

# THE WORLD AMBASSADOR

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UNSC Member, Installs Flag  
at UN Headquarters**

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UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin  
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Strengthening Bilateral Ties**

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**"JOSEPH AOUN:  
LEBANON'S TURNING POINT"**

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# The World Ambassador



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## Letter from the Editor

In today's interconnected world, *The World Ambassador* brings you the stories and insights shaping global perspectives. Each month, we cover a range of topics—from health and social issues to technology and entertainment—aiming to inform and engage on matters impacting people worldwide.

More than just news, *The World Ambassador* is dedicated to the spirit of diplomacy. We focus on international relations, diplomatic initiatives, and exclusive interviews with ambassadors and leaders. Our mission is to offer readers a unique look into diplomacy and international cooperation, showcasing how nations work together to tackle shared challenges and build mutual understanding.

This issue is filled with thoughtful articles on health, social issues, technology trends, and entertainment. Our diplomatic section, as always, provides exclusive coverage of recent events, ambassadorial interviews, and cultural exchanges that bring nations closer.

We hope these articles inform, inspire, and spark dialogue. Thank you for joining us in exploring diplomacy and global affairs. Your readership is invaluable, and we look forward to your continued support in broadening perspectives across borders.

Warm regards,  
**Abid Siddique Chaudhry**  
Editor-in-Chief  
The World Ambassador

## PM Shehbaz Sharif Reaffirms Commitment to Boosting SMEs for Economic Growth



By Abid Siddique Chaudhry

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed the government's dedication to supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), highlighting their importance as the backbone of Pakistan's economy.

Speaking at a meeting in Lahore on Saturday, the Prime Minister stressed the need for decisive actions to integrate Pakistan's industries into the global supply chain, enhancing the country's export potential. He called for close collaboration between the federal government and provincial administrations to foster the development of the SME sector.

The meeting provided updates on the progress of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), including

the regular meetings of its newly formed board and ongoing efforts to bring in international experts to guide SME development.

The State Bank of Pakistan has also taken steps to simplify loan application processes, making it easier for SMEs to secure financial support. Communication between the Federal Ministry of Industry and provincial governments has been strengthened, with data collection on SMEs underway nationwide.

While the governments of Sindh and Balochistan have already devised action plans for SMEs, other regions, including Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, are working on their respective strategies.

PM Shehbaz emphasized that the growth of SMEs is crucial for Pakistan's economic recovery and long-term development, urging all stakeholders to collaborate in realizing the sector's full potential.



## Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Meets UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to Discuss Strengthening Bilateral Ties



By Abid Siddique Chaudhry

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, on Sunday to discuss matters of mutual and bilateral interest.

During the meeting, both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing economic, political, and cultural ties. Discussions encompassed a wide array of topics, including economic collaboration, regional stability, climate change, and advancing shared global interests.

Prime Minister Sharif lauded the UAE's visionary leadership and its pivotal role as a development and investment partner for Pakistan. He emphasized Pakistan's readiness to strengthen cooperation in key sectors such as renewable energy, technology, trade, infrastructure, and skill development.

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan expressed the UAE's interest in collaborating with Pakistan in mining, minerals, and agriculture. He commended Pakistan's economic stabilization efforts under Prime Minister Sharif's leadership and noted the opportunities created for enhanced bilateral investment and cooperation.



The UAE President underscored the importance of people-to-people connections and reiterated his country's commitment to strengthening its enduring partnership with Pakistan.

Prime Minister Sharif extended heartfelt gratitude for the UAE's steadfast support, particularly in humanitarian aid and development initiatives. Both leaders pledged to work together on mutual interests, fostering peace and progress in the region.

The meeting concluded with a joint resolve to advance collaboration in priority areas, paving the way for a brighter future for both nations.

Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Chief Minister of Punjab Ms. Maryam Nawaz, Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi also attended the meeting.

Later, in a post on X, Prime Minister Sharif shared, "Delighted to meet with my dear brother, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of UAE, today in Rahimyar Khan. Reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment to further strengthen Pak-UAE cooperation and elevate our ties to a mutually beneficial strategic partnership. Matters of mutual interest including investments in Pakistan were discussed with a resolve to move forward together."

## Pakistan Begins Eighth Term as UNSC Member, Installs Flag at UN Headquarters



By Wasif Ali Khan

On January 2, 2025, Pakistan officially began its eighth term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2025-26 period. During a flag installation ceremony, Pakistan's national flag was raised in front of the UNSC chamber in New York, alongside the flags of four other incoming members: Denmark, Greece, Panama, and Somalia.

These new members have replaced Japan, Ecuador, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland, whose terms ended on December 31, 2024.

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan's Alternate Permanent Representative, led the ceremony, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to the UN Charter's principles, including the promotion of peace, security, and the rights of oppressed peoples. He emphasized Pakistan's ongoing support for self-determination and its dedication to cooperative multilateralism, especially through the UN.

Pakistan plans to use its term to push for just solutions to global conflicts and to contribute to efforts in peacekeeping, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding. The country will also assume the UNSC presidency in July and will hold a seat on the ISIS and Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee, which is responsible for counterterrorism measures.

The UNSC, which consists of 15 members, including five permanent ones (Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States), remains the most powerful body of the UN, charged with maintaining international peace and security. The tradition of flag installations at the UNSC was introduced by Kazakhstan in 2018.



PHOTO: Pakistan Mission to The United Nations



Photo: APP

## Pakistan Railways Collaborates with China to Double Freight Capacity with Locally Assembled Wagons

By The World Ambassador

January 9, 2025 — Pakistan Railways, in collaboration with China's Baotou Beifang Chuangye Co., Ltd., is assembling 115 flat wagons in Complete Knocked Down (CKD) form at a factory in Lahore, with plans for deployment by April 2025. This initiative is part of a larger project involving 620 freight wagons that are set to transform the country's freight transportation network.

"Once all 620 freight wagons are fully operational, they will double the current railway transportation capacity," said Philippe Mi, the Chinese project director for the 820 High-Capacity Wagon (HCW) project, in an interview with China Economic Net (CEN).

**The 820 High-Capacity Wagon Project**

In 2021, Beifang Chuangye secured a contract to supply 820 high-capacity railway freight wagons to Pakistan Railways, including open-top wagons, flat wagons, covered wagons, and cabooses. By 2022, 200 wagons had already been delivered and put into operation.

In 2024, 115 open-top wagons, assembled in Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) form at the Risalpur factory, were deployed along key routes, significantly easing warehousing pressures at Karachi Port and enhancing inland freight capacity.

"This initiative will bring significant economic benefits to Pakistan, marking a crucial step toward reducing import dependence and promoting local industries," said Aamir Baloch, CEO of Pakistan Railways. He described the project as a milestone in Pakistan's journey toward economic self-sufficiency and a new era in freight

transportation.

**Economic and Industrial Impact**

The local production of the wagons is expected to generate considerable economic and industrial benefits:

- **Enhanced Compatibility and Cost Efficiency:** The standardized wagon designs reduce operational and maintenance costs, ensuring efficiency in freight operations.
- **Job Creation and Skill Development:** The project has created 450 direct jobs, training a new generation of technicians and skilled workers for the railway industry.
- **Industrial Modernization:** Baotou Beifang Chuangye has played a pivotal role in upgrading facilities in Lahore and Risalpur, providing training, equipment upgrades, and quality control systems.

**Long-Term Vision for Rail Freight**

The 820HCW project is more than a logistical upgrade—it is a strategic move to strengthen Pakistan's industrial capabilities. Ishaq Butt, Pakistan's project director for the initiative, highlighted how this collaboration with China is boosting local manufacturing capabilities and ensuring the sustainability of railway operations for the future.

As these 620 high-capacity wagons come online, Pakistan Railways is poised to double its freight transportation capacity, easing supply chain bottlenecks and driving economic growth across the country. This partnership symbolizes the potential of international collaboration in achieving industrial modernization and economic self-reliance.



## Pakistan Calls for Dialogue Amid North Korea's Hypersonic Missile Launch

By The World Ambassador

United Nations, January 9 — Pakistan has voiced its concerns over North Korea's recent test of a hypersonic ballistic missile, calling for diplomatic engagement and dialogue to address tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

Ambassador Munir Akram, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, emphasized the need for reviving talks among relevant parties during a UN Security Council meeting held shortly after North Korea launched an intermediate-range hypersonic ballistic missile. Pyongyang claims the missile is equipped with a hypersonic glide vehicle, capable of evading defense systems.

"These developments are detrimental to regional and international peace and security," Ambassador Akram said, urging restraint and renewed efforts to reduce tensions.

### Commitment to Denuclearization and Non-Proliferation

Reiterating Pakistan's support for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Ambassador Akram underscored the importance of adhering to UN Security Council resolutions and advancing global non-proliferation and disarmament goals.

"Provocations such as missile tests on the one hand—and coercive actions and threats on the other—must be ended," he said, adding that Pakistan opposes further nuclear weapons testing in Korea or anywhere else.

He proposed that the Security Council consider Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) to ease tensions and promote stability in the region.

### UN Officials and North Korea Respond

Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific, warned during the session that North Korea's advancements in hypersonic technology pose significant challenges to the global non-proliferation framework.

"Hypersonic glide vehicles travel at least five times the speed of sound and can execute evasive maneuvers, making them difficult to counter," Khiari noted. He also criticized Pyongyang for failing to issue airspace or maritime safety notifications before the launch.

North Korean Ambassador Song Kim defended the missile test as a legitimate exercise of self-defense, citing a need to enhance strategic deterrence in response to the evolving regional security environment. He accused the United States of applying double standards, contrasting its criticism of North Korea with its support for Israel's actions in Gaza.

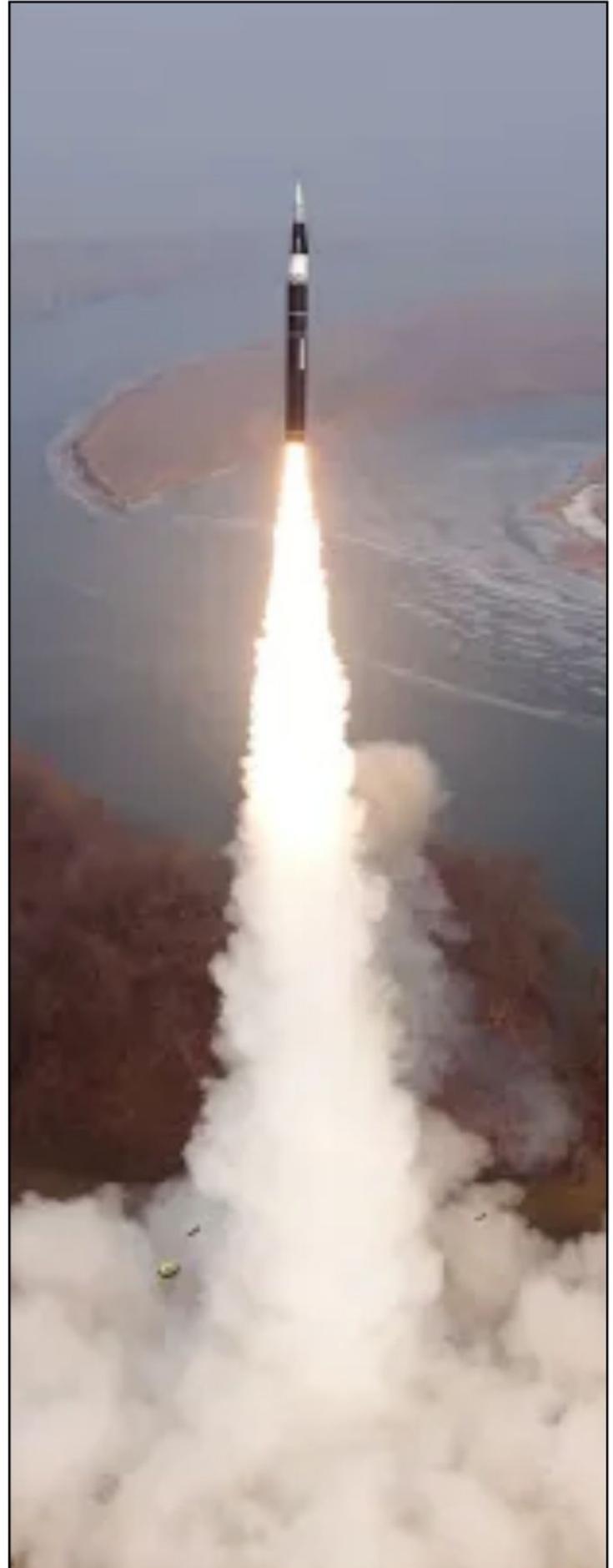
### Pakistan's Role in Promoting Peace

Ambassador Akram called on all parties to avoid escalating tensions and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to working within the UN framework to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula.

"We hope the Security Council will find ways of reviving dialogue and playing its role in reducing threats to peace and security in the region," he said.

Pakistan's stance highlights its broader commitment to global

peace and stability, emphasizing diplomacy as the most effective tool for addressing complex international conflicts.



## Pakistan Appreciates Ankara Declaration Between Ethiopia & Somalia



By Adnan Hameed

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Monday lauded the Ankara Declaration which would resolve the differences between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Federal Republic of Somalia.

The Ankara Declaration came under discussion during a meeting between Dr. Jemal Beker, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the FDR Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Turkmenistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, and Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Secretary (Africa) for the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

During the meeting, Ambassador Dr. Jemal praised the crucial role played by the Republic of Türkiye in mediating the dialogue between the two sisterly countries for resolving their differences which would further integrate the region and ensure regional peace, prosperity and development.

He said the Ankara Declaration is a manifestation of the comprehensive foreign policy reforms undertaken by the Government of Ethiopia, which gives top priority and focus to its neighboring countries to integrate the region by ensuring lasting peace and sustainable development, says press note.

The Ambassador said the declaration is based on a win-win scenario and aimed at accomplishing peace and stability in the region, and providing Ethiopia an access to sea as enshrined in the international laws.

The FDR Ethiopia has rendered numerous sacrifices for global peace by consistently participating in the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in the region and beyond, the Ambassador remarked.

On the other hand, Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan commended the Ankara Declaration as a crucial initiative for the regional peace, stability and development. The dialogue is only solution for all the problems, he said while acknowledging the pivotal role played by the FDR Ethiopia in regional peace and stability.

During the meeting, both sides also reviewed the full spectrum of the relations between the FDR Ethiopia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and also discussed future initiatives for further strengthening their bilateral ties including the Single Country Exhibition scheduled for May, 2025 in Addis Ababa.



## Turkish Embassy in Islamabad Commemorates Quaid-e-Azam's 148th Birth Anniversary

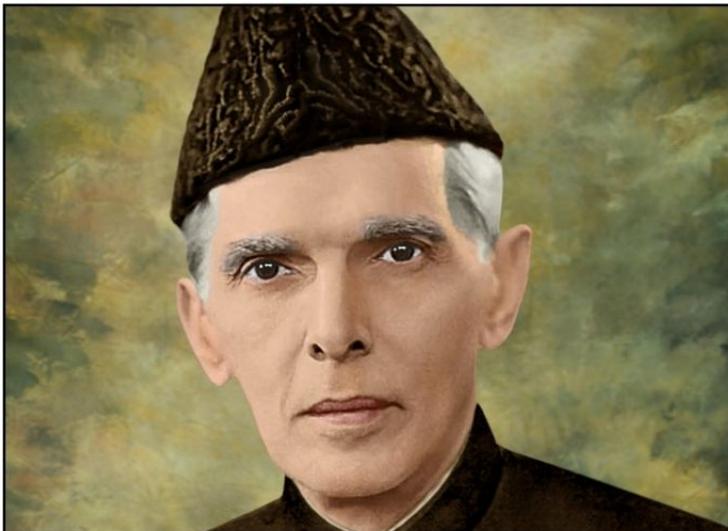
By The World Ambassador



The Turkish Embassy in Islamabad hosted an event to mark the 148th birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The ceremony was attended by several notable personalities, including the Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan, Dr. Irfan Neziroglu.

Held in the embassy's auditorium, the event featured speeches honoring the remarkable leadership and relentless struggle of Quaid-e-Azam. Speakers underscored his pivotal role in the creation of Pakistan in 1947, emphasizing his vision for establishing a sovereign state for Muslims in South Asia.

The occasion served as a poignant reminder of Jinnah's enduring legacy in shaping Pakistan's history and his contributions to the nation's foundation.



## Federal Minister Jam Kamal Khan Begins Official Visit to South Korea to Strengthen Bilateral Economic Ties



By Abid Siddique Chaudhry



Seoul, January 7, 2024: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, arrived in South Korea for a three-day official visit focused on enhancing bilateral economic relations and exploring trade and investment opportunities. The minister was warmly received by officials from the Pakistani Embassy, the Trade and Investment Office (TIO), and the Pakistan Business Association Korea, with a bouquet of flowers presented to him and a commemorative photograph taken.

During his visit, Minister Khan is set to sign the Pakistan-Korea Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), a significant milestone

aimed at doubling the trade volume between the two nations. The agreement also seeks to establish Pakistan as an attractive destination for Korean manufacturing, capitalizing on the country's strategic location and competitive production costs.

Khan's schedule includes meetings with the Korean Trade Minister, key Korean investors, and representatives from K-EXIM Bank to discuss expanding financial cooperation. Additionally, he will engage with the International Economic Institute to explore opportunities for encouraging Korean industries to relocate their operations to Pakistan.



## "We Must Eliminate Discrimination Against Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Actively Support Their Management" - Korea Immigrant Entrepreneurs Association President Abdul Jabar

**By The World Ambassador**

The Korea Immigrant Entrepreneurs Association (KIEA) is taking a bold stand in advocating for immigrant entrepreneurs, aiming to eliminate discrimination and foster an environment of equal opportunity in Korea's business landscape. Abdul Jabar, the first president of the Association, who established his own business in Korea in 2000, emphasized the critical need for systemic support for immigrant entrepreneurs.

Having faced numerous hardships and setbacks, Jabar is determined to lead the charge for fair treatment of immigrant entrepreneurs. "I have shed many tears to grow my business in Korea," he said, "Now, I will stand at the forefront to ensure that immigrant entrepreneurs are treated fairly in Korean society. I am committed to building an association that supports both Korea and my home country."

The Korea Immigrant Entrepreneurs Association was formed to represent the rights of immigrant businesspeople in Korea. At its inaugural meeting in Changwon, South Gyeongsang Province, the Association welcomed members from various countries including Vietnam, China, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. Over 124 founding members were present, with approximately 200 attendees, including Pakistani Ambassador to Korea Nabel Munit, marking the official launch of the organization.

The Association's mission is clear: to advocate for equal treatment of immigrant entrepreneurs, who often face challenges such as prejudice, lack of business information, and insufficient support systems. Many immigrants have expressed frustration with the barriers they encounter when establishing and operating businesses in Korea, despite their significant contributions to the economy, including job creation and tax payments.

Minister Lee Cheol-seung of the Gyeongnam Immigrant Center, who serves as an advisor to the Association, shared his vision for a more inclusive society. "If foreigners can thrive in Korea, so will domestic companies," he said. "We must shed the prejudiced perceptions and accept immigrant entrepreneurs as part of our society. Just as many Koreans once sought opportunities abroad, it's time for us to welcome immigrants striving to achieve the 'Korean Dream.'"

Abdul Jabar, who started his business by exporting used computers and textiles to Pakistan, now focuses on repairing and exporting used clothes. He highlights the disparity in treatment faced by immigrant entrepreneurs compared to their Korean counterparts. "Immigrant entrepreneurs pay taxes and create jobs just like Korean business owners," Jabar explained. "However, they often face different challenges when it comes to establishing and running their businesses."

The Association is dedicated to removing these obstacles by offering a platform for immigrant entrepreneurs to voice their concerns, share experiences, and receive guidance.



Furthermore, Jabar emphasized the importance of promoting exchanges between Korea and the home countries of immigrant entrepreneurs. Plans include inviting buyers from home countries and organizing export consultation festivals to support the internationalization of immigrant-run businesses.

"We will work to eliminate discrimination against immigrant entrepreneurs and improve their rights," Jabar concluded. "The government's support is essential, and the Association will cooperate with the Korean government to ensure a fair and welcoming business environment for all entrepreneurs."

With rapid growth and increasing membership, the KIEA is poised to become a powerful force in advocating for the economic and social integration of immigrant entrepreneurs, aiming for a future where all entrepreneurs, regardless of their nationality, can thrive in Korea's dynamic economy.

## Joseph Aoun: Lebanon's New President Signals Change in Power Dynamics

By International Desk



In a momentous turn of events, Lebanon's parliament elected army chief Joseph Aoun as the country's president, filling the top office after over a year of political paralysis. His election not only ushers in new leadership but also reflects shifting power dynamics within Lebanon and across the Middle East.

Aoun's ascent comes amid widespread economic turmoil and political deadlock, but his strong backing from the United States and other international actors marks a significant blow to Hezbollah, the powerful Shiite political and military organization. This shift follows Hezbollah's weakened state after last year's devastating war with Israel.

### A Vision for Lebanon

In a powerful inaugural speech, Aoun, 60, outlined a vision of a stronger Lebanese state, pledging to ensure the government's exclusive right to bear arms—a direct challenge to Hezbollah's armed capabilities. His call was met with resounding applause from lawmakers, though members of Hezbollah sat in silence.

"Today, a new phase in the history of Lebanon begins," Aoun declared. He vowed to rebuild southern Lebanon and other war-damaged regions while protecting the nation from future Israeli aggression. For a country still reeling from economic collapse and war, his promises struck a hopeful chord.



### A Maronite Presidency and International Support

Under Lebanon's sectarian system, the presidency is reserved for a Maronite Christian, a tradition Aoun now continues. The office had been vacant since October 2022, when Michel Aoun's term ended. Deep divisions among Lebanon's political factions stalled the election, but Joseph Aoun finally secured 99 votes in the second round of parliamentary balloting, surpassing the required majority.

His victory was facilitated by a coalition that included Hezbollah and its Shiite ally, the Amal Movement. Initially reluctant, Hezbollah eventually shifted its stance after its preferred candidate, Suleiman Frangieh, withdrew and endorsed Aoun. French, Saudi, and U.S. diplomats were instrumental in breaking the deadlock, emphasizing that international financial aid depended on the election of a president capable of uniting Lebanon.

The significance of international backing was highlighted by U.S. Ambassador Lisa Johnson, who expressed optimism about Aoun's presidency. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar also extended congratulations, expressing hope for improved relations and regional stability.

### Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

Joseph Aoun's presidency represents a turning point, not just for Lebanon but for the balance of power in the region. Hezbollah, long a dominant force, now faces mounting challenges as its influence wanes following recent conflicts and the loss of its Syrian ally, Bashar al-Assad.

For Lebanon, the stakes are high. The country remains in the throes of a financial crisis that began in 2019, and reconstruction

efforts following the war require significant international aid. The World Bank estimates \$8.5 billion is needed to repair the damage.

As the new president, Aoun's ability to rebuild trust in government institutions, address economic challenges, and navigate regional pressures will define his legacy. His election marks the first step in what many hope will be a journey toward a more stable and prosperous Lebanon.

With his military background, international support, and a promise to put Lebanon first, Joseph Aoun embodies the potential for a fresh start in a nation longing for stability and renewal.



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## Pakistani Zaireen Place Chaddar at Ajmer Sharif, Participate in 813th Urs Mubarak

By Nasir Ali Khan

Pakistani Zaireen, accompanied by Second Secretary of the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi, Tariq Masroof, placed the traditional Chaddar at the Shrine of Hazrat Khwaja Syed Moinuddin Hasan Chishti (RA) at Ajmer Sharif, India, on Tuesday.

A group of 89 Pakistani Zaireen is visiting Ajmer Sharif from January 7-9 to take part in the 813th annual Urs Mubarak of Hazrat Khwaja Syed Moinuddin Hasan Chishti (RA), according to a press release issued by the Pakistan High Commission.

The delegation offered prayers for Pakistan's progress and prosperity after placing the Chaddar on behalf of the people and Government of Pakistan.

Upon their arrival at the Dargah, the delegation received a warm welcome from prominent members of the Anjuman Moinia Fakhria Chishtia Khuddam Khwaja Sahib.

The participation of Pakistani Zaireen in the Urs Mubarak is facilitated under the 1974 India-Pakistan Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines, the statement added.

### Historical Significance of Hazrat Khwaja Syed Moinuddin Hasan Chishti (RA)

Hazrat Khwaja Syed Moinuddin Hasan Chishti (RA), also known as Khwaja Gharib Nawaz, is one of the most revered Sufi saints in the Indian subcontinent. Born in 1142 CE in Sistan (present-day Iran), he traveled extensively across Central Asia and the Middle East before settling in Ajmer, India.

Known for his teachings of love, compassion, and harmony, Khwaja Gharib Nawaz played a pivotal role in spreading the Chishti Order of Sufism. His shrine in Ajmer has become a significant pilgrimage site, drawing devotees of all faiths from around the world.

The Urs Mubarak commemorates the death anniversary of the saint, symbolizing his union with the Divine. The annual event includes various spiritual activities, such as prayer sessions, qawwalis (devotional music), and the offering of the traditional Chaddar at the shrine. It serves as a beacon of unity and spiritual enlightenment, transcending religious and cultural boundaries.



## US Ambassador Donald Blome Completes Tenure in Pakistan with Farewell Meeting



By Abid Siddique Chaudhry



Donald Blome, the outgoing US Ambassador to Pakistan, has officially concluded his tenure. On his final day in office, Ambassador Blome visited Aiwan-e-Sadr for a farewell meeting with President Asif Ali Zardari, according to Express News. During the meeting, President Zardari expressed his appreciation for Ambassador Blome's contributions to Pakistan, highlighting his efforts in strengthening bilateral relations between the two nations. Zardari also conveyed his hopes for continued progress in Pakistan-US ties.

Ambassador Blome's tenure was marked by his significant role in fostering diplomatic engagement between Pakistan and the United States. His departure signals the end of an important chapter in the history of diplomatic relations between the two countries.



## International Seminar Explores Advancements in Islamic Studies and Global Academic Collaborations



By **Abid Siddique Chaudhry**

The Islamic Research Institute (IRI) of the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) hosted an International Seminar on the Current State of Teaching and Research in Islamic Studies and Its Allied Disciplines at the Allama Iqbal Auditorium, Faisal Masjid Campus, Islamabad.

Organized in connection with the Visit and Short-Term Exchange Student Mobility Program of the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya (UM), Malaysia, the seminar brought together a distinguished gathering of dignitaries, academics, and policymakers from Pakistan and Malaysia.

Notable attendees included Prof. Dr. Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, Director-General of IRI; H.E. Amb. Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan; Allama Raghieb Na'emi, Chairman, Council of Islamic Ideology; and Prof. Dr. Mohd Fauzi bin Hamat, Dean of the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya. Joining them were other esteemed representatives from UM, including Assoc. Prof. Dr. Khadher bin Ahmad, Deputy Dean (Student Affairs); Dr. Mohamad Azrien bin Mohamed Adnan, Deputy Dean (Undergraduate Studies); Mrs. Maimunah binti Kamaruddin, Senior Assistant Registrar; and Mrs. Nur Jannah binti Md Akhir, Project Officer.

Senior faculty members from the Faculty of Usuluddin (Islamic Studies) of IIUI also participated, including the Dean, Prof. Dr. Taj Afsar, Deputy Dean/HoD (Department of Study of Religions) Prof. Dr. Muhammad Akram, and Post-Doctoral fellows, alongside other IIUI faculty members and UM representatives.

The seminar featured thought-provoking discussions on evolving trends in teaching and research within Islamic Studies and its allied disciplines. Speakers underscored the importance of fostering

global academic collaborations, enhancing interdisciplinary research, and adopting innovative pedagogical approaches. The event emphasized the critical role of exchange programs in broadening academic horizons and strengthening bilateral ties between academic institutions.

This collaboration between IIUI and the Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, marks a significant milestone in advancing Islamic education and research, showcasing a shared commitment to academic excellence and global partnership.

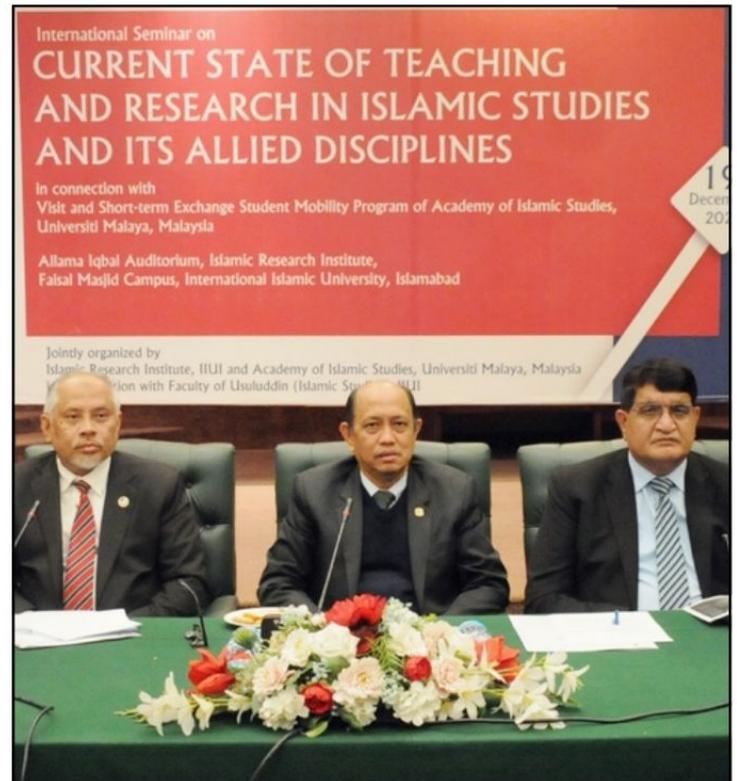




Photo: wikidata

## Malaysia Announces Plan to Resume Search for Missing Flight MH370

**By International Desk**

Malaysia has announced plans to resume the search for Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, Transport Minister Anthony Loke confirmed on Friday. The renewed effort aims to solve one of aviation's most enduring mysteries nearly a decade after the plane's disappearance.

Flight MH370, a Boeing 777 carrying 227 passengers and 12 crew members, vanished on March 8, 2014, while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. Despite extensive searches in the southern Indian Ocean, the aircraft's wreckage has yet to be found, leaving the families of the victims without closure.

According to CNN, Minister Loke revealed that exploration firm Ocean Infinity has proposed a new search in the southern Indian Ocean. The company, which last attempted a search in 2018, stands to earn \$70 million if it locates the wreckage. "Our

responsibility, duty, and commitment are to the next of kin," Loke said, expressing hope that this renewed effort will provide answers. Debris from MH370 has washed up on African shores and Indian Ocean islands, but the main wreckage has eluded investigators. Initial probes did not rule out the possibility that the plane was deliberately diverted from its flight path.

The renewed search coincides with ongoing demands from the families of more than 150 Chinese passengers for compensation from Malaysia Airlines, Boeing, Rolls-Royce, and Allianz.

Ocean Infinity's 2018 attempt followed earlier underwater searches led by Malaysia, Australia, and China, covering 120,000 square kilometers based on satellite data. Both efforts ended unsuccessfully.

Now, with advanced technology and renewed commitment, hopes are high that the mystery of MH370 will finally be solved, bringing long-awaited closure to grieving families.

## Export Boost: Malaysia Lifts Laboratory Testing Ban on Pakistani Oranges

By Web Desk

The ban on laboratory testing for the export of Pakistani oranges to Malaysia has been lifted, marking a significant milestone for trade relations between the two countries, announced Khawaja Yasir Qayyum, President of the Sargodha Chamber of Commerce.

In a press statement issued on Monday, Khawaja Yasir highlighted that the Food Safety and Quality Division (FSQD) of Malaysia's Ministry of Health had issued an advisory in November 2024, requiring shipments of oranges at Malaysian ports to undergo mandatory inspections. This posed a substantial challenge for Pakistan's orange exports.

To address the issue, Khawaja Yasir took proactive steps, raising the matter with the Malaysian Ambassador during the country's Independence Day celebrations. This engagement led to a detailed discussion with Pakistan's Federal Minister for Commerce, Mr. Jam Kamal Khan. Following these efforts, the FSQD of Malaysia announced the removal of the inspection requirement, clearing the way for smoother exports of Pakistani oranges to Malaysia.

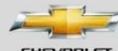
Khawaja Yasir expressed gratitude to Ms. Tahira Javed, the Trade and Investment Counselor at Pakistan's High Commission in Malaysia, for her instrumental role in resolving the issue.

The decision is expected to provide a substantial boost to Pakistan's orange exports, further strengthening trade ties between the two nations.



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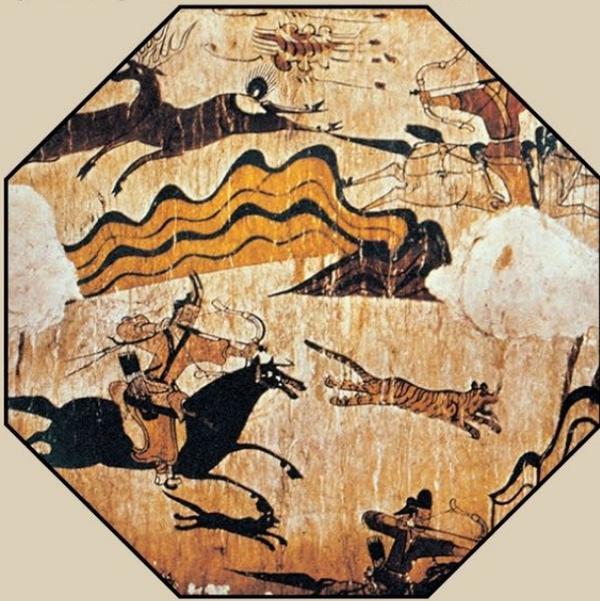
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## Seoul: The Soul of Asia



By Abid Siddique Chaudhry

Seoul, the capital of South Korea and its largest city by population, is a bustling metropolis home to nearly 10 million residents. Including its neighboring cities, the Seoul Metropolitan Area's population surpasses 26 million, making it the second-largest metropolitan area in the world. Approximately 55% of South Korea's total population resides in Seoul and its suburbs. Nestled along the banks of the Han River, which originates from the northern border mountains, Seoul is surrounded by small hills, giving it a scenic landscape. The city spans 605 square kilometers, hosting a dense population of 17,000 people per square kilometer, ranking it among the world's most crowded cities.



### A Modern Marvel

Today, Seoul is a thriving global city characterized by its modern architecture and infrastructure. Highlights include:

- Namsan Tower
- Lotte Tower, the fifth tallest building in the world
- Building 63
- Dongdaemun Design Plaza
- Lotte World, the second-largest theme park globally
- The Han River Fountain Bridge, featuring the world's largest light and water show
- Lotte Cinema, home to the largest cinema screen worldwide
- Coex Mall, the largest underground shopping plaza globally



### A Rich History Spanning 2,000 Years

Seoul's history dates back nearly two millennia, with its foundation attributed to the Baekje kings in 18 AD. It has served as the capital since the Joseon Dynasty in the 13th century. Over the centuries, Seoul has been known by various names, including Wiryeseong, Han Ja, NamKhyeong, Han Seong, and Han Yang, before officially adopting its current name in 1945. In Korean, "Seoul" means "capital city" or "central city."

Seoul boasts five UNESCO World Heritage Sites from its royal past, including Changdeok Palace, Hwaseong Fortress, Jongmyo Shrine, Namhansanseong, and the Royal Tombs of the Joseon Dynasty.



## Economic and Technological Hub

Known as the "Miracle on the Han River," Seoul ranks as the fourth-largest metropolitan economy globally, with a GDP of \$774 billion, trailing only Los Angeles, New York, and Tokyo. It is home to over 500 global companies, including tech giants like Samsung, LG, and automakers Hyundai, Kia, and Daewoo. With a GDP per capita of \$39,448, it is the world's sixth-richest city.



## A Tourist Favorite

Ranked 10th among the world's most popular cities for tourists, Seoul attracts approximately 12 million visitors annually. It is particularly popular among Chinese, Japanese, and Thai tourists. The city ranks sixth globally for revenue generated from tourism.

## Events and Connectivity

Seoul has hosted numerous global events, including the 1986 Asian Games, 1988 Olympic Games, 2002 FIFA World Cup, 2010 World Design Conference, and the G20 Summit.

The city is well-connected domestically and internationally through Gimpo Airport for local flights and Incheon Airport for international travel, which held the title of the world's best airport for nine consecutive years (2005–2013).

Seoul's KTX bullet train connects it with other parts of Korea, while its subway system is the largest and most efficient globally. Featuring over 24 lines, free 5G internet, and Wi-Fi, the subway serves over 8 million passengers daily. Additionally, an advanced bus network, equipped with real-time mobile apps for routes and schedules, offers seamless travel within the city.



## Education and Innovation

With over 20 world-class universities, Seoul is a hub for higher education, attracting thousands of international students alongside its millions of local learners.



## Cultural and Religious Diversity

Seoul's population includes approximately 332,000 foreigners, of which 200,000 are Chinese nationals. The city's religious composition is equally diverse: 37% identify as Christian, 17% as Buddhist, and 45% as non-religious. Notably, Seoul is home to Yoido Full Gospel Church, the world's largest church, with over 830,000 members.



## Seoul: Truly the Soul of Asia

A global city with rich history, modern marvels, and vibrant culture, Seoul embodies the essence of Asia's dynamism and charm. As one observer aptly put it:

"Seoul is truly the soul of Asia."



## China Aims to Pioneer International Collaboration in Early Weather Warnings

By International Desk



China is spearheading innovative paths for global collaboration in early weather warnings, sharing its technological expertise in disaster prevention and risk reduction, according to Chen Zhenlin, head of the China Meteorological Administration (CMA).

Chen highlighted the significant strides China made in advancing international meteorological cooperation in 2024. A notable achievement was the launch of its early warning system at the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November.

The early warning solutions have already been tested in countries such as Pakistan, Ethiopia, and the Solomon Islands, Chen revealed during the 2025 National Meteorological Work Conference in Beijing. The event assessed China's 2024 meteorological accomplishments and outlined priorities for the current year, as reported by China Daily.

China's early weather warning services have also been integrated into the China-Africa Cooperation Forum's green development partnership. Chen noted that leaders from the Maldives and Sri Lanka visited the CMA to discuss strengthening collaboration on these initiatives.

The World Meteorological Organization has endorsed China's contributions to global early weather warning systems. The organization's secretary-general praised China's "people-oriented" approach to meteorology, describing it as a global model, Chen added.

Despite these advancements, Chen stressed that the increasingly

complex global climate landscape poses significant risks to socioeconomic development worldwide. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and severe, with countries like the United States and Spain experiencing devastating disasters in 2024. In China, Super Typhoon Yagi inflicted economic damages six times greater than those caused by Typhoon Rammasun a decade earlier.

According to Swiss Re, an international reinsurance leader, global economic losses from natural disasters last year exceeded \$310 billion.

To mitigate these challenges, China plans to develop more efficient and inclusive early warning platforms to enhance global monitoring and forecasting capabilities. Chen emphasized China's commitment to providing comprehensive solutions for disaster prevention and risk reduction.

In 2025, China aims to expand meteorological cooperation with Africa and Southeast Asia, focusing on cloud-based early warning systems to support the Belt and Road Initiative's high-quality development. The country also intends to strengthen partnerships with the United States, European nations, and global organizations, advocating for international standardization in meteorological technologies, particularly in artificial intelligence and early warning systems.

Additionally, China will share its expertise in climate change adaptation at the 62nd session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, scheduled for February in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

## China Expands Trade-In Discounts to Boost Struggling Economy

By International Desk

The Chinese government has broadened the scope of its trade-in program, offering discounts of up to 20% on new goods to stimulate its slowing economy. The updated list now includes products such as microwave ovens, dishwashers, rice cookers, and water purifiers.

Previously, state-backed trade-in schemes covered items like televisions, phones, tablets, smartwatches, and electric or hybrid vehicles. These efforts aim to address China's economic challenges, including weak consumer demand and a deepening property crisis.

On Wednesday, January 8, officials announced that 81 billion yuan (£8.9bn; \$11bn) has been allocated for this year's consumer goods trade-in program. Launched in March, the initiative has already shown "visible effects," according to China's top economic planning body.

The Ministry of Commerce reported that the policies have boosted sales of big-ticket items such as home appliances and cars. However, some economists remain skeptical about the program's ability to significantly increase consumer spending.

Dan Wang, a China-based economist, remarked, "The measure is far from being enough to boost consumption." Similarly, Harry Murphy Cruise, head of China economics at Moody's Analytics, noted, "While it has supported sales of some listed goods, such as cars and appliances, it hasn't driven an overall uptick in spending."

In recent months, China has introduced additional measures to support its domestic economy, as its export sector faces mounting challenges. In December, a key meeting of Chinese leaders emphasized the importance of "vigorous" efforts to boost consumer spending.

These measures come as geopolitical tensions rise. President-elect Donald Trump, set to return to the White House this month, has threatened to impose a 60% tariff on Chinese-made goods.

China is expected to announce its 2024 economic growth figures next week. The government has forecasted growth of around 5% for the year.



## ASEAN Conference 2024: Advancing the Fight Against Plastic Pollution

**By International Desk**

The ASEAN Conference on Combatting Plastic Pollution (ACPP) 2024, held in Lao PDR, emphasized the region's deepening commitment to addressing the plastic waste crisis and fostering regional collaboration for sustainable plastic management. Key stakeholders, including ASEAN Member States, private sector representatives, innovators, and civil society organizations, convened to strategize solutions for tackling plastic pollution.

Hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) of Lao PDR, in collaboration with the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Lao PDR, the two-day event served as a platform for sharing knowledge, aligning policies, and identifying opportunities for regional cooperation.

### Major Milestones Achieved

Under the Lao PDR Chairmanship of ASEAN, two significant milestones were reached:

1. Successful Hosting of the 2nd ACPP: Representatives from ASEAN Member States, change-makers, innovators, and other stakeholders attended the conference, contributing to robust discussions and shared commitments.
2. Adoption of the ASEAN Declaration on Plastic Circularity: This declaration promotes circular economy principles, encourages sustainable plastic use, and advances waste reduction initiatives across the region.

### Key Messages and Outcomes

In his opening remarks, H.E. Mr. Phouvong Luangxaysana, Vice-Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Lao PDR, reiterated ASEAN's dedication, referencing prior commitments such as the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris

and the ASEAN Regional Action Plan for Combating Marine Debris. Mme. Martine Therer, UNDP Resident Representative in Lao PDR, underscored the need for a collective approach:

"Plastic pollution is not just an environmental issue; it is a socio-economic and health crisis that affects every corner of our region."

Key outcomes from the conference included:

- **Circular Economy Implementation:** Discussions focused on applying circular economy principles, expanding Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes, and reducing single-use plastics through behavioral change.
- **Strengthening Waste Management Systems:** Emphasis was placed on improving conditions for informal waste workers and driving investments in green industries and sustainable infrastructure.
- **Global Commitment:** Updates were shared on international negotiations to develop a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, aligning ASEAN's regional efforts with global priorities.
- **Innovation and Partnerships:** The UNDP-led Ending Plastic Pollution Innovation Challenge showcased transformative solutions, while the Global Plastic Action Partnership demonstrated collaborative progress.

### ERIA's Ongoing Support

Tetsuya Watanabe, President of ERIA, highlighted the institute's role in advancing ASEAN's efforts, stating:

"ERIA remains steadfast in its commitment to phasing out plastic pollution through collaborative and innovative solutions."

### A Cleaner Future for ASEAN

The conclusion of ACPP 2024 marked a significant step forward in ASEAN's quest for a circular economy and a cleaner environment. By fostering collaboration, adopting innovative strategies, and uniting public and private efforts, the region is paving the way for sustainable plastic management and long-term environmental resilience.



## Final Round of Talks on Plastic Pollution Treaty Opens Amid Deep Divisions



By Abid Siddique Chaudhry

A critical round of negotiations aimed at finalizing a treaty to combat plastic pollution began on Monday, but deep differences between nations emerged almost immediately.

The talks opened shortly after the conclusion of the COP29 climate summit in Baku, where a deal to increase climate funding was met with criticism from developing nations, who deemed the provisions insufficient.

Ecuadorian diplomat Luis Vayas Valdivieso, who is chairing the negotiations, emphasized the urgency of the issue during his opening address. “This is far more than drafting an international treaty. It is about humanity rising to meet an existential challenge,” he said at the opening plenary in Busan, South Korea.

Plastic pollution has become so pervasive that it has been found in clouds, ocean trenches, and even human breast milk. While there is broad agreement on the problem, solutions remain contentious. Among the most debated issues are whether the treaty should limit plastic production, include a ban on toxic chemicals, and how to finance its implementation.

These differences have stalled progress over the past two years, resulting in a lengthy and contradictory 70-page draft treaty. To address these challenges, Valdivieso has proposed an alternative document designed to consolidate various viewpoints and push negotiations forward. However, several countries, including Russia and India, have rejected it as a foundation for further talks.

“The reality is that many countries do not see themselves represented in this paper,” said Eyad Aljubran, head of Saudi Arabia’s delegation, speaking on behalf of the Arab group.

In 2019, global plastic production reached 460 million tonnes, a number that has doubled since 2000, and it is projected to triple by 2060. More than 90% of plastic is not recycled, with over 20 million tonnes of plastic waste leaking into the environment every year.

Some nations, including the High Ambition Coalition (HAC), composed of many African, Asian, and European countries, advocate for a treaty that addresses the entire lifecycle of plastics. This includes limiting production, redesigning products for reuse, and improving recycling and waste management.

In contrast, countries like Saudi Arabia and Russia, major oil producers, push for a focus on waste management alone, without limiting plastic production.

The HAC is calling for binding global targets to reduce plastic production and has warned that “vested interests” should not obstruct the deal. However, some observers fear the talks may falter and extend beyond their scheduled timeframe, as seen in the recent challenging negotiations at UN climate and biodiversity summits.

Despite the difficulties, both UN Environment Programme chief Inger Andersen and Valdivieso have insisted that a deal must be reached in Busan. Environmental groups, however, have raised concerns that the treaty may be diluted in order to secure an agreement.

The key to a successful accord will be the positions taken by the United States and China, neither of which have fully aligned with either bloc. Earlier this year, the US showed some support for limiting plastic production, but this position is now reportedly under reconsideration, particularly with the potential return of Donald Trump to office.

Andersen urged patience, reminding that it took over two decades to finalize global warming targets under the Paris climate agreement. “We are only in the first few hours,” she said. “We have to get something with targets, and we’re not going to wait 21 years for it.”



## 5G spectrum expected to improve internet situation

**By Technology Desk**

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication was informed on Thursday about the planned 5G spectrum auction in April, which is expected to improve the internet situation in the country.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Syed Amin-ul-Haque. Committee members noted that the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) had previously assured internet improvement by October 2024. However, concerns persist regarding ongoing internet issues causing financial losses amounting to millions of dollars.



## PTA Chairman Dispels Myth: Sharks Can't Damage Submarine Cables

**By Technology Desk**

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Chairman Major General (retd) Hafeez ur Rehman clarified that sharks are incapable of damaging submarine cables, addressing queries about internet disruptions in Pakistan.

He made these remarks during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication, chaired by Senator Palwasha Khan.

Committee members voiced concerns about internet speeds and application functionality, with one member noting that while download speeds were satisfactory, issues persisted with application performance and voice note transmission.

The PTA chairman reassured the committee that Pakistan currently has seven submarine cables, with plans to add four to five more. Two of these are expected to be operational within the year. He also noted Pakistan's global ranking of 97th in internet speed and reiterated that submarine cables are impervious to shark attacks, addressing concerns about potential damage.

Additionally, the chairman revealed that PTA receives approximately 500 complaints daily about social media content. The authority acts on these complaints, requesting platforms to block inappropriate material. While 80% of flagged content is removed, 20% remains accessible. He added that the Ministry of Interior has the authority to direct PTA actions under existing regulations.

## Supermassive Black Holes May Hinder Star Formation in Mature Galaxies: NASA's James Webb Telescope Reveals

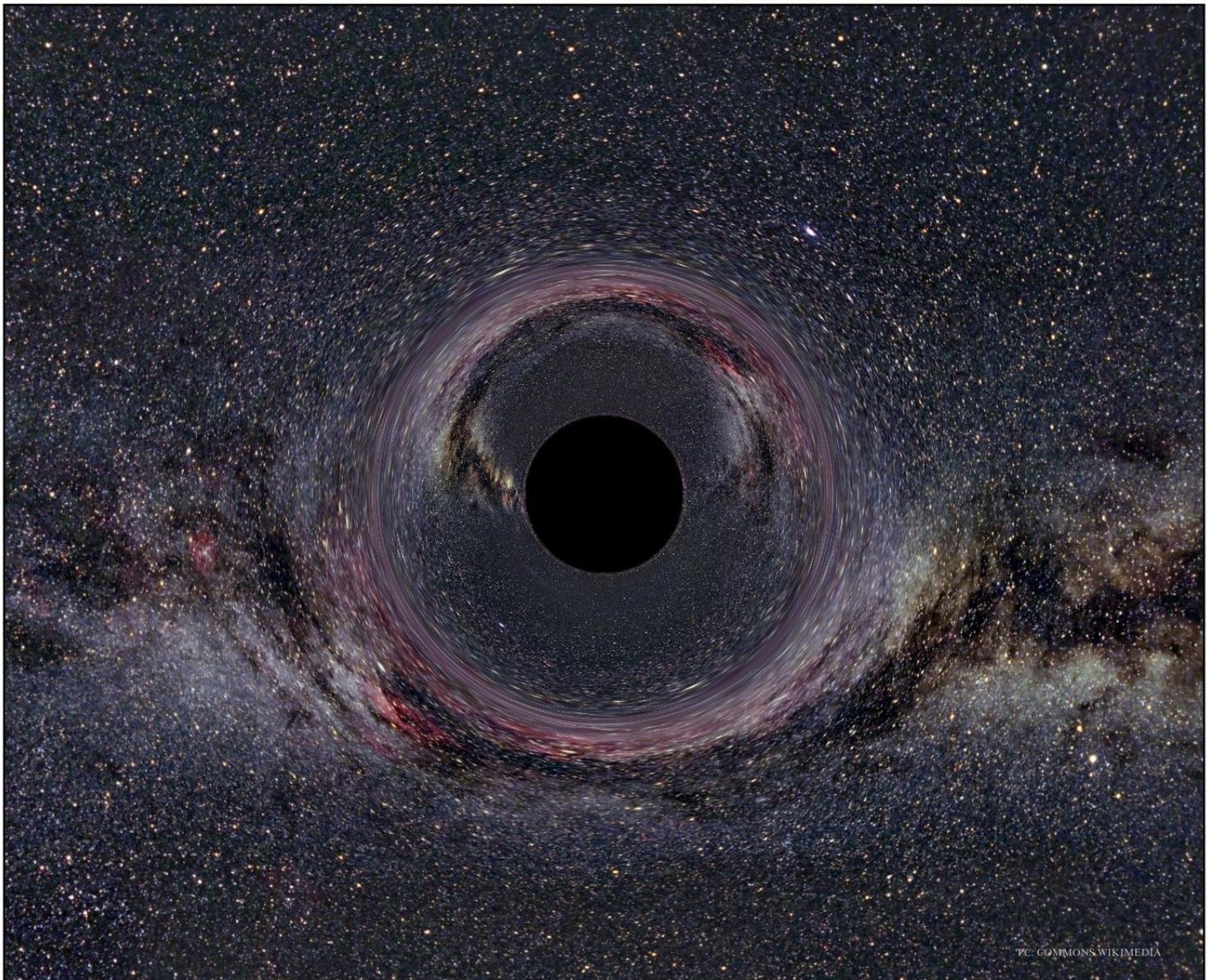
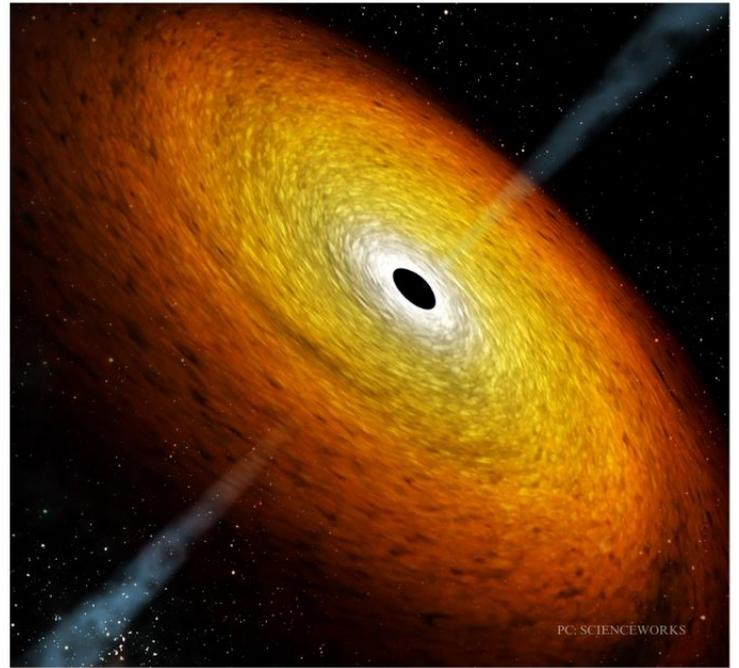
By Technology Desk

NASA's James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) has recently gathered evidence suggesting that supermassive black holes in mature galaxies may suppress star formation.

An international team of astronomers studied 19 galaxies located 11 billion light-years away in the Spiderweb Protocluster, one of the most extensively studied galaxy clusters. Using JWST's Near Infrared Camera (NIRCam), they observed that galaxies with supermassive black holes at their centers have significantly lower star-formation rates compared to those without such large black holes.

These findings provide valuable insights into the evolution of galaxies.

In the universe, stars form when massive clouds of cold hydrogen gas collapse under their own gravitational weight. As the density of these collapsing clouds increases, their temperature rises, ultimately initiating nuclear fusion—a process that leads to star formation.



## Exploring the Hidden Gem: Swat Valley – A Paradise for Tourism



By Sajid Ali

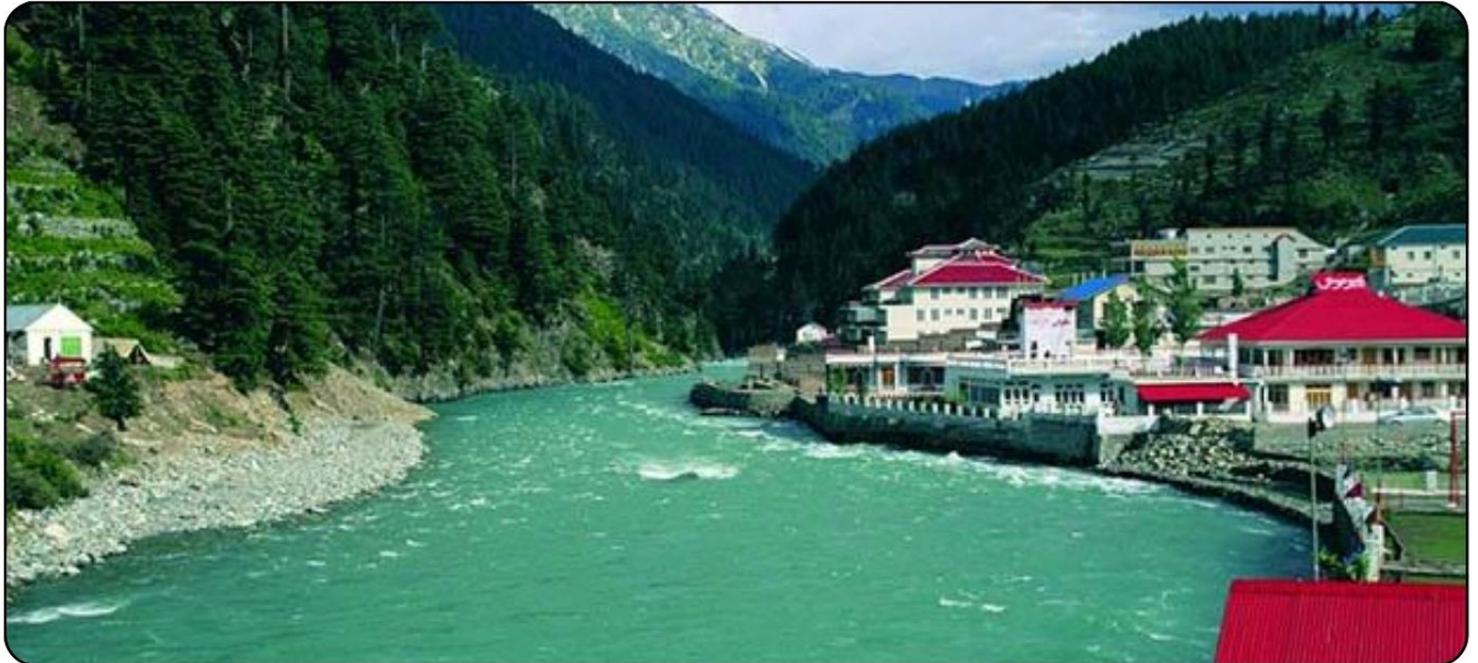
Swat, often referred to as the "Switzerland of Pakistan," is a breathtakingly beautiful valley located in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. With its lush green landscapes, snow-capped mountains, crystal-clear rivers, and rich cultural heritage, Swat has become one of the top destinations for both local and international tourists. Known for its natural beauty and historical significance, Swat offers an ideal escape for nature lovers, adventure enthusiasts, and history buffs alike.

### A Brief Introduction to Swat Valley

Nestled in the northwestern region of Pakistan, Swat is a valley that spans across approximately 10,000 square kilometers. The Swat River, originating from the Hindu Kush mountain range, flows through the valley, adding to its serene beauty. The valley is famous for its scenic landscapes, including verdant meadows, dense forests, and towering peaks. The local climate is temperate, making it an appealing destination year-round.

Swat has a rich history, dating back thousands of years. It was once part of the Gandhara civilization and is dotted with ancient archaeological sites, Buddhist monasteries, and ruins that offer a glimpse into the region's cultural and historical past.

### Top Tourist Attractions in Swat



**Malam Jabba** – A Skiing Resort Malam Jabba is one of Pakistan's premier ski resorts, located at an elevation of over 2,600 meters above sea level. It has become a popular spot for winter sports enthusiasts, offering skiing and snowboarding facilities against a backdrop of pristine snow-capped mountains. The resort has modern amenities, including cable cars, chair lifts, and various accommodations, making it an ideal place for both adventure and relaxation.



**Fizagat Park** Located in the heart of Mingora, the largest city in Swat, Fizagat Park is a serene spot for tourists to relax and enjoy nature. Surrounded by lush greenery and the crystal-clear waters of the Swat River, it is an ideal location for picnics, walks, and boating. The park is family-friendly and provides a peaceful atmosphere for those looking to unwind.



**Ushu Forest** The Ushu Forest, situated near the town of Kalam, is a dense and majestic forest known for its rich biodiversity. It is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, including tall pine trees, wild animals, and birds. Tourists can embark on hiking trails through the forest, enjoying the fresh mountain air and panoramic views of the valley below.



**Kalam Valley** Kalam is the heart of Swat Valley, offering an extraordinary combination of scenic beauty and cultural heritage. Surrounded by towering mountains and lush meadows, it is a paradise for trekkers, campers, and nature lovers. The valley is home to beautiful lakes like Mahodand Lake, which is a popular spot for boating and fishing, and Shahi Bagh, a serene garden offering spectacular views.

**Buddhist Archaeological Sites** Swat has a rich Buddhist history, with numerous ancient ruins scattered throughout the valley. The Butkara Stupa, Buddhist Monasteries in Udegram, and the Fizagat Buddhist Ruins are notable historical sites that reflect the valley's past as a key center of Buddhist civilization. The remains of stupas, statues, and monasteries provide a fascinating insight into Swat's cultural heritage.

**White Palace** The White Palace is another must-visit destination, located in the town of Marghazar, a short distance from the main Swat Valley. This palace, built during the era of the former princely state of Swat, is an architectural marvel with a unique blend of Islamic and Buddhist influences. The palace offers an impressive view of the surrounding mountains and is surrounded by beautiful gardens.

#### Swat's Rich Culture and Hospitality

Swat is not only a place of natural beauty but also a region with a rich cultural heritage. The people of Swat are known for their hospitality and friendliness, and visitors are often welcomed with open arms. The local cuisine is a delightful blend of traditional Pashtun dishes, such as Chapli Kebab, Peshawar Karahi, and Mantu (dumplings). The valley is also famous for its handicrafts, including intricate woodwork, traditional embroidery, and Swati carpets, all of which make for excellent souvenirs.

#### Best Time to Visit Swat

Swat is an all-year-round destination, but the best time to visit depends on the type of experience you're looking for. The summer months (May to September) are perfect for exploring the lush green landscapes, trekking, and camping, while winter (November to February) offers a chance to enjoy the snowy beauty of Malam Jabba and other high-altitude areas. Swat's moderate climate makes it a popular escape during the scorching summer heat in other parts of Pakistan.

#### Tourism Development in Swat

In recent years, Swat has seen significant investment in infrastructure and tourism-related facilities. The government, in collaboration with private investors, has worked to improve roads, establish hotels and resorts, and develop local tourist services. This development has enhanced Swat's accessibility and made it a more attractive destination for tourists.

Local businesses have flourished as tourism continues to grow, providing employment opportunities for the local population. However, with the increasing influx of tourists, it is important to maintain the region's natural beauty and cultural integrity, making sustainable tourism a key focus for future development.





## Climate Change: A Global Challenge Demanding Immediate Action

By Alisha Abid

Climate change stands as one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century, affecting every corner of the globe. Its impacts are widespread, altering ecosystems, economies, and communities, and the urgent need for collective action has never been clearer.

### Rising Temperatures and Global Impacts

Over the past century, global temperatures have risen by approximately 1.1°C due to increased greenhouse gas emissions. This warming trend is driving extreme weather events, including heatwaves, hurricanes, droughts, and floods, with devastating consequences for both developed and developing nations.

For instance, melting polar ice caps contribute to rising sea levels, threatening low-lying coastal areas from Bangladesh to Miami. At the same time, agricultural yields in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are declining due to unpredictable rainfall patterns and prolonged droughts, exacerbating food insecurity and poverty.

### Economic and Social Implications

The economic toll of climate change is staggering. According to the World Bank, climate-related disasters have caused over \$2.5 trillion in economic losses globally since 2000. Beyond financial costs, the human cost is profound. Vulnerable populations, including women, children, and indigenous communities, bear the brunt of climate impacts, as they often have limited resources to adapt.

Climate migration is another growing concern. Rising sea levels and desertification are forcing millions to leave their homes. By 2050, the World Bank estimates that over 140 million people could be displaced due to climate-related factors.

### International Efforts to Combat Climate Change

Addressing climate change requires global cooperation. Landmark agreements such as the Paris Agreement have set ambitious targets to limit global warming to below 2°C, with efforts to keep it within 1.5°C. Countries are committing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, transitioning to renewable energy, and protecting natural carbon sinks like forests and wetlands.

In 2023, the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) highlighted the urgency of accelerating the energy transition. However, challenges remain as nations grapple with aligning their policies and actions with climate goals.

### The Role of Innovation and Technology

Innovation is key to combating climate change. Advances in renewable energy technologies, such as solar panels, wind turbines, and energy storage systems, have made clean energy more accessible and cost-effective. Electric vehicles (EVs) and green hydrogen are transforming transportation and industrial sectors, reducing dependency on fossil fuels.

Emerging technologies, including carbon capture and storage (CCS) and geoengineering, hold promise for mitigating climate

impacts. However, ethical and technical concerns underscore the importance of implementing these solutions responsibly.

## The Power of Individual and Community Action

While governments and corporations play a crucial role, individual and community efforts are equally important. Reducing energy consumption, embracing sustainable practices, and advocating for systemic change can collectively make a significant impact. Grassroots movements, such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion, have amplified the voices of citizens demanding climate justice and accountability.

## Looking Ahead

The path to a sustainable future requires a unified effort across nations, industries, and communities. Time is of the essence, as the window to limit global warming and avoid catastrophic consequences is rapidly closing. By prioritizing climate action, investing in resilience, and fostering international cooperation, humanity can chart a course toward a more sustainable and equitable world.

As the global community faces this defining challenge, the question is not whether we can act, but whether we will act in time.

## What Is Climate Change?

Climate change refers to long-term changes in global temperatures and weather patterns. While such shifts can occur naturally, driven by factors like changes in the sun's activity or large volcanic eruptions, human activities have become the dominant force behind climate change since the 1800s. The primary cause is the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas.

When fossil fuels are burned, they release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. These gases, including carbon dioxide and methane, trap heat from the sun, creating a "blanket" around the Earth that raises global temperatures.

Carbon dioxide is released through activities like driving cars powered by gasoline, heating buildings with coal, and clearing land or cutting down forests. Methane, another significant greenhouse gas, is produced by agriculture, oil, and gas operations. Key sectors contributing to greenhouse gas emissions include energy, industry, transportation, buildings, agriculture, and land use.

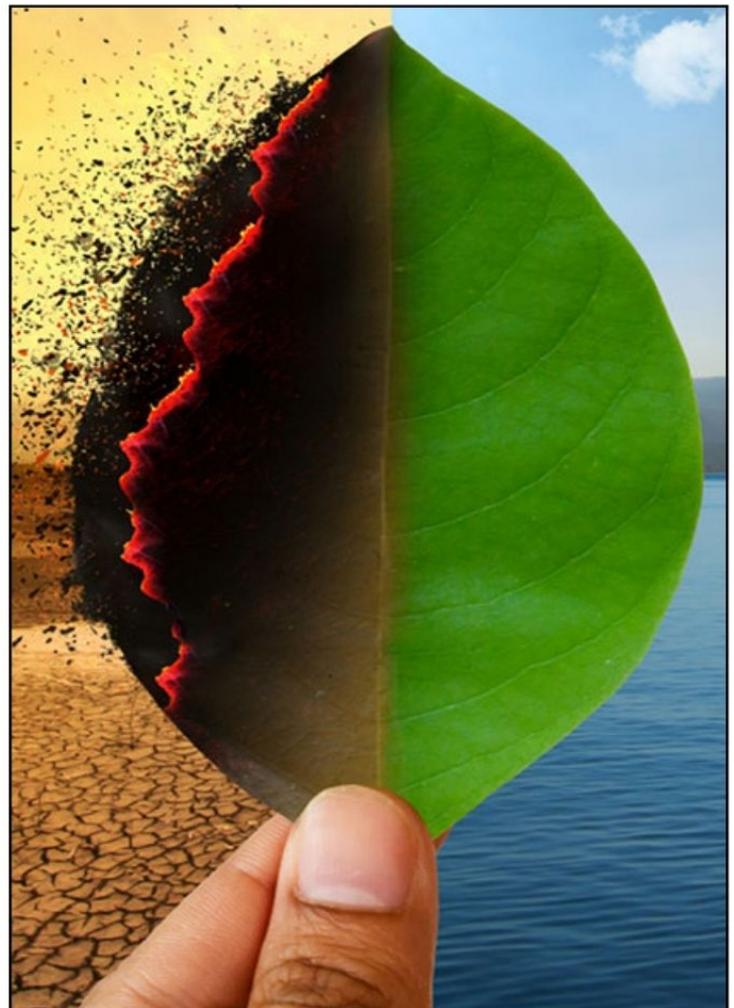
## Humans are responsible for global warming

Climate scientists have showed that humans are responsible for virtually all global heating over the last 200 years. Human activities like the ones mentioned above are causing greenhouse gases that are warming the world faster than at any time in at least the last two thousand years.

The average temperature of the Earth's surface is now about 1.2°C warmer than it was in the late 1800s (before the industrial revolution) and warmer than at any time in the last 100,000 years. The last decade (2011-2020) was the warmest on record, and each of the last four decades has been warmer than any previous decade since 1850.

Many people think climate change mainly means warmer temperatures. But temperature rise is only the beginning of the story. Because the Earth is a system, where everything is

connected, changes in one area can influence changes in all others. The consequences of climate change now include, among others, intense droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity.

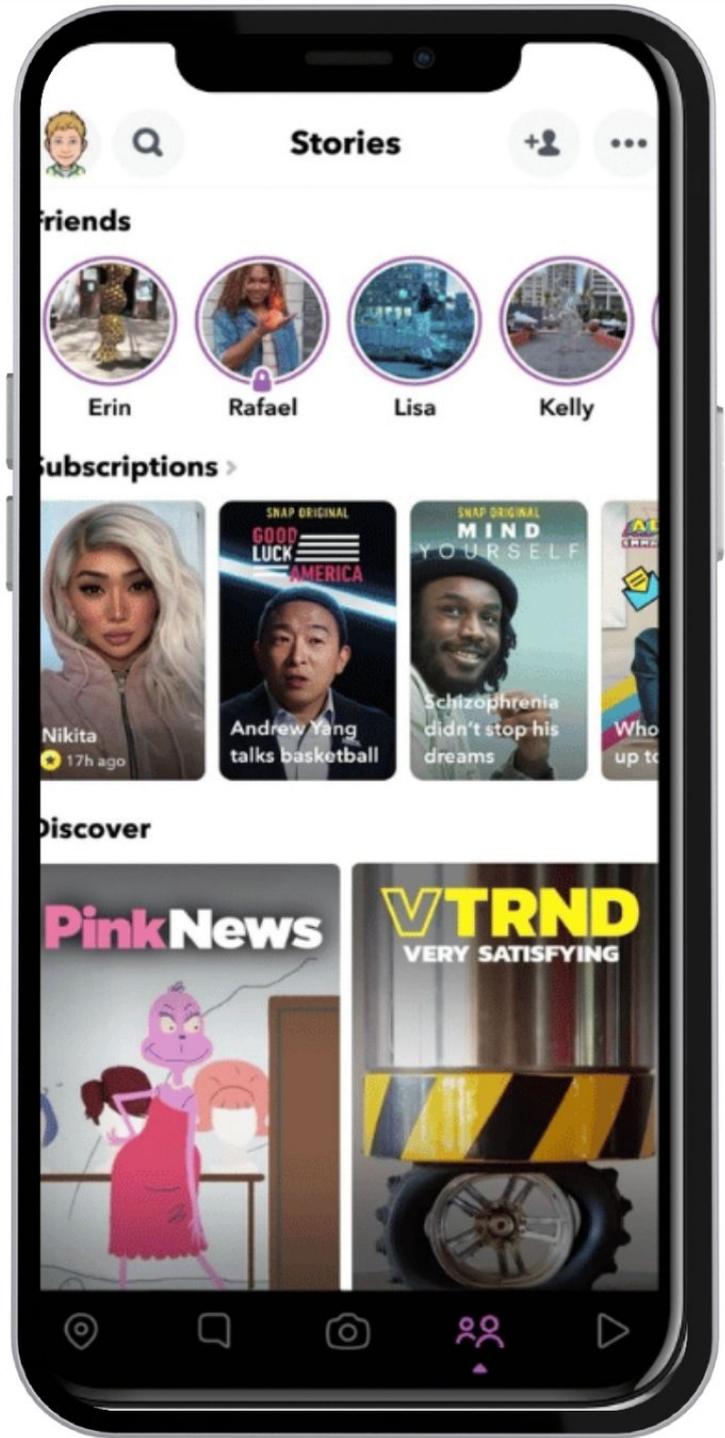


## The Era of Social Media



By Iffat Rauf

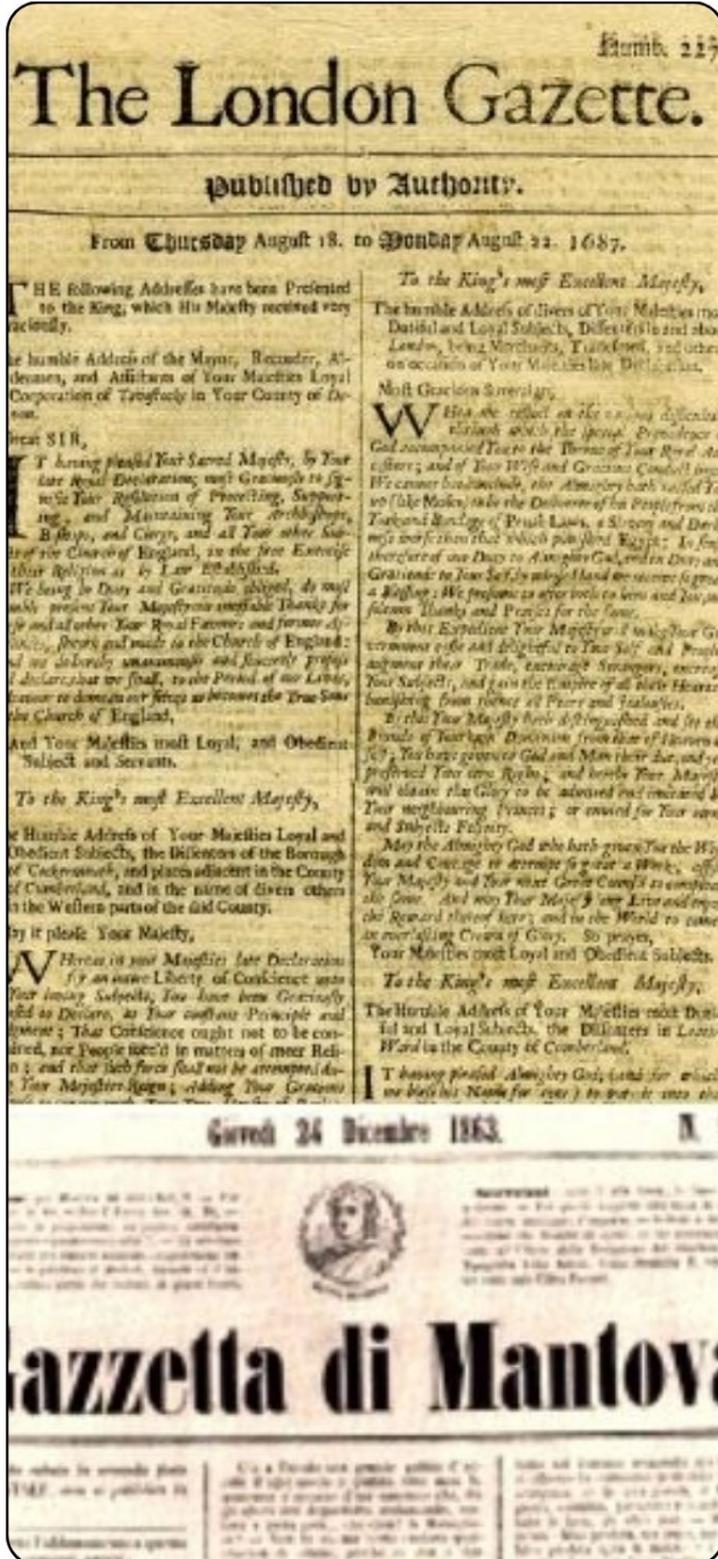
The history of journalism is connected with the written handscripts in Europe. The printing trends settled in 1440. Germany published the first newspaper in 1605 whereas Londonderry released her first newspaper in 1621. With the beginning of 20th Century Radio and Television earned the blockbuster popularity in sharing the News to public. Though they became the reliable information media but still the trust was ensured through print media. The significant media House then overlooked this nefarious influence of what's considered traditional in sharing information. The the decay of Mass Media starts when it's news had failed because of secret conspiracy and technical handling by the owners. The conflict and controversy arose as yellow journalism when William Randolph Hearts embarrassed the mantra "IF IT BLEEDS IT LEADS" sorting readership by sensational events and manufacturing drama. Press to it's boldness dragged the first press driven Spanish American War.



With emergence of Internet Social Media's emphatic role can't be denied which established the outspoken vigilance of any information. Ironically the leading platform has been misunderstood so misused worsley. Its negativity created the dogma of anxiety, depression and falsehood aptitude. Thus the optimism suffered pessimistic approach. But the benefits of easier access and quick information sharing welcome all professionals even laymen to participate. Internet acknowledged as a blessing for Newspapers, magazines, news channels, broadcast, print media, indoor & outdoor journalism and advertising media. The misinformation and cyber crimes raised as the most anxietiest and depression contained stigmas in social life. Now all human life moves on social media without any discrimination. No doubt a tiny handbunch mobile is ruling the world.

In social media the most popular platforms are Facebook, YouTube, tiktok, Instagram, LinkedIn and now threads. According to the statistics of January 2024 the almost 30% of the total population is engaged on social media in which 94.53% are connected with Facebook, 71.1% with YouTube and 1.96% engaged with Instagram .

Although no one can negate the importance of social media in lessening the distances and providing everyone the accessibility of establishing his/her future but the rising cyber crimes of child abuse, sex scandals ,blackmailing and harassment are still frequent and tough to be handled by any government.



Journalism is on peak at social media but many times with untrained and self appointed people. Russia, China and Japan have restricted the access to such negativity and engaged their youth with more constructive activities.

Pakistan suffered a lot in spoiling of youth the antistate elements stunted their minds for agitation against the state and its department. The present government resumed it seriously to introduce and control the social nuisance .



## Darren Gough Named Head Coach of Lahore Qalandars Ahead of PSL 10

By Sports Desk



Lahore Qalandars have appointed former England pace bowler Darren Gough as their head coach for the upcoming 10th season of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), the franchise announced on Thursday.

The two-time PSL champions shared the news on their official social media platforms, highlighting Gough's return to the Qalandars setup. The former cricketer had previously been associated with the franchise during the inaugural season of the Global Super League (GSL).

Expressing his enthusiasm, Gough said, "I am absolutely thrilled to be back with Lahore Qalandars. The passion and energy of the team, along with its incredible fan base, are unmatched. The PSL is a fantastic platform, and I'm eager to contribute to helping the Qalandars reach new heights this season."

He added, "I'm confident we can achieve something special. I believe in the potential of this squad, and together, we will work hard to bring success to the Qalandars and make our fans proud."

Sameen Rana, Team Director of Lahore Qalandars, praised Gough's leadership qualities and his understanding of the franchise's ethos. "Darren Gough is an outstanding leader who truly understands the culture and spirit of the Lahore Qalandars. His contributions during the Global Super League were invaluable, and we are excited to have him lead our team in HBL PSL 10," said Rana.

Gough, a cornerstone of England's bowling attack from 1994 to 2006, boasts an impressive record with 229 Test wickets and 235 ODI wickets. He also played a pivotal role as England's bowling consultant in 2020 and later served as the Managing Director of Cricket at Yorkshire.

The PSL 10 Player Draft is set to take place on January 13, 2025, in Lahore, marking the beginning of an exciting new chapter for Gough and the Qalandars.



## Ali Tareen Shares Heartbreaking Update on Ihsanullah's Career Following Elbow Injury

By Sports Desk



Ali Jahangir Tareen, owner of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise Multan Sultans, has revealed distressing news about the future of pace bowler Ihsanullah, who has been sidelined due to a serious elbow injury.

Ihsanullah, a promising young pace bowler who has represented Pakistan in one ODI and four T20Is, injured his elbow after the ODI series against New Zealand in April 2023. He underwent surgery that same year and has since focused on his rehabilitation, staying away from competitive cricket.

After a lengthy recovery, Ihsanullah made his return to the field in December 2024 during the Champions T20 Cup, where he took two wickets in four matches. However, his pace was noticeably slower compared to his previous performances.

In a recent appearance on a local podcast, Tareen discussed Ihsanullah's injury and his comeback, revealing the grim outlook for the young bowler's career.

"It's an unfortunate development, but we got Ihsanullah consulted with a top surgeon, who gave us really bad news," said Tareen. "The surgeon said that 'I can do the surgery, but no matter what I do, there is so much scarring from his previously botched surgery that his arm will never become perfectly straight, and he will never be able to bowl in the same way because he does not have a straight arm.'"

Tareen expressed his frustration over the situation, stating, "It's devastating that one person ruined a talented player's career to hide his mistake."

Although Ihsanullah is still bowling at 130-135 km/h—an impressive pace—Tareen noted that he was once capable of reaching speeds of 155 km/h. "He was our 155 [km/h] bowler," Tareen added, emphasizing the loss of potential caused by the injury.

## Neelam Muneer Sparks Marriage Buzz with Intimate Mayoun Night Photos

By Showbiz Desk

Actor Neelam Muneer has reignited marriage rumors after sharing pictures from what appeared to be her "mayoun" night on Thursday, January 2, 2025.

Taking to Instagram, the "Dil Mom ka Diya" star posted a series of stunning photos dressed in a vibrant yellow frock paired with a traditional gharara and a delicately embroidered net dupatta. Her look was completed with floral earrings, a teeka, and traditional garlands on her wrists—signature accessories of Pakistani bridal festivities.

Captioning her post, Neelam wrote, "So here it begins — Wanted an intimate Mayoun Night for myself! Festivities have just started." Despite the festive post, she left fans curious by keeping details about her partner undisclosed.



NEELAMMUNEERKHAN - INSTA



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Neelam also shared a behind-the-scenes video showing her getting ready for the event, further exciting her followers.

This event comes just a month after social media rumors suggested she would tie the knot in January in the UAE. At the time, the "Qayamat" actor denied the rumors, stating she had no immediate plans for marriage.

Now, fans are left speculating if this is the beginning of her much-anticipated wedding celebrations.



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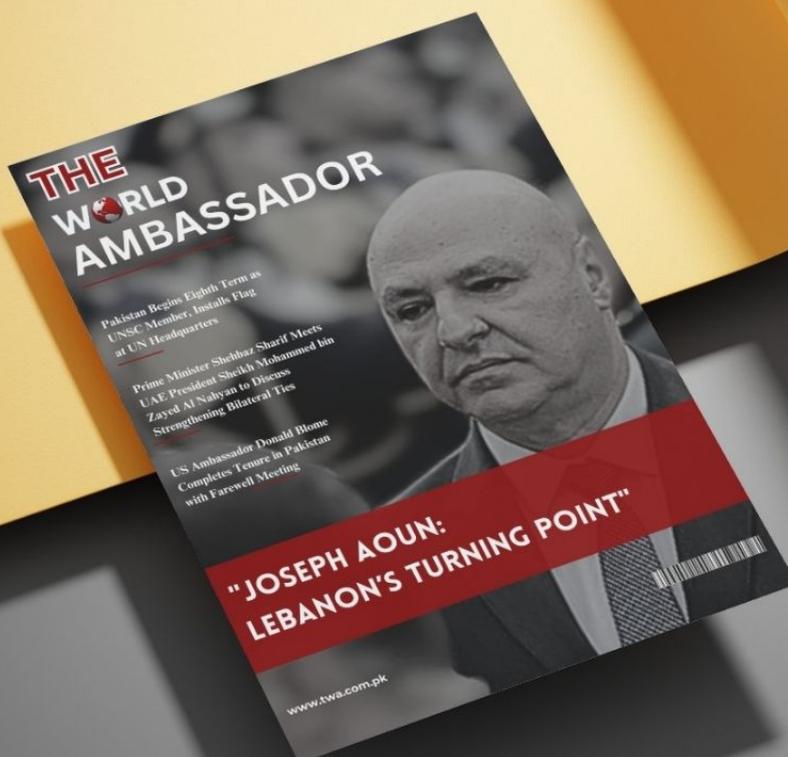
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## Mariyam Nafees: Renowned Actress and Expecting Mother Enjoys Vacation in Mauritius

By Showbiz Desk

Mariyam Nafees, a celebrated Pakistani actress, model, and host, is well-known for her outstanding performances in several hit drama serials. Her notable roles in popular dramas such as *Ishq Be Naam*, *Haya Ke Daman Mein*, *Mohabbat Na Kariyo*, *Haqeeqat*, *Munkir*, *Neem*, *Munafiq*, *Kamzarf*, *Yakeen Ka Safar*, *Mohabbat Chordi Maine*, *Ishq Jalebi*, and *Diyar-e-Dil* have earned her widespread admiration. Recently, her acting and portrayal in ARY Digital's drama serial *Jaan-e-Jahan* has garnered praise from fans. On the personal front, Mariyam is preparing to welcome her first child with her husband, Amaan Ahmed. The couple is currently enjoying a relaxing vacation in Mauritius, where Mariyam shared stunning photos from the picturesque Le Morne Brabant peninsula. Wearing a beautiful beach dress, she radiated charm as the serene atmosphere added to her glowing presence.



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