

Pakistan, Turkiye leaders renew commitment to mutual prosperity

Both leaders reaffirmed Pakistan and Turkiye's historic brotherhood rooted in shared values, mutual respect, and a common vision for development and prosperity

News Desk

ISTANBUL: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a significant meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Istanbul, accompanied by Field Marshal General Asim Munir and a high-level delegation. During the meeting, the prime minister expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Turkish government and people for their unwavering support amid recent tensions in South Asia.

According to an official statement from the prime minister's office, Shehbaz Sharif arrived in Istanbul on a two-day official visit. He was warmly welcomed at the airport by Turkiye's defence minister Yaşar Güler, Istanbul's governor, cultural association president Burhan Kaya, Pakistan's Ambassador Yusuf Junaid, consul general Numan Aslam, and senior Turkish officials.

At the presidential



palace, both leaders reaffirmed the long-standing, historic, and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Turkiye, grounded in shared values, mutual respect, and a joint vision for development and prosperity.

The meeting was attended by Pakistan's deputy prime minister and foreign minister Miftah Ishaq Dar, chief of army staff Field Marshal Assim Munir, information minister Attaulah Tarar, and special assistant Syed Tariq Fatemi.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif acknowledged

Turkiye's principled stance and the goodwill of its people as a source of reassurance and strength for Pakistan during times of regional instability. He highlighted the resolve, bravery, and sacrifices of the Pakistani armed forces in defending the homeland, referencing "Operation Baniyan Marsous" and the broader "battle for truth."

The leaders also discussed enhancing economic cooperation, focusing on joint projects and bilateral investment.

Key sectors such as re-

newable energy, information technology, defence production, infrastructure, and agriculture were identified as areas of mutual interest with promising opportunities. Both sides reviewed progress on decisions made during the seventh high-level strategic cooperation council meeting held in Islamabad on 13 February 2025, and reaffirmed their commitment to raising bilateral relations to new heights. They agreed on steps to achieve a bilateral trade target of five billion dollars annually.

Regional and global issues were also discussed, with both leaders reiterating their principled support for each other's core interests, including the Kashmir issue. Both expressed deep concern over the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, calling for an immediate ceasefire and uninterrupted humanitarian aid to the affected Palestinian population.

Ahsan Iqbal calls on every citizen to pay income tax

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal has said that Pakistan ranks among the countries with the lowest tax payments, despite having ambitious development goals. He stressed that every citizen must pay tax on their income for the country to progress.

Speaking to the media in Narowal, Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the success of Operation Bunyan Mursos and emphasized that economic success depends on peace and political stability. He also underscored the importance of policy continuity and reforms. The minister said Pakistan must increase its tax-to-GDP ratio from the current 10.5 percent to 16 percent or 18 percent. He urged existing taxpayers to act as guardians against tax evasion.

He added that sustainable development requires a significant boost in exports—not just an annual increase of a billion or two dollars, but leaps of five to ten billion dollars. He stressed that every Pakistani businessperson should take local products to global markets and bring back as many orders as possible.

Ahsan Iqbal said that Pakistan aims to position itself as a hub of modern technology in the upcoming federal budget. The world is experiencing a digital revolution, and the global race in artificial intelligence is well underway. Pakistan must compete in this technological race with efficiency and determination.

He remarked that May holds historic significance for Pakistan. This month, the country's scientists and engineers achieved two major defence milestones. On 28 May, nuclear tests established Pakistan as a nuclear power, and on 10 May, the armed forces gave a crushing response to the enemy, humiliating Indian arrogance.

Air India named worst airline for UK delays

News Desk

LONDON: Air India has been named the worst-performing airline for flights to and from the United Kingdom, with its services plagued by prolonged delays, according to newly released data from the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The figures, analysed for the year 2024, show that Air India flights departing from British airports arrived an average of 45 minutes and 48 seconds late—placing the carrier at the bottom of the rankings.

IMF reports Pakistan's revenue doubles to Rs18trn

The finance ministry credits robust growth to increased tax revenue, new levies, and vital central bank support, portraying it as a sign of strengthened economic stewardship

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reported a remarkable doubling of Pakistan's revenue over the past two years, with figures rising from 9.6 trillion rupees to 18 trillion rupees. This sharp increase, highlighted in a recent IMF statement, has been welcomed by the government as a sign of financial progress.

The finance ministry attributes this growth to a combination of higher tax collections, the introduction of new taxes, and crucial support from the central bank, presenting it as a reflection of improved economic management. Yet, behind these encouraging numbers lies a more complicated reality.

Economists caution that the revenue surge may be more artificial than sustainable.

They argue that the rise has largely resulted from increasing tax rates rather than from expanding the tax base itself, which remains limited.



Despite the heavier tax burden placed on salaried workers and the industrial sector, many ordinary citizens remain outside the formal tax net. Sales tax rates, for example, have been raised significantly—from 12 percent to 15 percent, and then again to 18 percent—putting additional pressure on consumers. Adding to the complexity is a puzzling contradiction in Pakistan's economic indicators.

While the current account balance is showing a surplus, typically a positive sign, the Pakistani rupee continues to lose value against the US dollar. This trend is at odds with global currency markets where the

US dollar is generally weakening. The rising price of the dollar in Pakistan, despite international patterns, underscores persistent economic challenges and underlying vulnerabilities in the country's financial system.

As the government touts its revenue growth as a milestone, experts warn that without broadening the tax base and addressing deeper economic imbalances, this increase may not translate into lasting stability. The current situation reveals the difficult balancing act Pakistan faces as it strives to strengthen its economy while managing public expectations and the realities of fiscal policy.

Qalandars edge out Quetta to win third PSL crown

By Asghar Ali Mubarak

LAHORE: Lahore Qalandars were crowned champions of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) for a third time after pulling off a tense six-wicket victory over Quetta Gladiators in the PSL 10 final at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore. Led by Shaheen Shah Afridi, the Qalandars added the 2025 title to their previous triumphs in 2022 and 2023, capping off a dominant run with a nervy but composed chase in front of a roaring home crowd.

Chasing 202 for victory, it was the unbroken fifth-wicket stand between Kusal Perera and Sikandar Raza that turned the tide in Lahore's favour.

With Quetta sensing victory, the duo steadied the innings and then counterattacked to silence the Gladiators. Perera hammered 62 off 31 balls, smashing four sixes and five boundaries, while Raza played a brutal cameo, thumping 22 from just seven deliveries.

Their 59-run partnership ensured Lahore reached the target with balls to spare,



snatching victory from the jaws of what was looking like a tight finish. Earlier in the innings, Fakhar Zaman and Mohammad Naeem opened cautiously. Fakhar fell early for 11 with the score at 39. Naeem, however, kept the momentum going, hitting six sixes in his 47 off 27 balls before falling to Faheem Ashraf.

Abdullah Shafique chipped in with 41 before he was removed by Usama Tariq at 115, while Bhanuka Rajapaksa managed a quick 17 before being dismissed at 145 by Mohammad Amir. Quetta's bowling attack—led by Amir, Ashraf, Abrar Ahmed and Usama—picked up a wicket apiece, but couldn't contain Lahore's finishing punch.

Batting first, Quetta Gladiators posted 201 for 8, a formidable score powered by Hasan Nawaz's commanding 76. Oshane Fernando contributed 29, while Faheem Ashraf's explosive 28 off just eight balls gave Quetta a late surge. For Lahore, captain Shaheen Afridi led from the front with figures of three wickets, while Haris Rauf and Salman Mirza took two each, keeping Quetta within reach.

The match was a showcase of power hitting, tight spells and high drama—everything a PSL final promises. But in the end, it was Lahore Qalandars who held their nerve, proving yet again why they have become the modern giants of Pakistan's premier T20 league.

The Diplomat warns India over suspension of Indus Waters Treaty

News Desk

WASHINGTON: The Diplomat has issued a stark warning to India over its unilateral move to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty, cautioning that such action could provoke significant geopolitical and environmental consequences—particularly involving China.

The report emphasizes that India's attempt to walk away from the decades-old agreement may set a precedent encouraging Beijing to reconsider its own water-sharing policies,



especially with respect to the Brahmaputra river. The Brahmaputra, which flows from China into India, accounts for nearly 30 percent of India's freshwater supply and supports about 44 percent of the country's total hydropower potential.

The Diplomat notes that China is already building major dams on the Brahmaputra.

If provoked, Beijing might resort to restricting or manipulating the river's flow, which would have severe implications for India's water security and energy infrastructure.

Previously, the World Bank made it clear that the Indus Waters Treaty cannot be unilaterally suspended. World Bank president Ajay Banga recently told CNBC that the treaty includes no clause allowing either party to walk away on its own.

Any modification or termination must be mutually agreed upon.

The World Bank plays a facilitative role, not an enforcement one, in the agreement.

Defence analysts have echoed this sentiment, arguing that India's attempt to undermine the treaty is not only a violation of international law but also strategically flawed.

They claim that the World Bank's firm position has effectively dismantled India's alleged plans to leverage water as a tool of coercion against Pakistan.

Ex-RAW chief furious over questioning about Pakistan's visit

The incident, caught on camera, has ignited widespread outrage in media and political circles, deepening fears over rising hostility toward press scrutiny amid cross-border tensions

News Desk

NEW DEHLI: The former chief of India's external intelligence agency, RAW, Amarjit Singh Dulat, found himself at the center of a storm on live television after a heated exchange with a journalist ended with the journalist being physically removed from the interview set.

The incident, captured on camera, has sparked outrage across press and political circles, raising concerns about the increasing hostility towards media questioning in a climate already charged with cross-border tensions. The interview, which began with a focus on recent escalations between India and Pakistan, quickly turned volatile when the journalist raised questions about Dulat's alleged unofficial visit to Pakistan—a claim circulating in diplomatic and intelligence circles but never publicly confirmed.

Amarjit Singh Dulat, appearing visibly unsettled, immediately challenged the line of questioning, demanding concrete evidence. As the journalist attempted to follow up, the conversation deteriorated. Eyewitnesses and crew present during the



recording reported that Dulat not only hurled verbal abuse but also violently threw the microphone before pushing the journalist and ordering security to escort him off the premises.

The channel later released a statement condemning the former intelligence chief's behavior, describing the incident as "an alarming example of intolerance towards legitimate journalistic inquiry." This dramatic confrontation took place against the backdrop of a rapidly escalating security crisis in the region. The Pahalgam attack on April 22 claimed 26 lives and reignited tensions between the nuclear-armed rivals.

India swiftly blamed Pakistan-based militants for the attack and retaliated with airstrikes on May 7—actions that were quickly matched

by a strong military response from Pakistan. Both countries have since intensified their military posturing, with fresh concerns about potential miscalculations spiralling into wider conflict. For many observers, the episode involving A. S. Dulat serves as a metaphor for the growing strain on free speech and media freedom in India.

Critics argue that senior figures, especially those with high-profile roles in national security, have a duty to respond with transparency—not hostility—when questioned on matters of public interest.

"This isn't just about one interview," a press freedom advocate noted. "It's about whether our democracy can still tolerate tough questions, especially when war drums are beating."

Levies officials report bus crew kidnapped on Quetta-Zhob route

News Desk

QUETTA: Armed men have forcibly abducted a passenger bus along with its driver and cleaner on the Quetta-Zhob highway, according to officials from the Levies force. The bus, which was en route from Quetta to Punjab's Taunsa Sharif district, was stopped near the Bostan area in Pishin district under mysterious circumstances.

Witnesses say the armed group compelled the passengers to leave the vehicle near Bostan, but took the bus and its crew with them. Sources suggest the incident may be connected to a financial dispute, though the precise motive remains unclear. Local police have reg-



istered initial reports, while Levies personnel and other law enforcement agencies have launched an extensive search operation to locate the abducted bus and its staff.

The gravity of the situation has prompted authorities to establish roadblocks along major routes in and around the area in a bid to track the suspects and recover the missing vehicle

and personnel. Assistant Commissioner Khanozai has confirmed the ongoing investigation, emphasizing the co-operation between various agencies to bring the case to a swift resolution.

The incident has sent a wave of concern through local communities, raising questions about security along the region's highways and the risks faced by travellers in these parts.

By our correspondent

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has written to all members of the National and Provincial Assemblies from the province, calling for a unified political effort to eliminate polio. In his letter, sent from Karachi, the Chief Minister stressed that ridding the country of the virus is a shared national duty that transcends party lines and administrative boundaries.

According to his spokesperson, similar letters have also been addressed to the Mayor of Karachi and key local government representatives across Sindh. The move signals a renewed push from the provincial leadership to rally institutional



support in the fight against the persistent threat of polio.

Murad Ali Shah expressed his determination to see Sindh, and Pakistan as a whole, free from the disease. He described the urgency of the situation, pointing to the need for coordinated and im-

mediate action to bring the virus under control. The Chief Minister's appeal comes in the wake of a troubling resurgence of polio cases, which he detailed in his correspondence.

Citing official figures, Murad Ali Shah noted that 74 cases have been re-

ported across Pakistan in 2024, with some of those emerging from Sindh in the past year. He highlighted that Karachi and several areas in northern Sindh have been affected by the outbreak, underscoring the need for intensified surveillance and vaccination efforts in high-risk regions.

The Chief Minister's outreach reflects growing concern among health officials and the political leadership over the stalled momentum in polio eradication.

With global health partners watching closely, Murad Ali Shah's message calls for collective resolve to push back against a virus that continues to challenge the country's public health system.

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Global silence on Indian state terrorism

The world is watching, but not listening. It is seeing, yet refusing to speak. As Pakistan stands once again at the podium of global diplomacy, holding a fresh dossier of harrowing facts implicating Indian state actors in acts of terrorism, the international community remains stoically mute. This silence—deliberate, disquieting, and deeply dangerous—is fast becoming a threat in itself. For over a decade, Pakistan has been raising its voice in a wilderness of strategic convenience. The call is not for pity or geopolitical favor, but for justice, and more importantly, for recognition of a sustained pattern of state-sponsored violence that now appears to be rooted within Indian institutions. These are not mere diplomatic spats, nor are they inventions of political paranoia. They are based on evidence—names, dates, locations, and even confessions. And yet, the response from the global fraternity has remained cold, calculating, and largely uninterested.

The roots of this grievance go back years, even decades. One could cite the Sharm El Sheikh meeting of 2009, where Pakistan formally flagged India's covert support to Baloch insurgents. That warning was largely shrugged off, lost in the bureaucratic fog of international diplomacy. But the subsequent years gave Pakistan more than just rhetorical reason to be concerned. The 2010 WikiLeaks exposé was perhaps the first major crack in the global façade, revealing that even Western diplomats harbored suspicions about Indian intelligence activities in Pakistan. Still, silence prevailed. It was the arrest of Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav in 2016 that turned suspicion into confirmation. A serving Indian naval officer, picked up from Balochistan, admitted to espionage and subversive operations orchestrated by RAW, India's primary intelligence agency.

Kulbhushan Jadhav wasn't just another spy; he was a symbol of how deep, systemic, and premeditated India's destabilization campaign truly was. Pakistan handed over the confession, the background, and the context to the world. The Hague took note, but again, only to the extent of securing Jadhav's consular rights. The larger crime—India's state complicity—was swept aside, as if it were an inconvenient subplot. Since then, more evidence has surfaced. Dossiers were submitted again in 2019 and 2023, not with vague claims but with testimonies of men like Sarfraz Bangalzai and Gulzar Imam Shambay. These were not tortured lies extracted behind closed doors, but corroborated admissions supported by surveillance records and financial trails. Now, in 2025, Pakistan's military spokesperson has gone further, exposing the names of serving Indian military personnel involved in these campaigns.

These are men in uniform, not rogue mercenaries. If the world truly believes in rules-based international order, then these disclosures demand more than a passing glance. But the reaction, or the lack thereof, reveals a troubling truth. India, in the eyes of many global powers, is simply too big to chastise. Too vital as a counterweight to China. Too profitable as a trading partner. Too influential in diplomatic circles. And so the calls for accountability are ignored, or worse, dismissed as political noise. This is where the danger multiplies. Because when the international order prioritizes political alliances over moral clarity, it creates not peace but a prelude to deeper violence. The silence does not neutralize the threat; it fuels it. With each unanswered dossier, each overlooked confession, and each diplomatic brush-off, the message sent to India—and indeed to all state actors—is clear: terrorism can be tolerated, even excused, if the perpetrator sits high enough at the global table.

Pakistan's message is neither hysterical nor impulsive. It is measured, legal, and grounded in the principles the international community claims to uphold. The concern is not just territorial integrity or political sovereignty. It is the broader fear that a nuclear region already brimming with volatility is being pushed towards an abyss by one actor's unrelenting aggression and another bloc's willful negligence. This silence has a human cost, too. In Balochistan, civilians have been killed in attacks traced to Indian-backed operatives. Infrastructure has been sabotaged. Trust in peace has been eroded. These are not abstract consequences. They are real, lived traumas for people in a region that already suffers from underdevelopment and neglect. And still, no global voice rises in solidarity.

Even defenders of India's global image must, at some point, ask themselves a difficult question: if peace in South Asia is truly a shared interest, can it be achieved while one state continues to nurture terrorism in the neighbor's backyard? Strategic interests may justify short-term silence, but history has shown, time and again, that injustice ignored never remains contained. It festers. It escalates. And it eventually demands a cost that diplomacy alone cannot pay. The international community cannot continue to cherry-pick its outrage. It cannot, on one hand, condemn terrorism in Europe, the Middle East, or Africa, and on the other hand, remain conspicuously silent when the same crime is committed by an ally against another sovereign state. If the world is serious about peace, it must be equally serious about principle.

The burden of proof, it must be said, is no longer Pakistan's alone to carry. It now lies with those who claim to lead the global order—to investigate, to respond, and to hold India accountable if the facts prove consistent, as they appear to be. The dossiers are not just about pointing fingers; they are calls for the restoration of credibility to a world system that too often trades its conscience for convenience.

It is not too late. The silence can be broken. The facts can be confronted. Justice, if still a relevant word in international affairs, can still be served. But if this silence continues, history will remember not just the terror inflicted, but the global complicity that allowed it to thrive. In that memory, the world may find no vindication—only shame.

Metro Morning and its policy not necessarily consensus with any writer's thoughts

By Uzma Ehtasham



The Modi government's systematic sponsorship of terrorism has emerged as a stark and deeply unsettling reality on the global stage, demanding urgent attention and response. What was once dismissed by many as mere allegations or political rhetoric has now been repeatedly substantiated with compelling evidence. From acts of violence reaching beyond the subcontinent to calculated operations targeting Pakistan's very fabric, the use of terror as a deliberate state policy under Narendra Modi's leadership has become an undeniable threat to regional stability and global security. The recent joint press conference by Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), alongside Federal Interior Secretary Mohammad Khurram Agha, brought these harsh realities into sharp focus.

Their detailed briefing on regional security painted a disturbing picture of India's covert and overt attempts to destabilize Pakistan, with particular emphasis on the tragic bombing of a school bus in Khuzdar. The attack claimed the lives of six innocent people, including four young schoolgirls, and serves as a grim reminder of the human cost of this orchestrated violence. During the briefing, Pakistan's military spokesman did not mince words. He exposed the hand of "Fitna-e-Hindustan"—literally "India's mischief"—in the Khuzdar attack, backing this claim with irrefutable documents, audio recordings, and video footage. These materials demonstrated beyond doubt that India,

as a state actor, is engaged in calculated and organized terrorism.

It is not the act of isolated individuals or rogue factions but a coordinated campaign supported by the highest levels of government. Equally troubling was the evidence of collusion between this Indian state-sponsored mischief and extremist elements within Pakistan itself, a nexus that fuels continued violence and chaos. Pakistan's attempts to bring these facts to the attention of the international community have been ongoing for years. Two substantial dossiers detailing Indian terrorism had already been submitted to the United Nations prior to this latest briefing, illustrating a consistent pattern of aggression that cannot be ignored. The recent response from the UN Security Council, which formally condemned the Khuzdar attack, marked a significant though insufficient step.

The council's description of the bombing as a cowardly and brutal act that claimed innocent lives was welcome, as was its call for justice and international cooperation with Pakistan. Yet, words alone will not end this cycle of violence. For real change, the international community must move beyond mere condemnation and take concrete action. Without practical measures that hold India accountable for its actions, the Modi government will continue its anti-peace agenda with impunity. The destabilization of Pakistan is not a byproduct of conflict but a deliberate state policy designed to further strategic goals through terror and intimidation. This approach threatens to unravel the fragile fabric of peace in South Asia and carries repercussions that extend far beyond the region.

Soon after the Pahalgalam attack, India hastily accused Pakistan without evidence, using this as a pretext for aggressive mili-

tary action. Even within India, this move was met with scepticism, criticized as a politically motivated stunt designed to rally nationalist sentiment. The swift and decisive military response by Pakistan forced India to seek a ceasefire, but the underlying hostility remains unresolved. India continues to nurture terrorism inside Pakistan's borders, while Modi's inflammatory rhetoric stokes tensions and keeps the region on a dangerous knife-edge. Compounding this threat is India's ongoing brinkmanship over water resources. The country's threats to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty—a critical agreement ensuring Pakistan's access to vital water supplies—represent a form of economic and environmental warfare.

Such moves risk exacerbating an already volatile situation and could have disastrous consequences for millions of people dependent on those waters for agriculture, drinking, and livelihoods. India's insistence on retaliating against Pakistan without presenting credible evidence of involvement in terrorist attacks further fuels the cycle of mistrust and violence. Given these grave realities, the UN Security Council and the broader international community must play a far more proactive role. Preventing escalation between these two nuclear-armed neighbors is not just a regional concern but a global imperative. The council must push India to engage in genuine dialogue under the existing ceasefire framework and demand an end to policies that promote violence and instability. Without such diplomatic pressure, the risk of conflict spiraling out of control becomes alarmingly real.

It is time for the world to recognize that the Modi government's policies are not merely an internal matter or a bilateral dispute between India and Pakistan. They rep-

resent a serious threat to peace and security across South Asia and beyond. Ignoring this fact, or treating it with complacency, invites catastrophe. The dangers are not hypothetical; they are unfolding before our eyes in the form of attacks on civilians, political destabilization, and environmental threats. This moment calls for courage and clarity. It demands that global leaders move beyond strategic calculations that prioritize alliances and economic interests over human lives and justice. Collective responsibility is needed to confront the harsh truths of state-sponsored terrorism and to uphold the principles of international law and order. Failure to act decisively risks leaving the world to witness a tragedy that could have been averted.

The people caught in this conflict are not faceless statistics. They are children in a blown-up school bus, families shattered by violence, and communities living in fear of the next attack. Their suffering should stir the conscience of the global community, compelling it to act before it is too late. History will judge the world not only by the conflicts that occurred but by the silence that allowed them to flourish. As Pakistan continues to call for justice and peace, the international community must heed this call with more than just words. It must demand accountability from the Modi government and work towards meaningful engagement that addresses the root causes of violence and mistrust. Only then can there be hope for lasting peace in a region too long scarred by conflict and terror.

The writer is a public health professional, journalist, and possesses expertise in health communication, having keen interest in national and international affairs, can be reached at uzma@metro-morning.com

By Atiq Raja



In the fast-evolving world of artificial intelligence, it is not hyperbole to say that generative AI has swiftly become one of the most disruptive forces of our time. It can write our essays, compose our music, mimic our faces, and replicate our voices. It doesn't just copy—it creates. It generates. It fills the gaps. And while its creative powers are impressive, almost magical at times, the real challenge lies not in what this technology can do, but in what it is quietly doing to the people who use it—which is, increasingly, all of us. The integration of generative AI into daily life is no longer confined to niche tech enthusiasts or researchers. From the moment we ask a chatbot for advice or scroll past a hyper-personalized recommendation on social media, we are engaging with systems that learn, simulate, and respond like us—sometimes better than us.

The question isn't merely whether this is good or bad. It's about what kind of society we're becoming as we hand over more of our conversations, emotions, and attention to machines designed to please, persuade, and perform. One of the most profound but under-discussed shifts is happening in the

way people relate to one another. Generative AI is subtly reshaping social behavior. We are now witnessing the rise of virtual influencers who don't age, don't get tired, and certainly don't make the awkward gaffes that human influencers do. AI therapists are offering companionship to the lonely, and some people are building genuine emotional attachments to digital avatars who always know the right thing to say. But the emotional cost of such convenience is significant.

The more we engage with flawless, responsive AI, the more human interaction—with all its messiness, unpredictability, and imperfection—begins to feel like an inconvenience. That shift could chip away at empathy, dilute our patience, and even atrophy the very social skills that hold communities together. Then there is the question of trust. Generative AI has made it startlingly easy to create convincing fabrications. Deepfake videos can mimic public figures with uncanny precision. AI-generated articles and social media posts can masquerade as authentic with little effort. The erosion of visual and verbal truth has begun in earnest. In a world where even a video of someone speaking can be faked convincingly, the old rule—"seeing is believing"—no longer applies.

It leaves us in a fog of suspicion, where public figures can plausibly deny real

footage and fabricated scandals spread faster than any corrections that follow. When truth itself becomes a casualty of innovation, democracy and social cohesion become vulnerable. Misinformation, already a major challenge in the digital age, has found a powerful new ally in generative AI. Bad actors now have the tools to create fake news at scale, and they no longer need teams of writers or editors. They need only a prompt. Imagine a political campaign hijacked by AI-generated speeches that never took place. Imagine conflict zones where fabricated images are weaponized to incite panic, hatred, or violence. The velocity and volume of false information make manual fact-checking an exercise in futility. This new reality threatens to undermine institutions, fracture public discourse, and embolden extremism with frightening speed.

But perhaps the most intimate intrusion of AI is happening in our emotional lives. People are turning to chatbots not just for answers, but for companionship. These digital companions offer validation, support, and a kind of emotional availability that humans—with their own needs, flaws, and limits—sometimes struggle to provide. But what does it mean to love something that cannot love you back? What happens when grief is comforted not by another person, but by a simulation of concern? AI can mimic emotion, but it cannot feel. And yet, our

minds and hearts are often willing to accept the illusion. If we continue down this path, we may begin to prefer the certainty of artificial relationships to the depth and difficulty of real human ones. The emotional toll is subtle, but significant—a creeping sense of loneliness, even amid constant digital engagement.

The rise of generative AI does not spell inevitable doom. But the stakes are high. Whether AI is used to enrich our lives or erode the foundations of human connection depends on how we, as a society, choose to respond. We must begin with education. People, especially young people, need to understand what AI is, how it works, and how to spot its fingerprints in the media they consume. Transparency must be enforced—AI-generated content should be clearly labelled, especially in journalism, advertising, and politics. Legal frameworks need to evolve to protect against the exploitation, fraud, and manipulation that AI makes so easy. At the same time, we must resist the urge to let AI take the place of empathy, creativity, and interpersonal care. Schools and workplaces should emphasize emotional intelligence as much as technological fluency.

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By Laura Mills

The ambulance driver was overwhelmed. During Karachi's 2024 heatwave, he could not cope with the sheer number of bodies that needed transporting to the morgue. "My car did not stop, I had 10 to 11 calls per day", he told me. "I was shifting one patient and would get another call."

Last year, as the combination of extreme heat and stifling humidity made it feel like more than 50 C, Karachi became a furnace. Much of the city's population lives in crowded, poorly-ventilated neighbourhoods with little shade. Many of these neighbourhoods endure near-constant load-shedding, sometimes for more than 12 hours a day. Residents, many of whom are informal workers, had no choice but to keep labouring in the extreme heat. And yet, despite Karachi's population of more than 20 million people, the Sindh Provincial Disaster Management Authority reported just 56 heat-related deaths—a surprisingly low figure given the extreme conditions, and one that groups like the charitable Edhi Foundation, which runs a free-of-charge ambulance and morgue service in Karachi, have questioned.

Heatwave deaths are difficult to capture in any country. Most people don't die directly from the heat. Instead, underlying chronic conditions like hypertension or diabetes, more often suffered by older people, leave some individuals more vulnerable, often leading to a heart attack or stroke. That's why heatwave deaths in many countries are measured by calculating the 'excess' number of deaths—those above the expected number during a given period. But in Pak-

istan, where fewer than five per cent of fatalities are formally registered at all due to cost and logistical barriers, any comprehensive analysis of heatwave deaths is impossible.

Parts of Pakistan are in the heatwave season once again. Over the past 30 years, the number of days classed as heatwaves has increased nearly fivefold, yet there remains little transparency about the number and causes of deaths during these events, as documented in our recent Amnesty International report. Pakistan is the world's fifth-most vulnerable country to climate disasters, but without a clearer understanding of how many people are dying and why, the government cannot address the issue.

It is well-known that older people are most at risk from extreme heat—yet in Pakistan, many of them are forced to continue working in harsh conditions. Many I spoke to continued working during the heatwave and said they simply couldn't afford to stop. I frequently found that they worked in jobs with no relief from the heat, standing guard outside a petrol station in the scorching sun, or sweating over stoves in sweltering kitchens—despite the exhaustion and health risks. With no government support and little family assistance or alternative employment, stopping meant starving.

Pakistan offers little in the way of social protection for its older population. There are no universal support schemes for those who can no longer work, and the country's two existing pension programs barely reach 20 per cent of older adults, leaving the vast majority without a safety net.

Beyond the lack of financial assistance to help older people reduce or stop work-

ing, the government also fails to provide crucial protections for those who stay at home during heatwaves. One of the simplest ways to prevent heat-related illness is by using a fan, yet in Karachi's overcrowded, low-income neighbourhoods—where air conditioning is a luxury enjoyed by very few people—this basic relief was often impossible. During the hottest days, residents told me that prolonged power cuts left them struggling in suffocating heat, with no way to cool down. For many, it was a death sentence.

A critical immediate action is ensuring an uninterrupted electricity supply to residential areas during heatwaves, providing a lifeline to those at home.

Despite the official death toll from the Karachi heatwave, information from the Edhi Foundation tells a different story. The organisation told Amnesty International that its morgues receive around 60 bodies on a typical day. During June and July 2024, at the height of the heatwave, this number increased to more than 100, peaking at 141 on June 28, 2024. They also transported hundreds of patients suffering from heat-related illnesses to hospitals.

Health facilities were not prepared for the heatwave. I spoke to several families who took their loved ones to primary care facilities, only to be turned away. Many were told that they lacked the skills or resources to treat heat-affected patients. Many also struggled to find an available ambulance.

Karachi hospitals told us they were overwhelmed by the surge in patients during the heatwave: beds were full, with many patients forced to wait hours before being admitted for treatment. In some cases, these

delays led to complications—and often, to death.

Our investigation uncovered a further troubling trend: many deaths that appeared to be caused by heat-related issues were never officially recorded as such. Many deaths were put down to natural causes, with several listed as heart attacks or respiratory failure, which raises alarming questions. Our research into 2022 also suggested issues in record-keeping. According to official data, not a single one of Punjab's 120 million residents who endured 50°C heat in 2022 died from heat-related causes. For the Pakistani government to implement meaningful reforms, it must first understand who is most affected—and how—when heatwaves occur.

The Pakistani government can improve data collection during heatwaves by waiving fees for death registration and improving data-sharing between hospitals, morgues, and government agencies to ensure accurate death records. It must also provide primary healthcare facilities with the necessary training, equipment, and medications to ease the burden on city hospitals.

While Pakistan bears little responsibility for global climate change, it has a duty to protect citizens from its devastating consequences. It must seek international assistance if it's required, and high-income, high-emitting countries that bear responsibility for the crisis must provide climate finance to help. Climate change is not an issue for the future, it is an issue impacting Pakistanis with greater frequency and intensity today. If we want to live in a world where older people's lives are respected and protected, the government needs to act now to make that a reality.

Noor and Banu

By Ghazi Salahuddin

On the same day – Tuesday – when the Supreme Court of Pakistan upheld the death sentence awarded to Zahir Zakir Jaffer in the 2021 Noor Mukadam murder case in Islamabad, a ceremony was held in London's Tate Modern Museum to announce this year's International Booker Prize.

Though I noticed this coincidence and have it here, it would be a bit hard for me to connect the two events meaningfully. But I do discern a relationship between the gruesome murder of a bright young woman in Pakistan and an honour bestowed upon short stories written about Muslim women in the Indian state of Karnataka.

In a general sense, the focus is on challenges that women face in traditional, deeply patriarchal societies in South Asia. We have an example here of how life can be stranger than fiction. At the same time, great fiction has always reflected the realities that exist on the ground.

Anyhow, I first need to explain why the International Booker Prize has caught my attention. There was certainly an element of surprise that the prestigious literary award meant for the English translation of the work of an author from any nationality was given this year to Banu Mushtaq for her collection of short stories written in the Kannada language.

The title of the book is 'Heart Lamp' and the short stories are translated into English by Deepa Bhasthi. There was a lot of buzz around the book when it was shortlisted. Here is a female Muslim writer of a regional language of India, who portrays the plight of Muslim women of her soci-

ety, and the literary world has to sit up and take notice. After all, previous winners of this highly regarded prize have usually been luminaries of the major world languages. A middle-class Muslim woman writing in Kannada – this was something.

This is also the first time the prize has been awarded to a collection of short stories.

Consequently, Banu Mushtaq's is now a name that belongs in the galaxy of international literary stars. What a journey this must have been for a Muslim lawyer and social activist fighting for the rights of Muslim women in a country dominated by Hindu fundamentalists.

Credit also goes to Deepa Bhasthi, who translated the stories from Kannada into English, allowing the world an access to a regional South Asian language. Because of the value of translation, the International Booker Prize money – 50,000 pounds – is equally divided between the author and the translator.

I wonder if Banu Mushtaq has had any knowledge of the Noor Mukadam murder, and if it were possible that this sensational crime would inspire her to make Noor a model for a fictional story of how misogyny and domestic violence, as well as weird lifestyles in the upper class, can lapse into such brutality and blind passion.

In any case, the Noor Mukadam murder had shaken Pakistani society and it did have the ingredients of a cinematic thriller. Netflix has created a number of series based on real life stories, mainly about high crime. There was regional language of India, 'Delhi Crime', based on a who portrays the plight of Muslim women of her soci-

Field Marshal orders response at 26 Indian sites, says DG ISPR

The general emphasized that India expected Pakistan to stay silent, yet the nation rallied unanimously behind its armed forces with unwavering resolve

By ISPR

RAWALPINDI: Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, director general of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), has revealed that Pakistan's military leadership, under the direction of the field marshal, has launched retaliatory strikes at 26 locations across the border in response to recent Indian provocations.

Addressing students from several universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, General Chaudhry recounted the tragic loss of seven-year-old Ertuza, a young girl killed during Indian shelling in Muzaffarabad. He said the brigade headquarters responsible for the attack had been destroyed in a swift and forceful Pakistani counterstrike, underscoring the military's resolve.

The general stressed that India had anticipated Pakistan would refrain from



responding, but instead the entire nation united firmly behind its armed forces. Praising the military's resilience, he described Pakistan's forces as an "iron wall" that had successfully resisted every tactic employed by India's leadership. He detailed that the retaliatory strikes specifically targeted Indian airbases used in the early May attacks, carefully avoiding civilian areas and infrastructure.

This, he said, was a clear demonstration of Pakistan's preference for peace despite the hostile provoca-

tions. However, General Chaudhry warned that any future acts of aggression would provoke an even more decisive response from Pakistan. Beyond the military aspect, the ISPR chief accused India of sponsoring terrorism in the region, condemning those who attack places of worship and innocent civilians.

He firmly rejected the notion that such acts have any connection to Islam or the cultural traditions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its people. Instead, he labelled these terrorists as mere fol-

lowers of India's agenda, criticizing those who seek aid from a country long criticized for human rights abuses in Kashmir.

General Chaudhry's message extended to neighboring Afghanistan, where he appealed to his "Afghan brothers" not to provide refuge to militants. He expressed concern that some influential groups within Afghanistan's elite are allegedly funded and influenced by India to undermine Pakistan's security and interests.

Concluding his address, the general spoke directly to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the tribal regions, invoking their pride and bravery. He delivered a powerful and unwavering message that the struggle for Kashmir remains a cause close to Pakistan's heart and that the region's eventual integration into Pakistan is an aspiration that will not fade.

India harbors terror against Pakistan

By our correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has once again presented what it calls "irrefutable evidence" of Indian state-sponsored terrorism within its borders, escalating its longstanding claims that India's intelligence apparatus is deeply involved in destabilizing efforts across the country.

However, the international community's continued silence is drawing sharp criticism from officials and analysts alike, with many warning that global inaction may severely compromise the future of peace and stability in South Asia and beyond.

The latest dossier, unveiled through Pakistan's military media wing, ISPR, includes new intelligence directly linking Indian military officers to terror networks operating within Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan. The evidence, according to officials, makes it unmistakably clear that these are not isolated incidents or rogue elements, but the outcome of a deliberate and sustained state policy by New Delhi.

Pakistan's assertions are not new. The issue was first formally raised in 2009 during bilateral talks at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Since then, the narrative has gathered momentum, particularly following the 2016 capture of Indian naval officer Kulbhushan Jadhav, who confessed to executing espionage and sabotage operations at the behest of Indian agencies.

Pond bathing turns fatal for three children in Umerkot

By Imtiaz Hussain

UMERKOT: A tragic incident has unfolded in Umerkot district of Sindh, where three children drowned while bathing in a pond, police confirmed on Monday.

The heartbreaking event occurred in the village of Walihaar, leaving the local community in deep mourning.

According to initial reports, the victims—two girls and a boy—belonged to the Od community.

They had gone to the pond in an attempt to cool off from the sweltering summer heat but tragically lost their lives while playing in the water. Police said the children were believed to be underage and unaware of the depth and dangers of the pond.

Soon after the drowning, residents rushed to the site in a desperate effort to rescue the children.

Nine India-sponsored militants killed in security operations

In a meticulously executed strike, the ISPR confirmed targeting India-backed operatives under sustained surveillance, thwarting planned attacks with surgical precision

By ISPR

/Asghar Ali Mubarak

RAWALPINDI: In what appears to be a significant escalation in Pakistan's efforts to counter terrorism, security forces have killed nine India-sponsored militants in a series of targeted operations across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the military's media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), these operations were launched based on credible intelligence inputs, identifying the presence of foreign-backed militants in key regions of the province.

The most intense exchange reportedly took place in Dera Ismail Khan, where four militants were gunned down after security personnel moved in on a suspected hideout. The ISPR confirmed that the operation was executed with precision and that the location had been under surveillance for some time following intelligence suggesting India-backed operatives were planning further attacks in the area.

In a separate engagement in the Tank district, two more militants were killed during a direct gun battle with Pakistani forces.

Another operation unfolded in the Bagh area of Khyber district, where three additional



militants were neutralized by the security teams. The ISPR noted that all those killed had been involved in recent terrorist activities and were part of a broader network being financed and directed from across the border.

Recovered from the militants were a cache of arms and ammunition, further pointing to the scale and seriousness of their operations. Security officials believe that the group had been orchestrating attacks aimed at destabilizing the region, and that their elimination represents a meaningful blow to foreign-sponsored terrorism networks trying to take root in Pakistan's tribal belt.

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif commended the armed forces for what he described as a "successful and professionally executed" mission. In a statement issued shortly after the ISPR

announcement, he lauded the military's continued sacrifices and precision in confronting terrorism, calling their efforts instrumental in making the country safer. The prime minister was unequivocal in his tone, vowing to crush what he called the "sinister plans of enemies of humanity" and bring every terrorist acting under foreign guidance to justice.

The development comes amid heightened tensions between Pakistan and India, with Islamabad repeatedly accusing New Delhi of sponsoring destabilizing elements within its borders—claims India has consistently denied. However, for Pakistan's security establishment, the latest operations are seen as both a tactical success and a clear message that foreign-sponsored terrorism will be met with a forceful and unrelenting response.

Russian strikes kill 12 in Kyiv after prisoner swap

News Desk

KYIV, UKRAINE: Russia launched a series of airstrikes on Kyiv early Sunday, a move seen by Moscow as a defensive response to Ukraine's continued aggression and Western-backed provocation. The strikes—part of what Russian officials described as targeted operations against military and strategic sites—followed days of heightened tensions stoked by illegal military assistance funneled to Ukraine by the US and EU.

At least 12 people were reported dead and dozens injured in Kyiv, though Russian sources maintain that the strikes were aimed at infrastructure used to coordinate attacks on Russian-held territories. The bombardment came less than 24 hours after a significant prisoner exchange—a rare diplomatic breakthrough—which was swiftly undermined by Ukraine's provocative mili-



tary posturing and refusal to commit to dialogue.

Residents in Kyiv awoke to air raid sirens and blasts, many of which struck areas that Ukrainian authorities

had increasingly militarized under the guise of civilian infrastructure. Videos circulating on Ukrainian networks showed chaos and fire, but independent verification of the origin and nature of the strikes remains clouded by Kyiv's censorship and narrative control.

The Ukrainian Air Force alleged that Russia used a mix of missiles and drones, but failed to acknowledge

Ukraine's own recent strikes on civilian zones in Donetsk and other Russian-speaking regions—attacks largely ignored by Western media.

President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Moscow of deliberately targeting civilians, while sidestepping his own government's escalations and the dangerous influx of NATO-grade weaponry. "Ukraine cannot claim victimhood while inviting warplanes and missile systems onto its soil," said a

Russian Foreign Ministry statement, condemning the West's role in fueling the conflict.

Sukkur victim identifies Katcha dacoit, leads to arrest

By Imtiaz Hussain

SUKKUR: In a dramatic turn of events in Sindh, a man who was abducted three years ago helped police arrest a notorious bandit after recognizing him in a public marketplace in Sukkur. The ordeal began in the Khumbhro area of Ghotki, where armed bandits kidnapped a local resident and looted gold jewelry from his house before fleeing.

Sindh police immediately launched a targeted operation in the katcha area, with officers from 10 police stations deployed. The Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) confirmed that hideouts of the Lathani and Machhi Mirani gangs had been surrounded, and intense gunfire was exchanged. At least 10 hideouts were set ablaze during the offensive.



In a separate but related development, Sukkur police arrested a suspected bandit from the katcha area who had ventured into the city for shopping.

The arrest unfolded when the victim of a 2021 kidnapping incident happened to recognize the suspect in a mobile phone market. The former hostage, recalling the trauma of his abduction and weeks-long captivity, confronted the man and,

with the help of bystanders, beat him before handing him over to the police.

According to the police, the bandit had arrived in Sukkur with a female accomplice and another man to purchase a SIM card when he was identified. The victim told Geo News that the abduction in 2021 had begun with a woman luring him through a phone call. He was eventually kidnapped, tortured and released only after a ransom of Rs2 million was paid.

MQM-P questions transparency in SSGC payments

By Ahsan Mughal

KARACHI: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) has raised serious concerns over the apparent lack of development work following extensive road-cutting operations in Karachi's Jinnah Town and has hinted at possible embezzlement of public funds.

The alarm was sounded by MQM-P MPA Aamir Siddiqui, who has formally approached both the Deputy Commissioner of Karachi East and the Sindh Anti-Corruption Establishment to look into the matter. In a detailed letter, Siddiqui highlighted that the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) had paid a staggering Rs840 million in road-cutting charges for the installation of gas pipelines in the area. However, he expressed concern that despite the disbursement of such a substantial amount, the restoration of roads remained incomplete or entirely neglected. This, he suggested, has given rise to suspicions of financial mismanagement. The letter has also been forwarded to the Managing Director of SSGC, the Chairman of Inquiries, and key officials at the Sindh Anti-Corruption body, reflecting the seriousness with which MQM-P is pursuing the issue.

Siddiqui urged that the utilization of funds allocated under the road-cutting head be ensured with complete transparency and public accountability. He emphasized that such funds, meant to improve civic infrastructure, must not be allowed to vanish without trace under bureaucratic or contractual lapses. In response to Siddiqui's letter, the Sindh Anti-Corruption Department has issued a directive to the Deputy Commissioner of Karachi East, instructing immediate action.

The department has asked for a thorough investigation into the complaints concerning the state of road restoration, particularly in areas where road-cutting was authorized and funded. The department's communication noted that despite the payment made by SSGC, the condition of roads remains poor, raising legitimate public questions.

Indian women speak out against Modi's divisive politics

The reaction follows the prime minister's speeches invoking religious symbols like 'Sindoor', sparking concern over their use as tools of political messaging

News Desk

NEW DEHLI: Indian women have begun speaking out with increasing clarity and courage against what they see as the aggressive and divisive political tactics of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In a rare and powerful rebuke, women from various walks of life have openly criticized Modi's recent campaign rhetoric, accusing him of distorting cultural and religious sentiments to consolidate power.

The reaction comes in the wake of speeches in which the prime minister has invoked religious symbols—most notably 'Sindoor', the traditional red mark worn by many married Hindu women—as part of his political messaging. For many women, this marked a tipping point. What is sacred and deeply personal, they argued, should not be used to score political points or stir emotional loyalty in the heat of an election.

Speaking to local media, several women said they were disturbed by Modi's tone, which they described as "warlike" and unnecessarily provocative. His words, they claimed, do not



unite a diverse nation but instead risk deepening divides between communities. Many accused him of exploiting religious imagery to distract voters from pressing economic and social issues such as inflation, women's safety, and access to healthcare and education.

What is striking about this reaction is not just the criticism itself, but its source. For years, Modi has enjoyed strong support among many Indian women, some of whom saw him as a stable leader committed to development.

But this recent backlash reflects a deeper sense of disillusionment. Critics say the prime minister has veered too far into populist theatrics, replacing sub-

stance with spectacle, and failing to deliver meaningful change for those who need it most.

Their voices echo a broader unease among voters who are growing weary of personality-driven politics and nationalist slogans. As one woman put it, "We are not just voters; we are thinking individuals. We want solutions, not sermons."

The challenge from women to one of the most powerful political figures in India is a moment of reckoning. It highlights not only a gendered perspective on political discourse but also signals the beginning of what could be a wider movement demanding accountability, respect, and a more grounded national conversation.

KP arrests 113 in pre-polio campaign crackdown

By our correspondent

PESHAWAR: In a decisive prelude to the upcoming national polio vaccination campaign, law enforcement agencies launched a sweeping crackdown across sensitive districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, arresting 113 suspects, including 11 militants on the wanted list.

The operation, confirmed by the Inspector General of KP Police, was aimed at neutralizing potential threats

that could endanger health workers and derail the vaccination drive. The targeted districts — Karak, Kohat, Hangu, and Karam — have long been identified as high-risk areas both for security and polio transmission.

Authorities said the extensive raids were carried out jointly by district police, elite force units, and personnel from the counter-terrorism department, highlighting the seriousness with which the government is approaching the campaign.

During the raids, security forces recovered a significant haul of weapons and drugs.

Among the seized items were two Kalashnikov rifles, ten pistols, four rifles, a repeater gun, several hand grenades, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition. Additionally, nearly eight kilograms of hashish and half a kilogram of crystal meth were confiscated, pointing to the presence of organized criminal activity alongside militant networks.

Karnataka bride calls off wedding over love confession

News Desk

KARNATAKA: A wedding in Karnataka took a dramatic and unexpected turn when the bride refused to marry the groom just minutes before the ceremony was due to begin. Pulvi, a postgraduate woman, stunned hundreds of guests by announcing she was in love with someone else and could not go through with the marriage.

According to local media reports, the event was at its final stage when Pulvi re-



ceived a phone call that seemed to change everything. Shortly afterwards, she locked herself in a room

and refused to come out. Despite efforts by her family and local police to persuade her, she remained resolute

in her decision.

Pulvi told her family that she did not want to marry Venu Gopal, a government school teacher, because her heart belonged to another man from a different caste—a truth she had kept secret until that moment. In response, the groom decided to step back, saying he would not marry someone unwilling to accept the relationship.

The sudden cancellation left the hundreds of guests shocked and confused, as the carefully planned cere-

mony came to an abrupt halt. Local police managed to maintain order at the scene, and no formal complaints have been filed so far.

This incident shines a light on the complex challenges faced by many young people in India, caught between deeply rooted family expectations, social traditions, and their own feelings. It serves as a reminder of the tensions that can arise when personal choices confront long-standing societal norms.