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Iran ends cooperation with IAEA

Dual-Track Diplomacy

A shifting regional landscape

Highway of Fear

Unending ethnic targeting in Balochistan

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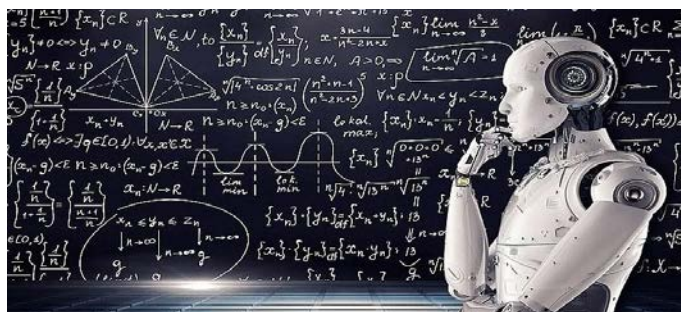


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India's proxy war of deadly terrorism against Pakistan



The Corps Commanders' Conference held on Thursday renewed Pakistan's deepening concerns over India's alleged involvement in sponsoring terrorism within the country. Against the backdrop of the recent Pahalgam incident and what was termed India's "manifest defeat in direct aggression," the military leadership called for "decisive and holistic actions at all levels" to counter Indian-backed and Indian-sponsored proxy networks.

The use of such proxies, the military noted, reflects a well-established pattern of Indian behaviour—particularly since the rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ultra-nationalist government in 2014. Pakistan has repeatedly accused India of supporting militant and separatist groups, including Baloch insurgents and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), both of which have carried out deadly attacks on Pakistani soil.

The urgency of these concerns was further underscored by a brutal

incident on the same day as the conference. In the Sur Dukai area of Balochistan, armed militants intercepted two buses, checked passengers' identity cards, and executed nine individuals from Punjab in cold blood. The Balochistan Liberation Front later claimed responsibility for the massacre.

Pakistan has submitted multiple dossiers to the United Nations and other international platforms, detailing what it describes as India's financial and logistical support to terrorist elements operating from Afghan territory or through covert regional networks.

A key turning point in this narrative was the 2016 capture of Indian naval officer Kulbhushan Jadhav in Balochistan. Jadhav, who carried a passport under a fake Muslim identity, later confessed on video to orchestrating sabotage missions on behalf of India's intelligence agency, RAW.

Notably, the Corps Commanders' statement made a direct reference to

India's National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval. Just a day earlier, DG ISPR Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry had named Doval as the "chief architect of terrorism in Pakistan." Doval is known for publicly endorsing his "offensive defence" strategy—an India-centric doctrine promoting covert operations and proxy engagement, particularly aimed at destabilizing Pakistan.

The military's emphasis on a "holistic" approach highlights the complex nature of modern security threats, which require not only military preparedness but also cohesive political will and economic resilience. As Pakistan faces internal political instability and economic hardship, India's continued reliance on proxy tactics further strains any possibility of diplomatic resolution in the region.

While common sense dictates that both nuclear-armed neighbours should seek de-escalation, India's alleged interference through proxies continues to aggravate already volatile ties, leaving little room for constructive dialogue.

A Fragile Hope: The 60-Day Ceasefire Between Israel and Hamas



By Kanwal Munir

Introduction

The conflict between Israel and Hamas has been one of the most intense and devastating in recent history. What started with a surprise attack by Hamas on October 7, 2023, quickly escalated into full-scale warfare, resulting in immense loss of life and destruction, especially in the Gaza Strip. Over 21 months of fighting have claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Palestinians and Israelis alike, leaving both societies deeply wounded.

Amidst this ongoing violence, a proposal for a 60-day ceasefire has recently emerged, sparking cautious optimism across the world. This ceasefire aims to pause the fighting, allow humanitarian aid to reach civilians, and open the door for longer-term peace negotiations. However, the challenges ahead are many, and the fragile truce is met with skepticism by many on both sides. This article explores the background, key elements, responses, and prospects of this ceasefire, explaining why it matters and what hurdles remain.

The Origins of the Ceasefire Proposal

The proposal for a ceasefire gained significant momentum in early July 2025, when U.S. President Donald Trump publicly announced that Israel had agreed to a temporary 60-day halt in hostilities with Hamas. This announcement followed months of behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts led by the United States, alongside key regional mediators such as Egypt and Qatar. These nations worked tirelessly to bridge the widening gap between the two sides, as the humanitarian situation in Gaza continued to deteriorate under the weight of relentless conflict.

The primary objective of the ceasefire is to provide a much-needed pause in the violence. This break is crucial not only to reduce further civilian casualties but also to allow humanitarian organizations to access the besieged Gaza Strip, where millions have been displaced and are facing extreme shortages of food, medicine, and clean

water. Moreover, the ceasefire creates a vital window of opportunity for negotiators to engage in deeper, more constructive discussions aimed at finding a long-term political solution to the crisis.

Despite the optimism surrounding this development, the road to the ceasefire was anything but easy. Negotiations were marked by mutual mistrust, last-minute objections, and external pressures, making the eventual agreement a delicate and hard-won milestone in a volatile conflict.

Main Features of the Ceasefire Agreement

The 60-day ceasefire proposal includes several important provisions designed to address key issues of the conflict:

Phased Hostage Release

One of the central elements of the ceasefire is the phased release of hostages held by Hamas. The agreement outlines that 10 living captives and 18 bodies will be released in five

separate groups over the course of the ceasefire.

The hostage issue has been one of the most sensitive and emotional aspects of the conflict for Israel. Many Israeli families have demanded the safe return of their loved ones, and the prospect of a phased release has been a major incentive for Israel to agree to the ceasefire.

Israeli Military Redeployment

Another major provision is the planned withdrawal of Israeli troops from parts of Gaza. While the Israeli military has maintained a strong presence in the region throughout the conflict, this partial redeployment signals a willingness to reduce active combat operations and ease pressure on civilians.

However, this move has met with mixed reactions. Some Israelis view it as a necessary step to de-escalate the situation, while others fear it could embolden Hamas or compromise Israel's security.

Humanitarian Aid Access

The ceasefire also aims to improve humanitarian access to Gaza, where millions of people have been living under siege with limited food, medicine, and clean water. The blockade and ongoing conflict have severely damaged Gaza's infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and water facilities.

The agreement calls for corridors to be opened to allow aid organizations to deliver food, medical supplies, and other essential items to those in desperate need. This aspect of the ceasefire is crucial for alleviating the humanitarian crisis that has unfolded over the past two years.

Hostage Exchange Mechanism

Beyond the phased release, the ceasefire proposal includes the establishment of a formal mechanism for exchanging prisoners. Both sides have detained individuals over the course of the conflict, and addressing this issue is seen as essential to building trust and moving toward peace.

Such mechanisms could pave the way for future negotiations about prisoner releases and set precedents for handling one of the conflict's most difficult disputes.

Hamas's Position on the Ceasefire

Hamas has expressed cautious willingness to consider the 60-day ceasefire proposal but has made it clear that its acceptance hinges on several critical conditions. These conditions reflect long-standing grievances and strategic objectives that Hamas seeks to address through any truce arrangement.

Demand for Full Israeli Withdrawal

Hamas's foremost demand is the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. For Hamas and much of the Palestinian population, the presence of Israeli troops represents a continuing occupation. They argue that without the removal of these forces, any ceasefire will be incomplete and temporary. A full withdrawal is viewed as essential for restoring Palestinian sovereignty and enabling the people of Gaza to reclaim control over their territory. However, Israel considers its military presence in certain areas of Gaza as vital for its national security. From the Israeli perspective, a complete pullout could invite renewed attacks, especially given Hamas's history of launching rockets from the territory.

Lifting the Blockade

Another central condition set by Hamas is the lifting of the blockade on Gaza, which has been in place since 2007. This blockade, enforced by Israel and Egypt, has severely restricted the movement of people and goods, contributing to dire humanitarian conditions. Hamas contends that lifting the blockade is essential not only for economic recovery but also for allowing humanitarian aid to reach the population without obstruction. Removing these restrictions is seen as key to rebuilding Gaza's infrastructure and easing the daily struggles of its residents.

Calls for International Guarantees

Finally, Hamas is demanding international guarantees to ensure that the terms of the ceasefire are fully implemented. This demand reflects deep mistrust of Israel's commitment to past agreements. Hamas insists that without third-party supervision

and enforcement mechanisms, the ceasefire could collapse, as has happened in previous attempts.

Israel's Response and Priorities

While Israel has signaled its acceptance of the 60-day ceasefire proposal, it does so with clear and firm conditions. For Israeli leaders, the pause in hostilities must not compromise national security or overlook core strategic priorities. Their support for the ceasefire is grounded in specific demands that reflect Israel's long-term security concerns and political pressures.

Hostage Release Priority

The unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas is Israel's top priority. Since the October 2023 attacks, numerous Israeli civilians and soldiers have been captured, many of whom are still being held inside Gaza under uncertain conditions.

The Israeli government, under immense public pressure from families and communities, insists that no ceasefire can be meaningful unless it includes the safe return of these captives. The phased release of a limited number of hostages, as currently proposed, is seen as a positive start but falls short of Israeli expectations. The complete and unconditional release of every individual remains a non-negotiable element in Israel's ceasefire approach.

Disarmament of Hamas

Another central demand from Israel is the full disarmament of Hamas. Israeli leaders classify Hamas as a terrorist organization responsible for numerous attacks against civilians. From Israel's perspective, no genuine peace can be achieved while Hamas retains its weapons and military infrastructure.

The fear is that without disarmament, Hamas could use future ceasefires merely to regroup and launch new offensives. However, Hamas has strongly opposed this condition, viewing its weapons as essential to resistance and self-defense. This fundamental disagreement remains one of the biggest obstacles to a long-term resolution.

Security Concerns

Israel also places heavy emphasis on maintaining national security during and after the ceasefire. Officials argue that the temporary truce must not allow Hamas to restock weapons, rebuild tunnels, or regroup. Israel seeks to continue surveillance and intelligence operations and retain the ability to respond swiftly if the ceasefire is violated.

The Role of International Mediation

The 60-day ceasefire proposal between Israel and Hamas did not come about in isolation. It is the result of sustained and coordinated international diplomacy involving key regional and global actors. Among the most active mediators have been the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, all of whom have leveraged their political influence and regional relationships to steer both sides toward a temporary truce.

United States

The United States has taken a leading role in the negotiation process. U.S. President Donald Trump has been particularly vocal and involved, presenting himself as a central figure in brokering the agreement. His public announcement that Israel had agreed to the ceasefire marked a major turning point in the talks. Trump later met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington to discuss how to implement the terms and ensure compliance. The U.S. has used its strategic alliances with Israel and diplomatic backchannels with other stakeholders to exert pressure on both parties to commit to a temporary halt in fighting. America's goal has been to de-escalate the violence while opening a path to longer-term peace discussions.

Egypt and Qatar

Egypt and Qatar have also played critical roles in facilitating dialogue. Egypt, sharing a border with Gaza, has traditionally been a key mediator in Israel-Gaza conflicts. Qatar, with strong connections to Hamas, has hosted multiple rounds of indirect talks and provided significant humanitarian aid to Palestinians. While their efforts have yielded some progress, Qatari officials have warned that the complexity of the demands

on both sides means that a full agreement could take time. They stress that continued dialogue, trust-building, and careful diplomacy will be essential to transform the ceasefire into a lasting peace.

The Humanitarian Impact of the Conflict

The ongoing violence has had catastrophic effects on Gaza's civilian population. The war has devastated lives, homes, and infrastructure:

Casualties and Loss of Life

More than 57,000 Palestinians have been killed since the conflict began, many of whom are women and children. The sheer scale of death has left entire communities grieving and traumatized.



Massive Displacement

Approximately 90% of Gaza's population has been displaced. Many families live in overcrowded shelters or makeshift camps, struggling to find basic necessities.

Destruction of Infrastructure

Hospitals, schools, water treatment plants, and power facilities have been damaged or destroyed. This destruction not only makes daily life difficult but also hampers any efforts toward recovery and peace.

The humanitarian crisis has been a major driver behind calls for a ceasefire, as the suffering of civilians has reached unbearable levels.

Challenges to Implementing the Ceasefire

While the 60-day ceasefire agreement brings a glimmer of hope in a long and bloody conflict, it is far from guaranteed to succeed. Several complex and deep-rooted challenges continue to threaten its stability and effectiveness. These obstacles must be acknowledged and addressed if the truce is to hold and lead to meaningful progress.

Deep Mistrust

At the heart of the challenge lies deep mistrust between Israel and Hamas. Decades of hostility, broken ceasefire agreements, and acts of violence have left both sides extremely skeptical of one another's intentions. Israel fears that Hamas will use the pause in fighting to regroup and launch

future attacks, while Hamas remains convinced that Israel may use the ceasefire as a smokescreen to continue its control and surveillance.

This mutual suspicion makes the implementation of even the most basic terms of the ceasefire difficult. Without trust, every action by one side is likely to be viewed as a provocation or violation by the other, making miscommunication and conflict resumption a real risk.

Regional Influences

Regional players, including Hezbollah and Iran, also pose a threat to the ceasefire's success. These actors have their own strategic interests in the conflict and may not be

fully aligned with efforts to reduce tensions. Hezbollah's activity along Israel's northern border and Iran's support for anti-Israel groups in the region could trigger wider confrontations or undermine the ceasefire if any party feels provoked or marginalized. External provocations or escalations could derail the fragile progress made through recent negotiations.

Internal Political Pressures

Both Israeli and Palestinian leaderships face internal political pressures that complicate their ability to compromise. In Israel, right-wing parties and military hardliners push for continued pressure on Hamas. On the Palestinian side, factions within Hamas and the wider population may reject concessions as weakness. These political dynamics often prioritize domestic survival over diplomatic flexibility.

What the Future Holds: Prospects for Peace

The recently proposed 60-day ceasefire offers a much-needed pause in a devastating conflict, but it is only a temporary measure. For genuine and lasting peace to take root, far deeper and more complex issues must be addressed. The truce creates a window of opportunity, but unless it is used to resolve the underlying causes of the conflict, violence could easily erupt again once the ceasefire ends.

The Two-State Solution

For decades, the two-state solution has been championed by international diplomats, scholars, and peace activists as the most viable path to ending the Israeli Palestinian conflict. The idea involves the creation of an independent Palestinian state existing peacefully alongside Israel. While the concept is widely supported globally, turning it into reality remains extremely difficult. It would require negotiations on key issues such as borders, the status of Jerusalem, control over resources, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and the structure of governance. Both sides would need to make painful compromises, and political will on both ends is currently lacking.

Security Guarantees

Security is a fundamental concern for both Israelis and Palestinians. Israelis seek protection from future attacks and demand demilitarization of hostile groups, while Palestinians want freedom from military occupation and guaranteed protection of their communities. Any long-term peace deal will require internationally backed security arrangements, such as peacekeeping forces, border monitoring, and mutual disarmament agreements. Trust-building measures will be essential.

Economic Recovery and Reconstruction

Lasting peace cannot be achieved without

economic recovery, especially in Gaza. Years of war have crippled infrastructure, left thousands homeless, and shattered livelihoods. A future peace framework must include massive investment in rebuilding, job creation, education, and healthcare. International donors and development agencies will need to play a central role. Achieving peace will require sustained diplomacy, bold leadership, and global cooperation beyond this ceasefire.

Conclusion

The 60-day ceasefire between Israel and Hamas marks an important, though fragile, milestone in a deeply entrenched and painful conflict. It offers a critical opportunity to ease the suffering of civilians, allow humanitarian aid to reach those in desperate need, and create space for meaningful diplomatic engagement. For many, it symbolizes a flicker of hope in a region long plagued by war and mistrust.

Yet, the path ahead is uncertain. Deep political divisions, historical grievances, and complex regional dynamics continue to pose serious challenges. Achieving a durable peace will require time, compromise, and the committed involvement of the international community. As the ceasefire unfolds, the world watches with cautious optimism—hoping that this temporary pause may open the door to a more peaceful and just future for both Israelis and Palestinians.



Abraham Accords and US Veto Power Against Gaza

(Contradictions Between the Abraham Accords and U.S. Actions in Gaza)



By Hina Kashif

Continued Bombardment Despite Ceasefire Talks

Although international efforts to negotiate a ceasefire in Gaza are ongoing, Israeli military forces, including the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), have not ceased their airstrikes and bombardment operations. The violence continues unabated, causing severe civilian casualties and widespread destruction. This paradox highlights the grim reality on the ground: while diplomats discuss peace, the people of Gaza face relentless attacks, with devastating consequences.

Overwhelmed Medical Facilities in Gaza

One of the most critical impacts of the ongoing violence is on Gaza's healthcare system, which was already fragile before the conflict escalated. The Rafah hospital — the last fully functioning medical facility in southern Gaza — has been overwhelmed by the influx of wounded civilians, many of whom are injured in or near so-called aid distribution centers.

Since May, these centers have become hotspots of mass casualties, with multiple incidents where large numbers of civilians were hurt during or immediately after receiving humanitarian aid. Haitham al-Hasan, a nurse working in the hospital's operating theatre, reported a threefold increase in emergency surgeries and trauma care cases. This surge has stretched the hospital's resources and staff to their breaking point.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) confirmed that since the new food distribution system began, their affiliated field hospital in Rafah has treated over 2,200 patients wounded by weapons. Many of these cases resulted from 21 mass casualty events linked directly to the distribution sites — where vulnerable civilians should be receiving aid but are instead becoming victims of violence.

Rising Civilian Death Toll and Airstrikes

The death toll from Israeli airstrikes continues to climb. Recent attacks since dawn

have killed at least 47 Palestinians in various locations throughout Gaza. The frequent air raids strike densely populated areas, medical facilities, and infrastructure, contributing to a humanitarian catastrophe. Hospitals and clinics, already under-equipped and understaffed, struggle to provide lifesaving care amid power outages, shortages of medical supplies, and unsafe conditions.

Forced Displacement and Rafah 'Concentration Camp' Criticism

Amid this ongoing conflict, the UN agency responsible for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) has strongly condemned Israeli plans to forcibly displace thousands of Palestinians towards Rafah, the southernmost point of Gaza near the Egyptian border. This strategy is seen by many as an attempt to create overcrowded, containment zones where displaced people are trapped with limited access to food, water, healthcare, or safe shelter.

Critics, including international human rights organizations and UN officials, have likened the conditions being imposed on Palestinians in Rafah to “concentration camps” — highlighting the extreme restrictions on movement, the blockade of essential goods, and the severe humanitarian deprivation faced by those forced into the area.

Broader Humanitarian Crisis

The ongoing violence and displacement exacerbate an already catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza. Key infrastructure such as water supply, electricity, sanitation, and healthcare systems are severely damaged or non-functional in many areas. Hospitals rely on backup generators that are frequently at risk due to fuel shortages.

violence has persisted. Negotiations mediated by international actors, including the UN and regional powers, have made slow progress amid ongoing fighting.

The blockade imposed by Israel on Gaza’s borders — controlling land, air, and sea access — severely limits the ability of aid agencies to deliver essential supplies. Furthermore, security concerns cited by Israel lead to the inspection and sometimes confiscation of aid shipments, complicating relief efforts.

At the same time, there are concerns over the exploitation of humanitarian aid by armed groups within Gaza, which Israel cites as justification for restrictions. However, humanitarian organizations emphasize that these restrictions disproportionately harm innocent civilians and violate international humanitarian law.

establish a lasting ceasefire to prevent further loss of life. They warn that without immediate and sustained international intervention, Gaza faces a long-term humanitarian disaster that could leave an entire generation scarred by trauma, deprivation, and loss.

Gaza’s Baby Formula Blockade: A Growing Humanitarian Catastrophe

Doctors in Gaza are raising urgent alarms over a severe shortage of infant formula that threatens the lives of hundreds of newborns, particularly the 580 premature babies currently at risk of starvation. At Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, pediatricians report having less than a week’s supply of specialized formula, and even regular formula is being rationed to stretch what little remains. This crisis is compounded by the fact that many mothers in Gaza are either too malnourished to breastfeed or have died, leaving infants without access to essential breastmilk. Mothers like Hanaa al-Taweel have witnessed their children suffer stunted growth and developmental delays due to this lack of nutrition.

Medical staff and families attribute this worsening situation largely to the ongoing Israeli blockade, which severely restricts the entry of humanitarian aid, including vital baby formula. While Israeli authorities claim that over 1,000 tons of baby food have entered Gaza since May, health officials insist these deliveries fall far short of what is needed, and formula remains critically scarce. Aid efforts are intermittent and inadequate; a small U.S. NGO’s delivery of 20 boxes of formula to Nasser Hospital—enough to last about two weeks—is a rare relief, and even then, there is no guarantee of steady future shipments. Disturbingly, Israeli border officials have reportedly confiscated infant formula brought in by visiting doctors, further deepening the shortage.

In makeshift hospital wards, newborns arrive “skin and bones,” showing clear signs of dehydration and growth delays, a heartbreaking indication of the broader humanitarian collapse gripping Gaza.



Food insecurity is rampant, and many families face starvation or malnutrition. The blockade and restrictions on aid deliveries have caused severe shortages of medicine, baby formula, and other critical supplies. Civilians attempting to access aid are often subjected to dangerous conditions, including violent incidents at distribution points where thousands queue daily under threat of attack or being shot.

The International Response and Challenges

Despite repeated calls from the international community for an immediate ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access, the

The Human Toll and Urgency for Action

The relentless bombardment, medical system collapse, displacement, and blockade have pushed Gaza into a deepening crisis that threatens to become irreversible. Hospitals like Rafah are the last lifeline for thousands of injured people, but they are stretched beyond capacity. Civilians, including children and the elderly, suffer from injuries, malnutrition, and exposure to cold and disease.

Doctors and humanitarian workers have issued urgent appeals to lift the blockade, allow full humanitarian access, and

Families desperate to feed their infants have resorted to paying exorbitant prices—up to \$50 per can—on the black market, nearly ten times the usual cost. Meanwhile, nearly half a million people face catastrophic hunger, and hospitals are stretched beyond capacity, operating on limited fuel and damaged generators, with some forced to suspend services altogether, jeopardizing critical healthcare.

Health experts like Dr. Ahmed al-Farra warn that the formula shortage could soon lead to an “avoidable disaster,” with babies having “no time and no voice” to plead for help. The World Health Organization reports that every day, over a hundred children are admitted for severe malnutrition, raising fears that early starvation will cause permanent developmental damage to an entire generation. Premature and vulnerable infants are often the first victims in famine crises, and their suffering signals a wider systemic breakdown.

This infant nutrition crisis is not just about immediate survival; it represents a long-term tragedy with irreversible consequences if aid is not urgently increased and the siege lifted. Doctors and humanitarian workers emphasize the critical need to reopen crossings, ensure steady supplies of baby formula, and end the blockade to prevent further loss of young lives. Gaza's infant crisis is a harrowing emergency demanding swift global attention and action—not only to save babies today but to preserve the future of an entire generation.

Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords are a series of historic agreements that began in 2020, marking a significant shift in Middle Eastern diplomacy. They refer to normalization deals between Israel and several Arab countries, aimed at establishing peaceful relations, economic cooperation, and diplomatic ties.

Key Points about the Abraham Accords:

- **Origins:** The Accords were announced in August and September 2020, initially between Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain.

- **Main Goal:** To normalize diplomatic relations, including opening embassies, establishing direct flights, promoting trade, and cooperation in various fields like technology, tourism, and security.
- **Significance:** These agreements broke a longstanding barrier, as many Arab states had previously refused to formally recognize Israel until the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was resolved.
- **Subsequent Participants:** Later, Sudan and Morocco also joined the Abraham Accords, agreeing to normalize ties with Israel.
- **Name Origin:** The term “Abraham” references the shared patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, symbolizing common roots and the hope for coexistence.
- **Impact:** The Accords represent a major diplomatic breakthrough, shifting alliances and fostering new regional partnerships, though the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains unresolved and continues to be a complex issue.

In summary, the Abraham Accords are a landmark series of peace agreements aimed at fostering cooperation and ending decades of hostility between Israel and some Arab nations.

Countries and Groups Opposed to the Abraham Accords

Palestinian Authority (PA) and Palestinian Groups

Position: Strongly opposed

Reason:

The Palestinians view the Abraham Accords as a betrayal by the Arab countries that signed them, especially because these agreements normalized relations with Israel without securing progress on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process or addressing Palestinian statehood and rights.

Statements:

- The PA leadership condemned the accords as undermining Arab solidarity with the Palestinian cause.
- Hamas and Islamic Jihad have also denounced the deals, accusing the signatories of abandoning Palestine.

Concerns:

The normalization is seen as weakening the Arab consensus that Israel should first resolve the Palestinian issue before formal ties are established.

Iran

Position: Strongly opposed and hostile

Reason:

Iran views the Abraham Accords as a U.S.-led attempt to isolate it regionally by creating a coalition between Israel and Gulf Arab states.

Statements:

Iranian leaders have called the accords a "treacherous pact" and warned that it fuels regional instability. Iran also supports Palestinian resistance groups that oppose normalization.

Concerns:

The Accords threaten Iran's influence in the Middle East and its strategic alliances with groups like Hezbollah and Hamas.

Turkey

Position: Opposed

Reason:

Turkey, which supports the Palestinian cause and has tense relations with Israel, condemned the agreements.

Statements:

Turkish officials described the accords as a betrayal of Palestinians and a disruption of regional peace.

Concerns:

Turkey fears the deals marginalize Palestinian rights and allow Israel to continue occupation policies unchecked.

Qatar

Position: Critical, though nuanced

Reason:

Qatar supports the Palestinian cause and has close ties with Hamas but has kept some channels open with Israel.

Statements:

Qatar criticized the Accords for sidelining Palestinian rights and has called for a comprehensive peace process including a Palestinian state.

Concerns:

The deals are seen as bypassing Palestinian aspirations and weakening Arab unity.

Lebanon

Position: Against

Reason:

The Lebanese government, influenced by Hezbollah and other factions, opposes normalization with Israel.

Statements:

Officials have condemned the accords as violating Arab consensus and legitimizing Israeli occupation.

Concerns:

Lebanon remains technically at war with Israel and views normalization as undermining Palestinian and Lebanese resistance.

Syria

Position: Strongly opposed

Reason:

Syria, which has a longstanding conflict with Israel, denounces the Accords.

Statements:

Syrian officials have called the deals a betrayal of Arab solidarity and the Palestinian cause.

Concerns:

The Accords are seen as further isolating Syria and enabling Israeli aggression.

7-PAKISTAN

Pakistan's Official Stance on the Abraham Accords

Pakistan maintains a principled position regarding the Abraham Accords and any normalization agreements with Israel. The country firmly believes that recognition of Israel or engagement in diplomatic relations cannot occur until the Palestinian people are granted their sovereign and independent state. Pakistan supports a just and comprehensive resolution of the Palestinian issue based on internationally recognized parameters, including the establishment of a viable Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.



Pakistan views the Abraham Accords as premature and counterproductive to the broader goal of lasting peace in the Middle East. The country reiterates that any peace process must prioritize Palestinian rights and aspirations and that unilateral normalization without addressing these core issues risks undermining regional stability.

Furthermore, Pakistan rejects any external pressure to alter its stance and will continue to uphold its long-standing commitment to the Palestinian cause, aligning its foreign policy with principles of justice, sovereignty, and international law.

Broader Opposition Factors

Arab League: While the Arab League did not officially endorse the Abraham Accords, several member states, especially those with stronger pro-Palestinian policies (e.g., Algeria, Iraq), voiced concerns.

Public Opinion: In many Arab and Muslim-majority countries, public sentiment remains largely against normalization without Palestinian rights being addressed.

Non-State Actors: Groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad reject the accords outright, continuing armed resistance against Israel.

US Vetoes UN Security Council Gaza Ceasefire Resolution

In the midst of ongoing violence in Gaza, the United States was the sole member of

the UN Security Council to veto a resolution calling for an immediate, unconditional, and permanent ceasefire in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This resolution was presented as the death toll from Israeli airstrikes soared to nearly 100 Palestinians within a single day, while the Gaza Strip remains under a severe and crippling blockade restricting humanitarian aid.

The resolution, tabled by 10 countries on the 15-member council, also urged the release of Israeli captives held in Gaza. However, the US opposed linking the ceasefire demand directly to the release of prisoners, labeling it a “non-starter.” On Wednesday, all other 14 Security Council members voted in favor of the resolution, reflecting broad international support for halting the violence.

US Justification and Opposition

Acting US Ambassador to the UN, Doro-

thy Shea, reiterated America's long-standing position that Israel has an inherent right to self-defense, including the objective of defeating Hamas and preventing future threats to its security. Shea stated this stance should be "no surprise," emphasizing the US commitment to Israel's security even as the conflict intensifies.

The US view remains that any ceasefire must not protect Hamas's control over Gaza, framing Israel's military campaign as necessary to dismantle the group and ensure future peace.

International Criticism and Isolation of the US

China's Ambassador Fu Cong sharply criticized Israel's military actions, stating they had "crossed every red line" of international humanitarian law and violated numerous UN resolutions. He lamented that because of the US's protective veto; Israel's violations have gone unchecked and unaccountable.

Political analysts like Al Jazeera's Marwan Bishara highlighted the growing global isolation of the US within the UNSC. Bishara described the US as standing almost alone in blocking widespread international condemnation of Israel, framing Israel's military actions as not self-defense but rather the defense of an ongoing occupation and siege.

Continued Israeli Attacks and Humanitarian Crisis

Despite global demands for an

unconditional ceasefire, Israel has rejected calls to halt hostilities, insisting Hamas must not remain in power or in Gaza. The Israeli military has escalated its attacks across the territory, killing and wounding thousands while maintaining a stringent blockade that restricts vital food, medicine, and fuel supplies.

On the day of the vote alone, health officials reported at least 95 Palestinians killed and over 440 injured amid relentless airstrikes. Al Jazeera's correspondent in Gaza described a "clear surge" in attacks throughout the region, especially in central Gaza.

Aid Distribution Controversies and Violence at Aid Sites

Amid the siege, Israel has warned Palestinians against approaching aid distribution sites run by the controversial Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), declaring such areas "combat zones." Israeli forces halted aid deliveries for an entire day and have repeatedly opened fire on crowds queuing for food, resulting in over 100 Palestinians killed and hundreds injured since late May.

Eyewitnesses described scenes of desperate Palestinians, many starving, gathering before dawn in tight, cage-like lines to receive minimal aid before coming under fire. The Israeli military acknowledged firing on aid seekers, claiming some individuals deviated from designated routes.

One poignant example is the killing of Reem al-Akhras, who was shot while trying to bring food to her family. Her relatives mourned her death as part of the tragic consequences of the blockade and military actions.

Broader Humanitarian Impact and UN Response

The United Nations and humanitarian agencies blame both Israel's blockade and internal lawlessness in Gaza for the failure to deliver and distribute aid effectively. While Israel accuses Hamas of stealing aid, international agencies like the World Food Programme report no evidence supporting this claim.

UNICEF spokesperson James Elder, speaking from Gaza, described "horrors" witnessed firsthand, noting hospitals and streets filled with malnourished children. Elder shared emotional accounts of teenage boys visibly emaciated and pleading for food.

UN Security Council Voting History and Current Context

Since the outbreak of war in October 2023, the UNSC has voted on 14 Gaza-related resolutions, approving only four. Wednesday's vote was the first since November 2024. The ongoing conflict has resulted in the deaths of over 54,000 Palestinians, most of whom are women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.



Diplomacy, Disputes and the Quest for Peace: Trump's Nobel Nomination Became Pakistan's Most Controversial Diplomatic Gamble



By Romana Afsheen

In the spring of 2025, Pakistan found itself at the heart of an international debate that few could have predicted just months earlier. At stake was the question of whether former U.S. President Donald Trump, a man often accused of divisive rhetoric and unpredictable foreign policy, truly deserved the world's highest recognition for peace: the Nobel Peace Prize.

The seeds of this controversy were sown against the backdrop of a deeply precarious regional crisis. In early May 2025, tensions between nuclear-armed neighbors India and Pakistan escalated dramatically after India launched a series of missile strikes inside Pakistani territory. The strikes, which India justified as a response to an attack on tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir, ignited fears that the two rivals were on the brink of their most serious conflict since 1971.

Pakistan responded swiftly and forcefully. In a large-scale military operation code-named “Bunyan-um-Marsoos,” its air force reportedly downed six Indian fighter jets and targeted military installations. For four tense days, South Asia stood on the edge of catastrophe, with analysts warning that even a single miscalculation could

trigger a nuclear exchange affecting millions.

Then, a diplomatic channel opened. According to Islamabad, it was Donald Trump, recently returned to the White House, who stepped in to broker an urgent ceasefire. By May 10, 2025, a truce had been declared, halting further escalation. Pakistan's government described Trump's intervention as “decisive” and “pivotal,” crediting him with preventing unimaginable loss.

In recognition of this role, Pakistan formally nominated Trump for the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize. In Islamabad's view, this was not merely about courting favor; it was a symbolic move to show that diplomacy could triumph even in moments of grave danger. The nomination letter submitted to the Nobel Committee in Norway praised Trump's efforts to “avert a broader conflict between the two nuclear states” and emphasized his leadership in steering both sides back to dialogue.

Yet what began as a gesture of gratitude soon transformed into a political and diplomatic firestorm.

The contradictions of peace and war

The timing of the nomination was its first complication. Almost simultaneously, Trump's administration was preparing a military operation targeting Iranian nuclear sites. In late June, U.S. B-2 bombers took off from Missouri, launching strikes deep inside Iran.

Pakistan, which had just praised Trump for diplomatic restraint, found itself condemning him days later. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif personally called Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian, to express concern and reiterate Islamabad's opposition to military escalation. Overnight, the man Pakistan had nominated as a peacemaker had become, in the eyes of many, a provocateur.

This contradiction sparked fierce debate within Pakistan. Former diplomats, opposition figures, journalists, and members of civil society criticized the government for what they saw as naive diplomacy. Why, they asked, should Pakistan reward someone whose actions threatened peace elsewhere in the Muslim world? Some

politicians, including from the religious JUI-F party, even demanded the nomination be withdrawn.

Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States, voiced the frustration many felt: "Why should Pakistan nominate a man who violated international law by bombing Iran? It is a very ill-conceived move."

For the government, however, the defense was simple yet complex: Trump's intervention had, undeniably, helped avoid a catastrophic war with India. Minister Musadik Malik argued that Trump "put serious efforts into resolving the Russia and Ukraine crisis" as well, even if success was limited. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif went further, calling Trump's combined peace efforts "unmatched in recent memory."

The Nobel Peace Prize as a tool of diplomacy

Pakistan's decision was not made in a vacuum. The Nobel Peace Prize has often been used by states and leaders to send diplomatic messages, recognize geopolitical allies, or draw attention to critical issues.

By nominating Trump, Islamabad sought to do three things at once: reward a foreign leader for helping reduce tensions; signal that dialogue is Pakistan's preferred path over confrontation; and position itself internationally as a responsible actor willing to acknowledge even controversial partners when they act for peace.

Yet the move also risked undermining Pakistan's credibility. Critics argued that Islamabad was ignoring the wider consequences of Trump's foreign policy. Trump had been nominated separately by Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu and earlier by Ukraine's Oleksandr Merezhko (who later withdrew his nomination in protest at Trump's failure to bring peace between Russia and Ukraine).

This debate illuminated a deeper question: should the Nobel Peace Prize reward isolated acts of diplomacy, or should it consider a leader's entire foreign policy record? In Trump's case, the answer was complicated by his simultaneous push for military

escalation with Iran, despite having brokered a ceasefire in South Asia.

The nomination process and symbolism

According to the Nobel Committee's rules, nominations can come from members of national governments, university professors, and past laureates. Thousands of individuals worldwide are eligible to nominate each year. But nominations themselves are secret for 50 years, unless made public by the nominator.

In this instance, Pakistan chose to go public, ensuring the gesture would be noticed internationally. The message was partly about Trump — but equally about Pakistan's own diplomatic story: that it had narrowly avoided a disaster and that it values peacemaking, even with complex partners.



Ironically, Netanyahu's late nomination of Trump couldn't even be considered this year, as it missed the January deadline. Yet the act itself served political ends — showing support for Trump, signaling alignment, and shaping narratives.

Domestic backlash and international scrutiny

Inside Pakistan, the backlash deepened as details of the U.S. strike on Iran emerged. Lawmakers and civil society leaders accused the government of sacrificing principle for short-term diplomatic gain. Former senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar

called the move "crass flattery," while Maleeha Lodhi demanded it be withdrawn immediately.

The government's defense emphasized context: the nomination was for Trump's South Asia role alone, not for everything he did globally. Yet this nuance was lost in the glare of media headlines.

At the same time, some analysts suggested Pakistan was using the nomination to highlight its own narrative: that it had been on the verge of war and that external mediation had saved millions from suffering.

Trump's own ambitions and skepticism abroad

Trump's own statements complicated the picture. On his Truth Social platform, he claimed he would never win a Nobel Peace Prize, despite believing he deserved

it. He cited his attempts to resolve conflicts from South Asia to the Middle East.

Yet foreign observers remained skeptical. Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt suggested Netanyahu's nomination was little more than political flattery. Others warned that awarding the prize could damage its credibility, given Trump's wider record.

In Washington, the nomination barely moved official policy. But in Islamabad, it remained a live debate, reflecting wider questions about foreign policy consistency and the risks of tying national prestige to unpredictable leaders.

The balancing act of Pakistani diplomacy

At its core, this episode revealed the tightrope Pakistan walks: committed to dialogue, yet often forced to engage powerful but controversial allies; eager to promote peace, yet deeply affected by the volatility of its neighborhood.

The government defended the nomination as recognition of a “specific, historic act” — a ceasefire that averted nuclear war. Critics countered that the timing made Pakistan look opportunistic or worse, complicit.

In the end, the question of whether Trump deserves the Nobel Peace Prize became secondary to a larger reflection: how small countries must navigate global crises, manage alliances, and sometimes use symbolic gestures to highlight their own vulnerability and commitment to peace.

Trump, Tehran, and the Nobel Dilemma: How Pakistan’s Gamble Exposed the Complexity of Modern Peacemaking

Even as diplomatic circles digested the news of a U.S.-brokered truce between India and Pakistan, events thousands of miles away would once again reshape the narrative. In a swift and controversial move, President Donald Trump authorized a targeted strike on Iranian nuclear facilities. The decision—executed just days after Pakistan had nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize—sent shockwaves through global capitals and left Islamabad facing a complicated diplomatic paradox.

The Trump administration, which had been praised for restraint in South Asia, now found itself at the center of a dangerous confrontation in the Middle East. For Pakistan, a country that has consistently advocated for peaceful resolution of conflicts in the Muslim world, the timing could not have been worse. In one hand, it held the torch of diplomacy by nominating Trump; in the other, it now found itself condemning the same man for military escalation in Iran.

The situation cast a spotlight not just on Trump’s global strategy, but on how countries like Pakistan must constantly recalibrate their positions in a fast-moving and volatile geopolitical environment.

The credibility question: can peacemaking be piecemeal?

One of the fundamental challenges the Trump nomination raised was the idea of credibility. Can a leader be acknowledged for peacemaking in one region while pursuing military actions in another? The Nobel Peace Prize, according to Alfred Nobel’s will, is awarded to the individual or organization that has “done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.”

This definition leaves significant room for interpretation. While Trump’s intervention between India and Pakistan arguably fits the bill, critics argued that his bombing of Iranian facilities contradicts the very spirit of the award.

International reactions echoed this dilemma. Ukrainian MP Oleksandr Merezhko, who had earlier nominated Trump for his claimed efforts in Eastern Europe, publicly withdrew his support, saying he had “lost all faith” in the American president’s ability to promote peace. His disavowal only amplified scrutiny over Pakistan’s nomination, which had been made even more prominent due to its official and public nature.

At home, Pakistani lawmakers from opposition parties seized on the contradiction. Some called the nomination a “national embarrassment,” arguing that it signaled inconsistency in Islamabad’s principles and eroded moral authority.

Pakistan’s diplomatic balancing act

Caught between regional alliances, strategic dependencies, and internal politics, Pakistan found itself in an unenviable position. On the one hand, it had a genuine security interest in de-escalating tensions with India and avoiding war. On the other,

it had to maintain solidarity with Iran, a key neighbor and fellow member of the Muslim world, especially in the face of American aggression.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s government responded by doubling down on a policy of compartmentalization. Officials insisted that the nomination was made in recognition of Trump’s role in the South Asian crisis only, not as a blanket endorsement of his foreign policy.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif reiterated that Pakistan still viewed diplomacy as the sole solution to regional and global conflicts, and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar emphasized the need to separate “individual acts of diplomacy” from a leader’s overall conduct.

However, this rationalization did little to calm public frustration. Critics argued that such compartmentalization was overly convenient. In the court of global opinion, symbolism often outweighs nuance, and Pakistan’s gesture had now been recast as either naïveté or opportunism.

The long shadow of past Nobel controversies

The debate over Trump’s nomination unfolded under the long shadow of previous Nobel Peace Prize controversies. The award has often been criticized for being politicized. U.S. President Barack Obama received the prize in 2009, less than a year into his presidency and while the U.S. was still engaged in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. That decision led to resignations from members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

In 1973, the committee awarded the prize to Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho for negotiating a ceasefire in Vietnam, even though fighting continued. Again, the move was met with protest, and some members resigned.

Pakistan’s nomination of Trump now seemed to echo this complicated history: a gesture meant to recognize a breakthrough, not necessarily endorse a legacy. But like those past episodes, the symbolism quickly became controversial, eclipsing the event it was meant to honor.

Trump's own posture on the Nobel Prize

Meanwhile, Trump himself added fuel to the fire. In a series of posts on his Truth Social platform, he downplayed his chances of ever winning the Nobel Peace Prize, claiming the committee was biased and that the world knew his achievements even if he never received the honor.

"No, I won't get a Nobel Peace Prize no matter what I do," he posted. "But the people know, and that's all that matters."

His statement was aimed as much at his domestic political base as at the global stage. It underscored Trump's ongoing campaign to brand himself as a global dealmaker, someone who could end wars, contain threats, and defy convention — even if international institutions didn't recognize it.

For Pakistan, however, this bravado made things more complicated. By nominating a figure who was already politicizing the Nobel Prize, Islamabad had tied its diplomatic outreach to someone whose ambitions and actions could not be predicted — or controlled.

Behind-the-scenes motivations

There was also a practical political calculation behind Pakistan's move. With U.S. influence in the region still considerable and Trump occupying the Oval Office once again, Islamabad needed to maintain strong bilateral ties — particularly on issues like military assistance, trade, and regional counterterrorism cooperation.

The Nobel nomination, while symbolic, may have been intended to buy goodwill or at least signal Pakistan's willingness to work constructively with the Trump administration. In an environment where Washington's favor can unlock or delay aid, arms sales, or diplomatic support, symbolic diplomacy often serves a strategic function.

Moreover, Pakistani officials were aware of Trump's well-known desire to be recognized on the global stage. The nomination may have been seen as an inexpensive way to curry favor with an unpredictable yet powerful ally.

Still, critics argue that the price of that gesture was reputational credibility. Diplomacy is as much about perception as substance, and the backlash in both domestic and international media suggested that Islamabad had miscalculated the optics.

Lessons for future diplomacy

In hindsight, the Trump Nobel nomination saga offers several lessons — not just for Pakistan but for all nations navigating modern diplomacy.

First, symbolic gestures can quickly become liabilities when not accompanied by careful timing and strategic foresight. A nomination that once seemed shrewd turned toxic within days, all because of parallel events beyond Pakistan's control.



Second, global politics is rarely black and white. Trump's role in averting a South Asian war was real and consequential, even if his actions in the Middle East were aggressive and controversial. Recognizing one does not automatically legitimize the other, but public opinion does not always allow for such distinctions.

Third, smaller powers like Pakistan must walk a tightrope when dealing with great powers — especially those led by unpredictable personalities. Symbolic acts may be intended as diplomatic olive branches, but they can quickly turn into political boomerangs.

Finally, the episode underscores how

fragile the politics of peace recognition can be. The Nobel Peace Prize is not merely an award — it is a statement. And for countries that make such statements, the backlash can be just as powerful as the applause.

Where things stand now

As of July 2025, Pakistan has not formally withdrawn Trump's nomination, though domestic pressure continues to mount. Government ministers remain divided, with some defending the decision as a principled gesture, while others privately acknowledge it may have been premature.

In the Nobel race, Trump remains just one among hundreds of nominees, with the Norwegian Nobel Committee expected to announce its shortlist later in the year.

While insiders remain tight-lipped, speculation is rife that the committee will weigh both Trump's peacemaking efforts and his military actions before making any final decision.

In Pakistan, meanwhile, the debate has already served its purpose: it has forced the country to engage in a deep and necessary conversation about the role of diplomacy, the ethics of foreign policy, and the cost of symbolic gestures in a volatile world.

Whatever the outcome of Trump's nomination, the larger lesson is clear: in an age where global conflict and diplomacy unfold in real-time, even well-meaning decisions can spark unintended consequences.

The fate of Iran's nuclear program after the suspension of IAEA cooperation



By Javed Mahmood

Iran's suspension of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reflects a deepening crisis of trust, not a rejection of nuclear transparency or non-proliferation norms, argues political analyst Tazmini. She attributes the move to ongoing Israeli and U.S. actions—particularly attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities—that have “eroded principles of trust and good faith.” These violations, she says, have compelled Tehran to act in defense of its sovereignty.

“Iran's mistrust of Western-led institutions is rooted in repeated breaches of its sovereignty and the use of coercive diplomacy,” Tazmini says. “The real question is not whether Iran will continue cooperation, but whether the international system offers Iran any credible, non-reversible guarantees in return. So far, it hasn't.” Turkish Radio and Television (TRT World) published this analytical article today.

A Strategic Step Short of Full Withdrawal

Several analysts view Iran's IAEA suspension as a measured and strategic response to what many deem violations of interna-

tional law. During a 12-day conflict, Israeli strikes—reportedly backed by U.S. operations—targeted Iranian nuclear sites in Fordow, Isfahan, and Natanz, escalating regional tensions.

Such actions appear to contradict a 2009 IAEA resolution, which was supported unanimously by the U.S., UK, and France. That resolution prohibits armed attacks or threats against nuclear installations used for peaceful purposes.

To date, the IAEA has found no conclusive evidence that Iran's nuclear program is intended for weapons development.

“Iran has not exited the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), but its suspension of IAEA cooperation is a significant move—one level below full withdrawal,” says Omer Ozgul, a former Turkish military attaché in Tehran and expert on Iranian security affairs.

Implications of IAEA Withdrawal

Mohammed Eslami, an Iranian international relations professor at the University of Minho, describes Tehran's decision as “a

softer version of NPT withdrawal,” given the central role the IAEA plays in overseeing nuclear activities.

Under the NPT, signatory nations are permitted to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, but must also submit to strict IAEA inspections and monitoring to ensure non-proliferation. Iran's halting of IAEA cooperation effectively removes this oversight.

“This puts Iran on a similar footing with Israel and North Korea—both nuclear-armed states that are not party to the NPT,” Eslami tells TRT World. “But unlike them, Iran still has a legal and ethical obligation as a signatory.”

According to Eslami, Iran's continued participation in the NPT hinges on de-escalation. “If Israel and the U.S. halt further provocations, Iran is likely to resume cooperation with the IAEA,” he says. “But if the situation worsens, a full withdrawal is on the table.”

Despite rising tensions, Eslami emphasizes that Iran is not pursuing a nuclear weapon, citing Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's fatwa prohibiting weapons of mass destruc-

tion. “Unless the Supreme Leader determines that a nuclear bomb is necessary to protect Muslim lives, that religious ruling will remain in place,” he says

From Diplomacy to Escalation: A Timeline of Iran’s Nuclear Tensions

Tensions over Iran’s nuclear program have deepened in recent years, but the roots of the crisis stretch back to the landmark 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to limit uranium enrichment to 3.67% and allow full access to IAEA inspectors at its nuclear facilities. In return, Western powers pledged to ease economic sanctions. While Tehran initially honored its commitments, many sanctions remained in place, undermining Iran’s incentive to fully comply.

The deal took a major hit in 2018, when then-U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the agreement. In response, Iran announced it would increase enrichment levels to 4.5%, marking the beginning of a gradual but steady rollback of its JCPOA obligations.

Since then, a series of Israeli actions targeting Iran’s nuclear infrastructure have further strained the situation, says security analyst Omer Ozgul.

In late 2020, Israel assassinated Mohsen Fakhrizadeh Mahabadi, widely regarded as the architect of Iran’s nuclear program. Just three days later, Iran’s parliament passed legislation instructing the government to raise enrichment levels to 20%.

In mid-2021, Iran unveiled a new centrifuge facility at its Natanz nuclear site. The next day, a cyberattack attributed to Israel hit the same facility. In retaliation, Tehran raised its enrichment levels to 60%—far beyond JCPOA limits but still below weapons-grade.

Tensions escalated again last month, when Israeli forces launched direct military strikes on Iranian nuclear sites, prompting Iranian retaliation. The attacks came just one day after IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi accused Iran of non-compliance with its nuclear obligations—an

allegation Tehran strongly rejected.

Iran viewed the timing of the attacks and the IAEA report as coordinated, questioning the agency’s neutrality. Officials in Tehran also criticized Grossi for remaining silent on Israeli and U.S. strikes on its nuclear infrastructure.

According to Ozgul, these provocations could push Iran to either enrich uranium to weapons-grade 90% or take a more calculated step, such as further limiting cooperation with the IAEA.

Despite growing pressure, Ozgul believes Iran is unlikely to quit the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) outright. “Iran has other strategic options,” he notes, including the threat of blocking the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global oil supply route.

Still, the 12-day conflict between Israel and Iran may yet serve as a catalyst for renewed diplomacy, offering a potential window to revive the stalled nuclear negotiations between Tehran and Washington

Iran Defiant as Israel Threatens Strike and IAEA Issues Harshest Nuclear Censure in Years

Iranian leaders have struck a defiant tone as fears mount that Israel could launch a military strike amid heightened tensions and a fresh censure by the global nuclear watchdog.

Despite the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) adopting another Western-backed resolution accusing Tehran of non-compliance with nuclear obligations, Iranian officials remain resolute, signaling no retreat from their nuclear ambitions.

On Thursday, Oman confirmed it will host a sixth round of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States this Sunday. But even as diplomacy stirs, U.S. and European media reports—citing officials—warn that Israel is ready to strike Iran’s nuclear sites, with or without U.S. support.

“We’re not saying it’s imminent, but it looks increasingly likely,” said former U.S.

President Donald Trump at a White House event, commenting on the growing prospect of an Israeli military operation.

In a televised address from Ilam, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian rejected Western pressure: “We won’t surrender to U.S. bullying.” Drawing parallels to Iran’s resilience during the 1980s war with Iraq, Pezeshkian emphasized the nation’s readiness to defend itself.

Iranian Military Prepares for Retaliation

IRGC Commander Hossein Salami issued a stark warning: “If Israel attacks, the response will be historic—far greater than last year’s retaliatory strikes.” He noted that, unlike Gaza, Iran is neither defenseless nor isolated. Quds Force chief Esmail Qaani echoed the sentiment, saying Iran’s armed forces have significantly upgraded their offensive capabilities since their last missile barrages.

Chief of Staff Mohammad Bagheri announced additional military drills, highlighting Iran’s readiness. The recent exercises showcased missiles, drones, warships, elite forces, and underground missile bases. Defence Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh warned that all U.S. bases in the region would be considered legitimate targets if war erupts.

He also revealed that Iran had successfully tested a ballistic missile last week carrying a 2,000kg warhead, declaring, “The other side will suffer more casualties, and it will force the U.S. to exit the region.”

Iran Responds to IAEA Censure with Expansion Plans

The IAEA’s latest resolution—drafted by the U.S., UK, France, and Germany—marks the most severe rebuke in nearly 20 years, citing Iran’s failure to clarify the presence of undeclared nuclear materials at several sites. In a joint statement, Iran’s Foreign Ministry and the Atomic Energy Organization dismissed the accusations as “baseless and politically motivated”, and accused the West of manipulating international bodies for leverage.

In response, Tehran announced plans to build a third uranium enrichment site in a secure location, and to upgrade the Fordow plant with advanced sixth-generation centrifuges. Iran currently enriches uranium at Natanz and Fordow, both of which are underground and heavily fortified against potential U.S. or Israeli strikes.

Although Iran is now enriching uranium up to 60%, it maintains that its nuclear program is entirely peaceful, aimed at energy production and medical applications. Weapons-grade uranium requires 90% enrichment.



Disagreement Over Enrichment Limits Looms Over Oman Talks

Despite the renewed talks in Muscat, the core dispute remains: uranium enrichment. Under the 2015 JCPOA, Iran agreed to a 3.67% enrichment cap. However, Trump—who now opposes any deal allowing enrichment in Iran—has insisted on zero enrichment, a condition Tehran recently rejected. Iran is expected to present a counterproposal during the upcoming talks. Meanwhile, efforts to establish a regional nuclear consortium to build trust have yielded no concrete progress.

Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and Mossad chief David Barnea are set to meet U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff ahead of his trip to Oman, underscoring Israel's influence on the diplomatic process.

A Nation Rallies Around Symbolism and Resilience

Back in Tehran, officials unveiled a giant sculpture of Arash Kamangir, a mythical archer, in the city's Vanak Square—symbolizing national strength and unity. Arash's legend, in which he defines Iran's borders with a heroic arrow shot from Mount Damavand, has struck a chord on social media. While some Iranians praised the installation as patriotic, others criticized it as an attempt to stir nationalism amid looming conflict.

allegedly violating a ceasefire he had brokered with Iran. Speaking to reporters on the White House lawn before departing for a NATO summit in the Netherlands, Trump accused Israel of acting recklessly by preparing to strike Iran, despite a truce set to begin at 7 a.m. He claimed that Israel had “dropped a load of bombs the likes of which I've never seen before” on Iran's nuclear facilities—Fordow among them—just before the ceasefire took effect.

Although Iran had fired missiles both before and after the agreed-upon ceasefire, killing four Israeli civilians, Trump directed most of his frustration at Israel. “I'm not happy with Israel,” he said repeatedly, expressing disbelief that they would proceed with strikes after he had ordered American B-2 bombers to destroy three major Iranian nuclear sites just days earlier.

While Trump did issue a passing critique of Iran, his final assessment was blunt:

“We basically have two countries that have been fighting so long and so hard that they don't know what the fuck they're doing.”

The U.S. president's anger escalated after learning that Israel was planning to launch additional strikes in response to continued Iranian missile fire. On his way to the NATO summit, Trump phoned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and demanded a halt to any further attacks:

“Do not drop those bombs,” he ordered.

Netanyahu complied, canceling planned strikes on 15 high-value Iranian targets and limiting the response to a single, low-impact radar site strike. Trump's former chief strategist, Steve Bannon, later described the president as “as mad as I've ever seen him,” attributing the fury to what he called “the many lies we've gotten from the Netanyahu government.”

However, by Wednesday, Trump appeared more conciliatory. He praised Israel for pulling back and acknowledged that, “technically, they were right” to respond to Iran's missile barrage. “It was a little bit of a violation,” he admitted.

A Warning for Israel

The episode served as a stark reminder of the volatility of Trump's support—even for

Despite rising tensions, Iran's markets remain stable. On Thursday, the rial traded at roughly 840,000 per U.S. dollar, showing only minor fluctuations. Many Iranians remain cautiously hopeful about the talks.

“There's no panic,” said a 36-year-old vendor at Tehran's Grand Bazaar. “People are watching closely, but after years of sanctions and hardship, we just want a resolution—not war.”

Trump saves Israel from Iranian devastating missiles, says not happy with Netanyahu

In what may be one of the harshest public rebukes of Israel ever delivered by an American president, Donald Trump unleashed a blistering tirade on Tuesday morning, criticizing Israeli leadership for

close allies like Israel. Despite receiving U.S. military assistance, including access to bunker-busting bombs only the U.S. could provide, Israel now finds itself navigating a far more conditional partnership.

Though the joint U.S. strikes reportedly set Iran's nuclear program back, their effectiveness remains debated. Trump insisted the Iranian facilities were "completely destroyed," while Israeli military officials claimed the program was delayed by several years. A preliminary U.S. intelligence assessment, however, estimated only a short-term setback of several months. The status of Iran's 400kg of enriched uranium remains unknown.



Renewed Diplomacy—or Renewed Danger?

U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff confirmed that Washington is now engaged in preliminary talks with Iran about restarting nuclear negotiations. The U.S. is pressing for a complete halt to enrichment activities—an idea long rejected by Tehran. Israel's June 13 airstrikes and the subsequent U.S. bombing campaign on June 22 came after Iran rebuffed the 60-day negotiation period Trump had initially offered.

While Netanyahu declared the mission a success, warning Tehran against rebuilding its nuclear program, the White House's message was clear: any further escalation must have U.S. approval—or risk losing critical support. Trump, who entered office vowing to end wars, not start them, emphasized that he used U.S. military might in a "devastating but focused" way.

"If Iran tries to resume enrichment, we'll strike again," he warned. "But I don't think that's going to be necessary." For now, Trump has drawn a line: the fighting must end—at least on his terms.

Current Global Nuclear Arsenal (2025 Overview)

As of 2025, nine countries possess nuclear weapons: Russia; United States; China; France; United Kingdom; Pakistan; India; Israel; and North Korea.

Together, these nations hold approximately 12,331 nuclear warheads, with more than

The nuclear stockpiles of North Korea and Israel remain unconfirmed:

- North Korea is estimated to have enough fissile material for 40–50 warheads.
- Israel is believed to possess around 90 warheads, with the capacity to produce up to 200.

Why Is This Significant?

Even a single nuclear detonation could result in catastrophic loss of life and environmental destruction. For instance, the detonation of one nuclear bomb over New York City could lead to an estimated 583,160 deaths.

The combined nuclear arsenals of the nine nuclear-armed states are vastly more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Additionally, 32 other countries contribute to the global nuclear threat—6 host foreign nuclear weapons, and 28 more support their potential use through defense agreements or alliances.

What Are Tactical Nuclear Weapons?

Tactical nuclear weapons are typically defined as those not classified as "strategic" under U.S.-Russia arms control treaties. These weapons are often referred to as "low-yield" but can be extremely destructive.

- Russia is estimated to have about 1,912 non-strategic (tactical) warheads.
- The United States maintains around 200 tactical warheads, with 100 deployed in five European countries.

Despite being labeled as "tactical," many of these weapons have yields up to 300 kilotons—around 20 times the explosive power of the Hiroshima bomb.

In short, while the number of nuclear weapons has decreased since the Cold War, the threat posed by nuclear weapons remains severe, with growing arsenals, more sophisticated delivery systems, and ongoing geopolitical tensions fueling concerns about future use.

9,600 actively maintained in military stockpiles, according to the Federation of American Scientists. While this marks a significant reduction from the estimated 70,000 warheads during the peak of the Cold War, current arsenals are far more advanced and capable. Experts also anticipate a gradual increase in global nuclear stockpiles over the next decade.

Which Countries Have the Most Nuclear Weapons?

- Russia holds the largest arsenal, with over 5,500 nuclear warheads.
- The United States follows with 5,044 warheads, including those deployed across Turkey, Italy, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands.
- Together, Russia and the U.S. account for nearly 90% of the world's nuclear weapons.

Dual-Track Foreign Policy in a Shifting Regional Landscape



By Col. (Retd) Sabahuddin Chaudhry

Introduction

From 2023 to mid-2025, Pakistan has redefined its approach to international engagement through a calibrated dual-track foreign policy. On one track, its strategic alliance with China has deepened, providing Pakistan with advanced defence technologies, cyber capabilities, and battle-field intelligence. On the other, Pakistan has maintained and expanded its cooperation with the United States in areas such as education, health, climate resilience, defence, and institutional development.

This duality has shaped Pakistan's strategic posture—balancing hard power with soft power to enhance national security and international legitimacy. The May 2025 conflict with India amplified this dynamic, with India portraying Pakistan as a proxy of China, while Pakistan asserted its indigenous capabilities and long-term modernization as the core drivers of its military success. This article explores the evolution of Pakistan's bilateral partnerships with China and the U.S., the narratives surrounding the May 2025 conflict, and the broader implications for regional security and strategic autonomy.

I. Strategic Bilateral Relations with China and the United States (2023-Mid 2025)

A. Pakistan–China: Consolidating Hard Power and Strategic Depth

1. Science, Technology, and Innovation

Pakistan's partnership with China has extended beyond conventional military cooperation into high-technology sectors:

- **Space and Satellite Development:** Joint projects such as PAKSAT-MM1R and ICube-Qamar, alongside advanced earth observation through PRSC-EO-1, have bolstered Pakistan's remote sensing and communications capabilities.
- **Cybersecurity and AI:** Collaboration in artificial intelligence, 5G infrastructure, cloud computing, and cybersecurity has enabled Pakistan to modernize its defence systems and align with

CPEC's smart-city development goals.

2. Military Modernization and Strategic Equipment

- **Next-Generation Platforms:** China has supplied Pakistan with cutting-edge military platforms including J-10C fighter jets, upgraded JF-17 Block III aircraft, PL-15E air-to-air missiles, and CH-4 armed drones.
- **Naval Strengthening:** Co-production of the Hangor-class submarines has further strengthened Pakistan's under-sea warfare capabilities.

3. Conflict-Time Assistance and Diplomatic Backing

Real-Time Intelligence: During the May 2025 conflict, China reportedly provided satellite intelligence, radar recalibration assistance, and secure tactical communication through the Beidou navigation system.

International Advocacy: On diplomatic fronts, China supported Pakistan at the UN and other global platforms, blocking unfavorable resolutions and countering Indian narratives.

B. Pakistan–United States: Building Institutional Resilience and Soft Power

1. Scientific, Educational, and Technological Cooperation

- **Human Capital Development:** U.S.-funded programs such as Fulbright, UGRAD, and teacher-training initiatives have significantly contributed to Pakistan's educational infrastructure and research capabilities.
- **Digital Economy Support:** Through USAID, the U.S. has supported the growth of Pakistan's digital economy, including initiatives in cybersecurity and ICT development—critical to economic modernization.

2. Climate Action, Health Systems, and Trade

- **Climate and Public Health:** U.S. assistance exceeding \$200 million has supported flood recovery, healthcare reforms, and climate resilience, in collaboration with institutions like the CDC and NIH.
- **Economic Engagement:** Bilateral trade, particularly in textiles and IT services, has added balance to the relationship—emphasizing economic stability and sustainable growth over military dependency.

3. Strategic Defence Reengagement Post-Conflict

In a major recalibration, the U.S. resumed defence dialogue with Pakistan following the May 2025 conflict:

- **High-Level Military Visits:** Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu's visit to the U.S.—the first by a PAF chief in over a decade—followed closely on the heels of Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir's tour. These visits were pivotal in renewing defence engagement.
- **Expanded Cooperation:** Meetings with U.S. military and political leadership led to agreements on joint training, operational exchanges, and potential technological cooperation.

- **Congressional and State-Level Dialogue:** The PAF Chief engaged with members of Congress and officials from the Departments of State and Defense to discuss regional security, counterterrorism, and the future of bilateral military cooperation.

- **Strategic Significance:** The timing of these visits—immediately following the Pakistan–India conflict—signals a deliberate U.S. strategy to reestablish a defence dialogue with Pakistan in the context of rising regional tensions.

II. The May 2025 Conflict: Competing Strategic Narratives

A. India's Allegation: A China-Assisted Pakistani Offensive

India's narrative surrounding the May 2025 conflict accuses China of enabling Pakistan's military effectiveness:

- **Intelligence Support:** Indian officials allege that China supplied real-time satellite imagery and ISR data that allowed Pakistan to rapidly adapt its air defences and strike strategies.
- **Chinese Hardware Deployment:** The use of Chinese-origin platforms such as J-10C fighters, PL-15E missiles, and CH-4 drones is cited as evidence of Beijing's operational influence.
- **Encrypted Communications:** India claims Pakistan leveraged Chinese 5G-based encrypted communications for battlefield coordination.
- **Diplomatic Shielding:** China's efforts to protect Pakistan diplomatically at multilateral platforms are seen as part of a coordinated campaign.

India concludes that the conflict reflected China's expanding footprint in the region, with Pakistan acting as a strategic proxy.

B. Pakistan's Rebuttal: Indigenous Capability and Strategic Autonomy

Pakistan strongly refutes these claims, asserting the conflict as a demonstration of

indigenous capability. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, in his address at the National Defence University (NDU) on 7 July 2025, provided a firm counter-narrative to Indian accusations, categorically denying any direct Chinese military involvement in Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos.

Indigenous Technological Development

- Pakistan has invested heavily in indigenous R&D in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, drone warfare, missile technology, and electronic warfare since 2019.
- Platforms like JF-17 Block III, Babur missile systems, and home-grown battlefield AI tools were developed with local expertise and integrated into operational plans well before the conflict.

Strategic Modernization (2020–2025) Key modernization steps included:

- PAF restructuring, enhancing rapid redeployment.
- Integration of IT, surveillance, and hybrid warfare units.
- Expansion of multi-domain operations via civilian-military tech coordination.
- Acquisition and adaptation of advanced unmanned systems and counter-drone technologies from Türkiye and Azerbaijan.
- Marshal Munir announced plans for acquiring J-20, J-35, and Turkish KAAN stealth fighters, KJ-500 AWACS, and HQ-19B air defense systems—highlighting long-term procurement, not last-minute reliance.

Operational Preparedness

- Pakistan's Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos was conceived, rehearsed, and positioned well in advance of the May 2025 conflict, based on precise strategic anticipation—not foreign guidance.
- Pakistan's own satellite platforms, PakTES-1A and data from SPARCO, supported its defense network.

Rebuttal of India's Claims

- Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir called Indian claims “factually baseless and operationally dishonest.”
- He emphasized India's intelligence and strategic misjudgment, rather than Chinese involvement, as the root of its failure:
 - Failure to locate dispersed high-value Pakistani assets.
 - Miscalculated PAF's operational depth and adaptive capabilities.
 - Overconfidence due to Rafale and S-400 systems.
 - Strategic surprise due to multi-layered Pakistani air defense and EW warfare.

- China contributes advanced defence technologies, real-time intelligence, and tactical support during crises.
- The United States provides long-term development assistance, institutional support, and international legitimacy.

This dual-track model supports strategic autonomy—blending deterrence with diplomacy.

B. India's Narrative as a Tool of Strategic Posturing

India's focus on Chinese influence serves key political and strategic purposes:

- Domestic Deflection: Framing Pakistan's success as Chinese-enabled helps India shift blame from its own operational lapses.

technologies must remain central to national security planning.

- Optimize Partnerships: Pakistan should deepen cooperation with both China and the U.S., ensuring that military and developmental ties reinforce rather than contradict one another.
- Assert Diplomatic Agility: Balancing neutrality and engagement will be crucial amid global rivalries. Pakistan must maintain its sovereignty while leveraging strategic partnerships for regional stability.

Conclusion: Strategic Maturity in a Complex Environment

Between 2023 and mid-2025, Pakistan's foreign policy matured into a multidimensional strategy that combines defence modernization, institutional strengthening, and international diplomacy.

- With China, Pakistan has solidified a comprehensive hard-power partnership that enhances military capability and strategic deterrence.
- With the United States, Pakistan has revitalized critical development sectors while renewing defence dialogue in the post-conflict context.

The May 2025 conflict served as a litmus test for Pakistan's strategic preparedness. While Indian narratives frame the conflict as a proxy war, Pakistan's emphasis on indigenous preparedness, operational foresight, and institutional readiness presents a more balanced and credible perspective.

Pakistan's foreign policy trajectory reflects a clear aim: achieving strategic autonomy through diversified partnerships and domestic capacity building. As geopolitical tensions continue to evolve in South Asia, Pakistan appears poised to act as a stabilizing force—leveraging both hard power and developmental diplomacy to safeguard its national interests.



Pakistan's Position:

- Victory was a result of national effort, backed by years of self-reliant defense innovation and multi-domain readiness, not foreign intervention.

III. Regional Implications and the Future of Pakistan's Dual Engagement

A. Strategic Autonomy Through Dual Partnerships

Pakistan's evolving partnerships illustrate a strategy that avoids overdependence on any single actor:

- Regional Signaling: It reinforces India's efforts to portray itself as a bulwark against growing Sino-Pakistani alignment.
- Undermining Self-Reliance: By questioning the authenticity of Pakistan's achievements, India attempts to discredit Islamabad's technological and strategic maturity.

C. Policy Recommendations and Strategic Outlook

Moving forward, Pakistan's dual-engagement strategy suggests key policy directions:

- Continue Indigenous Investment: R&D in space, defence, AI, and cyber

Supreme Court Verdict on Reserved Seats: A Pivotal Shift in Pakistan's Political and Legal Landscape



By Kanwal Munir

Introduction

The recent Supreme Court ruling on the allocation of reserved seats in Pakistan has sent ripples through the country's political and constitutional framework. Issued on June 27, 2025, the decision marks a significant moment in the post-2024 general election trajectory, reshaping power dynamics in both the National Assembly and provincial legislatures. At the heart of the controversy is the eligibility of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and its allied Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) to claim reserved seats for women and minorities. This verdict has bolstered the ruling coalition, granting them a two-thirds majority and igniting fresh debates over judicial overreach, electoral legality, and the boundaries of democratic representation.

This article explores the context, legal arguments, political consequences, and broader implications of the Supreme Court's decision, situating it within the evolving democratic structure of Pakistan.

Brief Background: Understanding Reserved Seats and PTI's Dilemma

Pakistan's Constitution reserves a specific number of seats in the National and Provincial Assemblies for women and non-Muslim minorities. These seats are not contested through direct elections but are allocated to political parties in proportion to their share of general seats. Reserved seats ensure representation for marginalized groups and uphold Pakistan's commitment to inclusive governance.

Following the February 2024 general elections, the PTI found itself in a precarious legal position. The party had been stripped of its electoral symbol, preventing its candidates from contesting under the party's banner. Instead, hundreds of PTI-backed candidates ran as independents and secured significant wins. After the elections, these independents joined the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), a lesser-known registered party, to claim reserved seats.

However, this maneuver was immediately challenged in courts and by rival political parties, who argued that SIC had not contested the general elections and therefore had no legal right to claim reserved seats. The matter escalated to the Peshawar High Court, which rejected SIC's claim. PTI then approached the Supreme Court, which initially provided interim relief but ultimately ruled against the party.

The Supreme Court Verdict: Key Rulings and Legal Reasoning

On June 27, 2025, the Supreme Court of Pakistan issued a landmark majority verdict that effectively cancelled the allocation of 77 reserved seats—designated for women and non-Muslim minorities—that had been awarded to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and its ally, the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). The ruling overturned earlier decisions by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and some interim relief granted by the court itself, restoring the verdict of the Peshawar High



Court. In doing so, the court held that SIC was not legally entitled to claim reserved seats, as it had failed to meet the constitutional criteria for such entitlement.

The Supreme Court bench ruled that reserved seats are a constitutional privilege granted only to political parties that participate in the general elections and win general seats. Since SIC had not fielded any candidates during the February 2024 general elections, the court concluded that it had no legal standing to claim a share of reserved seats through the post-election affiliation of independent candidates—most of whom were backed by PTI. The court emphasized that electoral legitimacy must be established through direct participation in elections, not through strategic alignments after the fact.

Justice Musarrat Hilali, in her dissenting note, raised serious concerns about the broader constitutional implications of the verdict. She warned that the ruling could effectively alter established constitutional procedures, particularly about deadlines and mechanisms for joining political parties after elections. Justice Hilali argued that such changes should come from Parliament, not the judiciary, cautioning against judicial encroachment into legislative territory. Her opinion has sparked renewed debate over the balance of power among Pakistan's democratic institutions.

Political Consequences: Realigning Power in Islamabad and the Provinces

The Supreme Court's decision has profoundly reshaped Pakistan's parliamentary landscape, altering power dynamics at both the national and provincial levels. This ruling has significantly strengthened the position of the ruling coalition, primarily led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), while simultaneously weakening the opposition, particularly the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

1. National Assembly Shift

At the federal level, the ruling coalition now holds 232 of the 333 filled seats in the National Assembly, securing a command-

ing two-thirds majority. This decisive majority empowers the government to pass constitutional amendments and major legislation without relying on opposition parties like PTI. The shift marks a substantial reduction in the opposition's ability to influence key legislative processes and policymaking, granting the ruling coalition unprecedented authority to implement its agenda. With such a strong majority, the government faces fewer hurdles in pursuing reforms and constitutional changes, marking a significant turning point in Pakistan's parliamentary politics.

2. Punjab Assembly Dynamics

In Punjab, Pakistan's most populous and politically crucial province, the PML-N's seat count has increased from 206 to 229 seats following the verdict. This gain positions the PML-N as the dominant political force in Punjab, capable of governing independently without the need for coalition partnerships. Control over Punjab is highly significant as it often sets the tone for national politics; thus, the strengthened position consolidates PML-N's influence across the country. This newfound authority in Punjab allows the party to drive its legislative priorities, manage provincial affairs with greater autonomy, and solidify its grassroots support.

3. Provincial Balance of Power

Beyond Punjab, the ruling has had ripple effects in other provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh. In these regions, PTI had maintained symbolic influence despite lacking formal institutional control. The court's decision undermines PTI's legitimacy in these provincial legislatures, diminishing its ability to affect legislative and administrative outcomes. This shift will likely impact budget allocations and governance decisions across the provinces, altering the political equilibrium and potentially affecting development priorities and resource distribution at the provincial level.

PTI's Response: Legal Challenges and Political Strategy

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has strongly condemned the Supreme Court's

recent ruling on the reserved seats issue, labeling it both unconstitutional and politically motivated. According to PTI leadership, the decision undermines fundamental democratic principles by denying independent candidates the constitutional right to join any political party after elections. PTI argues that the post-election alignment of its supported independents with the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) should be respected, as it reflects the will of the voters who elected these candidates. By invalidating this alignment, the party contends, the court has effectively nullified the mandate given by millions of citizens.

Describing the verdict as an "assault on democracy," PTI has announced its intention to rigorously challenge the decision through all available legal avenues, including filing a review petition in the Supreme Court. The party also plans to mobilize public support by organizing a series of rallies and nationwide protests aimed at pressuring both the judiciary and the government to reconsider the ruling. This dual legal and political strategy reflects PTI's determination to reverse the verdict and restore its position in the assemblies.

PTI's legal team has specifically criticized the court's interpretation of Articles 51 and 106 of the Constitution, which govern the allocation of reserved seats for women and minorities in the National and Provincial Assemblies. They argue that the verdict distorts these constitutional provisions by denying reserved seats to SIC members, thereby disenfranchising the large voter base that supported PTI-backed independent candidates. For PTI, the ruling is not merely a legal setback but a significant challenge to the democratic representation of millions of Pakistanis who cast their ballots for candidates aligned with the party.

Legal and Constitutional Debates: Judicial Overreach or Safeguard of Electoral Integrity?

The Supreme Court's verdict on the allocation of reserved seats has ignited a contentious debate among legal experts, constitutional scholars, and political analysts. At



the center of this discourse is the broader question of judicial authority versus parliamentary supremacy. Supporters of the ruling argue that it restores the sanctity of the electoral process by closing a “legal loophole” allegedly exploited by PTI. They maintain that allowing non-participating parties like the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) to benefit from post-election affiliations would undermine the legitimacy of elections and reduce reserved seats to political bargaining chips. In their view, the court acted responsibly to preserve constitutional intent and electoral integrity.

Conversely, critics argue that the judiciary has ventured into territory constitutionally reserved for Parliament. Justice Musarrat Hilali’s dissenting opinion captured this concern, cautioning that the court’s majority verdict effectively rewrote constitutional procedures—particularly regarding timelines and mechanisms for joining political parties post-election—without the legislative process. Such judicial activism, they argue, risks blurring institutional boundaries and undermining democratic balance.

Further unease surrounds the precedent set by this ruling. By denying independents the right to join a political party for the purpose of claiming proportional representation, the verdict may disincentivize political participation and restrict electoral flexibility. This has implications for future election strategies, especially in cases where parties face legal hurdles or symbol denials. Legal observers and constitutional experts are now urging Parliament to provide explicit legislative guidelines on post-election affiliations and reserved seat allocations to avoid ambiguity and future conflicts of this nature.

Impact on Electoral System and Party Politics

The Supreme Court’s verdict on the allocation of reserved seats carries far-reaching consequences not only for party politics but also for Pakistan’s broader democratic structure. As the immediate political shifts settle, a deeper analysis reveals structural changes in how elections are contested, how political disputes are resolved, and

how power is exercised within the democratic framework.

1. Future of Independent Candidates

One of the most immediate implications of the verdict is its impact on the strategy surrounding independent candidates. In the 2024 general elections, PTI had strategically fielded candidates as independents due to its inability to contest under a unified symbol. After securing a significant number of general seats, these independents joined the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) to collectively claim reserved seats. The court’s rejection of this arrangement now sets a



precedent that may dissuade major political parties from employing similar strategies in future elections. The verdict implicitly demands that parties must contest elections under their official platforms to gain full constitutional benefits, including access to reserved seats. This may lead to reforms enforcing stricter deadlines for post-election affiliations or more clearly defining the rights of independents, thereby compelling political parties to reassess how they field and support candidates in any future electoral contest.

2. Rise of Legal Activism in Politics

The verdict also highlights a growing reliance on the judiciary to adjudicate political disputes, a trend that reflects the

increasing judicialization of politics in Pakistan. While courts have a vital constitutional role in maintaining legal order and protecting fundamental rights, their deep involvement in political controversies risks transforming them into political actors. Critics argue that such legal activism may blur the separation of powers, invite politicization of the judiciary and eroding public trust in its impartiality. Each politically significant judgment becomes a matter of national contention, influencing the public’s perception of the judiciary as either a defender of democracy or a tool of political manipulation. The need for clearer legislative boundaries and better

institutional mechanisms for resolving political conflicts is more urgent than ever.

3. Strengthening or Weakening of Parliamentary Supremacy

With the ruling coalition now enjoying a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, Parliament has regained formal legislative supremacy. This level of control enables the government to amend the Constitution and enact significant legal reforms without opposition cooperation. While such power could be used to bring long-needed governance reforms, it also raises concerns about unchecked executive authority. In the absence of a strong opposition, the risks of majoritarianism, lack of accountability, and erosion of checks and balances become more pronounced. The



diminished presence of PTI—the largest vote-getting force in the 2024 elections—means that millions of voters are now underrepresented in legislative processes. This imbalance could lead to public disenchantment, fueling political polarization and possibly social unrest.

Public Sentiment and Media Coverage

Public reaction to the Supreme Court's verdict on reserved seats has been deeply divided, reflecting Pakistan's increasingly polarized political climate. Supporters of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have condemned the decision as a deliberate

tional safeguards to prevent future controversies of this nature.

International Observations and Democratic Perception

The international community, including democratic watchdogs and foreign diplomatic observers, is closely monitoring the aftermath of the Supreme Court's reserved seats verdict. The ruling, which significantly altered the political landscape of Pakistan, has drawn mixed reactions abroad. Some observers have voiced concern over what they describe as Pakistan's increasingly volatile

issue a strong, precedent-setting verdict as a sign of a maturing judiciary—one that is asserting its independence and upholding constitutional norms, even in politically sensitive cases. This interpretation positions the ruling as a positive step toward legal clarity.

Nevertheless, the verdict underscores the need for electoral reform. Ensuring transparent, unambiguous election laws will be vital for Pakistan to sustain its democratic credentials and maintain credibility on the global stage.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's verdict on the allocation of reserved seats stands as a pivotal moment in Pakistan's democratic evolution. By invalidating the claim of PTI-backed independents through the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), the ruling has not only reshaped the distribution of power in the National and Provincial Assemblies but also consolidated the ruling coalition's grip on legislative authority. It has simultaneously elevated the judiciary's role in political affairs, placing the courts at the heart of constitutional interpretation and political decision-making. While the verdict may have clarified one legal ambiguity, it has triggered broader constitutional debates—particularly concerning the rights and roles of independent candidates in Pakistan's parliamentary framework.

The unresolved issue of how post-election affiliations should be treated calls for immediate legislative and institutional attention. As the PTI prepares to challenge the verdict through legal means and mass mobilization, and the ruling coalition sets its sights on potential constitutional reforms, Pakistan's political environment remains tense and uncertain. This moment demands careful and responsible navigation from all stakeholders—judiciary, parliament, and political parties alike. The path forward could either lead to strengthened democratic norms and institutional coherence or deepen existing divisions and institutional friction. The choices made now will significantly shape Pakistan's democratic trajectory in the years to come.



attempt to sideline the party and disenfranchise its voter base. For them, the ruling represents a broader campaign to weaken PTI's parliamentary influence and undermine democratic fairness. In contrast, members of the ruling coalition and their supporters have welcomed the judgment as a victory for constitutional principles and legal clarity, arguing that it reinforces the rule of law.

Social media platforms have turned into arenas of intense debate, with hashtags both defending and denouncing the judiciary trending across Pakistan. The digital space has become a reflection of the country's political rift. Meanwhile, mainstream media has focused on the verdict's political ramifications, with prominent newspapers publishing editorials that urge the need for electoral reforms, legal clarity, and institu-

legal-political intersection. They warn that the recurrence of electoral and constitutional disputes—such as the controversy over party affiliations and reserved seat allocations—could hinder democratic consolidation and erode institutional stability in the long run.

These concerns are particularly acute among Pakistan's allies and international partners who view stable democratic processes as a prerequisite for effective governance, regional cooperation, and economic development. Any perception of judicial partisanship or political manipulation through legal means could tarnish Pakistan's image as a functioning democracy.

On the other hand, some international analysts view the court's willingness to

A Tightrope of Reform: Pakistan's Dance Between IMF Demands and Digital Ambitions



By Romana Afsheen

When the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) quietly released its end-of-year foreign exchange figures on June 30, 2025, few expected a headline number that would surprise the market: official reserves had climbed to \$14.51 billion comfortably beating the \$13.9 billion target set under Pakistan's agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

For a country long haunted by precarious balance-of-payments gaps, a fragile rupee, and a ballooning external debt, this was a moment of hard-won reprieve. Yet, behind the numbers, the journey tells a richer, messier, and often contradictory story of emergency measures, ambitious digital plans, IMF red lines, and a national search for growth in places as unlikely as crypto mining.

This is the story of how Pakistan not only met, but surpassed, a key IMF condition in 2025 and why the same period saw Islamabad pursue one of its most daring and controversial economic bets in recent memory.

Beating the IMF Target: Anatomy of an Unlikely Milestone

Crossing the IMF reserves benchmark didn't happen by luck. It followed a turbulent twelve months where policy-makers scrambled to close external financing gaps, secure new loans, and control the current account.

By the close of fiscal year 2024–25, the SBP's reserves had grown by \$5.2 billion. SBP data revealed the jump: reserves had stood at about \$9.39 billion in June 2024 and rose steadily, even amid external debt repayments that temporarily dragged them down.

Much of this increase stemmed from a cocktail of measures:

- SBP's open market operations: Over ten months, the central bank reportedly purchased \$6.8 billion from the open market, providing stability to the rupee and quietly boosting reserves.

- New external inflows: The government secured \$3.1 billion in commercial loans, plus \$500 million in multilateral support.
- Better remittance flows: Pakistanis abroad sent more money home, helping to close the current account deficit.
- Improved export receipts, particularly from textiles and agricultural goods, which helped moderate the trade imbalance.

As SBP Governor Jameel Ahmed had forecast months earlier, reserves exceeded the symbolic \$14 billion line, despite what he acknowledged were "heavy" external debt servicing obligations.

Numbers vs. Reality: The Structural Fragility

While reserves beat the IMF target, the country's external sector remains

vulnerable. According to the SBP's own liquidity risk report, Pakistan faces \$31.13 billion in maturing external obligations -loans, deposits, and securities. Of these:

- \$8.36 billion are due in the next 30 days.
- Another \$3.54 billion will mature over the following three months.
- The biggest chunk, about \$19.23 billion, matures within a year.

These figures illustrate why surpassing an IMF target, while critical, is just one milestone on a longer road. The real challenge lies in sustaining reserves without relying exclusively on new borrowing.

The Crypto Mining Gamble: An Unexpected Pivot

While the central bank focused on dollar accumulation, another economic debate caught the public eye: Pakistan's plan to channel surplus electricity into Bitcoin mining and AI data centers.

The plan, first drafted in September 2024, proposed allocating 2,000 megawatts of surplus winter capacity at preferential tariffs of Rs 23 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to energy-intensive sectors: crypto mining, data centers, copper, and aluminum production.

The goal? Turn underused energy into a source of foreign revenue. The Power Division estimated that crypto and AI could absorb spare capacity, helping reduce fixed capacity payments to Independent Power Producers (IPPs), a key driver of circular debt.

At the forefront was the Pakistan Crypto Council (PCC), led by Bilal Bin Saqib, who presented the plan as a leap into digital finance. Saqib argued Pakistan should:

- Build a state-managed Bitcoin reserve, using part of mined coins to back external liabilities.
- Launch a national Bitcoin wallet under government control.
- Position itself as an "early mover" in regulated digital assets, attracting Gulf

and Asian investors.

Saqib famously told a press event, "We are done sitting on the sidelines. Digital assets can be our hedge against external shocks."

IMF Red Lines and Political Pushback

The IMF quickly pushed back. In late 2024, it allowed only a three-month pilot of the preferential tariff, rejecting the broader six-month plan. In November, Islamabad re-submitted a revised plan, which the IMF again blocked.

Secretary of Power Dr. Fakhray Alam Irfan told the Senate Standing Committee on Power that the IMF saw sector-specific subsidies as equivalent to tax holidays, historically blamed for distorting Pakistan's energy market.

The IMF also flagged legal concerns: crypto mining lacks a clear regulatory framework in Pakistan, increasing risks of money laundering and market volatility.

Despite the rejection, Islamabad kept the proposal alive. Dr. Irfan confirmed ongoing talks with the World Bank and other lenders to explore ways to monetize surplus power without breaching IMF commitments.

Circular Debt: The Ghost Haunting Every Policy

Even as the crypto debate raged, Pakistan's energy sector fought an older demon: circular debt, which had climbed to about Rs 2.6 trillion by mid-2025.

To address this, the government signed a Rs 1.275 trillion deal with domestic banks, financed over six years via the existing Debt Servicing Surcharge (DSS) of Rs 3.23/kWh.

The deal sparked controversy in Parliament. Senator Shibli Faraz accused banks of being "forced at gunpoint," warning the repayments would burden ordinary consumers.

Dr. Irfan rejected the claim, stating no new levies were added; instead, the surcharge would continue over five to six years.

Still, the debate underlined a structural dilemma: Pakistan's power sector cannot sustainably subsidize new ventures like crypto mining while it struggles to pay its own bills.

Digital Reforms vs. Ground Realities

Parallel to large-scale plans, the government launched "Apna Meter Apni Reading", a mobile app for consumers to submit meter photos. Over 500,000 users reportedly registered, aiming to reduce overbilling and human error.

At K-Electric, which serves Karachi, around 30% of feeders still suffer high losses, largely due to theft through illegal "kundas." The utility began offering installment plans to help consumers avoid disconnections.

Yet senators, including Poojo Bheel, alleged systemic bribery: local staff allegedly accept payments to reconnect illegal connections, penalizing law-abiding consumers.

The Senate Standing Committee demanded urgent reforms, but ground-level enforcement remains difficult in areas with over 20% technical and commercial losses.

Balancing Reform and Relief: IMF Conditions and Domestic Pressures

IMF conditions require cost-reflective tariffs, meaning most consumers must pay what it costs to produce and deliver electricity, except for the most vulnerable.

About 58% of domestic consumers fall into the protected category, paying reduced rates. For 2025, the government set aside Rs 250 billion in subsidies, all cleared by the IMF.

Still, consumers outside the protected category face some of South Asia's highest electricity prices, feeding public frustration and political tension.

The Politics of Crypto, Energy, and Reform

For policymakers, the crypto mining

proposal symbolized a desire to break old cycles: rather than borrow endlessly, why not generate new revenue?

But IMF skepticism, rooted in past subsidy abuse and Pakistan's still-fragile macro framework, forced a rethink.

Dr. Irfan summarized the dilemma to the Senate: "The plan isn't withdrawn — it's being reworked to align with structural reforms."

In the background, the Power Division sought to convince other multilateral partners to see the plan as industrial modernization, not distortion.

International Comparisons: Why Pakistan Looked to Crypto

In defending the plan, officials often pointed abroad:

- Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan both tried to monetize surplus power through mining.
- El Salvador declared Bitcoin legal tender and launched a national crypto wallet, though its results remain debated.
- Iran legalized mining in 2019 to absorb excess energy, though later cracked down over grid impact.

Pakistan's pitch: use only surplus winter capacity, avoid displacing existing consumers, and tax mining at source.

By mid-2025, Pakistan stood at a curious crossroads: it had surpassed the IMF reserves target, stabilized the rupee, and launched visible digital reforms. Yet deeper issues like debt repayments, circular debt, market distortions, and legal grey areas around crypto remained unresolved.

Yet hitting the IMF reserves target was more than just a moment of relief; it underscored how targeted policy, rising remittances, and timely inflows can stabilize a fragile balance sheet, at least temporarily. Beneath the headline figures, though, remained stubborn structural challenges: circular debt that refused to shrink, an

energy sector caught between political pressure and fiscal reality, and an economy still vulnerable to external shocks. Beyond the numbers, policymakers faced a deeper dilemma: whether disciplined reform alone could deliver sustainable growth, or if fresh, unconventional ideas were needed to change the country's economic trajectory. It was here, in the search for a new path forward, that one bold and controversial proposal emerged, an attempt to transform surplus electricity into digital gold.

The proposal was as ambitious as it was unexpected: channeling 2,000 megawatts of surplus electricity into crypto mining farms

it offered policymakers in Islamabad a brief moment of triumph. The numbers told an optimistic story: a rise to \$14.51 billion, well above the \$13.9 billion benchmark set under the Fund's program. But behind the headline figures lay deeper, more complicated questions about how Pakistan's economy could, or should, grow in the years ahead.

What followed was a clash that captured the tension at the heart of Pakistan's economic strategy: between the discipline demanded by the IMF and a bolder digital gamble that policymakers hoped could unlock new growth. This gamble took the



and AI data centers, turning idle megawatts into a new kind of export. To its architects, it promised foreign exchange, high tech investment, and a chance to leapfrog into the digital economy. But what looked visionary on paper soon collided with the practical realities of Pakistan's power sector and the cautious scrutiny of the IMF. At its heart, the clash revealed something deeper: the tension between a government eager to experiment its way out of stagnation and lenders insistent on predictable, orthodox reforms. As policymakers debated whether to double down on creative risk taking or keep to the narrow path of fiscal discipline, the crypto mining plan became a symbol of Pakistan's larger struggle to balance ambition with restraint.

When Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves crossed the IMF's target in late June 2025,

form of a high-profile plan to allocate surplus electricity to crypto mining and AI data centers, a plan that, despite meeting technical definitions of "innovation," ultimately ran into the structural realities of Pakistan's fragile power sector and IMF oversight.

A Plan with Promise and Pitfalls

At first glance, the proposal seemed logical. The government argued that Pakistan, often stuck paying capacity charges for unused electricity, could sell some of this surplus, an estimated 2,000 megawatts to crypto miners and data centers. Instead of going to waste, these megawatts could be monetized, bringing in foreign exchange, stimulating local technology sectors, and creating jobs.

Advocates like Bilal Bin Saqib, CEO of the Pakistan Crypto Council, framed the idea as part of a broader vision. Pakistan wouldn't just mine Bitcoin, they argued; it would position itself as a regional digital hub, leveraging cheap electricity and location to attract foreign investment in AI and blockchain.

The plan even included proposals for a national Bitcoin reserve and a state-managed digital wallet — symbols, its backers hoped, of a country ready to join the digital age.

Yet the optimism was tempered by the reality that Pakistan's energy sector has rarely followed neat policy plans. And for the IMF, which had signed on to support Pakistan's financial stabilization, the proposal seemed less like modernization and more like a risk.

Why the IMF Said No

In meetings described by officials, the IMF made its position clear. First, it saw the proposal to sell electricity at subsidized rates to specific industries, especially crypto mining, as a distortion to power markets. To the Fund, it looked like a sector-specific tax holiday, something Pakistan's history showed could quickly balloon into larger, politically hard-to-remove subsidies.

Second, there were legal questions. Pakistan lacks a comprehensive framework regulating cryptocurrencies. Crypto mining, in many places, exists in a legal grey zone, tolerated but not fully recognized. Turning it into an officially subsidized industry could attract unwanted scrutiny from international watchdogs, including concerns over money laundering and terrorism financing.

And third, the IMF worried about precedent. Once a government starts subsidizing new industries, others often demand the same. In a power sector already burdened with circular debt, such moves could deepen fiscal stress instead of relieving it.

A Policy in Revision and Rejection

The crypto plan didn't appear overnight. It went through multiple drafts and negotiations. The first iteration, pitched in Septem-

ber 2024, offered a six-month incremental consumption tariff at Rs 23 per kilowatt-hour. After IMF objections, the government scaled it back to a three-month plan.

In November 2024, the policy team tried again, limiting the cheaper power to industries with high energy demand, like aluminum and copper smelting, data centers, and crypto mining. Still, the IMF remained unconvinced, repeating concerns over market distortions.

In May 2025, the government made a final push, combining the plan with announcements about a national Bitcoin reserve and wallet, aiming to signal digital transformation. But this time, the IMF's rejection was decisive. Officials later admitted the Fund hadn't been consulted before the public rollout, a misstep in an environment where IMF approval had become a central part of policy credibility.

Crypto as Digital Export or Risk?

For supporters, the crypto mining proposal was more than just about Bitcoin. It represented a different philosophy of growth. Rather than relying purely on remittances, textile exports, or loans, Pakistan could build a new digital export sector selling computing power globally, earning foreign currency without shipping physical goods.

Countries like Iran and Kazakhstan have tried similar strategies. But their experiences offered cautionary lessons. Iran's mining boom led to blackouts; Kazakhstan saw crypto consume a surprising share of national electricity, forcing policy reversals. Both faced pressure to curb mining when grid reliability faltered.

Pakistan's proposal promised safeguards: limiting mining to off-peak surplus electricity, taxing miners, and connecting the effort to regulated industrial zones. Yet the IMF wasn't persuaded, seeing the plan as too risky given unresolved structural issues.

The Elephant in the Room: Circular Debt

Any serious conversation about Pakistan's

power sector inevitably returns to circular debt — an accumulated mountain of unpaid bills between power producers, distributors, and the government. By mid-2025, this debt had reached about Rs 2.6 trillion.

Even as policymakers debated crypto mining, they were negotiating with domestic banks to refinance Rs 1.275 trillion of this debt over six years, using a Debt Servicing Surcharge of Rs 3.23 per unit. The deal aimed to ease immediate pressure, but it attracted criticism.

Senator Shibli Faraz, during a heated Senate session, claimed the banks had been pressured into the agreement, arguing that consumers would end up paying through higher surcharges. Power Secretary Dr. Fakhray Alam Irfan rejected the charge, insisting the deal was necessary to avoid worse outcomes.

For the IMF, this was precisely why new subsidies were problematic. Every rupee spent on sector-specific support could deepen the circular debt problem or undermine other reform commitments.

Governance and Political Friction

The debate over crypto mining exposed deeper frustrations within Pakistan's political system about the power sector's performance. Senators criticized the absence of the Federal Power Minister from key meetings, questioned the cost structures of Independent Power Producers, and raised allegations of corruption including cases where officials allegedly took bribes to reconnect illegal users.

Senator Poojo Bheel spoke about 14-hour daily outages in places like Tharparkar, Matiari, and Umerkot, even where consumers paid bills. These areas, often among Pakistan's poorest, faced load shedding driven by systemic inefficiency and theft.

In response, power officials highlighted steps like the "Apna Meter Apni Reading" app, which lets consumers upload photos of meter readings to reduce overbilling. The app, downloaded by over half a million users, reflects the government's attempt to use technology for small improvements,

even as big-picture reforms remain slow.

Digital Vision Meets Structural Reality

Pakistan's broader "Digital Pakistan" agenda includes AI data centers, expanded e-governance, and blockchain projects. The crypto mining plan fit into this ambition: a bold, headline-grabbing project to position the country as a regional digital hub.

But the power sector's fragility complicates these ambitions. Energy theft, underinvestment in distribution, and policy unpredictability undermine investor confidence. And in the eyes of institutions like the IMF, structural repair must come before — not after — innovation.

Supporters argue that digital exports could diversify Pakistan's economy and reduce reliance on traditional sectors. Critics counter that adding new demand to an already strained grid could backfire.

Reserves: A Milestone and a Mirage?

Crossing the IMF reserve target mattered. It offered breathing space and helped stabilize the rupee, restoring limited market confidence. But the number was partly supported by new external borrowing: \$3.1 billion in commercial loans and \$500 million in multilateral funding.

The SBP also bought \$6.8 billion from the open market over 10 months, boosting reserves. Yet upcoming obligations loom large. Within the next 30 days alone, Pakistan faces over \$8 billion in debt payments, with more in the coming months.

Economists caution that while the headline figure looks healthy, the underlying vulnerabilities remain: reliance on rollovers, new borrowing, and continued remittance growth to keep reserves afloat.

Public Reaction: Hope, Suspicion, Fatigue

Among Pakistanis, the IMF target win brought mixed reactions. Some saw it as evidence the government could deliver, offering hope for more stability. Others

noted that everyday challenges — high inflation, power cuts, and job scarcity — hadn't changed.

The crypto mining plan sparked interest, especially among younger Pakistanis used to global fintech trends. But skepticism remained strong, driven by past disappointments and the perception that big announcements rarely translate into tangible change.

The Road Ahead

For now, Pakistan continues to negotiate with other international institutions, hoping to find a compromise on its digital ambitions. Officials are working to revise the crypto plan to address IMF concerns, possibly by removing subsidies and introducing stronger regulation.



At the same time, the country must confront older, harder problems: reducing circular debt, cutting losses in distribution, and moving to cost-reflective tariffs.

Whether Pakistan can balance discipline with innovation will define its economic path. Policymakers hope digital projects can spark growth; lenders want proven reforms first.

A Balancing Act

The clash over crypto mining revealed

more than policy differences. It exposed the tension between a country eager to modernize and the discipline required to fix old systems.

As Pakistan steps into the next fiscal year, it does so standing on a fragile foundation: reserves above target but obligations pressing, public patience thin, and growth strategies still unproven.

The question that hangs in the air: can Pakistan craft a future where digital ambition and fiscal discipline reinforce each other, instead of colliding?

Meeting the IMF reserves target was more than a spreadsheet victory; it proved policymakers could deliver under pressure. But the same months revealed why bold plans, like crypto mining, clash with the caution lenders demand.

As one economist put it to local media: *"We beat the target, but can we beat the pattern? That's the real question."*

Pakistan's choice is between creative risk-taking and disciplined reform or, somehow, both. For now, the crypto mining plan hangs in limbo, reserves stand above target, and the power sector waits for real reform. What happens next will decide whether 2025's milestone was a turning point or just another pause before the cycle resumes.

Highway of Fear: Ethnic Targeting and the Unfinished Struggle in Balochistan

By Romana Afsheen

Late one night in July 2025, tragedy unfolded on the rugged highways of Balochistan. Passenger buses traveling from Quetta toward Punjab were intercepted in the remote districts of Zhob and Loralai. Gunmen blocked the road, boarded the vehicles, and demanded to see passengers' identity cards. After identifying nine men from Punjab, they forcibly removed them, led them away into the darkness, and executed them in cold blood.

As dawn broke, the bodies were discovered in the rocky terrain, bearing bullet wounds—a chilling reminder of how violence, driven by ethnic and political fault lines, continues to scar Pakistan's southwest. Survivors, shaken and traumatized, recounted how the attackers singled out passengers solely based on their Punjab addresses. The deliberate nature of this act underscored an alarming reality: civilians remain dangerously exposed in areas where insurgency persists despite years of military operations and political promises.

No group officially claimed responsibility. Yet Pakistan's leadership moved swiftly to identify the culprits, accusing separatist outfits of carrying out what they called terrorism aimed at deepening the country's internal divides. These groups, rooted in Baloch nationalist sentiment, have long demanded greater autonomy—or outright independence—from Islamabad.

The attack bore unsettling resemblance to earlier tragedies. In February 2025, unidentified gunmen halted another passenger bus in Barkhan, checking IDs and executing seven passengers from Punjab. Months earlier, a devastating suicide bombing targeted a school bus in Khuzdar, killing several schoolchildren. Each incident left behind not only grief and anger but also heightened fears of targeted ethnic killings in a province rich in minerals yet weighed down by decades of neglect and insurgency.



The shifting ground in Balochistan

For decades, Balochistan has stood at the crossroads of economic potential and violent separatism. Beneath its desert and mountain landscapes lies a wealth of natural gas, copper, and gold deposits. But despite its strategic and economic value, many locals feel the region remains underdeveloped and politically marginalized.

Insurgent groups emerged from these grievances, arguing that the central government exploits Balochistan's resources without adequately benefiting its people. Over the years, attacks have ranged from strikes on military targets to targeting infrastructure projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor—and tragically, civilians from other provinces traveling or working in Balochistan.

The recent attack once again exposed a disturbing tactic: stopping vehicles, checking identity documents, and selecting passengers purely on ethnic lines. These acts aim to instill fear among Punjabis who move to Balochistan for work or trade. Beyond immediate horror, they carry a calculated message to discourage demographic

movement into the province, echoing the separatists' claim that Punjab's economic and political dominance fuels Balochistan's suffering.

Accusations beyond the border

In Islamabad, the attack prompted more than local condemnation. Pakistani officials blamed external forces for fueling unrest. They accused India's intelligence agency of supporting insurgent networks inside Balochistan to destabilize Pakistan. The allegations are not new. Over the years, Pakistan has cited evidence—such as the arrest of an Indian national accused of espionage—as proof of foreign meddling.

According to officials, such backing strengthens groups that practice violence against civilians, making it harder for the state to restore normalcy. Pakistan's foreign office repeated its stance at international forums, arguing it has presented clear evidence of Indian interference. These charges, however, are firmly rejected by India, which counters that Pakistan must look inward to resolve Balochistan's grievances rather than deflect blame abroad.

This diplomatic friction reflects a deeper geopolitical struggle between the two neighbors. Accusations of cross-border terrorism have long formed part of the tense narrative that defines Pakistan-India relations. Each fresh tragedy on Pakistani soil risks sharpening this narrative, complicating any attempts at dialogue.

The human cost and political resolve

In the wake of the killings, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack in the strongest terms. Labeling it “terrorism of Fitna-ul-Hindustan,” he vowed that innocent blood would not be shed in vain. His message sought to reassure a grieving nation and signal resolve against terrorism, while also reiterating Pakistan’s claim that foreign hands were at work.

The Prime Minister’s pledge was matched by Balochistan’s Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti, who condemned the attackers as cowardly beasts. He described the killings not as an isolated event but part of a broader conflict against terrorism—promising a relentless state response. Provincial authorities ordered immediate search operations, while security forces were mobilized to trace those responsible.

These pronouncements were accompanied by visible actions. Checkpoints in restive districts were strengthened, and intelligence efforts were reportedly intensified. Yet for the families who lost loved ones, words and promises can feel painfully hollow against the depth of loss.

The victims of such attacks are often daily-wage workers, traders, or travelers—people moving between provinces in search of better opportunities. Their deaths highlight the cost borne by ordinary citizens, caught in a conflict that blends local grievances, regional politics, and militant strategy.

A dangerous pattern

This attack, like similar incidents in recent years, fits a troubling pattern: militants intercept buses on isolated highways, separate passengers based on ethnic identity, and execute them outside public view. The brutality is both symbolic and strategic:

it spreads fear far beyond the scene of the crime. It signals to outsiders that they are not safe in Balochistan, while demonstrating to local supporters that insurgents remain active and capable despite state countermeasures.

The psychological impact is significant. News of the attack spread rapidly across Pakistan, fueling outrage on social media and demands for decisive action. Critics questioned how, despite years of military operations and intelligence claims of success, such targeted killings could still occur. Some voices pointed to Balochistan’s vast terrain and sparse population, which make absolute security a daunting challenge.

Counter-insurgency and its limits

To suppress militant violence, Pakistan has relied heavily on military operations. Over the past two years alone, campaigns such as Operation Azm-e-Istehkam and Herof 2.0 were launched to root out insurgent groups. Officials claim hundreds of militants have been killed or captured, while infrastructure and safe havens have been dismantled.

Yet the persistence of attacks shows that military action alone may be insufficient. Insurgent groups, decentralized and deeply embedded in local networks, have adapted to security pressures by shifting tactics or recruiting new members. Observers argue that while force can contain violence temporarily, lasting peace will also require addressing longstanding political grievances and investing in the region’s social and economic development.

The state’s emphasis on external blame—particularly India’s alleged role—adds another layer. While it rallies domestic support, critics warn it risks overshadowing equally critical discussions about local governance, human rights, and dialogue with non-violent Baloch political actors.

Even as the buses rolled across the dark highways of Balochistan that night, the tragedy that awaited them was rooted in decades of tension, mistrust, and unresolved grievances. The brutal killings of passengers singled out because they

came from Punjab were not just another act of terror—they were an echo of a conflict whose shadows stretch back generations.

At the heart of the violence lies a deep sense of alienation among many in Balochistan. Despite its vast resources and critical strategic position, the province has long felt overlooked and exploited by Pakistan’s central government. For years, these grievances have simmered: the feeling that Balochistan’s natural wealth benefits outsiders, that local voices are ignored, and that political and economic power remains concentrated elsewhere. Over time, these frustrations hardened into organized resistance, giving birth to militant groups that claimed to fight for the province’s autonomy—or outright independence.

Among these groups, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) became the most well-known. While they portray their struggle as one of national liberation, their methods have often blurred lines between insurgency and terrorism. Attacks targeting security forces and infrastructure have been matched by chilling assaults on civilians, especially those from Punjab. The message, implicit but unmistakable, is meant to warn against migration and to deepen ethnic divides.

Stopping buses, checking ID cards, and killing passengers based on where they come from isn’t just an act of brutality. It’s also a statement: a challenge to the state’s authority and a declaration that the conflict is as much about identity and belonging as it is about politics or resources. For ordinary people, however, such tactics bring only fear and grief, leaving behind shattered families and a community weighed down by violence.

In response, the Pakistani state has often turned to force. Large-scale operations like Azm-e-Istehkam and Herof 2.0 have been launched to dismantle insurgent networks, destroy hideouts, and reduce militants’ ability to strike. Officials report successes, pointing to arrests, recovered weapons, and disrupted plots. Yet attacks like the recent bus massacre show that militants still retain the capacity to carry out horrifying acts.

Critics argue that focusing heavily on military operations, while necessary to curb violence, risks overlooking why the conflict keeps reigniting. For many in Balochistan,

the root causes are not just security gaps but decades of feeling excluded from decisions that shape their land and lives. Promises of development have too often arrived without meaningful consultation, leading some locals to see new roads, ports, or energy projects as symbols of outside control rather than progress.

Layered onto this complex local picture is the accusation that foreign hands are stirring the unrest. Pakistani officials have repeatedly blamed India's intelligence agency for funding and guiding Baloch separatist groups. They see it as part of a broader strategy to weaken Pakistan internally, especially as major projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

carries deep symbolic weight. It reflects resentment against what many Baloch militants view as demographic change and economic dominance by Punjab. Yet these attacks strike at the heart of national cohesion, turning highways and buses into places of danger rather than connection.

The psychological impact is profound. Families across Pakistan hear the news and wonder if it could have been them or someone they love. Punjabis working in Balochistan weigh the risk of staying. Locals, too, live under the fear that reprisals or intensified security measures could disrupt their daily lives. In this environment, trust becomes harder to build, and suspicion easier to spread.



pass through Balochistan. India denies these charges, insisting that Pakistan should focus on reconciliation rather than blaming outsiders.

This back-and-forth has hardened narratives on both sides of the border. In Pakistan, each new attack is seen as fresh proof of foreign interference, making domestic dialogue harder to prioritize. In India, officials dismiss Pakistan's claims as an attempt to deflect from local grievances and governance failures. The result is a diplomatic deadlock, where even regional forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation produce little more than cautious statements.

Meanwhile, the violence itself continues to evolve. The targeting of Punjabis traveling through Balochistan is not new, but it

Amid this tension, political leaders have responded with strong words. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the killings as "terrorism of Fitna-ul-Hindustan" and pledged that justice would come swiftly. Balochistan's Chief Minister called the attackers cowardly and vowed that every terror plot would be crushed. Security forces launched immediate operations to track those responsible. Such statements are necessary to show resolve, but on their own they do little to heal the wounds left behind.

The deeper challenge is to convince ordinary people that the state can protect them and that peace in Balochistan is possible. This means not only military action against those who pick up arms but also meaningful engagement with those who seek change through dialogue. It requires investing in schools, hospitals, and

roads that serve local communities, rather than simply building projects that look impressive on paper. And it demands confronting uncomfortable questions about how decisions affecting Balochistan are made—and who gets to make them.

There have been moments of hope. Some Baloch leaders have at times expressed openness to talks, provided that the process is genuine and addresses their core concerns. But each attack that kills civilians, each military raid that ends in civilian casualties, and each political speech that blames outsiders rather than listening to locals risks pushing dialogue further away.

International institutions, too, have a role to play. Reports that acknowledge how state actors can sponsor violence add weight to Pakistan's claims on one hand, but they also keep pressure on Islamabad to ensure that its own approach to counterinsurgency respects human rights and rule of law. Ultimately, global attention can encourage accountability—but the solutions must come from within.

In the end, it is the human cost that remains most haunting. Nine men who boarded buses that night simply wanted to reach their destination. Their families will remember them not for the politics that surrounded their deaths, but for the empty chairs at the dinner table, the phone calls that never came, and the futures stolen from them. These are losses that statistics and statements cannot truly capture.

Balochistan's path forward lies in acknowledging this pain—not as a point of blame, but as a call to do better. It means protecting all who live and travel in the province, whether they come from Quetta, Lahore, or beyond. It means ensuring that Baloch voices are part of decisions about Balochistan's future. And it means rejecting violence—whether carried out by insurgents or in the name of fighting them—as a means to shape that future.

Only then can the roads that today feel so dangerous become once again routes of hope and connection, rather than fear. And only then can the cycle of grief that began on those buses that night finally begin to end.

The Silent Fall of a Star

Remembering Humaira Asghar Ali



By Romana Afsheen

The discovery of Humaira Asghar Ali's lifeless body in a Karachi apartment earlier this month was a moment that shook Pakistan's entertainment industry and left ordinary citizens grappling with unsettling questions. How does someone so publicly visible die in such isolation, lying undiscovered for months? And what does our reaction to her death reveal about the way we engage with public figures, grief, and tragedy?

Humaira's story, even in death, remains both tragic and complex — a reminder that the images we see on screen rarely reflect the depth, struggle, or solitude that may lurk behind them.

It began with a knock on a locked door. Acting under a court order due to unpaid rent stretching back over a year, bailiffs and police arrived at Humaira Asghar's apartment in Karachi's Defence area. When there was no answer, they forced entry — and what they found stunned even seasoned officers: the decomposed remains of a woman who had once captivated audiences on television, in cinema, and on reality shows.

The body had decomposed so badly that even seasoned forensic experts found it challenging to establish the exact cause and timeline of death. Initially, it was believed she had died several months earlier. But further investigation, combined with forensic analysis of her surroundings, suggested that her death could have occurred around nine months ago — likely in October of the previous year.

The apartment itself offered eerie clues. Food in her refrigerator had expired months earlier. Her mobile phones were switched off, untouched since late 2024. It was as if she had quietly slipped away from the world — and no one had noticed.

From Rising Star to Lonely Figure

Humaira Asghar Ali was not an obscure name. A trained artist with roots in Lahore, she had built a respectable career that included acting roles in popular television dramas, appearances in films like “Jalabee” and “Love Vaccine,” and notable modelling assignments. She was also part

of a widely watched reality show that gave audiences a glimpse into her candid, off-screen personality.

In 2023, she had even received a National Woman Leadership Award, celebrated as a rising talent and emerging voice for young women in entertainment. Her own words upon receiving the award were filled with hope and determination — she saw her journey not just as personal achievement but as part of a broader mission to empower women and help Pakistan “shine nationally and internationally.”

Yet beneath this polished public image lay a reality far more complicated.

The Isolation of Independence

Humaira had moved from Lahore to Karachi several years ago, reportedly seeking creative freedom and space to pursue her career on her own terms. According to her family, she was fiercely independent. She would return home only occasionally — sometimes once a year —

and often kept her exact address private.

In modern urban life, this kind of independence is often romanticised. But as Humaira's story painfully illustrates, it can also create a gulf so wide that, when tragedy strikes, no one is close enough to intervene.

Family members revealed they had tried to contact her in recent months but her numbers were switched off. A friend they reached out to could not offer help. In the crowded chaos of Karachi, Humaira slipped into invisibility.



The Immediate Aftermath: Grief, Shock, and Public Speculation

News of her death spread quickly, sparking shock across the entertainment world and beyond. But what followed was less dignified: intense speculation over her final days, morbid curiosity about her body's condition, and a flood of commentary on her personal choices.

Online debates raged: Why was she living alone? Why didn't her family intervene sooner? Was this a cautionary tale about ambition or estrangement? Without answers, the public and media seemed determined to fill the void with conjecture.

This reaction revealed more about society than it did about Humaira. Rather than accepting the discomfort of unanswered questions — of the possibility that a young, successful woman could die quietly, unseen — many rushed to reduce her life and death to a simple narrative.

The Family's Response and Media Missteps

Adding to the confusion were reports that her family had refused to claim the body. This narrative quickly spread, triggering offers from the Sindh government and industry colleagues to arrange her burial.

However, when her brother arrived from Lahore to receive the body, he rejected this portrayal. He explained the delay was procedural: the body was in police custody

for investigation, and the family had been coordinating with authorities to complete legal requirements.

He also described how painful it was to see the focus shift from the tragedy of Humaira's death to questions about the family's perceived absence. The family had lost another relative in a recent accident and was grappling with compounded grief. Yet, rather than empathy, they were met with headlines implying neglect.

Celebrities Speak Out

Several prominent figures from Pakistan's entertainment industry publicly condemned the nature of the media coverage. Osman Khalid Butt expressed frustration over the rush to speculate, calling for a return to "basic empathy." He reminded everyone that Humaira was a real person — not just a story to be consumed for clicks.

Actor Zara Tareen echoed this sentiment, urging people to reach out privately to

loved ones rather than lecture strangers online. Their words cut through the noise, highlighting the difference between performative grief and genuine reflection.

A Life Not Easily Defined

It is tempting, when someone dies in such circumstances, to summarize their life in a few words: "lonely," "estranged," "forgotten." But Humaira's story defies simple labels.

She was ambitious, creative, and determined to make her mark on her own terms. She experienced moments of recognition and joy, as well as challenges and private struggles we may never fully know. Her death does not erase the vibrancy and talent she shared during her life.

Instead of flattening her story into a cautionary tale or scandal, there is greater value in acknowledging its complexity — the beauty, the hardship, the independence, and, yes, the tragic isolation that ultimately defined her final chapter.

A Community Left Questioning

In the days since her death, many in Pakistan's creative community have found themselves reflecting deeply. What does it say about us that a woman could lie dead for months, unnoticed? What does it say about modern life in big cities, where neighbours are strangers and connections often shallow?

Humaira's story resonates precisely because it exposes a shared vulnerability. It shows how even those in the spotlight can feel unseen and unheard behind closed doors. And it asks us, uncomfortably, what role we might play in preventing such solitude — not through public statements, but through real, private care.

Echoes After Silence — The Search for Answers in Humaira Asghar Ali's Death

The death of Humaira Asghar Ali did more than shock an industry — it forced a society to confront uncomfortable truths about

isolation, media ethics, and the blurred lines between public tragedy and private pain. But as grief settled into questions, the focus turned toward investigation, unanswered mysteries, and what justice or closure might look like for someone whose voice had already fallen silent.

While the headlines have moved on for some, for those closest to her — family, colleagues, and even thoughtful observers — the search for meaning, accountability, and dignity in the aftermath continues.

The Forensic Puzzle

From the moment Humaira's body was discovered in a state of advanced decomposition, investigators faced challenges that few cases present. Time had stripped away much of the biological evidence. Key internal organs were unidentifiable, leaving pathologists to work with fragments: hair, bones, partially preserved tissue.

Initial estimates suggested she had died around six months before discovery, based on the expiry dates of items in her refrigerator and her last known phone activity. But deeper forensic examination revised that timeline to possibly eight to ten months earlier — pointing to a likely death in October of the previous year.

The body's condition complicated everything: cause of death remained undetermined pending chemical and histopathological analysis. Investigators preserved every possible trace — hair samples, abdominal tissue, bones, and even dust from the apartment floor — hoping science might reveal what time and decay had hidden.

The Digital Clues

Parallel to the medical investigation, detectives turned to the digital world — the only place where Humaira's voice and daily choices might still echo.

From her apartment, police recovered three mobile phones, a tablet, and a laptop. At first locked and silent, these devices offered a potential diary of her final months. A breakthrough came when officers discovered passwords scribbled in a personal notebook, a quiet detail suggesting that even in isolation, Humaira had left breadcrumbs for someone to follow.

Forensic teams began extracting data, piecing together who she had spoken to, what she searched for, and how she spent her days. Early findings revealed regular communication with a few contacts, whose identities investigators have kept confidential but who are now part of the inquiry.

Authorities have already questioned two individuals and summoned two more, hoping to answer lingering questions: Was Humaira truly alone? Did anyone notice changes in her routine or mood? Could someone have played a part in her death — directly or by neglect?

Beyond the Apartment Walls

But the search for answers extended beyond her devices. Police traced her routine, speaking with staff at a gym she frequented and a local beauty salon she visited. These small windows into her daily life could reveal whether she appeared distressed, withdrawn, or fearful in her final weeks.

Bank records are also under forensic scrutiny. Investigators want to know if unexplained transactions hint at coercion, blackmail, or financial troubles. So far, nothing has been made public — a necessary restraint in an era when speculation too easily becomes fact in the public mind.

A Family's Grief, Magnified

While police worked quietly, Humaira's family navigated an unexpected storm. Rumours had painted them as uncaring — headlines suggested they refused to claim her body. When her brother, Naveed, finally arrived in Karachi, he did more than collect remains: he tried to reclaim his sister's dignity.

He spoke gently yet firmly, explaining that the delay was procedural — police needed time for legal formalities and forensic matching. He described the shock of learning of her death amid another family tragedy and criticised the media's obsession with the family's perceived absence, rather than the mystery of how she died.

Their grief, already heavy, was made harder by public judgment. A father and brother faced reporters, trying to honour Humaira's

memory while defending themselves from accusations. In a moment that should have belonged to quiet mourning, they were thrust into a spotlight Humaira herself might never have chosen.

The Role of the Media — Reflection or Exploitation?

Humaira's death became more than a case; it became a mirror. Social media posts multiplied: some heartfelt, many performative. Industry colleagues offered condolences, but voices like Osman Khalid Butt and Zara Tareen challenged others to do more than post quotes — to truly reflect.

Why did public curiosity shift so quickly from grief to gossip? Why were grim details of her decomposed body shared online? Why did the narrative rush to blame her independence, rather than question why no one checked in?

These questions go beyond Humaira's story. They ask whether, in our digital age, tragedy is something to be observed or consumed — and whether our empathy extends beyond a scroll or a like.

From the Industry, Calls for Change

Members of Pakistan's entertainment community responded not just with sadness, but with a sense of responsibility. Many noted that the business of performance can foster isolation: long shoots, public scrutiny, and the pressure to appear successful even when struggling privately.

Some suggested concrete steps: informal networks to check in on colleagues, confidential mental health support, and open conversations about loneliness. Others urged media houses to adopt ethical guidelines when covering such deaths, balancing public interest with respect for the deceased and their family.

As chemical analyses and digital investigations continue, the central mystery remains: How did a young, award-winning actress, once vibrant and visible, end up dying alone, undiscovered for months?

Was it an accident, illness, or something

darker? Did isolation magnify private struggles into tragedy? Or did someone else, directly or indirectly, contribute to her fate?

For now, even the family refrains from speculation. They await results quietly, knowing that certainty may never come — and that closure is often a hope more than a guarantee.

A Burial, and a Final Goodbye

When Humaira's body finally left Karachi, it travelled home to Lahore. There, her family made a painful choice: rather than bringing her remains to the family house, they transferred them directly to a mosque. Her funeral, held at Model Town, was modest but dignified, attended by relatives and well-wishers.

In that quiet burial, away from cameras and commentary, Humaira was finally returned to the city where her journey began.

In the weeks since, Humaira's name has faded from trending topics. But her story — the real one, not the version trimmed to fit tweets or headlines — lingers.

She was a daughter, a sister, an artist, and an independent woman who made choices that, like all choices, came with both freedom and risk. Her death does not erase

her talent, the joy she brought audiences, or the moments when she, too, must have felt deeply connected to others.

And while society may be tempted to reduce her life to a lesson about estrangement or ambition, the truth resists such simplicity. Humaira Asghar Ali was human — and like all humans, her story deserves to be remembered in full, not in fragments.

What Do We Take Forward?

Perhaps the question is not just why Humaira died alone, but what we can do so fewer people do. It's about noticing absence, not just presence; about real, quiet care rather than loud, public mourning.

Her devices may reveal clues, and forensic tests may suggest causes. But beyond that, Humaira's death challenges us to look closer at the people we think we know, to ask harder questions about connection, and to resist the temptation to consume other people's pain.

Humaira Asghar Ali deserved more in life, and certainly deserves more in memory: less speculation, more compassion. Less content, more humanity. And in telling her story fully — flaws, brilliance, solitude, and all — perhaps we honour her not just as a headline, but as the complex, real person

she truly was.

Hadiqa Kiani speaks up about controversy surrounding Humaira Asghar

Renowned Pakistani pop singer Hadiqa Kiani has spoken out following the passing of model and actress Humaira Asghar, urging the public to show compassion and restraint.

In a heartfelt message shared on social media, Kiani appealed to people not to exploit the tragedy or the grief of Humaira's family.

"I request everyone not to turn Humaira Asghar's life and her family's sorrow into a spectacle. Please pray for the peace of her soul and focus on your own lives," she said.

Meanwhile, new details have emerged regarding Humaira Asghar's strained relationship with her family. Her elder sister-in-law revealed that the late actress had grown distant from her relatives due to her career in the entertainment industry.

"Humaira's family never supported her decision to join showbiz," she said, noting that this long-standing disapproval led to a rift with her elder brother and other close family members.



Important News About Artificial Intelligence and Technology Advancements

By Javed Mahmood

A new UNESCO study unveiled at the AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva has revealed that the soaring energy demands of artificial intelligence could be drastically reduced—simply by using shorter prompts and smaller, more efficient models.

Released on Tuesday, the report emphasizes that concise user queries and specialised lightweight AI systems can cut electricity consumption by up to 90 percent without compromising the quality of responses.

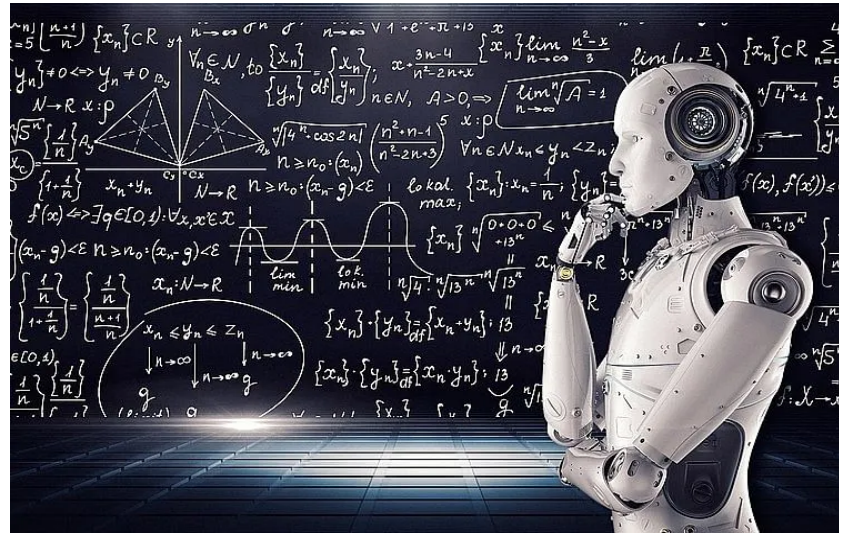
The findings arrive amid growing environmental concerns surrounding generative AI platforms like OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, and Microsoft's Copilot, all of which rely on significant computing power to function.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman recently disclosed that each ChatGPT prompt consumes approximately 0.34 watt-hours of electricity—between 10 and 70 times more than a standard Google search. With over a billion prompts processed daily, ChatGPT alone uses around 310 gigawatt-hours annually—equivalent to the yearly electricity consumption of three million Ethiopians, the report noted.

A Growing Environmental Burden

UNESCO warned that the escalating energy demands of AI are placing mounting pressure on global power systems, water supplies, and mineral resources. The report noted that energy use from generative AI is currently doubling every 100 days.

However, the study offers a simple solution: shorten prompts and use domain-specific AI models that don't require scanning vast datasets. Tests showed that cutting a prompt from 300 to 150 words and switching to a smaller, task-focused model slashed energy consumption by nearly 90 percent—without degrading performance.



Industry Response: Leaner, Greener AI Models

Major tech firms appear to be responding to the environmental challenge.

- Google has introduced its compact model Gemma
- Microsoft launched the energy-efficient Phi-3 series
- OpenAI released GPT-4o mini
- France's Mistral AI debuted its slimmed-down Ministral

These models are designed to perform specific tasks efficiently, requiring far less computational power and delivering faster results with a reduced environmental footprint.

A Call for Responsible AI Use

UNESCO urged governments, tech developers, and users to take into account the ecological costs of AI

as it becomes embedded in everyday tools — from search engines and chatbots to content creation software.

“With thoughtful design and mindful use, AI can be a powerful ally for sustainable development — but only if

its growing footprint is responsibly managed,” the report concluded.

Probe launched against AI-driven attempt to impersonate Marco Rubio

The U.S. State Department has launched an investigation into a sophisticated AI-driven scheme that attempted to impersonate Secretary of State Marco Rubio using fake messages aimed at misleading senior American and foreign officials.

State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce confirmed that the impersonation attempts were ultimately unsuccessful.

“The department takes seriously its responsibility to safeguard its information,” Bruce said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

She opened the briefing with a pointed remark: “In my own voice. Not AI,”—a lighthearted yet telling reference to growing concerns over synthetic media and deepfakes. Pressed for further information, Bruce declined to offer specifics, citing security concerns.

AI Threat Sparks Congressional Concern

The incident has added urgency to the debate on Capitol Hill over regulating artificial intelligence. While lawmakers on both sides of the aisle agree that federal standards are necessary, there remains disagreement on how best to implement them.

A recent effort by allies of former President Donald Trump to include a federal budget provision that would bar individual states from setting their own AI regulations was withdrawn after bipartisan opposition.



"I was very pleased," said Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.), who spearheaded the effort to strike the measure. "States are stepping in while Congress stalls. Now, we must move forward with a solid framework to protect people in the virtual space," she added.

Tech Industry Pushback Slows Progress

Despite consensus on the need for regulation, progress remains stalled as Big Tech firms continue to resist new federal oversight. As a result, the future of AI governance in the U.S. remains uncertain, even as threats like the recent impersonation attempt grow more sophisticated and dangerous.

Dewan Motors begins production of 300-km range EVs

Dewan Farooque Motors Limited (DFML) has initiated the manufacturing and assem-

bly of electric vehicles (EVs) with an extended 300-kilometre range for Eco-Green Motors Limited (EGML), further strengthening their ongoing partnership.

The development was announced in a notice submitted to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday. The company stated, "We are pleased to inform you that, in addition to 200km range electric vehicles, Dewan Farooque Motors Limited has now commenced manufacturing/assembling 300km range electric vehicles for Eco-Green Motors Limited." The announcement generated a positive response in the market, with DFML's share

price rising by Re0.72 to Rs36.89.

This expansion follows DFML's earlier disclosure that it had locally assembled over 300 units of the Chinese electric vehicle 'Honri-VE' within ten months of starting EV production at its facility. Production began in September 2024 after receiving approval from the Engineering Development Board (EDB).

DFML and EGML entered into a toll manufacturing agreement in June 2023. Under this arrangement, Eco-Green Motors supplies the vehicle design and materials, while DFML handles the assembly and manufacturing at its plant. Founded in 1998 as a public limited company, Dewan Farooque Motors is engaged in the assembly, progressive manufacturing, and sale of vehicles across Pakistan.

PayPal unveils AI-driven scam alert system

In a major step to bolster fraud protection, digital payments leader PayPal has

introduced an advanced AI-driven scam alert system designed to shield users from an ever-evolving landscape of online fraud. The new feature, also rolling out to Venmo in the United States, reflects PayPal's broader strategy to keep pace with cybercriminals who increasingly exploit generative AI.

"We need to outsmart scammers by using smarter AI," explained Yigit Yildirim, PayPal's Senior Vice President of Global Fraud Prevention. "We're fighting AI-driven fraud with AI built to protect."

At the core of this system are adaptive machine learning models that process billions of data points to detect subtle and unfamiliar risk patterns. This means the AI can flag suspicious transactions in real time, even if the specific scam hasn't been seen before.

Unlike traditional fraud alerts that can feel repetitive and easy to ignore, PayPal's system tailors its warnings based on the severity of detected risks. For lower-risk signs, users might see a simple prompt to double-check the transaction. If a high likelihood of fraud is identified, the system can block the payment outright.

This rollout is targeting "Friends and Family" payments worldwide and is coming soon to Venmo in the US. The aim is to reduce fraud without adding friction to genuine transactions. Yildirim highlighted how this dynamic approach helps avoid user "alert fatigue." For example, repeatedly warning someone about small, routine transfers could make users start ignoring alerts altogether. Instead, the new system adapts its response based on transaction history and context.

The real power behind the tool is its adaptive AI, which continually learns from new and old scam formats to detect suspicious patterns, even when exact matches don't exist. PayPal's move reflects a wider shift in fintech, where AI isn't just about speed or convenience but also about safeguarding customers against more sophisticated digital threats. While the company hasn't disclosed precise fraud figures, the message is clear: AI is becoming a frontline defender in the fight against online scams.

ChatGPT's Study Together Feature stuns people

OpenAI's widely used AI chatbot, ChatGPT, appears to be quietly testing a new feature called "Study Together," sparking intrigue among educators, students, and tech watchers alike. This experimental tool, which some ChatGPT subscribers have noticed in the tool drop-down menu, seems designed to transform how users interact with the chatbot, shifting from passive Q&A to active, critical engagement. Rather than simply delivering direct answers, early reports suggest Study Together acts more like an interactive tutor: posing follow-up questions, prompting deeper thinking, and encouraging users to explore topics more thoroughly. Some see this as OpenAI's answer to Google's recently announced LearnLM initiative.

Beyond one-on-one learning, there's speculation that Study Together could support shared study spaces, where multiple users can collaborate in real time potentially turning ChatGPT into a virtual group study room. However, OpenAI has yet to confirm any details about such functionality. When asked about the feature, ChatGPT itself responded, "OpenAI hasn't officially announced when or if Study Together will be available to all users, or if it will require ChatGPT Plus." The company has so far declined further comment.

The emergence of Study Together comes amid heated debate over AI's impact on education. While many educators see tools like ChatGPT as powerful aids for lesson planning and idea generation, critics warn they can tempt students to sidestep genuine learning.

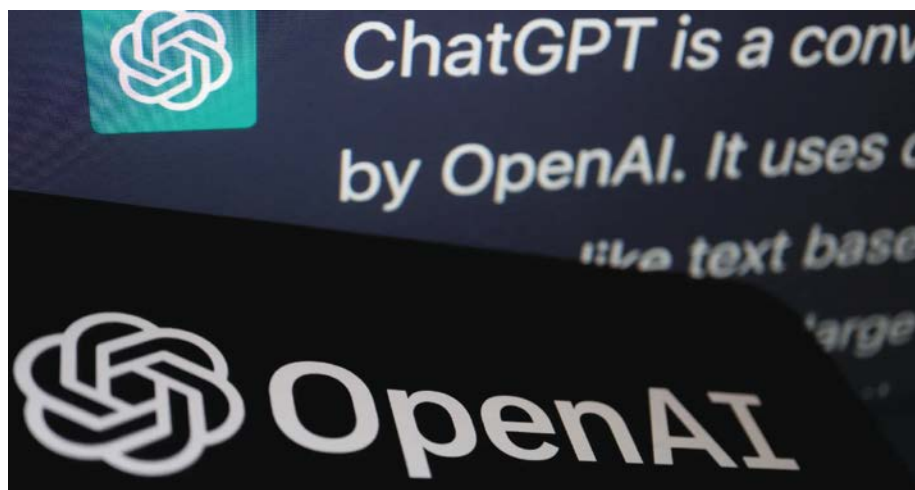
This new feature might reflect OpenAI's effort to reposition ChatGPT as an ally in fostering critical thinking rather than a shortcut for easy answers. Whether it will roll out broadly, and how it will reshape digital learning, remains to be seen.

OpenAI is launching its AI-powered web browser, a move poised

to challenge Google Chrome's dominance

OpenAI is nearing the launch of its own AI-powered web browser, a strategic move poised to directly challenge Google Chrome's dominance in the global browser market. According to three individuals familiar with the matter who spoke to Reuters, the browser is expected to be released in the coming weeks and is designed to revolutionize the way people interact with the web through artificial intelligence.

The forthcoming browser, insiders say, will allow users to navigate the internet through a ChatGPT-like interface, minimizing the need to click through traditional websites. This approach could drastically reshape user behavior by embedding AI agents into the browsing experience—agents capable of performing tasks such as filling out forms, booking appointments, and summarizing content.



If widely adopted by ChatGPT's 500 million weekly active users, the browser could significantly dent one of Google's primary sources of revenue: its ability to collect user data through Chrome to power targeted advertising.

Chrome is a cornerstone of Alphabet's digital empire, currently commanding over two-thirds of the global browser market with more than 3 billion users. The browser feeds Google's advertising machinery by channeling search traffic to its own engine and collecting vast amounts of user behavior data. That control over digital pathways is now being challenged.

Sources say OpenAI's browser is built on Chromium, Google's own open-source browser platform that also underpins other major browsers like Microsoft Edge and Opera. However, OpenAI's version will offer far deeper AI integration, serving as a foundation for deploying advanced AI assistants like Operator, capable of autonomously navigating and interacting with web content on behalf of users.

This browser project forms part of OpenAI's broader ambition to embed its services across users' personal and professional lives. One source indicated that OpenAI chose to build a standalone browser rather than a plugin or extension on another platform in order to gain full control over the browsing experience and the valuable data that comes with it.

The initiative also comes amid rising scrutiny of Google's market power. The U.S. Department of Justice recently accused Alphabet of holding an illegal monopoly in the online search market, prompting calls

for the divestiture of Chrome. While Google has denied wrongdoing and intends to appeal the ruling, the pressure adds a layer of complexity to the competitive landscape.

Adding to its strategic depth, OpenAI recently acquired AI hardware startup io for \$6.5 billion—a company founded by Apple's former design chief, Jony Ive—signaling its intent to expand into physical devices. In recent years, OpenAI has also strengthened its team with the recruitment of former senior Google engineers, including two vice presidents who were instrumental in developing Chrome.

Pakistan's New Sporting Craze: The Rise of Padel



By Hina Kashif

Padel, a thrilling blend of tennis and squash, is fast becoming Pakistan's most talked-about new sport. Stylish, social, and surprisingly addictive, it's already transformed the leisure scenes in Spain and the Gulf — and now, it's quietly reshaping how urban Pakistanis think about fitness, fun, and weekend plans.

But what's drawing attention isn't just the game itself. It's the lifestyle emerging around it.

Padel is far from a solitary sport. It's social by design — doubles only, with courts that bring players close enough to chat mid-serve. For many, it's not just a match; it's a midweek hangout, a weekend ritual, or even a date-night alternative. Whether played on rooftop clubs in Karachi, tucked-away courts in Lahore's gated communities, or stylish venues in Islamabad's diplomatic enclaves, padel is becoming a go-to for those seeking both activity and atmosphere.

A Game Born by Chance

Padel's journey began not in a boardroom or sports committee, but in the backyard of a wealthy Mexican

businessman. In 1969, Enrique Corcuera, short on space at his Acapulco home, built a makeshift tennis court enclosed by walls. To make it playable, he adjusted the rules, lowered the net, and unknowingly created what would become one of the world's fastest-growing sports.

The game quietly gained traction in Spain during the 1970s, especially among the elite in Marbella. Its smaller court, accessible technique, and dynamic doubles play soon caught fire. By the 2000s, there were more padel courts than tennis ones in Spain. The wave next swept through the Gulf, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia, where padel wasn't just played — it was styled. Courts became luxury experiences, with music, cafes, and curated social energy.

From Dubai to DHA: How Padel Arrived in Pakistan

Padel didn't arrive in Pakistan via government rollout or sports federation initiative. It came through curiosity. Traveling Pakistanis who tried it in Dubai or saw it trending in Spain returned home asking, "Why not here?"

Early adoption began in Islamabad's private clubs and secure diplomatic zones, where space and exclusivity aligned perfectly with the game's setup. Then Lahore joined in, with its fitness-conscious residents and community-driven sports culture. Now, Karachi is experiencing a surge — with rooftop courts overlooking the sea, where matches roll on late into the night, set to music and social buzz.

No Federation, No Problem

Padel in Pakistan is still unregulated. There's no central association, no national league, and no formal ranking system. But that's part of its appeal. Without rigid structures, the game remains accessible, fun, and inclusive. It's growing organically — fueled by excitement, word-of-mouth, and a craving for something new.

Whether you're an athlete, a fitness hobbyist, or just looking for a unique way to spend time with friends, padel offers a perfect mix of movement and community. And in Pakistan's ever-evolving urban landscape, it's proving that sometimes, the best trends are the ones you don't see coming — until they're everywhere.

Why Is Padel So Popular?

1. **Easy to Learn, Hard to Master:** The rules are simple, and the smaller court makes rallies longer and more fun for beginners.
2. **Social and Inclusive:** Since it's usually played in doubles, padel is very social. It's accessible to all ages and fitness levels, making it ideal for families, friends, and even corporate events.
3. **Less Physically Demanding:** Compared to tennis, padel puts less strain on joints due to the smaller court and underhand serve.
4. **Fast-Growing Global Sport:** It's especially popular in Spain, Argentina, Mexico, and is quickly expanding in Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. Celebrities and athletes like Cristiano Ronaldo and Zlatan Ibrahimović have helped boost its global image.
5. **Infrastructure Boom:** Padel courts are relatively cheap and fast to build, leading to a surge in new clubs, especially in urban areas.

In short, padel is famous because it's fun, accessible, and social, combining the best parts of tennis and squash in a format that's exciting for players and spectators alike.

Infrastructure and Spread

Commercial launch: Padel tennis has rapidly gained popularity in Pakistan, especially among urban youth and fitness enthusiasts. The sport made a significant breakthrough with the commercial launch of Pakistan's first accessible padel courts at Legends Arena in Karachi, a repurposed hockey ground. This development marked a new chapter for recreational sports in the country.

Since then, dedicated padel clubs have opened in major cities including Islamabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Multan, making the sport more accessible. These facilities offer a modern, social, and less physically demanding alternative to traditional tennis or squash, which has helped broaden its appeal. Padel's growing visibility in Pakistan is also driven by international

exposure, social media buzz, and endorsements by local influencers and athletes. With an increasing number of enthusiasts and facilities, Pakistan's padel scene is evolving into a vibrant community sport with the potential to grow into professional circuits and local leagues.

Islamabad Serves Up Padel Boom: CDA Leases Five Prime Sites to Fuel Pakistan's Fastest-Growing Sport

Islamabad has taken a significant step in promoting urban sports and recreation by auctioning five prime sites across the city for the commercial development of padel tennis courts. The Capital Development Authority (CDA) expects to generate a total of Rs 7.6 million in monthly revenue from these fixed-rent leases — a first for such a project in the capital.

Responding to this directive, the CDA re-rendered the five locations, which received strong interest from investors and sports entrepreneurs. According to the official statement, the following monthly lease values were secured for each site:

- G-5 (near Serena Hotel): Rs 2.1 million
- F-8: Rs 2.1 million
- F-9 Park: Rs 1.45 million
- G-11: Rs 1.1 million
- G-8: Rs 900,000

Each bidder is required to construct two padel courts per site and complete the work within 45 days. These courts will be operated commercially, allowing citizens access to state-of-the-art facilities and expanding Islamabad's recreational infrastructure.



Padel, a fast-growing racket sport that fuses elements of tennis and squash, has gained notable popularity in Pakistan, especially in major urban centres like Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad. Recognizing the sport's growing appeal, the CDA had initially planned to award padel court sites on a profit-sharing basis. However, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi intervened, expressing concerns about potential corruption and revenue mismanagement under the revenue-sharing model. He directed the CDA to revise the auction format to a fixed monthly rent structure, which would provide more transparency and predictable revenue for the public body.

In a press release, CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa and Acting Chairman Talat Mahmood Gondal expressed satisfaction over the successful and transparent auction process. They emphasized that the initiative was in line with the CDA's commitment to maximize the public utility of urban land and enhance citizens' access to modern sports amenities.

Acting Chairman Gondal further added that the move supports the broader goal of encouraging an active, healthy lifestyle among Islamabad's residents. With padel tennis already gaining traction among fitness enthusiasts and younger demographics, the addition of these professionally

managed facilities is expected to boost the sport's visibility and accessibility.

It is worth noting that padel courts had already been set up at F-6 and the Diplomatic Enclave under the older revenue-sharing model. While those contracts remain valid, the CDA has confirmed that all future sports infrastructure projects, including proposed futsal courts, will now follow the fixed-rent approach to ensure transparency and accountability.

This initiative marks a pivotal moment in Islamabad's evolving recreational landscape. Not only does it reflect the growing popularity of padel tennis in Pakistan, but it also showcases how public-private partnerships can effectively modernize city infrastructure, generate sustainable revenue, and improve quality of life for residents.



Public access

The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) is taking a major step toward making padel tennis accessible to the wider public by planning new courts at key national sporting venues. According to PSB sources, Jinnah Sports Complex in Islamabad, along with National Coaching Centers in Lahore and Karachi, will soon feature official padel facilities. This marks a shift toward inclusivity in sports, as these locations have traditionally been public property used primarily for elite training or larger sporting events.

Padel tennis, a hybrid of tennis and squash, has gained significant traction in Pakistan's

urban areas, thanks to private club expansions in Karachi and Lahore. However, access has remained financially out of reach for many enthusiasts. By developing padel courts within the Jinnah Sports Complex, Islamabad and the national coaching centers in Lahore and Karachi, the PSB aims to reduce this barrier to entry. These publicly owned venues promise more affordable fees, ensuring that young players, fitness fans, and families from diverse backgrounds can engage with the sport.

Under a public-private partnership (PPP) model, the PSB has invited bids for the construction and operation of these courts. Private firms will finance and build the facilities, manage them for an agreed duration, and return the courts to PSB control upon completion of the contract. They will also remand a share of revenues back to the PSB. This model not only

accelerates infrastructure development, but also ensures long-term professionalism and maintenance.

Construction is already underway, with courts progressing rapidly in the capital. In Islamabad, eight padel courts and five futsal pitches are being installed at public schools and colleges under the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to embedding sports into educational settings.

In the 2025–26 federal budget, the PSB is expected to receive funding to complete long-delayed upgrades at the Karachi coaching center. These include a new tartan athletics track, enhanced seating, additional padel courts, and new floodlights—some

facilities that had been left incomplete for nearly three decades.

By combining infrastructure upgrades at key sports hubs in Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi, the PSB's initiative broadens the availability of padel tennis across socioeconomic classes. This not only supports grassroots sports development but also positions Pakistan to nurture talent that could one day compete on an international stage.

Competitions & Rising Talent in Pakistan's Padel Scene

The competitive landscape of padel in Pakistan is expanding rapidly, highlighted by two major annual events that showcase both growing participation and emerging talent.

First, the Pakistan Padel Open 2024 set a national record with over 180 players, including international teams from Norway, competing across five categories—from Men's A and B divisions to Women's and Mixed events. Hosted at Legends Arena in Karachi, the event featured top-level performances and high-stakes finals. In Men's A, defending champions Farhan Mustafa and Abdur Rehman defended their title with a 6–4, 6–4 win over Norwegian duo Bilal Ahmed and Samir Almas. Women's champions Mehak Taherani and Saira Umar triumphed in a thrilling three-set final (6–3, 3–6, 6–3), while Hamzah Bokhari and Hasnat Hashwani clinched the Mixed category with a commanding 7–5, 6–1 victory. This tournament not only marked Pakistan's largest padel event to date but also signaled its emergence on the international stage.

Building on that momentum, the National Padel Championship 2025 took place from April 11 to 13 at Paddlers, Karachi, under the auspices of the Pakistan Padel Federation, International Padel Federation, and Padel Asia. It featured 37 men's teams, 8 women's teams, and 14 mixed pairs. In a high-energy final, Karachi's Adeel Allawala and Hasheesh Kumar defeated Islamabad's Sami Zeb Khan and Shumail Shigri in straight sets to claim the men's title and PKR 150,000. The women's doubles crown went to Karachi's Natalia Zaman and Sana Sohail Tabbu (PKR 100,000), while Islam-

abad pair Sarah Mansoor and Sami Zeb triumphed in the mixed category. This championship not only reinforced Karachi's status as a padel hotspot but also emphasized structured national competitions across gender and mixed divisions.

A particularly promising development is the emergence of Pakistani athletes on the international scene. Mohammed Aziz Khan made history as the country's first player to receive an International Padel Federation (FIP) license, competing in the FIP International Bronze Tournament in Hong Kong in March 2025 alongside Belgian partner Sébastien Garcia Ortega. Such achievements offer Pakistani padel newfound credibility and align with efforts to build national rankings for international competition.

Together, these tournaments and rising stars like Aziz Khan signal a pivotal phase for padel in Pakistan—shifting from a niche, urban trend to a serious, organized sport with grassroots appeal and historical international representation.

Why Padel Tennis Is Thriving in Pakistan

Padel tennis has swiftly become a cultural and recreational phenomenon across urban Pakistan, driven by its social nature, accessible format, and community-driven enthusiasm.

Social & Accessible

Padel's doubles format and simple rules make it easy to pick up yet engaging enough for seasoned players. As one club promoter explained, "No stadiums, no fees, no formalities. Just a ball, a bat, and a group of eager players". The smaller court size and mix of tennis and squash elements strengthen mental sharpness and reflexes while remaining beginner-friendly.

24/7 Play

Many Pakistani padel clubs offer near-round-the-clock availability, with some courts open till 3–4 AM, especially in Karachi and Islamabad. At Karachi's Legends Arena, courts operate up to 22 hours a day, responding to high demand from players and social groups. Even during Ramadan, night-time padel sessions after iftar and before suhoor have become a popular social activity in Islamabad.

Building Community

Padel has spawned vibrant grassroots communities. In Karachi, Islamabad, and Lahore, players organize matches through Facebook and WhatsApp groups, helping shy newcomers find partners. One Karachi player shared "I learnt about padel through a friend... It started from a small group... now a 35-member WhatsApp group". Islamabad users report hundreds in social

media circles, with matches arranged via WhatsApp invites.

Influencer Boost

Padel's rise has been fueled by social media and lifestyle branding. Stylish videos, influencer endorsements, and lifestyle coverage position the game as "therapy in motion." A Dawn feature noted that female players from different backgrounds—"a woman in a burqa trades shots with another in a tank top"—highlight padel's inclusivity and laid-back aura. It's become part of a modern urban identity.

padel's popularity in Pakistan stems from its social appeal, inclusivity, and flexibility—melding fitness, entertainment, and community. Whether you're a competitive player or social seeker, padel offers both a fun sport and a vibrant social scene. Pakistan's outlook for padel is exceptionally positive. Structured national programs, international integration, potential inclusion in major multi-sport events, and scalable grassroots growth—all fueled by enthusiastic community engagement—indicate that padel is becoming a cornerstone of Pakistan's sporting future. With every new court and tournament, Pakistan strengthens its ambition to be a competitive force in global padel.





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