bright lights, painted bridges, and well-maintained roads—make the city feel more vibrant and organized. It's clear that these beautification projects benefit everyone, both locals and visitors."

On the other hand, Anees Ahmed, an I-8 Sector resident, voiced concerns about the focus on beautification at the expense of other city needs, "While the city does look beautiful now, I feel that the money and energy spent on decorations could have been better used to address more pressing issues like traffic congestion and pollution. It's great that Islamabad looks stunning, but long-term improvements to public transport, air quality and climate impacts should be the top priority, not just temporary cosmetic changes."



# Traveling Greece: How Much Does It Cost?



**Covert Report**  
Home to beautiful islands, a history that stretches back thousands of years, a varied and rich culinary tradition, stunning hikes, ancient monasteries, and a rambunctious party scene, Greece is one of the most popular destinations in the world. However, most people don't think of it as a cheap one. Mention Greece and most picture the white and blue

stayed in the \$1,000 USD resorts, it would be, like he said, "hella expensive" too. But there's a middle ground here in Greece. In this post, I am going to break down how much I spent on my recent trip and what I spent it on. I'll also share some budget travel tips too to help you save money on your trip. The view of the calm waters of Santorini from a charming balcony

for me, I probably spent about 600-700 EUR more than your average traveler. That would have dropped my daily expenses closer to 100 EUR which I think is more realistic for your average "budget traveler."

So, with that said, let's talk average prices, suggested budgets, and how much YOU really need!  
**Average Prices in Greece**  
A small village built into the rugged coast of Greece Before I get into suggested budgets, I want to talk about average prices so you can get a sense of costs on your visit. This varies a lot by season depending as well on where you're going. Here's what to expect, on average, when you get to Greece (prices are in EUR):  
Hostel dorm: 15-25/night  
Hostel private room: 30-60/night (though, on Santorini or Mykonos, expect as high as 75)  
Budget hotel: 40-60/night (though, you can sometimes find guesthouses for as low as 25)  
Gyro (and other cheap to-go food): 2.50-3.50  
Bottled water at the grocery store: 0.50  
Bottled water (in a restaurant): 1  
Greek salad: 5.50-8  
Greek main dish: 8-12  
Seafood dinner: 15-20  
Lunch specials: 10-12  
Land tours: 15-50  
Boat tours: 10-35  
Ferries: 25-70/ride  
Public intracity buses/subways: 1-2/ride  
Major museums/historic sites: 10-20  
To help you with your budgeting, I've created a few different budgets below to give you an idea as to how much Greece costs, depending on your travel style. (Note: These are daily averages. Some days you'll spend more, some days you'll spend less. Prices are in EUR.)  
**Budget #1 - The Super Shoestring Traveler**  
Accommodation: 0-15  
Food: 15-20  
Transportation: 10  
Activities: None



homes on the cliffs in Santorini, boutique hotels, fancy dinners, a go-go nightlife, and island-hopping cruises. All things that scream, "This won't be a cheap trip!" However, Greece is actually quite affordable. I think it's one of the cheapest Eurozone countries there is. This was true when I first went ten years ago and it is still true today. Of course, not everyone agreed with me back then. Here's what one commenter said: Greece is definitely not cheap, especially not Athens. Clubs charge around 20 EUR entrance fees. The Akropolis is like 25 EUR entrance to walk around. Sure, tavernas are pretty cheap, but once you go up from backpacker hostels and low-end tavernas, Greece is hella expensive. I'm waiting until they get kicked out of the euro and go back to drachmas. There is a reason people go to Turkey instead of Greece. Telling people that it's on par with Thailand and Bali is just plain misinformation.... And he's right. Traveling that way would make Greece expensive. But traveling that way could make any place expensive. For example, Bali is a very cheap destination but, if you

Over the course of 35 days in Greece, I spent 4843.34 EUR, or 138 EUR per day. It breaks down like this (prices are in EUR; currently 1 EUR = \$1.07 USD):  
Accommodation: 1531.14, or 43.74 per day  
Transportation: 894.68, or 25.56 per day  
Activities: 447.50, or 12.78 per day  
Food: 1339.89, or 38.28 per day  
Drinks 13.85 per day  
Miscellaneous (sunscreens, toiletries, etc): 145.33, or 4.15 per day  
I was actually surprised I spent so much. I went a little over budget. But, to be fair, that is because I also spend like a travel writer. Since I work on the road, it's very important to me to have a room with a desk and a workspace and those rooms tend to be more expensive. Second, I tend to take way more tours than the average tourist, since I try everything to write about it. And I often hire private guides on my trips. I doubt many of you are going to drop hundreds of euros on multiple private tours. Between private tours, some upscale accommodations, a lot of island-hopping, dropping a few hundred euros on drinks for a group of backpackers (I always pay it forward, since, when I began my travels, people did so

**Budget #2 - The Backpacker**  
Accommodation: 15-25  
Food: 15-25  
Drinks: 10-20  
Transportation: 10-15  
Activities: 10  
Total: 60-95  
On this budget, you're staying in dorms, cooking some meals, eating some cheap fast food like gyros, using slower ferries and buses, paying for just a few activities, and limiting your nights out (because, let's face it, as a backpacker, you're going to want some nights out!). The big variable in this budget is, of course, how much you're going to party and how many islands you'll do (because the mainland is much cheaper).



**Total: 25-45**  
On this budget, you're Couchsurfing or staying in a hostel dorm room. You're cooking most meals, traveling slowly, avoiding expensive islands like Santorini, taking slower overnight ferries and buses, not paying for expensive tours and activities, and keeping your drinking to near zero or buying booze only in supermarkets. It's totally possible to travel on this budget but it's going to be tough for some.  
**Budget #3 - The Middle-of-the-Road Traveler**  
Hotel: 40-50  
Food: 25-45  
Drinks: 15-25  
Transportation: 15-20  
Activities: 20-25  
Total: 115-165  
For this mid-range budget, you'll get a private hostel room/budget hotel, more tours/activities, the occasional taxi, a mix of cheap, casual, and nice meals and whatever ferries (and the occasional flight) you need. This will put you more in line with what I spent during my trip but, if you don't drink as much wine or do as many activities as I do, you can easily do this closer to 100-115 EUR per day.  
**Budget #4 - The "I Only Have Two Weeks, So I Don't Care" Traveler**  
Hotel: 100+  
Food: 75+  
Drinks: 30  
Transportation: 15+  
Activities: 50+  
**Total: 240+**  
On this budget, you can do anything. If you want to blow it out of the water, this is really the floor of what you'll spend. As I said in the introduction, Greece can be as expensive as you want it to be! But I doubt you're reading this blog for luxury travel tips!  
Notes on the numbers:  
1. I'm not including souvenirs in these numbers. That's highly discretionary and variable. Obviously, the more you buy, the higher your daily average will be.  
2. While alcohol is included, if you like to drink or go clubbing a lot, you're going to spend a lot more. Summertime on the Greek islands are a bit hedonistic, so if that's your thing, bring extra money.  
3. These are daily averages. Some days you'll spend way more, most much less.  
**13 Budget Tips for Greece**  
One of the many ancient buildings in Greece Greece is actually pretty cheap. Greek food, glasses of wine, hostel dorms, and public buses aren't super expensive and you can find some really nice accommodation for between 30-50 EUR a night. There are a lot of ways to save money in Greece without sacrificing

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**Budget #4 - The "I Only Have Two Weeks, So I Don't Care" Traveler**  
Hotel: 100+  
Food: 75+  
Drinks: 30  
Transportation: 15+  
Activities: 50+

comfort. Here's how:  
Use the Greek Salad/Bread Rule - This is my number one rule! Is a restaurant cheap or expensive? Here's a good rule of thumb: If the bread cover is .50 EUR or a Greek salad is less than 7 EUR, the restaurant is cheap. If the cover is around 1 EUR and a salad is 7-8.50 EUR, the prices are average. Anything more than that and the place is expensive.  
Eat super cheap - Gyros (and other street snacks) usually only cost a few euros. They are quick and easy and can keep you full for less than 10 EUR per day!  
Rent a moped - If you're going to be somewhere (like on one of the islands) for a while, rent a moped. It's cheaper than a car and more convenient than the bus. It's a fun way to see the various towns and cities and the best way to get off the beaten path.  
Get off the beaten path - Greece is the cheapest when you get out of the popular destinations. Head to less well-traveled areas and you'll see prices drop by 30% or



**Drinks: 30**  
**Transportation: 15+**  
**Activities: 50+**

more!  
Book overnight ferries - Greece's ferries can get quite expensive if you are visiting a lot of islands. Taking the overnight ferries can save you up to half off the normal price (plus it will save you a night of accommodation). Have an ISIC Card - To save on the cost of admission to museums and other tourist attractions, be sure to present a valid student card. The ISIC is typically accepted in places where a foreign student ID is not.  
Couchsurf - Couchsurfing is an awesome way to meet locals while also getting a free place to stay.  
Buy wine at the store - You can buy a great bottle of wine from the stores for as little as 4 EUR. It's a lot cheaper than drinking at the bar, so drink before you go out to save money.  
Get a ferry pass - Eurail/Interrail has a ferry pass that has 4- and 6-trip options. The only caveat is that you can only take Blue Star and Hellenic Seaways ferries. Those tend to be the larger, slower ferries and, depending on the islands, might require you to connect somewhere. You'll need to research routes in advance to see if the pass is worth it. I would search routes on the FerryHopper to see if it works for you.  
Take public transportation - Buses, while sometimes running on inconvenient schedules, are the best way to get around Greece. Taxis are very expensive there, so minimize their use whenever you can.  
Get combined tickets - Historical attractions in Greece, for the most part, are priced so that it's always a better deal to get a combined ticket. If the sites you are going to offer that, buy it. It will save you money.  
Use points if you can - If you collect points and miles that can be used for cash, using them to book accommodation will be better if you're staying at cheaper properties (anything less than \$100 USD). For only a few thousand points per night, you can save a ton of money. You can learn more about getting started here.  
Rent a car - Car rentals can be incredibly cheap in Greece. Prices start at just 15 EUR per day when booked in advance. Drivers need to be at least 21 and have their license for one year. An International Driving Permit is also required. For the best car rental prices, use Discover Cars.  
\*\*\*  
Greece, like any country, has a wide range of budget options. Yes, you can spend a fortune there (many people go for a fancy, expensive getaway) but it's also possible to visit without breaking the bank. By using the tips above, you'll be able to have an amazing trip while keeping your budget intact.





# Portugal's bold plan to win back youth

**Newsire**

Low taxes are just one factor influencing where young people decide to set up

Last week, Portugal decided to take matters into its own hands. The minority government of Prime Minister Luís Montenegro unveiled an imaginative budget proposal to turn the country into a low-tax haven for young adults, offering a decade of tax breaks to those starting their careers. Under the plan, those aged 35 and under who earn up to €28,000 would pay no income tax for the first year. Tax relief would then be tapered over the next 10 years. Foreigners would also be able to benefit. There is a consensus in Lisbon that drastic action is warranted. Between 2008 and 2023, an estimated 361,000 people aged between 15 and 35 left the country, accounting for two-thirds of all emigrants during that period. Portugal is not the first to consider age-based financial incentives to arrest a brain drain. In 2019, Poland cut income tax for workers under the age of 26. Italy had a tax reduction scheme for returning employees and the self-employed. In 2015, Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán even tried to lure young Hungarians back with free flights and a monthly stipend. There is a logic to providing reliefs to cash-strapped, ambitious youngsters starting their careers. The transition from education to work is a costly one, particularly for those from poorer households. Portugal's proposal sends a clear signal to young people that it is thinking boldly to persuade them to stay. But whether financial incentives



actually make a significant difference in retaining or attracting talent is unclear. The IMF warned Portugal that the impact of preferential tax rates on emigration is "uncertain".

Tax is just one of many factors young people consider when deciding where to live. The range of well-paying job opportunities and professional networks in Brussels, Berlin and Paris, for example, is a big draw. Portugal, by contrast, has a long way to go to diversify its industrial base beyond tourism and spur more job creation. Its youth unemployment rate is over 5 percentage points higher than the EU average. Workers also consider housing costs, child care support and public amenities when deciding where to set up. That is something the government needs to consider with its tax proposal, which is estimated to cost about €650mn a year. Expats will want to see more evidence that Portugal's long-term prospects are improving, particularly as they could be in for a hefty marginal tax rise when the proposed reliefs disappear in their thirties. That means initiatives to cut red tape, incentivise investment and raise Portugal's burgeoning status as a hub for entrepreneurs are just as important. Portugal's plan, if it does pass through parliament, may jolt other European nations into bolder actions. The problem is that tax perks can only go so far when other countries are dangling their own carrots. Countries need to address a whole range of factors in their business environment if they want to win the race for talent.





# Japan visitors spent \$39 billion through September, breaking annual record

**Covert Report** Travelers spent 5.86 trillion yen (\$39.27 billion) through September, preliminary figures from the Japan National Tourism Organization showed. That eclipsed the 5.3 trillion yen spent in all of 2023, a record for any 12-month period. Tourism spending, classified as an export in national accounts, is poised to become Japan's second-biggest export sector after autos and ahead of electronic components. The average visitor spent 223,000 yen on their trip, based on the data from July through September. Ital-

ians spent the most, followed by Spaniards and Russians. There were 2.87 million visitors in September, down slightly from 2.93 million in August, JNTO data showed. Arrivals have set new monthly records since February, including 3.29 million in July that was an all-time high for any month. Through September, 26.88 million tourists have arrived in Japan, already more than the total for 2023 and on pace to break the record of 31.9 million set in 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic shut global borders.



# Pakistan's envoy to US Rizwan Sheikh begins visit to Texas in effort to expand economic ties

**Abdullah Jan** Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, met with the leadership of U.S. state of Texas, business community, and Pakistani diaspora in Dallas and Houston in his efforts to further strengthen Islamabad-Washington relationship, according to a Pakistani embassy press release. "There are immense opportunities to forge a strong partnership between Pakistan and Texas in diverse fields, including IT, agriculture, textiles, and sports," the ambassador said as he began a 3-day visit to Texas on Monday with that message. "Our diaspora in the United States can play a pivotal role in strengthening economic ties with the U.S. while also helping their counterparts capitalize on economic opportunities in Pakistan," he said. On the first day of his visit, Ambassador Sheikh met with Texas Governor Greg Abbott and discussed a range of matters aimed at boosting ties for mutual benefit. As the 8th largest economy in the world, Texas offers significant trade and economic opportunities for Pakistan. In Houston, Ambassador Sheikh inaugurated the first-ever 2-day Pakistan Literature Festival, organized by the International Academy of Letters. In his remarks, the Ambassador emphasized the role of art, literature, people-to-people contacts, and public diplomacy in strengthening

Pak-US relations. Earlier, the Ambassador met with the leadership of the Ismaili community at the Jamaat Khana, commending their contributions under the guidance of Prince Karim Aga Khan. Ambassador Sheikh also joined Congressman Al Green and members of the diplomatic corps in a send-off ceremony for two containers of medical equipment bound for Pakistan. He appreciated the philanthropic and relief efforts of the Houston-Karachi Sister City Association, Medical Bridges, Alliance for Disaster Relief, and Helping Hand. The Ambassador also visited clinics run by the Ibn-e-Sina Foundation and was briefed on the services provided to the underserved community in Greater Houston. In Dallas, the Ambassador had a luncheon meeting with Congressman Lance Carter Gooden, where they discussed Pak-US bilateral relations, security and defense cooperation, and exchanged views on regional and global developments. Ambassador Sheikh also met with the



Pakistan Chamber of Commerce-USA. He highlighted Pakistan's trade and investment potential, especially in sectors like IT and agriculture, and assured Pakistani-American businesses of support in pursuing opportunities in Pakistan. During his meetings with members of the Pakistani diaspora, the ambassador lauded their contributions to strengthening bilat-

eral relations and projecting a positive image of Pakistan in the United States. "Our community is the most enduring link in the Pak-US relationship. You have not only excelled in your respective fields but have also projected a positive image of the country here in the United States." "A strong Pak-US relationship benefits not only our two countries but also the

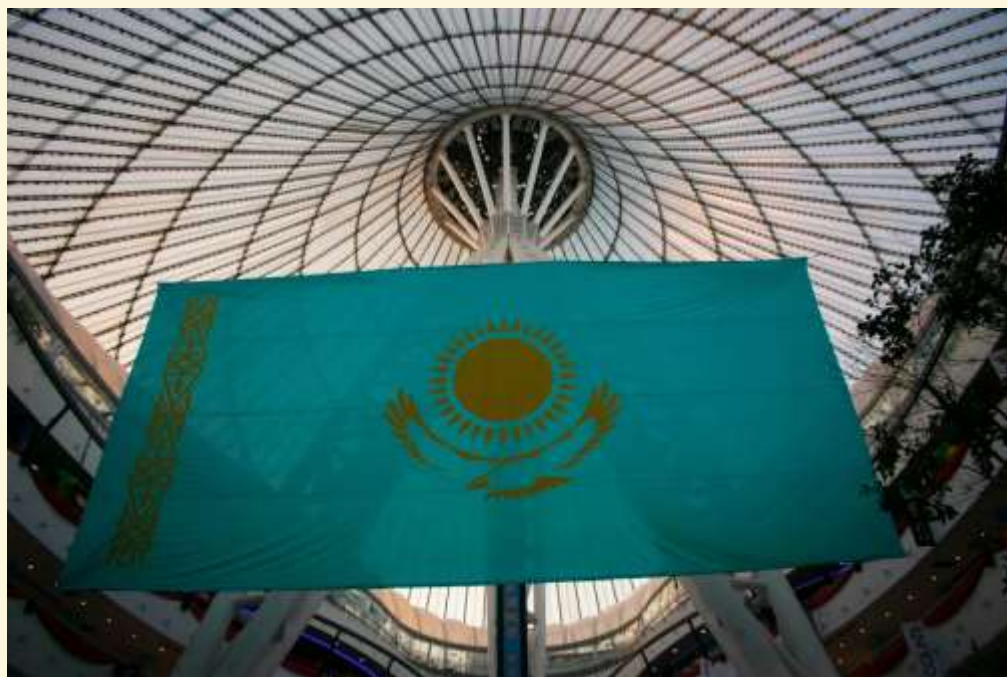
future generations of our community," he continued. The Ambassador reiterated the full support of the Embassy and the Consulate for the Pakistani community in the United States. He thanked them for their valuable contributions towards socio-economic development of Pakistan.



# Kazakhstan: 21st Cooperation Council with the European Union



**Celina Ali** Union (EU) and Kazakhstan held its twenty-first meeting on Monday, 14 October in Luxembourg. During the meeting, both parties confirmed their commitment to deepening and widening their cooperation and to exploring the full potential of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA). As Kazakhstan's first trade partner and foreign investor, the EU expressed strong support for the country's economic reform and political modernisation process. The EU underlined that the rule of law, good governance and fight against corruption are the very foundations of a functioning democracy,



and essential for a conducive business climate attracting foreign investment. The EU stressed the importance of freedom of expression, assembly and association, as well as independence of lawyers, pluralism and independence of media. A thriving civil society is fundamental, this includes granting Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working on human rights access to domestic and foreign funding without obstacles. The risk of disinformation and misinformation was also discussed. With regard to Kazakhstan's membership of the UN Human Rights Council in 2022-2024, the EU expressed gratitude for the very good cooperation in this forum. The enhanced cooperation between the EU and Kazakhstan includes strengthening transport connectivity, in particular the development of the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor under the EU's Global Gateway strategy. The EU expressed appreciation to Kazakhstan for the country's active participation in the high-level political launch event held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 3 October 2024, in the presence of European Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen. The EU and Kazakhstan welcomed the initialing of their Horizontal Aviation Agreement in the margins of the Cooperation Council and hoped that the Agreement could be finalised for signature soon. Both parties welcomed the ongoing cooperation in the area of critical raw materials through the implementation of the current Joint Roadmap. They looked forward to the adoption of a new ambitious Roadmap for 2025-2027. Kazakhstan's participation in the EU Raw Materials Week in November 2023 was instrumental in strengthening business-to-business contacts in this field. The EU also expressed gratitude to Kazakhstan for having joined the Mineral Security Partnership this year. The EU and Kazakhstan confirmed their openness to pursue the preparation of negotiations for a Visa Facilitation Agreement and a Readmission Agreement. The EU recognised the important role of Kazakhstan in EU's energy security and expressed support for the development of renewable energy sources in Kazakhstan. The EU appreciated that Kazakhstan committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2060 and has joined the Global Methane Pledge. Kazakhstan benefits from a dedicated Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (2021-2027), to support the implementation of the EPCA through a Cooperation Facility focusing on sustainable economic growth and rule of law. The EU welcomed Kazakhstan's active participation in Erasmus+ and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions under Horizon Europe, underlining the potential for greater involvement of Kazakh researchers. Regional EU programmes and initiatives in Central Asia as well as wider regional developments including the situation in Afghanistan and other security challenges, were discussed. The Cooperation Council was chaired by Peter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, on behalf of EU High Representative, Josep Borrell. The Kazakh delegation was led by Murat Nurtleu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan.





# How fast is the UK's economy growing and what is GDP?



doesn't show how income is split across a population - rising GDP could result from the richest getting richer, rather than everyone becoming better off

### What is GDP per capita?

Just because GDP is increasing, it doesn't mean that an individual person's standard of living is improving. If a country's population increases, it pushes GDP up, because with more people, more money will be spent. But individuals within that country might not be getting richer. They may be getting poorer on average, even while GDP goes up.

The ONS also publishes a figure for GDP per capita - or head of population - which can tell a different story. In fact, when you strip out inflation and population growth, the latest quarterly figures show that in the second three months of 2024, GDP per capita was 0.3% lower than for the same period in 2023.

Official GDP figures don't take into account unpaid work like looking after children

Some critics also argue that GDP doesn't take into account whether the economic growth it measures is sustainable, or the environmental damage it might do. Alternative measures have been developed which try to capture this.

Since 2010, the ONS has also measured well-being, external alongside economic growth. This assesses health, relationships, education and skills, as well as people's personal finances and the environment. But despite its limitations, GDP is still the most widely-used measure for most government decisions and international comparisons.



**Celina Ali**  
Growth in the UK's economy has slowed in recent months, despite a pick-up in August, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).  
The strength of the economy affects things like pay increases for workers and the amount of tax the government can raise to pay for services.  
What is GDP and how is it worked out?  
GDP is a measure of all the economic activity of companies, governments and people in a country.  
In the UK, new GDP figures are published every month. However, quarterly figures - covering three months at a time - are considered more important.  
Most economists, politicians and businesses like to see GDP rising steadily.  
That's because it usually means people are spending more, extra jobs are created, more tax is paid and workers get better pay rises.  
When GDP is falling, it means the economy is shrinking - which can be bad news for businesses and workers.  
If GDP falls for two quarters in a row, that is known as a recession, which can lead to pay freezes and job losses.  
The UK fell into recession at the end of 2023, when the economy shrank in the last two quarters of the year.  
However, it rebounded strongly in the first three months of the year, when GDP increased by 0.7%, and this was followed by 0.5% growth between April and June, external.

The latest figures show that GDP rose by 0.2% in August, external, following zero growth in both June and July.  
The ONS said that although the economy grew in August, "the broader picture is one of slower growth in recent months".  
Bar chart showing UK quarterly GDP growth with April to June growth of 0.5%  
How does GDP affect me?  
If GDP is going up steadily, people pay more in tax because they're earning and spending more. This means more money for the government, which it can choose to spend on public services, such as schools, police and hospitals.  
When the economy shrinks and a country goes into recession, these things can go into reverse.  
Governments tend to get less money in tax, which means they may decide to freeze or cut public spending. Or taxes may rise.  
In 2020, the Covid pandemic caused the most severe UK recession for more than 300 years, which forced the government to borrow hundreds of billions of pounds to support the economy.  
How much money does the UK government raise and spend each year?  
Where does the government borrow billions from?  
The UK produces one of the quickest estimates of GDP of the major economies, about 40 days after the quarter in question.  
At that stage, only about 60% of the data is available, so the figure is revised as more information comes in.  
GDP doesn't tell the whole story: Hidden economy: Unpaid work such as caring for children or elderly relatives isn't captured Inequality: GDP growth also





**“A right minority  
Is superior to a wrong majority.”**

**“You can burn libraries,  
ban books, boycott scholars, and  
blacklist intellectuals, but you cannot  
blot out ideas.”**

# Italy's Melony 'blocked' all new arms deal with Israel over Gaza



### Covert Report

The Italian government blocked all new arms deals with Israel within weeks after it launched a war on Gaza, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has told the Senate, according to the ANSA news agency. Speaking to the Senate Tuesday, Meloni

defended the arms agreements Italy has with Israel, saying the conditions were stricter than those of other Western countries. “After the start of operations in Gaza, the government immediately suspended all new export licenses and all agreements signed after Oct. 7 were not implement-

ed,” she said during a debate ahead of Thursday’s European Council summit. “The licenses authorized before are all being analyzed on a case-by-case basis by the competent authority at the foreign ministry.” “I want to recall that the Italian policy of completely blocking of all new licenses is



Italy's Ambassador to Pakistan Marilina Armellini

much more restrictive than that applied by our partners – France, Germany and the United Kingdom,” the Italian leader added. “These partners continue to use case-by-case assessments, including for new licenses.” “We have blocked everything,” she said. Israel has continued a genocidal war on Gaza, following an incursion by the Palestinian resistance group, Hamas, last Octo-

ber, despite a U.N. Security Council resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire. The Israeli military has killed more than 42,400 people since, mostly women and children, and over 99,100 injured, according to Gazan health authorities. It has also displaced almost the entire population of Gaza amid an ongoing blockade that has led to severe shortages of food, clean water and medicine. Israel faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its actions in Gaza.

# 'Choose France' initiative boosts education partnership

### NewsWire

French envoy highlights increasing academic cooperation and student exchanges Islamabad: French Ambassador to Pakistan, Nicolas Galey, stated on Friday that the partnership between Pakistan and France in higher education is gaining momentum, marked by increasing academic cooperation and student exchanges. This relationship, strengthened by the "Choose France" initiative, is paving the way for further collaboration between universities in both countries.

During a welcome event at the French residence, attended by Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, esteemed members of the Choose France delegation, and media representatives, Ambassador Galey highlighted the visit of a high-level academic delegation from France. He noted that strengthening ties in higher education is a key objective in the bilateral roadmap for both nations. The Ambassador emphasised the timeliness of the event, coinciding with the conclusion of the 3rd edition of the Choose France Education Tour, which took place in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. The initiative aims to engage students through direct interactions with leading French universities and to foster collaboration between French and Pakistani institutions through personalized visits, laying the groundwork for long-term

partnerships.

In the past two years, eight agreements have been signed between universities from both countries, resulting in active academic and research cooperation. These agreements are only the beginning, as efforts are underway to establish a double degree system that would enhance educational quality and create opportunities for joint participation in programs like Erasmus Mundus. Ambassador Galey reported that this year's Choose France Education Tour garnered significant interest, with 2,200 Pakistani students attending education fairs and 22 bilateral university visits organized. The response from France has been positive, with 21 Pakistani representatives participating, up from just five in the inaugural edition two years ago. Such interactions are essential for fostering mutual understanding and friendship between the two nations. He also expressed France's eagerness to welcome talented Pakistani students with clear academic goals. The increasing number of Pakistani students choosing France reflects a growing awareness of the opportunities available. Over the past three academic years, the number of Pakistani students accepted into French institutions has increased six fold, with many receiving scholarships to support their studies. The Ambassador emphasised the importance of selecting French institutions that offer state-recognized degrees. Campus France Pakistan plays a vital role in guiding students and their families through the process of identifying suitable programs and universities. This year, the embassy expanded its support team, adding new personnel, including a dedicated staff member at the embassy and four Campus France officers in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, all alumni of French universities

