

Vol.21 No.06

August 2026

SUBH NAU

a greener vision

Pakistan's first international award winning magazine on environment and health

Building a **Green** Defense Together for Pakistan



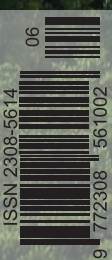
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Gardening



Safety





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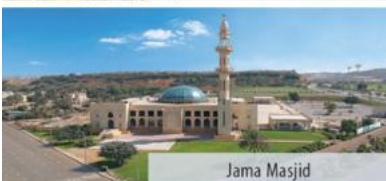
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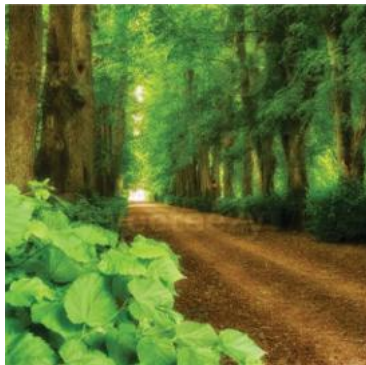


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August 2026

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SUBH-e-NAU
 a greener vision

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Letters to the Editor

Cover Story July 2026

Your cover story challenged me to think about climate change in a completely different way. I had always viewed it mainly as an environmental issue, but the concept of occupational security helped me understand that climate change affects every aspect of daily life, including work, education, health, family care, mobility and even rest. The article made it clear that protecting people from climate impacts means creating safer communities rather than simply responding to disasters after they occur. I hope policymakers adopt this people-centred framework when planning Pakistan's climate future.

—Dr. Ayesha Siddiqui, Islamabad

I especially appreciated your discussion of the five values of occupational security: sustainability, justice, peace, compassion, and authenticity with accuracy. Climate discussions often become highly technical, but your article reminded readers that climate action is ultimately about ethics and protecting human dignity. The emphasis on honest environmental reporting, transparent data, and measurable outcomes was particularly refreshing. Pakistan needs truthful climate governance if we are to build public trust and effective long-term solutions.

—Faisal Karim, Lahore

The section on heatwaves resonated strongly with me. As someone who works outdoors throughout the summer, I know how dangerous extreme heat has become. Your suggestion that shade, drinking water, cooling spaces, flexible work schedules and indigenous plantation should be viewed as essential public infrastructure rather than optional conveniences was both practical and compassionate. I hope employers and local governments recognize that protecting workers from extreme heat is an investment in public health and productivity.

—Rashid Mahmood, Multan

Your explanation that climate change is also disrupting the lives of birds, animals, rivers, forests and ecosystems was one of the most thoughtful parts of the cover story. Too often environmental discussions focus only on people, yet healthy ecosystems are what ultimately sustain human life. I particularly appreciated your reminder that protecting non-human life is not separate from protecting ourselves. This broader understanding of occupational security offers an inspiring framework for Pakistan's environmental future.

—Nadia Javed, Peshawar

What is Subh-e-Nau

This journalistic endeavor primarily focuses on the environment and public health sector, and is published every month. The dismal state of affairs in this sector demands public awareness and community involvement for the protection of our natural environment. The magazine cuts across a diverse range of environmental issues, which require thought and conveys action-oriented messages for the general public and decision makers.



Chief Editor's Message

This month marks a special milestone as Subh-e-Nau Monthly enters its 22nd year of publication. Over the past two decades, our mission has remained unchanged: to promote environmental stewardship, public health, sustainable development, and compassion towards both humanity and nature. While many environmental challenges have evolved over these years, one reality has become increasingly evident. Climate change is now one of the defining challenges facing Pakistan, affecting nearly every aspect of our lives.

Twenty-two years ago, when Subh-e-Nau began advocating for indigenous plantation and environmental restoration, climate change had not yet entered everyday public discussion in Pakistan. Yet even then, it was becoming clear that declining forest cover, disappearing biodiversity, water scarcity, urban expansion, and environmental degradation were gradually weakening the country's natural resilience. These concerns inspired a proposal that ultimately led to the establishment of National Plantation Day, observed every year on August 18 in 2009. Our vision was simple but ambitious. Plantation should not be viewed as a ceremonial activity performed once a year, but as the beginning of a lifelong commitment to protecting Pakistan's natural heritage. Today, that vision is more relevant than ever.

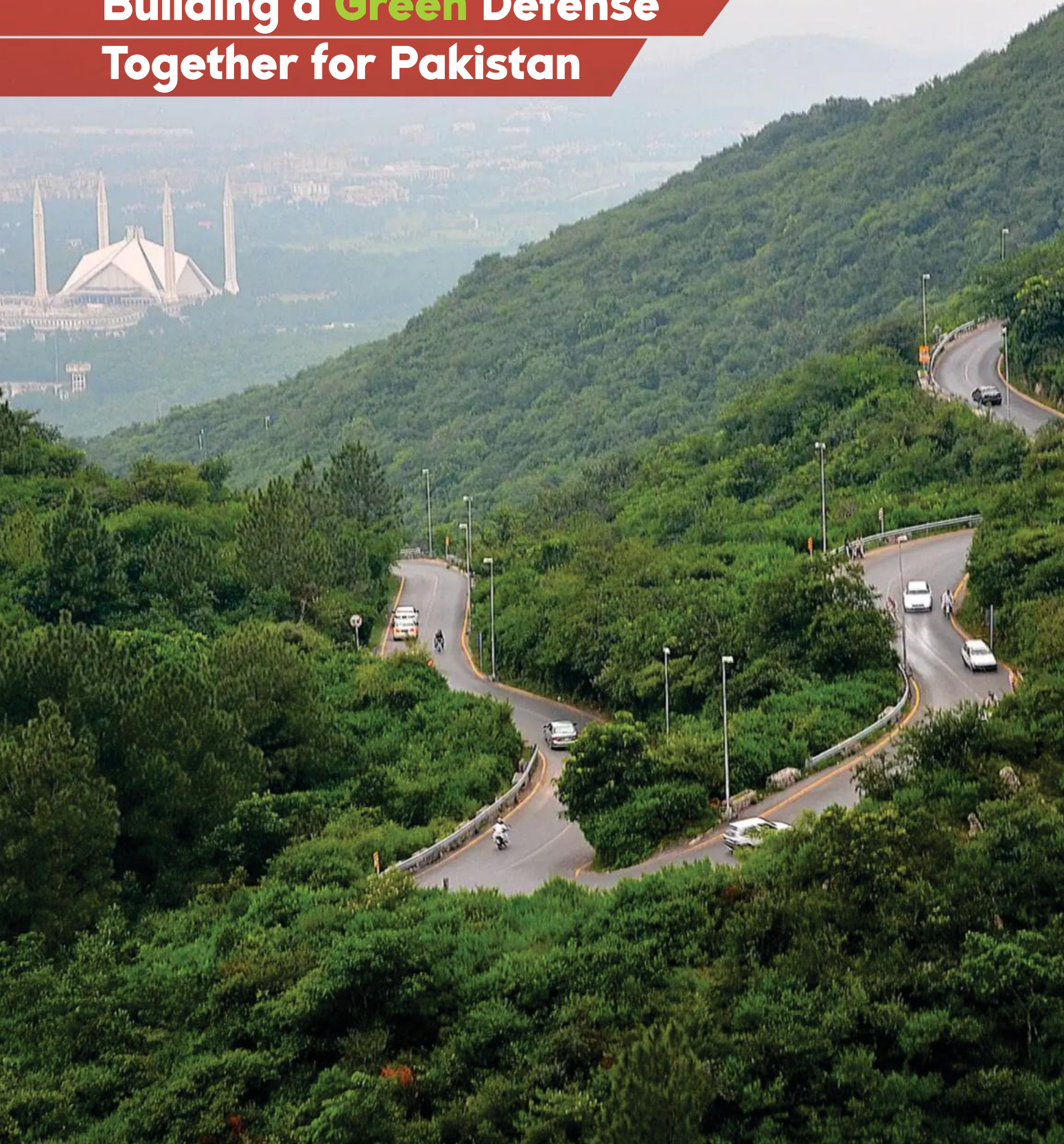
This month's cover story, "Building a Green Defense Together for Pakistan," presents a vision that extends far beyond tree planting. It calls for a national movement that unites indigenous plantation, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, water conservation, biodiversity restoration, urban forestry, and community participation into one integrated strategy for climate resilience. Healthy forests create healthier watersheds. Conserved water supports growing forests. Restored biodiversity strengthens ecosystems. Together they form Pakistan's first line of defense against climate change.

As we celebrate the twenty-second anniversary of Subh-e-Nau, I remain deeply encouraged by the growing environmental awareness across Pakistan. More young people are embracing conservation, more communities are recognizing the importance of indigenous plantation, and more institutions are beginning to understand that environmental protection is not a luxury but an investment in our nation's future. National Plantation Day reminds us that the smallest actions often grow into the greatest transformations. A single tree planted today may cool a neighbourhood for generations. A rooftop rainwater harvesting system installed today may help sustain communities through future droughts. A child who learns to care for nature today may become tomorrow's environmental leader. As you read this anniversary issue, I invite you to become part of Pakistan's Green Defense. Let us commemorate National Plantation Day not simply by planting trees, but by renewing our collective commitment to protecting our forests, conserving our water, restoring biodiversity, and leaving a greener, healthier, and more resilient Pakistan for those who follow us. Together, we can transform hope into action and action into lasting environmental renewal.

Shahida Kauser Farooq
Chief Editor

Cover Story

Building a **Green** Defense Together for Pakistan



Pakistan stands at a defining moment in its history. While our nation has overcome countless political, economic and security challenges, another threat has steadily emerged over recent decades that transcends provincial boundaries, political affiliations and generations. Climate change has become one of the greatest threats to Pakistan's future. How do we build a lasting defense against this existential threat?

It is changing the way our rivers flow, altering rainfall patterns, increasing the frequency of devastating floods and droughts, intensifying heatwaves, worsening air pollution, reducing agricultural productivity, degrading biodiversity and placing immense pressure on our already limited water resources.

The evidence surrounds us. The catastrophic floods of 2022 displaced millions of people and damaged infrastructure across vast areas of the country. More recently, severe monsoonal flooding, intense heatwaves and prolonged dry spells have continued to remind us that climate change is no longer a future concern but a present-day reality affecting every province of Pakistan. Urban centres experience dangerous heat island effects, rural communities struggle with declining groundwater reserves, forests continue to



Photo Credit: DAWN

“ Subh-e-Nau has advocated this philosophy for more than two decades through campaigns promoting indigenous plantation, environmental stewardship, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, urban forestry, biodiversity conservation and sustainable community participation. One of its landmark achievements was advocating for the establishment of National Plantation Day, observed annually on August 18, providing a national platform to unite citizens in restoring Pakistan's green heritage ”

disappear, and biodiversity that has supported our ecosystems for centuries is under increasing pressure.

These environmental crises should not be viewed as isolated problems. Floods, droughts, air pollution, declining rainfall, water scarcity, disappearing wildlife and degraded forests are interconnected symptoms of the same environmental imbalance. Solving one problem while ignoring the others will only provide temporary relief. Instead, Pakistan requires a comprehensive national strategy that recognizes the deep connections between climate, water, ecosystems and human well-being.

This strategy can be summarized in a single concept: Building a Green Defense Together for Pakistan.

Traditionally, national defense has been associated with protecting our borders and ensuring the safety of our people from external threats. Yet climate change presents a different kind of challenge. Rising temperatures, environmental degradation and ecosystem collapse threaten food security, economic development, public health and national stability. These dangers cannot be overcome through conventional infrastructure or emergency responses alone. They require strengthening nature itself as one of Pakistan's greatest allies.

A green defense is built upon healthy forests, abundant indigenous vegetation, thriving

wetlands, protected rivers, sustainable agriculture, conserved biodiversity, secure groundwater reserves and communities that actively participate in protecting their environment. It recognizes that every indigenous tree planted, every litre of rainwater harvested, and every natural ecosystem restored contributes directly to Pakistan's long-term resilience.

Importantly, this vision is not solely the responsibility of governments. Every citizen has a role to play. Farmers, students, teachers, engineers, health professionals, religious leaders, businesses, civil society organizations and local governments all contribute to strengthening Pakistan's environmental resilience. Climate action is most successful when it becomes a shared national responsibility rather than a task delegated to a single ministry or department.

Subh-e-Nau has advocated this philosophy for more than two decades through campaigns promoting indigenous plantation, environmental stewardship, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, urban forestry, biodiversity conservation and sustainable community participation. One of its landmark achievements was advocating for the establishment of National Plantation Day, observed annually on August 18, providing a national platform to unite citizens in restoring Pakistan's green heritage.

However, National Plantation Day

represents much more than planting trees on a single day. It symbolizes a commitment to rebuilding Pakistan's natural defenses throughout the entire year. It encourages every citizen to become a guardian of forests, water resources and biodiversity, recognizing that environmental stewardship is both a patriotic duty and an investment in future generations.

This cover story explores how Pakistan can build this Green Defense through indigenous plantation, water conservation, rainwater harvesting, biodiversity restoration, urban forestry and collective national action. Together, these interconnected strategies offer one of the most practical, affordable and sustainable pathways toward

climate resilience. They remind us that protecting nature ultimately means protecting ourselves.

Trees Are Pakistan's First Line of Defense

Throughout history, forests have quietly protected civilizations. They stabilize mountains, regulate rivers, moderate temperatures, recharge groundwater, purify the air and provide habitat for countless species that sustain healthy ecosystems. Yet despite these remarkable services, forests are often undervalued until they disappear. Pakistan's environmental challenges clearly demonstrate that protecting and restoring forests is no longer simply an ecological priority. It is a national necessity.

Pakistan currently possesses only a fraction of the forest cover recommended internationally. While approximately 25 percent forest cover is considered desirable for ecological stability, Pakistan remains far below this threshold. Decades of deforestation driven by urban expansion, illegal logging, agricultural encroachment and population growth have weakened one of the country's greatest natural defenses against climate change.

The consequences have become increasingly visible. Forest removal accelerates soil erosion, destabilizes mountain slopes, increases landslide risks and allows rainfall to flow rapidly across landscapes instead of being gradually absorbed into the soil.



In 2005, Subh-e-Nau launched its Indigenous Plantation Campaign with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz by planting a Kachnar tree, reaffirming its commitment to environmental conservation and a greener, more sustainable Pakistan

During heavy monsoon events this contributes directly to flash floods that destroy roads, bridges, agricultural land and entire communities. Healthy forests, by contrast, act like giant natural sponges. Their extensive root systems increase soil stability, enhance groundwater recharge and slow runoff, reducing the destructive force of floodwaters before they reach populated areas.

Trees also provide an essential defense against another growing threat: extreme heat. As Pakistan experiences longer and more intense heatwaves, urban areas are becoming increasingly

vulnerable to dangerous temperatures caused by the urban heat island effect. Roads, concrete buildings and asphalt surfaces absorb and retain enormous amounts of heat throughout the day. Indigenous urban forests help reverse this process by providing shade, cooling surrounding air through evapotranspiration and improving human comfort while reducing energy demand for cooling buildings. This is particularly important for rapidly growing cities such as Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad and Peshawar.

Forests simultaneously improve air

quality by capturing particulate matter and absorbing carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides and other pollutants. As Pakistan continues to battle worsening air pollution and prolonged smog seasons, especially across Punjab and northwestern regions, expanding indigenous tree cover offers an important complementary strategy alongside reducing industrial and transportation emissions.

Equally important is the choice of species. Not all trees provide equal ecological benefits. Subh-e-Nau has consistently emphasized that plantation efforts should prioritize indigenous species adapted to Pakistan's diverse ecological



The majestic Margalla Hills stand as a symbol of Pakistan's rich natural heritage, offering breathtaking landscapes, diverse wildlife, and a vital ecological balance

regions. Native species support local wildlife, strengthen ecosystem stability, require less maintenance and avoid unintended ecological consequences associated with invasive or exotic plants. The experience of invasive species such as paper mulberry illustrates how introducing non-native trees can worsen allergies, suppress native vegetation and reduce biodiversity. Indigenous species restore ecological balance while supporting pollinators, birds, mammals and countless other organisms that form healthy ecosystems.

This philosophy has guided Subh-e-Nau's nationwide plantation campaigns for many years. Rather than focusing solely on planting large numbers of trees, emphasis has been placed on planting the right trees in the right places while ensuring their long-term survival. Sustainable plantation requires community ownership, ongoing maintenance and environmental education. Planting a tree is only the beginning. Nurturing it into maturity is what ultimately strengthens Pakistan's Green Defense.

National Plantation Day embodies this vision. Every August 18 provides an opportunity for citizens, schools, universities, government departments, businesses and local communities to come together around a common purpose that transcends politics, ethnicity and geography. Each tree planted becomes a living investment in cleaner air, safer communities, healthier ecosystems and greater climate resilience.

In the years ahead, Pakistan's security will depend not only upon technological advancement and economic development, but also upon restoring the natural systems that have protected our civilization for centuries. Our forests are not merely landscapes to admire. They are living infrastructure, quietly defending our water, climate, biodiversity and future every single day.

Water Conservation and Rainwater Harvesting: Every Drop Strengthens the Green Defense

Trees cannot survive without water, and neither can civilizations. Throughout Pakistan's history, water has shaped settlements, agriculture, ecosystems and economic prosperity. Today, however, water security has become one of the country's greatest environmental challenges. Population growth, climate change, declining groundwater levels, inefficient water use and changing rainfall patterns are placing unprecedented pressure on freshwater resources. Building Pakistan's Green Defense therefore requires that plantation and water conservation become two inseparable national priorities.

For decades, environmental discussions have often treated forests and water as separate issues. In reality, they are intimately connected. Forests depend upon reliable water supplies for their survival, while healthy forests simultaneously

“ Rainwater harvesting represents one of the simplest, most affordable and most effective approaches for strengthening Pakistan's climate resilience. During every monsoon season, enormous quantities of rainwater rapidly flow across roads, rooftops and urban surfaces before entering drainage systems and rivers. Instead of allowing this valuable resource to be lost, communities can capture rainfall from rooftops, schools, mosques, government buildings and commercial centres for later use ”

protect watersheds, recharge aquifers and regulate streamflow. Likewise, conserving water increases the survival of newly planted trees, while expanding tree cover improves the long-term sustainability of Pakistan's water resources. Success therefore depends on pursuing both strategies together rather than independently.

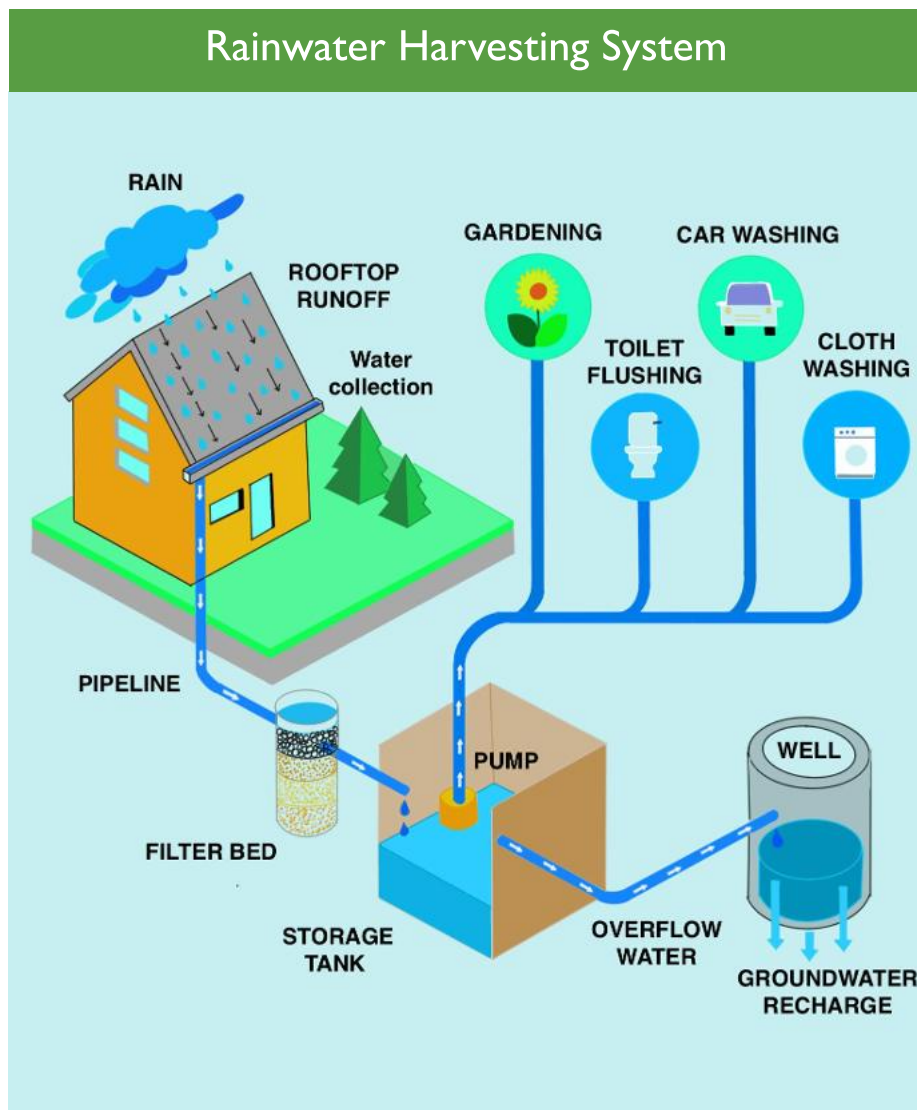
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resilience. During every monsoon season, enormous quantities of rainwater rapidly flow across roads, rooftops and urban surfaces before entering drainage systems and rivers. Instead of allowing this valuable resource to be lost, communities can capture rainfall from rooftops, schools, mosques, government buildings and commercial centres for later use. Harvested rainwater can irrigate trees, replenish groundwater, support household needs and reduce pressure on municipal water supplies. Subh-e-Nau has

advocated integrating rainwater harvesting alongside National Plantation Day for more than a decade, recognizing that successful plantation campaigns require secure water supplies to ensure long term tree survival.

Groundwater recharge is equally important. Across much of Pakistan, excessive extraction has caused aquifers to decline steadily while natural recharge has diminished because of urbanization and the replacement of permeable soils with concrete and asphalt. Recharge wells, infiltration ponds, restored wetlands and permeable landscapes allow rainwater to slowly penetrate the soil, replenishing underground water reserves rather than contributing to flash flooding. These nature-based approaches simultaneously reduce flood risks while increasing water availability during dry seasons.

Water conservation begins at home. Every household can contribute to Pakistan's Green Defense through simple daily actions. Water used to wash fruits and vegetables, excess drinking water and even water from ablution can irrigate gardens and young trees rather than entering drainage systems. Greywater reuse, efficient irrigation techniques and fixing leaking pipes collectively save millions of litres each year. These practices not only conserve precious water but also nurture the indigenous trees that will protect future generations from climate change.



Agriculture, which consumes the majority of Pakistan's freshwater resources, also offers enormous opportunities for conservation. Modern irrigation methods such as drip irrigation, laser land levelling and improved water scheduling can dramatically reduce water consumption while maintaining or increasing crop productivity. Protecting rivers from pollution, restoring wetlands and improving watershed management further strengthen the nation's hydrological resilience.

Building Pakistan's Green Defense therefore means recognizing a simple truth: every tree planted requires water, and every drop of water conserved supports new life. National Plantation Day should evolve into a broader celebration of environmental stewardship where plantation, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and water conservation become interconnected national activities. Every citizen can participate, and every litre conserved becomes an investment in Pakistan's greener, safer and more resilient future.

Forests Create Water: Restoring Nature's Climate Engine

One of the greatest misconceptions about forests is that they merely depend upon rainfall. In reality, forests actively help create the very conditions that produce rainfall. They function as living climate regulators, recycling water through the atmosphere, moderating temperatures and maintaining the delicate balance between land,

“Restoring forests therefore represents far more than an environmental project. It is an investment in Pakistan's future water security. Indigenous reforestation across mountain watersheds, river catchments, urban landscapes and degraded lands strengthens the entire hydrological cycle. Combined with rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and wetland restoration, forests become part of a comprehensive climate adaptation strategy that simultaneously reduces flooding, improves water availability, supports agriculture and protects biodiversity”

water and weather. Understanding this relationship fundamentally changes how we think about plantation. Trees are not simply passive recipients of rain; they are active participants in the water cycle itself.

Through the natural process of evapotranspiration, trees absorb water from the soil and release water vapour into the atmosphere through their leaves. This moisture contributes to cloud formation and helps sustain regional rainfall systems. Large forests continuously recycle atmospheric moisture, allowing water to fall as precipitation many times as it travels across landscapes. When forests disappear, this recycling

process weakens, resulting in hotter conditions, lower humidity and increasingly irregular rainfall patterns.

Healthy forests also cool the surrounding environment. Their shade reduces surface temperatures, while evaporation from leaves removes heat from the atmosphere. These cooling effects are especially valuable as Pakistan experiences increasingly severe heatwaves driven by climate change. Cooler landscapes not only improve human comfort but also reduce evaporation losses from soils and reservoirs, allowing precious water resources to remain available for longer periods.

Plant Indigenous Trees — Strengthening Pakistan's Green Defense

Choosing the **right tree** is just as important as planting one. Indigenous trees have evolved over thousands of years to thrive in Pakistan's climate and support local wildlife, soils and water cycles. They generally require less maintenance, are more resilient to local pests and diseases, conserve biodiversity and provide habitat for birds, pollinators and other beneficial organisms. Subh-e-Nau recommends prioritizing **indigenous species** in all plantation campaigns and gradually replacing invasive or exotic species wherever appropriate.

Northern Pakistan (Mountain Forests)

These species stabilize slopes, reduce erosion and protect watersheds.

- Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*)
- Kail or Blue Pine (*Pinus wallichiana*)
- Cheer or Chir Pine (*Pinus roxburghii*)
- Fir (*Abies pindrow*)

Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Potohar Region

Excellent species for urban forestry, roadside plantation and community parks.

- Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*)
- Banyan (Bur) (*Ficus benghalensis*)
- Shirin (*Albizia lebbek*)
- Kachnar (*Bauhinia variegata*)
- Sukh Chain (*Pongamia pinnata*)
- Indigenous Black Mulberry (*Morus nigra*)

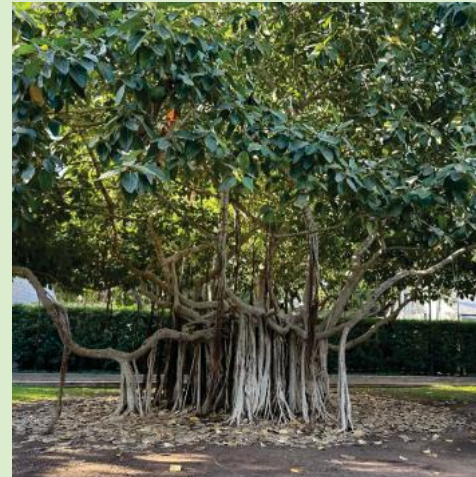
Sindh, Karachi and Baluchistan

These drought-tolerant native species help restore degraded landscapes while supporting biodiversity.

- Khor (*Acacia senegal*)
- Kikar or Bhabar (*Vachellia nilotica* formerly *Acacia nilotica*)
- Kandi or Jandi (*Prosopis cineraria*)



Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*)



Banyan (Bur) (*Ficus benghalensis*)



Cheer (*Pinus roxburghii*)



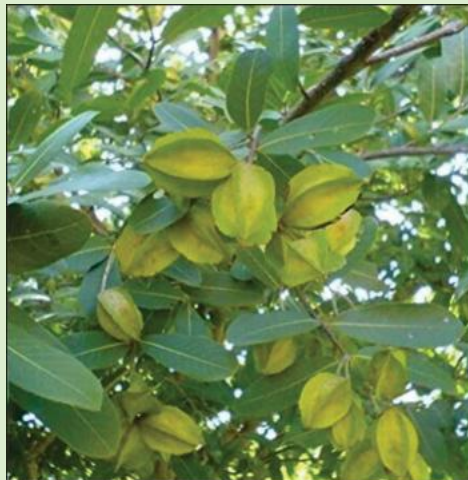
Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*)



Kachnar (*Bauhinia variegata*)



Sumbul

Sukh Chain (*Pongamia pinnata*)Shirin (*Albizia lebbeck*)Khor (*Acacia senegal*)Kikar (*Acacia Nilotica*)

Valuable Native Trees

These species provide ecological, medicinal and community benefits.

- ▶ Sumbul (whose seed fibres have traditional economic value)
- ▶ Black Mulberry, valued for its edible fruit and traditional medicinal use for sore throats and respiratory infections

Avoid Invasive Exotic Species

Fast-growing exotic species may appear attractive, but they often damage Pakistan's native ecosystems.

Examples include:

- ▶ Paper Mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*) — associated with severe pollen allergies and suppression of native vegetation.

- ▶ Mesquite or Wilayati Keeker (*Prosopis juliflora*) — invasive in Sindh and Balochistan, where it displaces native vegetation and reduces biodiversity.

A Simple Rule

Plant the right tree, in the right place, for the next hundred years.

Every indigenous tree planted strengthens Pakistan's forests, protects biodiversity, improves air quality, conserves water, reduces flooding, moderates heatwaves and builds a stronger Green Defense for future generations.

Equally important is the role forests play in protecting watersheds. Rain falling onto forested land follows a very different pathway than rain falling onto bare ground or concrete surfaces. Forest soils, enriched with organic matter and extensive root systems, absorb large quantities of rainfall like natural sponges. Water infiltrates slowly into underground aquifers before gradually feeding streams and rivers throughout the year. By contrast, deforested landscapes generate rapid surface runoff, increasing erosion, transporting sediments into reservoirs and dramatically increasing flood intensity.

Pakistan's devastating floods provide repeated evidence of this relationship. Deforestation throughout upper watersheds has reduced the landscape's ability to regulate water movement. As a result, heavy rainfall increasingly produces destructive flash floods, landslides and severe soil erosion. Simultaneously, the loss of forests contributes to prolonged droughts because less water infiltrates underground to sustain river flows during dry periods. Thus, floods and droughts are not contradictory phenomena but two consequences of the same ecological imbalance.

Restoring forests therefore represents far more than an environmental project. It is an investment in Pakistan's future water security. Indigenous reforestation across mountain watersheds, river catchments, urban landscapes and degraded



lands strengthens the entire hydrological cycle. Combined with rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and wetland restoration, forests become part of a comprehensive climate adaptation strategy that simultaneously reduces flooding, improves water availability, supports agriculture and protects biodiversity.

Scientific understanding increasingly recognizes that climate, forests and water form one integrated system. Attempts to solve water shortages without restoring forests will remain incomplete. Likewise, plantation campaigns that ignore water conservation cannot achieve their full potential. Building Pakistan's Green Defense therefore requires reconnecting these natural systems through thoughtful planning,

community participation and long-term stewardship.

Every indigenous forest restored today becomes tomorrow's source of cleaner air, healthier soils, more reliable rainfall and stronger climate resilience. By allowing nature to rebuild its own climate engine, Pakistan can harness one of the most powerful and cost-effective solutions available for securing its environmental future.

Building a National Green Movement

Environmental recovery cannot be achieved by governments alone. While national policies, legislation and investment provide the foundation, the true strength of Pakistan's Green Defense lies within its people. Climate



resilience begins in neighborhoods, schools, villages, universities, businesses, places of worship and households where ordinary citizens make extraordinary contributions toward protecting their environment. Building a Green Defense therefore requires transforming environmental stewardship into a national movement that inspires participation throughout the year.

National Plantation Day, observed every August 18, provides the perfect platform for such a movement. Rather than viewing it as a ceremonial event, it should become the annual beginning of year-round environmental action. Every school can organize indigenous plantation drives. Universities can establish living laboratories that monitor tree

survival, groundwater recharge and biodiversity. Businesses can adopt urban forests, restore degraded landscapes and incorporate environmental stewardship into their corporate responsibility programs. Religious institutions can promote environmental care as both a civic and moral responsibility, emphasizing that caring for creation is inseparable from caring for humanity.

Local governments occupy a particularly important role. Municipal authorities can identify degraded lands, expand parks, establish roadside plantations, protect wetlands and install rainwater harvesting systems in public buildings. Communities should be encouraged to adopt nearby green spaces, ensuring long-term maintenance rather than short-term plantation campaigns. Modern technology can further strengthen these efforts through geographic information systems, satellite monitoring and citizen science initiatives that track plantation success and groundwater recovery.

Young people deserve special attention. They will inherit the consequences of today's environmental decisions, making them the natural leaders of tomorrow's Green Defense. Environmental education should therefore extend beyond classrooms into practical conservation projects that cultivate lifelong stewardship. Through collective participation, Pakistan can transform environmental

protection into a defining feature of national identity.

A National Action Plan for Pakistan's Green Defense

Building climate resilience requires coordinated action across every sector of society. Pakistan already possesses the scientific knowledge and practical experience necessary to strengthen its environmental future. What is now required is integration and sustained implementation.

The federal and provincial governments should expand National Plantation Day into a comprehensive Green Defense Strategy that integrates indigenous plantation, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, biodiversity conservation, urban forestry and climate adaptation within a single national framework. Every ministry should contribute according to its mandate. Forest departments should restore degraded ecosystems. Education departments should integrate environmental stewardship into school curricula. Housing authorities should require rainwater harvesting and indigenous landscaping in new developments. Agricultural agencies should promote efficient irrigation and agroforestry. Health authorities should recognize environmental restoration as preventive public health policy.

Communities must equally become active partners. Every household

can conserve water, reuse greywater where appropriate, plant indigenous trees and protect neighborhood green spaces. Businesses can invest in sustainable landscapes and reduce their environmental footprints. Universities can provide research that guides evidence-based policy while monitoring the effectiveness of restoration efforts.

Equally important is continuous environmental monitoring. Satellite observations, groundwater monitoring, biodiversity surveys, air quality networks and climate forecasting should be integrated into a national environmental information system. Scientific evidence allows governments and communities alike to evaluate progress, identify emerging risks and adapt management strategies accordingly. A Green Defense is strongest when guided by reliable data, informed citizens and coordinated institutions working toward common national goals.

Climate Security Through Healthy Ecosystems

Pakistan's future security depends upon far more than economic growth or physical infrastructure. Long-term prosperity ultimately rests upon healthy ecosystems capable of supporting agriculture, regulating water supplies, protecting biodiversity and sustaining human well-being. Every forest restored, every wetland protected and every river rehabilitated strengthens the

“Climate adaptation should therefore move beyond reactive emergency management toward proactive ecosystem restoration. Investing in nature is one of the most cost-effective forms of national infrastructure available. Unlike concrete alone, healthy ecosystems continuously improve with time when properly protected. They become stronger, more resilient and increasingly capable of defending both people and biodiversity against future climate extremes”

nation's resilience against climate change.

Healthy ecosystems simultaneously reduce floods, moderate droughts, improve air quality, lower urban temperatures, conserve biodiversity and enhance food security. These environmental services represent enormous economic value while requiring comparatively modest investment when compared with repairing disaster damage after each climate emergency.

The Green Defense therefore embraces a holistic understanding of security. Human health depends upon environmental health. Wildlife health depends upon ecosystem integrity. Agricultural productivity depends upon healthy soils, pollinators and reliable rainfall. Water security depends upon forests, wetlands and functioning watersheds. None of these systems operate independently. Protecting one strengthens all the others.

Climate adaptation should therefore move beyond reactive emergency management toward proactive ecosystem restoration. Investing in nature is one of the most cost-effective forms of national infrastructure available. Unlike concrete alone, healthy ecosystems continuously improve with time when properly protected. They become stronger, more resilient and increasingly capable of defending both people and biodiversity against future climate extremes.



Together We Build Pakistan's Green Defense

Every generation is remembered by the legacy it leaves behind. Some generations build roads, cities and institutions. Others protect the natural foundations upon which civilizations depend. Ours has been entrusted with a challenge unlike any before it: ensuring that Pakistan remains environmentally secure in an era of accelerating climate change.

Fortunately, the solutions are already within our reach. Indigenous forests, rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, biodiversity conservation, urban forestry and responsible water use are not separate environmental projects. Together they form a living Green Defense that protects communities from floods, droughts, heatwaves, water scarcity, declining biodiversity and air

pollution. Every indigenous tree planted, every wetland restored and every litre of rainwater conserved strengthens that defense.

National Plantation Day symbolizes something far greater than planting trees. It represents hope, unity and collective responsibility. It reminds us that environmental stewardship is not the responsibility of governments alone but of every citizen. When millions of Pakistanis work together with a shared vision, individual actions become a national transformation.

Subh-e-Nau has championed this vision for more than two decades through advocacy for National Plantation Day, indigenous afforestation, urban forestry, rainwater harvesting and community environmental action. These initiatives demonstrate that meaningful change begins with

citizens working alongside governments, scientists, educators and communities toward a common purpose.

The future of Pakistan will not be determined solely by the challenges we face, but by how we respond to them. Let us therefore commit ourselves to building a nation where forests flourish, rivers flow cleanly, groundwater is replenished, biodiversity thrives, cities become cooler and greener, and future generations inherit a healthier environment than the one we received.

Our greatest defense against climate change is not built from steel or concrete alone. It is rooted in living forests, flowing water, thriving ecosystems and the collective determination of an entire nation.

**Together, let us build
Pakistan's Green Defense.■**

The Fall Season's Gift

Summer on its way out and winter yet to come, this is the time of year when the garden takes matters into its own sensible hands and begins to feed itself, organically of course.

Those of you with deciduous trees and shrubs in your gardens will know exactly what I am talking about, as those prettily colored autumn leaves dance in the breeze.

Anytime now, deciduous trees and shrubs will begin to shed the leaves they have so proudly worn since early last spring. They will scatter this treasure, for that is what it is, in garden beds, on lawns and driveways and, instead of accepting their gift with a joyous smile, many people will moan about having to clean up and dispose of the 'mess'.



Freesia Bloom



Spider lilies

“ Leaf mould is the magic ingredient for improving soil, mulching and making your own potting mix. Making it is so simple, you’ll wonder why you haven’t done it before ”



Fallen leaves for leaf mould

The leaves of deciduous plants are perfect soil and plant food. They are a natural layer of highly nourishing mulch around the bases of the trees and shrubs from which they have fallen. Rotting leaves suppress weeds, prevent the evaporation of precious moisture, feed the earth and the microscopic elements that soil itself is

composed of. They are essential for the long-term health of the legions of beneficial lifeforms such as earthworms, which labor, round the clock and round the year, to keep the soil healthy and fertile.

Accepted that it is not always possible or feasible to simply allow all the leaves to lie where they have fallen, but this does not mean

that they should be swept up and either binned or burnt — far from it.

Fallen leaves can be transformed into that gardener’s gold known as ‘leaf mould’, with very little effort indeed. All that is required is to sweep up the fallen leaves, pack them, as tightly as possible, into large, black plastic sacks, tie the sacks closed, leave them somewhere out of the way and out of sight and forget all about them for the following 6-9 months when, on opening, they will contain pure, undiluted, chemical free, leaf mould of a quality impossible to purchase even if it were available.

Organic leaf mould is perfect mulching material, first class soil conditioner and the perfect addition to compost for seed sowing, re-potting and for general garden use.

Deciduous leaves can, of course, be added directly to the compost heap/bin but they have far more benefits when composted, as in the black bag method.

Do not, however, be tempted to add the leaves of evergreen species of trees and shrubs into your leaf

“There are lots of different varieties of this fast-growing, perennial climber with gorgeous flowers. Some produce deliciously edible fruit, while others are grown mainly for their ornamental beauty. Passionflower vines thrive in rich, well-drained soil and reward gardeners with spectacular blooms and abundant growth”



Daffodils



Climber of the month Passiflora

mould-making process. Evergreen leaves are usually far tougher and leathery — citrus leaves and of the extensive ficus family being prime examples — and take forever to turn into any kind of useable compost, let alone into high quality leaf mould.

If you are going to try to compost evergreen leaves, do this completely separately than the comparatively fragile ones of deciduous trees and shrubs.

Making leaf mould is simple and the rewards from using it are huge.

Go on, get sweeping and give it a go.

Seed-sowing suggestions for October

In the flower department: Antirrhinums — dog flowers/ snapdragons, Cerinthe major atropurpurea — honeywort, wallflowers, sweet Williams, sweet sultan, cornflowers, nigella, bellis daisies, Queen Anne's lace, violas, pansies, larkspur, godetia, geraniums, pelargoniums, pinks, carnations, coreopsis, petunias,

lobelia, alyssum, verbena, salvias, ageratum, bidens, aquilegia, candytuft, mixed annual poppies, annual chrysanthemums and, towards the end of the month, sweet peas.

The vegetable garden: Winter cabbages and spring cabbages, cauliflowers, broccoli and calabrese, kale, green onions, lettuce, spinach, leaf beet/ Swiss chard, endive, pak choy, giant red mustard, mustard, mustard mizuna, turnip greens, radicchio, chicory, beetroot, carrots, turnips,

*Lavender*

rutabaga, French radish, Russian, Spanish and Chinese winter radish, broad beans, bush beans, climbing beans, peas, sugar snap peas, celery, kohlrabi, red and white onions, plus — in Karachi and with care — tomatoes. Potatoes and garlic can go in this month too, all over the country.

The herb garden: Coriander, calendulas, nasturtiums, chives, garlic chives, parsley, fennel, bronze fennel, aniseed and dill, zeera (cumin), oregano, marjoram, thyme, lavender, lemon balm, chamomile, rosemary, sage, watercress, cress, borage, lovage,

*Coriander*

mint varieties and, if you can find seeds, comfrey.

Bulbs and corms: Dutch hyacinths, Dutch iris, gladioli, tulips, daffodils, spider lilies, narcissus, anemones, ranunculus, sparaxis, grape hyacinths, crocus, freesias, Asiatic and Oriental lilies and cyclamen.

Climber of the month: Passiflora — Passionflower. There are lots of different varieties of this fast growing, perennial climber with their gorgeous flowers. Some of them bear deliciously edible fruit, others produce fruit that is edible but not particularly enjoyable. The most common variety with edible fruits is *P. edulis* with its fascinatingly intricate flowers in purple and white. Its egg-sized, egg-shaped, fruits are a delicate mauve to purple color and, when fully ripe, are mouthwateringly juicy and sweet. Other varieties include: *P. caerulea*, which is widely cultivated throughout the country. Its flowers are a combination of greenish-white, purple and blue followed by purple-colored fruits, which are a major culinary treat. *P. vitifolia* has spectacular vermilion to scarlet flowers followed by greenish-white, delicately perfumed fruits with white flesh, which can be eaten as they are, or made into juice. Passionflower vines enjoy rich, well-drained soil, morning sun and need very strong supports/ trellises to ramble over. They can be propagated from seed or by woody stem cuttings. Highly recommended if you have space, as they tend to become an awful lot of plants! ■

How do apes communicate

Monkeys and apes may not speak like humans, but they have their own unique ways of communicating. They use sounds, facial expressions, and body movements to express feelings, warn others of danger, and maintain order within their groups.



The signals that animals use cannot exactly be compared to human languages. Whether you speak English, French or Japanese depends upon where you were born, and which languages you have learnt since. However, if you cannot speak Japanese, there are still things that you would be able to tell if you met a Japanese person who could not speak English. You could recognize them as human and as male or female. You could tell by looking at them and listening to some of the sounds that they made whether they were happy, friendly, angry or unhappy. Laughter, smiles, scowls and tears mean the same to all mankind. The ability to understand these signals is born in us.

Like us, monkeys and apes use some signals which are designed to be seen, and others which are sounds, but their signals are not the same as ours. You can only understand them if you have learned their special kind of language.

Monkeys of Africa and Asia make a rapidly repeated sound by smacking their lips together. This means roughly the same as the human smile, but you would never guess unless you had been told, or had spent many hours watching them. The easiest primate signals for us to understand are threat signals, such as a fixed stare with raised eyebrows. However, monkeys and apes do not only signal with their faces. The coloring of other parts of the body, and the way they are held help too.

The parts of a monkey's body used for signaling are colored so that they show up. In the forests where most primates live it is not possible to see far because the leafy branches get in the way. Under these conditions sound signals can be very useful.

Gibbons use whooping calls to warn rivals of their own kind to keep away. Some of them, like the siamang of Malaya and Sumatra, have special vocal sacs to give their voices extra carrying power.

When a macaque feels fierce towards another one, it first stares, then shows its teeth. Bobbing the head up and down shows a still fiercer mood.

Not all monkeys are equal within the same troop. Those which are stronger or bolder than the others are treated with great respect. You can see the rank of a monkey at a glance by the way it behaves when it meets others.

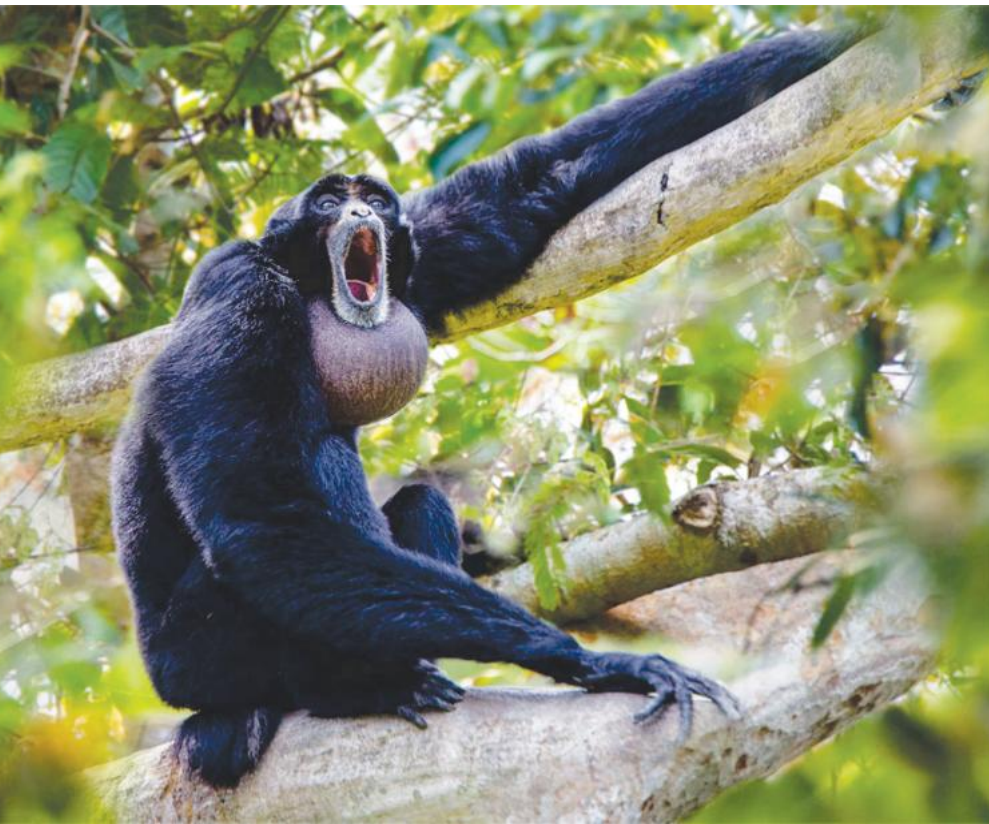
Gorillas usually go on all fours on the ground, but when they are angry they stand up and beat their

chest. This is a signal of warning. It lets other gorillas, or enemies of any other kind, know that the gorilla making the signal is not to be trifled with. Usually the warning is enough. The offender retreats, and there is no need for

fighting.

The leopard is a fierce hunter, and eats monkeys and apes when it can. It is stronger than a chimpanzee, but chimpanzees find safety in numbers. A troop of





Gibbon whooping



Leopard hunting monkey

“Of all the monkeys and apes, only adult gorillas are big and strong enough to fear no enemies other than human beings. All other kinds must keep a keen watch for danger, as threats may come from any direction — from eagles swooping above to leopards and other wild cats climbing trees”

chimpanzees acting together and clever enough to use branches as clubs can sometimes drive off the attack.

It is the job of the largest males to defend their baboon troop. They have powerful teeth, but against the ruthless attack of a pack of wild hunting dogs their defense is not always successful.

Of all the monkeys and apes, only adult gorillas are big and strong enough to fear no enemies other than human beings. All other kinds of monkeys and apes must keep a keen watch for danger, which may come from any direction. Eagles may swoop from above, and wild cats as large as the leopard can climb trees with ease.■



The journey down the environmental path

The history of environmental development has been gradual, however, with climate change impacts accelerating towards increasing adaptation and protection of its ecosystems and environment.

For a geographically diverse country like Pakistan, hosting more than 10 major and minor eco and agroecological zones, one would expect that environmental matters would take center stage. However, Geography is not the sole determinant of the



Photo Credit: AP Photo/Zahid Hussain

priority list especially for a country that had a cataclysmic birth, and was in survival mode for most of its first decade, and then again facing cataclysmic dismemberment of the Eastern wing that did face the brunt of Nature's wrath through cyclones and floods that caused widespread devastation.

After the dismemberment of the country, which set Pakistan back many years, the recovery and development imperatives pivoted to sectors other than environmental conservation and stewardship. Globally there was a greater awareness emerging post the Stockholm United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, by the time the Rio Earth Summit took place in 1991, conservation, development and governance came together.

By 1993, Pakistan had compiled its NEQS, National Environmental Quality Standards that became the

handbook for the Environment Protection Agency, the regulatory body. In sync with the global environmental movement, there was a resonance within Pakistan's civil society, which went beyond activism and stewardship, and opened the door of environmental jurisprudence after the landmark *Shahla Zia v WAPDA* case in 1994 that firmly placed environmental litigation under the Right to Life.

Several things came together at the turn of the millennia, and the pace quickened world over once the reality of Climate Change and its impacts snatched the limelight from many other issues that had been capturing the headlines. Pakistan too was raising its profile regionally and globally, as an active participant, not always for good reasons.

The climate vulnerability index was in place and out of over 190 countries, Pakistan found itself in

the top ten bracket almost from the outset. While this meant bearing the brunt of climate disasters, it also allowed it to grab a seat at the table where conversations about combating climate change were taking place. This was happening alongside the rise in the consciousness and acknowledgement of the importance of focus on environment in society, as well in the governance hierarchy.

Governance structure changes within the country also brought greater focus. In 2010, the landmark devolution law, known as the 18th Amendment was passed which devolved many subjects, including Environment, Climate Change, Forestry, Wildlife etc were all devolved to the provinces.

There was a period of ambivalence which was very anachronistic given the growing importance of this sector. Before the 18th Amendment, the Federal Ministry of Environment looked after all matters related to environment and climate change. After the 18th Amendment, initially, the federal ministry was abolished, and it was renamed as the Ministry of National Disaster Management in April 2012.

Establishment of Ministry of Climate Change (2012):

Recognising the global climate crisis, in 2012, Ministry of National Disaster Management was renamed the Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC), and for a period, in 2013, the ministry was demoted to a Division under the



The Commonwealth Secretariat and Azerbaijan's COP29 Presidency are inviting proposals to fund climate action projects across 25 Commonwealth Small Island Developing States (SIDS), helping communities address the growing impacts of climate change

Cabinet Secretariat to cut costs.

It was later again restored as a full-fledged ministry and officially established in its current form in 2017.

By this time the provincial ministries had been strengthened and had drafted their province specific policies, reducing the on ground interventions by the Federal Ministry which now functioned as a policy body and custodian of Pakistan's bilateral and multilateral treaties, agreements, conventions and MoUs.

Because of this specific role, the nomenclature again changed and in 2022, its name received an appendage and now it functions as the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination.

This allows for a better coordination with the provincial ministries as well as with international partners.

The new name brought a new focus on the roles and responsibilities. It allows it to function as a convening body that can have an oversight on provincial aspirations that align with the broader national agenda, while freeing it from the responsibilities of on ground implementation. This also allows for greater leverage on the regional and global platforms to be able to play a more influencing role.

This has made Pakistan a strident voice at forums like the COPs and UNEP which have acknowledged Pakistan's leadership role closure of hitherto inconclusive conversations like Loss and Damage and the imperative of bringing in a just solution to

countries in the Global South.

This has also allowed the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination to gain some quick wins by way of bilateral and multilateral forums to bridge the policy and implementation gaps by accessing technical and financial assistance through readiness grants to build capacities and fill policy grants. One example of this is the preparation of the ccGAP (Climate Change Gender Action Programme), which has paved the way for mainstreaming women in six priority sectors.

(Courtesy: The News PK)

The writer is an environment and climate change journalist, member of National Climate Change Council and member of National Coordinating body for Marine Protected Areas ■

Preventing the Next Tragic Disaster through Building Safety Reforms

June 30, 2026, began with tragedy as a building collapse in Lahore killed 14 children, drawing international media attention. The incident occurred when the roof of a tuition center caved in during construction work, trapping several students beneath the debris. Initial investigations revealed that the collapse was caused by negligence, as an additional floor was being illegally constructed on an aging and unstable structure without basic safety measures in place.



Sadly, building collapse incidents are not uncommon in Pakistan and other developing countries. Not so long

ago, in January 2026, Karachi's Gul Plaza was engulfed in flames and burned to ashes. The devastating fire claimed 80 lives

and left several others injured. Though painful, the death toll in the Gul Plaza fire was lower than that of Karachi's Baldia factory

inferno in 2012, where 260 workers died from burns and smoke inhalation. The collapse of Islamabad's Margalla Tower during the 2005 earthquake demonstrates that fire is not the only hazard capable of destroying multistory buildings. Similarly, hundreds of people die every year in building collapses caused by natural disasters.

From unsafe construction practices to fires and natural disasters, structural failures occur across the country for a variety of reasons. However, inadequate enforcement of building safety laws remains the common underlying factor, which is why such incidents happen time and again. In this article, we explore the root causes of this critical issue, the practical measures the government can take, and the role society can play in improving building safety at the national level.

Why do These Accidents Keep Happening?

Most accidents can be prevented by taking appropriate safety measures. These preventive measures are often governed by building regulations around the world. Nevertheless, even world-class safety regulations become meaningless without effective enforcement. Overpopulation, political instability, poor governance, and poverty can significantly hinder a country's ability to implement and enforce essential laws. Building control authorities are often hampered by inadequate resources, insufficient training, and staff shortages, limiting their ability to curb illegal



14 children were killed when the roof of a tuition center caved in during construction work in Lahore

construction and enforce building safety rules. Corrupt officials allegedly accept bribes in exchange for overlooking serious violations of building safety regulations, including allowance of unsafe building materials.

Authorities typically take action only after such incidents have occurred. And even then, their response is often symbolic rather than addressing the root causes. Despite major tragedies involving building collapses, the prime focus remains on investigating the causes of each incident, while meaningful systemic reforms rarely follow.

Poverty is another major factor contributing to such unfortunate incidents. Coupled with weak law enforcement, it often encourages cost-cutting at the expense of

“ People invest millions in building construction, yet safety is often overlooked. It is evident that even high-end commercial buildings, schools, and residential complexes barely meet basic safety requirements ”



In January 2026, Gul Plaza fire claimed 80 lives in Karachi

building safety, putting human lives at risk. Not only do people have limited financial resources, but poor law enforcement also reduces the likelihood of legal consequences, which encourages people to compromise on safety. Additionally, a lack of safety awareness contributes to unsafe building practices. People invest millions in building construction, yet safety is often overlooked. Poverty may contribute to unsafe construction, particularly in low-income communities. However, it is evident that even high-end commercial buildings, schools, and residential complexes barely meet basic safety requirements. They feature luxurious interiors, marble flooring, and modern amenities, yet often lack functional fire

alarms and accessible emergency exits. Furthermore, earthquake-resistant construction is rarely incorporated into building projects. All of these issues are caused not only by lax regulations and limited financial resources but also by public attitude toward safety.

Key Measures Needed to Strengthen Building Safety

Effective enforcement through the reform of building control authorities is the need of the hour. This would help ensure that all residential, commercial, and industrial buildings comply with established safety standards. The following measures could significantly contribute to reducing

the number of building-related disasters:

- New building approvals should require **earthquake-resistant** design, an adequate number of **emergency exits**, and functional **firefighting equipment**.
- Existing buildings should also be gradually modified to meet safety requirements. Regular inspections should be conducted to ensure continued compliance with safety regulations.
- Administrative reforms should also establish a **citizen complaint and reporting system**. This could significantly improve compliance with building safety laws, as enforcement

agencies have limited resources to conduct regular inspections across cities.

- ▶ Low-income groups should be provided financial assistance, such as interest-free soft loans, to help them upgrade their homes to meet basic safety requirements.
- ▶ Public awareness is equally important in making our buildings safer. People must

realize that prevention is always cheaper than paying the price of a deadly accident.

- ▶ **Is this building safe?** This is the question everyone must ask before buying or renting a house, checking into a hotel, booking an event venue, or enrolling their children in an educational institution.
- ▶ The concept of **safety culture** should be introduced through



Earthquake-resistant construction is rarely incorporated into building projects due to lax regulations



Emergency exits and firefighting equipment are basic safety requirements for all buildings

“Despite major tragedies involving building collapses, the prime focus remains on investigating the causes of each incident, while meaningful systemic reforms rarely follow”

formal education and vocational training programs across the country.

- ▶ The government should take initiatives to educate construction companies and workers about the importance of safe working practices.
- ▶ Media platforms, including news, TV, and social media, can play a vital role in promoting **public awareness of building safety**.
- ▶ Real estate developers should recognize **Safe Buildings** as a key feature of their projects and lead by example in promoting safer construction practices.

The aforementioned measures are crucial to saving lives and preventing property losses. Unless decisive steps are taken, horrific building disasters like the Baldia factory inferno (2012) and the Lahore tuition center collapse (2026) will continue to make tragic headlines. ■

Molten salt and human sweat: the weird batteries that could store renewable energy

From Nevada to Manchester, developers are trialling innovative solutions to clean energy's biggest challenge.



The Crescent Dunes project in the Nevada desert harnesses the sun's power to heat a reservoir of potassium and sodium nitrate to 560C

In the deserts of the United Arab Emirates a sprawling clean energy project, stretching across an area roughly the size of 12,600 football fields,

will play host to a breakthrough allowing solar energy to power the equivalent of half a million homes through the night.

The Gulf state has been steadily

combining 5.2GW of solar power capacity with 19GWh of battery storage to create the largest battery scheme in the world.

Meanwhile, about 7,500 miles



The Polar Night ‘sand battery’ in Pornainen, Finland, can cover almost a month of the small town’s heating demands in summer and nearly a week’s in winter, cutting oil use by storing energy as heat.

away, at the US’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory facility in Colorado, researchers and engineers are making some of the smallest batteries the world has ever seen. A fraction of the size of the grid-scale lithium-ion batteries used to store renewable energy, they have been designed to power electronic tags that will track the 3in-long (about 7.5cm) young from salmon and eel species.

As traditional lithium-ion batteries push boundaries in size and scale, alternative battery types could provide the same vital role in harnessing low-carbon energy – but without the scramble for

critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt and nickel that have raised concerns for environmental protection and vulnerable communities.

A tall dark grey iron-clad cylinder with silver pipes on one side. It has trees and a blue sky behind it and two people are walking by it wearing white helmets and hi-vis jackets. Unlike lithium-ion batteries, which have a finite number of charge/discharge cycles, many of these alternative battery technologies can be used indefinitely and recycled when the units reach the end of their 20-year service life.

Already developers are turning to a large range of materials to store renewable electricity when it is available and use it to power everything from wearable technology to heating networks and factories. Here are some of the energy storage innovations raising eyebrows.

Liquid air

Late last year, on the site of a former coal plant in Trafford, the former mayor of Greater Manchester marked the start of construction on a long-awaited energy storage project that could usher in the “re-industrialisation” of the county.

Andy Burnham said the development of the Trafford green cluster, which includes the Carrington “liquid air” cryobattery, could mean “this decade is the most exciting since the Victorian period for Greater Manchester”. In simple terms the Carrington project, developed by the British startup Highview Power, aims to capture renewable energy when it’s abundant and store it as liquid air. In theory, a “cryobattery” can store energy for hours, days or even weeks. The science is more complicated: Carrington uses surplus renewables to cool air to -196C, which reduces it to a liquid one-700th of the volume. It can be kept in this state until renewable energy is scarce and market prices begin to rise. Then the liquid is allowed to become a gas once again, rapidly expanding through a turbine that generates electricity without the emissions typically associated with gas-fired power plants.

The project has faced a number of delays but once it begins operations, slated for the end of the year, it will deliver 300MWh of storage and an output of 50MW for six hours – or enough clean, renewable energy to power almost half a million homes.

Molten salt

While in Manchester energy is being stored at sub-zero temperatures, in the Nevada desert the opposite approach has been taken.

Here, 10,000 panes generate

electricity for the Crescent Dunes scheme, which for the past 10 years has harnessed the sun’s power to heat a reservoir of potassium and sodium nitrate to 560C.

This temperature can be maintained for 10 hours after the sun has set, before the stored

In the 2020s Denmark proved molten salt storage technology could provide an answer to the dilemma of decarbonising heavy industry, too. The leading wind power nation unveiled a 1GWh large-scale molten salt battery project earlier this year, which can store clean electricity for up



Andy Burnham (third from right) said the Trafford green cluster could make this decade ‘the most exciting since the Victorian period for Greater Manchester’

thermal energy can be converted into electricity by using the heat to drive a traditional spinning turbine. The system effectively stores clean electricity as heat in a process known as molten salt storage.

A tall, tin white tower in a desert landscape is surrounded by thousands of mirrors and solar panels. There are small hills in the background and a deep blue sky with white fluffy clouds.

to two weeks by heating the salts to approximately 600C. When needed, the hot salt is circulated through a generator that produces high-temperature steam that can be used directly in industrial processes.

Sand

Much like renewable electricity can be stored by heating salt, clean energy can be stored in sand.

In the small town of Pornainen in



In Pornainen, Finland, 2,000 tonnes of crushed soapstone is being used to store clean energy in the form of heat

southern Finland, thousands of tonnes of sand help store energy used to heat schools, libraries and town halls. This should allow the district to end the use of oil in its local heating network completely and reduce the use of wood chips by about 60%.

The sand battery uses about 2,000 tonnes of crushed soapstone to store clean energy in the form of heat to provide 1MW of thermal power and a storage capacity of 100MWh.

In summer, the sand battery, which stands about 13 metres tall and 15 metres wide (43ft x 49ft), can cover almost a month's heat demand in Pornainen – and in winter, close to a week. It is about 10 times larger than an earlier version launched in the country in 2022, underscoring the potential of

sand batteries to play a greater role in cutting emissions across the country.

Sweat tech

In Japan, researchers at the Tokyo University of Science are investigating how human sweat could be a viable energy source to power wearable technologies.

By treating the body as an energy source capable of providing continuous power, the researchers hope to solve the problem of how to fuel the sensors that underpin wearable devices without tiny batteries that make them bulky and need constant charging.

In response they have developed a thin wearable patch that generates electricity directly from human sweat. It uses an enzymatic biofuel cell to capture the chemical

“ In the small town of Pornainen in southern Finland, thousands of tonnes of sand help store energy used to heat schools, libraries and town halls. The sand battery is expected to end the use of oil in the local heating network and significantly reduce the use of wood chips ”

compounds – especially lactate – released in sweat and convert them into power. When sweat comes into contact with the cell, the enzymes embedded in the patch trigger a biochemical reaction, releasing electrons.

This means electricity can be generated without the need for any external power source – during everyday activities such as walking, exercising or running errands.

(Courtesy: The Guardian UK) ■

Every Drop, Every Tree:

Simple GREEN Living for Climate Resilience in Pakistan

Climate change may seem like a challenge that only governments and scientists can solve, but many of the most effective solutions begin at home. Every family can reduce waste, conserve water, plant indigenous trees, and create greener surroundings. When millions of households adopt small sustainable habits, they collectively become a powerful Green Defense for Pakistan.



Eco-living is not about expensive technology or complicated lifestyle changes. It is about making thoughtful daily choices that protect our environment while improving our quality of life. These choices save money, conserve natural resources, strengthen communities, and help future generations inherit a healthier Pakistan.

Every drop of water matters

Pakistan is one of the world's most



water-stressed countries. Conserving water should therefore become part of everyday family life. Simple habits can make a surprisingly large difference. Turn off taps while brushing teeth,



repair leaking pipes promptly, use buckets instead of running hoses where possible, and avoid wasting clean drinking water. Water used for washing fruits and vegetables can often be reused to irrigate gardens. Similarly, water from ablution may be collected for watering trees and ornamental plants where appropriate. These simple practices reduce unnecessary waste while helping maintain greenery during the hot summer months.

Rainwater harvesting is another practical solution. Even a modest rooftop collection system can provide water for gardens, cleaning outdoor spaces and supporting newly planted indigenous trees. Every litre of rainwater collected is



“One of the most meaningful contributions any family can make is planting an indigenous tree. Native species are naturally adapted to Pakistan's climate, require less water once established, and provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects. A healthy tree that survives for decades benefits the environment far more than neglected saplings”

one less litre drawn from already stressed groundwater reserves.

Plant indigenous trees for future generations

One of the most meaningful contributions any family can make is planting an indigenous tree. Native species are naturally adapted to Pakistan's climate, generally require less water once

“ Small gardens, balconies and courtyards can become valuable habitats for wildlife. Plant flowering native species that attract bees and butterflies. Place shallow bowls of clean water outdoors during hot weather for birds and other small animals. Avoid excessive pesticide use whenever possible ”

established, and provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects. Unlike many ornamental species, indigenous trees strengthen local biodiversity while helping cool neighbourhoods, reduce air pollution and improve soil health.

Remember that planting is only the beginning. Young trees require watering, protection and care during their first few years. A healthy tree that survives for decades contributes far more than dozens of neglected saplings that fail to mature.

Reduce waste and reuse wisely

Sustainable living also means using resources carefully. Before throwing something away, ask whether it can be repaired, reused or recycled. Glass jars can store kitchen items. Old containers can become plant pots. Cardboard boxes can be reused for storage. Kitchen scraps may even be composted to produce nutrient-rich fertilizer for gardens.

Reducing single-use plastics is another simple but important step. Carry reusable shopping bags, refill water bottles instead of purchasing disposable ones, and avoid unnecessary plastic packaging whenever possible. Less



plastic entering drains and waterways also means lower flood risks during the monsoon season.

Welcome nature into your neighbourhood

Even small gardens, balconies and courtyards can become valuable habitats for wildlife. Plant flowering native species that attract bees and butterflies. Place shallow bowls of clean water outdoors during hot weather for birds and other small animals. Avoid excessive pesticide use



whenever possible, as many beneficial insects are essential pollinators that support food production and healthy ecosystems.

Children especially enjoy observing birds and butterflies, helping them develop an appreciation for nature that lasts throughout their lives.



Save energy while protecting the environment

Reducing electricity consumption also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and household expenses. Switch off lights and fans when leaving a room. Choose energy-efficient appliances where possible. Make greater use of natural daylight and ventilation. Plant shade trees around homes to reduce indoor temperatures naturally, decreasing dependence on air conditioners during summer.

Build a culture of environmental responsibility

Perhaps the most important aspect of eco-living is setting an example. Children learn environmental responsibility by watching adults. When families conserve water, care for trees, avoid littering and

“Reducing electricity consumption also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and household expenses. Switch off lights and fans when leaving a room. Choose energy-efficient appliances where possible. Make greater use of natural daylight and ventilation”

respect nature, these habits become part of everyday life rather than occasional environmental campaigns.

Healthy communities are built through thousands of small actions repeated consistently over many years. Each family that conserves water, plants indigenous trees and reduces waste contributes to Pakistan's climate resilience.

In summary, building Pakistan's Green Defense begins at home. Every drop of water conserved, every indigenous tree planted, every piece of waste avoided and every act of care for nature strengthens our environment. Sustainable living is not about perfection. It is about making better choices every day.

Together, our homes can become the foundation of a greener, healthier and more climate-resilient Pakistan. ■





Nature-based solutions advance water security and climate resilience in Pakistan

WWF-Pakistan highlighted the growing role of nature-based solutions in addressing water shortages, flooding, and ecosystem degradation. Initiatives include recharge wells, floating treatment wetlands, check dams, and gabion structures that slow runoff, replenish groundwater, improve water quality, and restore damaged landscapes. Experts emphasized that Pakistan must work with natural systems rather than relying exclusively on concrete infrastructure to manage intensifying climate risks.

(Courtesy: Dawn)



Clean air recognized as essential climate and public-health protection

Recent reporting warned that Pakistan's air pollution crisis must be addressed as both a climate and public-health emergency. Fine particulate matter frequently exceeds national standards and World Health Organization guidelines in major urban centres, placing children, older people, outdoor workers, and individuals with respiratory or cardiovascular conditions at particular risk. The report called for stronger monitoring, cleaner transport, industrial emission controls, urban greenery, and closer coordination between climate and health policies.

(Courtesy: Dawn)



Heavy monsoon rain causes deadly house collapse in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Heavy rain caused the roof of a mud-brick house to collapse in Kohat district, killing eleven people, most of them women and children. Monsoon conditions also triggered landslides, road disruption, and damage in parts of Gilgit-Baltistan. Authorities warned residents and tourists to avoid vulnerable mountain routes, rivers, and fast-flowing channels as the risks of flash floods and landslides remained high. The tragedy again exposed the vulnerability of poorly constructed housing to extreme weather.

(Courtesy: AP News)



Climate ministry receives funding for environmental and resilience programmes

Pakistan's climate ministry secured approximately Rs2.48 billion through the Public Sector Development Programme for climate, environmental, and institutional initiatives. Supported activities include climate-resilient development, environmental monitoring, biosafety, water-quality management, and improved scientific capacity. Officials emphasized that effective climate governance requires strong institutions, reliable evidence, and transparent implementation rather than isolated or short-term projects. (Courtesy: Dawn)

WHO prepositions medical supplies before Pakistan's monsoon emergencies

The World Health Organization supported Pakistan in positioning emergency medical supplies capable of serving approximately 380,000 people ahead of monsoon flooding. Floods can damage

clinics, interrupt access to medicines, contaminate drinking water, and increase the risks of diarrhoeal disease, malaria, dengue, skin infections, and other health emergencies. Prepositioning supplies allows health teams to respond more rapidly when communities become isolated by damaged roads or floodwaters.

(Courtesy: World Health Organization)



Pakistan and WHO launch national plan to reduce cholera deaths

Pakistan and the World Health Organization launched a National Cholera Plan intended to reduce cholera mortality by 90 percent by 2030. The strategy emphasizes surveillance, clean water, sanitation, rapid diagnosis, treatment, public communication, and preparedness for floods and other natural hazards. The plan recognizes that cholera cannot be controlled by hospitals alone because unsafe water, inadequate sanitation, poverty, displacement, and climate-related disasters all contribute to disease transmission.

(Courtesy: World Health Organization)

Pakistan ranked as the world's most polluted country in 2025

The 2025 World Air Quality Report identified Pakistan as the country with the highest annual average concentration of fine particulate pollution among those assessed. National PM_{2.5} exposure was reported at as much as thirteen times the World Health Organization annual guideline. The finding reinforces demands for continuous and transparent air-quality monitoring, cleaner fuels, safer public transport, industrial regulation, controls on waste and crop burning, and coordinated action before the winter smog and fog seasons. (Courtesy: Al Jazeera)

Agricultural water conservation becomes an urgent policy priority

Experts called for water conservation to become central to Pakistan's agricultural policy as groundwater declines and climate change increases uncertainty. Punjab has improved more than 51,000 watercourses, representing around 90 percent of the provincial total, but further action is needed. Efficient irrigation, careful crop selection, groundwater monitoring, rainwater capture, aquifer recharge, and farmer education are necessary to prevent water-saving technology from being undermined by unchecked extraction.

(Courtesy: Dawn) ■

Creature of the Month

Indus River Dolphin (Bhulan)

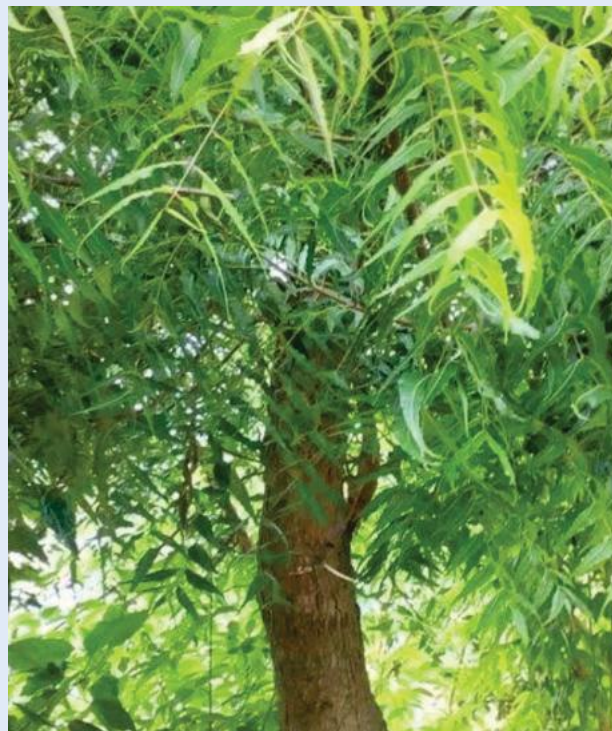
The Indus River Dolphin is one of Pakistan's most amazing animals. It lives only in the Indus River and is one of the world's rarest freshwater dolphins. Unlike dolphins in the ocean, the Bhulan has very small eyes and relies mainly on sound to find fish and move safely through the water. The dolphin is an important part of Pakistan's natural heritage. It helps remind us that healthy rivers support many different forms of life. When rivers become polluted or lose too much water, animals like the Bhulan struggle to survive.

You can help protect the Indus River Dolphin by never throwing rubbish into rivers or canals, using water wisely, and telling others why clean rivers are important. Every drop of clean water helps wildlife and people alike.



Flower of the Month

Neem (Azadirachta indica)



Neem is one of Pakistan's most valuable indigenous trees. It grows well in many parts of the country and provides cool shade during hot summers. Its leaves, flowers, seeds and bark have been used in traditional medicine for hundreds of years.

Neem trees help clean the air by absorbing carbon dioxide and trapping dust. They also provide shelter for birds, insects and other wildlife. Because they tolerate dry conditions, they are excellent trees for planting in schools, parks and communities.

This National Plantation Day, try planting an indigenous tree such as Neem with your family or classmates. Remember to water it regularly until it becomes strong enough to grow on its own.

Poem

Our Green Promise



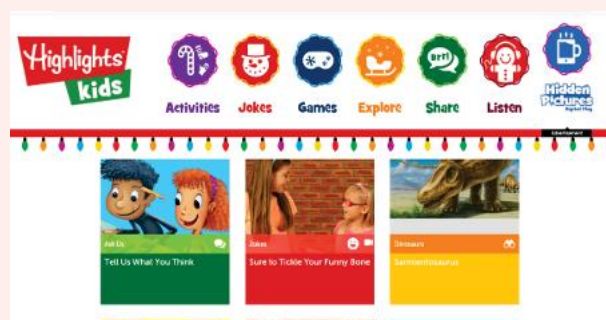
A little tree begins to grow,
With tiny roots that stretch below.
We give it water, love and care,
It fills with life the summer air.
The birds will sing,
The bees will fly,
Soft white clouds will fill the sky.
Each little tree that you and I tend,
Helps our Green Defense never end.

Hira Salman

Interesting website

HIGHLIGHTS KIDS

www.highlightskids.com



This website is targeted for all elementary age kids who are reading on their own. The activities are based upon the highlights magazine and have a lot to offer. From science projects to reading, puzzles to printable coloring pages, there is something for everyone on this site.

Quote

“The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is today.”

~ Chinese Proverb

International days



International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

A day to celebrate Indigenous communities around the world and learn how their traditional knowledge helps protect forests, rivers and wildlife.



International Youth Day

Young people have the power to build a greener future by planting trees, conserving water, recycling and caring for nature.



National Plantation Day (Pakistan)

A special day to plant indigenous trees and protect Pakistan from climate change, floods, droughts and air pollution. Every tree planted today helps future generations.



Int'l Day for People of African Descent

A day to celebrate diversity, equality and respect for people from every culture and background. ■

Dried Pomegranate Seeds

A tangy traditional ingredient that adds flavour and supports health

In Pakistan, dried pomegranate seeds, commonly known as anardana, have been used for centuries as both a culinary ingredient and a traditional household remedy. Their pleasantly sour flavour makes them a favourite addition to chutneys, curries, vegetable dishes, lentils, kebabs, fruit chaat and spice blends such as chaat masala.

Beyond their distinctive taste, anardana has long been appreciated for supporting digestion and adding natural flavour without relying heavily on salt or artificial seasonings. Like many traditional foods, anardana deserves appreciation within the context of a balanced diet. It is not a miracle food, nor should it replace fresh fruits and vegetables. However, when incorporated regularly into healthy meals, dried pomegranate seeds provide valuable fibre, antioxidants and beneficial plant compounds that contribute to overall well-being.

Nutritional and bioactive profile

Drying concentrates many of the natural compounds present in fresh pomegranates. Anardana contains dietary fibre, natural organic acids, potassium and small amounts of vitamins and minerals. It is also rich in polyphenols, flavonoids, anthocyanins and



tannins, all of which possess antioxidant properties. These compounds help neutralize harmful free radicals that contribute to ageing and chronic diseases. Although drying reduces some vitamin C compared with

fresh pomegranates, anardana remains an excellent source of protective phytochemicals. Its concentrated flavour also means that relatively small amounts can provide substantial culinary and nutritional value.

May support digestive health

One of the best-known traditional uses of anardana is for digestive comfort. In many Pakistani households it has been used to stimulate appetite, improve digestion and relieve feelings of heaviness after meals. Its natural organic acids encourage saliva and digestive secretions, while its fibre supports healthy bowel function. Anardana is frequently combined with cumin, coriander, mint and fennel in traditional digestive spice mixtures. While these traditional uses have been valued for generations, persistent digestive symptoms should always be evaluated by a healthcare professional.

Rich in antioxidants

Oxidative stress contributes to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, certain cancers and age related decline. The polyphenols naturally present in pomegranate have been extensively studied for their antioxidant and anti inflammatory properties. Including antioxidant-rich foods such as anardana within a balanced diet may help support long term health alongside regular physical activity and other healthy lifestyle habits.

Supports heart health

Emerging research suggests that pomegranate polyphenols may contribute to cardiovascular health by helping maintain healthy blood vessel function and reducing oxidative damage. Potassium also

contributes to normal blood pressure regulation. While dried pomegranate seeds should not be considered a treatment for heart disease, they represent a nutritious addition to heart healthy dietary patterns rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes.

Adds flavour while reducing excess salt

One overlooked advantage of anardana is its ability to provide strong natural flavour. Its pleasant sourness can reduce the need for excessive salt in many traditional recipes. Chutneys, lentils, vegetable curries and grilled meats can all benefit from its tangy taste, allowing cooks to prepare meals that remain flavourful while supporting healthier sodium intake. Healthy eating depends upon consuming a wide variety of plant foods. Anardana contributes to this diversity by introducing unique plant compounds that may not be obtained from commonly eaten fruits and vegetables alone. It pairs well with chickpeas, lentils, spinach, eggplant, pumpkin, okra and numerous traditional Pakistani dishes, making healthy meals more enjoyable without adding excessive fat or sugar.

How to use it in Pakistani kitchens

Ground anardana can be sprinkled over fruit chaat, yogurt, salads and roasted vegetables. Whole dried seeds are commonly added to chutneys, karhi, daal, vegetable

curries, kebabs and spice blends. They also complement grilled chicken, fish and lentil dishes by providing natural acidity that balances richer flavours.

For maximum flavour, store dried pomegranate seeds in airtight containers away from moisture and direct sunlight. Grinding only the amount needed for immediate use helps preserve their aroma and beneficial plant compounds.

Considerations

Although generally safe, anardana is acidic and may aggravate acid reflux, heartburn or sensitive stomachs in some individuals when consumed in large amounts. Moderation is therefore advisable for those prone to gastric discomfort. Commercial spice blends containing anardana may also include substantial quantities of salt. Reading ingredient labels or preparing homemade blends allows greater control over sodium intake. As with all dried foods, quality matters.

In summary, Anardana represents a wonderful example of how traditional Pakistani ingredients can contribute to healthy eating. Rich in antioxidants, fibre and beneficial plant compounds, it supports digestive health, enhances flavour naturally and promotes greater dietary diversity. Used regularly as part of a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes, dried pomegranate seeds can be both a delicious culinary ingredient and a valuable component of a healthy lifestyle.■

Anardana brings a delightful tangy flavour to Pakistani cuisine while adding valuable antioxidants and fibre. These two simple recipes celebrate these qualities. Enjoy!

Anardana Chutney (Tangy Pomegranate Chutney)

Ingredients

Dried pomegranate seeds (anardana), ½ cup
Fresh mint leaves, 1 cup
Fresh coriander leaves, 1 cup
Green chillies, 2 to 3, or to taste; Garlic cloves, 2
Roasted cumin powder, 1 teaspoon
Black pepper, ½ teaspoon; Salt, ½ teaspoon, or to taste
Jaggery or honey, 1 teaspoon, optional;
Lemon juice, 1 tablespoon
Cold water, 2 to 4 tablespoons, as needed

Instructions

Wash the mint and coriander thoroughly and drain well. Soak the dried anardana in warm water for about 15 minutes to soften slightly. Place the softened anardana, mint, coriander, green chillies, garlic, roasted cumin, black pepper, salt and jaggery or honey, if using, into a blender. Add the lemon juice and a small amount of cold water. Blend until smooth, adding a little more water if required to achieve the desired consistency. Taste and adjust the seasoning if necessary. Refrigerate in a covered container and consume within three to four days.



Anardana and Chickpea Salad (Refreshing Summer Salad)

Ingredients

Boiled chickpeas, 2 cups, Cucumber, finely diced, 1 medium;
Tomatoes, finely chopped, 2 medium
Red onion, finely chopped, ½ medium
Fresh coriander leaves, chopped, ¼ cup
Fresh mint leaves, chopped, 2 tablespoons
Dried pomegranate seeds (anardana), coarsely crushed, 2 tablespoons, Roasted cumin powder, 1 teaspoon;
Black pepper, ½ teaspoon; Salt, ½ teaspoon, or to taste
Extra virgin olive oil, 1 tablespoon; Fresh lemon juice, 2 tablespoons

Instructions

Place the boiled chickpeas into a large mixing bowl. Add the cucumber, tomatoes, onion, coriander and mint. Sprinkle over the crushed anardana, roasted cumin, black pepper and salt. Drizzle with olive oil and freshly squeezed lemon juice. Toss gently until everything is evenly coated. Allow the salad to rest for about ten minutes so the anardana softens slightly and its tangy flavour blends with the vegetables. Sprinkle a little extra crushed anardana over the salad just before serving for additional flavour and a beautiful traditional finish. ■



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