

Pakistan Businesses' Confidence Rises To A Four-year High, Gallup Survey

Islamabad (News Desk): Pakistan’s private sector business confidence has climbed to its highest level in nearly four years, according to Gallup Pakistan’s latest Business Confidence Survey, reflecting a cautiously improving mood despite persistent inflation, high energy costs, and electricity load-shedding. The Q2 2025 survey, conducted from July 23 to 27 across 524 businesses in manufacturing, services, and trade sectors, found a notable rebound in perceptions of the country’s overall direction. Gallup’s “Direction of the Country Score” now stands at -2 percent, marking its best level since Q4 2021 and signalling a moderate easing of political and economic uncertainty. The number of businesses with a favourable view of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s handling of the economy has nearly doubled over the past year — with 46 percent rating the PML-N government’s performance as better than its predecessor, compared to 24 percent in 2024. Gallup Pakistan Executive Director Bilal Ijaz Gilani described the mood as “cautiously improving,” crediting stabilization in perceptions about both national direction and economic management. However, he emphasised the need for sustained macroeconomic reforms, policy consistency, and institutional responsiveness, especially towards informal sector enterprises. Business performance also showed positive signs, with 61 percent of respondents rating their operations as “good” or “very good,” while optimism for the months ahead rose slightly. Challenges persist, with inflation, high utility costs, and taxation cited as top concerns. The survey also noted a drop in reported bribery cases to 15 percent, down from 34 percent in Q4 2024. Overall, the findings suggest measured improvement in private sector sentiment, with progress tempered by deep-rooted structural issues in Pakistan’s business environment.

ALC Sustains Momentum In Community Campaign To Promote Sustainable Reading

Abu Dhabi (News Desk): The Community Campaign to Promote Sustainable Reading, launched in February by the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre (ALC) under the theme "Knowledge Illuminates Our Community", has recorded significant achievements in the first half of 2025. Coinciding with National Reading Month and aligning with the UAE’s designation of 2025 as the Year of Community, the year-long initiative aims to strengthen the Arabic language, preserve shared heritage, and instill reading as a daily habit among all age groups. The campaign featured more than 2,000 creative activities, including 250 major events, in partnership with over 100 government and private sector entities. Nearly 400 creative professionals and 15 universities took part, with outreach extending to schools, universities, institutions, and public spaces. Highlights included programming during the 34th Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, which welcomed 2,350 school visits. In total, the initiative engaged over 50,000 community members and successfully connected with diverse audiences through traditional and social media channels. ALC Executive Director Saeed Hamdan Al Tunaiji confirmed that the campaign met all its performance indicators in embedding reading as a sustainable community practice.

Foreign Ministers, EU Diplomats Urge Israel Against Restricting International Aid Organisations



Brussels (News Desk): A coalition of foreign ministers and the European Union’s High Representative have urged Israel to halt its crackdown on international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in Palestinian territories. In a joint statement, ministers from Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, the UK, and the EU warned that Israel’s newly introduced registration system could force NGO staff to leave the country by next month, worsening the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and other occupied areas. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) cautioned that Israel is demanding sensitive personal data on Palestinian employees, with non-compliance leading to the termination of operations in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Aid agencies warn that without urgent action, most international NGO partners could be deregistered by 9 September, forcing the withdrawal of all international staff. Already, unregistered NGOs are barred from sending supplies to Gaza, adding to the strain on humanitarian relief efforts.

Security Council: Ambassadors Meet In Emergency Session, Amid Starvation In Gaza



New York (News Desk): The UN Security Council convened an emergency session Sunday in response to Israel’s decision to expand its military operations in Gaza and take full control of Gaza City, a move UN Secretary-General António Guterres labelled a “dangerous escalation” for the two million civilians trapped in the enclave and the remaining Israeli hostages. Briefing the Council, Miroslav Jenča, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia, and the Americas, described conditions in Gaza as “unbearable” and warned of “catastrophic consequences” if the operation proceeds. He reiterated calls for a permanent ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages, and unrestricted humanitarian access. The UN humanitarian office reported that hunger in Gaza has reached “starvation, pure and simple,” with aid deliveries crippled by insecurity and access restrictions. France, the UK, and other nations warned the Israeli plan could breach international humanitarian law. In a significant policy shift, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced a halt to military exports to Israel that could be used in Gaza. Palestinian envoy Riyad Mansour condemned Israel’s actions as violations of international law, with Qatar and the UAE voicing similar criticism. Iran accused Israel of pursuing ethnic cleansing. The meeting ended without a resolution, highlighting deep divisions within the Council. Meanwhile, Gaza’s medical sources said hospitals received 61 bodies in the past 24 hours, including two recovered from rubble, alongside 363 wounded. At least five new famine-related deaths — including two children — were reported, bringing hunger-related fatalities to 217, among them 100 children. UNRWA warned child malnutrition rates had doubled in recent months, and the World Health Organization said one in five children in Gaza suffers from acute malnutrition due to the blockade and aid delays.

Finance Minister Reaffirms Commitment To Deepening Relations With Turkmenistan

Islamabad (News Desk): Pakistan’s Finance and Revenue Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Monday reaffirmed the country’s strong commitment to strengthening ties with Turkmenistan, highlighting that the past year had seen multiple high-level ministerial exchanges between the two nations. The commitment came during a meeting with Turkmenistan’s Ambassador to Pakistan, Atadjan Movlamov, who called on the minister to discuss matters of mutual interest, with a focus on expanding bilateral trade, commerce, and investment. Ambassador Movlamov stressed Turkmenistan’s high regard for its partnership with Pakistan, describing it as both an important trading and investment partner and a vital transit hub for bilateral and transnational trade. Discussions also explored opportunities for joint ventures and cooperation, particularly in the energy, transportation, and construction sectors. On behalf of Turkmenistan’s Minister of Finance and Economy, Mammetguly Astanagulov, Ambassador Movlamov extended an invitation to Senator Aurangzeb to attend the Turkmenistan Investment Forum, scheduled for mid-September in Ashgabat, coinciding with the 34th Anniversary celebrations of Turkmenistan’s Independence.

FAO Food Price Index Edges Up In July

Rome (News Desk): The FAO Food Price Index averaged 130.1 points in July 2025, up 1.6% from June, driven mainly by higher international meat and vegetable oil prices, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Despite the monthly rise, the index remains 18.8% below its March 2022 peak, but 7.6% higher than in July 2024. The index measures monthly changes in global prices of key food commodities. In July, gains in meat and vegetable oils outweighed declines in cereals, dairy, and sugar. The FAO Cereal Price Index fell 0.8% to 106.5 points, as falling wheat and sorghum prices offset maize and barley increases. Seasonal wheat harvests in the Northern Hemisphere pushed prices lower, although poor spring wheat conditions in parts of North America offered some support. The FAO All Rice Price Index dropped 1.8%, reflecting ample export availability and subdued import demand.

20th International Summer School On Youth And Heritage Concludes In Bosnia-Herzegovina

SHARJAH, (News Desk) The 20th International Summer School on Youth and Heritage (ISSYH20) has concluded in Bosnia-Herzegovina, marking two decades of training young professionals in cultural conservation and preservation. Organised by the International Forum Bosnia in collaboration with the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and its Regional Centre in Sharjah, the programme brought together 23 participants from diverse backgrounds. Running from 24th July to 9th August, the school combined lectures, seminars, workshops and field visits to heritage sites in Sarajevo, Mostar and Stolac, focusing on the role of cultural heritage in peacebuilding and post-crisis recovery. Participants also exchanged cultural traditions during the Cultural Mosaic evenings. Amra Hadžimuhamedović, Director of the Centre for Cultural Heritage at the International Forum Bosnia, said the milestone edition strengthened connections among youth committed to safeguarding heritage. Anwar Sabik, Programme Officer at ICCROM’s Sharjah Regional Centre, emphasised the programme’s role in empowering future heritage leaders. The opening ceremony at Sarajevo’s Memorial Centre featured addresses by the ICCROM Director-General, the Deputy Manager of ICCROM’s Sharjah Regional Centre, the Secretary-General of Europa Nostra, and the acting Mayor of Sarajevo. Master classes were delivered by heritage experts from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the UK, and ICCROM, alongside practical workshops in heritage survey methods, wood carving, and freehand heritage drawing. Capstone studios explored peace formation through small-scale heritage recovery projects. Participants also attended the 20th International Conference on Unity and Plurality in Europe in Mostar, gaining insight into heritage restoration as a tool for rebuilding communities and fostering social cohesion.

