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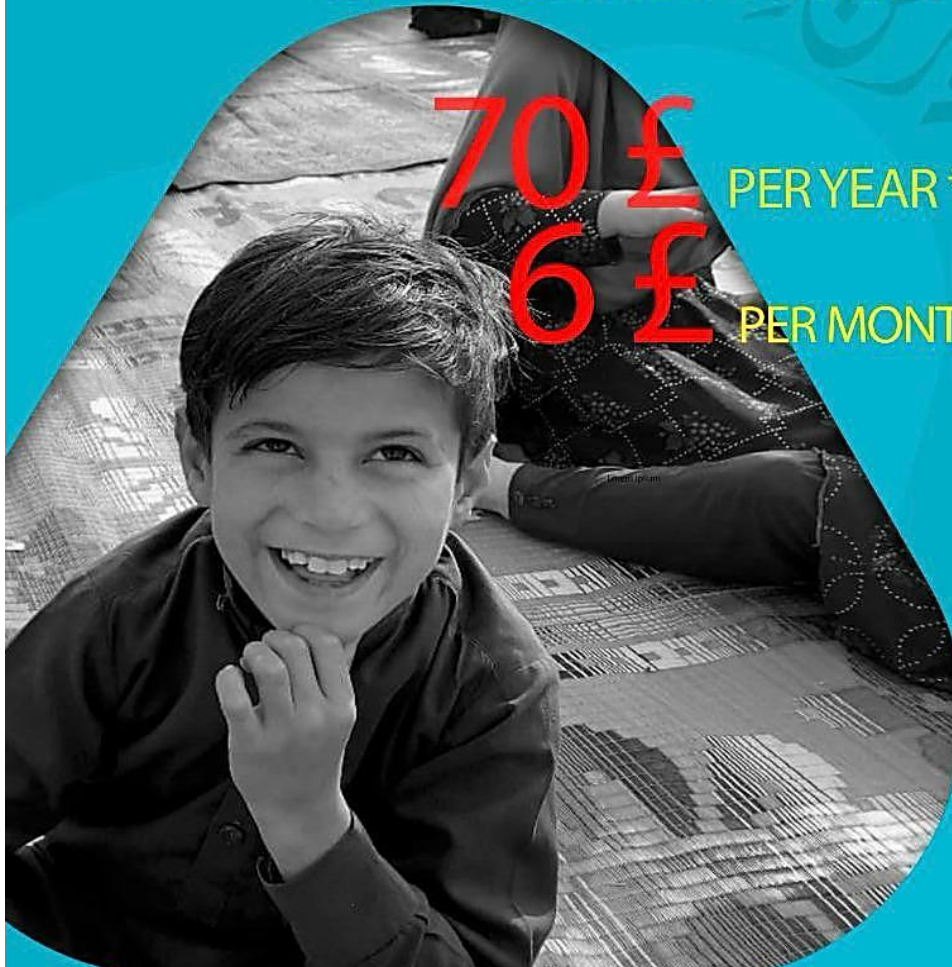
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**Chief Editor Note**

As we close in on the end of 2024, Pakistan finds itself at a crucial juncture, with both significant challenges and promising opportunities shaping its future. In this edition of The Foresight, we take a closer look at some of the most pressing issues facing the country, as well as the ways in which Pakistan can turn these challenges into stepping stones for growth.

Hosting the 2024 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit presents Pakistan with a unique chance to strengthen its position on the global stage. The summit will not only bolster diplomatic ties but also open doors for economic cooperation and regional stability. It's a pivotal moment for Pakistan to assert its role in the region and highlight its commitment to fostering peace and collaboration.

The smog crisis in Punjab continues to threaten public health and environmental sustainability. The thick, toxic air that envelops the province each winter is not just a seasonal nuisance—it's a public health emergency. The government has taken steps to mitigate the situation, but stronger policies, better enforcement, and increased public awareness are urgently needed to tackle this issue head-on. Cleaner air is not just a luxury; it's a fundamental right.

Turning to education, Pakistan's system is in dire need of reform, with millions of children still out of school and the quality of education remaining highly uneven. However, amidst the challenges lie opportunities for change. By embracing new technologies and focusing on inclusive, quality education, Pakistan can lay the foundation for a brighter future. This edition highlights the efforts to reform higher education in South Punjab, where Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghauri, Vice Chancellor of Bahauddin Zakariya University, shares his vision for transforming the region's academic landscape. His work offers a glimmer of hope for a better, more equitable education system that can drive regional development.

As we reflect on these issues—foreign policy, environmental health, and education reform—it's clear that Pakistan's future depends on how effectively we address these critical areas. The road ahead is not without its obstacles, but with strategic vision and collective effort, we can build a stronger, more resilient nation. At The Foresight, we remain committed to bringing you the insights and perspectives needed to navigate this complex yet promising journey.

With warm regards,



Tanveer Ali Maken

# HOSTING THE SCO

## Pakistan's Vision for a Stronger SCO

Tanveer Ali Maken

The successful hosting of the 23rd Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Islamabad marks a significant achievement for Pakistan's government. Pakistan has recently faced a series of economic, financial, political, and public order challenges that have strained national resilience. At a time when the region itself faces instability, bringing together four of the world's nuclear powers under the SCO could signal positive progress toward transformative change. Hosting such an international summit is particularly commendable considering Pakistan's recent struggles with events like the catastrophic 2020 floods, inflation, and public order issues, which displaced millions, damaged infrastructure, and intensified economic challenges.

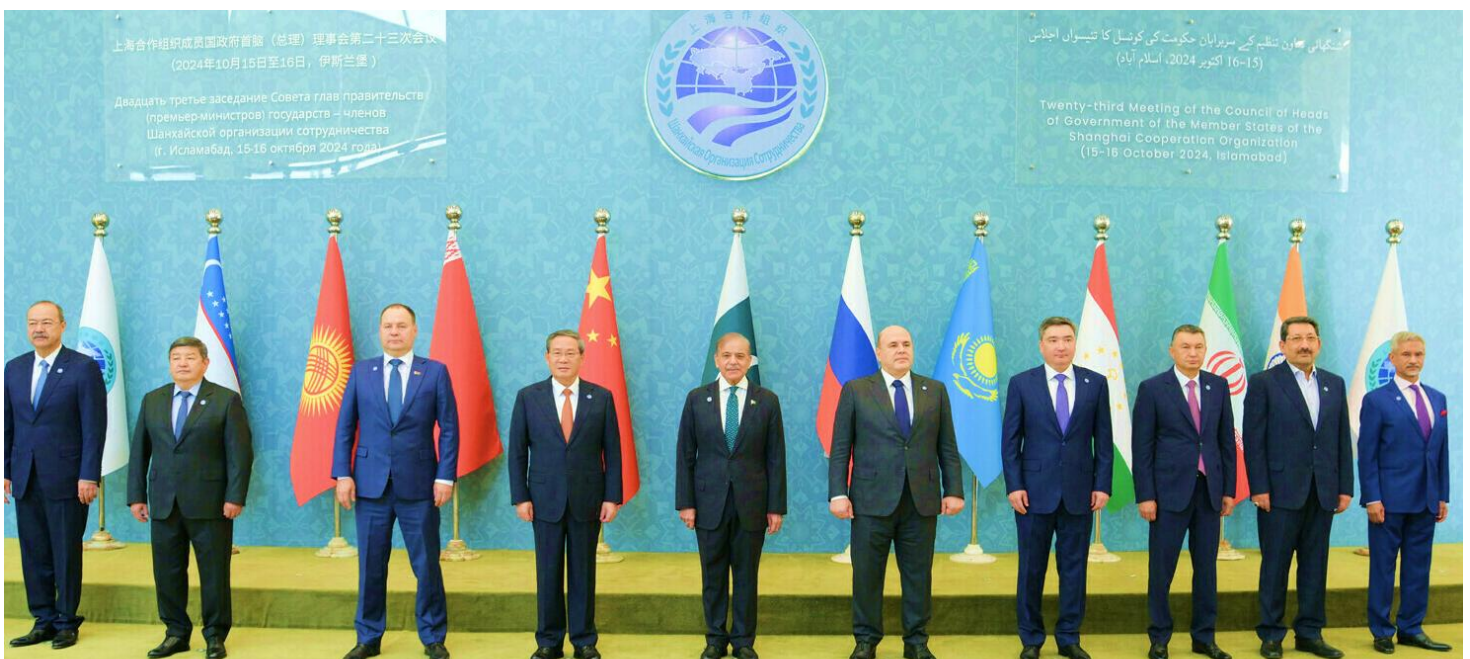
Despite these hurdles, the government's effort to

successfully host 900 delegates at the SCO summit reflects a strong commitment to stabilizing Pakistan's economy. The two-day Heads of Government Summit, which concluded in Islamabad, emphasized the importance of Eurasian connectivity and multilateral cooperation. Leaders from Pakistan, Russia, China, India, and other member states gathered with a message: Pakistan is ready for business and prepared to play a central role in multilateral institutions. Key topics covered at the summit included trade, environmental initiatives, and cultural exchange, as highlighted in the Joint Declaration. The declaration further called for establishing an SCO Development Bank and increasing the use of national currencies in transactions, while also opposing unilateral U.S. sanctions on certain member states—a clear signal against

Western economic tactics seen as punitive.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif underscored climate change as an “existential crisis” and emphasized that this is an opportune moment to invest in major infrastructure projects such as the China-Central Asia Gas Pipeline, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and the Eurasian Transport Network. Pakistan also voiced strong support for SCO's Energy Cooperation 2030 strategy and advocated establishing an investor association to attract critical investments.

A few major takeaways from the summit highlight the SCO's shift towards pragmatic solutions for economic growth, security, and environmental sustainability. Economic integration emerged as a priority, with member states reinforcing the need for regional





connectivity. Pakistan proposed the establishment of an SCO Development Fund to restart stalled projects and ensure balanced development throughout the region. The issue of national autonomy was also prominent; member states asserted that each nation has the right to shape its political, social, and economic trajectory independently and committed to non-interference and mutual respect.

Additionally, the group committed to implementing the SCO Economic Development Strategy 2030, with plans for enhanced cooperation across trade, finance, eco-friendly initiatives, and digital infrastructure. Addressing the digital divide and boosting information security are also among the group's top priorities. The SCO adopted a new plan to develop digital public infrastructure that could modernize economies and promote innovation within the region.

As the global landscape continues to change, SCO leaders highlighted the importance of keeping pace with advancements in artificial intelligence, digital commerce, and information technology. Challenges such as

protectionism and disrupted supply chains remain, but initiatives like China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) offer solutions by building strong partnerships across the region. The SCO aims to integrate the BRI with the Eurasian Economic Union to foster these connections.

Climate change was another focal point. SCO leaders endorsed the SCO Green Belt Program and established a working group on climate action, vowing to share expertise to address environmental challenges. Preparedness for natural disasters also saw renewed focus, with plans to use satellite surveillance and improve emergency response systems discussed to better address the rising threat.

For Pakistan, regional connectivity with Eurasian neighbors is vital for its economic development. In an increasingly divided world with conflicts across continents, platforms like the SCO offer countries the chance to collaborate for the benefit of their citizens. Rather than viewing the SCO as a revival of "bloc politics," global observers see it as an opportunity for a balanced global influence.

As power dynamics shift globally, the SCO's strategic importance grows. Including countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and other GCC and ASEAN members could transform it into an influential economic and political force. In the future, some political experts predict that the SCO might develop a military alliance dimension, especially as it seeks a greater role in maintaining global strategic balance. A military alliance involving China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and potentially Turkey and Saudi Arabia could provide the SCO with considerable influence on the global stage, while a focus on economic development over military spending could lead to a stable regional outlook.

Achieving the SCO's full vision will require overcoming significant bureaucratic and systemic differences among its diverse member states, but this summit demonstrates that while challenging, these goals are within reach. As Pakistan and its neighbors work towards economic integration, the SCO's ambitious goals for shared prosperity and stability signal an optimistic future for the region and beyond.



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## SMOG SIEGE

### Punjab Battling For Cleaner Air and Public Health

Rida Ilyas

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In response to the severe smog crisis in Lahore, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz emphasized the need for coordinated measures to address the air pollution affecting millions. Acknowledging that the crisis goes beyond politics, she called for cross-border cooperation with Indian Punjab, stating that “the smog problem is not just a political issue but a humanitarian issue.” Such collaboration could help mitigate environmental challenges that threaten citizens' health and livelihoods.

In addition to diplomatic outreach, Punjab's government in Pakistan has implemented various measures to combat smog. These include mandating face masks, grounding faulty vehicles, shutting down non-compliant factories, and taking strict action against illegal crop burning. These efforts aim to foster a healthier future for Punjab residents as the government strengthens its commitment to combating the smog crisis.

Smog has become one of Pakistan's most pressing environmental issues, especially in urban centers like

Lahore, where thick, brown haze symbolizes the growing pollution problem. This haze is not merely an environmental concern but a dangerous mix of pollutants that harms public health and agriculture. Smog in Pakistan arises from both human and natural sources, including industrial emissions that release particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>), and sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). These pollutants combine with sunlight to produce ground-level ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) through photochemical reactions, leading to smog. In cities like Lahore, where this smog can linger for days, it reduces visibility and degrades air quality.

Vehicle emissions are also a major factor in smog formation, particularly in urban areas where the number of cars, trucks, and buses has surged in recent years. The widespread use of outdated engines and fossil fuels exacerbates air pollution. Furthermore, the practice of burning crop residues, common among Pakistani farmers, adds to the problem. During harvest seasons, large quantities of rice and wheat straw are burned to



clear fields, releasing smoke and particles into the atmosphere.

Weather patterns complicate the situation, particularly in winter, when temperature changes trap cold air near the ground, preventing pollutants from dispersing and intensifying smog. Lahore's location also contributes to high smog levels, especially when air currents fail to dissipate pollutants.

The health effects of smog are severe, with both immediate and long-term consequences. Fine particles like PM2.5 are particularly hazardous, as they can penetrate deeply into the lungs, reach the alveoli, and even enter the bloodstream. Prolonged exposure to PM2.5 can cause chronic respiratory conditions like asthma, bronchitis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). For those with pre-existing health conditions, smog worsens symptoms, leading to increased hospital visits and a lower quality of life. Smog also presents significant cardiovascular risks, with pollutants like ground-level ozone and PM2.5 causing inflammation, oxidative stress, and blood vessel damage. This increases the likelihood of heart attacks, strokes, and other heart-related diseases.

Vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems, are especially at risk. For children, smog exposure can hinder growth, cause respiratory infections, and lead to long-term lung damage. Elderly people with pre-existing health conditions face increased symptoms and mortality rates due to air pollution. Lahore's air quality frequently reaches alarming levels, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) often falling in the "very unhealthy" range. Early in 2024, Lahore recorded an AQI of 207, which is 30

times higher than the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended limit. These high pollution levels have worsened health problems related to smog, further burdening Pakistan's healthcare system.

Smog not only affects human health but also harms agriculture. Ground-level ozone, a major component of smog, is a serious threat to crops. It can damage plant tissues, hinder photosynthesis, and stunt growth, resulting in reduced crop yields and economic losses for farmers. Key crops like wheat, rice, and soybeans are especially sensitive to smog, with potential yield reductions ranging from 10% to 40%. In Pakistan, where agriculture is the backbone of the economy, these losses are substantial. Smog also harms soil health by depositing pollutants like sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide, which increase soil acidity and deplete essential nutrients, making it harder for plants to absorb the nutrients needed for growth.

Besides damaging crops, smog affects livestock. Animals exposed to pollutants like ozone and particulate matter may experience respiratory distress, decreased milk production, and even higher mortality rates. The cumulative impact of smog harms the entire agro-ecosystem, affecting crops, livestock, soil health, and biodiversity. The burning of crop residues, which contributes to smog formation, also damages soil by releasing carbon monoxide and particles into the air, depleting nutrients and degrading air quality. Often, crop residue burning coincides with weather conditions favorable to smog formation, creating a cycle that harms the environment and economy.

Accurate monitoring is crucial for managing smog effectively. Air quality in Pakistan is tracked through



monitoring stations, passive samplers, and mobile units that measure pollutants like PM2.5, nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and ozone in real-time. Continuous monitoring stations in urban areas provide data to authorities, helping to assess air quality and issue health guidelines. Satellite-based remote sensing techniques complement ground-level monitoring by allowing researchers to observe pollution concentrations over large areas, providing valuable insights into smog distribution and trends over time. This data informs policy decisions and helps refine pollution control strategies.

Pakistan has taken steps to address smog, including implementing stricter vehicle emission standards, promoting clean fuel technologies, improving vehicle testing and maintenance programs, and encouraging electric vehicle adoption in cities like Lahore and Karachi. Efforts are also underway to reduce industrial emissions by enforcing regulations that prioritize cleaner production methods and eco-friendly technologies. Renewable energy promotion is another key component of these initiatives, as shifting away from fossil fuels will reduce pollution.

Agricultural practices are also being reformed through awareness campaigns and incentives for farmers to adopt sustainable methods. Efforts to reduce crop residue burning and promote eco-friendly waste management practices are essential. However, challenges such as limited resources, weak enforcement, and low public awareness hinder the successful implementation of these measures. Addressing Pakistan's smog crisis requires a multi-faceted approach involving government agencies, industries, environmental organizations, researchers, and the public. While progress has been made, much more is needed to lower pollution levels, protect public health, and ensure agricultural sustainability. Moving forward, the government must invest in pollution control research, enhance air quality monitoring infrastructure, and promote public engagement in pollution reduction. Only through strong political will, regulatory enforcement, and public awareness campaigns can Pakistan hope to mitigate the long-term effects of smog and protect the health of its citizens and its agricultural sector.

Ultimately, smog in Pakistan is a complex issue that demands urgent attention. By addressing the root causes—industrial emissions, vehicle pollution, agricultural practices, and weather conditions—and implementing a comprehensive, science-based strategy, Pakistan can progress towards a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future for its people and environment.



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# REVITALIZING EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

## Challenges and Opportunities for Change

Dr. Tanveer Kiyani

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The state of education in Pakistan has become an alarming issue, drawing attention both locally and internationally. Each year brings new evidence of the widening gaps across both primary and higher education sectors. The 2024 Times Higher Education rankings highlighted this decline when only one Pakistani university managed to secure a place in the 401-500 bracket, underscoring the deteriorating quality of higher education nationwide. This singular statistic reflects a much deeper crisis, impacting all levels of education in Pakistan, with severe implications for the nation's future.

To understand the present circumstances, it's essential to reflect on Pakistan's history with education. Since gaining independence in 1947, Pakistan has struggled to establish an effective educational system to cater to its ever-growing population. Early efforts to improve literacy and expand educational access were frequently disrupted by political instability, underfunding, and inadequate infrastructure. In the 1970s, educational institutions were nationalized under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. While these reforms were intended to make education accessible to all, they ultimately led to widespread inefficiencies and lack of accountability. This period set a precedent for chronic underfunding and administrative

stagnation, which continue to undermine the education sector.

The establishment of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in 2002 represented a significant turning point, offering a ray of hope for higher education in Pakistan. Under Dr. Attaur Rahman's leadership, the HEC rolled out ambitious reforms, such as increased funding for research, faculty development programs, and international collaborations. For a time, this brought about noticeable improvements, with some Pakistani universities earning international recognition. However, the momentum of these initiatives soon faltered, and higher education in Pakistan regressed into familiar patterns of neglect, mismanagement, and inefficiency.

The crisis within higher education cannot be understood without addressing the failures in primary and secondary education. According to a 2023 UNICEF report, 26 million children in Pakistan are currently out of school, while another 70 million lack basic literacy skills. This paints a harrowing picture of an educational system failing at its fundamental task of providing all children with a basic education. The roots of this problem are multifaceted. Poverty remains a significant barrier, as many families cannot afford even the minimal expenses associated with schooling. Gender discrimination,





particularly in rural areas, further limits access, with cultural norms often prioritizing the education of boys over girls. The lack of basic facilities, such as furniture, classrooms, and clean drinking water, exacerbates the issue, especially for female students. Government initiatives, like the Ehsaas Scholarship Programme, have been introduced to address these challenges, but these efforts have yet to create a meaningful impact on a system plagued by deeply entrenched problems.

A major contributor to the higher education crisis is Pakistan's chronic underfunding of the sector. In 2024, the government initially slashed the higher education budget to Rs25 billion, a drastic cut that shocked the academic community. Following public outcry, the decision was reversed, with the budget restored to Rs65 billion for recurring expenses and Rs21 billion for development. However, this

episode left lasting financial instability, with many universities struggling to maintain basic operations. Insufficient funding hampers universities' ability to invest in research, update curricula, improve infrastructure, and retain qualified faculty, all of which diminish the quality of education and the employability of graduates in a globalized market.

The Higher Education Commission, though established to oversee and improve the quality of higher education, has faced criticism for its bureaucratic and often heavy-handed approach. While it has increased the number of PhD programs and promoted research, it has failed to ensure accountability and transparency within universities. Plagiarism, fake degrees, and substandard research remain common. HEC's Quality Enhancement Cells, which are supposed to monitor educational standards, lack the authority and resources to enforce

meaningful change, often leading to a focus on quantity over quality in academic output. Universities prioritize metrics, such as the number of publications, often resorting to unethical practices like publishing in predatory journals. This has devalued academic integrity and tarnished the reputation of Pakistani universities internationally.

The autonomy granted to universities in Pakistan has been both a blessing and a curse. While it allows institutions to operate without excessive government interference, it has also led to a lack of accountability. The appointment of vice-chancellors, which became the prerogative of provincial governments after the 18th Amendment, has often been influenced by political affiliations rather than merit. Consequently, many universities lack stable leadership, with 64 institutions currently operating without permanent vice-chancellors. This

reliance on temporary appointees has led to a lack of continuity, preventing long-term planning and reducing academic standards. Such politicization of appointments has severely damaged the credibility of the higher education system.

Administrative dysfunction extends beyond leadership issues. Key positions, such as registrars, deans, and department heads, often remain vacant or are filled temporarily. This has created a bureaucratic backlog, delaying essential decisions and compromising effective governance. The preference for retired employees over young talent has further eroded the quality of administration, creating an unhealthy work environment. In addition, teachers increasingly take on administrative roles, attracted by the associated financial benefits, further detracting from their primary responsibilities of teaching and research. The influence of teachers' unions has further complicated matters, often resulting in appointments based on union loyalty rather than competence, creating an environment where self-interest supersedes educational quality.

The absence of student representation in university governance bodies, such as the Senate and Syndicate, further weakens the system. Despite forming the largest constituency in universities, students are systematically excluded from key decision-making processes. This exclusion extends to committees dealing with grievances and harassment, leaving students vulnerable and marginalizing their voices in issues that directly affect their welfare. The lack of an effective support system has led to widespread disillusionment, with

many students feeling that the educational system fails to meet their needs.

Harassment is a significant, unaddressed issue within Pakistani universities. Many institutions have failed to implement transparent and effective mechanisms for handling cases of harassment. Teachers' unions and administrative protections often shield perpetrators from accountability, forcing victims into compromising their cases or staying silent. These compromised mechanisms perpetuate a culture where grievances are suppressed, driving many students and employees to resign due to an environment that tolerates abuse.

Quality assurance in Pakistani universities is another area of concern. Although the HEC has mandated the establishment of Quality Enhancement Cells in every university, these bodies often lack the authority to enforce changes. The focus is frequently on meeting formal requirements rather than genuine improvements in teaching quality, research, or infrastructure. This has allowed poor teaching standards to persist, compromising the academic experience of students. Additionally, ad hocism has become prevalent, particularly in newer universities that lack regular faculty. Such institutions, which are often unaccredited by the HEC, jeopardize the future of thousands of students.

The problem of fake research publications is another black mark on Pakistan's higher education sector. Many professors engage in this practice to secure promotions and financial benefits, publishing in low-quality, predatory journals that lack proper peer review. This fraudulent behavior has even

extended to prominent individuals, including lawmakers and judges, further damaging the academic reputation of the country. The Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization, originally intended to connect academia with industry, has devolved into a tool for academic opportunism, with the emphasis on publishing for promotion rather than meaningful research.

There is also a trend of establishing new university campuses in every district, often driven by political motivations. Unfortunately, these newly established institutions lack adequate infrastructure and faculty, diverting resources away from well-established universities that already struggle with funding. Instead of creating more universities, the government should focus on reforming existing institutions, ensuring they are well-funded, properly managed, and staffed by qualified faculty. Universities need the resources to enhance research, and pending legal cases involving these institutions should be resolved promptly to allow them to function effectively.

Ultimately, the government must establish clear performance indicators for both teaching and administrative staff to foster accountability and promote continuous improvement. This should involve regular evaluation of academic quality, enforcement of ethical standards, and the implementation of transparent mechanisms for student welfare. Such measures could transform the higher education system into a foundation for national progress, moving away from the existing culture of mediocrity and enabling Pakistan to nurture talent that can compete on a global stage.

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# TRANSFORMING EDUCATION IN SOUTH PUNJAB

## An Interview With Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghauri Vice Chancellor BZU, Multan

Tanveer Ali Maken

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Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghauri, recently appointed as the Vice Chancellor of Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) Multan, steps into this role at a pivotal time. With over two decades of experience spanning academia, corporate, and public sectors, he brings a visionary approach to an institution that has been without a permanent leader for two years. His background, marked by roles in digital transformation, policy development, and strategic planning, has equipped him with the skills to drive impactful change. In this exclusive interview with Foresight Magazine, Dr. Ghauri shares his insights on BZU's potential, his plans to foster growth, and his vision for strengthening BZU's role in Pakistan's educational landscape.

**Foresight Magazine: Dr. Ghauri, congratulations on your appointment as the Vice Chancellor of BZU. What motivated you to take on this role, and what do you see as the primary challenges and opportunities at BZU?**

Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghauri: Thank you. The opportunity to lead BZU, an institution with a deep-rooted history and impact in South Punjab, is truly an honor. BZU has been a vital educational and cultural hub, particularly for the people of Southern Punjab. Yet, it faces challenges in terms of modernizing infrastructure, aligning academic programs with



market demands, and fostering a globally relevant education environment. My goal is to address these challenges by promoting academic excellence, strengthening research, and creating a dynamic campus culture. With a clear vision and the right strategies, I believe BZU can become a leading institution not only in Pakistan but internationally.

**Foresight Magazine: Your career encompasses leadership roles in institutions like NUML, the Lahore Knowledge Park Company, and the Planning Commission. How has your experience prepared you for the responsibilities of Vice Chancellor at BZU?**

Dr. Ghauri: Each role I've undertaken has shaped my

approach to academic leadership, policy-making, and institutional development. At NUML, as a Pro-Rector, I focused on building academic excellence and establishing policies that facilitated impactful learning. At the Lahore Knowledge Park, I led initiatives that bridged academia, industry, and government to foster innovation—this approach of inter-sector collaboration is something I plan to bring to BZU as well. Additionally, my experience with the Planning Commission gave me insights into large-scale educational projects and policy reform. These roles taught me the importance of balancing strategic vision with actionable steps, which I believe will be instrumental in my work at BZU.





**Foresight Magazine: What are your immediate priorities as Vice Chancellor, and what long-term goals do you have for BZU?**

Dr. Ghauri: My immediate priority is to bring stability and structure to BZU. This includes filling administrative and academic vacancies, enhancing campus facilities, and improving student support services. Another crucial area is academic reform. I am committed to modernizing our curriculum to make it relevant to current industry demands and global standards. We'll be working to integrate digital learning technologies, enhance faculty development programs, and promote interdisciplinary research initiatives.

In the long term, I envision BZU as a center of excellence that goes beyond traditional learning. Our goal is to be a leader in research, particularly in fields like biotechnology, environmental studies, and social sciences. We are also focusing on building partnerships with industries to foster internships, job placements, and practical training for our students. Ultimately, my vision is

for BZU to not only educate but to empower students with the skills and values needed to contribute meaningfully to society.

**Foresight Magazine: BZU's location in Multan, a region with a rich cultural and academic heritage, provides a unique context for its role. How do you plan to integrate this heritage into your vision for BZU?**

Dr. Ghauri: Multan's cultural heritage is an incredible asset. The city has a long history as a center of knowledge and spirituality, dating back to Hazrat Bahauddin Zakariya's establishment of a higher learning institution in the 13th century. At BZU, we want to honor this heritage by promoting studies and research that resonate with the region's identity and contribute to its development.

We're looking to expand programs in areas like Islamic studies, regional languages, arts, and social sciences, as these disciplines connect deeply with Multan's cultural roots. Our Saraiki Area Study Centre is a start, but we will build on that foundation. By embracing Multan's heritage, we can create a

sense of pride and identity among our students, while also addressing issues relevant to the region's development.

**Foresight Magazine: With your expertise in digital transformation, what initiatives do you envision for bringing BZU up to speed with the digital age?**

Dr. Ghauri: Digital transformation is crucial in today's educational environment. We aim to modernize BZU's systems by integrating digital tools that facilitate learning, research, and administrative efficiency. We're looking at implementing virtual learning platforms, upgrading our IT infrastructure, and making student services more accessible online. The goal is to make BZU a digitally enabled campus that enhances both learning and operational processes.

Furthermore, we plan to introduce courses and workshops in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, data science, and cybersecurity. These areas are not only in demand but are essential for preparing our students to succeed in an

increasingly digital world. Embracing digital transformation will help BZU keep pace with global standards and equip our students with relevant skills.

**Foresight Magazine: What role do you see for international partnerships in BZU's future, and how will they benefit students and faculty?**

Dr. Ghauri: International partnerships are high on our agenda. In today's globalized world, exposure to diverse perspectives and methodologies is invaluable. I am actively pursuing collaborations with foreign universities and research institutions to facilitate student and faculty exchange programs, joint research projects, and international conferences. These initiatives will give our students and faculty a global perspective, which is crucial for a comprehensive education.

Additionally, partnerships with international institutions can open doors to research funding, scholarships, and training opportunities. Such collaborations also help BZU align its academic standards with global benchmarks,

thereby enhancing our reputation and attracting talent from across the country and beyond.

**Foresight Magazine: What are your thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of the current education system in Pakistan, and how can it be improved?**

Dr. Ghauri: The education system in Pakistan has both notable strengths and significant weaknesses. While we have a wealth of talented students, many face considerable challenges, particularly in areas like career planning and effective industry linkage. A key issue is the lack of adequate counseling and guidance at early educational stages, which leaves students uncertain about their future paths. To address this, we must create an environment that encourages students to identify their skills and passions, aligning them with viable career opportunities.

Improving the education system requires a concerted effort to integrate industry needs into our curricula. By fostering strong partnerships between academia and industry, we can ensure that our programs are relevant and that

graduates are equipped with the skills necessary to excel in the job market. Additionally, enhancing career counseling services and providing experiential learning opportunities, such as internships and workshops, can empower students to make informed choices about their careers. Ultimately, these changes will help cultivate a more responsive and effective education system that prepares our youth for the challenges of the modern workforce.

**Foresight Magazine: What message would you like to share with the youth of Pakistan?**

Dr. Ghauri: I encourage young people to explore their unique skills and passions. It's crucial to identify whether they lean towards practical skills or theoretical knowledge. Investing time in skill development can lead to numerous opportunities. I stress the importance of hard work, dedication, and having a clear vision of one's goals. Remember, creativity and knowledge are powerful tools for transformative change in society.

**Foresight Magazine: In your opinion, what is the biggest**



**challenge facing higher education in Pakistan today?**

Dr. Ghauri: The most significant challenge is the disconnect between education and the practical needs of the economy. We must cultivate a culture of research and innovation that transcends rote learning. Universities must prepare students to ask critical questions, seek solutions, and contribute meaningfully to society. Without this focus, we risk producing graduates who are ill-equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

**Foresight Magazine: Many universities are focusing on character development alongside academics. How do you plan to instill values and civic responsibility in BZU's students?**

Dr. Ghauri: At BZU, we believe that education is not just about imparting knowledge; it's about building character. We aim to foster a campus culture that

encourages ethical conduct, civic engagement, and social responsibility. Through various initiatives, such as community outreach programs, leadership workshops, and cultural events, we're working to create well-rounded individuals who are compassionate, socially aware, and committed to making a positive impact.

In a society facing challenges such as intolerance and social divides, we want our students to be leaders who promote unity and understanding. Character-building is as important as academic excellence, and we will continue to emphasize this in our campus environment and curriculum.

**Foresight Magazine: What message would you like to convey to the students and faculty at the beginning of your tenure as Vice Chancellor?**

Dr. Ghauri: My message to our students and faculty is one of optimism and dedication. For our students, remember that you are

the future architects of a prosperous Pakistan. Seize the opportunities that BZU provides, engage actively in your studies, and contribute to the university community. For our faculty, let's work together to create a supportive, innovative, and inclusive environment that fosters learning and growth. As a team, we have the power to make BZU a place of excellence, not just for Multan but for all of Pakistan.

With Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghauri at the helm, Bahauddin Zakariya University stands poised to enter a new era marked by innovation, growth, and renewed purpose. His vision combines respect for the university's heritage with a progressive approach that embraces digital transformation, international collaboration, and comprehensive character-building for students. As he leads BZU into this promising future, Dr. Ghauri's commitment to excellence promises to elevate the institution's stature and impact, aligning it with the needs of a rapidly changing world.



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# POET OF THE EAST AND ARCHITECT OF THOUGHT

## Tribute to DR. ALLAMA IQBAL

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Muhammad Aziz ur Rehman

November 9th marks the birth of Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, a towering figure in the intellectual and political history of South Asia. Revered as a philosopher, poet, and politician, Iqbal's contribution to the intellectual awakening of the Muslim world is unparalleled. His profound vision for the future of the Muslim ummah, encapsulated in his poetry, inspired not only Pakistan's creation but also laid the groundwork for a reimagined Islamic identity in the modern world.

His ideas continue to shape Pakistan's national identity and inspire countless individuals globally. Dr. Iqbal's legacy is not merely that of a poet, but of a visionary thinker who saw beyond the immediate challenges of his time and sought to offer a timeless, transformative solution for the Muslim community.

Dr. Allama Iqbal's contributions remain a beacon of light, guiding us towards a future where intellectual, spiritual, and political awakening remain central to human progress. His birth anniversary serves as a reminder of the power of thought and vision in shaping the course of history. As we remember his legacy, we are called to embrace his call for self-empowerment and strive towards creating a better, more enlightened world.



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## QAU SHINES BRIGHT Securing Top Spots in QS Asia and Global University Rankings

Dr. Abdul Rauf

Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) in Islamabad has once again demonstrated its academic prowess by securing an impressive position in the QS Asia Rankings for 2025. Ranked 84th across Asia and 9th in South Asia, QAU has firmly established itself as one of the region's premier institutions of higher learning. This remarkable achievement underscores the university's ongoing commitment to academic excellence, research, and institutional development.

The latest ranking marks a significant leap for Quaid-i-Azam University, surpassing its previous standing and reflecting a consistent trajectory of growth in key academic and research areas. This improvement highlights the university's relentless pursuit of excellence and the dedication of its faculty, students, and staff, along with the strategic initiatives implemented by its leadership to foster an environment conducive to learning and innovation.

Professor Dr. Niaz Ahmed Akhtar, Vice Chancellor of QAU, expressed pride in the university's

accomplishments and offered congratulations to all who contributed to this success. "This milestone is a result of the collective efforts of the entire university community, including our faculty, students, staff, and alumni," he said. "We remain committed to maintaining our standing and achieving further success in the years to come." Dr. Akhtar emphasized that QAU's rise in the rankings is not just a reflection of its current status, but the culmination of years of hard work focused on improving academic standards, research output, and the quality of education.

The recognition from QS Asia is not the only international accolade Quaid-i-Azam University has earned recently. In addition to its impressive ranking in Asia, QAU also secured a spot in the top 400 universities worldwide in the 2025 Times World University Rankings. Furthermore, it placed 315th in the QS World University Rankings, further solidifying its global academic reputation. These accomplishments highlight the university's growing stature on the

international stage, reinforcing its status as a key player in the global higher education landscape.

Despite facing financial challenges, Quaid-i-Azam University has continued to rise in prominence. Its ability to thrive amidst these constraints is a testament to the strategic leadership and resilience of its administration. The university has made notable progress in expanding its research capabilities, enhancing teaching standards, and broadening its academic offerings. Dr. Akhtar acknowledged that while financial constraints remain an ongoing challenge, they have not impeded the university's mission. "Through careful planning and resource optimization, we have ensured that QAU remains competitive, both regionally and globally," he said.

Several factors have contributed to QAU's continued success. One key element is its academic excellence. The university offers strong programs across a range of disciplines, including natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities, which have played a significant role in elevating its global standing. Research is another cornerstone of QAU's achievements. The university is renowned for its high-quality research output, often conducted in collaboration with international scholars and research institutions, which has helped raise its visibility and academic reputation.

Another major factor driving QAU's success is the dedication of its faculty and staff. Their commitment to

academic rigor, research excellence, and student development has been crucial to maintaining the university's high standards. In addition, QAU has actively sought to strengthen international collaborations, forming partnerships with universities and research institutions around the world. These collaborations have enhanced the university's research capacity and contributed to its growing global recognition.

Moreover, QAU places a strong emphasis on student engagement and success. The university continuously invests in creating a supportive and enriching environment for its students, providing access to world-class facilities, academic support, and opportunities for personal growth. This focus on the student experience has played an essential role in establishing QAU's reputation as one of the leading universities in Pakistan.

As Quaid-i-Azam University looks to the future, it remains committed to upholding its position as a top-tier institution. Its impressive performance in the QS Asia Rankings 2025, along with its continued success in global rankings, demonstrates the collective efforts of its community and the university's unwavering commitment to excellence. Despite ongoing financial challenges, QAU's continued focus on innovation, research, and academic rigor ensures that it will maintain and build on its global standing in the years ahead.





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# TERIFIC FLAVOUR FUZION





Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistan's Minister for Planning and Development, recently emphasized the critical role that education and research must play in ensuring the future prosperity and global competitiveness of Muslim countries. Speaking at a seminar

Iqbal highlighted the pressing challenges facing the Muslim world today—ranging from economic disparities to technological lag—and argued that these issues could only be addressed by a focused commitment to education and

One of Iqbal's key points was the need for collaboration between Muslim countries in these fields. He proposed that a united approach to education and research would not only help individual nations but could also provide collective solutions to

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## AHSAN IQBAL'S CALL FOR ACTION Strengthening Education and Research to Boost Global Competitiveness in Muslim Nations

Desk Report

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on Saturday, Iqbal shared his vision for the Muslim world, underscoring the urgent need to modernize educational systems and increase investments in research to keep pace with the fast-evolving global landscape. Drawing inspiration from the philosophy of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the Minister advocated for intellectual growth, unity, and the empowerment of societies through the pursuit of knowledge.

research. He warned that without strengthening these areas, Muslim-majority nations would find it increasingly difficult to compete on the global stage. The Minister noted that the world is more interconnected than ever before, with trade, technology, and security issues increasingly transcending borders. In such an environment, research and education are vital tools that can help countries solve pressing social issues and achieve sustainable development, he said.

shared challenges such as poverty, unemployment, climate change, and geopolitical instability. He argued that fostering intellectual collaboration would enhance the political, economic, and cultural ties between Muslim nations, enabling them to present a unified and stronger voice on the global stage.

The Minister also drew on the enduring relevance of Allama Iqbal's philosophy, which emphasizes self-empowerment

through intellectual and spiritual growth. Iqbal's call for a revival of Islamic thought, grounded in critical thinking, self-awareness, and the pursuit of knowledge, was cited as a guiding force for the modern Muslim world. Iqbal's vision of a united and progressive Muslim Ummah, achieved through intellectual advancement, remains a powerful roadmap for the future of these nations, according to Iqbal.

Despite a rich history of scholarship and scientific achievement, many Muslim countries today face a significant gap in research and development (R&D), Iqbal observed. While countries like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the UAE have made substantial strides in investing in education and technology, much of the Muslim world still lags behind in global education rankings. According to the QS World University Rankings 2024, only a handful of universities from Muslim-majority countries feature in the top 1000 globally. This gap, Iqbal argued, represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the Muslim world to prioritize long-term investments in higher education and research.

To address these disparities, the Minister called for a multifaceted approach to improving education and research. Governments, the private sector, and international organizations must all contribute to building robust educational systems, he said. Iqbal emphasized the importance of focusing on both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, with a particular emphasis on STEM fields—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. By fostering a strong academic and research environment, Muslim countries can drive innovation, improve the

quality of life for their citizens, and tackle global challenges such as climate change and health crises.

Iqbal also discussed the necessity of cultivating a culture of innovation within educational institutions. He noted that many Western nations are leading the way in technological advancements due to their emphasis on research, innovation, and entrepreneurial ecosystems. In contrast, many Muslim countries continue to rely heavily on traditional sectors, missing out on growth opportunities in emerging fields like artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and renewable energy. He called for a shift in mindset from merely consuming knowledge and technology developed by others to creating original solutions that address the world's most pressing challenges.

According to Iqbal, this transformation in approach is crucial to the future development of Muslim nations. The creation of a thriving culture of innovation, he argued, would enable these countries to not only catch up with global trends but to also lead in key areas. This, in turn, would serve as the foundation for sustained growth and prosperity.

Iqbal also emphasized that fostering educational excellence and research capabilities requires long-term policy

commitment and investment. He urged Muslim countries to focus on developing policies that support the growth of institutions dedicated to research and innovation, including providing adequate funding, forming academic partnerships, and creating systems that incentivize intellectual pursuit. The success of these efforts, he concluded, hinges on a collective, strategic approach to education and research.

Ahsan Iqbal's message was clear: for the Muslim world to thrive in the 21st century, it must invest in education, research, and intellectual collaboration. By doing so, these nations will not only overcome their local challenges but also contribute meaningfully to global knowledge and progress. Allama Iqbal's timeless call for an intellectual and spiritual awakening remains as relevant today as it was in his time, offering a beacon of hope and guidance for Muslim nations seeking to build a prosperous, self-reliant future through knowledge and unity.



# CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

## Korea-Pakistan

### Celebrating Unity and Cooperation on National Foundation Day

Adnan Hameed

The Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Islamabad hosted a vibrant reception to mark the National Foundation Day and the 76th Anniversary of the Korean Armed Forces Day. The event featured cultural performances, including renditions of both the Korean and Pakistani national anthems, followed by a Taekwondo demonstration and a captivating opera performance by Korean singer Ms. Heemin Kim.

Federal Minister Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada was the Chief Guest, joined by various dignitaries, including Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Kareem Kundi and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Atta Tarar. In his address, Korean Ambassador Park Kijun highlighted Korea's commitment to supporting Pakistan's growth, stressing the importance of cultural and technological collaboration. He also announced

the upcoming "2024 K-Week" celebrations, featuring a cultural gala, movie day, and Taekwondo championship.

Minister Pirzada praised the strong diplomatic ties between the two nations and emphasized the need for deeper cooperation across sectors. The event underscored the growing partnership between Korea and Pakistan, celebrated through shared cultural and educational initiatives.



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# YOUTH AND EDUCATION

## At the Forefront of Korea-Pakistan Relations

### A Celebration of Unity and Growth

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Adnan Hameed



Islamabad, 23 October 2024: The Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Islamabad hosted an elegant reception on the occasion of the National Foundation Day and the 76th Anniversary of the Korean Armed Forces Day. The event, filled with cultural performances and diplomatic engagements, marked a significant moment in strengthening the long-standing ties between Korea and Pakistan.

The evening began with a poignant performance of the Korean national anthem, followed by a rendition of Pakistan's anthem, performed by a group of Korean children. The heartfelt

tribute resonated with attendees, symbolizing the shared respect and admiration between the two nations.

The Chief Guest for the evening, Federal Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, was joined by a distinguished group of Pakistani leaders, including Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Kareem Kundi, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Atta Tarar, and Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja. Members of the National Assembly and Senate, as

well as prominent figures from the diplomatic corps, business community, and media, were also present to commemorate the occasion.

In his opening address, His Excellency Park Kijun, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Pakistan, welcomed the gathering warmly and expressed his gratitude for Pakistan's ongoing support. He spoke passionately about the potential for enhanced cooperation between Korea and Pakistan, particularly in technology, innovation, and cultural exchange. Ambassador Park emphasized that Korea's

technological advancements and global expertise were at the ready to assist Pakistan in its development, with a deep sense of commitment to fortifying the bond between the two nations.

The celebration also included the announcement of "2024 K-Week," a series of cultural events aimed at fostering closer people-to-people ties between Korea and Pakistan. Among these, the 2024 Korea-Pakistan Cultural Gala, set to take place at the Liaquat Gymnasium on October 23, was a key highlight. The event was followed by the Korea-Pakistan Movie Day and the 17th Korean Ambassador Senior National Cadet Taekwondo Championship, scheduled for the following days. These events serve as platforms for Koreans and Pakistanis to connect, learn, and share in mutual cultural experiences.

Ambassador Park expressed his optimism for the future of bilateral relations, pointing to the significant strides both nations have made in advancing their diplomatic, economic, and

cultural partnerships. He spoke about the shared values of progress and mutual respect that form the foundation of the relationship, particularly in the realms of education, culture, and economic collaboration.

Federal Minister Pirzada, addressing the gathering, congratulated Korea on behalf of the Government of Pakistan and highlighted the enduring strength of the Korea-Pakistan relationship. He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to furthering cooperation in areas ranging from trade and technology to cultural and educational exchanges. His remarks underscored the importance of a shared vision for the future, with both countries focused on mutual growth and prosperity.

The event also showcased performances that captivated the audience, including a remarkable opera rendition by Korean singer Ms. Heemin Kim, whose powerful voice left a lasting impression. The evening concluded with an impressive Taekwondo

demonstration by a group of Korean martial artists, a spectacle that not only highlighted the discipline's grace and precision but also garnered applause from the distinguished audience.

This reception exemplified the cultural diplomacy that continues to shape the relations between Korea and Pakistan. As both nations look to the future, the focus remains on fostering deeper ties through cultural, educational, and technological collaboration. With events like "K-Week" bringing the people of both countries closer, the foundation is being laid for a future of continued cooperation and shared success.

As Ambassador Park Kijun aptly noted, the future of Korea-Pakistan relations is bright, built on the shared values of respect, cooperation, and cultural understanding. Through such initiatives, both nations are paving the way for a deeper, more resilient partnership, one that will undoubtedly continue to flourish for years to come.



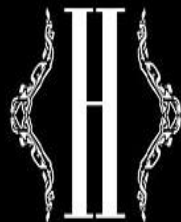
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