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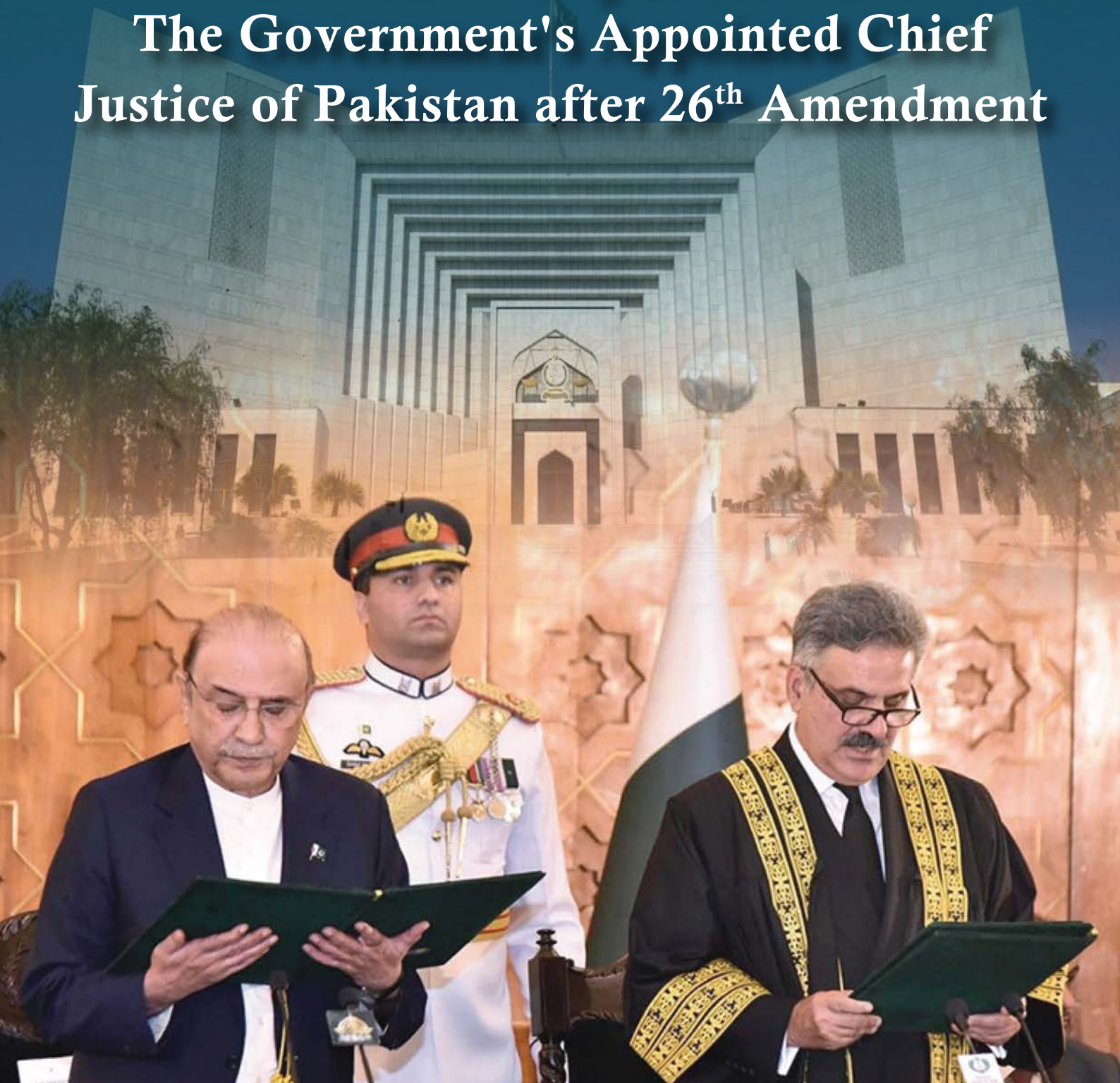
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Justice Yahya Afridi: The Government's Appointed Chief Justice of Pakistan after 26th Amendment



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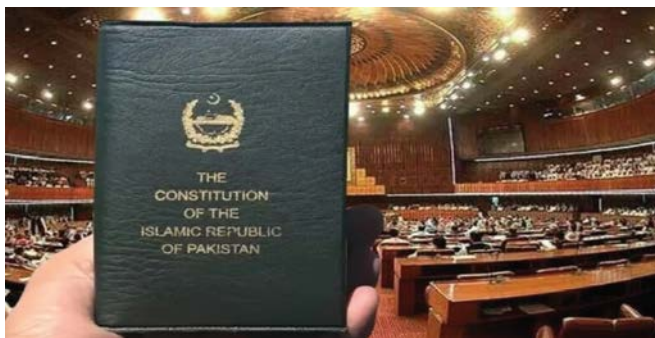
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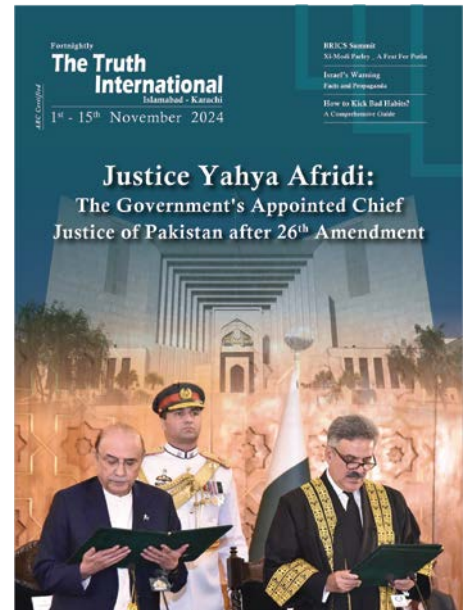
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Justice Yahya Afridi: The Government's Appointed Chief Justice of Pakistan under the 26th Constitutional Amendment



By Kanwal Munir

Introduction

The appointment of Justice Yahya Afridi as the Chief Justice of Pakistan marks a significant milestone in the country's judicial history. For the first time, a Special Parliamentary Committee was responsible for nominating the Chief Justice, a decision that has sparked both hope and controversy within legal and political circles. This article delves into Justice Afridi's background and the political context surrounding his nomination, including the implications of the recent 26th Constitutional Amendment.

The opposition's response, particularly the protests by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, reflects deep divisions within the political landscape. Furthermore, this article examines the broader impact of these developments on Pakistan's legal system, assessing the potential challenges and opportunities that lie ahead under Justice Afridi's leadership. As he takes on this pivotal role, the future of the judiciary hangs in a delicate balance amid ongoing political tensions.

Background of Justice Yahya Afridi

Justice Yahya Afridi, a distinguished figure in Pakistan's legal landscape, was born in Peshawar on March 22, 1966. He completed his early education in Peshawar before moving to the United States for higher studies. Afridi earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and later obtained a Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) from the University of London. His academic background laid a strong foundation for his career in law and justice.

Before his elevation to the Supreme Court, Justice Afridi served as a judge of the Peshawar High Court, where he earned a reputation for his commitment to justice and legal integrity. He was appointed to the Supreme Court of Pakistan on August 17, 2018, where he continued to demonstrate his judicial acumen and dedication to upholding the rule of law.

Legal Contributions

Throughout his judicial career, Justice Afridi has presided over several landmark cases, addressing issues ranging from human rights to constitutional law. His rulings have often reflected a deep understanding of the complexities of Pakistani society, making him a respected figure among legal professionals and scholars alike. His commitment to judicial independence and reform has been recognized both nationally and internationally.

In his tenure, Justice Afridi has authored notable judgments on human rights, women's rights, and civil liberties. One of his significant contributions includes a ruling that enhanced protections for minority rights, affirming the need for the judiciary to play a proactive role in safeguarding the rights of marginalized communities. His judgments often emphasize the importance of balancing state authority with individual freedoms, reinforcing the judiciary's role as a check on executive power.



Personal Life

Justice Afridi is married and has children, balancing his demanding judicial career with family life. His personal experiences have shaped his understanding of the challenges faced by ordinary citizens in Pakistan, fueling his dedication to making the judicial system more accessible and responsive to the needs of the public. His family background is rooted in a tradition of legal practice; his father was also a prominent lawyer, influencing Afridi's career choice and commitment to justice.

The Special Parliamentary Committee's Nomination

The historic nomination process for Chief Justice Afridi began with the formation of a Special Parliamentary Committee, which included representatives from both the ruling coalition and opposition parties. This committee was established under the 26th Constitutional Amendment, which modified the process of appointing the Chief Justice, requiring a two-thirds majority for any nomination.

Initial Meetings and Consensus

The committee convened its initial meeting in early October 2024, where members engaged in extensive discussions about

potential nominees. The deliberations were marked by a desire to ensure that the appointment reflected a consensus among various political factions. Justice Afridi was ultimately selected as the nominee with a two-thirds majority, a testament to his reputation and qualifications.

Members of the committee expressed their views on the importance of a Chief Justice who could navigate the challenges facing the judiciary. Many emphasized the need for a leader who could restore public confidence in the judicial system, which has faced criticism for perceived bias and inefficiency. The committee's deliberations were also informed by the current political climate, marked by a growing demand for judicial reforms.

The 26th Constitutional Amendment: Implications and Reactions

The 26th Constitutional Amendment introduced significant changes to the judicial appointment process, sparking a heated debate about its implications for judicial independence. The amendment established a fixed three-year term for Chief Justices and mandated that a 12-member parliamentary committee nominate the Chief Justice based on a two-thirds majority.

Key Provisions of the Amendment

The 26th Constitutional Amendment introduces several pivotal changes to the judicial appointment process in Pakistan, fundamentally altering the landscape of judicial governance.

Fixed Terms for Chief Justices

One of the most significant aspects of the amendment is the introduction of a fixed three-year term for Chief Justices. This provision aims to ensure stability and predictability in the highest judicial office, allowing for more consistent leadership within the Supreme Court. By limiting the tenure of Chief Justices, the amendment seeks to mitigate the potential for prolonged judicial dominance by any one individual and to promote a more dynamic and responsive judicial leadership.

Establishment of Constitutional Benches

The amendment also proposes the establishment of constitutional benches within both the Supreme Court and high courts. These benches will be responsible for handling cases that involve significant constitutional questions, ensuring that such matters receive the focused attention they require. The formation of these benches





will be overseen by a judicial commission tasked with determining the appropriate number of judges for each bench. This reform aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the judiciary in addressing complex constitutional issues.

Role of the Judicial Commission

A critical aspect of the amendment is the enhanced role of the judicial commission in the judicial appointments process. The commission will now have the authority to appoint judges to the constitutional benches, as well as evaluate their performance. This change is intended to promote accountability within the judiciary and to ensure that judges are held to high standards of performance and integrity.

Concerns Raised by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has raised significant concerns regarding the potential implications of the 26th Constitutional Amendment on judicial independence. Critics argue that the amendment's provisions may pave the way for increased political influence over judicial appointments, which could severely undermine the impartiality and autonomy of the judiciary. Such a shift in the balance of power is particularly alarming given the critical role an independent judiciary plays in upholding the rule of law and safeguarding citizens' rights.

amendments could set a dangerous precedent for future judicial appointments. They called for transparency in the appointment process and urged for the establishment of safeguards that would prevent undue political influence. This dialogue is crucial to ensuring that the judiciary retains its role as a guardian of rights and freedoms, free from external pressures that could compromise its function. The HRCP's warnings reflect a vital aspect of Pakistan's democratic framework, emphasizing that the health of the judiciary is integral to the overall stability and fairness of the nation's legal system. The call for a renewed commitment to judicial independence is a reminder of the importance of maintaining a balance of power that protects the rights of all citizens.

The Opposition's Boycott and Protest

In response to Justice Yahya Afridi's nomination, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has vehemently rejected the appointment and vowed to launch a protest movement against the Special Parliamentary Committee's decision. PTI leader Hamid Khan publicly condemned the nomination, asserting that it undermines the integrity of the judicial system. He expressed hope that Justice Afridi would decline the nomination, citing previous instances where out-of-turn appointments of Chief Justices had caused significant harm to the country.

The PTI's decision to boycott the parliamentary meeting reflects deeper political motivations, with the party alleging that the nomination process was manipulated to fulfill a political agenda. The opposition claims that the decision to overlook the seniority principle in favor of a political nominee is an attempt to create division within the Supreme Court and undermine its credibility. Hamid Khan's comments underscore the party's position that such actions threaten the foundations of justice in Pakistan.

Organizing Protests

Following the boycott, the PTI has begun organizing protests across the country to express their discontent with the nomination of Justice Afridi. The protests are intended to mobilize public opinion against



Legislative Oversight of Judicial Appointments

To strengthen the legislature's role in the judicial appointments process, the amendment establishes a 12-member parliamentary committee that will nominate the CJP by a two-thirds majority. This move is seen as an attempt to introduce greater oversight and accountability into the appointment process, ensuring that the judiciary is not insulated from legislative scrutiny. However, critics argue that this increased legislative influence may compromise judicial independence.

In a formal statement, the HRCP urged lawmakers to prioritize the insulation of the judiciary from political pressures. They stressed that a strong, independent judiciary is not only essential for maintaining the integrity of the legal system but also for protecting the fundamental rights of individuals. The HRCP's concerns echo a broader apprehension within civil society regarding the potential erosion of judicial independence in Pakistan.

The commission highlighted the need for a public discourse surrounding these changes, warning that the acceptance of such



what they perceive as an unconstitutional move that threatens the independence of the judiciary. The PTI aims to rally support from legal professionals and civil society organizations, framing their movement as a defense of judicial integrity and independence.

The party's protest strategy has included press conferences, rallies, and social media campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the perceived dangers of the 26th Amendment and its implications for the judiciary. By galvanizing public support, the PTI hopes to pressure the government to reconsider the nomination and engage in a more transparent and inclusive judicial appointment process.

Political Messaging

The PTI framed the protest as part of a broader struggle for democracy and judicial integrity. Party leaders, including former Prime Minister ****Imran Khan****, emphasized the importance of maintaining the sanctity of the judicial appointment process. The protests aimed to galvanize public support and pressure the government to reconsider its nomination of Justice Afridi.

During speeches at protest rallies, Imran Khan called for a united front against what he termed "political interference in the judiciary." He urged citizens to recognize the potential dangers of allowing political considerations to dictate judicial appointments. The messaging resonated with many who have long been concerned about the politicization of the judiciary.

Government's Response

In response to the protests, the government, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, defended the nomination of Justice Afridi as a decision made on merit, dismissing allegations of political motivations. Planning Minister ****Ahsan Iqbal**** reiterated that the selection process adhered to constitutional requirements and emphasized the need for a stable judiciary in Pakistan.

Government officials argued that the appointment of Justice Afridi represented a step forward in promoting judicial reform

and accountability. They dismissed the PTI's claims of political interference as unfounded and emphasized the importance of maintaining public trust in the judiciary.

Challenge to the 26th Constitutional Amendment in Pakistan's Supreme Court

The 26th Constitutional Amendment has faced a legal challenge in Pakistan's Supreme Court, initiated by former Human Rights Commission of Pakistan chairman and ex-senator Afrasiab Khattak. In his petition, Khattak has called for the formation of a full bench to hear the case, emphasizing the need for a thorough investigation into whether lawmakers voted for the amendment under coercion or voluntarily. He has suggested that the court or a judicial commission conduct this inquiry.

Khattak's petition asserts that the amendment was passed without proper due diligence and calls for its nullification, arguing that it threatens the independence of the judiciary, a cornerstone of the Constitution. The petition raises concerns about the newly introduced mechanism for reviewing judges' annual performance, contending that it infringes on judicial independence. Furthermore, the changes to the appointment process for the chief justice and the establishment of constitutional benches are described as violations of judicial autonomy. The petition also argues that constitutional benches should be barred from hearing challenges to the 26th Amendment. Political parties such as PML-N and PPP have been named respondents in this significant case, underscoring its political implications.

Justice Afridi's Swearing-In Ceremony

On October 26, 2024, Justice Yahya Afridi was formally sworn in as the Chief Justice of Pakistan in a ceremony held at the President's House. The event was attended by a significant number of dignitaries, including government officials, legal experts, and members of the judiciary.

Ceremony Highlights

During the swearing-in ceremony, President Asif Ali Zardari administered the oath of office to Justice Afridi, emphasizing the importance of an independent judiciary in upholding the rule of law. In his speech, President Zardari expressed confidence in Justice Afridi's ability to lead the Supreme Court and navigate the challenges facing the judiciary.

Justice Afridi's acceptance speech focused on the need for judicial reforms and the importance of public trust in the legal system. He emphasized his commitment to upholding the Constitution and ensuring justice for all citizens, stating, "I will strive to make the judiciary a beacon of hope for the people of Pakistan."

Immediate Reactions

Following the swearing-in ceremony, reactions poured in from various quarters. Supporters of Justice Afridi celebrated his appointment as a positive development for the judiciary, while critics continued to express their concerns regarding the legitimacy of the nomination process.

Legal experts noted the importance of Justice Afridi's leadership in addressing pressing issues within the judicial system, including case backlogs and access to justice. Many expressed hope that he would prioritize judicial reforms and work towards restoring public confidence in the judiciary.

The Broader Implications for Governance and the Judiciary

Justice Afridi's appointment and the surrounding controversy have broader implications for governance and the rule of law in Pakistan. The tensions between the government and opposition highlight the challenges of political polarization in the country, particularly concerning critical institutions like the judiciary.

Impact on Judicial Independence

The introduction of political influence into the judicial appointments process raises concerns about the long-term impact on



judicial independence. The perception of political interference can undermine public confidence in the judiciary, leading to questions about the legitimacy of judicial decisions. Maintaining the integrity of the judiciary is essential for ensuring the rule of law and protecting individual rights in Pakistan.

Potential for Political Instability

The ongoing protests and political tensions surrounding Justice Afridi's appointment may contribute to broader political instability in Pakistan. The opposition's rejection of the nomination process could lead to

address these concerns and ensure that reforms serve the best interests of the public and uphold the rule of law.

Economic Outlook Following the Appointment

Justice Afridi's appointment has also been met with cautious optimism in economic circles. Analysts suggest that a stable judiciary is crucial for fostering investor confidence and promoting economic growth in Pakistan. The stock market reacted positively to the news of his appointment, reflecting hopes for a more predictable legal environment.

Future Economic Prospects

Economists argue that the judiciary plays a vital role in fostering economic development by ensuring the rule of law. Justice Afridi's leadership is expected to contribute to a more predictable legal environment, which can boost investor confidence and promote economic growth.

As Pakistan grapples with numerous economic challenges, including inflation and fiscal deficits, a stable judiciary may be a crucial factor in promoting economic stability. Observers emphasize the importance of addressing structural issues within the judicial system to enhance its capacity to support economic growth.

Conclusion

Justice Yahya Afridi's appointment as Chief Justice of Pakistan marks a significant turning point in the country's judiciary. While his nomination has ignited controversy and sparked protests from opposition parties like the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), it also presents an opportunity for judicial reform and enhancing public trust in the legal system. The implications of the 26th Constitutional Amendment, which reshapes the judicial appointment process, will be crucial in determining how effectively the judiciary operates under Afridi's leadership.

As he embarks on this new chapter, Justice Afridi faces the challenge of navigating a complex political landscape while upholding the principles of justice and the rule of law. His commitment to reform and accountability will be vital in restoring public confidence in the judiciary, ensuring it remains an independent institution dedicated to serving the people of Pakistan. The broader economic outlook, along with the reactions from civil society, will further influence the trajectory of the judiciary during this critical period. Ultimately, Justice Afridi's leadership will be instrumental in fostering a judiciary that embodies integrity, fairness, and responsiveness to the needs of the nation.



increased confrontations between political parties, exacerbating existing divisions within the political landscape. As protests escalate, there is a risk of escalating tensions, which may further complicate the functioning of government institutions.

The Future of Judicial Reforms

The passage of the 26th Amendment and the subsequent appointment of Justice Afridi signal a shift in the landscape of judicial reforms in Pakistan. While the amendments aim to enhance accountability and efficiency within the judiciary, they also raise questions about the balance between legislative oversight and judicial independence. Moving forward, it will be crucial for lawmakers and judicial authorities to engage in constructive dialogue to

Stock Market Performance

In the days following Justice Afridi's appointment, the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a surge in trading activity, with the benchmark index registering gains. Investors expressed optimism about the potential for a more stable legal framework, which could enhance the business environment in the country.

Market analysts attribute the positive sentiment to the belief that Justice Afridi will prioritize judicial efficiency and transparency. A stable judiciary is seen as essential for resolving business disputes and safeguarding investor rights, which are critical for attracting foreign investment.



PTI and Constitutional Amendments

By Hina Kashif

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has distanced itself from a petition filed in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) by Advocate Faisal Hussain Chaudhry on behalf of Imran Khan. The petition seeks to challenge the withdrawal of certain prison facilities for the former prime minister.

Chaudhry stated that the petition was submitted with the consent of Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, Imran Khan's legal representative. However, PTI clarified on Saturday night that Chaudhry acted independently, utilizing an outdated power of attorney from Khan without current authorization.

This clarification follows news that Chaudhry had been removed from PTI's legal team just a day prior. PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja reportedly instructed him to disassociate from all cases involving the party's founder. Furthermore, Chaudhry was removed from PTI lawyers' WhatsApp groups, a decision confirmed by Barrister Gohar.

In response, Chaudhry took to X (formerly Twitter) to express understanding for Barrister Gohar, acknowledging the pressure he might be under.

There are also allegations that Chaudhry and another lawyer, Intizar Panjutha, are working to facilitate the return of certain leaders to PTI, indicating deeper internal dynamics within the party's leadership and legal circles.

Faisal's brother, Fawad Chaudhry, a former cabinet minister under the PTI government, left the party amid the crack-down on PTI leaders following the regime change in 2022, adding another layer of complexity to the situation surrounding Imran Khan's legal representation.

The petition highlights the challenges Khan has faced during his imprisonment, alleging that his political opponents are trying to undermine his commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and the Constitution.

It claims that since October 3, 2023, Khan has experienced inhumane treatment from



prison authorities, including denial of legal rights and harsh living conditions that violate prison regulations.

The petition details that Khan has been confined to an 8×6 foot cell, deprived of exercise and subjected to prolonged periods without electricity, leaving him in darkness for 12 to 14 hours at a time—conditions deemed detrimental to his health and safety.

Additionally, it reports that Khan has received poor-quality food, resulting in stomach issues, and has not been provided with newspapers or reading materials since October 3, effectively isolating him from the outside world and news about the ongoing crackdown on his family and party workers.

The petition calls on the IHC to direct prison authorities to restore proper facilities for Imran Khan, reflecting his status as a former prime minister of Pakistan.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs, Rana Sanaullah, has confirmed that the proposed 27th constitutional amendment will include provisions for establishing military courts.

In an interview with World Echo (WE News), he stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reassured allied political parties about the amendment's introduction.

The amendment is expected to address issues related to the distribution of funds within Sindh's local government system.

Sanaullah's confirmation comes amidst reports of potential changes to laws governing military courts. However, this move has sparked opposition from key political figures.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who played a critical role in the passage of the 26th Constitutional Amendment, has voiced strong opposition to the creation of military courts.

The government recently passed several constitutional amendments aimed at judicial reforms. These reforms include changes to the process of appointing top judges, following a series of decisions by the judiciary that have been favorable to opposition leader Imran Khan.

The changes modify how the Chief Justice of Pakistan is appointed and how judicial benches are formed. Another key amendment sets a deadline for phasing out interest-based banking (riba) by January 1, 2028, "as far as practicable."

Sanaullah highlighted that the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) is pushing for direct transfers of local government funds from the federal government to districts, arguing that provincial governments often fail to allocate these funds to the grassroots level effectively.

Regarding military courts, Sanaullah emphasized their necessity in regions like the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where civilian courts are reluctant to operate due to security concerns.



He clarified that cases involving former Prime Minister Imran Khan would not fall under the jurisdiction of these military courts, stressing that such a scenario should not arise.

Additionally, Sanaullah denied rumors about former Chief Justice of Pakistan, Qazi Faez Isa, being considered for the position of Chief Election Commissioner.

He also stated that retired judges would not participate in constitutional benches. Independent Senator Faisal Vawda echoed these sentiments on a television appearance, asserting that more amendments,

PTI's Sheikh Waqas Akram emphasized during Geo News' program 'Geo Pakistan': "Whether it's the 27th or 28th constitutional amendment, PTI will oppose it."

Akram suggested that if the government were confident, it wouldn't resort to raiding PTI lawmakers' homes or allegedly abducting supporters. "We are a political party, and while our decisions can be critiqued, why is the call for consensus only made concerning PTI?" he questioned.

He also defended Bushra Bibi, stating she has no political ambitions and reaffirmed

each other's success," he commented.

He shared that after his last meeting before leaving jail, he informed Khan that he would be filing the petition, to which Khan responded, "Go ahead."

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari met with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Lahore on Sunday to discuss the proposed 27th Constitutional Amendment. The meeting was attended by prominent figures including former Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf, Punjab Governor Sardar Salim Haider, Adviser to the Prime Minister Rana Sanaullah, and National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.

This high-profile meeting followed the recent approval of the 26th Constitutional Amendment in both the National Assembly and the Senate. While the amendment received backing from Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), other opposition parties raised concerns.

During the discussion, Bilawal commended the passage of the 26th Amendment, describing it as a significant milestone toward bolstering democracy and enhancing the effectiveness of parliament. He stressed that the amendment served as a safeguard against anti-democratic influences and underscored the PPP's dedication to collaborative efforts for democratic progress.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed his appreciation for the role of all coalition parties in achieving this legislative success. He emphasized his administration's commitment to public service and shared that a noticeable reduction in inflation had been recorded, which he attributed to improved economic indicators and policies aimed at stabilizing the economy.

The discussions reflected a shared vision among coalition partners for strengthening the democratic framework and addressing the nation's pressing challenges. The PPP Chairman's remarks underscored a commitment to working hand in hand with the government to sustain democratic principles, ensuring that recent legislative advancements contributed to long-term stability and prosperity.



including beyond the 27th, were forthcoming but refrained from offering specific details.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has firmly declared its opposition to any forthcoming constitutional amendments that the government may propose.

This declaration came during a recent parliamentary session, where PTI members staged a walkout as lawmakers voted on the contentious 26th Constitutional Amendment. PTI leaders argue that the new amendment could lead to political interference in judicial matters, particularly regarding the appointment of the chief justice and Supreme Court judges, thereby giving parliament undue influence over the judiciary.

The statement follows reports that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto discussed the potential "27th constitutional amendment."

the PTI founder's stance that no family members would enter politics. Akram assured that the party stands with any family member advocating for the founder's release, adding, "It is not politics when a wife speaks up for her husband, or sisters for their brother."

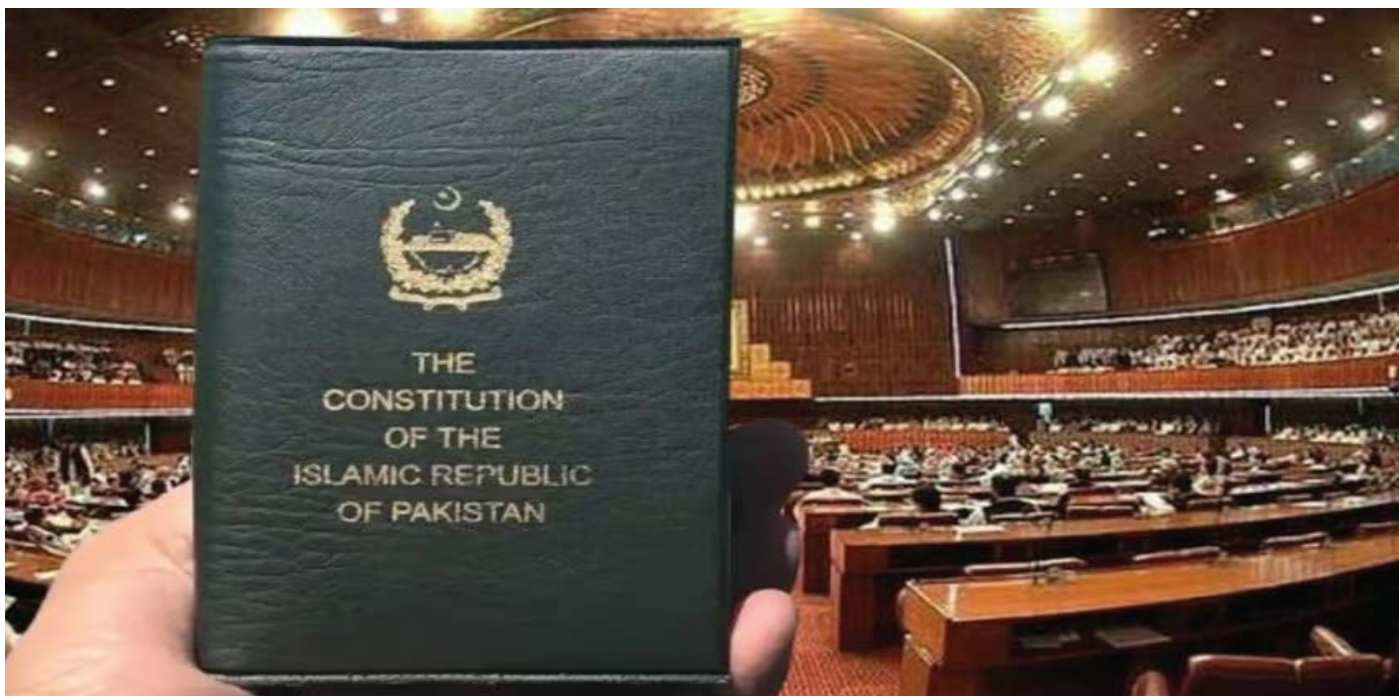
The PTI remains focused on securing the release of its leader, he noted.

Regarding reports of Faisal Chaudhry's removal from the party's legal team, Akram clarified that Salman Akram Raja leads PTI's legal committee. "Faisal is like a brother to me and I hold him in high regard," he said, adding that Chaudhry has not been hired for Imran Khan or Bushra Bibi's cases.

In a separate interview, Chaudhry explained that he filed a petition on the instruction of PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan. "If I am delivering, then I will stay; if not, my client can choose another lawyer. Lawyers can be jealous of



What is Pakistan's new constitutional amendment all about?



By Aamir Latif

Constitutional changes approved by Pakistan's Parliament this week have further strained the country's political atmosphere, with critics accusing the government of undermining the independence of the judiciary.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's ruling coalition maintains that the 22-point Constitutional Package is aimed at regulating the country's judicial system.

The 26th Constitutional Amendment Bill 2024 passed with a two-thirds majority from both the National Assembly and Senate, as lawmakers, oddly, worked through a Sunday night.

In total, 65 senators and 225 assembly members voted in favor, enough for the majority needed for changes to the Constitution.

The senators included a man and a woman from the province of Balochistan who voted against party lines. Their party says the man himself and the woman's son and husband were abducted by security forces and coerced, charges the government denies.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the main opposition party of jailed ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan, boycotted the assembly vote and opposed the bill in the Senate.

A previous attempt in September to make the changes failed because the coalition could not muster the numbers. It was then given to a special parliamentary committee set up last month, which had members from all parties, including the PTI.

Key changes

The amendment has given the prime minister the power to appoint the next chief justice, sets the top judge's term at three years, and has taken away the Supreme Court's suo motu powers — the ability to take action on an issue without any request by the parties involved.

Previously, the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court would automatically become chief justice and serve until retirement at age 65.

Now a 12-member parliamentary committee will select one of the three senior-most judges and forward a recommendation to

the prime minister, who will pass it on to the president.

The committee, which has proportional membership from all parties in Parliament, has to pick a candidate with two-thirds majority.

The new process has already been used to appoint Justice Yahya Afridi as the next chief justice, who will take over later this week for a three-year term.

In addition, any new Supreme Court judges will now be appointed by a judicial commission that has the chief justice, the four most senior judges, four lawmakers and a representative of the Pakistan Bar Council.

Also, instead of the chief justice, the judicial commission will now decide which judges hear which specific cases, and there is a new provision for five-member "constitutional benches" to hear political and constitutional cases.

The latter was a compromise on the initial idea of setting up a separate Constitutional Court, equivalent to the Supreme Court.



‘Part of power politics’

The government says the legislation aims to decentralize powers and create a “balance” between the Parliament and judiciary.

In a speech after the bill was passed, Prime Minister Sharif hailed the amendment as a “historical achievement” and “example of national solidarity and consensus.”

Addressing Cabinet members a day later, Sharif reiterated that it would be a “milestone” for Pakistan and “bring ease for the common man who had to suffer owing to inordinate delays in seeking justice,” according to state media.



Thanking his coalition partners and independent lawmakers who supported the move, Sharif said the legislation was the result of “tireless efforts ... which also manifested a true spirit of consultation.”

That contention has been dismissed not just by opposition parties, but also watchdogs in the country and abroad, including UN human rights chief Volker Turk.

“Latest constitutional amendments — adopted hastily, without broad consultation and debate — will seriously undermine independence of the judiciary. Constitutional reforms must be in line with international human rights law,” Turk said in a statement.

Critics accuse the government of politicizing the judiciary and encroaching on its powers, while supporters of the move argue it was necessary to curb the judiciary’s

“continuous involvement” in government affairs.

Political analyst Hasan Askari views it as “a part of power politics” in Pakistan, saying the government acted out of fear that the future judicial setup would become a threat to the political side.

His remarks referred to Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, the senior-most judge who would have automatically become the next chief justice if the changes were not made.

Shah drew the government’s ire after he, along with seven other top court judges, ruled in favor of PTI in July in a case related to reserved parliamentary seats,

but added that he believes the crisis was “started by the judiciary.”

There were also some indicators “from a section of judiciary that propelled the government to take preemptive measures to thwart any judicial adventure,” Mir said.

“One can object to the timing of the legislation but it has several legitimate points, mainly to address the judiciary’s gradual intrusion into the domain of other pillars of the state.”

Legal fraternity divided

Pakistan’s legal fraternity stands divided over the amendment, with opponents terming it “a blow to the judiciary,” while supporters acknowledge Parliament’s right of legislation.

“Parliament represents the 250 million people of Pakistan ... What the government has done is nothing new. Before the 18th amendment (passed in 2010), judges’ appointments were made by the government. Now this amendment gives that power to the Parliament, which is the right way to go about it,” Yaseen Azad, a former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, told Anadolu.

“I was a member of the judicial commission for four years. I am witness to how the appointment of judges was a handful of people just picking and choosing their favorites. Parliament will handle it now, with both the ruling and opposition parties getting a say.”

Denouncing the changes, Amir Nawaz Waraich, president of the Karachi Bar Association (KBA), said lawyers will launch a nationwide protest movement against what he termed “anti-judiciary legislation.”

“We recognize Parliament’s right to amend the constitution, but the manner in which this right was exercised marks a dark day in the democratic history of Pakistan,” he said in a statement. He said the KBA will continue to monitor the situation and stands ready to offer legal assistance to “protect the independence of the judiciary and the rights of citizens.”

Courtesy: Anadolu Agency.

which were allotted to the ruling alliance in the aftermath of the Feb. 8 general elections.

“They have used power to secure their power,” Askari told Anadolu.

Political commentator Sajjad Mir partially agreed with his viewpoint, but said the executive was compelled to “assert” itself because of “too much” concentration of power with the judiciary.

“The top judiciary, in collusion with the military establishment, has played a role against the democratic governments. That has resulted in the repeated ouster of governments and disqualifications of several prime ministers on flimsy grounds over the past seven decades,” he told Anadolu.

“No doubt, it’s all about politics,” he said,

SBP's annual report reveals economic achievements and challenges ahead



By J. Choudhry

Pakistan's macroeconomic conditions improved in fiscal year 2024. With a continued tight monetary policy stance, supported by fiscal consolidation, and relatively benign global economic conditions, inflation turned a corner after two challenging years. External account pressures also waned, contributing to a build-up of foreign exchange reserves, which together with reforms in foreign exchange companies, instilled stability in the foreign exchange market. These improvements were accompanied by continued stability in the financial sector, amid moderate agriculture-led economic growth that was also supported by a small but gradual recovery in large-scale manufacturing (LSM) against a sharp contraction in FY23. The early signs of improvement in macroeconomic conditions were visible since the first quarter of FY24, reflecting that the various difficult decisions taken by the SBP and the government in the battle against inflation were indeed paying off.

However, the SBP remained cautious

against a premature monetary easing. It maintained the tight monetary stance by keeping the policy rate unchanged at 22 percent until nearly the end of FY24, to eliminate the risks of deep entrenchment of inflationary pressures. The year also saw fiscal policy being aligned with the tight monetary stance by recording the first primary surplus in 17 years, which also led to a notable decline in public debt in terms of GDP. As a result, the headline and core inflation witnessed a consistent downward trend in the second half of the fiscal year, falling sharply to 12.6 percent in June 2024 from 29.4 percent in June 2023. This provided room for the SBP's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to reduce the policy rate by 150 basis points (bps) to 20.5 percent in June 2024. The reduction was the first in 33 months, marking the gradual softening of the tight monetary policy stance. The exchange rate stability also helped the deceleration of inflation in H2-FY24. The PKR's stability came on the back of many factors, including the narrowing current account deficit (CAD) to a 13-year low of 0.2 percent

of GDP on account of growth in exports and remittances amid a muted increase in imports. The trends in the foreign exchange market were also facilitated by the inflows under the US\$ 3 billion Stand-By Agreement (SBA) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in June 2023, and ensuing official inflows from multilateral and bilateral external creditors.

In addition, the government's decision to approach the IMF for Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program; FX market reforms including in exchange companies; and mobilization of deposits from friendly countries supported the build-up in FX reserves and the stability in the exchange rate. The fiscal year 2024 also witnessed a respite from the multitude of shocks faced by the global economy in recent years. Despite the geo-political tensions emerging in the Red Sea region during the year and the continued Russia-Ukraine conflict, the global economy performed relatively well. Global GDP growth was marginally higher, whereas world trade also

improved as the year progressed. Moreover, global inflation declined with both headline and core inflation falling meaningfully in advanced economies (AEs) as well as emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs). The trends in inflation were supported by the continued softening of global commodity prices that began in FY23. In light of these developments, EMDEs unwound monetary tightening, while AEs adopted a cautious stance due to relatively sticky core inflation. In addition to macroeconomic stabilization policies, this conducive global environment, coupled with relatively lower economic and political uncertainty, also had multifaceted positive spillovers on the domestic economy. On the financial stability front, the banking sector continued to perform well. The total deposits of the banking sector grew strongly on the back of elevated interest rates and SBP's efforts towards financial inclusion and digitalization of payments. This contributed to a decline in currency-in-circulation to Governor's Remarks deposit ratio. Owing to the government's increased reliance on domestic banks to finance the budget deficit amid a shortfall in external financing, banks invested these deposits in government

securities as demand for private sector credit remained low in FY24. In addition to the increase in deposits, the banking sector's capital adequacy ratio (CAR), assets quality, and liquidity indicators also improved, enabling the country's financial sector to maintain overall financial soundness. Despite the tight monetary policy stance, the growth in the banking sector's loan delinquencies remained relatively contained compared to FY23, while the provisioning coverage improved substantially.

However, relative to commercial banks, growth in the asset base of microfinance banks (MFBs) more than halved in FY24. MFBs' borrowers, being more vulnerable to economic shocks, were hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, unprecedented floods in FY23 as well as the recent high inflationary environment and economic slowdown, resulting in a significant increase in MFBs' losses. These factors led to a further decline in MFBs' aggregate CAR. However, excluding the non-compliant MFBs, the sector's CAR improved in FY24. Complementing the efforts to ensure price and financial stability, the SBP continued to support the government's general economic policies, as part of its tertiary objective. These measures are also well

aligned with the SBP's Vision 2028, which includes goals to facilitate exports and remittances; further develop an innovative digital financial services ecosystem; promote financial inclusion, and transform into a Shariah-compliant banking system.

Accordingly, the SBP undertook measures and initiatives to support exports and remittances, such as an increase in retention limit in foreign currency accounts for IT companies, freelancers, and exporters; and launched awareness programs to boost remittance inflows through formal channels. From the perspective of digital financial services, the SBP also achieved significant progress during the year, particularly the launch of Raast's 'Person-to-Merchant' (P2M) service. The Raast P2M service is set to accelerate the digitization of business transactions across Pakistan, by enabling payments via QR Codes, Raast Alias, IBAN, and Request to Pay. Moreover, the SBP also granted license to an Electronic Money Institution to enable the digitization of agri-business. In terms of cross-border digital financial integration, the SBP signed an MoU to integrate SBP's Raast with the Arab Monetary Fund's Buna, its cross-border payment system, where the inclusion of PKR as a settlement currency in Buna is a key milestone. In



addition, the SBP approved a cross-border partnership between Pakistani and Chinese financial services companies that would enable e-wallet users in Pakistan to make cross-border payments in China.

During FY24, the SBP also implemented the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 2018-2023, successfully achieving its headline targets of an increase in account ownership and a reduction in the gender gap. The SBP is in the process of finalizing the next version of the NFIS to further enhance financial inclusion and digital financial services by 2028. In other measures towards increasing financial inclusion, the SBP's Banking on Equality policy has achieved notable success in terms of women's financial inclusion by introducing women-centric products and gender mainstreaming policies. Moreover, the SBP is developing a Financial Inclusion index based on access, usage, and quality to better assess the progress and inform evidence-based policymaking. Meanwhile, progress on the development of Islamic banking continues, with the sector experiencing significant growth, in terms of assets and deposits in FY24. During the year, the SBP adopted 12 additional Shariah standards to strengthen the compliance framework and harmonize Shariah practices in the domestic Islamic banking sector. To further advance Islamic banking, the SBP is collaborating with the stakeholders to promote understanding and develop skilled human capital through appropriately formulated strategic goals. Moreover, in line with the Federal Shariat Court's ruling on Riba, the SBP has Governor's Remarks 2 3 Governor's Remarks granted in-principle approval for establishing a digital retail Islamic bank and Shariah compliant digital banking through Islamic window operations. These complementing measures will help towards Pakistan's long term economic growth and development. At the same time, there is a need to address supply side constraints, and other policy, governance and administration related challenges. In this context, while the scaling back of energy subsidies poses an upside risk to inflation, it is an important step towards energy reforms. This needs to be accompanied by reforms in energy policy and governance to ensure energy inflation risks are tempered in the medium term. Similarly, there is a need for continued fiscal consoli-

dation to reduce debt and help bring down inflation sustainably. This also entails reducing fiscal leakages, such as by reforming state-owned enterprises, and better fiscal planning, including through public pension reforms. In addition, it also requires addressing the issues of the informal economy and documentation that will not only help raise revenues but also have a lasting impact on access to credit. In this regard, the ongoing fiscal consolidation is encouraging.

With the budgeted increase in direct and indirect taxes amid plans to widen the tax net, the fiscal deficit in FY25 is projected to be lower than FY24, despite the government's plans for higher development spending aimed at boosting economic growth. Although the pace of agriculture growth

the IMF's US\$ 7 billion EFF program, which typically paves the way for other external inflows from multilateral and bilateral sources, is expected to further strengthen foreign exchange buffers.

Against this backdrop, inflation is projected to remain significantly contained in FY25, particularly due to the lagged impact of the tight monetary policy stance and continued fiscal consolidation. The headline inflation has already been on a downward trajectory since June 2023 falling to 6.9 percent in September 2024; global commodity prices continue to be low; whereas core inflation is also softening. These are indeed encouraging signs. However, upside risks could still emanate from global and domestic economic and political uncertainties, such as from slippages from envisaged fiscal



may soften in FY25, the slow but consistent recovery in LSM since December 2023, and the bottoming out of high-frequency demand indicators reflects steady improvements in real economic activities. This momentum, supported by lower borrowing costs and a fall in global commodity prices, is expected to continue in the remaining period of FY25. While moderate economic growth is expected to increase import volumes, its impact on the trade balance may be muted by benign trends in global commodity prices. At the same time, both the exports and workers' remittances are projected to grow in continuation of the trends in FY24, leading to a sustainable CAD. This, coupled with the approval of

consolidation, unplanned energy subsidies, or volatile global commodity prices in the wake of growing geopolitical tensions. Reflecting its confidence over receding inflationary pressures, the SBP's MPC further reduced the policy rate by 350 bps in July and September 2024, taking the cumulative reduction to 450 bps since June 2024. Despite this reduction, the real policy rate remains significantly positive, which the MPC considers appropriate to guide inflation towards the medium-term target of 5.0 – 7.0 percent. The SBP will remain on guard to counter any threat to price and financial stability, which are critical for sustaining higher growth over the medium to long term.

Job search and strategies

By Mahnoor Saleem

Introduction

Job searching can often feel discouraging, but it's important to maintain your focus on achieving a healthy balance. You can find a quality job that offers the flexibility and career growth you desire. Success lies in how you strategize and plan your approach to the job search.

The concept of a quick and easy job search is certainly attractive, but the reality is that shortcuts often aren't genuine and can be much more complicated than they appear.

To assist you in your job search, we've created this comprehensive guide. With these strategies, you'll be better equipped to find the right position at a reputable company while steering clear of online scams that could jeopardize your future and finances.



Job search methods:

There are various ways to find a job, including networking, collaborating with executive recruiters or search firms, responding to ads in websites, journals, or newspapers, attending job fairs, and making cold calls. It's a good idea to explore all these methods, but focus your job search efforts on the ones that are most likely to yield results.

1. NETWORKING

Networking is the most effective way to discover career opportunities and secure a job. Research consistently shows that networking results in job placements more often than other methods, such as responding to postings, attending job fairs, or sending unsolicited resumes. It's often the only way to find out about "unpublished" jobs—those that aren't advertised and may not even exist yet. Job seekers should prioritize networking to find the right position in the shortest amount of time.

2. EXECUTIVE RECRUITERS

Executive recruiters, often referred to as "headhunters," can be a valuable resource for job leads, particularly for senior,

higher-salary positions. These recruiters operate independently and are compensated by the hiring company. Contingency recruiters typically focus on mid-to-senior-level roles and are one of several agencies working to fill a job opening. They earn a fee of 20–30% of the position's annual salary, only getting paid once they successfully place a candidate. Because of this, they are motivated to quickly find candidates who closely match the job requirements, often being very attentive if they see you as a potential fit, and less so if they do not. Retained recruiters, on the other hand, conduct exclusive searches for companies, primarily targeting senior-level positions. They act as an extension of the hiring team and are generally more invested in finding the ideal candidate. Their fees are typically around one-third of the position's annual salary. However, recruiters are usually not focused on candidates looking to change careers.

3. INTERNET POSTINGS

If you find yourself spending more than three hours a week applying for jobs online (excluding research time), you may not be conducting an effective job search. This is because internet job postings lead to actual jobs only 5–10% of the time, although the

success rate is higher for fields like IT, engineering, finance, and healthcare. Online searching should only play a small role in your overall job search strategy.

To use your time efficiently, focus on the websites of companies you're targeting, along with one or two major job boards like CareerBuilder.com or Indeed.com, and one or two industry-specific sites. For instance, if you're interested in public relations, visit the Public Relations Society of America website (prsa.org). If human resources is your field, check out the Society for Human Resource Management (shrm.org). For a comprehensive list of both general and industry-specific job search websites, refer to Job Search Links. Utilize job search "agents" to tailor your search according to your criteria, and follow up on positions that align with your preferences.

When applying online, save your resume as a plain text (.txt) file without any formatting. This version is less likely to appear garbled when it reaches employers or screening systems. Keep your formatted resume for direct submissions to individuals. Always ensure you follow application instructions closely, and follow up, if possible, to express your interest and confirm that your resume was received.

Job search strategies:

Get to Know Yourself

Before anything else, it's essential to understand yourself in order to set yourself up for success. Take some time for self-reflection to define your passions and interests, which will help you target your dream job. Consider taking a personality test, like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), to gain valuable insights into what motivates you.

Establish Your Goals

Take charge of your career by setting clear goals instead of relying on chance. Define your salary expectations, desired flexibility, and the type of work environment where you'll thrive. Once you have this list, prioritize the items based on their importance to you. Before applying for a job, review how well it aligns with your established goals.

Master Time Management

Effective time management is essential in almost every field, especially when working remotely, where it's easy for work and personal time to overlap in unproductive ways.

Develop your time management skills to ensure your job search remains productive. Dedicate daily and weekly time slots to outline and prioritize your job search tasks. Adhere to your schedule, respect your breaks, and remember to take time away from your job search activities as well.

Establish a Routine

Consistency is key in your job search. Create a routine that aligns with your strengths and natural rhythms instead of working against them.

Are you a night owl? Consider focusing on your job search after dinner. An early riser? Start your day with job hunting before the sun comes up. Whatever your preference, commit to your routine. The excitement of the job search may fade, but having a consistent pattern will help you maintain your momentum.

Know Your Worth Before You Share It

How much time do you spend researching

a product to grasp its value before making a purchase? For high-value items like cars or houses, you probably invest a significant amount of time in research. Your job search should be no different. Before diving into a job application, take the time to understand your market value.

Attend Job Fairs, Both In-Person and Virtually

Job fairs are excellent opportunities for job seekers to expand their professional networks, discover new opportunities, and leave a lasting impression on potential employers. Participating in both in-person and virtual job fairs can refine your job search strategy and enhance your chances of finding a great career fit.

Here's how to maximize your experience at job fairs during your remote job search:

1. **Research Upcoming Events:** Subscribe to industry newsletters, follow relevant social media accounts, and join professional organizations in your field.
2. **Prepare Your Elevator Pitch:** Practice your pitch to confidently introduce yourself to potential employers and make a strong first impression.
3. **Dress Professionally:** Even for virtual events, dressing professionally signals to employers that you take your job search seriously.
4. **Engage in Conversation:** Use your research to ask insightful questions and demonstrate genuine interest in the companies and roles available.

Watch Webinars and Tutorials

Take the time to watch webinars and tutorials related to your industry and current job-search strategies. This will not only keep you informed about the job market but also give you a competitive edge over applicants who may not be up to date on trends. Additionally, these tutorials can teach you how to use specific software programs or develop new skills that could enhance your qualifications.

Flex Jobs' Career Expert Keith Spencer advises, "Familiarize yourself with the basics of any software listed as a job requirement. As long as you don't claim to be an expert, you'll likely meet the requirements to apply for the role."

This knowledge can significantly help you stand out from other candidates.

Leverage Time-Saving Tech and Tips

Technology can save you a significant amount of time while helping you stay relevant and develop in-demand skills. Utilize apps, browser extensions, job alerts, and other tools to streamline your job search process. However, be cautious not to let technology overshadow your efforts. Use these tools as a foundation, but make sure to personalize and update your information so your unique personality shines through.

Conclusion:

With a solid job search strategy, you can successfully secure a role that offers the work-life balance you need to thrive. By approaching your job search step by step, you'll enhance your ability to stand out from the competition. Start by gaining a clear understanding of your strengths and goals, which will guide your efforts. Make networking a priority, as it opens doors to opportunities that might not be publicly advertised. Leverage technology to streamline your search and keep your skills relevant, but ensure that your personality and unique qualities shine through in your applications and interactions.

Attend job fairs and engage with webinars to stay informed about industry trends and connect with potential employers. As you navigate your job search, remember to maintain a consistent routine and manage your time effectively to keep your momentum going. By being proactive, well-prepared, and adaptable, you'll increase your chances of finding a position that not only meets your professional aspirations but also supports your personal well-being. Stay focused on your goals, and you'll be well on your way to landing the job that's right for you.

Xi-Modi meeting at the BRICS Summit in Russia is a big achievement for Putin

BRICS' share of global GDP is projected to rise to 37% by 2030, while the G7's share is expected to decline to 28%. Russia hopes to persuade BRICS countries to create an alternative international payment platform that would be resistant to Western sanctions



By Javed Mahmood

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized that stable bilateral relations between their countries contribute to a multipolar world and positively impact regional and global peace and prosperity.

The leaders met for their first formal meeting in five years on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia on October 23, just two days after China and India reached an agreement to end a border standoff between their armies in eastern Ladakh.

Both leaders welcomed the agreement on complete disengagement and resolution of border disputes, according to a statement from the Indian Foreign Ministry. Modi highlighted the importance of managing differences and disputes in a way that does not disturb peace and tranquility. The statement also noted that special representatives on the India-China boundary issue will meet soon to ensure peace in the border areas and to explore a fair and mutually acceptable solution to the boundary question.

The two nations, which share the world's longest unresolved border dispute along the 3,500-kilometer (2,174-mile) Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, have been in a stand-off since May 2020. The tensions culminated in the "Galwan clashes," which resulted in the deaths of 24 soldiers, including 20 from India. Following Monday's border agreement, the stage was set for the leaders to meet at the BRICS summit, which drew representatives from 32 countries, including 24 state leaders, according to the Kremlin.

Xi and Modi emphasized the need to enhance strategic communication, explore avenues of cooperation to address developmental challenges and strengthen bilateral ties from a long-term perspective.

"The two countries must also shoulder their international responsibilities and set an example in strengthening the unity of developing nations," Xi told Modi. The BRICS group, consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, recently expanded to include

Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates.

BRICS Summit declaration in Kazan

The recent BRICS summit in Kazan, Russia, was notable less for its formal proceedings than for the dynamics that unfolded on the sidelines. One significant absence was the further expansion of the bloc.

Following the addition of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE at the 2023 BRICS summit in Johannesburg, which nearly doubled the bloc's membership from its original five countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), progress on further enlargement has stalled.

Argentina, invited in 2023, declined to join, while Saudi Arabia, also invited, has yet to act on its offer. Its de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was among the prominent figures missing from the Kazan summit.

Additionally, Kazakhstan—Russia's largest Central Asian neighbor—decided not to join just before the summit, prompting Russia to retaliate by banning a range of agricultural imports from Kazakhstan.

Even as some invitees declined, BRICS remains a focus for interest, with many countries seeking closer ties. In a September meeting of BRICS security officials, Russian President Vladimir Putin noted that 34 countries had expressed interest in engaging with BRICS, up from 23 applicants reported by South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor in 2023. Yet, since last year's expansion, only six invitations have been extended and four accepted, indicating that internal disagreements over further enlargement, along with hesitancy among some invitees, have hindered expansion efforts.

Marginal meetings

While the summit declaration offered limited outcomes, several bilateral meetings on the margins shed light on the bloc's direction. Most notably, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held their first face-to-face meeting in five years—a significant shift given the tensions that had led Modi to skip the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, just months earlier. With a new agreement on their longstanding border dispute, the two most populous and economically powerful BRICS members have a chance to reset relations.

Warmer ties between China and India could strengthen BRICS's pursuit of its ambitious vision for a new global order. This may signal a shift in BRICS leadership from a China-Russia axis to one led by China and India, potentially moving the group's stance from an anti-Western to a more balanced, non-Western agenda.

Russia highlights the growing influence of the non-Western world

Russia aims to use the upcoming BRICS summit to highlight the growing influence of the non-Western world, but Moscow's partners from China, India, Brazil, and the Arab world are pressing President Vladimir Putin to find a solution to the war in Ukraine. The BRICS bloc, now representing 45% of the global population and 35% of the world's economy based on purchasing power parity, has become a significant force, with China contributing more than half of its economic power.

Putin addressed BRICS reporters, stating that “BRICS does not position itself in opposition to anyone,” and emphasized that the shift in global economic power was an undeniable fact. “This is a group of nations that collaborate based on shared values, a common vision of development, and, most importantly, respect for each other's interests,” he said.

The summit comes at a critical moment as global financial leaders gather in Washing-

ton amid the backdrop of the Middle East conflict, the ongoing war in Ukraine, concerns over China's economy, and the potential for new trade conflicts as the U.S. presidential election looms.

Putin, who launched the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 after eight years of conflict in eastern Ukraine, faced numerous questions from BRICS journalists regarding a potential ceasefire. His response was clear: Russia will not relinquish control over the four regions of eastern Ukraine it claims as its own, even though parts remain contested. He also stressed that Russia's long-term security interests in Europe must be addressed.

Although there is growing talk in Moscow of a possible ceasefire, two Russian sources indicated that no concrete plans have emerged, and the global community is awaiting the outcome of the U.S. presidential election on November 5.

Currently, Russia controls about one-fifth of Ukraine, including Crimea, which it annexed in 2014, about 80% of the Donbas region, and over 70% of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. Putin said that the West has come to accept Russia's eventual victory but expressed willingness to resume talks based on draft ceasefire agreements from Istanbul in April 2022.

On the eve of the BRICS summit, Putin held informal talks with UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who has been involved in mediation efforts



related to Ukraine. Putin also commended both Sheikh Mohammed and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, though the latter will not attend the summit in Kazan.

“I assure you that we will continue to work towards peace and resolution,” Sheikh Mohammed told Putin, emphasizing the UAE’s readiness to contribute to ending the crisis.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the summit, but Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva canceled his trip due to health issues following a minor brain hemorrhage.

UN Secretary-General Guterres attends BRICS Summit

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres arrived in Russia on Wednesday to attend this week’s BRICS summit, his first visit to the country in more than two years.

Russia hosted the three-day summit in the Tatarstan capital of Kazan, where the speaker of the regional legislative assembly greeted Guterres after his plane landed at the city’s airport.

Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry slammed the

G7 Nations \$50 billion in loans for Ukraine

The Group of Seven (G7) nations are advancing plans to provide Ukraine with \$50 billion in loans, backed by frozen Russian assets, according to the White House. Earlier this year, leaders of the G7 agreed to create a substantial loan package to support Ukraine in its war against Russia. The interest generated from Russia’s frozen central bank assets will serve as collateral for the loan.

Daleep Singh, the White House deputy national security adviser for international economics, announced that the United States intends to contribute \$20 billion, with the remaining \$30 billion coming from the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, and other allies.

“To be clear, nothing like this has ever been done before,” Singh noted. “This is the first time a multilateral coalition has frozen the assets of an aggressor country and used the value of those assets to support the defense of the victimized nation, all while upholding the rule of law and maintaining global solidarity.”

Legal Debate

Singh explained that the U.S. plans to split its share between economic and military aid for Ukraine, though military assistance will require congressional approval.

“Either way, the U.S. will provide \$20 billion to support Ukraine, whether it’s divided between economic and military aid or given entirely as economic assistance,” he clarified.

Further details about the loan are expected to be discussed during this week’s G7 finance ministers’ meeting in Stresa, Italy. The G7 first announced in June that the majority of the loan would be secured by the interest earned on approximately \$260 billion in frozen Russian assets, most of which are held in EU countries. The decision followed extensive debates over the legality of seizing these funds to support Ukraine.

When Russia launched its “special military operation” against Ukraine in 2022, the U.S. and its allies immediately froze any Russian central bank assets within their reach.



The BRICS acronym, first coined in 2001 by former Goldman Sachs economist Jim O’Neill, highlighted the economic potential of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Over time, the group expanded to include South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE, with Saudi Arabia expected to join soon.

BRICS’ share of global GDP is projected to rise to 37% by 2030, while the G7’s share is expected to decline to 28%, according to the International Monetary Fund. Russia hopes to persuade BRICS countries to create an alternative international payment platform that would be resistant to Western sanctions. However, internal divisions within BRICS remain. China and India, both major buyers of Russian oil, have strained relations, and tensions persist between Arab nations and Iran.

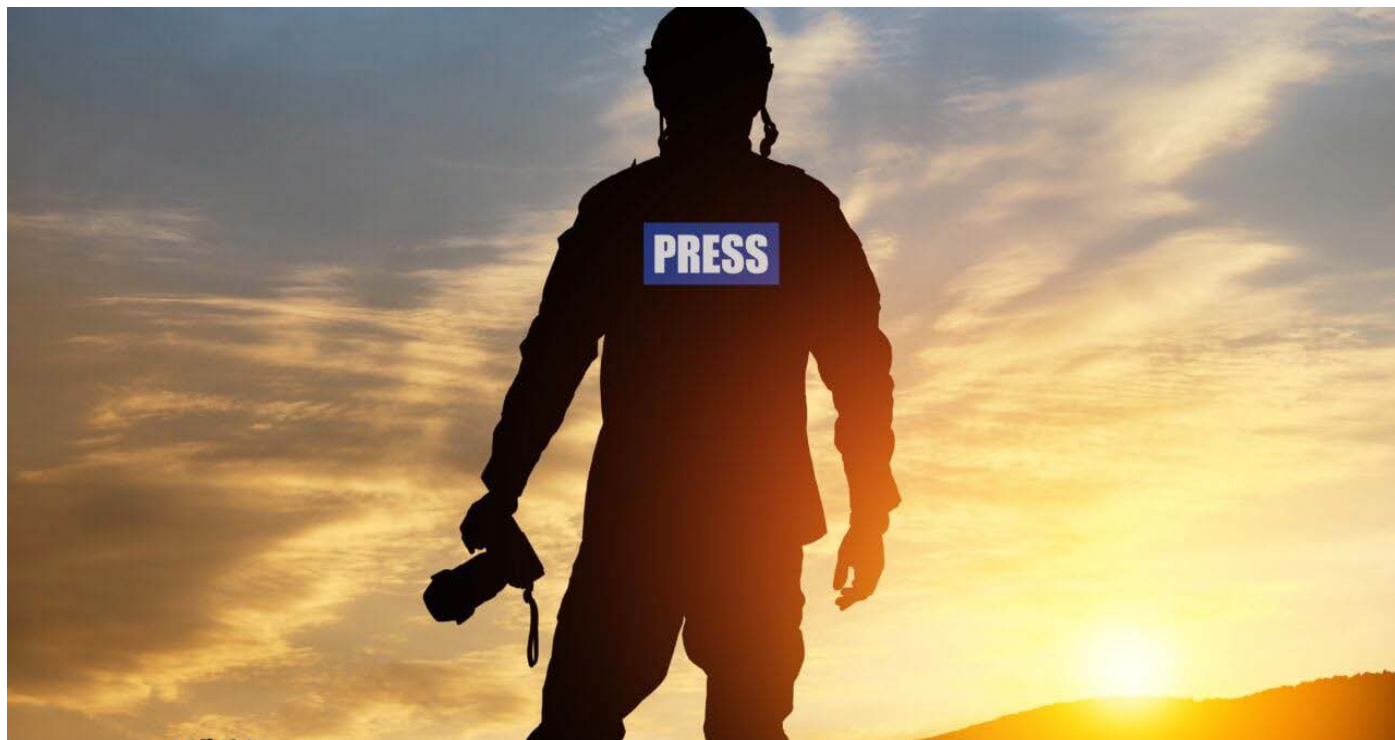
visit, saying the UN chief made the “wrong choice that does not advance the cause of peace” after earlier rejecting an invitation to attend Kyiv’s peace summit in Switzerland. The United Nations maintains that BRICS — a nine-member organization that includes China and India — holds “great importance” given the bloc represents almost half the world’s population.

Guterres plans to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday, where he will “reaffirm his well-known positions on the war in Ukraine and the conditions for just peace based on the UN Charter.” “He will continue to pursue his efforts to re-establish safe navigation in the Black Sea, which is critically important for global food and energy security, especially for the most vulnerable countries around the world,” Haq said. Guterres will visit Ukraine at a “mutually convenient time,” he added.



Reporting War; fact and propaganda

The Gaza War Experience



By Naqi Akbar

As these lines are read by the worthy readers, Iranians might have undertaken the “Promised Strike-3” by then. There is fair probability that the Iranian and Israeli military establishment would be observed trading claims and counter claims on the social media; amongst them the most serious forum X or Twitter. The likely exercise brings home after many decades that reporting the war can be most trying and complicated assignment for the reporter; who is in the field as well as one; who cannot afford to be at every place of conflict or impact; but has to put into use, his journalistic skills to separate fact from propaganda.

The situation faced now; brings to mind the unceremonious assassination of a Waziristan Journalist in the aftermath of the commencement of the Drone policy adopted by the United States in the post 9/11 scenario with complete cooperation from the then Musharraf set up and later the PPP government led by the then President Asif Ali Zardari. The drone incident was denied officially. The unfortunate reporter who found the missile part in the area under discussion was soon to be

killed in mysterious circumstances. It was somewhat a reply from the powerful quarters of society. An equally unceremonious and dastardly killing was of a US based Journal Wall Street journalist; Daniel Pearl, when he tried to cross the limits defined by the all-powerful military establishment in power in Pakistan in the post 9/11 and war on Terror scenario.

Fast forward to the Gaza conflict; the IDF being the dominant player in the conflict, with state of art technology and firepower at its disposal, nearly 132 journalists were killed by direct participation of the IDF. One journalist living in Gaza had to suffer the trauma of losing his entire family. Likewise, one journalist doing a report on the hometown of slain Hamas leader Ismael Hania was killed with a direct hit from Israeli tank. Similarly, many were killed along the Israeli Lebanese border.

What could have been the reasons for the Pakistani establishment, the Israeli establishment and any other group to undertake these episodes of brutality emanates from suppressing the other narrative.

In the current conflict; the dominant player with the active support of the western economic system has been precisely following a two-pronged strategy. One followed on the field by targeting the individual or group of journalists following the events. The aim is to discourage the journalists from actively following the ‘war stories’ as these journalists want to; rather make them settle to the official narrative. Towards that count, if the journalist is not the news node for the anxious readers to follow, the social media outlets like X are the place where the people flock to get the news they want to read.

In that separate domain of social media, which has been recognized as the alternate source of news, the warring parties especially the ones aggressing have been found to be trying to influence the news trends as well as the desired narrative. To begin with, the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 was linked to a supposed slaughter of the 40 or so babies by the Hamas militants to justify, what the world saw as relentless air strikes on Gaza by the IDF and other Palestinian suburbs. The end result of that narrative was that Israel ended up killing

more babies than what it claimed to have been slaughtered by the Palestinians. Given the fact that all type of prohibited ammunition was made available to the IDF air force, the ghastly images as well as video clips of the Palestinian kids blown into pieces as well as decapitated; it was fair for any objective news analyst to conclude that the IDF narrative was based on the old premise of; that in the event of war; “truth is the first casualty”.

That strategy continues as the parameters of the conflict continue to widen, geographically and also in the geopolitical sense. The relentless unloading of Bunker Buster ammunition on the predominantly pro Hezbollah neighborhood in Beirut, the recent strike on Iran, using the Iraqi Kurdistan airspace, using the gulf airspace for flight refueling, all indicate that irrespective of the general international silence to the one-sided war by the United States and Israel, any minimal challenge to the status quo is not tolerated at any level.

That second aspect of the two-pronged strategy, that of controlling the media narrative has come out in open in the last one month or so. The select channels giving coverage to the dissidents within the ranks of the resistance has proven the fact that the

media front is aimed at creating confusion as well as making the resistance look like a failed project. The one particular dissident appearance in an Arabic channel if observed has been followed by ‘tangible’ actions by the IDF. That situation monitoring by any objective observer can churn out the result that no one thing is happening in isolation.

A specific analysis of the latest round of conflict between the IDF and IRGC points to the fact that as per the Iranian declaration as well as the independent defence observers’ contention that the IDF never crossed the Iranian air defence and depended on Beyond Visual Range (BVR) options available with IDF advanced jets; the reason that the strikes were basically intelligence based and in some cases the intelligence was obsolete.

The very reason that the damage to the Iranian infrastructure has been sketchy and hard to find and even substantiate. Given the fact that the Iranian military might have been equally evasive of the truth, the presence of dissident sections of society within Iran and their sharing of the intelligence as well as evidence could have been the basis for the IDF claims. As things stand, the satellite imagery on commercial

basis has been the mainstay of the narrative being paddled by the western backers of the IDF and the IDF itself.

Here one may point to an episode in the aftermath of October 1, 2024 Iranian strikes on IDF AFBs. The evidence of damage and the strike taking place by a US based journalist promoted the IDF authorities to arrest him. The reason behind his arrest has been the fact that the IDF and the Israeli government did not want the public at large to know the truth.

As things stand, the conflict is likely to drag into an attrition. Despite the fact that the Reformist government wants to play safe; the subtle message from Khamenei that “Israel be made to realize” points to the possibility that the IRGC will have to make some move, either cosmetic under the Reform camp dictates or an effective one, if the supreme leader stands behind them.

The escalation of conflict will undoubtedly kick off aggressively the war of narratives on social media especially the X. Conclusively, war reporting is likely to tolerate a lot of claims and counter claims. For the readers and observers, it will be a strenuous task to separate fact from fiction and find their own ‘objective conclusions’



Israel Strikes Iran: A Detailed Analysis of the Latest Conflict and What Lies Ahead



By Romana Afsheen

Tensions have escalated dramatically in the Middle East following Israel's recent airstrikes on Iran, marking the first time Israel has publicly claimed an attack on Iranian territory. On Saturday, Israeli airstrikes targeted multiple sites in Iran, as well as in Iraq and Syria, ostensibly aimed at Iranian military infrastructure. The strikes, dubbed "Days of Reckoning" by the Israeli military, have heightened fears of a prolonged conflict in an already volatile region. Iran has condemned the strikes as a flagrant violation of international law and has vowed to defend its territorial sovereignty.

This article delves into the intricate dynamics of this recent conflict, examining the motivations behind the strikes, the regional responses, the global implications, and what the future might hold for both Iran and Israel, as well as the broader international community.

Key Events and Timeline

The recent hostilities began on Friday evening when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant reportedly convened a phone

call with cabinet ministers to discuss attack plans. Following the meeting, Israel sent a warning to Iran, cautioning against any potential retaliation. Just hours later, after 2 a.m. on Saturday (22:30 GMT on Friday), Israel launched the first wave of attacks on Tehran, with a second wave following three hours later, hitting additional targets in the provinces of Ilam and Khuzestan.

Israel has confirmed the completion of its strikes, stating that the attacks successfully neutralized key military sites, missile production facilities, and air defense systems. The Iranian state news agency IRNA reported the deaths of four air defense personnel, although Iran downplayed the overall impact of the strikes, asserting that it had countered many of the attacks. Flights across Iran, which had been briefly suspended, resumed at 9 a.m. local time.

What Was Targeted?

Israel claims it targeted over 20 Iranian military sites, focusing on facilities associated with missile and drone capabilities. Reports from Al Jazeera indicate that most of the strikes were concentrated in Tehran

and neighboring regions, where Israel aimed to dismantle Iran's air defense systems and missile infrastructure. These strikes appear to have been a continuation of Israel's long-standing strategy to curtail Iran's military capabilities, particularly its ballistic missile program, which Israel views as a direct threat.

Syrian state media also reported Israeli strikes on military positions in central and southern Syria early Saturday, although Israel has not confirmed these attacks. Explosions were likewise reported in Basra, Iraq, where authorities temporarily closed Iraqi airspace, although they later clarified that the explosions originated from across the border in Iran.

Reasons Behind Israel's Attack

Israel has repeatedly expressed concerns over Iran's influence in the region, especially through its proxy forces in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. In a recorded statement released during the attack, Israeli military spokesman Daniel Hagari said, "The regime in Iran and its proxies in the region have been relentlessly attacking Israel since

October 7.” This escalation was reportedly a response to recent missile launches by Iran and its allies, as well as to recent assassinations of key figures within Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Israel argues that these strikes are a defensive measure, necessary to protect its citizens from ongoing regional threats.

Over recent years, Israel’s policymakers have been increasingly vocal about the need to contain Iran’s military capabilities, fearing that a stronger Iranian influence could shift the balance of power in the region. Israel has targeted Iranian assets and personnel in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon in the past but has rarely conducted strikes within Iranian territory itself, making this incident particularly significant. Additionally, the strikes are intended to send a signal to Iran’s allies and proxies in the region, especially those involved in the ongoing Israel-Gaza and Israel-Lebanon conflicts.

Iran’s Reaction and Regional Implications

Iran has condemned the strikes as a blatant violation of its sovereignty, calling the attacks a serious breach of international law. In a statement, Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserted that it had “the right and obligation to defend itself against external aggression” under international law and the UN Charter. Iran has also warned that it would use “all available resources” to protect its sovereignty and security.

Public reaction in Iran has been a mixture of fear and resilience. Although some residents reportedly slept through the attacks, videos and social media posts indicate that many Iranians were awakened by the explosions and expressed anxiety over the possibility of a larger conflict. However, life quickly returned to normal in many areas, with Iranians resuming their daily routines despite the palpable tension.

In the wake of these strikes, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi sent a letter to the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, condemning the aggression and urging the Security Council to convene an emergency meeting. The letter stressed that Israel’s actions jeopardize peace and stability in the region and called for a clear and

decisive stance from the international community. Araghchi invoked Article 2, Paragraph 4 of the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity of any state, arguing that Israel’s strikes were a direct violation of this principle.

The Role of the United States and Its Allies

Although the United States has denied direct involvement in the strikes, the Iranian mission to the UN has accused the U.S. of complicity, alleging that Israeli warplanes used Iraqi airspace under U.S. control to launch the attack on Iran. The



United States has a long-standing alliance with Israel and has provided military, financial, and diplomatic support over the years, which has fueled Iranian accusations of U.S. complicity in Israeli military actions.

Meanwhile, both the U.S. and the United Kingdom have reiterated their support for Israel’s right to self-defense, while also calling on Iran to exercise restraint. This stance has drawn criticism from Iran, which contends that Western nations are enabling Israel’s aggression and undermining regional stability. Iran’s Permanent Mission to the UN further stated that the United States, as a key supporter of Israel, bears some responsibility for the attack and should commit to preventing further escalations.

Potential for Iranian Retaliation

As tensions mount, the question of whether Iran will retaliate looms large. Analysts suggest that the limited scope of damage sustained by Iran could provide a basis for plausible deniability, allowing Iran to forgo immediate retaliation. Israeli officials have indicated that the strikes were designed to be limited in scope to avoid provoking an all-out confrontation.

However, Iran’s Foreign Ministry has stated that it reserves the right to respond, though it has not specified the form or timing of any potential retaliation. Some

experts believe that Iran may choose a calculated response, possibly involving cyberattacks or asymmetric warfare through its regional allies rather than direct confrontation. Military analyst Elijah Magnier has suggested that the deaths of Iranian personnel could indeed push Iran toward retaliation, although Iran’s response is likely to be measured and strategically timed.

Diplomatic Responses and International Reactions

The international response to Israel’s strikes on Iran has been mixed, with countries across the Middle East condemning the actions, albeit with varying levels of intensity. Arab nations have expressed

concern over Israel's aggressive posture, fearing that this conflict could destabilize the region further. Some regional analysts argue that Israel's actions are part of a larger agenda to expand its regional influence, with the risk of drawing Arab nations into a wider conflict.

Iran's foreign policy advisors have called for a United Nations-led peace conference to address regional security, arguing that international and regional powers must work collectively to ensure stability. Iran has positioned itself as a nation committed to peace, even as it prepares for the possibility of a protracted conflict. Iran's leaders have also called upon the global community, particularly the United Nations, to hold Israel accountable for its aggressive actions, arguing that failure to do so will set a dangerous precedent for international relations.

Iran Seeks Diplomatic Resolution Amid Israeli Strikes

Israel's military operation, which it claims has concluded, may only mark the beginning of a more sustained period of conflict. Israeli military sources have indicated that should Iran retaliate, further strikes may be

launched. Additionally, Israel's history of conducting covert operations and targeted assassinations suggests that it could continue to undermine Iranian interests without openly claiming responsibility.

Iran, for its part, has called for heightened vigilance within its intelligence and military apparatus. Leaders have stressed the importance of maintaining a balance between military preparedness and diplomatic engagement, recognizing that an all-out conflict could have devastating consequences for Iran and the region. Although Iran is determined to defend its sovereignty, it appears equally committed to finding a diplomatic resolution if possible.

The involvement of international powers such as the United States and the United Kingdom has further complicated the situation. Iran views these countries as co-aggressors due to their unwavering support for Israel.

Iran has called for an international response, urging the United Nations to convene a peace conference to address the ongoing hostilities and ensure long-term stability. The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized that diplomacy should be the guiding force, despite Iran's resolve to defend itself. A peace conference, Tehran

argued, could help prevent the escalation of tensions while ensuring that the region's nations work together to maintain peace.

The recent Israeli strikes on Iran represent a significant escalation in an already complex and volatile conflict. Both Israel and Iran are navigating a delicate balance of power in the Middle East, with each side determined to assert its dominance while avoiding a full-scale war. As the situation develops, the risk of further violence remains high, especially given Israel's stated willingness to continue its military campaign if provoked.

Internationally, this conflict highlights the urgent need for a coordinated response to promote stability and prevent further escalation. The United Nations and other diplomatic bodies face a daunting challenge in mediating peace in a region fraught with long-standing animosities. If the global community fails to address this crisis effectively, the risk of a broader conflict could grow, threatening the security and well-being of millions across the Middle East.

Ultimately, Israel and Iran's path forward will hinge on a combination of military strategy, diplomatic negotiation, and the influence of international actors.



Artificial Intelligence reduces human-wildlife conflict

By Aamir Latif/Anadolu

KARACHI: Artificial intelligence (AI) technology has reduced the human-wildlife conflict in recent years, which was one of the key reasons for a gradual decline in the population of endangered snow leopards in northern Pakistan.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-Pakistan installed AI-based trail cameras in 2022 at strategic locations in the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) region, which borders neighboring China and is home to the rare leopard species, which has turned the human-wildlife conflict into "human-wildlife coexistence."

This recent technology has significantly reduced snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) attacks on livestock, a key factor behind the human-leopard conflict, at the targeted sites, the WWF said on the occasion of World Snow Leopard Day on Wednesday.

The development coincided with the saving of a herd of about 60 elephants crossing the railway tracks in northeastern Assam state of India last week through AI.

The AI-based intrusion detection system (IDS) alerted the loco pilots of the train about the herd of elephants crossing the tracks, propelling them to apply the brakes.

In the past, several snow leopards have been killed by local communities in retaliation for their attacks on the livestock.

In addition to this threat, poaching, illegal hunting, and habitat loss resulting from adverse climate change impacts, also endanger the snow leopard population across its habitat range in Central and South Asia, according to the WWF.

In collaboration with the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), the WWF developed and installed five AI-based camera traps at strategic locations where snow leopard depredations were reported by the representatives of the local communities.

These cameras detect the presence of snow leopards in the surroundings, transfer the data to a centralized system, and generate alerts for members of local communities about the predator.

AI and symbiotic relationship

As a result, local communities safeguard their livestock either grazing in the fields or being kept in the household. The technology has significantly reduced the attacks of snow leopards on livestock turning human-snow leopard conflicts into a symbiotic relationship.

Livestock depredation by snow leopards is a major cause of human-wildlife conflict in various valleys in three landscapes such as Karakoram-Pamir, Hindu Kush, and Himalaya in



Pakistan, Hammad Naqi Khan, director general WWF-Pakistan, said in a statement. This existential threat, he added, has undermined conservation efforts and halted progress to achieve desired outcomes.

"The use of AI technology is vital not only for the protection of the endangered snow leopard population, but it safeguards the livestock," maintained Khan.

This has led to the improvement in the declining population of snow leopards and has reduced the economic losses born by the livestock herders at the project sites, Khan added, proposing that this technology could be replicated for other wild species, which are threatened by human retaliation.

The balance between infrastructure development and wildlife conservation

A WWF study released in April 2024 recommended that there is a need to strike a balance between boosting infrastructure development and conservation of threatened wildlife such as snow leopards in the region.

The study pointed out that the linear infrastructure development, which cuts through the landscape such as roads and railways, has fragmented the snow leopard habitat.

Although linear infrastructure improves national and regional economies, it restricts wildlife movement and poses threats to snow leopards and their prey species such as ungulates.

Various studies indicate that snow leopard is an elusive animal, hence it is difficult to record its exact population in the distribution range across Central and South Asia.

However, WWF research indicates that fewer than 7,000 snow leopards live in the world, of which approximately 200 to 420 individuals inhabit the northern mountain ranges of Pakistan, including the GB region, northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, and Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

The Evolution of Streaming Platforms and Their Impact on the Entertainment Landscape



By Romana Afsheen

Since the emergence of streaming platforms in the late 2000s, the entertainment industry has undergone one of its most significant transformations. What was once an industry dominated by movie theaters, broadcast television, and cable networks has been fundamentally restructured by streaming, which now caters to billions of users worldwide. As streaming giants like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ continue to evolve, they're not only shifting the way we consume media but are also reshaping the business models and storytelling formats of the entertainment industry. This evolution has introduced new technological advances, a surge in on-demand content, and a highly personalized viewing experience, creating a profound cultural impact.

A Brief History of Streaming: From Niche to Necessity

The initial concept of streaming video began with the rise of the internet in the early 2000s, though at that time, internet

speeds were not adequate to provide high-quality, uninterrupted streaming. Early platforms like YouTube, launched in 2005, marked the start of a video-sharing revolution. However, the idea of an all-inclusive streaming service offering a large library of films and television series on demand began to take shape with Netflix, which transformed its business model from a DVD rental service to streaming in 2007.

Netflix's entry into streaming was a turning point, popularizing on-demand entertainment. Subscribers could now select what they wanted to watch and when, creating an entirely new form of user empowerment. No longer constrained by the schedules of cable TV, viewers embraced this flexibility, quickly pushing Netflix to the forefront of the entertainment industry. Hulu launched in 2008, initially focusing on recently aired television shows, while Amazon Prime Video entered the market in 2011, offering its streaming service bundled with Amazon's popular Prime membership.

As broadband and mobile internet became faster and more reliable, these platforms

saw rapid subscriber growth. By the mid-2010s, streaming had moved from a convenient alternative to a primary source of entertainment for millions worldwide. Recognizing the shift, traditional media companies launched their own platforms: Disney introduced Disney+ in 2019 with an impressive catalog of existing intellectual properties, while NBCUniversal rolled out Peacock, and CBS rebranded its platform as Paramount+. The streaming market was now saturated with options, sparking intense competition and compelling each player to innovate continuously.

Technological Innovations Fueling Streaming's Growth

Streaming's success is directly tied to advancements in technology. Improved internet speeds, thanks to broadband, fiber optic, and 5G technology, have been instrumental in making streaming accessible. Faster internet reduces buffering times and makes it possible to stream high-quality video, including HD and 4K, even in

regions previously hampered by slow connections.

In addition to internet speed, the role of content delivery networks (CDNs) cannot be overstated. CDNs are networks of servers located around the world that cache content closer to the end user, significantly reducing latency and buffering issues. When a viewer streams a movie on Netflix, the content isn't coming from a central server but from a CDN server located as close to them as possible. This makes for a smoother and more enjoyable experience, which has been essential to the growth and appeal of streaming platforms.

Compression technology has also been a game changer. Modern codecs like H.264 and H.265 allow streaming services to send large video files over the internet without overwhelming bandwidth. These compression technologies mean that even users with slower internet speeds can watch content in high definition. With these technical advancements, streaming has become seamless across devices, from smartphones and tablets to smart TVs, making it accessible anytime, anywhere.

Changing Viewer Habits and the Rise of On-Demand Culture

Streaming platforms have reshaped how audiences consume content. Where traditional television had once dictated a rigid viewing schedule, streaming offers unparalleled freedom. Viewers no longer need to schedule their time around a favorite show's airtime. Instead, streaming caters to a new "on-demand culture" where users can access entire seasons at their convenience. This shift has led to the phenomenon of binge-watching, where viewers consume multiple episodes or even entire series in a single sitting.

Binge-watching has changed storytelling itself. Knowing viewers can watch multiple episodes consecutively, creators can now craft intricate plots that unfold over time, without needing to "hook" viewers at the start of every episode. Shows like *Stranger Things*, *The Crown*, and *The Mandalorian* have taken advantage of this format, offering complex narratives that unfold across seasons, keeping audiences invested for long periods.

Personalization has further transformed the viewing experience. Streaming platforms utilize sophisticated algorithms to study viewer habits, allowing them to make accurate recommendations tailored to each individual. By analyzing data points such as viewing time, genre preference, and watch history, services like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ can predict what a user might enjoy next. This data-driven approach keeps audiences engaged and coming back for more, creating a personalized entertainment experience that traditional TV cannot match.

Streaming services have also invested in localized content, producing shows in various languages and genres tailored to regional tastes. Netflix, for example, has produced original shows in multiple languages, including Hindi, Japanese, and Portuguese, expanding its appeal across diverse cultural backgrounds. This globalization of content not only satisfies regional audiences but also allows viewers to experience new cultures, ideas, and storytelling styles from around the world. It is a testament to how streaming has enabled storytelling without borders, creating a shared cultural landscape.



The Cultural Shift: Global Access to Diverse Content

One of the most profound impacts of streaming is the way it has expanded access to global content. In the past, international shows and films were often difficult to find, limited by geographic distribution rights and language barriers. Streaming platforms have broken down these barriers, allowing users from all over the world to discover foreign content. Shows like *Money Heist* from Spain, *Dark* from Germany, and *Squid Game* from South Korea have gained massive global followings, underscoring the demand for cross-cultural storytelling.

Impact on Content Creation: A New Era of Storytelling

With the rise of streaming platforms, the business of content creation has also undergone a profound shift. Traditional television networks have often been risk-averse, creating content with broad appeal to maximize advertising revenue. Streaming platforms, however, operate on a subscription model and are therefore incentivized to take risks and invest in diverse, high-quality content. This model has democratized content creation, allowing for unique, experimental, and niche storytelling.

For creators, streaming platforms offer unparalleled creative freedom. Unlike network television, which relies on ad breaks and formulaic episodes, streaming platforms are not bound by these constraints. As a result, shows on streaming services can explore different episode lengths, tones, and storytelling structures, resulting in more engaging, layered narratives. Directors and writers are encouraged to develop unique stories that might not have fit within traditional network television, leading to original programming like *The Queen's Gambit*, *Black Mirror*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*, all of which take storytelling risks.

Additionally, streaming platforms often operate on faster production timelines, allowing for quicker adaptation to audience trends and interests. This flexibility has helped creators develop content that resonates with modern audiences, addressing current social, cultural, and political issues in ways that are both timely and relevant.

Competition, Consolidation, and the Future of Streaming

As streaming's popularity has surged, the industry has become crowded, with numerous players vying for audience attention. Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, HBO Max, and Apple TV+ all compete fiercely, leading to what has been coined the "streaming wars." Each platform strives to differentiate itself with exclusive

content, original programming, and unique user features. This competition has led to rapid growth in content investment, with billions of dollars poured into new series and films. For viewers, this results in an abundance of choice, though it also means multiple subscriptions, each with its associated cost.

To remain competitive, streaming platforms are continually innovating. Interactive content is one area of exploration, with shows like Netflix's *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*, which allows viewers to make choices that affect the story. As immersive technologies like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) evolve, streaming platforms may incorporate these technologies to create even more engaging experiences.

The industry is also beginning to consolidate, with mergers and acquisitions reshaping the market. Larger players are acquiring smaller services, and major studios are launching their own platforms. This trend is expected to continue as companies seek to bolster their content libraries and improve market share. At the same time, increased competition among platforms may lead to more variety in programming and innovative subscription models.

The success of ad-free streaming has also prompted a shift in revenue models. While streaming platforms traditionally relied on subscription fees, several are now experimenting with ad-supported options to attract budget-conscious consumers. Hulu, HBO Max, and more recently, Netflix and

Disney+, offer tiered subscriptions with ads, which allow viewers to choose between ad-free and ad-supported plans. This approach has not only increased affordability but has also introduced an alternative revenue stream, providing platforms with more resources to invest in original programming.

Conclusion: The Lasting Impact of Streaming on Entertainment

The evolution of streaming platforms has permanently altered the entertainment industry. By shifting control from traditional broadcasters to consumers, streaming has fostered a culture of on-demand entertainment, where people can access diverse, high-quality content on their own terms. The rise of personalization, global storytelling, and flexible viewing options have made streaming an integral part of modern life, catering to audiences who seek convenience, choice, and cultural exploration.

As technology advances, streaming platforms will continue to innovate, pushing the boundaries of what's possible in entertainment. With AI, interactive content, and immersive experiences on the horizon, the future of streaming promises even more exciting developments. In a rapidly changing media landscape, streaming stands as a testament to how technology can transform an industry, paving the way for a new era in which entertainment is more accessible, personalized, and globally interconnected than ever before.



Consequences of Deforestation on Global Biodiversity



By Ayesha Shaeban

Deforestation, the large-scale removal of trees from forested areas, stands as one of the most urgent environmental challenges facing the planet today. Its consequences are extensive and varied, influencing not only local ecosystems but also global biodiversity and climate stability. This article examines the impact of deforestation on biodiversity, highlighting key aspects such as habitat loss, species extinction, ecological balance, and socio-economic factors. One of the most immediate consequences of deforestation is habitat loss. Forests serve as vital habitats for countless species, providing food, shelter, and breeding grounds. When trees are removed, these habitats are often destroyed or fragmented, leaving many species without the resources they need to survive. For instance, tropical rainforests, which are among the most biodiverse ecosystems on Earth, are being cleared at alarming rates for agriculture, logging, and urban development. As a result, many species that rely on these forests face increased competition for dwindling resources, leading to population declines. The loss of habitat is closely linked to species extinction. According to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), deforestation is a primary driver of

species extinction, with approximately 28,000 species estimated to vanish each year due to habitat destruction. Iconic species such as the orangutan, jaguar, and various types of birds and amphibians are at significant risk as their habitats are cleared for industrial purposes. Once a species is pushed to extinction, the effects ripple through the ecosystem, destabilizing food webs and affecting other species that depend on them for survival. The extinction of one species can lead to the decline of others, creating a cascade effect that threatens overall biodiversity. Deforestation also disrupts ecological balance. Forests play a crucial role in maintaining ecological equilibrium by regulating the climate, preserving soil quality, and controlling water cycles. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, acting as carbon sinks that help mitigate climate change. When forests are cut down, the stored carbon is released back into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming. Furthermore, the removal of trees affects local rainfall patterns and increases the risk of soil erosion. Without the protective cover of trees, soil becomes more susceptible to runoff, leading to loss of nutrients and degradation of land, which can further diminish the ability of the ecosystem to recover. Deforestation has significant

socio-economic consequences. Many communities, particularly indigenous peoples, depend on forests for their livelihoods, relying on them for food, medicine, and materials. The destruction of forests can displace these communities, strip them of their resources, and disrupt their cultural practices. Furthermore, deforestation often leads to conflict over land and resources, as competing interests such as agriculture, mining, and logging clash with the rights of local populations. This socio-economic strain can exacerbate poverty, creating a cycle of dependency that makes it difficult for affected communities to pursue sustainable development. Efforts to combat deforestation and its impacts on biodiversity are increasingly crucial. Sustainable forest management practices, reforestation initiatives, and the establishment of protected areas are vital strategies to preserve remaining forests and restore degraded lands. Raising awareness about the importance of forests and the services they provide can foster a greater understanding of the need for conservation. Consumers can also play a role by supporting sustainable products and practices that reduce the demand for resources contributing to deforestation.

Understanding Deforestation

Deforestation occurs for a variety of reasons, including agricultural expansion, logging, urban development, and infrastructure projects. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), approximately 10 million hectares of forest are lost each year. This loss translates into significant alterations in ecological systems, affecting the myriad of organisms that depend on forests for their survival.

Types of Deforestation

Deforestation can be classified into several types:

Commercial Deforestation: It refers to the large scale logging of forests primarily for timber and paper products. This practice is driven by the demand for wood in construction, furniture manufacturing, and the production of paper, leading to the rapid depletion of forested areas around the world. The consequences of commercial deforestation are profound and far reaching, impacting both local ecosystems and global environmental health. One of the most significant impacts of commercial deforestation is habitat loss. Forests provide essential habitats for countless species, and their destruction threatens biodiversity. As trees are cut down, many animals and plants lose their homes, leading to declines in population and, in some cases, extinction. This loss of biodiversity disrupts ecological balance and can result in cascading effects throughout the ecosystem. It contributes to climate change. Trees play a vital role in sequestering carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming. When forests are cleared, the stored carbon is released back into the atmosphere, exacerbating climate change and its associated impacts, such as extreme weather events and rising sea levels. It often leads to soil degradation and increased erosion. The removal of trees leaves soil exposed, making it more vulnerable to runoff and loss of nutrients. This degradation can affect agricultural productivity and water quality, further impacting local communities that rely on these resources. Despite the economic benefits that commercial logging can bring, the long term environmental costs are significant.

Sustainable forest management practices, reforestation, and responsible consumption are essential to mitigate the impacts of commercial deforestation. By prioritizing these strategies, we can protect forests and the vital ecosystems they support, ensuring a healthier planet for future generations.

Subsistence Deforestation: Agricultural deforestation is primarily driven by the demand to expand farmland for high-value crops such as soy and palm oil. As global



populations increase and food demands rise, vast areas of forest are cleared to make way for agriculture. This practice leads to significant environmental consequences, including habitat loss, decreased biodiversity, and soil degradation. The conversion of forests to farmland disrupts local ecosystems and contributes to climate change by releasing stored carbon into the atmosphere. Sustainable agricultural practices and responsible land management are essential to mitigate the impacts of agricultural deforestation and protect vital forest ecosystems.

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forest ecosystems.

Urban Deforestation: It refers to the clearing of forests for urban development and infrastructure projects, such as housing, roads, and commercial buildings. This practice significantly impacts biodiversity, often resulting in habitat fragmentation and degradation. As forests are replaced by concrete landscapes, many species lose their homes and resources, leading to population declines and

increased extinction risks. The loss of green spaces also disrupts ecological balance, affecting air quality and water cycles. To counter these effects, sustainable urban planning and the integration of green spaces into city designs are essential for preserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological health in urban areas.

The Direct Impact on Biodiversity

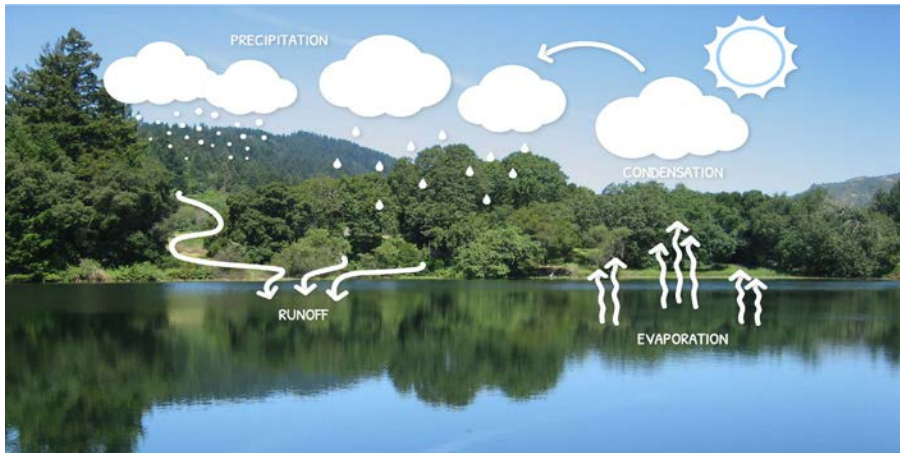
Habitat Loss

Forests are home to an estimated 80% of the world's terrestrial species. When trees are cut down, the habitat that countless species rely on is destroyed. This loss of habitat directly correlates with declining populations of flora and fauna. For instance, the Amazon rainforest, often referred to as the "lungs of the Earth," hosts an incredible variety of species. Deforestation in this region has resulted in significant habitat loss, endangering species like the jaguar, sloth, and countless bird species.

Species Extinction

The IUCN Red List indicates that deforestation is one of the primary drivers

of species extinction. The loss of habitat forces many species into smaller areas, leading to overcrowding and competition for resources. Isolated populations are less likely to reproduce successfully, leading to a decline in genetic diversity. As populations dwindle, the risk of extinction increases. Notable examples include the Spix's Macaw and the Sumatran Orangutan, both of which face imminent extinction largely due to habitat loss from deforestation.



Invasive Species

Deforestation often creates conditions that favor the introduction of invasive species. When native vegetation is removed, it disrupts local ecosystems and can allow non-native species to thrive. These invasive species can outcompete native flora and fauna for resources, leading to further declines in biodiversity. For instance, in Hawaii, deforestation has facilitated the spread of invasive plants that choke out native species, altering entire ecosystems.

Ecological Imbalance

Disruption of Ecosystem Services

Forests provide critical ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, water purification, and soil stabilization. Deforestation undermines these services, leading to ecological imbalances that affect not only local biodiversity but also global climate systems. For example, trees absorb carbon dioxide, a significant greenhouse gas. With fewer trees, more CO₂ remains in the atmosphere, exacerbating climate change and its associated impacts on biodiversity.

Soil Degradation

The removal of trees disrupts the soil

structure and nutrient cycle. Without tree cover, soil is more susceptible to erosion, leading to loss of fertile land. Erosion can carry away topsoil, which is essential for plant growth, and degrade habitats for many species. This degradation further diminishes biodiversity by altering the landscapes in which species thrive.

Water Cycle Disruption

Forests play a crucial role in maintaining

the water cycle, a vital process that sustains life on Earth. Trees absorb rainfall through their roots and release water vapor back into the atmosphere via a process called transpiration. This continuous exchange of moisture not only helps regulate local climates but also contributes to cloud formation and precipitation. When forests are intact, they create a balanced and healthy water cycle that supports both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. However, deforestation disrupts this cycle, leading to significant environmental changes that can have far-reaching consequences. When trees are removed, the immediate effect is a reduction in the number of plants available to absorb rainfall. This leads to decreased transpiration, which in turn affects the moisture levels in the atmosphere. With fewer trees to release water vapor, less moisture is available to form clouds, resulting in altered rainfall patterns. Areas that once received regular rainfall may experience drought, while others might suffer from increased runoff and flooding due to the inability of the soil to absorb excess water. These changes can create arid conditions, which not only affect agricultural productivity but also threaten the livelihoods of communities that depend on consistent rainfall for their crops. The

alteration of rainfall patterns has dire implications for both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Forests are home to a diverse array of species that rely on consistent water availability for survival. For example, many plants and animals are adapted to specific moisture conditions; when those conditions change, their habitats may no longer be suitable. This leads to habitat fragmentation, where ecosystems are broken apart, further threatening biodiversity. Species that cannot adapt or migrate face the risk of extinction. The impacts of deforestation on the water cycle extend to aquatic ecosystems as well. Rivers and lakes depend on stable inflows of freshwater from surrounding forests. With the loss of trees, increased runoff can lead to soil erosion, which often results in sedimentation in water bodies. This sedimentation can degrade water quality, harm aquatic life, and disrupt the balance of ecosystems. Changes in water flow can affect the spawning grounds of fish and other aquatic organisms, further threatening their populations. The socio-economic implications of these environmental changes are significant. Communities that rely on forests for their livelihoods through agriculture, fishing, and tourism face increasing challenges as the water cycle becomes destabilized. Crop yields may decline due to altered rainfall patterns, and local fisheries may suffer from changes in water quality and fish habitats. This can lead to food insecurity and economic hardship, particularly in developing regions where people rely heavily on natural resources. In response to the challenges posed by deforestation and its effects on the water cycle, it is crucial to implement sustainable forest management practices. Reforestation and afforestation efforts can help restore damaged ecosystems, while preserving existing forests is essential for maintaining the delicate balance of the water cycle. Policies that promote sustainable agriculture and land use can reduce pressure on forests, allowing them to continue providing vital ecosystem services.

Socio-Economic Consequences

Impact on Indigenous Communities

Indigenous peoples often rely on forests for their livelihoods, culture, and spiritual

practices. Deforestation not only displaces these communities but also undermines their traditional knowledge and practices that have historically contributed to biodiversity conservation. The loss of forests means a loss of food sources, medicinal plants, and culturally significant landscapes.

Economic Implications

While deforestation may offer short-term economic gains through logging and agricultural expansion, the long-term costs are often ignored. Biodiversity loss can lead to decreased ecosystem services, which are essential for agriculture, fisheries, and tourism. The decline in these sectors can result in economic instability, particularly for communities that depend on natural resources for their livelihoods.

Climate Change Effects

The interconnectedness of biodiversity and climate change cannot be overlooked. Deforestation contributes to climate change, which in turn affects biodiversity. As temperatures rise and weather patterns become more erratic, species that cannot adapt quickly enough face extinction. The loss of biodiversity can also impair ecosystem resilience, making it harder for ecosystems to recover from climate-related disturbances.

Conservation Efforts

Sustainable Forestry

One of the most effective ways to combat deforestation is through sustainable forestry practices. This approach emphasizes responsible management of forest resources, ensuring that logging and land use do not compromise biodiversity. Certification programs, such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), promote sustainable practices that help protect ecosystems.

Reforestation and Afforestation

Restoration efforts, such as reforestation and afforestation, are essential for rebuilding lost ecosystems. By planting native trees and restoring habitats, these initiatives can help revive biodiversity. Organizations worldwide are working to restore degraded lands, which can also serve as carbon sinks, contributing to climate change mitigation.

Policy and Legislation

Governments play a crucial role in addressing deforestation through legislation and policy initiatives. Strengthening laws that protect forests, regulating land use, and promoting conservation programs can significantly impact biodiversity preservation. International agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, aim to create frameworks for countries to protect their natural resources.

Community Engagement

Involving local communities in conservation efforts is vital for success. Community based conservation programs that empower indigenous and local populations to manage their resources have shown promising results. By recognizing the rights and knowledge of these communities, conservation strategies can be more effective and equitable.



Global Implications of Biodiversity Loss

Economic Consequences

The loss of biodiversity poses significant economic risks. Biodiverse ecosystems provide numerous services, from pollination and pest control to water purification and climate regulation. The decline of these services can lead to increased costs for agriculture, fisheries, and health care, ultimately impacting global economies.

Human Health

Biodiversity loss has direct implications for human health. Many medicines are derived from plant and animal species, and as these

species become extinct, potential cures and treatments are lost. The disruption of ecosystems can lead to increased disease transmission, as wildlife habitats are encroached upon and animals come into closer contact with human populations.

Food Security

Biodiversity is essential for food security. Diverse ecosystems provide a range of crops, livestock, and fish species that are crucial for human diets. Deforestation threatens this diversity, leading to monocultures that are more vulnerable to pests and diseases. The reliance on a narrow range of species for food can jeopardize food systems, particularly in times of climate stress.

Conclusion

Deforestation poses a profound threat to global biodiversity, impacting ecosystems,

species, and human communities alike. The consequences of habitat loss, species extinction, and ecological imbalance extend beyond the immediate environment, affecting economic stability, human health, and food security. Addressing deforestation requires a multifaceted approach that includes sustainable practices, effective policy, and community engagement. As global citizens, it is our collective responsibility to advocate for the preservation of our forests and the biodiversity they sustain. Only through concerted efforts can we hope to mitigate the consequences of deforestation and protect the rich tapestry of life on Earth for future generations.

Dengue fever - Symptoms and causes

- **Dengue Transmission:** Dengue is a viral infection spread to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes.
- **Global Risk:** Approximately half of the world's population is at risk, with an estimated 100–400 million infections each year.
- **Geographic Distribution:** Dengue is prevalent in tropical and sub-tropical climates, primarily in urban and semi-urban areas.
- **Symptoms and Severity:** While many infections are asymptomatic or mild, severe cases can occur and may lead to death.
- **Prevention:** Effective prevention relies on controlling mosquito populations. There is no specific treatment for dengue; however, early detection and access to health-care significantly reduce fatality rates in severe cases.

Overview

Dengue, also known as break-bone fever, is a viral infection transmitted by mosquitoes, predominantly in tropical and subtropical regions. Most infected individuals do not show symptoms, but those who do may experience high fever, severe headache, muscle and joint pain, nausea, and rash. Recovery typically occurs within 1–2 weeks, but severe cases require hospitalization.

To reduce the risk of infection, it is crucial to avoid mosquito bites, especially during daytime hours. Pain management is the primary treatment, as no specific cure exists for dengue.

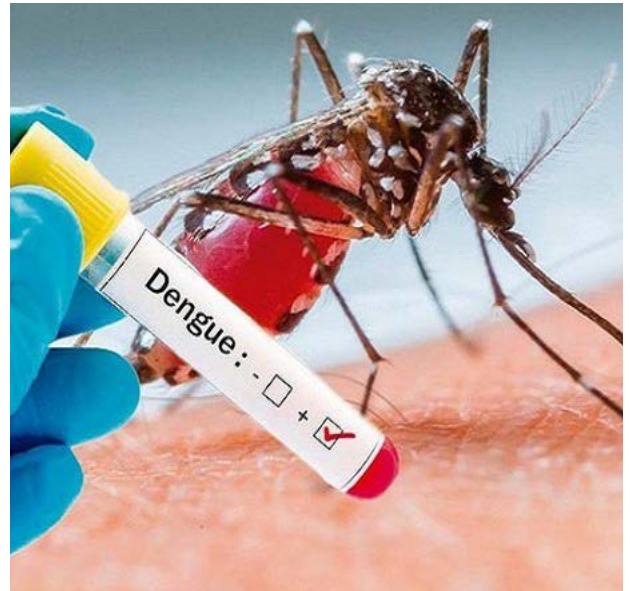
Symptoms

Many individuals with dengue experience mild or no symptoms and usually recover within 1–2 weeks. Severe dengue, although rare, can be fatal. If symptoms manifest, they typically arise 4–10 days post-infection and may last 2–7 days, including:

- High fever (40°C/104°F)
- Severe headache
- Pain behind the eyes
- Muscle and joint pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Swollen glands
- Rash

Those experiencing a second infection are at higher risk for severe dengue. Symptoms of severe dengue often appear after the fever subsides, including:

- Severe abdominal pain
- Persistent vomiting



- Rapid breathing
- Bleeding gums or nose
- Fatigue and restlessness
- Blood in vomit or stool
- Extreme thirst
- Pale, cold skin
- Weakness

Immediate medical attention is essential for individuals with severe symptoms. After recovery, fatigue may persist for several weeks.

Diagnostics and Treatment

There is no specific treatment for dengue; management focuses on alleviating symptoms. Most cases can be treated at home using pain relievers. Acetaminophen (paracetamol) is commonly recommended, while non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen and aspirin should be avoided due to bleeding risks. Severe cases often require hospitalization.

Global Burden

The incidence of dengue has significantly increased in recent decades, with reported cases rising from 505,430 in 2000 to 5.2 million in 2019. Many cases are asymptomatic or mild and go unreported. In 2023, over 6.5 million cases and more than 7,300 dengue-related deaths were documented, marking the highest incidence recorded.

Factors contributing to the rising dengue epidemic include:

- Changing distribution of mosquito vectors (mainly *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*)

- Climate change and the El Niño phenomenon
- Fragile health systems amid the COVID-19 pandemic
- Political and economic instability in regions facing humanitarian crises

Modeling estimates suggest 390 million dengue infections occur annually, with around 96 million cases exhibiting symptoms. The disease is endemic in over 100 countries across various WHO regions, with Asia bearing approximately 70% of the global burden.

Transmission

Mosquito Transmission: Dengue is primarily transmitted by infected female *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, with *Aedes albopictus* also contributing to outbreaks. After biting an infected individual, the virus replicates within the mosquito and can be transmitted after an incubation period of 8–12 days under optimal temperatures.

Human-to-Mosquito Transmission: Humans can infect mosquitoes during the viremia phase, which occurs before symptoms manifest and up to two days post-fever resolution. The likelihood of mosquito infection is higher with increased viremia and fever levels.

Maternal and Other Transmission: Maternal transmission is possible but rare, with potential risks including pre-term birth and low birth weight. Additionally, rare cases of transmission via blood products or organ donations have been recorded.

Risk Factors

Prior dengue infections elevate the risk of developing severe disease. Urbanization, particularly unplanned growth, contributes to transmission through various social and environmental factors. Community knowledge and practices related to dengue prevention significantly impact exposure and disease risk.

Prevention and Control

To reduce dengue risk:

- Use protective clothing and mosquito nets, especially during the day.
- Employ window screens and mosquito repellents.
- Control mosquito breeding by managing standing water and disposing of waste properly.

In the event of infection, individuals should:

- Rest and stay hydrated.
- Use acetaminophen for pain relief.
- Avoid NSAIDs like ibuprofen and aspirin.
- Seek medical attention for severe symptoms.

Currently, one vaccine (QDenga) is licensed in some regions for individuals aged 6 to 16 in high-transmission areas, with additional vaccines under development.

WHO Response

The WHO addresses dengue through:

- Outbreak confirmation support via laboratories.
- Technical guidance for effective outbreak management.
- Enhancements to disease reporting systems.
- Training on diagnosis, clinical management, and vector control.
- Development of evidence-based strategies for dengue prevention and control.
- Recommendations for new tools, including insecticides.

Dengue in Pakistan

Since the beginning of 2024, over 13 million dengue cases and over 8500 dengue-related deaths have been reported globally. Most cases globally have occurred in the WHO PAHO region where over 11 million cases have been reported in 2024, 53% of these being laboratory confirmed.

Cases were reported in every month of the study; however, 90% of cases occurred between June and November. Increases in rainfall were correlated with increases in cases 2 months later (correlation of 0.7).

Dengue related infections have gripped Pakistan as well as other countries. Dengue can be a serious infection, yet preventable. Timely, precise vigilance can curtail this menace to bare minimum. Surveillance, larvicidal activities are the key factors in prevention of Dengue infection. Once infection has occurred, morbidity and mortality can be minimized with close monitoring and exemplary medical management. Patient presenting late in the course of the disease can run into hurdles, therefore timely checkup and close monitoring is the way to save lives. Dengue Expert Advisory Group was formed for provision of advanced clinical advice for management of difficult dengue cases, development of national guidelines and capacity building for medical and paramedical staff. We at DEAG, are working hand in hand with Primary, Specialized healthcare and CDC to facilitate patients with meticulous dengue management.

Dengue fever has touched lives adversely, leaving behind tears and fears, scaring the psyche of the nation for at least a short time. A nation that is already fighting war on terror on multiple fronts, Dengue related morbidity and mortality could not have occurred at a more difficult time. Instead of giving up to this adversity, we decided to stand up and take the challenge head on. Since Dengue related infections are a relatively new disease in this part of the world, doctors' training and guidance was of paramount importance. For this very purpose, Dengue Expert Advisory Group was formed for provision of advanced clinical advice for management of difficult dengue cases, development of national guidelines and capacity building for medical and paramedical staff.

How to Kick Bad Habits: A Comprehensive Guide



By Ayesha Shaeban

Introduction

Bad habits can significantly hinder personal growth and overall well-being, creating a cycle of negative behaviors that affect various aspects of life. These habits, whether they manifest as procrastination, unhealthy eating, excessive screen time, or poor time management, can lead to increased stress, decreased productivity, and diminished physical health. Over time, they accumulate, often resulting in feelings of guilt and frustration, which can further entrench these habits and make change seem daunting. The impact of bad habits extends beyond the individual; they can strain relationships, hinder career progression, and limit opportunities for personal fulfillment. For instance, someone who consistently procrastinates may miss deadlines, leading to stress and undermining their reputation at work. Similarly, unhealthy eating habits can lead to physical health issues, affecting energy levels and mood, thus impairing one's ability to engage fully in life's activities.

Breaking bad habits is crucial for personal growth, as it paves the way for healthier choices and more constructive behaviors.

When individuals take steps to identify and address their bad habits, they often experience a sense of empowerment and accomplishment. This process can enhance self-discipline and resilience, qualities that are vital for achieving long-term goals. Overcoming bad habits can lead to improved mental and physical health, fostering a more positive outlook on life. Engaging in this journey of transformation not only improves personal well-being but also sets a positive example for others. By demonstrating that change is possible, individuals can inspire friends, family, and colleagues to reflect on their habits and consider making positive adjustments in their own lives. Ultimately, breaking bad habits is not just about eliminating negative behaviors; it is about embracing a more fulfilling and productive life.

Understanding Habits

The Psychology Behind Habits

Habits are automatic behaviors that occur in response to specific cues. They are formed through a process of reinforcement, where behaviors that lead to positive outcomes are repeated, while those that do

not are typically discarded. Understanding this psychological mechanism is crucial for anyone looking to change their habits.

The Habit Loop: Cue, Routine, Reward

The habit loop is a fundamental concept in understanding how habits form and persist in our lives, consisting of three key components: cue, routine, and reward. By examining these elements closely, individuals can gain insight into their behaviors and implement effective changes. The first component, the cue, acts as the trigger that initiates the habitual behavior. Cues can take many forms, such as specific times of day, emotional states, or certain environments. For instance, you might find that you reach for a snack every afternoon around 3 PM. In this case, the time of day serves as your cue. Similarly, an emotional state, like stress or boredom, can trigger a habit. For example, someone feeling anxious might habitually turn to smoking or binge watching television as a way to cope. Environmental cues, such as walking past a favorite coffee shop, can also spark cravings and lead to habitual behavior. Recognizing these cues is essential because they are often automatic, occurring without

conscious thought. By becoming aware of your triggers, you can begin to address and modify your responses.

The second component of the habit loop is the routine, which is the actual behavior that follows the cue. This can manifest in various ways physical actions, mental thoughts, or emotional responses. Continuing with the earlier example, if the cue is the time of day, the routine might be reaching for a snack or indulging in a specific treat. Routines can also include more complex behaviors, such as exercising or engaging in negative self-talk. Understanding your routines helps to clarify how you respond to different cues and what behaviors you engage in as a result. By analyzing these routines, you can pinpoint which ones are beneficial and which may need to be replaced with healthier alternatives.

Finally, we have the reward, the third component of the habit loop. Rewards are the benefits you gain from completing the routine, and they can be either tangible or intangible. Tangible rewards may include a delicious treat or a new item you purchase after a shopping spree, while intangible rewards could be feelings of relief, happiness, or satisfaction. The reward reinforces the routine, making it more likely that you will engage in the same behavior when the same cue appears in the future. This reinforcement cycle is what solidifies habits in our lives. For example, if you feel a sense of relaxation after binge-watching your favorite show, that feeling acts as a reward, making you more likely to repeat the behavior the next time you feel stressed. By understanding these components of the habit loop, individuals can start to dissect their habits and identify necessary changes. The first step is to become aware of your cues recognizing what triggers your behaviors. Next, analyze your routines and evaluate whether they contribute positively to your life or detract from it. Finally, consider the rewards associated with your routines. Are they genuinely beneficial, or do they provide only short-term gratification at the cost of long-term well-being?

Once you have a clear understanding of your habit loop, you can begin to make informed decisions about how to alter your behaviors. For example, if you identify a cue that leads to an unhealthy routine, you can work to replace that routine with a

healthier one, while still aiming for a rewarding outcome. By adjusting each component of the habit loop modifying cues, changing routines, and re-evaluating rewards you can create a more positive cycle that promotes personal growth and wellbeing.

Types of Habits: Positive vs. Negative

Habits can be broadly categorized into positive and negative, each playing a significant role in shaping our lives and well-being. Positive habits are those that enhance your overall quality of life and contribute to personal growth. Examples include exercising regularly, which boosts physical health and mental clarity, and reading daily, which expands knowledge and fosters creativity. These habits not only promote a healthier lifestyle but also create a sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. Conversely, negative habits detract from your well-being and can lead to detrimental consequences over time. Examples include excessive screen time, which can lead to a sedentary lifestyle and negatively impact mental health, and unhealthy eating patterns, which may contribute to weight gain and various health issues. Recognizing these habits is crucial, as they can create a cycle of self-sabotage that hinders personal development and happiness. Identifying which habits fall into each category is essential for your journey toward improvement. By taking stock of your daily routines, you can pinpoint behaviors that uplift you and those that hold you back. This self-reflection allows you to make informed decisions about which habits to nurture and which to change. Once you've categorized your habits, you can set realistic goals for improvement, focusing on reinforcing positive habits while gradually replacing negative ones with healthier alternatives. Ultimately, understanding the distinction between positive and negative habits empowers you to take control of your life. By actively working to cultivate positive behaviors and diminish negative ones, you pave the way for a more fulfilling and balanced existence, enhancing your overall well-being and happiness.

Identifying Your Habits

Importance of Self-Awareness

Before you can effectively change your

habits, it is essential to develop a heightened awareness of them. This self-reflection is often overlooked but is crucial for understanding how your daily behaviors shape your life. By taking the time to examine your actions, you can uncover harmful patterns that may be affecting your well-being and productivity. One effective method for cultivating this awareness is to keep a habit journal. For a period of one week, dedicate yourself to writing down your daily habits in detail. Record not only what habits you engage in but also the circumstances surrounding these actions, including the time of day, location, and the people you are with. Additionally, take note of how you feel before, during, and after engaging in each habit. This practice allows you to create a comprehensive overview of your behaviors and emotional responses, which can be enlightening. As you begin to analyze your habit journal, look for recurring cues and triggers that initiate specific behaviors. For instance, you might discover that certain emotions, such as stress or sadness, lead you to snack mindlessly. Feelings of boredom could prompt you to spend excessive time scrolling through social media. Recognizing these triggers is an important step in understanding the underlying reasons for your habits and can help you formulate strategies for change.

Once you identify the triggers, it becomes easier to strategize how to modify your behaviors. For example, if you notice that stress drives you to unhealthy eating, you might seek alternative stress-relief methods, such as exercise or mindfulness practices. If boredom is the culprit behind excessive screen time, consider setting specific times for technology use or replacing that habit with a more constructive activity, such as reading or engaging in a hobby. It's important to examine the rewards associated with your habits. Understanding what you gain from certain behaviors can help you find healthier alternatives that still provide satisfaction. If snacking gives you a momentary sense of comfort, look for healthier snacks that can fulfill that need without compromising your health goals. Sharing your findings with a friend or a support group can add another layer of accountability and motivation. Discussing your habits and the changes you want to make can provide valuable insights and

encouragement from others who may have faced similar challenges. Throughout this process, remember to practice patience and self-compassion. Change doesn't happen overnight, and setbacks are a natural part of the journey. The key is to remain committed to your goals and to view each small victory as progress. Ultimately, developing awareness of your habits through self-reflection and journaling empowers you to take control of your life. By recognizing triggers, understanding emotional patterns, and exploring healthier alternatives, you lay the groundwork for lasting change. This journey of self-discovery not only enhances your well-being but also fosters personal growth, leading to a more fulfilling and balanced life. Taking these steps can be transformative, setting you on a path to create habits that align with your values and aspirations, rather than being governed by unconscious patterns.

Strategies for Breaking Bad Habits

Understanding the cues that trigger your bad habits is a crucial first step toward meaningful change. Cues can be emotional, environmental, or social, and they often act as invisible strings that pull us into repetitive behaviors. For instance, if you find yourself reaching for junk food when stressed, it's essential to identify that emotional connection. Acknowledging that stress triggers this unhealthy behavior allows you to explore healthier coping mechanisms, such as mindfulness exercises, yoga, or even a brief walk outside. By understanding your cues, you can disrupt the cycle of habit formation and make conscious choices that serve your well-being. Replacing bad habits with positive routines can be more effective than attempting to eliminate them entirely. The idea is to fill the void left by the negative behavior with something beneficial. For example, if you typically smoke when feeling stressed, consider replacing that habit with deep breathing exercises or a brisk walk. These alternatives not only provide a healthier outlet for stress relief but also help reinforce a more positive routine. The act of consciously substituting one behavior for another creates a new pattern that is less likely to trigger the same feelings of guilt or shame often associated with bad habits. Setting SMART goals is another effective

strategy for habit change. This acronym stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. By defining your goals clearly, you create a roadmap for your journey. For example, instead of stating, "I want to exercise more," you could set a SMART goal like, "I will go for a 30-minute walk three times a week for the next month." This clarity helps you focus your efforts and measure your progress effectively. You'll be able to track your improvements, which can serve as motivation to continue on your path. Creating an accountability system is vital for sustaining commitment to your goals. Sharing your intentions with friends or family members can significantly enhance your motivation, as they can offer encouragement and reminders of your objectives.



Joining a support group or utilizing habit-tracking apps can also provide the accountability you need. Having someone to check in with, share successes, and discuss challenges can make a meaningful difference in your resolve to change your habits. The Two-Minute Rule is a simple yet powerful concept that suggests any new habit you want to develop should take less than two minutes to start. For example, if your goal is to read more, begin with just one page a day. This makes the habit feel manageable and less daunting, allowing you to ease into a more extensive routine over time. Once you establish the habit of reading one page, you may find yourself naturally drawn to read more, effectively expanding your commitment without the pressure of a large initial goal. Maintaining a positive mindset is essential when break-

ing bad habits. It's easy to focus on the negatives of your current behaviors, but shifting your perspective to highlight the benefits of change can significantly impact your motivation. Techniques such as positive affirmations, visualizing success, and keeping a gratitude journal can bolster your resolve. By concentrating on the positive outcomes associated with your new behaviors, you create a mental framework that encourages continued effort and resilience. Understanding that setbacks are a normal part of the process is crucial for long-term success. If you slip up, rather than viewing it as failure, take the time to reflect on what led to that setback. Adjust your strategy accordingly, recognizing that resilience is an essential component of habit change. Each setback can serve as a

learning opportunity, offering valuable insights into your triggers and the efficacy of your current strategies. Developing coping strategies for when negative emotions arise can also be beneficial in replacing bad habits. Meditation is a powerful tool for reducing stress and improving focus, while exercise releases endorphins that can enhance your mood. Engaging in hobbies can provide a productive distraction from urges, allowing you to channel your energy into fulfilling activities. Finding constructive ways to cope with emotions can significantly reduce the likelihood of reverting to old habits during challenging times. Your environment plays a significant role in shaping your habits, so it's important to create a supportive atmosphere. Make conscious changes to discourage bad habits while promoting

good ones. If you're striving for healthier eating habits, stock your kitchen with nutritious snacks and remove unhealthy options. Creating an environment conducive to your goals can greatly increase your chances of success.

Long-Term Success Strategies

Monitor Progress

Regularly tracking your progress is vital for staying on course. This could be through journaling, using apps, or conducting weekly check-ins with your accountability partner. Monitoring helps identify patterns and areas for improvement.

Reinforce Positive Habits

As you work to eliminate bad habits, focus on reinforcing positive ones. Consistency is key; practice your new habits regularly to ensure they become ingrained in your routine.

Educate Yourself

Learning more about the consequences of your bad habits can provide the motivation needed to change. Consider reading books, watching documentaries, or attending workshops related to your specific habits.

Seek Professional Help

If you find breaking a habit particularly challenging, consider seeking professional help. Therapists or life coaches can provide tailored strategies and support, helping you to navigate your specific challenges.

Real-Life Examples

To illustrate these concepts, let's look at a few real-life examples of individuals who successfully kicked their bad habits:

Case Study: Sarah and Sugar

Sarah struggled with a sugar addiction that led to weight gain and energy crashes. By keeping a habit journal, she identified that stress and boredom triggered her cravings. She replaced sugary snacks with fruits and nuts, and began a daily yoga practice to manage her stress. Over six months, she lost weight and felt more energetic.

Case Study: Mike and Smoking

Mike was a long-time smoker who wanted to quit for health reasons. He identified social situations as his primary cue. By informing his friends of his goal and seeking their support, he found it easier to refuse cigarettes. He replaced smoking with chewing gum and took up running as a new activity. After a year, he celebrated his

smoke-free status and improved fitness.

Case Study: Jessica and Procrastination

Jessica often procrastinated on her work assignments. She realized that the overwhelming feeling of tasks was her main cue. By breaking down her tasks into smaller, manageable parts and using the Two-Minute Rule, she began to tackle her work incrementally. She set clear deadlines and shared her goals with colleagues, leading to increased productivity and a sense of accomplishment.

Conclusion

Kicking bad habits is a journey that requires self-awareness, dedication, and a willingness to change. By understanding the cues that trigger your habits, replacing negative behaviors with positive ones, and setting structured goals, you can make significant progress toward a healthier, more fulfilling life. Remember, the path to change is not linear. Expect setbacks, learn from them, and celebrate your victories no matter how small. Embrace the process of transformation and seek support when needed. With perseverance and commitment, you can break free from bad habits and cultivate a life filled with positive routines and meaningful growth.



Pakistan vs. England Test Series: A Triumphant Homecoming for Pakistan Cricket



By Romana Afsheen

The 2024 Test series between Pakistan and England marked a pivotal moment in the realm of cricket, showcasing not only the skills of the players but also the resilience and determination of the Pakistani team on home soil. Historically, matches between Pakistan and England have been intense, characterized by fierce competition and memorable performances. With England visiting Pakistan for a Test series, the stakes were high, particularly for the home side, which aimed to solidify its reputation in the longer format of the game.

This series was especially significant for Pakistan, as it came after a period of struggle in Test cricket. Having faced challenges in their past series, including inconsistent performances and a shifting lineup, the Pakistani team needed a strong showing against a formidable England side. The series consisted of three matches, culminating in a dramatic and hard-fought victory for Pakistan, who emerged victorious by 2-1.

First Test Recap

The first Test, held at the National Stadium in Karachi, set the stage for an exciting series. England showcased their prowess by taking an early lead, driven by solid performances from their bowlers and key batsmen. Pakistan struggled to find their rhythm, particularly with their batting lineup, which faltered against England's disciplined bowling attack.

Despite a valiant effort from Babar Azam and Shan Masood, Pakistan was unable to post a competitive total in their first innings. England capitalized on this opportunity, securing a comfortable win and putting pressure on Pakistan to rebound in the subsequent matches.

Second Test Recap

In the second Test, held at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, Pakistan made significant adjustments. Realizing the need for a stronger spin attack, they

brought in Noman Ali and Sajid Khan, whose ability to exploit spin-friendly conditions proved crucial.

Pakistan's strategy shifted dramatically, and the team displayed resilience and determination. Noman Ali's five-wicket haul in the first innings was a turning point, as it dismantled the English batting lineup. The match culminated in a thrilling finish, with Pakistan securing a narrow victory and leveling the series.

Third Test Highlights

The third Test, again at the Gaddafi Stadium, became a showcase for Pakistan's spinners. With the series hanging in the balance, both teams entered the match with high stakes. Noman Ali and Sajid Khan emerged as the heroes for Pakistan, dominating England's batsmen and leading their team to a remarkable victory.

Noman's exceptional bowling, which included a six-wicket haul in England's

second innings, was pivotal. Sajid Khan's support created an unassailable partnership, and Pakistan's bowling attack proved too potent for England, clinching the series 2-1.

In-Depth Analysis of the Third Test Victory

Pitch Analysis and Bowling Strategy

The pitch conditions for the third Test heavily favored spin bowlers, a fact that Pakistan exploited to full effect. Historically, the Gaddafi Stadium has been known for aiding spinners, and Pakistan's decision to field a spin-heavy attack was instrumental in their victory.



Noman Ali and Sajid Khan understood the nuances of the pitch, adjusting their bowling styles to extract maximum turn and bounce. The strategy paid off handsomely, as they dismantled England's batting lineup, which struggled to cope with the relentless pressure exerted by the spin duo.

England's Struggle Against Spin

England's batsmen faced significant challenges throughout the match, particularly against Pakistan's spinners. The conditions were alien to them, and their shot selection was often suspect, leading to critical dismissals.

The team's inability to adapt to the spinning conditions was evident, as they fell victim to Noman and Sajid's clever variations. This marked a turning point in the series, as England's struggles against spin became a recurring theme, contributing to their overall downfall.

Key Performances

Key players emerged as heroes in Pakistan's victory, particularly Noman Ali, whose six wickets in the second innings dismantled England's hopes of a comeback. Sajid Khan's bowling provided essential support, with both spinners complementing each other effectively.

Babar Azam, despite facing criticism for his own performances, remained a crucial part of the team's morale and leadership. His captaincy decisions during the third Test, particularly regarding bowling changes and field placements, played a vital role in maximizing the spinners' effectiveness.

with the bat were vital, especially in stabilizing the innings when the team faced pressure. His solid performances provided the foundation for Pakistan's success in crucial moments.

While some players excelled, others struggled to find their footing. Babar Azam, despite his captaincy responsibilities, faced criticism for his batting form throughout the series. His inability to convert starts into significant scores added pressure on the middle order.

As the series progressed, Babar's performance became a talking point, raising questions about his form and potential impact on the team's strategy moving forward.

The series also provided opportunities for emerging talents to shine. Kamran Ghulam and Shan Masood stepped up when it mattered most, proving their worth in the lineup. Their performances hinted at a promising future for the team, showcasing depth in talent that could be pivotal for Pakistan in upcoming challenges.

The Turning Point: Pakistan's Spinners Dominate

Importance of Spin Bowling

The third Test served as a testament to the effectiveness of spin bowling in subcontinental conditions. Pakistan's strategy to rely heavily on spinners paid off significantly, as they adapted well to the pitch and the conditions.

The decision to field a spin-heavy attack, even going so far as to leave a fast bowler out of the lineup, demonstrated Pakistan's confidence in their spin bowlers. Noman Ali and Sajid Khan took full advantage of the conditions, establishing themselves as the cornerstones of Pakistan's bowling attack.

Noman Ali's six-wicket haul in the second innings was not just a personal achievement; it was a collective effort that broke England's spirit. Sajid Khan's supportive spells ensured that England's batsmen were under constant pressure, preventing them from establishing partnerships.

Their synergy proved to be the decisive

Individual Player Performances and Ratings

Top Performers

- **Noman Ali:** With a remarkable performance in the third Test, Noman earned a stellar rating as the standout bowler of the series. His ability to read the game and adapt his bowling style made him a formidable opponent for the English batsmen. His six-wicket haul in the second innings was a highlight, showcasing his skill and determination.
- **Sajid Khan:** Sajid's consistent wicket-taking ability was crucial for Pakistan. His economy rate and ability to break partnerships made him an indispensable part of the bowling lineup, earning him high praise from analysts and fans alike.
- **Agha Salman:** Agha's contributions

factor in Pakistan's triumph, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in a successful bowling attack. The duo's exceptional performances throughout the series showcased their skills and potential, indicating a bright future for Pakistan's spin bowling.

England's Performance and Challenges

England's batting woes throughout the series were evident. Their struggles against Pakistan's spin attack revealed weaknesses in their approach, particularly against quality spin bowlers. The failure to adapt to the conditions and formulate a successful strategy contributed to their downfall.

Key players like Joe Root and Ben Stokes faced pressure to deliver, but their efforts were often thwarted by the relentless Pakistani bowlers. England's inability to counter Pakistan's spin strategy ultimately cost them the series.

Ben Stokes, known for his aggressive approach to batting, found it challenging to impose himself on the Pakistani bowling attack. While his captaincy style has been praised in the past, this series revealed the limitations of his strategies against spin bowling.

England's batting lineup, built on aggression, struggled to adapt when facing Pakistan's spinners, leading to inconsistent performances across the series. Stokes' leadership faced scrutiny as the series unfolded, with analysts questioning his tactical decisions.

Despite the struggles, Joe Root stood out as a key performer for England. His ability to score runs consistently made him a critical component of their batting lineup. However, without adequate support from his teammates, Root's efforts were often in vain.

England's middle order faltered under pressure, and their inability to build partnerships ultimately sealed their fate in the series.

A New Chapter in Pakistan's Test Cricket

This Test series victory against England is monumental for Pakistan cricket. The team's performance demonstrated not only their skill but also their resilience in the face

of adversity.

Winning the series at home instills confidence and pride in the players and fans alike, reigniting hopes for a brighter future in Test cricket. This victory serves as a reminder of Pakistan's rich cricketing heritage and its capacity to produce world-class players.

Upcoming Prospects and Series

Looking ahead, Pakistan will face various challenges in the international arena. The confidence gained from this series victory will be crucial as they prepare for upcoming tournaments and series against other strong teams.



The blend of experienced players and emerging talents suggests a promising future for Pakistan cricket, with the potential to compete at the highest levels.

Leadership Transition in Pakistan Cricket

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Sunday that wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan has been appointed as Pakistan's new white-ball captain, with Salman Ali Agha named as his vice-captain.

In a press release from the PCB, Rizwan expressed his gratitude, describing the appointment as "a tremendous honor." He remarked, "Joining the ranks of Pakistan's legendary limited-overs captains is the icing on the cake," and committed to collaborating closely with selectors, coaches, and teammates to meet the expectations of fans.

The announcement was made by PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi during a press

conference in Lahore, where he was joined by Head of Selectors Aaqib Javed. Rizwan's appointment was recommended by head coach Gary Kirsten and supported by the selectors. He takes over from Babar Azam, who recently stepped down following Pakistan's World Cup performance. Previously, Rizwan served as vice-captain and led the Multan Sultans to victory in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) in 2021.

Having made his debut in 2015, Rizwan has scored 5,401 runs in 74 ODIs and 102 T20Is, including four centuries and 143 dismissals. He becomes Pakistan's 31st captain overall and the 12th to lead in the T20I format. Rizwan's captaincy debut is

set to take place next month against Australia in a three-match ODI and T20I series. In the meantime, Salman will lead the T20I squad in Zimbabwe while Rizwan rests as part of a workload management strategy.

In addressing fans, Rizwan emphasized his commitment to team unity, stating, "I'm not a king as captain, but a team member." Naqvi also addressed questions regarding team discipline, particularly concerning left-handed batter Fakhar Zaman's fitness and social media activities. Naqvi underscored the PCB's emphasis on discipline, saying, "It's not just the tweets but Fakhar's fitness that matters."

Furthermore, Naqvi praised Azam as a significant asset to Pakistan cricket, noting, "Babar voluntarily stepped down." He also commended the selection committee for its role in Pakistan's recent success against England, highlighting the collaborative approach to team management.

While Babar Azam's captaincy in the Test format remains intact, the transition to a new white-ball captain raises questions about his future. Critics have pointed to inconsistencies in his performances, prompting discussions about his leadership qualities.

Babar's role as captain will require adaptation and resilience as he navigates the complexities of leading a team under pressure. His ability to rally the team and foster a positive environment will be essential for maintaining stability within the squad.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced that it will issue 12-month central contracts to 25 male cricketers for the upcoming 2024-25 international season, effective from July 1, 2024.

This move demonstrates the PCB's commitment to supporting its players and ensuring they are adequately prepared for the challenges of international cricket.

These contracts are part of a three-year agreement established last year between the PCB and the players, emphasizing a structured approach to player remuneration and support. The current list showcases a blend of established stars and rising talent, reflecting the PCB's focus on both performance and potential.

Among the 25 players receiving contracts, five have been awarded central contracts for the first time. This notable group

consists of Khurram Shahzad, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Ali, Muhammad Irfan Khan, and Usman Khan. Their inclusion highlights the PCB's dedication to nurturing new talent and providing opportunities for players who have demonstrated exceptional promise in domestic cricket.

Regarding contract categories, only Babar Azam and Muhammad Rizwan have been awarded A-category contracts, underscoring their crucial roles and outstanding performances for the national team.

Fast bowlers Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah have secured B-category contracts, which further emphasizes their importance within the bowling lineup.

Shan Masood has also received a B-category contract; however, it is contingent upon his continued role as captain. This stipulation reflects the PCB's strategic approach to leadership within the team.

The C-category contracts feature several prominent players, including Shadab Khan, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmad, Sajid Khan, Salman Ali Agha, Saud Shakeel, Haris Rauf, and Saim Ayub. Notably, Noman Ali's contract is conditional upon his fitness, indicating the PCB's emphasis on player health and performance readiness.

In the D-category, Aamer Jamal, Muhammad Waseem, Muhammad Hurraira, Mir Hamza, Khurram Shehzad, Mohammed

Ali, Usman Khan, Irfan Niazi, Haseebullah Khan, Abbas Afridi, and Kamran Ghulam have been included. This category typically comprises players who are either new to the national team or looking to establish themselves within the squad.

Overall, the PCB's decision to award these contracts represents a strategic investment in the future of Pakistani cricket, aiming to develop a strong and competitive team capable of excelling on the international stage.

Conclusion: Looking Ahead to Future Challenges

The Pakistan vs. England Test series concluded with a resounding victory for Pakistan, marking a significant milestone in their cricketing journey. The series showcased the strengths of Pakistan's bowling attack, particularly their spinners, while also revealing challenges faced by England's batting lineup.

As Pakistan prepares for future challenges, the lessons learned from this series will be invaluable. The team's resilience and determination to succeed on home soil have rekindled hopes for a successful era in Test cricket. With a blend of experienced players and emerging talents, Pakistan stands poised to tackle upcoming challenges head-on, paving the way for a bright future in the sport.



“My Punjabi Sister”

Hug goes viral: Roma and Rachel

In an Instagram post, Rachel Gupta shared: “Roma, my heart swells with pride when I think of your courage and grace. Competing alongside you has been a blessing, like finding a home away from home. Your kindness, hard work, and strength have been an example to all, and I am so proud of everything you’ve overcome on your own.”



By J. Choudhry

Despite the complex relationship between Pakistan and India, the love shared by their people often transcends borders. This was beautifully demonstrated by two contestants — Pakistan’s Roma Michael and India’s Rachel Gupta — at the Miss Grand International 2024 beauty pageant held in Bangkok last week.

Rachel, who emerged as the winner, wrote a heartfelt note to her “Punjabi sister” Roma, expressing her affection and admiration.

In an Instagram post, she shared: “Roma, my heart swells with pride when I think of your courage and grace. Competing alongside you has been a blessing, like finding a home away from home. Your kindness, hard work, and strength have been an example to all, and I am so proud of everything you’ve overcome on your own.”

Rachel continued, “Borders may keep us apart, but they cannot separate our bond. We are born of the same blood, and you will always have a friend in me and a home in India. Keep your

head high, Roma, because you are not alone. We are stronger together because what divides us is not bigger than what unites us!”

Miss Grand International, a global beauty contest dedicated to promoting peace and understanding, serves as a platform for cultural exchange and goodwill.

The winner receives the “Golden Crown,” crafted from gold and brass and adorned with diamonds and emeralds, with its design refreshed every three years.

Mahira Khan Dance Goes Viral

Pakistani superstar Mahira Khan has again set social media abuzz, this time with a captivating video of her dancing to the popular Bollywood track “Laila Mein Laila.” This song, which originally featured in her Bollywood debut film *Raees* (2017) alongside Shah Rukh Khan, holds a special place in the hearts of her fans.

In the Instagram video, Mahira show-

cases her effortless dance moves while dressed in a stylish outfit: blue pants paired with a white silk top. Her confident and graceful performance, coupled with her radiant smile, has struck a chord with her followers, propelling the video to viral status across various social media platforms.

Captioning the video, Mahira shared a reflective message: “We work really hard... but it’s important to have fun every chance we get.” The post has been met with widespread appreciation, as fans commend her for finding joy amid her busy schedule.

Renowned for her stellar performances in both Pakistani cinema and Bollywood, Mahira Khan is also making headlines with her upcoming role in the Netflix series *Jo Bache Hain Sang Samet Lo*.

The series has generated considerable excitement, and her latest viral video has only increased anticipation for its release.

With her continued presence in the spotlight and her knack for engaging with fans, Mahira Khan remains a

prominent and beloved figure in the entertainment industry.

Mahira Khan in Trouble

Renowned Pakistani actress Mahira Khan, known for her captivating performances in popular dramas and films, recently found herself at the center of an online controversy. This time, it wasn't her acting that drew attention, but her unconventional walk on the runway during a fashion event.

A video of Mahira's ramp walk quickly went viral on social media, sparking a wave of mixed reactions and harsh criticism from netizens.



Mahira Khan, celebrated for her roles in hit dramas like *Shehr-e-Zaat*, *Wo Humsafar Tha*, *Bin Roye*, and Bollywood's *Raees*, has always been admired for her elegance and grace both on and off-screen.

However, her appearance on the ramp during this particular event seemed to surprise many, as her runway walk deviated from her usual poised demeanor. In the viral clip, Mahira is seen briskly walking down the runway in a form-fitting black bodycon dress.

Unlike the typical slow and graceful strides expected on the ramp, Mahira's hurried pace and exaggerated movements stood out, leading many viewers to speculate whether it was a rehearsal or part of the actual show.

Social media platforms were quickly flooded with a variety of reactions. Some users expressed their disappointment,

feeling that Mahira's walk didn't meet their expectations for someone of her stature.

Several users compared her walk to that of international supermodels, but not all in a positive light. One particularly harsh comment compared her to Gigi Hadid, saying, "This is the worst imitation of Gigi Hadid I've ever seen." Another joked, "Looks like she just watched Kangana Ranaut's *Fashion* and thought that's how it's done."

The video even prompted some users to label her walk as a "ramp disaster," while others remarked that "it looked like she was about to fall any moment."

While Mahira's walk certainly generated a lot of criticism, there were also a few defenders who pointed out that everyone can have an off day and that perhaps the walk wasn't reflective of her usual grace.

Some speculated that the brisk pace and unusual style might have been intentional, designed to make a statement, or simply due to the pressures of walking in a live fashion show environment. However, these voices of support were largely overshadowed by the widespread critique.

Despite the online backlash, Mahira Khan remains one of Pakistan's most beloved and respected actresses, known for her unique charm, talent, and versatility. Her ability to connect with audiences through her performances has earned her a loyal fan base over the years.

Alizeh Shah Claps Back at Social Media Critics

Pakistani actress Alizeh Shah has openly criticized online critics for their negative comments on her social media photos, leading her to disable the comments section on her posts. Addressing the issue in her Instagram stories on Sunday, she stated, "I AM A PUBLIC FIGURE, not PUBLIC PROPERTY, so keep your lame opinions to yourself!" Shah continued, "Pity for the haters... obsessed with hating me just because you were not loved enough?"

Known for her roles in popular dramas like *Ehd-e-Wafa*, Shah has previously faced scrutiny for her bold fashion choices. A recent video post ignited another wave of criticism from social media users, but Shah responded with resilience. She pointed out the apparent double standards of critics when judging celebrity appearances. "I know being a Pakistani with a unique fashion sense causes issues, but really, is that even my problem?" she remarked, highlighting the disconnect between public expectations and individual expression. With a substantial following of 4.3 million on Instagram, Shah frequently shares personal and professional moments with her fans. Her appearances in dramas such as *Ishq Tamasha*, *Mera Dil Mera Dushman*, *Jo Tu Chahay*, and her ongoing series alongside Affan Waheed have earned her significant popularity.

During her vacation, Shah's fashion choices often reflect Gen Z-inspired trends, with her latest look—a pink off-shoulder top—showcasing her vibrant, playful style. In her continued response to detractors, Shah reiterated her stance, stating, "I honestly feel pity for you haters... you guys are just obsessed! Hating on me just cuz you were not loved enough?" Shah's assertive replies reflect her decision to remain unaffected by negativity, defending her right to personal expression on her social platforms.

Taylor Swift experienced on-stage malfunction

Taylor Swift recently experienced a major stage malfunction during her Sunday performance in New Orleans. According to

MailOnline, the 34-year-old singer was wrapping up her third and final night at the Caesars Superdome when the mishap occurred.

Swift's reflective silver platform—nicknamed the “Tayoomba” by fans—unexpectedly stalled just after she sang the first verse of Who's Afraid of Little Old Me. Swift continued performing on the ground while her backup dancers worked to push the broken prop offstage. This incident also marked the first time she performed her song Down Bad without the floating platform.

Before closing her last show in New Orleans, Swift performed Close to You and I Love You, I'm Sorry. Before finishing her final song, she thanked the New Orleans crowd, calling them “extraordinary” and expressing that she would never forget her time in the city. Swift will take her Eras Tour next to Indianapolis, with shows at Lucas Oil Stadium on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The tour is set to conclude on December 8 in Vancouver, Canada.

Kabhi Mein, Kabhi Tum

The highly anticipated finale of the beloved drama series ‘Kabhi Main Kabhi Tum’, featuring the talented Hania Amir and

Fahad Mustafa, is officially scheduled to be screened in cinemas on November 5, 2024. Fans are buzzing with excitement as the date approaches, eager to see how the intricate love story between Mustafa and Sharjeena unfolds.

As the series has progressed, it has captivated audiences with its unexpected plot twists and emotional depth. The storyline explores the dynamics of love and relationships, emphasizing the theme of “Opposites Attract.”

The chemistry between the lead characters, portrayed by Fahad and Hania, showcases how two very different personalities can harmoniously complement each other, which has resonated deeply with viewers.

‘Kabhi Main Kabhi Tum’ has become a standout series, following in the footsteps of other blockbuster dramas like ‘Meray Paas Tum Ho’ and ‘Ishq Murshid.’ Its compelling narrative and character development have garnered a significant following, solidifying its place in the hearts of fans. This series marks a notable return for Fahad Mustafa to the television landscape after nearly a decade-long hiatus, while Hania Amir continues to shine brightly, further enhancing her reputation as one of the industry's leading actresses.

The series boasts an impressive ensemble cast, including prominent actors such as Javed Sheikh, Bushra Ansari, Emmad Irfani, Maya Khan, Naeema Butt, and Tauseeq Haider. Each character contributes to the rich tapestry of the story, adding layers of complexity and intrigue.

As the finale draws near, viewers are left speculating about the future of Sharjeena, who has recently been revealed to be pregnant, and Mustafa, who is fervently focused on his career.

Recent promotional materials have teased potential drama and complications, especially concerning Sharjeena's pregnancy. Fans are on the edge of their seats, hoping for a satisfying conclusion to their beloved story, even as ominous signs suggest possible tragedy ahead.

In an effort to reach a broader audience, the final episode will not only be available for theatrical screenings but will also be accessible on YouTube for international viewers. This decision allows fans from around the world to experience the emotional conclusion of this heartfelt narrative, ensuring that the impact of ‘Kabhi Main Kabhi Tum’ is felt far beyond its home audience.





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