

HORIZON

OCTOBER 2025



RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT
PAKISTAN MUSLIM LEAGUE - NAWAZ

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

Pakistan's diplomacy has entered a new, confident phase. Over the past few months, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Islamabad has pursued an energetic and purposeful foreign policy that reflects both strategic clarity and economic pragmatism. Visits to the US, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia have collectively reaffirmed Pakistan's position as a constructive and respected player in regional and global affairs.

In Washington, the US-Pakistan relationship has witnessed a significant reset. High-level engagements between Pakistan's finance and trade officials and their American counterparts have focused on trade, investment and energy cooperation. For example, the two countries held productive talks in July 2025 aimed at reducing reciprocal tariffs and strengthening economic ties. Pakistan also emphasised that its relationship with the US should not be viewed simply through the lens of its ties with China, but as a distinct partnership serving both countries' interests. The Ambassador in Washington called the relationship "indispensable" and elevated, highlighting collaboration on counter-terrorism, climate change and regional stability.

In Kuala Lumpur, Pakistan's outreach to Southeast Asia has displayed a widening diplomatic canvas. The visit to Malaysia underscored Islamabad's intent to diversify partnerships beyond traditional corridors, focusing on trade, technology, industrial cooperation and educational linkages. This engagement complements Pakistan's ties with the Gulf and underscores a multipolar approach to diplomacy.

In Riyadh, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have deepened strategic cooperation, via investment MoUs, defence understandings and stronger economic engagement. The Kingdom remains a critical partner for Pakistan's export engine, energy security and regional anchor. The foregoing visits reflect diplomacy not as ceremonial, but as substantive: geared toward Pakistan's industrial development, trade diversification and strategic relevance.

At the same time, Pakistan's domestic governance is showing parallel strides. In the province of Punjab, the anti-smog campaign launched by the provincial government has evolved into a structured, multi-sector effort. Over 11,000 brick-kiln inspections, thousands of cases registered for non-compliance, bans on stubble burning and the deployment of new oversight mechanisms all point to a serious policy trajectory. These efforts send a clear message: environmental health is inseparable from sustainable development and national credibility.

At the heart of both diplomacy and governance lies Pakistan's renewed sense of agency. The country is building stronger ties abroad while reforming and modernising at home — a confident, responsible nation shaping its own course in the world.

Sincerely,
Saira Bano
Editor-in-Chief

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Front cover: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets US President Donald Trump at the White House, Washington, DC, 25 September 2025. (Photo: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif / Instagram)



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir meet US President Donald Trump at the White House, Washington, DC, 25 September 2025. Photo: The White House/Official

PAKISTAN'S DIPLOMATIC REBOUND

HOW A CONCENTRATED PUSH RESTORED ISLAMABAD'S STRATEGIC LEVERAGE

RESEARCH AND POLICY PLANNING UNIT

economy carries strategic weight. It restores a channel that had narrowed in recent years and brings Islamabad back into conversations about regional stability and supply-chain resilience.

The renewed trust was visible in Pakistan's inclusion in the US- and Qatar-hosted meetings of Arab and Muslim countries in New York and later at the Sharm el-Sheikh peace summit on Gaza. Pakistan's participation underscored Washington's recognition of Islamabad as a constructive regional voice, one capable of bridging conversations between the Muslim world and the West. At the summit, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was the only leader personally invited by President Trump to speak. His remarks commending the former US president's mediation efforts, while criticised by some, were widely acknowledged as deft

diplomacy that strengthened Pakistan's international standing.

CONSOLIDATING PARTNERSHIPS IN THE GULF

Parallel to the US reset, Pakistan has deepened engagement with long-standing partners in the Gulf.

“ FOR WASHINGTON, OUTREACH TO ISLAMABAD ALIGNS WITH ITS OWN INTERESTS — BALANCING INDIA'S ASSERTIVENESS AND MAINTAINING GULF STABILITY. ”



Photo: The White House / Official



Photo: The White House / Official



Photo: The White House / Official

The signing of a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement with Saudi Arabia was a milestone, formalising decades of strategic trust and shared security interests. It was complemented by new commitments in energy, investment, and labour mobility — all reinforcing Pakistan’s economic recovery agenda.

These developments reflect Riyadh’s growing confidence in Pakistan’s regional posture. By aligning diplomacy with both Washington and the Gulf, Islamabad has strengthened partnerships without compromising its independent stance.

STRATEGIC CONTINUITY WITH CHINA AND EAST ASIA

Pakistan’s relationship with China continues to serve as a cornerstone of its foreign policy, one defined by trust, mutual respect, and shared strategic interests. During high-level exchanges in Beijing and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meetings, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and signed new memoranda on industrial development, renewable energy, and technology cooperation.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and COAS Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People, Beijing, 2 September 2025



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meeting Saudi officials in Riyadh, 17 September 2025

“ THE MAY 2025 CRISIS BECAME A DEFINING MOMENT — TURNING CONFRONTATION INTO AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RENEWED DIALOGUE. ”



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman meeting for signing the Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement in Riyadh, 17 September 2025



Pakistan remains an integral part of the Belt and Road Initiative. The long-standing friendship between Islamabad and Beijing was tested once again during the confrontation with India — and it passed that test. Strategic convergence and defence cooperation helped Pakistan dominate the conflict and emerge as a clear victor.

EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT WITH CENTRAL ASIA

Building on its strategic partnership with China, Pakistan has extended its diplomatic focus northward to Central Asia. Islamabad has strengthened engagement with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan

through official visits, trade forums, and agreements on energy and transit corridors linking Central Asia to Pakistani seaports. These initiatives underscore Pakistan’s commitment to becoming a regional hub for trade and connectivity, complementing broader projects under the Belt and Road Initiative.

DEEPENING TIES WITH TURKEY, IRAN, AND MALAYSIA

Parallel to its outreach in Central Asia, Pakistan has continued to consolidate ties with Turkey, Iran, and Malaysia — nations with which it shares strong cultural



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif shakes hands with President of Iran Dr Masoud Pezeshkian, on his visit to Islamabad. 3 August 2025



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Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif shakes hands with President of Iran Dr Masoud Pezeshkian, on his visit to Islamabad. 3 August 2025

and strategic affinities. Cooperation with Turkey has expanded across defence, trade, and technology. With Iran, Islamabad has maintained an open line of dialogue despite regional tensions, focusing on border security and energy connectivity. Engagement with Malaysia has centred on education, halal trade, and Islamic finance. Together, these partnerships highlight Pakistan's balanced and inclusive approach to diplomacy, one that values regional solidarity while aligning with global priorities.

FROM ISOLATION TO ENGAGEMENT

Pakistan's diplomatic resurgence is even more remarkable when contrasted with the isolation it faced only a few years earlier. Under the previous administration, foreign-policy missteps and rhetorical excesses had strained ties with key Western and regional partners, leaving Pakistan excluded from major dialogues by 2022–23.

The present leadership reversed that trend through institutional coordination and quiet, professional diplomacy. The prime minister, foreign minister, and army chief worked in concert to rebuild trust, ensuring

messages were consistent and focused on partnership rather than grievance.

Three factors underpinned this recovery: a united national narrative presenting growth and stability as shared goals; emphasis on tangible deliverables supported by follow-up mechanisms; and a security framework aligned with broader themes of regional peace. This disciplined approach proved that Pakistan could engage constructively and reliably at the highest levels of international diplomacy.

A RESTORED SENSE OF AGENCY

The cumulative impact of these efforts has been a restoration of agency in Pakistan's external affairs. The country now enjoys renewed credibility in Washington, strategic depth in the Gulf, and an enduring partnership with Beijing. Invitations to major regional summits, resumption of trade dialogues, and visible foreign investment all point to a diplomatic environment once again receptive to Pakistan's voice. The convergence of US geopolitical interests and Pakistan's aspirations has created new opportunities for collaboration in trade, energy, and security. Islamabad's challenge now lies in translating these gains into measurable domestic outcomes: investor confidence, infrastructure growth, and sustainable employment ■



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir present samples of Pakistan's rare minerals and gemstones to US President Donald Trump during a meeting at the White House. 28 September 2025. Photo: The White House/Official

PAKISTAN AND THE GLOBAL RACE FOR RARE EARTHS



AQEEL NAJAM HASHMI

In the 21st century, power no longer rests solely on oil wells or gold reserves; it lies buried deep within the Earth's crust in the form of rare earth elements (REEs). These seventeen metallic elements, though dispersed and difficult to extract, have become the backbone of modern civilisation, powering the world's technological, defence, and renewable energy sectors. From smartphones and electric vehicles to fighter jets and missile guidance systems, rare earths have transformed into strategic assets shaping the new world order.

The control over rare earth resources has redefined global geopolitics much like oil did in the 20th century. Today, China holds the commanding position, accounting for over 60 per cent of global production and nearly 90 per cent of refining capacity. This dominance has turned Beijing into a silent superpower

in the tech and defence supply chain. The US, Japan, and Europe, once the champions of industrial technology, now depend heavily on Chinese exports of rare earths, giving China immense strategic leverage.

The Russia–China strategic axis has further deepened the divide between the resource-rich East and the industrialised West. The US and its allies are now racing to diversify rare earth supplies from Africa, Central Asia, and South America to counter the Chinese monopoly. The global focus is thus shifting toward mineral diplomacy, resource nationalism, and strategic partnerships in the mining sector.

Pakistan, blessed with abundant natural resources, stands at a critical juncture in this emerging mineral-based geopolitics. Geological surveys have revealed the presence of rare earth and strategic minerals in

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FOR PAKISTAN, A NUCLEAR POWER WITH A GROWING DEFENCE SECTOR, ENSURING ACCESS TO RARE EARTHS IS BOTH AN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND A SECURITY IMPERATIVE.

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regions like Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in areas near Saindak, Reko Diq, and Chagai. Preliminary studies by the Geological Survey of Pakistan and international partners have confirmed deposits of rare earths, lithium, and other critical minerals vital for the energy transition.

While Pakistan’s mineral sector remains largely underdeveloped, its geostrategic location — bridging China, Central Asia, and the Arabian Sea — gives it a unique advantage to become a corridor for rare earth trade and processing. The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can serve as a catalyst for establishing mineral exploration, refining industries, and technology transfer zones.

However, the policy framework governing Pakistan’s mineral resources requires urgent modernisation. The absence of a national mineral development policy focused on rare earths has hindered the efficient exploitation of these strategic materials. Pakistan must now move beyond raw mineral export and aim for value addition, refining, and downstream industries to truly benefit from its resources.

In recent months, the Government of Pakistan has already begun taking concrete steps to attract investment in rare earth exploration and commercialisation. Under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), several mineral blocks in Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan have been shortlisted for auction, including those containing rare earth elements. The government is also seeking joint ventures with foreign partners — particularly from China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab

Emirates — to develop mining, refining, and value-added processing facilities. Discussions are underway to establish a dedicated mineral authority and to bring Pakistan’s mineral laws in line with international standards. These initiatives indicate that Islamabad is not merely identifying its resource potential but actively preparing to market and monetise its rare earth reserves within a structured policy framework.

Control over rare earths has now become synonymous with national security. The defence, space, and nuclear industries depend on a steady supply of these materials. For Pakistan, a nuclear power with a growing defence sector, ensuring access to rare earths is both an economic opportunity and a security imperative.

Developing partnerships with China, which leads the global rare earth processing market, can provide Pakistan with the necessary technological support. Simultaneously, collaboration with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Central Asian states under the framework of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) could diversify the country’s investment base and strategic outreach.

Pakistan can also leverage its ports of Gwadar and Karachi as regional hubs for mineral exports and refining facilities, connecting South and Central Asia with the Middle East and Africa. This would not only boost Pakistan’s economic footprint but also transform it into a pivotal player in the emerging “mineral geopolitics” of the 21st century.

To transform potential into power, Pakistan must adopt a coherent and forward-looking policy framework:

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RARE EARTH ELEMENTS ARE THE NEW OIL OF THE DIGITAL AND DEFENCE AGE, DETERMINING THE GLOBAL BALANCE OF POWER.

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1. **Formulate a National Rare Earth Strategy:** Establish a dedicated authority under the Ministry of Energy or Petroleum to map, regulate, and promote rare earth exploration.

2. **Strengthen Strategic Partnerships:** Deepen cooperation with China under CPEC for technology transfer, mining infrastructure, and refining capacity.

3. **Provide Investment Incentives:** Offer tax holidays and special economic zones for rare earth extraction and processing industries.

4. **Enhance Research and Development:** Encourage collaboration between universities, geological institutions, and defence industries to innovate in mineral processing.

5. **Ensure Environmental Safeguards:** Promote sustainable mining practices to avoid ecological degradation and community displacement.

Rare earth elements are the new oil of the digital and defence age, determining the global balance of power. Nations that control, refine, or secure access to these critical materials will command the future of technology and security.

For Pakistan, the path is clear: strategic alignment, technological collaboration, and institutional reform can turn its mineral wealth into geopolitical strength. In an era when minerals define might, Pakistan must seize the opportunity to become not just a participant but a decisive player in the global rare earth equation. ■

The writer is the former mayor of Bahawalpur.



DRIVING CHANGE

HOW PUNJAB IS LEADING PAKISTAN'S GREEN TRANSFORMATION



SAFDAR ALI DANISH

In recent years, Punjab has stood at the crossroads of economic growth and environmental degradation. Urban expansion, unchecked industrial emissions, vehicular pollution, and agricultural burning have combined to create an ecological crisis that manifests most acutely in the thick smog that blankets cities each winter. Aware of the urgency of the situation, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has made environmental protection and climate resilience central pillars of her governance vision. Led by Senior Minister Marriyam Aurangzeb, her administration has rolled out a range of forward-looking, technology-driven, and community-oriented initiatives to reduce pollution, safeguard public health, and build a sustainable future for Pakistan.

A MULTI-PRONGED ATTACK ON SMOG

Punjab's most pressing environmental challenge has long been winter smog, which poses serious threats to public health and economic activity. In response, the government has implemented a comprehensive anti-smog strategy. Smog guns have been installed at

“ CHIEF MINISTER MARYAM NAWAZ HAS MADE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE CENTRAL PILLARS OF HER GOVERNANCE VISION. ”

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MORE THAN 500 ELECTRIC BUSES ARE ALREADY OPERATING UNDER THE FIRST PHASE, MARKING A MAJOR STEP TOWARD CLEANER URBAN TRANSPORT AND REDUCED CARBON EMISSIONS.

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The Saaf Suthra Punjab campaign is in full swing across the province.

key locations to suppress airborne particulate matter, while monitoring units provide real-time air quality data to enable swift and targeted action by relevant departments. A bold step has been the conversion of petrol-powered motorcycles to electric bikes. Since motorcycles are a major source of urban emissions, promoting electric mobility through incentives and infrastructure development is expected to bring significant reductions in pollution. Alongside this, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has been strengthened with expanded administrative and technological powers to enforce environmental regulations more effectively.

A landmark initiative in this regard is the establishment of Pakistan's first SMART Environment Protection Force, launched by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on 21 April 2025. Described by her as a “milestone in Punjab's journey toward environmental improvement,” this force uses drones, mobile laboratories, and real-time AQI monitors to detect and address violations proactively, marking a decisive shift from reactive to preventive environmental governance.

Complementing these measures, the Chief Minister's campaign against crop residue burning has evolved into a province-wide movement, warmly supported by farmers. The introduction of modern machinery, such as super seeders, bailers, and harvesters, has significantly improved smog conditions, with over 316,000 acres cleared using 91 bailers and 814 Kubota harvesters. Many farmers have now shifted from burning stubble to collecting it for livestock feed, a transformation CM Maryam Nawaz hailed as a major step toward a cleaner, greener Punjab.

PUNJAB GREEN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Punjab's eco-friendly vision builds on a strong foundation laid by the Punjab Green Development Programme (PGDP), which was launched during the Buzdar government with significant financial and technical support from the World Bank. Despite its critical importance, the \$ 273 million programme was largely neglected by the Buzdar administration, and its various schemes could not be implemented. After the resignation of the PTI government in 2023, the caretaker government reinvigorated the programme by appointing a competent project director, who immediately started work on stalled schemes, which are now coming to fruition. The programme seeks to integrate environmental sustainability into Punjab's development planning by improving air and water quality, modernising regulatory frameworks, and supporting green investments.

Under Maryam Nawaz's leadership, the PGDP has gained renewed momentum and a broader scope. The World Bank's partnership has provided both resources and global expertise, enabling Punjab to scale interventions, strengthen institutions, and align environmental governance with international best practices.

GREEN ELECTRIC BUSES: A CLEAN TRANSPORT REVOLUTION

The Green Electric Buses Project marks a major step toward reducing smoke and protecting the environment. Eco-friendly electric buses have been introduced to provide clean, modern, and sustainable



public transport. Green buses have been launched across several major cities in Punjab, including Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sargodha, Khushab, Mianwali, and Bhakkar, where more than 500 electric buses are already operating under the first phase. The initiative, which envisions a total of 1,500 eco-friendly buses, is set to expand further to Sheikhpura, Sialkot, Gujrat, Rahim Yar Khan, and Dera Ghazi Khan. This ambitious project marks a major step toward cleaner urban transport and reduced carbon emissions across the province.

DIGITAL INNOVATIONS AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

The current administration has embraced digital technology to strengthen citizen participation in environmental governance. A pioneering example is the launch of Pakistan's first "EcoBot," an AI-powered assistant that provides real-time Air Quality Index (AQI) data for major cities such as Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, and Multan. Beyond offering information, EcoBot guides citizens on protective measures against air pollution, promoting responsible behaviour and fostering a sense of shared responsibility between the government and the public.

Complementing this initiative, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has also inaugurated Punjab's first "Environment WhatsApp Chat Box," which enables citizens to directly access information on health services, environmental conditions, and cleanliness

through the number 0304-1373000. This two-way communication platform allows people to register concerns and receive timely updates, while local administrations, already equipped with modern machinery, can respond more efficiently, marking another important step toward improving the province's environmental quality and public well-being.

ZIGZAG TECHNOLOGY IN BRICK KILNS

The brick kiln industry has traditionally been one of the largest contributors to air pollution in Punjab. To address this, the government has championed the conversion of traditional kilns to zigzag technology, which is a cleaner, more efficient method that significantly cuts emissions.

In this design, bricks are arranged in a zigzag pattern, improving air and heat circulation and allowing for more complete combustion. This results in up to 60 per cent less carbon emissions and 40 per cent less black carbon compared to traditional kilns. The benefits are multifold, including reduced smog and improved air quality, lower fuel consumption, higher-quality bricks with better profit margins, and safer working conditions that contribute to the formalisation of the kiln sector.

The Punjab government has facilitated this transition through loans and technical support, illustrating how environmental reforms can create win-win outcomes for industry and society.



SAAF SUTHRA PUNJAB: CLEANLINESS AS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

An equally significant but often underappreciated aspect of Punjab's green agenda is the role of Saaf Suthra Punjab (Clean and Green Punjab) teams. Working across cities and rural areas, these teams are at the frontline of waste management and cleanliness drives. By removing garbage from streets, improving sanitation systems, and promoting community participation in waste disposal, they have turned cleanliness into a grassroots environmental movement.

Their efforts complement larger policies by ensuring that Punjab's towns and cities not only breathe cleaner air but also look and feel cleaner. This ground-level mobilisation is essential to sustain the broader green initiatives introduced at the provincial level.

MEHMOOD BOOTI LANDFILL TRANSFORMATION

A remarkable example of Lahore's urban renewal is the transformation of the Mehmood Booti landfill, once one of the city's largest garbage dumps and a

major source of pollution. Spread over 40 acres, the site had accumulated millions of tons of solid waste over decades, contaminating nearby land and water sources. Under the Green Punjab Initiative, it has now been reclaimed, leveled, and converted into a lush green zone with trees, walking tracks, and recreational spaces. The initiative not only restores ecological balance but also opens avenues for earning carbon credits, making it both environmentally and economically sustainable making it a model for urban renewal across Punjab.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Punjab's environmental measures represent a remarkable policy shift toward sustainable development. The government has effectively combined global partnerships, technology, institutional strengthening, and civic engagement to address complex ecological challenges.

However, the implementation stage presents opportunities for further growth. For example, sustaining the electric bike conversion programme will require investment in charging infrastructure, incentives for adoption, and active collaboration with the private sector. Similarly, while the SMART Force and EcoBot have modernised monitoring and communication in urban centres, expanding these services to rural areas will amplify their impact.

Building institutional capacity at the district and local levels is vital for sustaining these initiatives. Strengthening human resources, ensuring steady funding, and fostering accountability will elevate Punjab's environmental programmes.

Under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, Punjab has emerged as a pioneer of green governance. This vision mirrors the legacy of Professor Wangari Maathai, Kenya's first female professor and 2025 Nobel laureate, who led the Green Belt Movement to plant millions of trees and inspire global change ■

The writer, who holds an M.Phil. in English Literature, is an educationist and youth analyst affiliated with PML-N.



Photo: Stanford University

PMYP, STANFORD UNIVERSITY TO LAUNCH AI INNOVATION PROGRAMME



SABA ALI

The Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP) has launched the AI-Driven Enterprise Product Online Training and Development Programme in collaboration with Stanford University, the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC), Obsidian Technologies, and wAI Advanced Industries. The fully funded initiative is designed for MPhil, PhD, and post-doctoral scholars in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), aiming to translate academic research into commercially viable, AI-based products.

The three-month online course, Innovation-Driven Product Development Using AI, will be delivered by Stanford Engineering's Centre for Global and Online Education and taught by Stanford faculty. The curriculum equips participants with the tools and

frameworks to generate and evaluate innovative ideas, align technical solutions with market demand, and lead product innovation within startups, research labs, and industry teams. Participants will also receive mentorship from Pakistani industry leaders to ensure the practical relevance of their learning and to strengthen the bridge between research and commercialisation.

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THE MAY 2025 CRISIS BECAME A DEFINING MOMENT — TURNING CONFRONTATION INTO AN OPPORTUNITY FOR RENEWED DIALOGUE.

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“ **PAKISTAN’S YOUTH ARE ITS GREATEST ASSET — AND BY PROVIDING ACCESS TO WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY, THE GOVERNMENT IS EQUIPPING THEM TO PLAY A MEANINGFUL ROLE IN THE GLOBAL INNOVATION ECONOMY.**” — RANA MASHHOOD AHMAD KHAN

This is the first government-backed programme in Pakistan that specifically targets scholars at an advanced academic level for AI and product innovation training. It represents a shift in focus from basic skill development to high-impact innovation and entrepreneurship. Under the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the leadership of PMYP Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, the government has made youth empowerment a cornerstone of its development agenda. PMYP now serves as the central platform advancing initiatives across education, employment, engagement, and the environment.

At the programme’s launch, Rana Mashhood emphasised that Pakistan’s youth are its greatest asset, and by providing access to world-class education and technology, the government is equipping them to play a meaningful role in the global innovation economy. He noted that collaborations such as this one will not only enhance the country’s digital capacity but also contribute to the growth of Pakistan’s knowledge economy and digital exports.

The AI training initiative arrives at a time when nations around the world are racing to harness artificial intelligence as a driver of competitiveness and growth. By partnering with Stanford University, a global leader in innovation, Pakistan is taking a significant step toward positioning its scholars and entrepreneurs within that global conversation. Yet the true potential of such

a partnership lies not only in the training itself, but in what follows: whether participants can convert their research into sustainable enterprises, attract investment, and create jobs in Pakistan’s emerging digital economy.

For Pakistan, this initiative offers more than just a technological leap; it represents a cultural shift in how the nation approaches higher education and innovation. Traditionally, much of the country’s academic output has remained confined to research papers rather than real-world applications. This programme seeks to change that by introducing a system of mentorship, product development, and market orientation within academic training. If successful, it could serve as a model for future collaborations between academia, industry, and the public sector.

With initiatives like the AI-Driven Enterprise Product Programme, the Prime Minister’s Youth Programme is setting a new standard for how government-led youth initiatives can influence the national innovation landscape. By fostering a generation of researchers and entrepreneurs who think globally and act locally, Pakistan is laying the groundwork for a more competitive and resilient digital economy — one where young minds are not just consumers of technology, but creators shaping the future of artificial intelligence ■

The writer is a digital media executive at the Prime Minister’s Youth Programme.



Delegation of UK-based Pakistani youth visited the OPF Headquarters, Islamabad, where Managing Director Afzaal Bhatti welcomed them. September 11, 2025.

YOUNG BRITISH PAKISTANIS STRENGTHEN TIES WITH HOMELAND



DR RANA KHALID MEHMOOD

A delegation of young British Pakistanis led by Farooq Ali Khalid, focal person for the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), visited Pakistan to strengthen engagement between the homeland and the overseas community. The visit focused on educational collaboration, youth empowerment, and building a stronger connection between Pakistan and its global citizens.

During their stay, the delegation met students at the University of Lahore, where discussions centred on leadership training, international representation, and creating global opportunities for Pakistani youth. Students expressed enthusiasm about learning from the experiences of overseas Pakistanis who are contributing to national development from abroad.

The group also visited the Punjab Assembly in Lahore, where Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan welcomed them and hosted a reception in their honour. The meeting highlighted the importance of youth participation in governance and acknowledged the overseas community as a valuable national asset.



At the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) headquarters in Islamabad, the delegates held a policy dialogue with senior officials to explore cooperation in welfare, education, and investment. Both sides agreed to strengthen institutional partnerships that connect Pakistan with its diaspora. The delegation, comprising young professionals from across the United Kingdom, represented the diversity, ambition, and talent of Pakistanis living abroad.

POLICY SESSION WITH PAKISTANI STUDENTS IN ISTANBUL



In Istanbul, Barrister Amjad Malik, Chief Coordinator for PML-N Overseas Chapters and Vice Chairperson of the Punjab Overseas Pakistanis Commission, met Pakistani students studying in various universities. The students discussed practical challenges such as health insurance, banking, housing, and documentation. Barrister Malik assured them that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif were implementing major reforms to address overseas Pakistanis' concerns, including biometric e-services for land registration, online courts for testimony, and strong action against land grabbers and human traffickers. He praised students as "true ambassadors of Pakistan," whose success enhances the country's image worldwide.



PML-N BAHRAIN HOSTS RECEPTION FOR SARDAR AYAZ SADIQ



The PML-N Bahrain Chapter, led by President Nadeem Hafeez, hosted a grand reception at the Gulf International Hotel, Manama, in honour of National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. The event was attended by senior office-bearers, business leaders, and community members. Speaking on the occasion, Nadeem Hafeez briefed the speaker on issues faced by Pakistanis in Bahrain. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq listened attentively and assured that steps would be taken to resolve them. Embassy of Pakistan's Community Welfare Attaché Kashif Shughri, also attended the event.

PAKISTANI ATHLETES SHINE IN CHICAGO MARATHON



Pakistani journalist and athlete Mona Khan, along with coach Muhammad Yousaf from Kashmir, proudly carried Pakistan's flag in the Chicago World Major Marathon. Competing among thousands of runners from across the globe, they dedicated their success to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif. Their participation highlighted Pakistan's positive, dynamic image and symbolised national unity and confidence on an international platform ■

PICTURE GALLERY



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF, ALONG WITH PRESIDENT TRUMP, ADDRESSES THE PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE SHARM EL SHEIKH SUMMIT FOR PEACE, 13 OCTOBER 2025.



EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT ABDEL FATTAH EL-SISI RECEIVES PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF UPON HIS ARRIVAL TO ATTEND THE SHARM EL SHEIKH PEACE SUMMIT. 13 OCTOBER 2025



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF IS WELCOMED BY MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER ANWAR IBRAHIM UPON ARRIVAL IN MALAYSIA ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT. KUALA LUMPUR, 5 OCTOBER 2025



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF AND MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER ANWAR IBRAHIM HOLD DELEGATION-LEVEL TALKS AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, PUTRAJAYA, 6 OCTOBER 2025



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF AND MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER ANWAR IBRAHIM WITNESS THE EXCHANGE OF MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND MALAYSIA. PUTRAJAYA, 6 OCTOBER 2025



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF RECEIVES AN HONORARY DOCTORATE IN LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA, KUALA LUMPUR. OCTOBER 2025



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF MEETS FEDERAL CHANCELLOR OF AUSTRIA CHRISTIAN STOCKER ON THE SIDELINES OF THE UNGA. NEW YORK, 23 SEPTEMBER 2025



CHIEF MINISTER OF PUNJAB MARYAM NAWAZ SHARIF WELCOMES THE SAUDI-PAK JOINT BUSINESS COUNCIL DELEGATION. LAHORE, 10 OCTOBER 2025



CHAIRMAN OF THE SHURA COUNCIL OF SAUDI ARABIA, DR ABDULLAH BIN MOHAMMED BIN IBRAHIM AL-SHEIKH, CALLS ON PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF IN ISLAMABAD. 8 OCTOBER 2025



PRESIDENT ASIF ALI ZARDARI MEETS PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF AT AIWAN-E-SADR, ISLAMABAD. 15 OCTOBER 2025



PRIME MINISTER MUHAMMAD SHEHBAZ SHARIF CHAIRS A HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC SITUATION. ISLAMABAD, 3 OCTOBER 2025



PRESIDENT ASIF ALI ZARDARI MEETS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER ISHAQ DAR, NA SPEAKER AYAZ SADIQ, AND INTERIOR MINISTER MOHSIN NAQVI IN NAWABSHAH TO DISCUSS POLITICAL AND SECURITY MATTERS. 8 OCTOBER 2025



CHIEF MINISTER OF PUNJAB MARYAM NAWAZ SHARIF ADDRESSES SANITATION WORKERS AND INSPECTS NEW WASTE MANAGEMENT MACHINERY AT THE SUTHRA PUNJAB CEREMONY IN LAHORE. 7 OCTOBER 2025



RANA MUHAMMAD IQBAL KHAN AND KHAWAJA MUHAMMAD MANSHAULLAH BUTT TAKE OATH AS PUNJAB'S NEW MINISTERS FOR LAW AND LABOUR AND HUMAN RESOURCES, RESPECTIVELY. 14 OCTOBER 2025



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