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2025 marks decisive reset in Pakistan-US ties

The Washington Times has described 2025 as a turning point in Pakistan-US relations, citing what it called a dramatic shift in Washington's approach.

The newspaper said President Donald Trump abandoned the long-standing "India First" policy and elevated Pakistan's strategic importance, a change it linked largely to the May conflict between Pakistan and India.

In May 2025, following India's

unprovoked attacks, Pakistan launched a calibrated military response, Operation Bunyanum Marsoos, targeting Indian troop concentrations, air assets, and key command infrastructure. Retaliatory strikes neutralized over 26 high-value installations across five Indian states, including missile silos, air defence systems, logistics hubs, and communications networks.

Pakistani drones and cyber

Continued on page 12

US State Department revokes 95,000 visas in 2025

In a significant escalation of border and national security enforcement, the U.S. State Department has canceled more than 95,000 visas so far in 2025.

The updated figures, confirmed by Fox News on Friday, reveal a rapid acceleration in enforcement actions. Just weeks ago, that number sat at approximately 85,000, indicating that authorities have voided an additional 10,000

Continued on page 12

Pakistan taught India unforgettable lesson in May war: PM Shehbaz

Prime Minister Shehbaz reaffirms Pakistan's political, moral and diplomatic support for Kashmiris

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday reiterated that Pakistan's armed forces taught India an unforgettable lesson during the four-day military clashes in May 2025.

PM Shehbaz made the remarks

while addressing a ceremony as he formally launched the distribution of laptops under the Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Programme in Azad Jammu and Kashmir at the University of Azad Jammu

Continued on page 12



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Pakistan Warns Of Severe Risks From India's Indus Waters Treaty Violations

Aamir Zulfiqar Khan

On 20th December 2025, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan briefed the Diplomatic Corps in Islamabad on India's persistent material breaches

of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). He highlighted India's repeated manipulation of water flows, construction of illegal hydropower projects on the Western Rivers, and refusal to engage

Continued on page 13

UN expert decries Bushra Bibi's detention; urges communication with lawyers, family

A United Nations (UN) expert on Wednesday warned that Bushra Bibi, the wife of former prime minister Imran Khan, is being "detained in

Continued on page 12

FIA arrests 451 involved in human trafficking, reducing illegal migration by 47%

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) reported at a review meeting held on Saturday that this year, 451 individuals involved in human trafficking and illegal travel networks had been arrested. As a

result, the number of Pakistanis illegally travelling to Europe had dropped by 47%, with similar reductions seen in illegal travel to the UK and Gulf countries.

Continued on page 12

Pakistan snaps up major arms deal with Libyan force

KARACHI: Pakistan has signed a multi-billion dollar deal to sell conventional military equipment to the Libyan army, entering a select club of countries that export conventional arms and equipment.

Continued on page 13

PIA to be run by Arif Habib-led consortium by April 2026

The national flag carrier, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), is expected to be run by a new owner from April 2026. It will also receive fresh capital under a deal to privatise the airline, the country's privatisation

Continued on page 13

Donald Trump lauds Field Marshal Asim Munir as 'Highly Respected'

US President Donald Trump once again praised Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, reiterating that he played a key role in preventing a war

between India and Pakistan in May.

Trump made the remarks during an event in Florida alongside Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth

Continued on page 13

Poll finds 1 in 4 Americans think U.S. healthcare is in 'crisis'

Nearly 1 in 4 Americans believe the U.S. health care system is in crisis, and high costs are the top reason why, the results of a new poll suggest.

The data, released Monday

Continued on page 12



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Pakistan–United States Relations, From Confrontation to Partnership

Mian Iftikhar Ahmad

Relations between Pakistan and the United States represent one of the most complex and evolving chapters in contemporary international politics, marked by cycles of engagement and estrangement, cooperation and confrontation, trust and suspicion. From the very beginning, this relationship was shaped less by ideological harmony and more by strategic compulsions.

In the early years after Pakistan's independence, the Cold War environment pushed Islamabad towards the Western bloc, while Washington viewed Pakistan as a strategically located ally in South Asia capable of counterbalancing Soviet influence.

Pakistan's participation in defense alliances such as SEATO and CENTO reflected its desire for security guarantees and economic assistance, while the United States primarily saw Pakistan through the prism of containment strategy.

This asymmetry of expectations laid the foundation for future misunderstandings. Over time, it became evident that while Pakistan perceived the United States as a long-term strategic partner, Washington regarded Pakistan largely as a situational ally whose importance fluctuated with changing global priorities.

The wars of 1965 and 1971 between Pakistan and India deeply affected public perceptions in Pakistan, as American neutrality or reluctance to support Pakistan during critical moments reinforced a sense of abandonment.

The dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 further deepened mistrust, leaving a lasting scar on bilateral relations. The subsequent pursuit of Pakistan's nuclear program triggered another phase of ten-

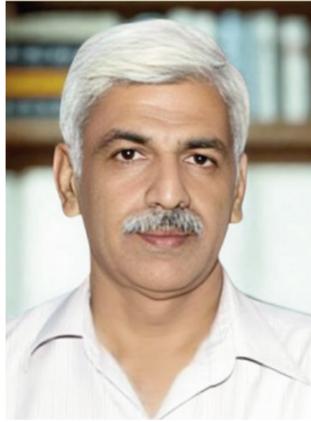
sion, culminating in sanctions and legislative measures such as the Pressler Amendment, which symbolized the fragility of American commitments from the Pakistani perspective. The issue of paid-for but undelivered F-16 aircraft remains a powerful symbol of broken promises in the collective memory of Pakistan.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan once again brought the two countries together, as shared strategic objectives temporarily overshadowed mutual suspicions. Pakistan became a frontline state in the Afghan jihad, hosting millions of refugees and playing a decisive role in supporting resistance forces, while the United States provided financial and military assistance to counter Soviet expansion.

However, with the withdrawal of Soviet troops, Washington's rapid disengagement left Pakistan grappling with the long-term consequences of militancy, weapons proliferation, and regional instability, reinforcing the perception that Pakistan was used and then discarded once its utility had diminished.

The events of September 11, 2001, marked yet another turning point, as Pakistan was once again thrust into the role of a frontline ally in the global war on terror.

Islamabad aligned itself with Washington, incurring enormous human, economic, and social costs in the process, while facing persistent accusations of duplicity and repeated demands to "do more." Drone strikes, unilateral actions, and incidents such as the Abbottabad operation severely strained bilateral ties, raising serious questions about sovereignty and mutual trust. For many in Pakistan, this period



By: Mian Iftikhar Ahmad

represented the height of confrontation, where cooperation existed alongside deep resentment and suspicion. Yet international relations are rarely static, and shifting global dynamics have gradually pushed both countries toward a reassessment of their approach.

The United States today is no longer solely focused on counterterrorism in South Asia; instead, its strategic outlook is increasingly shaped by great power competition, particularly with China, the rebalancing of influence in the Asia-Pacific region, and the need for economic connectivity across Central and South Asia. Within this evolving framework, Pakistan's geostrategic location, demographic potential, and economic significance have once again come into focus. Simultaneously, Pakistan has also undergone a gradual shift in its own foreign policy thinking, recognizing that an exclusive security-centric relationship with Washington is neither sustainable nor beneficial.

There is a growing realization in Islamabad that future engagement with the United States must be grounded in

economic cooperation, trade, investment, technology transfer, and people-to-people contacts rather than dependence on aid or military alignment.

This recalibration has opened new avenues for engagement, particularly in areas such as information technology, digital services, education, and climate cooperation. Pakistan's expanding IT sector, freelance workforce, and startup ecosystem are increasingly connected to the American market, generating foreign exchange and projecting a more modern and entrepreneurial image of the country. Educational exchange programs, most notably the Fulbright scholarships, stand out as one of the most enduring and positive pillars of bilateral relations, fostering human capital development and long-term intellectual ties.

Thousands of Pakistani students and professionals trained in the United States contribute not only to Pakistan's development but also to a deeper mutual understanding between the two societies. The Pakistani-American community plays a crucial bridging role in this context, acting as an informal yet influential channel of diplomacy.

With significant representation in medicine, engineering, academia, business, and technology, the diaspora has the capacity to counter negative stereotypes, promote investment, and advocate for balanced policies in Washington.

Another emerging area of convergence lies in addressing climate change, a challenge that poses an existential threat to Pakistan and has become a priority in global policymaking.

Pakistan's vulnerability to floods, heatwaves, and glacial melting underscores the need for international cooper-

ation, and the United States, with its technological expertise and financial resources, can play a constructive role through climate finance, renewable energy initiatives, and disaster resilience programs.

While defense and security cooperation remains sensitive, it is increasingly framed in pragmatic and limited terms, focusing on counterterrorism coordination, military-to-military engagement, and regional stability rather than expansive strategic alignment. For this evolving partnership to succeed, both countries must abandon unrealistic expectations and acknowledge each other's constraints and priorities. Pakistan seeks recognition as a sovereign state pursuing a diversified foreign policy that includes relations with China, Russia, and regional partners, while the United States must move beyond a zero-sum mindset that views Pakistan's external engagements as inherently adversarial.

A mature relationship requires mutual respect, transparency, and clearly defined objectives, replacing coercion with dialogue and conditionality with cooperation.

If Washington prioritizes trade over aid, investment over assistance, and institutional engagement over episodic crisis management, and if Islamabad approaches the relationship with strategic clarity rather than emotional reaction, Pakistan–United States relations can gradually move from a history dominated by confrontation toward a more balanced and sustainable partnership. Such a transformation would not only serve the national interests of both countries but also contribute to regional stability and global cooperation in an increasingly interconnected world.

Honouring promises

GERMANY'S decision to admit more than 500 Afghans stranded in Pakistan is a welcome, albeit belated step towards honouring commitments that should never have been put on hold. These individuals were accepted under a formal resettlement scheme after the Taliban's return to power, many because they worked with German forces or spoke out for rights and freedoms that now place them at grave risk. Leaving them in limbo was never morally defensible. The move draws attention to a recurring

problem in the West's approach to Afghan refugees. Grand assurances were made in 2021. Yet as political winds shifted, programmes were slowed, suspended or quietly abandoned. For those who trusted these promises and uprooted their lives, the cost has been years of uncertainty and fear.

Pakistan's position adds urgency to the matter. Already burdened by decades of displacement and limited resources, it has made clear that temporary arrangements cannot continue indefinitely. Deportation to

Afghanistan is not a neutral act. For many of those waiting here, it would mean persecution, imprisonment or worse. This reality places an obligation on states that pledged resettlement to act decisively. Germany's move should then be seen as just the beginning. Other countries that announced similar schemes must review stalled cases and speed up admissions. Countries with means cannot outsource moral responsibility to host nations or substitute cash offers for sanctuary when lives are at stake. More

broadly, credibility is at stake. Global partnerships, whether military, humanitarian or diplomatic, rest on trust. When states fail those who stood with them in moments of danger, the damage extends far beyond one refugee cohort. Promises made to Afghans were not conditional or symbolic. They were commitments grounded in risk and sacrifice. Honouring them, fully and promptly, is the least required of governments that claim to uphold human rights and international responsibility.

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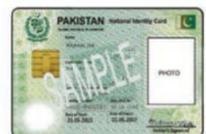
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POLICING WITH PURPOSE

Dr. Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti

At a time when public confidence in Pakistan's policing institutions continues to decline, the Faisalabad region offers a remarkable positive illustration of how dedicated leadership can begin to change ingrained behaviours. Under the direction of Regional Police Officer (RPO) Faisalabad Sohail Akhtar Sukhera, the area has witnessed a policing paradigm that combines administrative discipline with public participation, accountability and a more compassionate understanding of law enforcement. In a province where legacy problems frequently plague policing, this strategy offers a crucial case study in institutional restructuring.

Central to this transformation has been the resurgence of direct public participation through open courts (khuli katcheris), which are now routinely conducted throughout the region. By deliberately bypassing bureaucratic layers that often impede or obstruct justice, these forums enable residents to voice their grievances directly to the regional police head. So far, since he assumed charge, over 265 complaints have been received, many of which were addressed immediately. In one well-known instance, the RPO personally intervened to help an elderly woman regain ownership of her house. Beyond its immediate outcome, the episode served as a symbolic reminder that justice must be seen in order to be believed, particularly in communities where state institutions are frequently perceived as aloof or uncaring.

If public involvement constitutes the first pillar of Sohail Sukhera's philosophy, internal accountability forms the second. Unlike many police officers who remain reluctant to take decisive action against their own ranks, the Faisalabad region has witnessed a zero-tolerance stance towards corruption, incompetence and misuse of authority. Consequently, senior traffic wardens, traffic assistants and investigative officials across Faisalabad, Toba Tek Singh and



Dr Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti

Jhang have been demoted, suspended or dismissed due to misconduct. Although such measures are often resisted within rigid bureaucratic structures, they reinforce a simple yet transformative principle: law enforcement cannot command public respect if it is unwilling to discipline itself.

At the same time, efforts to control crime under Sukhera's leadership have been significantly intensified. A region-wide crackdown on narcotics has resulted in 360 registered cases, 365 arrests, and the recovery of substantial quantities of heroin, charas, ICE, and illicit liquor. Similarly, gambling networks—frequently linked to broader illicit economies—have been targeted through 56 prosecutions and more than 200 arrests. Collectively, these actions reflect a clear recognition that unregulated criminal marketplaces erode social order and disproportionately prey on the most vulnerable members of society.

Another important intervention has been the

campaign against professional begging mafias. In an aggressive region-wide sweep, police have taken nearly 2,800 professional beggars into custody, primarily from busy intersections and commercial districts. Importantly, these operations have been paired with coordination efforts involving district administrations to ensure that enforcement is complemented by rehabilitation and welfare-oriented measures, rather than force alone. It is this balance between firmness and compassion that distinguishes the Faisalabad model from purely coercive approaches.

Equally notable is the Sohail Sukhera's unwavering stance against drug trafficking and gambling, alongside an explicit policy of zero tolerance for crimes such as child abuse, molestation and sodomy. By clearly identifying these offences as red lines, the regional command has underscored that policing must protect social dignity as much as it enforces the law. Meanwhile, a broader crackdown against hard-core offenders and habitual criminals continues across the region, running parallel to what the leadership describes as "soft policing" including community engagement, prevention and, where possible, conflict de-escalation.

In this context, the integration of technology with traditional enforcement methods represents a significant, though still evolving, dimension of policing reform in Faisalabad Region. As modern crime patterns increasingly demand data-driven responses, leadership-driven reforms have encouraged the gradual use of digital surveillance, geo-fencing, crime mapping and improved record management systems to enhance operational efficiency. When combined with conventional beat policing, community intelligence and human judgment, these technological tools can strengthen investigations, improve response times and reduce discretionary abuse. Crucially, the objective is not to replace traditional policing, but to amalgamate experience-based law enforcement with evidence-led, technology-assisted decision-making, ensuring that innovation enhances accountability rather than distancing the police from the public.

Leadership style, too, has played a decisive role in reinforcing these priorities. Sohail Sukhera's preference for presence over distance, manifested through frequent field inspections, surprise visits to

police stations and direct assessments of public dealing has recalibrated internal expectations. As a result, officers now operate with heightened awareness that their conduct and performance are being closely monitored at the highest regional level.

Crucially, the reform agenda has not overlooked police welfare. Recognising that exhausted and under-supported officers cannot deliver community-oriented policing, he has taken concrete steps to address the financial, medical and administrative concerns of police personnel. Moreover, his engagement with the families of shuhada, coupled with his visibly empathetic approach towards their welfare, reflects an understanding that institutional morale and institutional performance are inseparable.

Beyond operational policing, Faisalabad has also seen efforts aimed at promoting interfaith harmony. These initiatives reinforce the idea that law enforcement has a broader role to play in safeguarding social cohesion within a religiously diverse society. Although such measures rarely attract headlines, they quietly contribute to easing tensions and building trust between communities and the state.

Taken together, the Faisalabad experience demonstrates that people-centred policing is not an unattainable ideal, but rather the outcome of leadership that balances authority with service and enforcement with empathy. Admittedly, systemic challenges within Punjab's policing framework remain substantial, and no single region can offer a comprehensive solution. Nevertheless, Faisalabad stands out as a reminder that accountability, transparency and humane engagement are not abstract concepts—they are practical choices.

In a country grappling with rising crime and diminishing trust in public institutions, the lessons emerging from Faisalabad merit serious consideration. If adopted with consistency and backed institutionally, such principles could help redefine policing across Punjab and perhaps begin to restore a fragile but essential social contract between the police and the citizens they are meant to serve.

Dr Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti holds a PhD in Political Science and writes regularly on terrorism, counter terrorism, countering violent extremism, and policing affairs. He can be reached at rizwanbh79@gmail.com.

A way out

AFTER the weekend deliberations in the federal capital concluded with both the opposition and government camps calling for dialogue, some political 'in-betweeners' have also chimed in with helpful suggestions.

On Monday, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman suggested fresh elections as a way to turn a new leaf and break the political deadlock. In the maulana's estimation, an electoral reset would help the nation move on from this era, which has seen two governments born of what he described as 'rigged' elections.

"Neither the 2018 elections nor the 2024 polls reflected the will of the people," the maulana said. "The governments born out of establishment-backed rigging should come to an end. From Sindh to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, these governments should be brought to an end, and fresh elections must be held across the country."

His is not an unfair assessment, even if his own political history is not untouched by the compromises he now decries; nor is the demand novel or unreasonable.

But it is well-timed. With opposition parties calling for a new charter of democracy, and the government signalling openness for dialogue, the maulana has highlighted the root of their dispute. In the maulana's view, both the present dispensation and those who ruled in the previous setup must accept that the electoral process that brought them to power was an

unfair one.

So much has been documented regarding this matter since 2018 that it is unreasonable for either party not to concede this much. Yet both continue to act as if they have not, at different moments, benefited from the corruption of the electoral process. The PTI still refuses to accept that its 'victory' in 2018 was a tainted one, even after finding itself at the wrong end of the same tactics used to engineer electoral outcomes in 2024. Unless it accepts this, it cannot credibly demand reform or claim the moral high ground it now seeks.

Likewise, the PML-N and PPP, despite appearing to be aware of the realities of the 2024 general election, never stopped and reconsidered whether accepting such a 'victory' would delegitimise their politics in the eyes of the people. They have lost much in this Faustian bargain, and it is understandable why they, too, need a reset. Which is why the conditions seem to be conducive for a new charter.

If both sides concede that the other was wronged, agree to stop victimising opponents, reverse their poor decisions, and agree on a modus vivendi that involves civilised opposition even if it is unyielding in its principles, there is a good chance that they will make decent headway. Their fight has been long, and it has hurt the nation. Much may still be redeemed if they choose to end it in a civil manner.

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An ‘America First’ strategy

Trump’s redirection of foreign policy is driven by economic nationalism.

Malecha Lodhi

THE National Security Strategy (NSS) recently released by the Trump administration leaves little doubt that it is an effort to redirect US foreign policy and break in several ways from the past. How much of this will translate into actual policy actions that can be implemented in the real world of changing geopolitics and rapid developments waits to be seen.

The intent is to make protection of ‘core national interests’ the sole focus of strategy in pursuit of President Donald Trump’s America First foreign policy and reflecting his domestic priorities. Economic nationalism is central to the NSS which accords

overriding importance to US economic and mercantilist interests. Strengthening America’s economic power and maintaining its economic pre-eminence is a priority goal and trade policy the means to ensure that. The strategy reflects Trump’s transactional and unilateralist view of how America should engage with the world.

A distinguishing aspect of the NSS is implicit acknowledgement that the world is now multipolar, where US leverage has limits. It says America will not seek to dominate the world. This can be read not just as a choice but recognition of a world where there has been a redistribution of global power, especially eco-

nomie power. When the strategy refers to the US working to “maintain global and regional balances of power” it implies acceptance of that reality and of the influence of the world’s “great and middle powers”.

No longer aspiring to global dominance doesn’t mean the US will not act to prevent others seeking such ascendancy. According to the NSS “The US cannot allow any nation to become so dominant that it could threaten our interests”, so it will ally with others to prevent the emergence of “dominant adversaries”. But it won’t waste “blood and treasure” to curtail the influence of all the world’s powers.

The kind of global leadership envisioned is apparent from the document. Positing a narrower view of national interests suggests selective global engagement and therefore a departure from past US leadership. The document states plainly “The days of the United States propping up the entire world order like Atlas are over”. It sharply criticises previous national security strategies that followed the end of the Cold War for being open-ended and overreaching by trying to “shoulder forever global burdens”. Past “American foreign policy elites,” it says, “convinced themselves that permanent American domination of the entire world was in the best interests of our country.” Instead, it argues “the affairs of other countries should concern the US only if their activities directly threaten American interests”. This is the ‘course correction’ the new NSS aims to carry out.

As others have also noted, the strategy envisions a ‘spheres of influence’ world where different big powers hold sway and call the shots in their regions of priority. “The outsized influence of larger, richer, and stronger nations is a timeless truth of international relations,” the document says. In another departure from the past, the NSS omits any mention of big power competition and the US engaging in this. It takes a non-confrontational approach to China and Russia. Nowhere does it describe them as adversaries. It talks of re-establishing “strategic stability” with Russia. The EU, on the other hand, is viewed as a threat for US interests.

The biggest threat is seen to come from migration, which the strategy seeks to prevent as a top homeland security priority. This goal is projected on to foreign policy. The Western hemisphere is deemed as the most important region where a revived Monroe doctrine will be enforced. US aims in the region are to stop migration, cross-border drugs smuggling and counter China’s growing presence and influence.

China is described as a ‘near-peer’ power and seen as a competitor, not a threat. But that doesn’t mean the US policy of containment is

weakening. The Indo-Pacific is regarded as a region of high priority precisely because of that and as the battleground where the US must “win the economic future” and “compete successfully”. China’s industrial efficiency and economic progress are referred to with admiration in the document. The goal is to rebalance America’s relationship with China while forging a “mutually advantageous economic relationship with Beijing”. The commitment to deter a conflict over Taiwan is reiterated. The announcement of \$11 billion in arms sales to Taiwan is in pursuit of that objective and marks an escalatory US move.

India figures in US balance-of-power considerations in the context of the Indo-Pacific strategy, which accords it elevated importance. Improvement is sought in commercial and other ties with India. But it is to encourage New Delhi to contribute to regional security that a greater role for India is envisaged. Despite current difficulties in the relationship, the US continues to see India as a strategic counterweight to China. That provides a firm foundation for longer-term Indo-US relations.

The Middle East no longer counts among core strategic priorities. Among reasons given for this are diversification of US energy supplies, waning of superpower competition by the advantageous position held by America and Iran’s weakening after Israeli and US military attacks. Nevertheless, the strategy commits the US to prevent domination of the region and control of energy chokepoints by an adversary.

Europe is not only downgraded but comes in for harsh criticism. It is depicted as being in economic decline and facing “civilisational erasure” due to immigration and EU institutions. European governments are also assailed for subverting democracy. Because they have failed to curb mass migration, the document pledges to help right-wing populists in Europe come to power, who can secure borders. This despite the NSS claim of non-intervention in other countries. The contradiction between this pledge and actual practice is also laid bare by ongoing US actions against Venezuela, including declaring its government as a ‘foreign terrorist organisation’.

Pakistan is not mentioned in the document. But the new strategy has implications for Islamabad that need to be carefully assessed. At the end of the day, it is actual US foreign policy conduct that will count. How much of the strategy is put into practice is what will matter especially with a leader whose mercurial personality and whimsical ways put US consistency and reliability in serious doubt.

The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK and UN.

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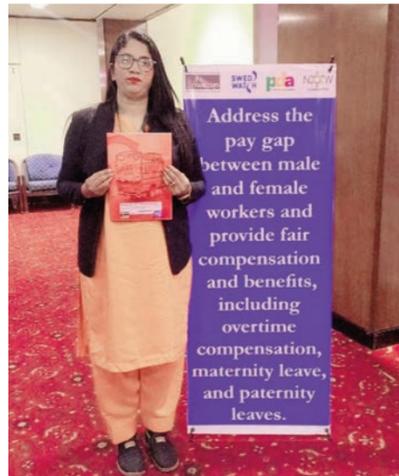
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Labour Rights in Pakistan: Observations and the Need for Action

Nazia Naz Defender & International researcher human Rights

As an academic and researcher, I recently completed the Business and Human Rights (BHR) course at the Geneva Academy, which gave me a deeper understanding of international labour standards and human rights frameworks. Since then, I have been actively working on labour rights issues in Pakistan, focusing particularly on child labour, bonded labour and the conditions of industrial workers.

My field visits across several industries allowed me to meet thousands of workers, providing first-hand insight into their struggles. One of the most surprising findings was that nearly 98% of industrial workers were unaware of Pakistan's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, which aligns with South-East Asia's regional commitments. This lack of awareness highlights a critical gap in outreach and education about workers' rights. When workers do not know their entitlements, they cannot demand fair treatment, making



them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. During my visits, I observed widespread negligence and weak enforcement of labour laws.

While Pakistan has passed numerous legislations to protect workers, implementation

remains a major challenge. Employers often violate regulations with impunity and government authorities responsible for monitoring and enforcement frequently fail to act due to inadequate resources, corruption, or lack of accountability.

These gaps prevent the intended benefits of the laws from reaching the workers who need them the most. Women workers, in particular, face extreme hardships. Many female labourers I spoke with work long hours in unsafe conditions for very low wages, often without access to proper healthcare or social protection. They are subjected to harassment, forced overtime, and limited mobility due to societal norms and workplace policies. The combination of poverty, illiteracy, and social discrimination makes them one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour force. Child labour and bonded labour remain persistent problems despite legal prohibitions. Many children continue to work in hazardous industries, often because families depend on their income for survival. Bonded

labourers, trapped in cycles of debt, rarely see justice due to systemic inefficiencies and intimidation by powerful employers.

Based on these observations, it is clear that much more work is needed to improve labour conditions in Pakistan. A comprehensive study and awareness campaign should be undertaken to educate workers about their rights and the mechanisms available for redress. Stronger monitoring and stricter enforcement of labour laws, combined with community-based support systems for women and children, are essential to achieve meaningful change. Ultimately, protecting labour rights is not only a matter of legal compliance but a moral obligation. Workers are the backbone of industries and the broader economy. Ensuring they are treated fairly, paid justly and protected from exploitation should be a national priority. Only through coordinated efforts by the government, civil society and academia can the promise of labour rights become a reality for every worker in Pakistan.

Two Muslims, Two Paths — The Battle of Narratives and Ahmed's Prize

By A. Rehman Patel

This piece would be incomplete without a clear preface:

Wherever a life is lost, whoever that life belongs to, it is a loss for humanity. Religion, nationality, race, or identity come later. From a ten-year-old child to an eighty-seven-year-old elder, those who died in this tragedy were not representatives of any ideology. They were living human beings. This catastrophe deserves nothing less than unequivocal condemnation.

Yet history's cruel trick is this: some events do not end. They transform into narratives. And then the central question is no longer about bodies, but about meaning. That is the point at which this incident ceases to be merely an attack and becomes an intellectual and moral test.

There is an uncomfortable but decisive fact in this case that ignoring would amount to deliberate dishonesty:

the attacker was a Muslim, and the man who saved lives, Ahmed al-Ahmed, is also a Muslim.

This is where two paths diverge.

The first is the path the world has chosen many times before.

A handful of broken, misguided individuals—shaped by psychological collapse, ideological manipulation, or political delusion—are turned into representatives of an entire religion, a whole community, a complete civilization. This path is easy, immediate, and extremely useful for powerful political narratives.

The second path is harder, but far closer to the truth.

That path runs through Ahmed al-Ahmed.

Ahmed was not a preacher.

He was not an ideological soldier.

He was not a media-trained character delivering lines for cameras.

He was an ordinary human being—regular, anonymous, unremarkable. And yet, when a gun appeared, when fear froze the crowd, he chose not to retreat but to move forward. He placed his own life in danger, confronted an armed man, saved multiple lives, was wounded himself—and did not stop.

That moment explains what being

Muslim truly means.

Islam's philosophy is not killing, but protection.

Its ethics are not explosions, but shields.

Saving one innocent life is equated with saving all of humanity—and that is precisely what Ahmed did.

Opposite him stands the one who picked up the gun.

Such people exist in every religion, every society, every nation. Their numbers are smaller than a pinch of salt—perhaps even less. The problem is that their voices arrive as explosions, while people like Ahmed do their work quietly and step away.

The real question, then, is not why corruption exists.

The real question is: who is granted identity?

Is the one who raises the gun allowed to represent an entire faith, or is Ahmed recognized as its face?

This must be said without hesitation: the world must stand against such corrupted elements—and Muslims must do so first. Not in defense, not in expla-

nation, but because these crimes are committed in our name, and their burden is placed on all of us. Countering extremism is not only a state responsibility; it is a moral obligation.

At the same time, another injustice continues.

After every tragedy, the gun is centered—and the shield is forgotten. Figures like Ahmed are pushed to the margins of the news cycle, while the killer becomes the headline. This is the most dangerous failure of narrative.

At this point, one statement is no longer emotional rhetoric; it becomes a moral demand:

Ahmed should be awarded the Nobel Prize.

Not because he is Muslim.

Not because he fits any political agenda.

But because he revived the original meaning of the Nobel idea—the courage to choose humanity in a moment of hatred.

Where the gun spoke, he turned his body into a shield.

Where the crowd stood frozen, he

moved.

Where identities were being weaponized, he saw only a human being.

If the Nobel Prize exists only for laboratories, treaties, and speeches, then its moral foundation deserves scrutiny. But if it truly honors peace, courage, and human dignity, then Ahmed is its natural heir.

Ahmed issued no manifesto.

He presented no ideology.

He simply did what many of the world's most powerful leaders fail to do: he risked his own life so that others might live.

In the end, the truth is simple, but heavy:

If the world recognizes Ahmed, the narrative can change.

If the narrative does not change, then the gun will win and humanity will lose—no matter which religion the victim belongs to.

This event does not show us two Muslims.

It shows us two paths.

The decision of which path becomes our identity is now ours to make.

Gaza, the Politics of Silence, and an Offer That Exposes More Than It Reveals

A Rehman Patel

In American politics, some figures are more than senators or cabinet officials. They help set the direction of policy. One such figure is Marco Rubio, a senior power broker with deep access to Washington's foreign-policy and security establishment.

That is why his recent statement at a press conference—that Pakistan itself offered military services to the United States—cannot be dismissed as an off-hand remark or rhetorical flourish. It came from someone who understands the internal machinery of U.S. foreign and security policy. For that reason alone, the claim is not just a piece of news; it places an entire narrative in the dock.

For decades, Pakistani audiences have been told that Palestine is a pillar of our faith, our conscience, and our foreign policy. That Al-Aqsa is a red line. That

Pakistan stands with the oppressed. But in international politics, positions are not judged by slogans. They are judged by actions and by record.

Palestine was never merely a "conflict." It was a living society—with cities, markets, schools, and cultural continuity. Gaza was not a military term; it was a coastal city full of life. Today, Gaza has been transformed into an open-air prison where electricity becomes news, water becomes a political weapon, and life itself is reduced to a temporary permit. This did not happen overnight. It is the product of global power politics and the long, sustained silence of the Muslim world.

So the question here is not emotional; it is practical. In the decades-long Israel-Palestine conflict, what role has Pakistan actually played? Did Pakistan ever convene an international conference on

Palestine? Did it pursue a sustained, assertive diplomatic strategy through the OIC? Did it go beyond UN resolutions to pay any political, diplomatic, or economic cost? Was Palestine ever treated as a genuine state priority at home?

The answer is clear: no.

At the state level, Palestine has remained an emotional reference, never an operational priority. Statements were made, but statements are not policy. Streets were not allowed to heat up, media was kept within limits, and no confrontation with global powers was risked over this issue. This silence was not accidental; it reflects a deliberate state posture.

History has seen this silence before. The massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon remains one of the darkest chapters in Palestinian history. While responsibility was directly attributed to Lebanese militias under Israeli

oversight, the broader military presence and collective silence of the Muslim world at that time remains an unresolved moral question. There is no proven judicial charge against the Pakistani military, but it is equally true that the state never felt compelled to publicly and transparently address this chapter. Over time, silence itself becomes a statement.

It is against this backdrop that today's claim—that Pakistan offered military services—takes on significance. Services for whom? For the Palestinians? Or for a global security framework in which Israeli occupation is treated as the status quo and Palestinian resistance as the problem?

States are judged not by what they say, but by what they do. A state that truly stands with a cause pays a price for it. Pakistan has paid no price—diplomatic,

political, or economic—for Palestine.

That is why, in the coming days a role emerges under the banners of "security" or "stability" that benefits Israel and its allies while harming Palestinian civilians, it should not be seen as a sudden deviation. It would be the logical outcome of a long, carefully maintained silence.

This piece does not accuse; it questions.

And questions are the mark of living societies.

If silence itself is a policy, then citizens have the right to know where they truly stand—and for whom they have remained silent.

This is not a temporary headline. It is a question of state conscience, moral direction, and historical accountability.

Nations are not recognized by slogans.

They are recognized by their record.

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DEMOCRAT

Commissioner Dr. Asif Tufail Reviews Christmas Arrangements and Flood Relief in Sahiwal



**BY: Tayyab Habib Khan
Bureau Chief Sahiwal Division**

Commissioner Sahiwal Division Dr. Asif Tufail visited the Rose Garden along with Deputy Commissioner Sahiwal Captain (r) Samiullah Farooq. He reviewed the current situation of the garden and issued instructions to the concerned officers to speed up the pace of work so that the restoration process can be completed within the stipulated time. Commissioner Sahiwal Division Dr. Asif Tufail said that the Rose Garden should be completely restored and opened for the citizens so that the public can get quality recreational facilities.

He directed the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) to plant seasonal plants and colorful flowers in the garden and make the overall environment more beautiful. He said that the Rose Garden is an important public place in the city which should be improved and converted into a healthy recreation area for the citizens.

The Commissioner further directed that cleanliness, lighting and other basic facilities should also be improved so that citizens can spend time with their families in a peaceful environment. Later, Commissioner Sahiwal Division Dr. Asif Tufail chaired a special meeting in his office in which the arrangements for the

Christmas festival of the Christian community and the payment of relief funds for the flood victims were reviewed. The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners of the three districts Captain (retd) Samiullah Farooq, Asif Raza, Ahmed Usman, Additional Commissioner Coordination Dr. Saifullah Bhatti, AC General Ghulam Hussain Bhatti, Chief Officer Municipal Corporation Sheikh Ashfaq Ahmed and officers of the relevant departments. Addressing the meeting, Commissioner Sahiwal Division Dr. Asif Tufail said that cheap convenience markets should be established for Christian brothers, effective security arrangements should be ensured at places of worship and proper lighting should be arranged in churches and surrounding areas so that citizens can celebrate their religious ceremonies in a peaceful environment. The meeting discussed the payment of relief funds for the flood victims.

The Deputy Commissioners of the three districts gave a briefing regarding the matter, after which the Commissioner directed that the flood relief funds should be delivered to the deserving flood victims in a transparent and timely manner so that relief could be provided to the victims.

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Study: Nearly 1 in 4 U.S. adults under 40 have high blood pressure



An epidemic of high blood pressure is occurring in young adults and children in the United States, a pair of new studies show.

An epidemic of high blood pressure is occurring in young adults and children in the United States, a pair of new studies show.

Nearly a quarter of people ages 18 to 39 have high blood pressure, with readings above the healthy level of 130/80, the first study found.

Blood pressure is even a problem for school-age children, according to the second study. Nearly 14% of children ages 8 to 19 have elevated or high blood pressure, researchers found.

Both studies were presented Friday at the American Heart Association (AHA) scientific sessions in Chicago. Such research should be considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

"The prevalence of hypertension in young adults is stark, and social determinants of health amplify the risk for hypertension and subsequent premature cardiovascular disease," said Dr. Bonita Falkner, chair of the writing committee for the AHA's 2023 scientific statement on pediatric hypertension.

In both studies, researchers used data gathered from 2017 to 2020 by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as part of its National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

The first study looked at young adults' blood pressure readings, as well as five factors that can influence health -- poor education, low income, lack of health insurance, food insecurity and little to no employment.

"Social determinants of health are the social conditions arising from where people are born, live, learn, work and mature," said researcher Thomas Alexander, a medical student at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago.

Nearly 23% of young adults have high blood pressure, and those were more likely to be uninsured, food-insecure and financially challenged compared to older adults, researchers discovered.

These factors appear to interfere with a person's ability to get their blood pressure under control, researchers found.

Adults with two or more unmet social needs were about 80% more likely to have untreated blood pressure and about 70% more likely to not have their blood pressure under control, results showed.

"Young adults with social needs and high blood pressure need more support to achieve blood pressure goals," Alexander said in an AHA news release. "Our study highlights that

addressing these social determinants through targeted public health strategies is essential to improve outcomes and prevent long-term heart disease and stroke complications in this vulnerable population."

In the second study, researchers found that nearly 9% of children ages 8 to 19 had elevated blood pressure and more than 5% high blood pressure, based on guidelines established by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"Youth who have high blood pressure are more likely to have high blood pressure as adults, putting them at greater risk for heart disease and stroke," said researcher Ahlia Sekkarie, an epidemiologist of heart disease and stroke with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

About 14% of boys had elevated blood pressure and nearly 7% had high blood pressure, compared with 3% and 4% of girls, respectively, researchers found.

High blood pressure was more common in kids with severe obesity, and elevated blood pressure rates increased with age.

"A healthy diet and regular exercise are important to reducing the risk of high blood pressure," Sekkarie said. "Ensuring that youth are eating a healthy diet and getting enough physical activity is crucial to helping prevent heart disease and stroke."



By Siraj Narsi

Stanley Wolpert, the renowned historian, once wrote of Muhammad Ali Jinnah: "Few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly anyone can be credited with creating a nation-state. Muhammad Ali Jinnah did all three."

I have often wondered how Jinnah was single handedly able to carve out Pakistan amid the chaos and turbulence of Indian politics, the strong opposition from Congress to the idea of Pakistan, the obstacles laid out by the British and the internal divisions within the Muslims. When we look at the life of the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, we often see a man of granite—unyielding, impeccably dressed, and possessing a legal mind so sharp it frustrated the finest negotiators of the British Empire. But if you peel back the layers of his life as it unfolded, a fascinating question emerges: Was the creation of Pakistan merely the result of Jinnah's political and constitutional maneuvering and negotiations, or was Jinnah a man being chosen by the higher power for a purpose that changed the map of the world. Was his mission a divine design that even he hadn't anticipated?

The Submissive Son vs. The Iron Man

The Jinnah we know from history books is a man who took orders from no one. Yet, his youth tells us a different story—one of profound submission to his parents. Before leaving for England, Jinnah agreed to an arranged marriage with Emi Bai, simply because his mother so wished. There was no protest, no argument. Jinnah submitted to his mother's will. Later, while in London, Jinnah fell in love with the theater.

He auditioned for a Shakespearean play and was even chosen for the character. He had the voice, the presence, the talent and the passion to become a professional actor. But when his father wrote to him from across the ocean, forbidding such a career and insisting on studying trade and business, Jinnah walked away from the stage. Imagine! A young man on his own, thousands of miles away from his parents in a western land and culture, didn't have the nerves to defy his father to pursue his own interest. Why? This submissive young man isn't the Jinnah who wouldn't budge from his positions when negotiating with the British. It is a striking irony. The man who would eventually defy the British Raj and the Indian National Congress began his journey by surrendering his personal desires to the will of his parents who were thousands of miles away. Perhaps this was a cosmic lesson in discipline; a training ground for a man who would one day need to stand up to an empire under whose rule the sun never set, but only after learning the humility of obedience. Or, Perhaps, this was the beginning of the divine intervention to guide Jinnah into a path, at the very early stage of his life, that would eventually lead to Pakistan.

The Detour from Trade to Law
Jinnah's father was a successful businessman from a Khoja Gujrati Ismaili Muslim family. This community has always been known as a successful business community. Trade, business and entrepreneurship run in their DNA—in the 19th century as well as the 21st century. Jinnah's father sent him to London with a singular, practical goal: to study trade and business. For him, there could be no other future for Jinnah.

Probably Jinnah guessed that too, at least when he embarked on his journey to London. But destiny had other plans. In a series of events that seem almost scripted, Jinnah pivoted from business to the theater, and finally to Lincoln's Inn to study law. Why the law? If Jinnah had become a successful merchant like his father intended, he would have lived a comfortable, private life. If he had become an actor, he might have been a footnote in London's West End. Instead, he ended up choosing the one profession—law—that would provide him with the intellectual weaponry needed to argue the case for a new nation in the court of world opinion. How can one explain this in any way other than a divine plan?

While in London, he also happened into the orbit of Dadabhai Naoroji, the first Indian to be elected to a seat in the British Parliament. This wasn't just a chance meeting; it was meant to lead him to a political awakening and nurturing that would guide Jinnah's politics in the future. The "Grand Old Man of India" shifted Jinnah's gaze from ledgers and balance sheets to the rights of "his" people. To see this as a mere "coincidence" ignores how perfectly these pieces clicked together to build a statesman with a destiny.

From Ambassador of Unity to the Founding Father

The most profound shift in Jinnah's life was his transition from the "Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity" to the champion of the Two-Nation Theory. For years, Jinnah worked tirelessly to keep India united. He believed in it. He argued for it. He was on one side while the majority of Muslim leaders of his time were on the other side. All India Muslim League was formed in 1906, being led by Aga Khan III and many other prominent Muslim leaders, but Jinnah was still with Indian National Congress—on the other side of the political spectrum. Yet, history pushed him into a corner. From Hindu-Muslim unity to becoming president of All India Muslim League to eventually the two-nation theory, can either be described simply as turn of events, or a path that he was destined to take. You be the judge.

Self-exile to London
After years of frustration with Indian politics, divisions within the Muslim leadership and the tragic personal loss of his beloved wife, Ruttie, Jinnah did something unexpected. He quit India and moved to England, almost retired from an active role in Indian politics, and settled into a quiet life as a barrister in London where he built an impressive and successful law practice. He even tried to choose a career in British politics by seeking ticket to a seat in the British Parliament. He may have thought that he could play a more effective role for India's independence from the colonial rule by sitting in the parliament of the colonial master itself. Or perhaps, he was done with Indian politics. If he had become a member of the British Parliament, had he been given the ticket and won the election, as he desired then, he would have remained in London. Any possibility of Jinnah returning to India

The Architect of Destiny: Was Jinnah's Mission a Divine Appointment?

would have ended. But history wasn't done with him as far as freedom movement was concerned, it seems evident. In a move that feels like a "call to action" from a higher order, influential Muslim leaders continued to plead with him to return to India and take charge of Muslim League's struggles to seek independence from British rule. Liaquat Ali Khan and the Begum traveled to London to plead with him to return. They told him that the Muslims of the subcontinent were a ship without a captain. They believed only he could lead them. A man who had moved thousands of miles away to find peace and perhaps a different political career, was pulled back into the eye of the storm. How can one explain this in any other way than the call of a destiny being prescribed already?

A Script Written Elsewhere

How does a dejected, retired lawyer living in self-imposed exile return to a land he left behind and, within few years, carve out a new country against all odds? If we look at Jinnah's life as a series of random events, they don't quite add up. But if we view them as a "divine purpose," the picture becomes clear. The submission to his parents taught him discipline; the detour into law gave him the tools; the heartbreak and exile gave him the perspective; and the urgent call to return gave him the mission.

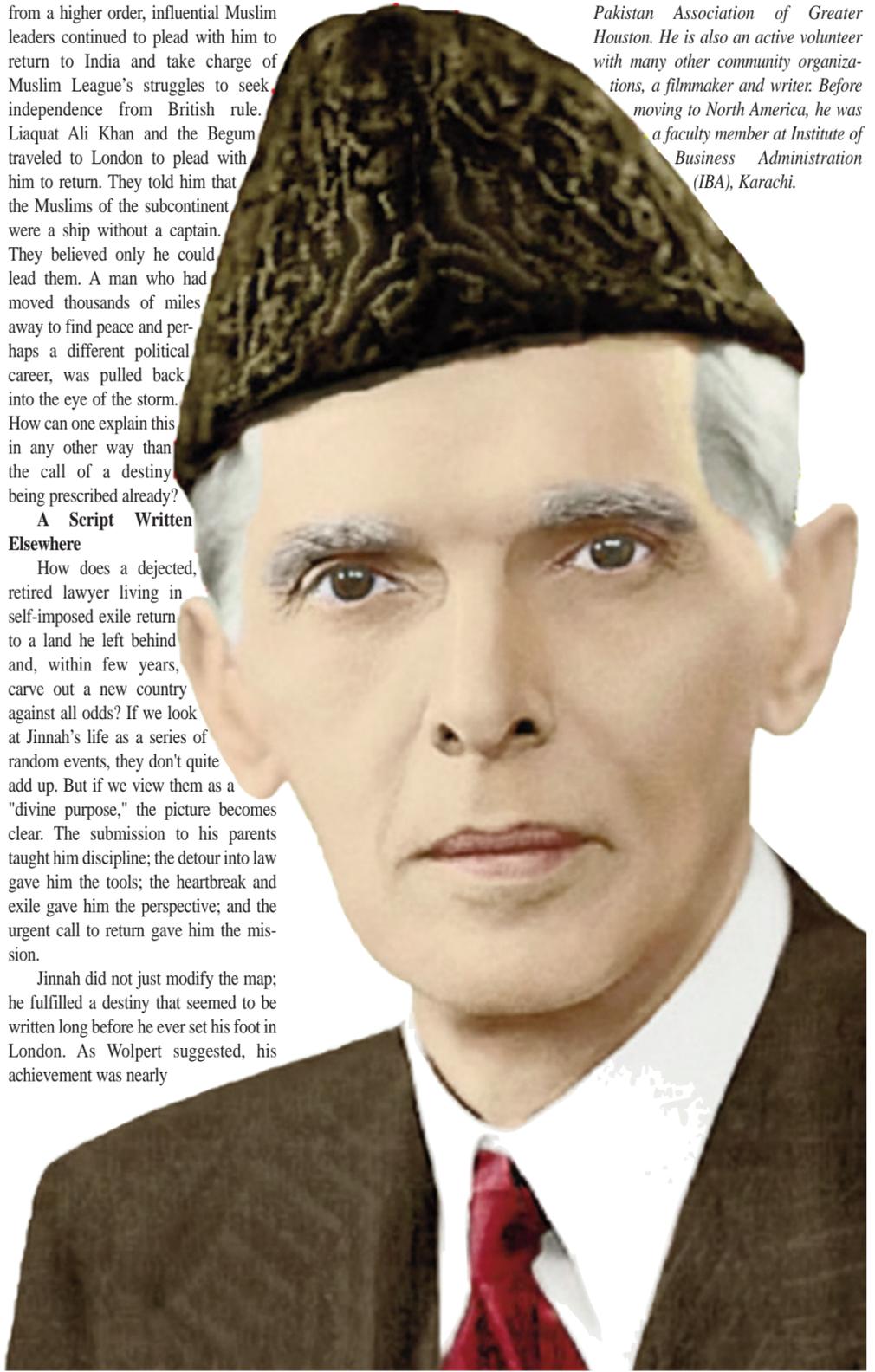
Jinnah did not just modify the map; he fulfilled a destiny that seemed to be written long before he ever set his foot in London. As Wolpert suggested, his achievement was nearly

unique in human history. Whether you call it brilliant politics or divine intervention, the result remains the same: the birth of a nation that changed the

world forever, making Jinnah the giant of the history.

About the writer:

Siraj Narsi is the President of Pakistan Association of Greater Houston. He is also an active volunteer with many other community organizations, a filmmaker and writer. Before moving to North America, he was a faculty member at Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi.





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We aim to save a staggering \$1 billion or 20% of foreign exchange procurement in current foreign exchange expenditures through the implementation of competitive tendering processes. This is not just a goal, but a necessity. A clear example of this is the procurement of health and hygiene products by PGDP. For instance, for PKR 200, the civil department of the province procures the same quality and greater quantity of products for PKR 2,000. In contrast, the current procurement costs paid by the government are excessively high. Unfortunately, the procurement processes for the civil health and agriculture departments have been compromised by corruption, allowing contractors to profit unjustly.

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The SIFC, Prime Minister's Office, and various ministries are aware of Pakistan's current economic situation. Let's consider our nominal GDP projection for 2030. It is expected to range between \$680 billion and \$750 billion, with the potential to significantly increase with the inclusion of rare mineral exports, a promising aspect of our economic future. The current flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has averaged between \$3.8 billion and \$4.8 billion over the last two years, a result of the SIFC's strategic efforts, which included spending \$25 million on various events. This indicates that the SIFC's initiatives have significantly improved results, boosting FDI by \$1 billion.

To enhance foreign cash inflow, the Pakistan Sovereign Wealth Fund will require a projected increase in funds. We anticipate that global manufacturers will invest in Pakistan to capture the Chinese market, leading to an average annual FDI of \$12 billion, with potential increases of up to fivefold beyond 2030.

The e-commerce and services sectors, including traditional services and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), are expected to grow significantly, reaching \$133 billion by 2030, up from \$33 billion currently. This growth will be driven by a \$100 billion increase stemming from graphite and antimony exports, the privatization of airline businesses, and advancements in e-commerce and BPO.

These figures are not just projections; they are realistic and achievable targets. Pakistan's debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to remain within the range of 55% to 60%, and the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP is expected to rise to 20%. Additionally, the remittance sector will experience growth due to the introduction of direct, real-time transfer systems designed specifically for global payment processing in Pakistan.



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FIA arrests 451 involved in human trafficking, reducing illegal migration by 47%

Continued from front page

According to Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif, the relevant authorities are taking steps to address human trafficking, like the Federal Minister for Interior personally visiting airports to review recent offloading cases. "The Minister's proactive approach at airports is highly commendable," he said.

Key factors discussed during the meeting that contribute to illegal migration included the misuse of work, visit, and tourist visas, as well as offloading and deportation incidents. Many of the deported passengers came from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iraq, Malaysia, and Oman.

He stated that measures against illegal travel and suspicious travel documents should be managed to avoid impacting travellers holding valid documents.

The PM stressed the need for improved coordination between the Protectorate of Immigrants, the FIA, and other related institutions to ensure that individuals travelling legally for overseas employment do not face disruptions. Additionally, he stressed the need to use technology to streamline the immigration process.

PM Shehbaz also called for continued efforts to root out corrupt elements within the FIA, as 196 officers and personnel have already been dismissed for corruption.

The FIA has introduced a Risk Assessment Unit that targets passenger screening and incorporates data on deported or illegally travelling passengers. In efforts to streamline processes, work is also underway to implement e-gates at airports, and access to Advanced Passenger Information-Passenger Name Record data will be provided to identify potentially illegal travel documents ahead of time.

A mobile application is being developed to track passenger data, and the FIA's Integrated Border Management System and Information Technology sections are undergoing restructuring to improve efficiency. Additionally, AI is being employed to enhance surveillance and curb illegal travel.

The meeting was also attended by Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi, Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, and other senior government officials.

UN expert decries Bushra Bibi's detention; urges communication with lawyers, family

Continued from front page

circumstances that could pose a serious risk to her physical and mental integrity".

Bushra is serving a seven-year sentence in the £190 million corruption case. She was recently sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment in the Toshakhana 2 case, which revolved around the purchase of an expensive jewelry set gifted to Imran by

the Saudi crown prince during his May 2021 visit.

"The state has an obligation to protect Mrs. Khan's health and ensure conditions of detention compatible with human dignity," Alice Jills Edwards, the UN Special Rapporteur, said in a statement issued on Wednesday.

Earlier in May, the Adiala prison administration submitted a detailed report to the Islamabad High Court (IHC), stating that Bushra was receiving a range of special facilities at the prison, with accommodation provided to her under the Pakistan Prison Rules 1978, including medical care, private lodging, and access to entertainment and legal resources.

According to the report, Bushra had been afforded amenities aimed at ensuring her "health, comfort, and legal rights".

Bushra has access to a dedicated woman medical officer who conducts twice-daily health checks. She has also been provided with a private, spacious room equipped with a cot, mattress, furniture, and climate-control measures such as ceiling fans and an air cooler during summer, the report added.

The UN special rapporteur added that the "conditions and locations of detention must take into account the age, sex and health circumstances of detainees".

UN special rapporteurs are independent experts mandated by the Human Rights Council. They do not, therefore, speak for the United Nations itself.

Edwards claimed that Bushra was "frequently placed in near-total isolation for more than 22 hours a day, sometimes for periods exceeding ten days, without access to exercise, reading material, legal counsel, family visits, or her personal physicians."

The UN expert further urged the authorities to ensure that the former first lady could "communicate with her lawyers, receive visits from family members, and have meaningful human contact throughout her detention."

Earlier this month, the same UN special rapporteur warned that Imran was being held in conditions that could amount to inhuman or degrading treatment, calling on Pakistani authorities to comply with international norms and standards.

Pakistan taught India unforgettable lesson in May war: PM Shehbaz

Continued from front page

and Kashmir (UAIK).

Pakistan and India went to war in May after India launched an unprovoked attack on Pakistan following the attack on tourists in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

New Delhi maintains that the terrorists who killed 26 tourists in IIOJK's Pahalgam were Pakistanis — a charge that Islamabad has denied and has also asked India to partake in a neutral investigation.

Pakistan, during the 87-hour conflict, downed its six fighter jets, including three Rafale, and dozens of drones. The war between the two nuclear-armed nations ended on May 10 with a ceasefire agreement brokered by the United States.

Addressing the event, the premier said Pakistan's youth were the country's greatest strength and investment in their education and skills was an investment in the future.

He said the laptops were not merely machines but a means to connect young people with the world, knowledge and opportunity.

"Our youth, especially Generation Z, are more aware, more capable and better equipped to use technology than earlier generations," said the prime minister.

He urged students to play a positive role in the digital and social media space, cautioning against the spread of misinformation and fake news.

"Truth and falsehood today are often shaped by narratives. Our educated youth must stand for facts and responsibility," he said.

Reiterating the government's commitment to merit, PM said laptops had been distributed strictly on merit during previous programmes as well, rejecting criticism that such initiatives were political handouts.

Touching on Azad Jammu and Kashmir, he said the people of Kashmir had made immense sacrifices and their emotional bond with Pakistan was unbreakable.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's political, moral and diplomatic support for the Kashmiris and called for unity, hard work and faith to achieve national goals.

US State Department revokes 95,000 visas in 2025

Continued from front page

travel documents in a matter of days.

The State Department has confirmed that more than 8,000 international students are among those whose visas have been revoked this year. This news is shifting the conversation from general immigration stats to the very real impact on U.S. campuses. For many, these aren't just numbers, they represent students whose academic careers have been suddenly derailed.

While the 95,000 cancellations span various categories, the impact is being felt most acutely in two areas: high-skilled work and higher education. This aggressive wave of revocations marks a clear shift in policy under the Trump administration, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio leading a department of state that has significantly tightened the screws on vetting and compliance.

It isn't just one group feeling the heat. The administration is casting a wide net:

Work visas (H-1B): Even high-skilled workers are facing unprecedented scrutiny. Many H-1B holders, who are often the backbone of the tech and engineering sectors, are finding their permits under review or revoked as the administration prioritizes a "buy American, hire American" philosophy.

Student visas: Although students make up a smaller percentage of the total 95,000, the personal and professional fallout for them is uniquely severe.

Under Rubio's leadership, the State Department is moving away from the "status quo" of years past. The message is clear: a visa is a privilege that can be pulled at any moment if a holder falls outside the administration's increasingly narrow safety and security criteria.

The recent confirmation that over 8,000 student visas have been voided in 2025 has sent a wave of anxiety through university halls. University administrators are reporting a growing sense of unease among their international populations. The sheer scale of these revocations suggests that "routine" student life

is now subject to a much higher level of federal scrutiny.

As the wave of revocations continues to swell toward the 100,000 mark, a new sense of urgency has taken hold across American college campuses. While the vast majority of international students are currently in good standing, the fact that over 8,000 peers have already lost their status has turned compliance into a daily survival tactic.

Students and university administrators alike are now glued to State Department updates, knowing that in this climate of heightened scrutiny, even a minor oversight can lead to a life-altering cancellation.

2025 marks decisive reset in...

Continued from front page

operations further disrupted India's energy grids, rail networks, and surveillance systems, while multiple Rafale jets were reportedly shot down. The operation demonstrated Pakistan's military discipline, precision, and strategic reach, sending a clear message that its airspace and national sovereignty would not be violated. The article provides a special analysis of the growing rapport between Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and President Trump, describing Pakistan's transformation from an "undesired state" to a key partner. Its rapid image-building and opinion shift in Washington are described as rare and unique, positioning Pakistan as a central pillar of Trump's South Asia policy.

Earlier, during his official visit to the United States, Field Marshal Munir praised President Trump for helping prevent "many wars," including brokering the May Pakistan-India ceasefire.

Addressing the Pakistani diaspora, he highlighted Pakistan's diplomatic successes, warned against any future Indian aggression, and reaffirmed that Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir remains an internationally recognized dispute. The military chief also held high-level engagements with US military and political leadership, emphasizing strengthened bilateral cooperation, regional security, and counterterrorism collaboration.

Initially, Washington had sought to strengthen India through platforms like the Quad, sidelining Islamabad. However, India's political climate, restrictions on personal freedoms, uneven military performance, and diplomatic rigidity cast doubt on its role as a regional stabilizer.

The first thaw in Pakistan-US relations came via secret counterterrorism exchanges, signaling substantive cooperation. In March, Trump unexpectedly praised Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts during a national address, prompting a policy shift.

Islamabad seized the opportunity, turning limited cooperation into strategic gains. Engagement increased, and the bilateral relationship evolved from transactional to strategic. The short but intense May skirmish with India became a decisive turning point, showcasing Pakistan's military discipline, strategic focus, and asymmetric capabilities - qualities that reportedly surprised Trump.

The article also highlights historic engagement between Trump and Field Marshal Munir, including their first-ever luncheon meeting for a Pakistani military chief and Munir's red carpet visit to US Central Command Headquarters for high-level talks. Advisers described their relationship as a "budding romance," with Munir emerging as a disciplined, strategic, and carefully image-managed figure in Washington. Pakistan also leveraged

this attention with light diplomatic gestures and public relations moves, further boosting its standing.

US President Donald Trump called the visit an "honour," praising Munir for helping avert further escalation between Pakistan and India. The meeting discussed the recent Middle East conflict, Pakistan's understanding of Iran, and regional security issues. Trump credited Munir's leadership in securing the May ceasefire, calling it a major contribution to preventing war between the nuclear-armed neighbours, and noted that the luncheon marked the first time a US president hosted a Pakistani army chief unaccompanied by civilian officials.

By early 2026, The Washington Times notes, Pakistan sits at the center of Trump's emerging grand strategy for South Asia and the Far East. It offers Washington discreet channels to Iran, a potential role in Gaza, and a subtle counterweight to China's regional influence. Islamabad has re-established itself as a serious regional actor, reshaping US policy and rewriting the balance of power in South Asia.

Poll finds 1 in 4 Americans think...

Continued from front page

by Gallup Inc., showed that 29% of adults consider the biggest health problem facing the country to be the cost of care. Another 23% said the health care system is either in crisis or has major problems, one of the highest levels Gallup has ever recorded.

Gallup surveyed about 1,300 adults between Nov. 3 and Nov. 25. The results have a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.

About 81% of Democrats and 64% of Republicans said the health care system is in serious trouble, the poll also showed. Cost worries are growing faster than concerns about access. Many people now say the problem isn't that they lack insurance, it's that they can't afford to use it. "It's not that they don't have the plans," Lydia Saad, director of U.S. social research at Gallup, told The Washington Post. "They can't afford the plans."

Lawmakers recently argued over whether to extend Affordable Care Act subsidies. Those subsidies are set to expire at the end of the year.

If that happens, average insurance premiums could more than double, according to estimates from KFF, a non-profit that studies health care policy.

Public concern about health care costs has risen sharply since last year. Gallup also found that worry about costs rose 12 percentage points among Democrats and 10 points among Republicans.

Among independents? Concern stayed about the same.

Gallup found a long-standing divide in how Americans view health care costs. In all, 16% said they are satisfied with the overall cost of U.S. health care, but 57% said they are satisfied with what they personally pay.

That gap may reflect fear of what could happen during a medical emergency.

"Even if they're not having trouble paying for it today," surprise bills could cause serious financial harm, Liz Hamel, vice president of public opinion research at KFF, told The Post.

A recent KFF survey found that more than one-third of Americans had delayed or skipped medical care because of cost. About 1 in 5 said their health got worse as a result.

"Health care is a pocketbook issue for people," Hamel said.

Pakistan snaps up major arms deal with Libyan force

Continued from front page

According to the Reuters news agency, the over \$4 billion deal, one of Pakistan's largest-ever weapons sales, will see arms sold to the Libyan National Army (LNA).

It was finalised after a meeting last week between Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir and Saddam Khalifa Haftar, deputy commander-in-chief of the LNA, in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi, officials said.

Although foreign ministry, defence ministry and military did not respond to Reuters' requests for comment, military officials called it "historic in terms of size and financial impact".

A copy of the deal before it was finalised that was seen by Reuters listed the purchase of several JF-17 fighter jets, jointly developed by Pakistan and China, and a number of Super Mushak trainer aircraft, used for basic pilot training.

A Pakistani official told Reuters the deal included the sale of equipment for land, sea and air, spread over 2-1/2 years, adding it could also include the JF-17 fighter jets.

Since 2011, the United Nations has imposed an arms embargo on the fractured North African country, which means transfers of weapons and related material require UN approval.

However, senior Pakistani military officials justified the arms sale, saying that many major western and Middle Eastern states have been supplying weapons and equipment to Libya for many years despite the embargo.

Calling it a "paper embargo" which is virtually "non-existent due to multiple reasons", the sources said the move was in line with the prime minister and army chief's vision for "an export driven self sustained economy".

The internationally-recognised Government of National Unity, led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, controls much of western Libya, while Haftar's LNA controls the east and south, including major oilfields, and does not recognise the Unity government's authority.

According to Reuters, any arms agreement with the LNA is likely to face scrutiny given Libya's long-running instability following a 2011 Nato-backed uprising that toppled Muammar Gaddafi and split the country between rival authorities.

The LNA's official media channel reported on Sunday that the faction had entered a defence cooperation pact with Pakistan, which included weapons sales, joint training and military manufacturing, without providing details.

"We announce the launch of a new phase of strategic military cooperation with Pakistan," Haftar said in remarks broadcast on Sunday by Al-Hadath television.

Authorities in Benghazi also did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Pakistan has been seeking to expand defence exports, drawing on decades of counterinsurgency experience and a domestic defence industry that spans aircraft production and overhaul, armoured vehicles, munitions and naval construction.

"Our recent war with India demonstrated our advanced capabilities to the world," CDF Munir was quoted as saying in remarks broadcast by Al-Hadath on Sunday.

Donald Trump lauds Field Marshal Asim Munir as 'Highly Respected'

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and Secretary of the Navy John Phelan.

Referring to Field Marshal Munir as a "highly respected general," Trump said the Pakistani prime minister had credited him with saving 10 million lives by averting the conflict. The US president also claimed that eight aircraft were destroyed during the India-Pakistan standoff.

"We stopped potential nuclear war between Pakistan and India. The head of Pakistan, the highly respected Field Marshal, and also the PM of Pakistan said Trump said 10 million lives."

— US President Donald Trump (@SouthAsiaIndex) December 23, 2025

Trump has repeatedly praised Pakistan's civil and military leadership following the May clashes with India.

Earlier, in October 2025, Trump lauded Field Marshal Munir as a "good man" and described Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as a "great leader" while addressing the ASEAN Summit 2025 in Kuala Lumpur.

During the speech, Trump said he had received reports of a potential conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan but noted that Pakistan's leadership resolved the issue swiftly and peacefully.

Calling himself a strong advocate for global peace, Trump said he had helped stop eight wars so far. "I stopped wars through trade," he stated, emphasizing that the United States prefers economic cooperation over conflict.

"I like stopping wars," Trump added, reiterating his belief that trade and economic engagement are key to lasting peace. The President also praised the strength of the American Navy, claiming it is unmatched globally and announcing the construction of new warships, including advanced aircraft carriers and submarines.

Speaking about military modernization, Trump said the United States is adding what he described as the world's most powerful aircraft carrier and building modern naval vessels to reinforce American dominance at sea. He claimed that U.S. submarines are the most advanced in the world and that America is "15 years ahead" of any other country in submarine construction, asserting that China and Russia cannot compete in this area.

He said 15 state-of-the-art submarines are currently in various stages of construction and announced plans to equip the Navy with new technology under what he called a "Golden Fleet." Trump also claimed a new naval ship would be "100 times more powerful" than any other vessel and mentioned a ship named Victory as key to maintaining U.S. military strength.

Trump linked naval expansion to national security and drug enforcement, saying maritime drug smuggling in the Caribbean has dropped by 96.2 percent due to U.S. operations. He said the Navy is targeting and destroying drug-trafficking boats at sea to prevent narcotics from entering the United States, claiming such actions save thousands of lives. He added that drug abuse led to 300,000 deaths in the U.S. last year.

The president also said naval headquarters are being upgraded and argued that increased shipbuilding would help revive the American shipbuilding industry. Emphasizing broader national strength, Trump said U.S. borders are

secure, the economy is strong, and America's modern naval fleet is respected worldwide.

"These ships will frighten America's enemies," Trump said, adding that countries that once doubted the United States now respect its military power.

PIA to be run by Arif Habib-led consortium by April 2026

Continued from front page

chief said on Wednesday.

A consortium headed by the Arif Habib Corporation emerged as the top bidder on Tuesday, in a live-televised auction for a 75% stake in PIA. This marks a breakthrough for the government's long-delayed privatisation of the carrier.

The consortium offered Rs135 billion, surpassing the government's reserve price of Rs100 billion – a turnaround from last year's failed sale attempt.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatisation, Muhammad Ali, told Reuters in an online interview that the state expects a new owner to be running the airline by April next year. The process moves to final approvals by the Privatisation Commission board and cabinet, expected within days, with contract signing likely within two weeks.

Financial close is also expected after 90 days to meet regulatory and legal conditions.

Ali said the government would receive Rs10 billion, in cash, upfront, retaining a 25% stake valued at around Rs45 billion. The deal was structured to inject fresh capital into the airline rather than simply transfer ownership, he said.

"We did not want a situation where the government sells the airline, takes its money, and the company still collapses," Ali said. The winning consortium also comprises fertiliser maker Fatima, private school network City School and real estate firm Lake City Holdings Limited.

Ali said Fauji Fertiliser Company, a military-run conglomerate, did not bid but could still join the winning consortium as a partner, noting the buyer can add up to two partners – including a consortium partner or a foreign airline – if they meet the qualifying criteria. Allowing partners adds financial strength and could bring global aviation expertise, he said.

IMF pressure

Ali said safeguards, including retained earnest money and an additional payment on signing, would allow the government to move to the second-highest bidder if the deal fails to close.

On labour, he said the buyer must retain all employees for 12 months after the transaction, with contracts unchanged, adding that the PIA workforce has already shrunk in recent years.

The sale is closely watched by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has pressed Pakistan to halt losses at state-owned enterprises. Ali termed the privatisation a key test of Pakistan's reform credibility with the IMF, adding that failure to offload loss-making state firms risked renewed pressure on public finances.

He said closing the deal would signal momentum on reforms and privatisations, adding that the government was working through a pipeline of future transactions once PIA closes.

Pakistan Warns Of Severe Risks From India's Indus Waters Treaty Violations

Continued from front page

the IWT's dispute-resolution mechanisms.

Thus, Pakistan has timely placed its case before the international community and has re-emphasised the dangers inherent in this bellicose and illegal Indian weaponisation of water.

Unfortunately, history tells us that it has always been India's desire to stop or regulate the waters of the Indus basin from flowing into Pakistan. Despite well-established international laws governing the water flow between the upper and lower riparians, India first stopped water flow to Pakistan on 1st April 1948, shortly after Partition, by shutting off key canals like the Upper Bari Doab and Dipalpur Canals.

This led to negotiations, and after 12 years, the World Bank brokered the Indus Water Treaty in 1960 between the two countries. Despite wars and continuous acrimony between them, the IWT was held sacrosanct by both. However, India held the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in abeyance starting 23rd April 2025, immediately following the Pahalgam terror attack. Sadly, without an iota of evidence, India's Foreign Secretary announced the move as a response to perceived cross-border terrorism. This was an illegal step, as the IWT itself has no provision for unilateral suspension under international law, leading to legal challenges from Pakistan.

Since then, India has been using its upstream position to create uncertainty, fear, and cause severe economic harm in Pakistan. Pakistan has been raising serious concerns about the hydropower projects on the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab), especially Baglihar, Kishanganga, and Ratle, since the designs incorporate features which allow India to manipulate the timing and volume of flows.

Moreover, "Blood and water cannot flow together" is a powerful phrase used by the Indian leadership, especially Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to signal a major shift in policy regarding the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan, meaning terrorism and diplomatic/resource-sharing relations cannot coexist. Thus, they have linked water flow to Pakistan's alleged support for terrorism and threatened to halt water sharing in response to attacks. The phrase signifies that India will no longer allow water cooperation (the "water") while it perceives ongoing "blood" spilt through terrorism, putting the treaty in abeyance and exploring maximising its water rights under the pact.

Pakistan is already among the most water-stressed countries on the planet. Its per capita water availability, for a host of reasons, has sharply declined. Its economy and population remain heavily dependent on irrigated agriculture, as approximately 80% of the farmland relies on the Indus system. Experts argue that the cumulative impact of multiple dams, combined with severe climatic variability, could give India de facto control over seasonal flows, especially during the crucial sowing periods in Pakistan, thus creating an existential threat to the country.

In order to explain to my respect-

ed readers what is currently happening, I am placing the case of the river flow manipulation of the Chenab river. According to daily reports of WAPDA, the situation related to inflows and outflows at Marala head-works was found to be alarming from 9th–18th December. The inflows and outflows at Marala were monitored on the said dates with 10,100 and 3,800 cusecs on 9th December, respectively, and 6,900 and 1,500 cusecs on 10th December. No outflows were monitored from 11th–17th December.

The costs of the latest volatility in Chenab flows—just like the flow variations between late April and May—have been significant for farmers whose canal irrigation supplies were disrupted at a critical stage in the wheat season. Millions of acres of land across Punjab have faced reduced or zero water availability, threatening crop yields. This is how uncertainty—because of sudden releases and reductions and delayed data-sharing—changes water into a deadly tool. We need to remember that when India released floodwaters into the Ravi and Chenab in the summer, without the timely exchange of information or warning, it led to devastation in Punjab.

If relations between India and Pakistan are to achieve a semblance of normalcy, the implementation of the IWT is the first concrete manifestation. To ensure that it continues as a beacon of trust and future cordial relations, both countries—and more so India—have to take the following steps:

Firstly, India has to ensure enhanced transparency. Real-time data sharing on flows, reservoir levels, and dam operations could reduce suspicions.

Secondly, joint studies with mutually acceptable and respected international experts on climate impacts and adaptive management could have a very positive impact without reopening core allocations.

Thirdly, strengthening the role of neutral experts and insulating the IWT from different crises may preserve cooperation.

Fourthly, cessation of sloganeering and inflammatory language from the Indian side could prevent escalation.

Lastly, India needs to take back its abeyance of the treaty and accept the rights of Pakistan as per the IWT and international laws governing water sharing between states.

It is to be remembered that on 24th April 2025, Pakistan's NSC stated that any attempt by India to block or divert water belonging to Pakistan would be considered an "act of war" and would be met with "full force across the complete spectrum of national power". If, after such a clear, unambiguous, and powerful message by Pakistan, India still chooses to weaponise the Indus basin water, then the entire onus is on India.

In the final analysis, the danger of a calamity lies less in water flow than in the erosion of trust. Water flows, not recognising any man-made border. In South Asia, which has nearly 1.7 billion people who depend on the same melting glaciers and flowing rivers, turning water into a weapon—real or rhetorical—is the most dangerous gamble of all, not only for the two nuclear-armed countries but for the entire world.

It is still not too late. The world needs to wake up and get this matter resolved at the earliest.

CEO DHPA Inspects RHC Chak No. 176/9L, Reviews Medical Facilities



He also reviewed key medical services including delivery services, emergency medical response (EMR), family planning, and fixed-site vaccination facilities.

The CEO assessed the quality of medical facilities being provided to the public and issued instructions for further improvement. He directed the staff to ensure uninterrupted continuation of all health services and emphasized strict implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to ensure the provision of quality healthcare to patients.

Dr. Abdul Majeed Khan Niazi urged the staff to treat patients with care and compassion and to maintain high standards in administrative and professional affairs. He clearly stated that negligence or laxity in duties would not be tolerated under any circumstances.

BY: Tayyab Habib Khan
Bureau Chief, Sahiwal Division SAHIWAL: Chief Executive Officer, District Health and Population Authority, Dr. Abdul Majeed Khan Niazi paid a surprise visit to Rural Health Center (RHC) Chak No. 176/9L, where he reviewed the overall performance and facilities of the health center.

During the visit, Dr. Abdul Majeed Khan Niazi checked the duty roster of the staff and inspected the cleanliness arrangements of the facility.

“Christian Community Is Our National Strength,” Says RPO Sahiwal During Christmas Celebrations

BY: Tayyab Habib Khan Bureau Chief Sahiwal Division

Sahiwal: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Sahiwal, Muhammad Ayaz Saleem, visited the DPO Office Sahiwal and participated in Christmas celebrations with Christian employees, reaffirming the commitment of Sahiwal Police to religious harmony and equal protection for all citizens.

Congratulating the Christian employees on the occasion of Christmas, RPO Muhammad Ayaz Saleem said that the Christian community is a national strength and that their happiness is shared by the entire nation. He emphasized that Sahiwal Police stands shoulder to shoulder with the Christian community on every religious festival.

The RPO further stated that, along with the District Police Officer (DPO) Sahiwal, he had visited various churches and nearby markets to review the security arrangements for Christmas. He expressed satisfaction over the security measures and directed officers to remain vigilant to ensure peaceful celebrations.

Speaking on the occasion, DPO Sahiwal said that Sahiwal Police provides equal protection to all citizens without any discrimination on the basis of religion. He added that special security duties have been assigned in churches and Christian residential areas, while the issues of non-Muslim citizens are being



promptly addressed through Meesaq Centers.

The event concluded with the cutting of a Christmas cake along with

Christian employees. Christmas gifts were also distributed among the employees and their children, adding to the festive spirit.



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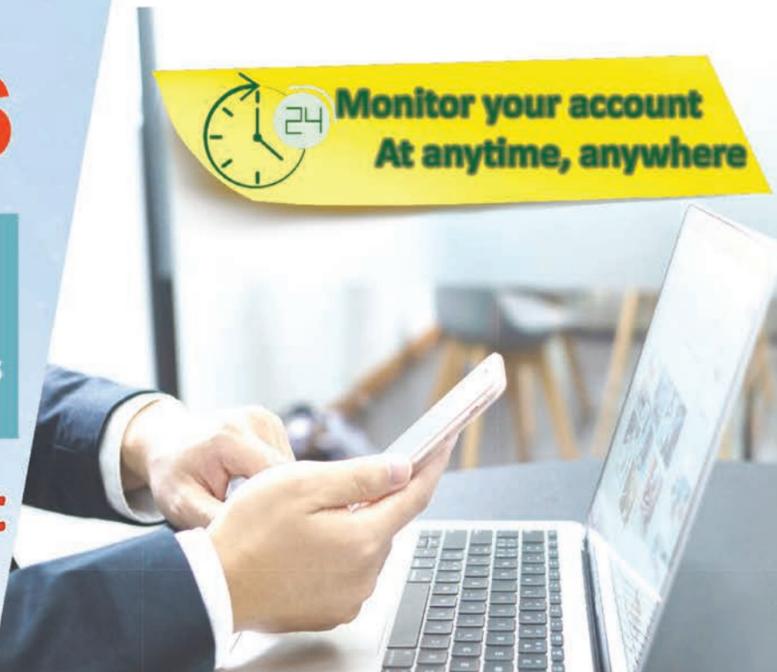


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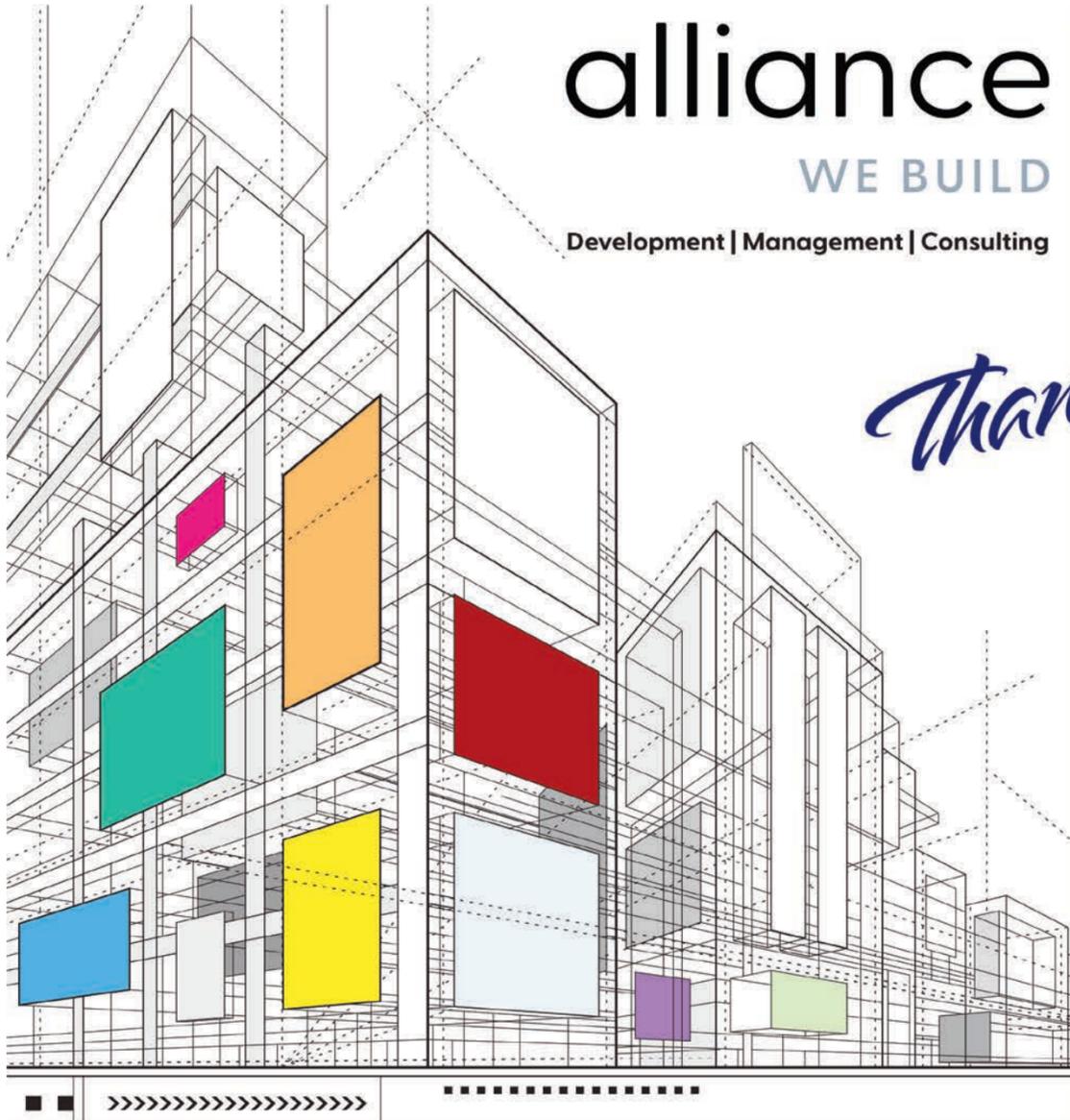
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Makkah Masjid to Host Urs of Sultanul Hind Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (R.A.) in Houston

Spiritual gathering featuring Tilawat, Hamd, Naat, and a special address on love and compassion to be held on December 27, followed by community dinner

HOUSTON: Makkah Masjid will organize a spiritual gathering to commemorate the Urs of Sultanul Hind, Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (R.A.), one of the most revered Sufi saints of the subcontinent, on Saturday, December 27, 2025.

The program will begin after Isha prayers at 8:00 p.m. at Makkah Masjid, located at 3505 Dairy Ashford Road, Suite #199, Houston, Texas 77082.

The Mehfil will include Tilawat-e-Quran, Hamd and Naat recited by Hafiz Karim Sultan, followed by a religious address by Maulana Abdul

Ghani Awaisi, highlighting the teachings of love, peace, and service to humanity associated with Khwaja Gharib Nawaz (R.A.).

A community dinner will be served after the program. Organizers have extended an open invitation to community members to attend the blessed gathering along with their families and friends.

The Urs is held annually to honor the spiritual legacy of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (R.A.), whose message of tolerance and compassion continues to inspire millions around the world.

Fort Bend Community Leaders Host Meet & Greet Dinner, Highlighting Haroon Mughal's Vision for Precinct 4



FORT BEND COUNTY, TX — Residents and community leaders gathered for an inspiring Meet & Greet Dinner hosted by Lush Cafe, celebrating leadership, service, and community engagement in Fort Bend County. Among the distinguished guests were District Attorney Brian Middleton, District Clerk Beverley Walker, and Haroon Mughal, candidate for Commissioner of Precinct 4.

The event, generously organized by Juned Bhai and Abraham, also fea-

tured the presence of celebrity star Dua Malik, adding a touch of glamour to an evening dedicated to public service. Attendees enjoyed the opportunity to connect with leaders who have consistently demonstrated integrity, dedication, and a commitment to the well-being of the community.

Haroon Mughal, seeking election as Commissioner of Precinct 4, emphasized his vision for a safer, more prosperous, and united Fort

Bend County. "I am committed to serving our community with transparency and dedication. My goal is to ensure every resident feels heard, supported, and represented," Mughal said during the gathering.

Brian Middleton, who has served as District Attorney since 2018, shared his ongoing initiatives to strengthen the county's legal system and deliver results for families. Beverley Walker, running for

Continued on page 28

Virginia Honors Field Hockey Coach Asim Siddiqui for Decades of Service in Sports and Community Leadership



Richmond, Virginia: Field hockey coach Asim Siddiqui was honored at a ceremony recognizing excellence in sports and community leadership, celebrating more than two decades of his contributions across athletics, media, and public service.

Addressing the gathering, Siddiqui thanked the First Lady of Virginia and Governor

Continued on page 28

Leveraging US tariffs can lift Pakistan's exports

LAHORE: A delegation of the Pakistan American Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce visited the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) and met with LCCI President Faheemur Rehman Saigol.

The LCCI president said that the United States is Pakistan's largest export destination, with exports reaching around \$6 billion last year. He said that by effectively using the US tariff structure, Pakistan can increase its exports to \$10 billion.

He pointed out that Pakistan has mostly focused on traditional exports, especially garments, but now it needs to explore new products and sectors to boost exports. He stressed the importance of moving beyond the five traditional sectors and focusing on IT,

Continued on page 28

US Announces \$3,000 and Free Flights for Illegal Immigrants — But There's a Catch

The Trump administration has sharply increased its incentive for migrants who agree to voluntarily leave the United States. The Department of Homeland Security announced on Monday that the stipend has been raised to \$3000, which is triple the previous amount.

The offer applies to people living in the US illegally who commit to signing up for self-deportation through the CBP Home app by the end of the year. In addition to the cash stipend, the government will also provide a free flight to the migrant's home country, DHS said.

Earlier this year, the administration

Continued on page 28

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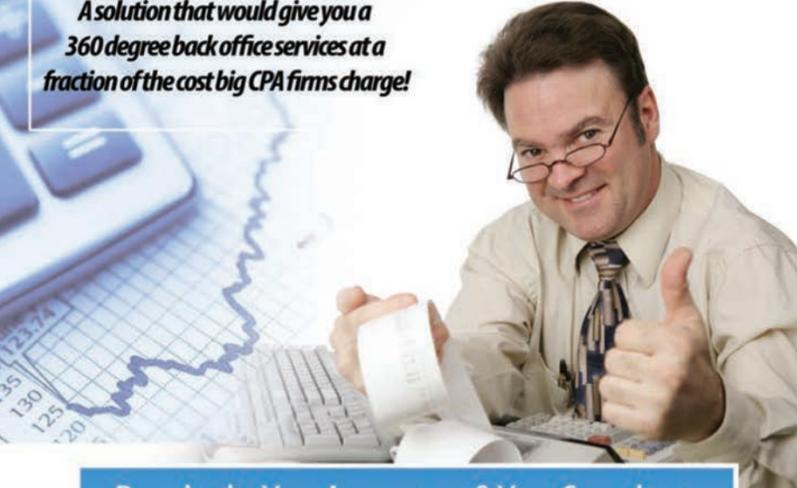
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THE ASSASSINATION OF LIAQUAT ALI KHAN

Farooq Babrakzai

In a mystery, the sleuth must be believably involved and emotionally invested in solving the crime. — Diane Mott Davidson

On Tuesday, 16 October, 1951, around 4 pm, the first prime minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan, was going to address a public meeting in Company Garden in Rawalpindi. As he walked to the microphone and uttered the words “Baraadaraan-i-Millat” [Brothers of the Nation], a man named Said Akbar, sitting on the ground near the dais, fired two bullets at him in rapid succession with a 9mm semi-automatic pistol.

Chaos and mayhem suddenly erupted in the meeting. Khan Najaf Khan, the Deputy Superintendent of Police who had personally supervised the security arrangements, yelled in Pashto, “Who fired the shots? Shoot [him]!”. Within seconds, a police inspector, Mohammad Shah, came running with his service revolver drawn and shot Said Akbar five times at close range, in such a haphazard manner that he missed one shot altogether.

As Said Akbar was lying on the ground dying, he was also stabbed more than 26 times with spears by Muslim League volunteers. The recording equipment of Radio Pakistan was on and captured the sounds of the firing and the chaos for one minute and 13 seconds, and then fell silent. The entire shooting episode ended within 48 seconds. The recording is available online. Liaquat Ali Khan was taken to the Combined Military Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries.

The assassin, Said Akbar, was my father, who had come to Rawalpindi from Abbottabad on 14 October.

INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

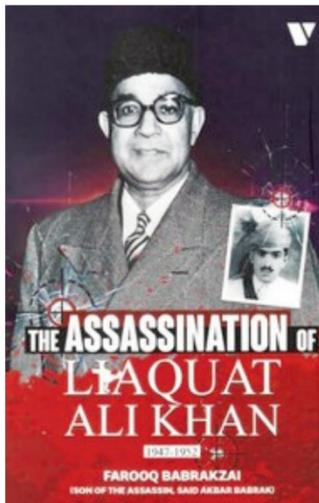
Neither the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) nor the police personnel had any prior knowledge of Said Akbar’s presence in Rawalpindi, let alone at the public meeting. All police and CID claims about keeping Said Akbar under surveillance in Rawalpindi for three days prior to the murder, upon close examination, turned out to be false; stories that were fabricated after the tragedy. No CID or police official was able to establish Said Akbar’s identity in the public meeting.

Soon after the incident, Inspector Abar Ahmad went around checking hotels in Rawalpindi Saddar to see if Said Akbar had stayed in any of them, when, after two hours, he got lucky at Grand Hotel, where Said Akbar was staying. The hotel clerk immediately identified and confirmed that the body was that of Said Akbar, who was staying at the hotel. That led police to Abbottabad and, by nightfall, with the help of a few men from the neighbourhood, they arrived at Said Akbar’s home.

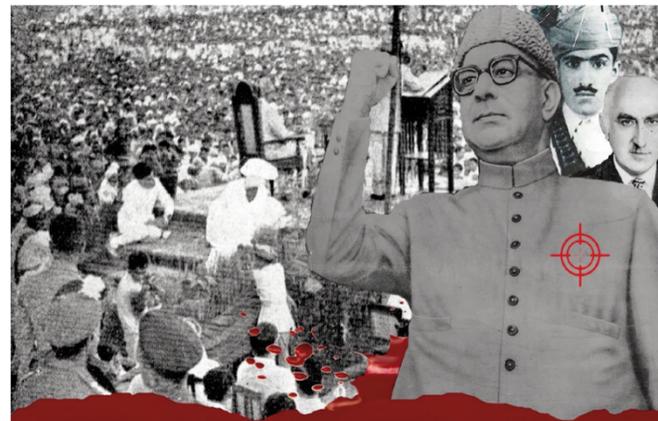
Said Akbar’s eldest son, 11-year-old Dilawar Khan, was with the father in Rawalpindi, and was sitting in front of him in the public meeting. He heard the shots and saw the prime minister fall. He turned around to ask father why the prime minister had fallen and what was happening and saw the chaos erupt-



A copy of the only photo of Said Akbar that survived the searches conducted by the police. The picture shows him dressed like a Khaksar | The Assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan: 1947-1952



Said Akbar’s eldest son, Dilawar Khan (pictured above in 2019 at the age of 79 in the suburbs of Abbottabad), was sitting in front of Said Akbar when he killed Liaquat Ali Khan | The Assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan: 1947-1952



(Figures: from left to right) Former prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan, his killer Said Akbar, and Maj Gen Akbar Khan — who plotted a coup against Liaquat Ali Khan. (Background) The public rally at Rawalpindi’s Company Bagh on October 16, 1951, during which Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated



The weapon Said Akbar used for the assassination was a semi-automatic pistol of this model, German-made 9mm Walther P38, which he had bought from a tribesman in 1948, who was returning from the war in Kashmir | The Assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan: 1947-1952

One of Pakistan’s founding fathers and the country’s first prime minister was assassinated at a public gathering 74 years ago. Despite the formation of an Inquiry Commission and two other police investigations — one by Scotland Yard — until today, there has been no satisfactory closure regarding those tragic events. Now, the son of the assassin has penned his own investigation into the events in the shape of a book, which provides, for the first time ever, his family’s perspective as well as delves into the weaknesses of the official accounts and spans Pakistan’s tumultuous history — from the first war over Kashmir, the Rawalpindi Conspiracy and internal friction within the new state’s functionaries. Eos presents, with permission, excerpts from The Assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan: 1947-1952 by Farooq Babrakzai, published by Vanguard Books...

ing and people attacking his father. He got scared and ran away, leaving his shoes behind.

The assassination of the prime minister was a sudden, unexpected and shocking event for Pakistan. In the days following the incident, when the police and the CID officials started to examine the circumstances of the crime, they had no prior information about the incident, no relevant intelligence reports, and no leads to follow.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

On 25 October 1951, the government appointed a ‘Commission of Inquiry’, consisting of Mr Justice Mohammad Munir, judge of the Federal Court, as the president, and Mr Akhtar Hussein, Financial Commissioner, Punjab, as his associate. The Commission examined 66 witnesses in 38 sessions, 23 in Lahore and 15 in Rawalpindi. Four months later, on 28 February 1952, the Commission submitted its report to the chief secretary, Government of Punjab. From the final version of the report, 73 names, clauses and sentences were omitted, mostly for security reasons. This obfuscated

the report and made it look quite weak.

The Commission looked at five major factors to see if they had any bearing on the assassination. It examined at length various documents about Said Akbar, from January 1947, when he and his older brother, Mazrak Zadran, surrendered to the British authorities in North Waziristan, till October 1951.

These pertained to their detention under the Bengal Regulation III of 1818, which determined their official status, starting in British India and then in Pakistan, and records of all the places they visited in Pakistan. Nearly all of this was irrelevant to the tragedy in Rawalpindi as the Commission did not find any valuable clues in Said Akbar’s travels, his contacts with people, and his lifestyle.

Next, the Commission examined the security arrangements at the public meeting, the circumstances under which the prime minister was killed, and recorded statements by witnesses. In some cases, after much rambling discussions, the Commission concluded that certain

CID and police personnel made false statements. High-ranking officials, such as Khan Najaf Khan, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Rawalpindi, gave evasive answers to questions of the Commission. It was Najaf Khan who suggested, supervised and approved the security arrangements at the public meeting.

Other officials either lied or gave exaggerated accounts to the Commission to protect themselves. Inspector Mohammad Shah, who had shot and killed Said Akbar, was not questioned by the Commission.

POSSIBLE MOTIVES

The Commission also examined possible motives for the crime. It considered three: first, that Said Akbar killed the prime minister in a fit of insanity, but could not find any evidence to support it.

Second, he did so out of resentment over the prime minister’s policy regarding Kashmir. In fact, some time in the summer of 1951, Said Akbar had volunteered to raise a lashkar [band of fighters], pay for their food and other expenses, and lead them in the jihad to liberate

Kashmir, but the Commission considered Said Akbar’s offer a “hoax” and rejected it.

Third, that he did not like the un-Islamic lifestyle of the prime minister and because his wife, Begum Ra’ana Liaquat Ali, did not observe purdah [veil] in public. But this also turned out to be a baseless story.

It then examined various theories of conspiracy to see if Said Akbar was part of any of them but did not provide details of any conspiracy and discarded each of them and, in fact, stated its inability to uncover any conspiracy.

Police searched Said Akbar’s home three times and took away all items they considered important, including books, documents, air gun, money, mother’s gold, photos etc. A summary of the items was given in the Inquiry Report.

The public was not satisfied with the findings of the Commission because it failed to fulfil its own mandate and provide transparent answers to the very questions it was tasked to investigate. The two important questions for which the Commission could not find answers were: what was Said Akbar’s motive? And if the murder was the result of conspiracy, then who were his accomplices?

POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

The task of the Commission was to examine the circumstances of the crime, and not to identify any individuals who might be implicated, because that was the task of criminal investigation by police.

There was only one police investigation conducted in 1951-2, in Lahore, when our family was taken there. We were kept there for about five months,

Continued on Page 20

THE ASSASSINATION OF LIAQUAT ALI KHAN

Continued from Page 19

during which time mother was questioned

through an interpreter. It was this investigation that the Inquiry Commission alluded to but gave no details, as it was ongoing at that time.

Scotland Yard's official Cecil Edwin U'ren referred to the same investigation as "headed by Chaudhry Mohammad Hussein, Superintendent of Police, CID, Lahore, and his team." He quoted extensively from the Munir-Hussein Inquiry Report, but did not include any information from Chaudhry Hussein's report and, what is more, did not even discuss his own conclusion with him.

The public and the media raised further questions about the U'ren report. The prime minister's widow, Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali, strongly reacted to the U'ren Report and raised several questions, but no one in Pakistan, whether the police, politicians or journalists, provided satisfactory answers.

The report by Chaudhry Mohammad Hussein and his team allegedly got destroyed when the plane carrying the police Inspector General Eteazuddin, crashed in August 1952. But curiously, Scotland Yard's official Cecil Edwin U'ren was given access to it in 1954-5. That is because the documents pertaining to the investigation were safe and available. All the statements about the documents being destroyed were deliberate attempts by the government to protect unnamed army officers and government officials, and divert public attention from the case.

MY INVESTIGATIONS

The Inquiry Report at best described the circumstances under which the prime minister was killed. It provided sufficient background information for me to see the gaps and discrepancies in the description of events and flow of information. The assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan was the result of a well-planned conspiracy by the plotters. Said Akbar indeed had accomplices in Abbottabad, in Rawalpindi, and right at the public meeting on 16 October, 1951.

This work is driven by numerous questions that are explored in the chapters of the book. These are questions that have been asked multiple times since 1951, but not answered truthfully. For example, why would Khan Najaf Khan yell an order in Pashto at the public meeting in Rawalpindi, to shoot the person who fired the shots?

How did Dilawar Khan, Said Akbar's son, come up with the story that his father had seen Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi in a dream on 13 October, 1951, who told Said Akbar to kill Liaquat Ali Khan? In fact, it was the police who repeatedly instructed Dilawar what to say and how to answer investigators' questions.

Because the police had to find a motive for the crime, they invented the story of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi and put it in Dilawar's head. The police created that story from a document taken from Said Akbar's home during one of the searches, which had names of Muslim warriors, including Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, written on it.

Over the decades, the Liaquat Ali Khan murder turned into a mystery, the result of some deep-rooted conspiracy, which no one seriously attempted to solve. The major reason was the investigation report by Chaudhry Mohammad Hussein that was deliberately never made public, and no other truthful statements came from the government. The Munir-Hussein inquiry and that by U'ren of the Scotland Yard went in two different directions, while exploring the same incident.

The former did not answer the questions it formulated to explore. The latter concluded that Said Akbar committed the crime because he was socially isolated, void of any reasoning, and had inherited some kind of criminal genes.

For me, it has been like solving a dozen separate but related puzzles, in which each one the actors played different roles. But when connected, the small puzzles make a giant puzzle, one that sheds light on the dark corners of the tragedy and attempts to provide transparent answers.

KASHMIR AND SAID AKBAR

The goal of the book is to find the hard and transparent answers of the case in plain and easy language. It attempts to inform and educate the readers and let them rethink and have a fresh look at history.

It neither glorifies Liaquat Ali Khan as a martyr nor condemns Said Akbar as the assassin. Here Liaquat Ali Khan is presented as a politician who had both his loyal followers and rivals in the government, but he also committed blunders, particularly his decision to accept the ceasefire agreement in Kashmir, which also sealed his fate.

The prime minister was a refugee from India, and Said Akbar was a refugee from Afghanistan, who had no personal grudge against the prime minister and no motive to kill him. He had no cultural roots in Pakistan and was not savvy in Pakistani politics. But he became interested in the Kashmir war solely because the social and political atmosphere in Pakistan was awash with pro-Islamic and anti-Hindu speeches, media stories and Friday's sermons in mosques.

The constant clamour of jihad to liberate Kashmir from Hindu-domination naturally influenced young Said Akbar, who had seen Kashmiri refugees in Abbottabad and the Pashtun tribesmen who went to fight in Kashmir.

Religion played a nominal role in Said Akbar's life in Afghanistan as, over the centuries, Islam had been adapted and blended with Pashtunwali, the Pashtun code of social and moral conduct. Being a good Pashtun naturally meant being a good Muslim. In Pakistan, he became interested in religion starting in mid-1949 and began to learn about Islam, but his goal was personal and pragmatic, not scholarly.

He sought meaning in his life, to make sense of the social and political turmoil in Pakistan, and to understand the fervour of jihad in Kashmir through religion and Iqbal's poetry. These provided the justification for jihad in a simple and pragmatic sense.

It is important to note that the ceasefire agreement in Kashmir came into effect on 1 January, 1949, and hostilities stopped. However, Said Akbar's interest in jihad started in mid-1949. Curiously, this is also the period when Maj Gen Akbar Khan, ringleader of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy, first spoke openly about overthrowing Liaquat Ali Khan's government.

Said Akbar knew many tribal fighters from his Zadrans tribe, some of whom visited him. It was during this period that Said Akbar became acquainted with men who were active in the war in Kashmir, and those who hated the ceasefire agreement that the prime minister had accepted, and therefore lost the chance to march on to Srinagar.

Some of these people eventually persuaded Said Akbar, in the summer of 1951, to assassinate the prime minister and, in the process, became his accomplices and facilitators.

I have taken it upon myself as my moral and ethical duty to uncover the truth to the

best of my ability. It is something that I owe to the people of Pakistan, to my family, and to myself, while living thousands of miles away in the United States.

THE RAWALPINDI CONSPIRACY

Political assassinations are well-planned, meticulous operations by the plotters, their accomplices, facilitators, and those who carry out the deeds. Secrecy is the key to the success of such operations. Whether the crime is successfully committed or it fails, the news, stories and conspiracies later become part of public discussions. The plotters and accomplices remain hidden from the public eye. That is what happened in October 1951.

The Rawalpindi Conspiracy was the first coup attempt to topple the government of Liaquat Ali Khan and eliminate him. But it failed. On 9 March, 1951, the ringleader, Maj Gen Akbar Khan, and his collaborators were arrested. That was because, earlier in February, an insider of Akbar Khan's group, Inspector Askar Ali, CID Peshawar, informed I.I. Chundrigar, governor of North-West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), who informed the prime minister.

The documents of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy presented in the court showed that "late Hon'ble Liaquat Ali Khan, along with his personal attendants... would be called and cleared." That is, arrested and executed. The list also included the name of the first Pakistani Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Gen Ayub Khan, who "was shocked that he was to be shot." When the first attempt failed, many officers thought of taking a bold action.

In the second week of May (1951), Maj Hassan met some other officers in Rawalpindi who were also apprehending arrest, and there was some talk of confronting the authorities and taking some desperate step. But the idea was given up. There was no leadership, and the suspected officers were far too demoralised and isolated from the top command to undertake the dangerous course of mutiny.

The trial of those accused in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy started on 15 June, 1951 and, four months later, on 16 October, 1951, the prime minister was assassinated in the same city.

I came across the Munir-Hussein Inquiry Report (1952) in the Asia Collection of Hamilton Library at University of Hawai'i at Manoa, in 1998. Since 2007, I have read the Report many times and re-read parts of it more than 30 to 35 times, taking copious notes on small individual events. In the process, it started to dawn on me that there were discrepancies in the recording of many events.

In 2010, I bought a copy of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy. Many events described in the book coincided with changes in Said Akbar's life, and some of the people mentioned in the book were also known to Said Akbar.

THE U'REN REPORT

In November 2016, I went to London to visit the British Library and Scotland Yard, looking for a copy of Cecil Edwin U'ren's Report (1955). After a few days of searching, I was told that the report was in the National Archive. About a month later, the National Archive put the photocopy of the report on a website and allowed me access to it for a fee.

I finally downloaded a photocopy of the report as it was published in Dawn on 25 June, 1955, along with other related documents, and the response by Begum Liaquat Ali Khan, the widow of the prime minister to the U'ren Report. The report is a photocopy of the columns in Dawn and does not have chapters and page numbers.

U'ren concluded that Said Akbar alone plotted to assassinate Liaquat Ali Khan, and that no one else was involved in any conspiracy. His report exonerated the police officials, satisfied the politicians, but very cleverly avoided getting involved in the controversies of the case. He expressed sympathy with police personnel for the undue duty-related stress they had to suffer during the investigation. He spuriously questioned Inspector Mohammad Shah, who had shot and killed Said Akbar, and did not even meet Khan Najaf Khan, Deputy Superintendent of Police.

The only valuable piece of information in the U'ren Report was that the police investigation conducted in 1951-2 was not destroyed in the plane crash in August 1952, because U'ren was given access to it in 1954-5.

U'ren considered Chaudhry Mohammad Hussein a highly competent police officer, whose team had conducted the only criminal investigation of the case. However, he did not quote any information from Chaudhry Hussein's report. In other words, the U'ren report did not uncover a single piece of fresh and relevant evidence. His own conclusion was based on evidence that was skewed and faulty and had no bearing on the assassination of the prime minister. In short, his conclusion amounted to another cover-up.

Epilogue

There are also other sides to the story. Journalists and writers continue to write on Liaquat Ali's murder and narrate at length his life and achievements as prime minister, and how his widow, Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali, was later sent abroad as ambassador. But there has never been a shred of objective information about Said Akbar before October 1951, and about his family after that.

Hasan Zaheer, author of *The Time and Trial of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy*, stated:

In March 1995, I wrote to the former prime minister, Ms Benazir Bhutto, requesting permission to consult the official records of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy and related background materials for this study. I thank her for graciously acceding to my request.

I personally would like to examine the investigation report by Chaudhry Mohammad Hussein and his team and other related documents of the assassination of the prime minister, which have been collecting dust in some government archives. However, in the current political atmosphere of Pakistan and the fact that I am an American citizen, it would require authorisation by high government officials and sincere cooperation of others. Something I cannot count on.

I realise that certain events are described more than once in different chapters of the book because each chapter analyses one or more related questions of the case and describes the characters and the different roles they played in the tragedy. All events eventually culminated in the killing of Liaquat Ali Khan and Said Akbar in less than a minute.

The author is the third son of Said Akbar, the assassin of Liaquat Ali Khan, and was born in North Waziristan. He lived and studied in Abbottabad, Kabul, Beirut and Honolulu, where he completed his doctorate in linguistics. He has taught in Hawai'i, Muscat and Beijing and at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. He currently lives in California in the US.

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Why Pakistan Still Fails to Tax Its Own Wealth

Pakistan's inability to expand its tax net is no longer a policy failure—it is a chronic national dysfunction. Every government promises reform, every budget claims progress, and every IMF program demands results. Yet year after year, the same reality persists: a small, compliant segment of society pays, while the wealthy majority remains untaxed.

At the core of this failure is a collapse of trust between the state and the citizen. For most Pakistanis, paying tax brings no visible return. Schools decay, hospitals malfunction, clean water is scarce, and justice is slow or unavailable. Taxes are widely believed to vanish into corruption, waste, and elite privilege. In such an environment, taxation is not seen as citizenship, but as extraction.

This distrust is reinforced by blatant inequality in enforcement. Salaried individuals are taxed automatically, leaving them with no room to escape. Meanwhile, large landowners, powerful traders, real estate speculators, and polit-



By Zafar Chishti

ically connected business groups either stay outside the tax net or underreport income with impunity. Agricultural income—one of the largest sources of wealth in the country—remains effectively untaxed. This double standard has destroyed the moral legitimacy of the tax system.

Instead of simplifying compliance,

the state has made taxation intimidating and opaque. Frequent policy changes, confusing regulations, and aggressive notices turn filing into a burden few are willing to carry. The Federal Board of Revenue, rather than acting as a service institution, is widely feared as a coercive authority, associated with harassment, discretionary powers, and rent-seeking. This culture encourages avoidance, not voluntary compliance.

Pakistan's massive undocumented economy further weakens enforcement. Real estate, retail trade, transport, and informal services continue to operate largely in cash, beyond the reach of documentation. Claims of digitization remain selective and superficial, failing to challenge entrenched interests that benefit from opacity.

Politics remains the biggest obstacle. No government has been willing to confront powerful trader groups, landlords, and business lobbies whose electoral and financial influence is decisive.

Faced with protests and shutdowns, the state repeatedly retreats, choosing political survival over fiscal reform.

The structure of taxation itself deepens public anger. Reliance on indirect taxes—sales tax, fuel levies, electricity surcharges, and customs duties—places the heaviest burden on the poor and middle class while wealth remains largely untouched. This regressive model fuels inflation, inequality, and resentment.

Institutional failures add to the mess. After the Eighteenth Amendment, tax authority was fragmented between the federation and provinces without adequate capacity or coordination. Data systems remain poorly integrated, allowing major evaders to stay invisible while smaller taxpayers are targeted. Courts provide further refuge to powerful defaulters, with tax cases dragging on for years under stay orders.

Repeated tax amnesty schemes have perhaps caused the most lasting damage. By rewarding evasion and penalizing

honesty, the state has sent a clear message: compliance is optional, and dishonesty will eventually be forgiven at a discount.

Under IMF pressure, governments often resort to raising tax rates and indirect levies to meet short-term revenue targets, rather than undertaking politically difficult reforms to broaden the base. The result is predictable: higher inflation, slower growth, public backlash—and no real expansion of the tax net.

Until the state shows real intent by taxing elites without exception, documenting major sectors of the economy, simplifying tax laws, reforming the FBR into a service-oriented institution, reducing reliance on indirect taxation, and visibly linking tax revenues to improved public services, Pakistan's tax reform debate will remain little more than an annual ritual. The burden will continue to fall on the few, while the untaxed many remain comfortably outside the system.

Provincial Consultation on Draft Sindh Gender Parity Report Held in Karachi

By Nazia Naz, Human Rights Defender and International Researcher

A Provincial Consultation on the Draft Sindh Gender Parity Report (SGPR) was organized by the Human Rights Department, Government of Sindh, to review the preliminary draft and gather insights from key stakeholders across the province. The consultation aimed to strengthen the report's alignment with provincial priorities and ensure that gender parity objectives are effectively addressed in policy and practice.

The event was chaired by the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Human Rights, Mr. Rajvir Singh Sodha and led by Secretary, Human Rights Department, Mr. Khalid Chachar, along with Secretary, Women Development Department, Mr. Rashid Ahmed Zardari. In his opening remarks, Mr. Sodha highlighted the critical importance of promoting women's inclusion at all levels of society, emphasizing that ownership of assets such as land and vehicles is vital for women's economic empowerment and social security. He further stated that the Government of Sindh would work closely with relevant departments to explore incentives for registering property and assets in women's names, a move aimed at enhancing women's financial independence and participation in decision-making.

Secretary Khalid Chachar provided



participants with a detailed overview of the mandate assigned to the Human Rights Department by the Honourable Chief Secretary Sindh, underscoring the department's role in promoting gender equality, human rights, and inclusive development. Secretary Rashid Ahmed Zardari lauded the Human Rights Department's efforts and dedication in advancing the preparation of the Draft Sindh Gender Parity Report, acknowledging the collaborative work that went into its development.

Chairperson of the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women, Ms. Rubina Brohi, emphasized the need to address existing gaps in the draft report through comprehensive consultations with all relevant provincial departments. She stressed that a robust and evidence-based report is essential for informed policymaking that can effectively

advance gender parity and social inclusion across Sindh.

The Communication Specialist and Gender Focal Person, Ms. Kiran Zubair, briefed participants on the rigorous data collection and consultative processes undertaken with line departments to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and inclusivity of the information presented. A detailed presentation on the draft report was delivered by SPO, followed by an interactive discussion that allowed participants from government departments, commissions, civil society organizations, development partners, academia, and NGOs to provide feedback and recommendations.

The consultation facilitated a productive exchange of ideas, enabling stakeholders to contribute toward refining the report and ensuring that it reflects both provincial priorities and international best practices in gender equality. The session was supported by UNFPA and moderated by Mr. Jameel Hussain Junejo, Executive Coordinator, Treaty Implementation Cell, who ensured a smooth and collaborative discussion.

This consultation represents a significant step in Sindh's commitment to gender parity, demonstrating the Government of Sindh's proactive approach to engaging multiple stakeholders, integrating evidence-based recommendations and promoting women's rights and empowerment across all sectors.

FDA to Inaugurate World-Class Padel Tennis Court at FDA City Sports Complex



Zafar Chishti Bureau Chief Punjab

FAISALABAD: Under the arrangements of the Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA), a world-class Padel Tennis Court has been established at sports complex FDA City. This facility of international standard is a grand New Year's gift for sports enthusiasts and is set to be inaugurated soon.

Director General FDA Mohammad Asif Chaudhry visited the Sports Complex to inspect the newly completed court. He was accompanied by Chief Engineer Mehr Ayub, Director IT Yasir Ejaz Chattha, Project Director/Director Estate Management Sohail Maqsood Pannu, Deputy Director Engineering Talha Tabassum and other officials. The DG expressed satisfaction with the high quality of construction, noting that the court features state-of-the-art infrastructure in a serene environment.

This facility will be available to both members and non-members and separate fee structure has been designed specifically for Padel Tennis participants, he

added. He told that the cafeteria and juice corner are being made functional immediately to enhance the visitors experience. He said that this game is added in the complex keeping in view the growing trend and interests of the youth. He encouraged the sports lovers to utilize this modern facility at FDA City to improve their fitness and skills. The Director General revealed that a master plan has been devised for the expansion of the Sports Complex with future facilities including bowling alley, cinema, and e-gaming, Lawn Tennis (green turf), a marquee/event hall, and fine dining restaurant, guest house, daycare center, salon, and facility of bakery have been proposed. During the visit, the DG also reviewed the cleanliness, security, administrative matters, and other indoor game courts. Chief Engineer Mehr Ayub briefed the DG on the completion phases, ensuring that special attention was paid to the durability and aesthetic appeal of the construction materials used in the Padel Tennis project.

Seed Crisis Under Spotlight as UAF Hosts ISTA Training Workshop

By Zafar Chishti, Bureau Chief Punjab

FAISALABAD: Experts at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) have stressed the need to revamp Pakistan's seed sector to boost the production of certified seeds, reduce reliance on imports, and move toward an export-driven seed industry.

The call was made during a specialized

training workshop on seed testing protocols conducted in accordance with the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) rules. The workshop was organized at the National Seed Research and Training Center, UAF, and was attended by researchers, seed analysts, and stakeholders from the seed industry.

Addressing the participants, Scientific

Director Dr Muhammad Tehseen Azhar emphasized that the adoption of international standards in seed evaluation is crucial for enhancing crop productivity and ensuring global competitiveness of Pakistan's agricultural exports. He said UAF is committed to bridging the gap between academic research and industry needs by offering practical, hands-on training and promoting

the production of quality seed.

Principal Investigator Dr Shahid Ibne Zameer highlighted that the availability of quality crop seed in the country remains critically low, meeting only 36.75 percent of the total requirement of 1.835 million metric tons. This shortfall, he noted, is a major factor behind low per-hectare yields despite extensive land utilization. He added that the ISTA-UAF laboratories are focusing on Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality

Management Systems (QMS) strictly in line with ISTA rules for seed sampling and testing.

The workshop is part of UAF's ongoing initiatives to strengthen the national seed system. The university aims to empower farmers by ensuring access to high-quality, certified seeds that are resilient to climate change and biotic stresses, ultimately contributing to sustainable agricultural growth and food security in the country.

Prominent Community Leader Arif Azeem's Son Weds in Elegant Ceremony

A grand and dignified wedding ceremony was held to celebrate the marriage of Maaz Azeem, son of Arif Azeem—President of Friends of Karachi and a well-known social and community leader—and Mrs. Arif Azeem, with Mariam Mehmood, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Mehmood Haroon. Arif Azeem, widely respected for his active role in community serv-

ice and social welfare initiatives, warmly received guests and personally welcomed community elders, friends, and well-wishers, reflecting his longstanding commitment to unity and relationship-building.

Fort Bend County Judge KP George, along with several distinguished political, social, and civic figures, attended the ceremony and con-

gratulated Arif Azeem and his family on the joyous occasion. The presence of Judge KP George and other notable personalities added significance to the event and highlighted the strong bonds between community leadership and public officeholders.

The wedding was conducted in an elegant and joyful atmosphere, with guests praising the

excellent arrangements and hospitality. Attendees extended heartfelt congratulations and offered prayers for the newly married couple, wishing them a life filled with happiness, harmony, and success. The event stood as a symbol of cultural heritage, mutual respect, and the strong community connections fostered by leaders like Arif Azeem.



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Russia plans a nuclear power plant on the moon within a decade

Russia plans to put a nuclear power plant on the moon in the next decade to supply its lunar space programme and a joint Russian-Chinese research station, as major powers rush to explore the earth's only natural satellite.

Ever since Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first human to go into space in 1961, Russia has prided itself as a leading power in space exploration, but in recent decades it has fallen behind the United States and, increasingly, China.

Russia's ambitions suffered a massive blow in August 2023 when its unmanned Luna-25 mission smashed into the surface of the moon while attempting to land, and Elon Musk has revolutionised the launch of space vehicles - once a Russian speciality.

Is that a nuclear reactor on the moon?

Russia's state space corporation, Roscosmos, said in a statement that it planned to build a lunar power plant by 2036 and signed a contract with the Lavochkin Association aerospace company to do it.

Roscosmos did not say explicitly that the plant would be nuclear but it said the participants included Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom and the Kurchatov Institute, Russia's leading nuclear research institute.

Roscosmos said the purpose of the plant was to power Russia's lunar programme, including rovers, an observatory and the infrastructure of the joint Russian-Chinese International Lunar Research Station.

"The project is an important step towards the creation of a permanently functioning scientific lunar station and the transition from one-time missions to a long-

term lunar exploration programme," Roscosmos said.

The head of Roscosmos, Dmitry Bakanov, said in June that one of the corporation's aims was to put a nuclear power plant on the moon and to explore Venus, known as earth's "sister" planet.

The moon, which is 384,400 km (238,855 miles) from our planet, moderates the earth's wobble on its axis, which ensures a more stable climate. It also causes tides in the world's oceans.

US also plans a reactor on the moon

Russia is not the only one with such plans. NASA in August declared its intent to put a nuclear reactor on the moon by the first quarter of fiscal year 2030.

"We're in a race to the moon, in a race with China to the moon. And to have a base on the moon, we need energy," US Transport Secretary Sean Duffy said in August, when asked about the plans.

He added that the United States was currently behind in the race to the moon. He said energy was essential to allow life to be sustained on the moon and thence for humans to get to Mars.

International rules ban putting nuclear weapons in space but there are no bans on putting nuclear energy sources into space - as long as they comply with certain rules.

Some space analysts have predicted a lunar gold rush: NASA says there are estimates of a million tonnes of Helium-3, an isotope of helium that is rare on earth, on the moon.

Rare earth metals - used in smartphones, computers and advanced technologies - are also present on the moon, including scandium, yttrium and the 15 lanthanides, according to research by Boeing.

Fort Bend Leaders Meet Residents at Community Dinner Hosted by Juned Bhai and Abraham

District Attorney Brian Middleton, District Clerk Beverley Walker, and Commissioner Precinct 4 candidate Haroon Mughal attended a Meet & Greet Dinner at Lush Cafe, organized by hosts Juned Bhai and Abraham. The event gave residents a chance to interact with leaders and discuss local priorities in an informal, community-focused setting.





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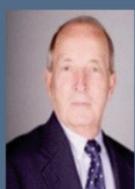
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2025 was tumultuous year at U.S. health agencies under Trump, RFK Jr.

Under the so-called MAHA agenda, the agencies would be overhauled to better implement "the new HHS priority of ending America's epidemic of chronic illness by focusing on safe, wholesome food, clean water and the elimination of environmental toxins," Kennedy wrote.

But, according to critics, including major medical groups and former agency employees, the result of the actions was "chaos" that "decimated" the morale and effectiveness of the agencies due to layoffs, firings, the introduction of "inaccuracies, misinformation and unsupported claims" in regulatory decisions, and many other factors.

In a year filled with controversies, summarized below are five topics that each generated a significant amounts of attention.

Firing of vaccine advisory panel members

Perhaps the most controversial move of Kennedy's first year as head of HHS came June 10 with the mass removal all 17 members of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and their replacement with new appointees, including several who share his vaccine skepticism.

The panel makes recommendations on use of vaccines in the United States.

Kennedy said in a post on X that his new appointments were "designed to restore public trust in vaccines."

"All of these individuals are committed to evidence-based medicine, gold-standard science and common sense," he wrote. "They have each committed to demanding definitive safety and efficacy data before making any new vaccine recommendations."

He also assured that "none of these individuals will be ideological anti-vaxxers."

However, at least three of the new members had spoken out against mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, while two others served as witnesses in lawsuits against vaccine makers, including one who served on the board of the nation's oldest anti-vaccine group, according to the Washington Post.

For instance, Martin Kulldorff, a biostatistician and former professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School who was fired in his post in 2024 for what he says was his refusal to take the COVID-19 vaccine, is recognized as an outspoken vaccine skeptic.

He was a co-author of the "Great Barrington Declaration" in 2020, which urged an end to COVID-19 lockdowns and called for relaxing restrictions for low-risk groups while promoting "herd immunity" — ideas that former director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Dr. Anthony Fauci called "ridiculous" and "total nonsense."

Kulldorff and another new advisory committee member, Robert Malone, have served as paid expert witnesses for plaintiffs suing the pharma company Merck over some of its vaccines targeting measles, mumps and cancer, Bloomberg reported in June.

Kulldorff chaired committee meetings in June and September, each of which saw through changes to vaccine policy that were hotly opposed by doctors' groups.

In June, the panel voted to recommend that only flu shots not containing the mercury-based preservative thimerosal should be approved after hearing a presentation from Lyn Redwood, the former leader of Children's Health Defense, an anti-vaccine group founded by Kennedy that dismisses scientific consensus and links the preservative to autism.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, however, insisted that "extensive research proves that thimerosal is a safe ingredient in vaccines, and it does not cause neurological problems or autism. Banning vaccine ingredients without solid scientific reasons sets a dangerous precedent and ultimately makes children less safe."

Then in September, the committee voted to not recommend COVID-19 shots for those under 65, instead opting to say it should be left up to an individual's decision-making after consultations with their doctors or healthcare providers.

This vote came after a discussion led by new member Retsev Levi, a professor of operations management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management and a known COVID-19 vaccine opponent and skeptic, The Hill reported.

During the same meeting the panel also voted that children under 4 years should receive separate measles/mumps/rubella and varicella vaccines, and not the combined MMRV vaccine, drawing strong opposition from the American Medical Association.

The group said the committee's move "leaves parents confused about how best to protect their kids and unable to choose the combined MMRV vaccine for children under 4 years old. The AMA is concerned that this change not only reduces parental choice, but also reflects ACIP's reliance on selective data in forming its guidance."

This month, Kennedy promoted Kulldorff to chief science officer for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, or ASPE.

"Martin Kulldorff transformed ACIP from a rubber stamp into a committee that delivers gold-standard science for the American people," Kennedy said. "I'm glad to welcome him to my team to help develop bold, evidence-based policies to Make America Healthy Again."

More controversial changes to vaccine policy



Demonstrators are shown at a "Fund Don't Freeze" rally in front of the Department of Health and Human Services headquarters in Washington on Feb. 19. Federal workers and others protested against the Trump administration's massive funding cuts to HHS and other agencies. File Photo by Annabelle Gordon/UPI | License Photo

Kennedy's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices ignited yet another firestorm among public health advocates this month when the panel voted 8-to-3 to end a decades-old recommendation to automatically vaccinate newborns against hepatitis B, a practice that scientists say have led to a reduction of childhood infections of the virus by 99% since 1991 to only seven cases in 2023.

They opted not only to recommend that babies whose mothers have tested negative for hepatitis B not receive the shot until they are 2 months old, but also suggested "individual decision-making" be the guide as to whether the child would ever start the three-shot vaccine series.

As with its earlier decision regarding COVID-19 shots, the change reflected the administration's belief that vaccine uptake should be decided at an individual level in which parental rights are paramount.

"The American people have benefited from the committee's well-informed, rigorous discussion about the appropriateness of a vaccination in the first few hours of life," Acting CDC Director Jim O'Neill said in a statement, adding that the long-standing U.S. universal birth dose "is an outlier among developed countries with low hepatitis B prevalence."

Among those making a presentation at the contentious meeting was Cynthia Nevison, a researcher in biochemistry and climate at Colorado University-Boulder's Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research and a volunteer for the organization SafeMinds, which supports the long-discredited theory that vaccines cause autism.

Her presentation cited studies she claimed demonstrated that hepatitis B birth doses are not especially effective over time and are associated with reduced antibody levels at older ages, especially when vaccination begins in infancy or early childhood.

And in seeking to explain why disease levels had plunged in recent decades, Nevison cited targeted measures aimed at adults, such as safe sex practices and needle exchange programs.

"The universal birth dose contribution to the acute case decline is likely very small," she added.

These conclusions prompted fiery pushback from others on the committee as the meeting descended into chaos.

Dr. H. Cody Meissner, a professor of pediatrics at the Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth and a nationally recognized expert in pediatric infectious diseases, voiced "strong opposition" to Nevison's presentation, saying she appeared to misunderstand how immunity is measured while pointing out that lower levels of antibodies in adolescents don't mean they aren't fully protected from the disease — they indeed remain well-protected by immune memory cells, he said.

"The evidence is very strong that there is lifelong immunity to hepatitis B after completing the series" of vaccinations, Meissner contended.

Meanwhile, Dr. Jason Goldman, president of the American College of Physicians, urged the vaccine skeptics on the panel to "stop cherry-picking the data by individuals who do not have the scientific evidence and data-driven background to make those presentations."

Afterwards, American Academy of Pediatrics President Dr. Susan Kressly similarly criticized the committee's conclusions, saying, "This irresponsible and purposely misleading guidance will lead to more hepatitis B infections in infants and children.

"I want to reassure parents and clinicians that there is no new or concerning information about the hepatitis B vaccine that is prompting this change, nor has children's risk of contracting hepatitis B changed.

"Instead, this is the result of a deliberate strategy to sow fear and distrust among families."

Medical groups sue RFK Jr. over vaccine decisions

Kressly was among the leaders of six prominent medical groups who in July filed suit against Kennedy for making "unilateral, unscientific changes to federal vaccine policy" which they claim are "assault on science, public health and evidence-based medicine."

The suit claims that Kennedy "promised multiple times during his Senate confirmation process that: 'If confirmed, I will do nothing as

HHS Secretary that makes it difficult or discourages people from taking vaccines," yet broke that promise to the Senate by signing a directive May 27 under which the government will no longer recommend COVID-19 shots for healthy children or pregnant women.

In announcing the policy in a post on X, Kennedy said, "Last year, the Biden administration urged healthy children to get yet another COVID-19 shot despite the lack of any clinical data to support the repeat booster strategy in children. ... We're now one step closer to realizing President Trump's pledge to Make America Healthy Again."

That directive, the suit claims, "breaks the promise that the secretary made to the Senate and the American people not to make it difficult to get vaccines or discourage them. The directive, unless vacated, will result in preventable deaths, including the unborn and newborns under six months old."

In November, the suit was updated by its plaintiffs, which include the American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Physicians, American Public Health Association, Infectious Disease Society of America, Massachusetts Public Health Alliance and Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, and an unidentified pregnant woman described as "a physician working in a hospital ... who was advised to get another dose of the [COVID-19] vaccine later in pregnancy to better protect herself and her baby from contracting this deadly disease."

Their demands were broadened to include dismissal of the committee members appointed by Kennedy in June. The amended complaint says the appointees "lack the credentials and experience required of their role and that the group's votes should be declared null and void."

"The nation's children are already paying the price in avoidable illnesses and hospitalizations," Kressly said in statement. "We urge federal leaders to restore the science-based deliberative process that has made the United States a global leader in public health. Urgent action is needed."

"The secretary stands by his CDC reforms," an HHS spokesman told ABC News in July.

The department on Nov. 19 sought to have suit dismissed on the grounds that the medical groups lacked standing. The matter remained pending in U.S. District Court in Massachusetts as 2025 came to an end.

RFK Jr. mulls replacing another key panel's members

Concerns remained high as the year ended that Kennedy was also poised to replace all 16 members of a nominally independent and influential advisory committee that offers guidance about preventive health services.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force is a volunteer group of national experts who provide evidence-based recommendations on clinical preventive services. Members are appointed by the health and human services secretary to staggered, four-year terms.

Designed to be nonpartisan and independent, the panel issues recommendations that dictate coverage policy for health insurers nationwide who, under law, must cover task force-recommended services without cost-sharing. This means patients have access to preventative services such as screenings for colon, breast and lung cancer, and many other diseases without having to shoulder any costs.

Alarm bells went off in July when the Wall Street Journal reported Kennedy was considering firing all members of the panel because they were "too woke." Its July meeting was then abruptly postponed.

The HHS secretary did not deny he was considering making the move, telling reporters in August, "The task force has done very little over the past five years, and we want to make sure it is performing, and it is approving interventions that are actually going to prevent the health decline of the American public. And it hasn't.

"We're looking at the personnel and we're making the decision now, but no decision has been made."

The November meeting of task force also was postponed by HHS, which cited the then-ongoing government shutdown as the reason.

Concerns over the panel's future were heightened when the Supreme Court ruled the HHS secretary has the authority to both appoint and its fire members at his discretion.

The AMA was among the prominent medical groups to voice dismay at the report, expressing "deep concern" in a letter to Kennedy.

"USPSTF plays a critical, non-partisan role in guiding physicians' efforts to prevent disease and improve the health of patients by helping to ensure access to evidence-based clinical preventive services," the AMA said in its letter.

"As such, we urge you to retain the previously appointed members of the USPSTF and commit to the long-standing process of regular meetings to ensure their important work can continue without interruption."

On Aug. 11, a group of nearly 200 organizations representing patients, parents, workers, small businesses, health care providers, public health professionals and consumers similarly urged caution.

To replace all of the task force members "would not only undermine decades of bipartisan public health progress, precedent and

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US Announces \$3,000 and Free Flights for Illegal Immigrants — But There's a Catch

Continued from page 17

introduced a revamped mobile application called CBP Home. The app is designed to streamline the voluntary departure process.

Officials framed the program as both an opportunity and a warning. DHS Secretary Kristi Noem urged migrants to accept the offer while it is available.

She said those who refuse to leave voluntarily will face arrest and deportation. According to Noem, individuals removed through enforcement actions will also be permanently banned from returning to the United States.

President Donald Trump, who returned to office in January, has made immigration enforcement a central priority. He has pledged to carry out deportations at historic levels.

Although the administration promised to remove 1 million immigrants annually, it has deported about 622,000 people so far this year.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is preparing to escalate its immigration crackdown in 2026. US officials say billions of dollars in new funding are expected to support the effort.

Planned measures include hiring thousands of additional immigration agents, expanding detention capacity, and working with private companies to help locate people living in the country without legal status.

Leveraging US tariffs can lift Pakistan's exports

Continued from page 17

minerals, agriculture and other emerging areas, which are also being prioritised by the government and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

The LCCI president highlighted the vital role of the Pakistani community in the US and said Pakistan should fully benefit from their business networks and expertise. He also emphasised the need to strengthen coordination with all joint chambers, adding that exports of skilled human resources have great potential, which can increase both exports and remittances.

He mentioned that remittances have increased significantly this year and are expected to reach \$42 billion by the end of the year. He said that a comprehensive strategy is needed to send skilled labour to other countries to further increase remittances.

Pakistan American Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce President Naveed Anwar said that Pakistani businessmen living in the US are deeply committed to Pakistan and want to contribute to economic stability. He shared that discussions with US Senate representatives highlighted the strong potential of Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry and that Pakistan can increase pharma exports.

However, he regretted that currently no Pakistani pharmaceutical company is FDA-compliant, which has held the sector back. He said regulatory complications and quality

control issues are major obstacles.

Anwar added that after tariffs were imposed on India's pharmaceutical industry, new opportunities have emerged for Pakistan, but quality remains a serious challenge.

Dr Sameer Shafii, who was part of the delegation, said that strict visa policies in the US have created a shortage of human resources, forcing American companies to look for outsourcing options. He suggested establishing special facilitation centres in Pakistan for such companies, as there is significant potential in this area.

He also pointed out that overseas Pakistanis face difficulties in taking their capital out of Pakistan after investing, which has reduced investment inflows. Regulatory issues and the lack of ease of doing business are major hurdles.

Virginia Honors Field Hockey Coach Asim Siddiqui for Decades of Service in Sports and Community Leadership

Continued from page 17

Glenn Youngkin for the recognition, calling the honor a shared achievement. He dedicated the award to the generations of athletes he has coached and mentored, noting that their success reflects the true impact of his work.

Over the past 20 years, Siddiqui has trained and guided thousands of girls through private and public schools, clubs, and universities in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, DC. His efforts have played a key role in strengthening competitive field hockey programs while expanding opportunities for young women in sports.

Proudly identifying as an American Pakistani, Siddiqui described his journey as part of the broader American story—one defined by access, inclusion, and opportunity. In addition to his coaching career, he has represented the United States internationally and built a parallel career in journalism, studio, and production work, bringing together leadership, discipline, and creative vision.

Siddiqui also acknowledged the support of Mansoor Qureshi, Juan Pablo Segura, and the South Asian Business Council of Virginia, emphasizing the importance of community collaboration in sustaining long-term impact.

He concluded by reflecting that the recognition marked not only a personal milestone, but also a testament to collective effort, perseverance, and the power of opportunity to transform lives.

Fort Bend Community Leaders Host Meet & Greet Dinner, Highlighting Haroon Mughal's Vision for Precinct 4

Continued from page 17

re-election as District Clerk, highlighted her commitment to efficient and transparent public service.

The dinner provided an informal platform for residents to engage with the candidates, dis-

cuss community priorities, and learn more about the plans and initiatives aimed at improving Fort Bend County.

Supporters praised the event for its focus on people rather than politics. Attendees encouraged the community to back candidates who demonstrate integrity and follow through on their promises.

Haroon Mughal's campaign continues to gain momentum as he seeks to bring practical solutions and innovative leadership to Precinct 4, with a focus on public safety, infrastructure development, and responsive governance.

About Haroon Mughal:

Haroon Mughal is a dedicated community leader with a proven track record of service in Fort Bend County. His campaign emphasizes transparency, accountability, and initiatives that directly improve the lives of residents.

Prediabetes diagnosis may not curb Type 2 diabetes, experts say



Endocrinologist Dr. Ralph DeFronzo describes diabetes as a "continuum." Photo courtesy of UT San Antonio Health Science Center



"For some patients [a prediabetes] diagnosis is a wake-up call to make changes," says Dr. Eva Tseng. Photo courtesy of Johns Hopkins Medicine

NEW YORK -- An epidemic of Type 2 diabetes continues to plague the United States, leading to calls for reassessing how the disease is diagnosed and treated, experts told UPI.

As many as 1 in 10 people nationally meet the criteria for Type 2 diabetes, with levels of hemoglobin A1C in the blood above 6.5%, according to the American Diabetes Association.

In addition, nearly 100 million adults in the country have what's called prediabetes, or hemoglobin A1C blood levels between 5.7% and 6.4%, meaning they're at high risk for Type 2 diabetes, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates.

Historically, a diagnosis of prediabetes was intended to serve as a warning from physicians to patients that they were at risk for Type 2 diabetes and related health problems, such as heart disease.

"For some patients that diagnosis is a wake-up call to make changes," Dr. Eva Tseng, an associate professor of general internal medicine at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, told UPI in an email.

"On the other hand, I have patients who are aware they have the condition, but they are not motivated to make changes -- making lifestyle change is difficult and often hard to sustain," said Tseng, who has researched how primary care physicians manage patients with prediabetes.

Preventing progression from prediabetes to Type 2 diabetes typically requires treatment with prescription medication, as well as "lifestyle changes," such as eating a healthy diet and exercising, according to Tseng.

However, patients need to know they have prediabetes to begin making these changes -- and as many as 80% of those who meet the criteria for the condition haven't been diagnosed.

Using insurance claims data for 4,000 adults who met the criteria for prediabetes between 2016 and 2021, Tseng and her colleagues found that only 10% had coded diagnoses of prediabetes.

"The research we conducted was from eight years ago so it should not be interpreted as what physicians know and do these days," Tseng said.

"There has been increasing public health messaging about prediabetes and changes in guidelines have made prediabetes an important condition to manage," she said.

Cost challenges

In Tseng's study, only 1% of the patients with prediabetes were referred for nutrition services and 5% were prescribed a drug to lower their hemoglobin A1C.

'Retract or resign': Cair slams US intelligence chief for talk of Muslim threat

The largest US Muslim civil rights organisation is calling on the director of national intelligence to resign or retract her statement that the biggest threat to the country is "Sharia law" which is "threatening western civilisation".

The Council on American Islamic Relations (Cair) said her remarks were "delusional and disqualifying".

Speaking at AmericaFest, at the right-wing Turning Point USA summit on Saturday, Tulsi Gabbard said: "The greatest near and longterm threat to both our freedom and our security... is the threat of Islamist ideology."

"It is propagated by people who not only do not believe in freedom. Their fundamental ideology is antithetical to the foundation that we find in our constitution and bill of rights, which is that our creator endowed upon us inalienable rights, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," she added.

"At its core, it is a political ideology that seeks to create a global caliphate that governs us here in America," Gabbard said. "They will use violence or any means they deem as necessary to silence us."

The crowd of thousands responded with loud applause, despite prominent voices on the

American right now saying that anti-Muslim rhetoric is unwarranted, and also potentially a distraction from the pro-Israel lobby's agenda in the US.

Earlier this year, when the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs hired a US polling firm to determine how to rehabilitate Israel's image after its genocide in Gaza, the suggested solution was to foment fear of "radical Islam" and "jihadism", the study said.

"Gabbard is responsible for gathering, analysing and presenting factual information to policymakers so that they can protect the American people. The last person who should serve in this critical, apolitical role is a bigoted conspiracy theorist who spreads hate against the American people," Cair said in a statement on Monday.

"She is completely detached from reality and has no business serving as the director of national intelligence."

'Ready to laugh'

In her speech, Gabbard called out US cities with large Muslim populations, such as Dearborn, Michigan; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Paterson, New Jersey, where she said, "Islamist clerics are openly pushing this Islamist ideology, trying to recruit and radicalise young people".

Cair, she added, had "issued a call to action to use American legal and political systems to implement Sharia law".

Tulsi Gabbard is now team Trump. What are her views on the Middle East?

The executive director of Cair's Paterson office told Middle East Eye that Gabbard should come to the city and see for herself.

"I'm feeling like I'm almost ready to laugh, because at this point, the Muslim community is so numb to the vilification, harassment and intimidation by leadership in this administration that every day is like a new crisis, and you never know what to expect," Selaedin Maksut said.

"When Muslims are civically engaged, she conflates that with terrorism and nefarious dual loyalty, when in fact, it's very clear that people in her camp have a loyalty and priority to Israel over American interests," he added. "Because Cair invites American Muslims and calls upon American Muslims to fight for justice, to fight for civil rights, to fight for dignity, to fight for righteousness - because we do that, now we're the bad guy."

New Jersey's Democratic lawmakers hit back at Gabbard for her remarks.

Senator Cory Booker, who also happens to be a staunchly pro-Israel figure, condemned Gabbard's remarks on X as "dishonest, cruel and un-American".

"Tulsi Gabbard's dangerous attempt to sow fear, pit people against each other, and smear the Muslim Americans of Paterson, NJ... endangers an entire community," he wrote.

Senator Andy Kim, the first Korean-American elected to the upper chamber, said on X: "Muslim Americans are our friends and neighbours... Trump and his team want to divide us so they can distract us. We can't let them."



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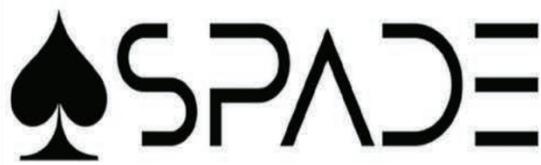
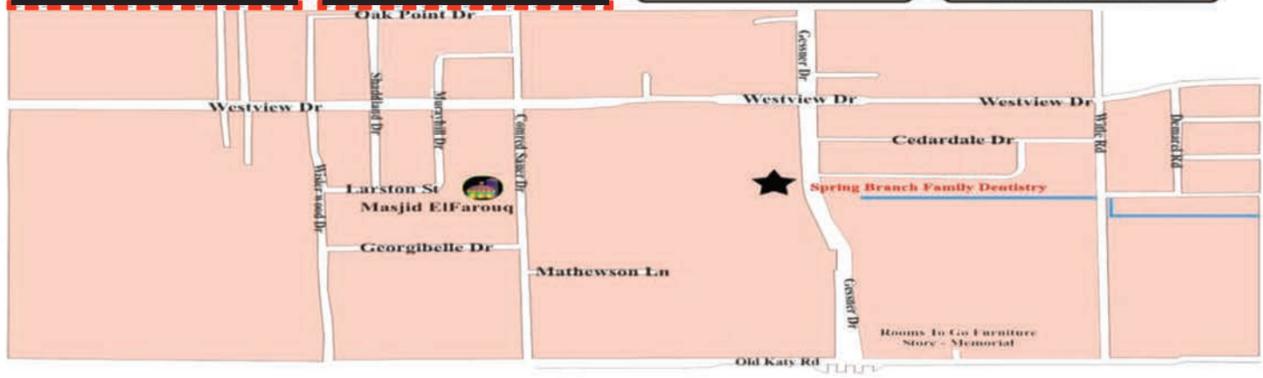
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