# TIC

THE INDUS COMPASS WEEKLY | Issue 01 | 26 November 2026




THE FIRST ISSUE

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File photo: launch of Shenzhou-13, 2021. ForrestXYC / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

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*A new issue every week, launched by Bilal Javed. Every picture is credited; photographs that are not from the event are marked "file photo".*

# Why a *magazine*?

Every day we publish stories that take a minute to read and are forgotten by the evening. Some of them deserve better. This first issue of TIC, The Indus Compass weekly magazine, takes the stories that mattered most in recent weeks and gives each of them room to breathe: the background, the numbers, the people and the questions nobody has answered yet.

The pages turn sideways, like a printed booklet. Every picture is credited, and a file photograph is always labelled as one, because a magazine should never pretend that an old picture is the scene.

In this issue: a Pakistani in orbit; a narrow strait on which the world economy leans; the biggest majority an American party has won in 34 years; the wage deal that ended weeks of unrest in Bangladesh; and the Pakistani television event of the season. Tell us what you want more of. A new issue will arrive every week.

**Bilal Javed**
*Editor, The Indus Compass*

SPACE | PAKISTAN

# The first Pakistani in *orbit*

*Zeeshan Ali has docked with China's Tiangong station. A country that has long looked up now has someone looking back.*



Zeeshan Ali in his flight suit before launch. China News Service / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0

BY THE INDUS COMPASS

At 11:56 on Wednesday morning, Pakistan time, the Shenzhou-24 spacecraft docked with China's Tiangong space station, about three and a half hours after a Long March-2F rocket lifted it from the Jiuquan launch centre in north-western China.

On board was Zeeshan Ali, 40, a payload specialist: the first Pakistani to reach orbit and the first foreigner to enter Tiangong.

READ THE NEWS STORY ONLINE →

## Seven months in Beijing

The seat was not an accident of the moment. Ali trained in Beijing for seven months alongside a second Pakistani pilot, Khurram Daud, who served as his backup. He studied Chinese intensively, learned songs and poems, tried calligraphy and took up table tennis.

He flies with Chinese commander Tang Hongbo and flight engineer Wu Yi, and will stay five to 10 days, far shorter than the usual six-month tours. On board he will help run experiments, among them a test of carbon fibre composites that repair small cracks by themselves.

Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal watched the launch in person. The flight comes as the two countries mark 75 years of diplomatic relations; their space cooperation goes back to the early 1990s, and a Pakistani-built rover is due to ride on a Chinese lunar mission around 2028.

> *I'm not flying for myself. I carry the name of Pakistan on my shoulder.*

**THE MISSION AT A GLANCE**

- **Spacecraft:** Shenzhou-24, on a Long March-2F
- **Docked:** 11:56am Pakistan time
- **Crew:** Tang Hongbo, Wu Yi, Zeeshan Ali
- **Stay:** five to 10 days
- **Backup:** Khurram Daud

FULL REPORT ONLINE →

MIDDLE EAST | SHIPPING

# The strait that cannot *breathe*

*More merchant ships were attacked near Hormuz in October than in any month since the war began. Traffic is still about 65 per cent below what it was.*



The Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz at night, from the International Space Station. File photo. NASA / Tim Kopra, public domain

BY THE INDUS COMPASS

On a map the Strait of Hormuz is a thin blue neck between Iran and the Arabian peninsula. Before the war that began in late February, about a fifth of the world's oil passed through it.

Today traffic is roughly 65 per cent lower, after Iran's moves to halt shipping and a US blockade of Iranian ports.

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## A floor, not a ceiling

The UK Maritime Trade Operations Centre logged more than 30 incidents involving merchant ships in October, the first month above 30 since the war began. Before October the average was about 10 a month. In November, up to Sunday, it had recorded at least 22 more: roughly one a day.

Those are the verified cases. The monitor says it counts only incidents it can confirm from primary sources, and that many attacked ships decline to report and have switched off their tracking. The published numbers are a floor, not a ceiling, and a rise in the count could mean more attacks or more ships willing to talk.

The blockade has produced clashes of its own: in October a US jet disabled a cargo ship that tried to run it in the Gulf of Oman. Pakistan, a mediator in the conflict, has pressed for open sea lanes; Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar said the Islamabad memorandum signed on 18 June made toll-free navigation a key principle. Brent crude was near $92 a barrel on Monday.

**HORMUZ IN NUMBERS**

- **30+** incidents in October
- **22+** in November, to Sunday
- **about 10** a month before October
- **65%** below pre-war traffic

FULL REPORT ONLINE →

UNITED STATES | POLITICS

# A majority not seen since *1992*

*Democrats won their 258th House seat after a recount, completing a sweep of Congress and gaining power over the rest of Donald Trump's term.*



The US Capitol in Washington. File photo. Kevincart1 / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

BY THE INDUS COMPASS

CBS News and NBC News called the last race on Sunday: Democrat Chuck Hubbard beat Republican Virginia Foxx in North Carolina after a recount that Foxx had requested. Hubbard said she conceded and thanked her for decades of public service.

Two hundred and fifty-eight of 435 seats is the party's largest House majority since 1992, the year Bill Clinton was elected, when it also won 258.

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## What 40 spare seats buy

A majority needs 218 seats, so 258 leaves Democrats a cushion of 40, by our arithmetic. House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said no party has held a bigger congressional majority in this century. The party has also won the Senate.

Holding both chambers gives Democrats the means to block the president's legislative agenda and to investigate his administration, and Senate leader Chuck Schumer has promised to investigate the administration. Voters, the reports say, were angry about the cost of living, tariffs and the war with Iran that pushed up fuel prices.

For Pakistan the result matters in three ways: it has mediated between Washington and Tehran, fuel prices are a daily worry for households, and a Congress able to shape tariffs and the war affects both. A big majority is not the same as unity, and the White House stays Republican for two more years.

**BY THE NUMBERS**

- **258** of 435 House seats
- **218** needed for a majority
- **40** to spare
- **1992** the last time, also 258

FULL REPORT ONLINE →

BANGLADESH | LABOUR

# Four million workers, one hard-won *raise*

*After weeks of protests that cost the industry an estimated $428 million, a wage board has set a new minimum of 17,000 taka a month.*




Women at work on a garment factory floor in Dhaka. File photo. Tareq Salahuddin / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0

BY THE INDUS COMPASS

The decision came early on Wednesday. Judge Syed Azad Subhani, who chairs the government wage board, said a majority had voted for a minimum of 17,000 taka a month, up 36 per cent from 12,500. At the exchange rate AFP used, that is about $136.

Workers had begun by asking for 30,000 taka, about $240.

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## The cost of the quarrel

The garment makers' association says the protests cost about $428 million and pushed $254 million of orders to other countries. The industry employs more than four million people and earns roughly $38 billion a year, four-fifths of Bangladesh's exports, which makes it the world's second-biggest garment exporter after China.

Labour representative Babul Akhter said workers were not fully satisfied but the outcome was "not entirely bad", and noted that pay is now revised after three years, not five.

The sector's success rests on a vast, low-paid workforce. The 2013 Rana Plaza collapse, which killed more than 1,100 people, exposed how dangerous the buildings were. Pakistan sells textiles into the same big markets; we have no figures showing that any of the shifted orders came here.

**THE WAGE DEAL**

- **Old minimum:** 12,500 taka
- **New minimum:** 17,000 taka
- **Workers' demand:** 30,000 taka
- **Cost of unrest:** about $428m

FULL REPORT ONLINE →

STREAMING | TELEVISION

# Pakistan's first Netflix *original*

*Jo Bachay Hain Sang Samait Lo arrives worldwide on 4 December with six love stories, three generations and a cast of twelve stars.*



Mohatta Palace in Karachi, where the trailer was unveiled. File photo. Miansari66 / Wikimedia Commons, CC0

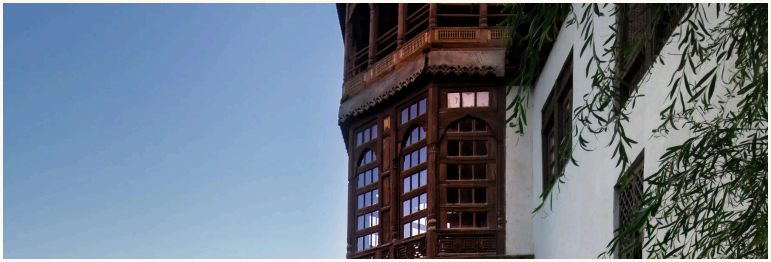
BY THE INDUS COMPASS

The trailer arrived at a red-carpet evening at Karachi's Mohatta Palace, with musical performances and a few words from the actors, and offers a three-minute glimpse of the series.

The cast: Fawad Khan, Sanam Saeed, Mahira Khan, Ahmed Ali Akbar, Bilal Ashraf, Aamina Sheikh, Ahad Raza Mir, Iqra Aziz, Hamza Ali Abbasi, Maya Ali, Khushhal Khan and Hania Aamir.

DAWN IMAGES DECODES THE TRAILER →

## Six couples, one trailer



Khaplu Palace in Gilgit-Baltistan, which the trailer appears to use as a location. File photo. Totallytrashed / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

The scenes were shot in northern Pakistan, Karachi, Bahawalpur, Rome, Tuscany and London. Dawn's Images team reads the trailer as six pairings across generations: Fawad Khan and Sanam Saeed meeting in Europe, Mahira Khan and Ahmed Ali Akbar in a 1970s-style haveli, Ahad Raza Mir and Iqra Aziz in Rome, and younger and older couples whose stories seem to echo each other.

Beyond the romance, they note, the trailer hints at infidelity, jealousy and the violence women face. In India, the All India Cine Workers Association has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to block the series. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal replied that India had already made sport and water into weapons and now seemed to be doing the same with art, and asked how insecure one must be to treat a drama as a security threat.

# Also in *showbiz*

*Three more stories from the past fortnight.*



File photo: Sony Music Sweden / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0

## Alan Walker's 24 hours in Lahore

The DJ flew in for a one-day shoot with Zain Zohaib and Hamza Malik for "Alfaaz (Alan Walker Relight)", a remix with James Arthur. He told Dawn Images it was "really possible for Pakistani music to make it worldwide".



File photo: The Citizens Foundation / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0

## Dar-e-Nijaat, on and off screen

Sania Saeed says her character Khushbakht is "a very resilient woman". In Bengaluru, two private screenings planned for 28 November and 5 December were cancelled after posters caused a backlash and police asked the organisers for details.



File photo: Frere Hall, Karachi / Aareez Asif, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

## Karachi's world on one stage

The World Culture Festival closed after 25 days: more than 200 performances by artists from 153 countries. Sajjad Ali headlined the last night, and the next edition is set for 28 October to 21 November 2027.

MORE FROM DAWN IMAGES →



PHOTO OF THE ISSUE

# Lahore, from the *ramparts*

**The Badshahi Mosque seen from the Lahore Fort. File photo.**

Alan Walker had 24 hours in Lahore. From the plane he went to the hotel and then straight to the old city, where his first shoot was at the Lahore Fort beside the Badshahi Mosque. He likened the complex to the Taj Mahal, both being icons of Mughal architecture.

File photo: Nauman335 / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

# The week in *numbers*

*Five figures from the stories that shaped the week.*

**$1.21bn**

### The IMF's next payment

The Fund's board is expected to vote on 11 December, which would bring total disbursements under two programmes to about $5.7bn.

**−23%**

### Business confidence

The overseas investors' chamber survey fell 36 points, even as foreign direct investment rose 22 per cent in July to October.

**3,263**

### Subsidised EVs delivered

By 28 October, against 21,918 approved loan applications under the PAVE scheme.

**1,631**

### Vehicles traced in Karachi

Safe City cameras helped trace and return the vehicles from January to October, and 84 wanted people were arrested.

**153**

### Countries on one stage

The artists at Karachi's World Culture Festival came from 153 countries over 25 days.

# The weeks *ahead*

*Dates to watch, as reported at the time of going to press.*

**30 Nov to 5 Dec**

### Zeeshan Ali returns

If his stay lasts the reported five to 10 days. No landing date has been announced.

**4 Dec**

### Jo Bachay Hain Sang Samait Lo

Pakistan's first Netflix original is released worldwide.

**5 Dec**

### A screening that will not happen

One of two Dar-e-Nijaat screenings in Bengaluru, cancelled by its organisers.

**11 Dec**

### IMF board vote

On about $1.21bn for Pakistan under two programmes.

**11 Dec**

### Women's World Cup draw

The draw for the 2027 tournament in Brazil takes place in Rio de Janeiro.

# TIC

THE INDUS COMPASS WEEKLY MAGAZINE

## Next issue: *next week*

Thank you for reading our first issue. A new issue is launched every week by Bilal Javed. Stories are first reported, day by day, at theinduscompass.com; this magazine takes the best of them and gives them room.

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