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The Gazette

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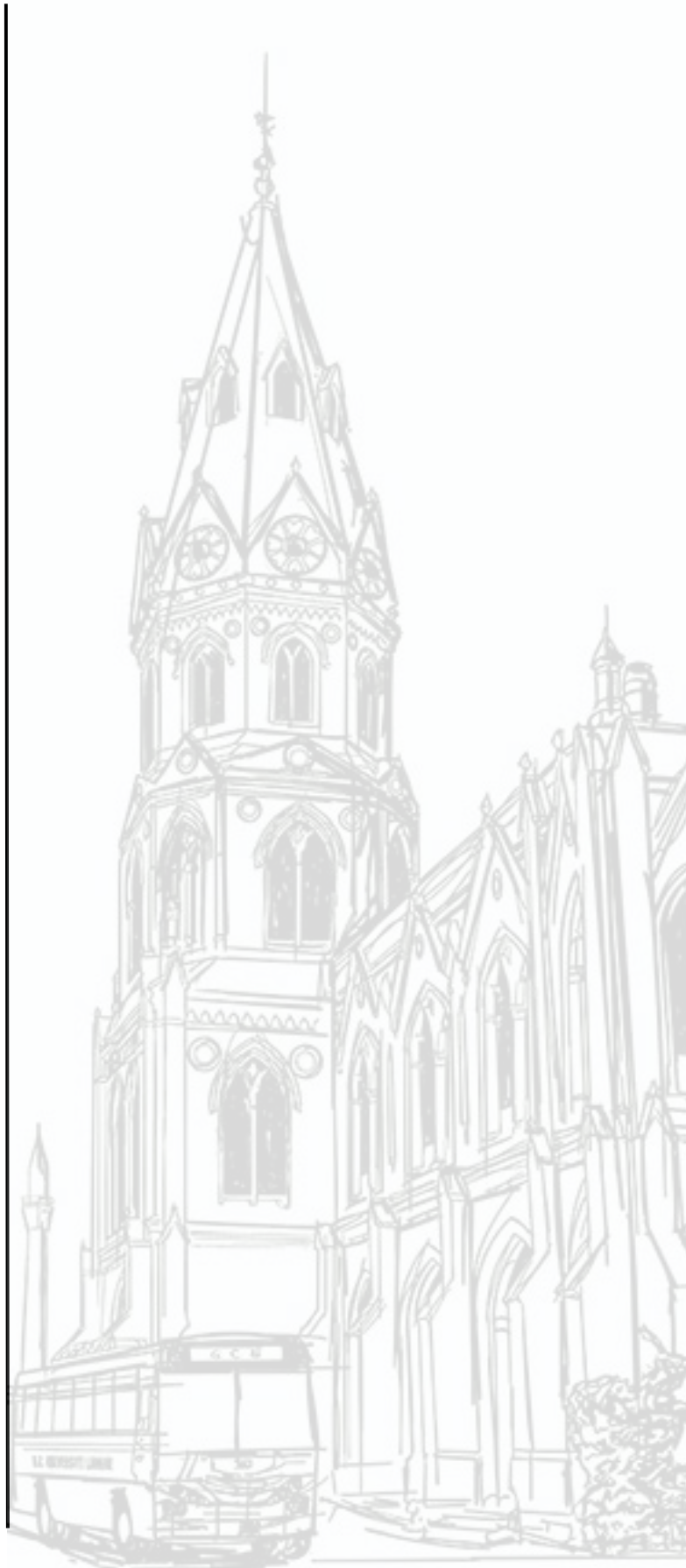
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✦ Editorial ✦

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Editorial

Identity. Selfhood. Recognition. Ill-fitted full stops in place of commas. Fragments where once the living continuity of an idea flowed. The nomenclature of student activism has clearly been altered. Far and wide, student activism across the educational landscape of Pakistan has undergone a paradigm shift, bartering away its ideological compass for a curated selfhood. This shift, on the whole, appears revolutionary due to its commitment to bringing marginalised voices to the core. However, a difficult question lurks deep beneath the surface: has the politics of identity, in its mounting presence, overshadowed the politics of ideology?

First things first, the politics of identity was not an offshoot of apoliticality. Championing the revolutionary perspective of the Combahee River Collective, it solidified not as a performative drift but as a strategic intervention. The general public began to address exclusions within the leading leftist movements, the ones that advocated for inclusivity and solidarity. Identity, for them, was not a convenient slide to selfhood, but a political instrument: a way to unveil the many loopholes and hypocrisies of the then-prevalent ideological frameworks. It was a tactic, not a manifesto; a lens to expose power, not a mirror to admire the self. To take it otherwise is to mistake its very essence.

But in today's student discourse, identity politics, in its manifestation, veers more towards symbolic performance than structural intervention. Political clout is increasingly sourced from positionality rather than praxis; visibility is confused with transformation, and

experience is cited to serve as a replacement for analysis. This aestheticisation of resistance relegates the cause. When there is an unapologetic transformation of protest into content, the energies are wasted on the spectacle rather than on bringing about a meaningful change.

Across educational institutions, the downturn of student movements rooted in collective transformative visions of structural change, such as the ones contesting power dynamics, class struggle, and neoliberal strains, among many, has materialised a vacuum now saturated with individualised, identity-driven interventions. In the present state of affairs, when ideological debate and strategic plans of action find expression as mere footnotes, performance of identity becomes the most permissible and agreeable form of expression. It is tolerated, even nurtured, largely because it hardly poses a danger to the many manifestations of systemic power.

Government College University, Lahore, a historic sanctuary for known theorists and reformers, now steers through a complex terrain. Students consistently wrestle with contemporary debates on gender inclusivity, diversity, and hierarchy in their campaigns and academic settings. However, these initiatives persistently appear detached from broader global and socio-economic frameworks. While panels engage in dialogue, sessions are conducted, and hashtags make rounds, positionality is hardly ever conflated with the praxis.

It should be noted here that this discussion is

Editorial

not meant to invalidate identity as a political paradigm; quite the contrary, as politics of identity has always challenged dominant narratives. However, when politics of identity exist in a vacuum without aligning with the overarching narratives of power and capital, it inadvertently risks amplifying the very hierarchies it aims to deconstruct. Nancy Fraser, a critical theorist, warns the world against the dangers of politics grounded solely in recognition. The critique stands against visibility that glorifies itself while leaving material conditions untouched. In a similar strain, Mark Fisher critiques “left melancholia”, which speaks of a mode of activism more at ease with critiquing than equipping how to dismantle it.

It is high time we ask ourselves: How do we make sense of the critique when it lies divorced from collective action? What do we do when positionality goes on without conflating with praxis? How do we proceed when activism begins to mirror the logic of the market it opposes, labelling, branding, and performing itself?

To critique this turn is to argue that theatrics can never suffice as the sole horizon. Intersectionality, when rightly grasped, fuses the many fragments formed, urging us to analyse relationally: What happens when gender intersects with labour? How does ethnicity entangle with class politics? Can decolonisation occur without dismantling the neoliberal strains?

This time in history calls for a reassessment, a reevaluation to interrogate the nuances of power and to dissect the many symbolic perfo-

mances. Students must be encouraged to conflate positionality with praxis, not merely articulating who they are but what they contest with a proper strategy and a mode of action. In this sense, identity becomes a point of departure, not a mere arrival.

The Gazette, as GCU’s very own reflective space, stands by this dual imperative: the affirmation of personal narratives and the pursuit of a systemic vision. To choose between them is to compromise on an intellectual choice. Because a discourse excluding identity fails to account for the body. A discourse without an ideology fails to account for the world. But a discursive framework that performs both without a purpose spaces out on the task that, dear Ravians, is the struggle for emancipation.

Zunnoorain Fatima

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Obituary

Obituary

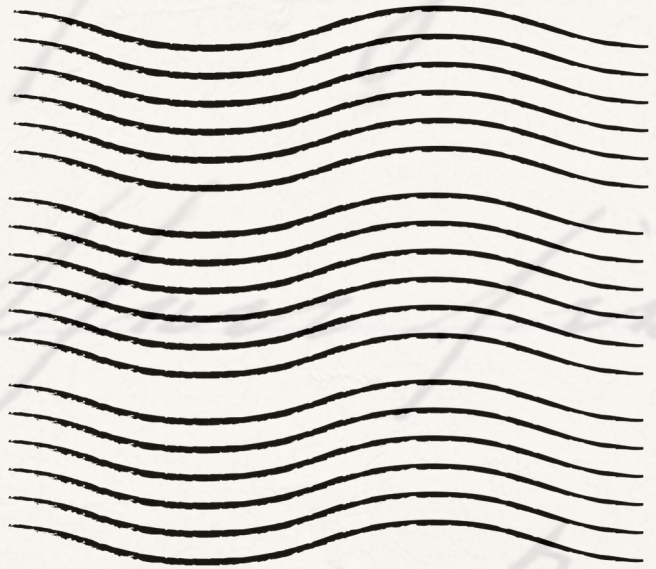
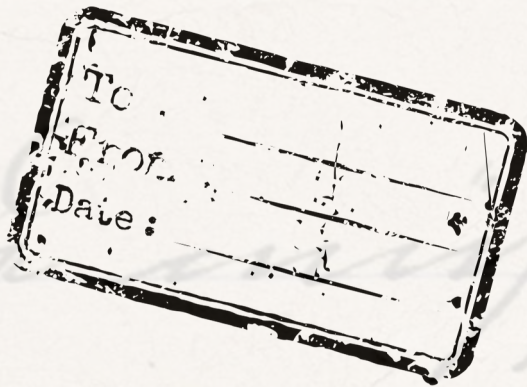
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Inna nillahi wa Inna illaihi rajioon

*“Surely, we belong to Allah and to Him we shall
return.”*

i. The passing of **Momin Usman**, an English Literature graduate (Session 2017-2021) and former office bearer of the Hiking and Mountaineering Club (2019–20), leaves our community quieter. He will be remembered for the quiet grace with which he carried himself and the lightness he brought into the lives around him. Momin was a student whose calm demeanour belied a deep reservoir of purpose. His presence was steady, his convictions quietly unwavering, and his aspirations carried with them a quiet radiance. Momin’s time among us was brief, yet he left an impression of sincerity and resolve. He passed away in Darmstadt, Germany, while swimming in the Grube Prinz von Hessen lake. We hold his memory with respect and pray for his eternal peace, and for strength and comfort to embrace his family in this time of immeasurable grief.

ii. We mourn the loss of **Syed Jaffer Hassan**, an Old Ravian from the English Department (Session 2017–2021), who passed away in a car accident with his brother. Son of Professor Baqar Jafri, Jaffer was known for his composed manner, inward depth, and a quiet sense of honour that drew respect without demand. He lived with restraint and thoughtfulness, carrying his aspirations with quiet resolve. His absence will be deeply felt by all who knew and loved him. We pray for peace upon his and his brother’s souls and for fortitude for their family as they endure the weight of this sudden and profound loss.



✦ Letters To The Editor ✦



Letters To The Editor

Letter 1

Dear Editor,

I write this letter while seated on more than a century-old brown bench that has, over the past many years, given a place to sit to reformers, scholars, and the highly esteemed occasional nappers. To my utter dismay, I find this quiet seat of shadowed wood now under siege by pen engravings, strokes of permanent markers, and rather distressingly, chewed gum.

Yes, so it appears our hallowed furniture must bear not only permanently etched initials into its surface but also a layered relic of chewed gum underneath its venerable shafts, an archaeologically rich site for wanderers with questionable taste. Perhaps our ascetics take this as the sole way available out there to leave a legacy, but I assure them, none of the posterity shall find this tasteful (chewed gum doesn't taste good).

It should also be noted that the kindest inhabitants of our campus, the green trees of character and stature, have now become diaries for confession. Their years and years old branches and bark now bear thy hollow declarations of love, whimsical utterances, and philosophically dense questions "why am I here?" engraved next to "Arshad 2020", as though Arshad might one day come back with a potent answer.

While I can appreciate the urge to leave a mark, must it really involve defacing things that belong to all of us? If you are determined to prove you were here, might I suggest planting a tree instead? It is a far better legacy

than a scratched desk or a fossilised mint. This campus has weathered colonial rule, countless administrations, and every possible fashion trend. It deserves at least the courtesy of being left unscarred by our momentary passions, and unadorned by our chewing gum.

Let us be remembered as the generation that cherished these silent witnesses to our shared story, rather than the one that couldn't resist scratching and sticking its name onto everything in sight.

Yours in exasperation,
A friend of Furniture.

Letter 2

Dear Editor,

Through your esteemed publication, we wish to put forth our genuine concerns regarding continued reliance on relative grading at our prestigious university.

We are well aware of the many nuances of this grading approach. However, as it goes by the recent revisions, many public and private institutions throughout Pakistan have now switched to absolute grading. This ensures unfair penalisation and sets a common benchmark across different institutions. Relative grading, as we have been able to understand, presents a compromised output of individual achievement.

Letters To The Editor

Now we do understand the intricacies of both these systems. Therefore, by taking everything into account, we suggest opting for a hybrid system. This ensures flexibility by combining absolute grading with clear rubrics and making room for moderation where necessary. To curb grade inflation, encouraging external benchmarking can provide a good alternative.

We sincerely hope the administration will consider this request and clear out the concern.

Yours Sincerely,
A Group of concerned students

Letter 3

Dear Editor,

Empires have risen, revolutions undergone, syllabi revised, faculty changed (or temporarily moved to attain another doctorate), yet one dynasty remains unshaken in the historical alleys of Government College University, Lahore, our eternal alumni, the cats of GCU. It is a profound truth that nations are built upon promises, yet these creatures demand none. They require no makaan, for the entire university campus is their domain; they need no imposed kapra, as they roam with a liberty that is, ironically, a privilege not extended to all our human fellows. Their requisites are elemental: fresh water, a modest morsel, and the incidental kindness that a civilized community should afford its most unassuming members.

Alas, the condition of these whiskered custodians is pitiable. Many wander malnouri-




shed, dehydrated, un-nurtured and some severely diseased. History tells us that civilizations are judged not by their might but by their treatment of the weakest; what verdict then awaits us, if we cannot care for the very creatures who share our joys and our loneliness?





I recall vividly the day two friends and I rescued a cat from our department. She was ravaged with eye infection and her tiny body was fraught with insects quenching on the pus seeping out. My friend Roshanay named her Cookie, perhaps as a promise of sweetness for us in this bitter world. As there was no place in the university to take her, we carried her to UVAS for treatment where she got better.

Be it the chunky ginger with emerald eyes who roams the inter lawns like a monarch or the two frail grey kittens, all of them are not doing okay and need our help. But sentiment alone will not fill a water bowl. We need shaded feeding corners, bowls refreshed daily, and a modest fund for veterinary care in the university. Last time I heard Ted-X started their "paws for a cause initiative" but never witnessed any practical outcomes.




Dear Editor, let GCU not be remembered as a place of arches and archives alone, but as a campus where even its quietest citizens, its cats, were given dignity, food, and shelter. For future generations will find them still here. The question is: will they find them thriving, or merely surviving?





Yours sincerely,
Mohattar

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An interview with Director CASP

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An Interview with Director CASP

Sajjar Shabbir, Co-Editor, along with the assistance of the Editorial Board.

GCU's Glorious Past, Project-706, and the Cause of "Certain Coldness" in Pakistan's Science Culture.

A while ago, The Gazette seized the opportunity to interview Dr. Naveed Afzal, Director of the Centre for Advanced Studies in Physics (CASP). The following transcript blends the verbatim exchange with the Director and subtle editorial refinements by The Gazette's Editorial Board to ensure a smooth and engaging read.

We have heard that CASP was started as a High Tension Laboratory that trained nuclear scientists who played a significant role in the Project 706. What's a high tension laboratory, how does it connect to a nuclear program?

CASP houses the very first particle accelerator, and the first proton accelerator, in Southeast Asia. This machine uses electrical energy to accelerate particles across extremely high voltages, which is why the facility has long been known as the High-Tension Laboratory. These days, it's more commonly called the Nuclear Laboratory, but if you ask Dr. Samar Mubarakmand, he still calls it the High-Tension Lab, a name that carries the weight of its history.

What is the historical significance of the High Tension Lab, and how did it transition from a nuclear research hub to CASP's current work?

The High Tension Lab owes its origins to Dr. Rafi Chaudhry, who did his PhD in nuclear physics directly under Nobel Prize-winner Ernest Rutherford, the man who pioneered the atomic model. Tucked among rows of government offices, many of which once had their eyes on the land for other uses, the lab survived only because Dr. Chaudhry and his successors refused to let it vanish. In its heyday before the 1998 tests, it was a research facility, a training ground, and a "nursery" for brilliant young scientists who would later drive Project 706 to completion. Today, reborn as the Centre for Advanced Studies in Physics (CASP), it has shifted from nuclear ambitions to fostering multidisciplinary research, carrying forward a legacy of scientific curiosity in new directions.

What kinds of materials and elements were studied here during the lab's peak years? Did that include radioactive substances like uranium and radium?

Absolutely. The lab did work with radioactive elements, including uranium and radium, particularly during its peak research years. In fact, if you take the time to search through old research publications from this facility, you'll find a fascinating range of studies; not just on radioactive materials, but also on various other elements and compounds. The scope was surprisingly broad: from investigations into insulators and semiconductors to work that pushed the boundaries of material science in Pakistan at the time.

(Continued on the next page)

An Interview with Director CASP

Figures like Dr. Samar Mubarakmand were closely associated with the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), and CASP often seemed to be aligned with PAEC's work. Did CASP formally facilitate PAEC in conducting experiments? Were there any official MoUs signed?

No, there were no official MoUs. But in reality, the work of these institutions was deeply interlinked, even without formal paperwork. In Pakistan's nuclear history, two parallel streams were crucial. On one side, you had Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan at Khan Research Laboratories, who brought in the expertise and infrastructure for uranium enrichment. Naturally occurring uranium is mostly U-238, which must be enriched to U-235 to sustain a fission reaction. That enrichment capability was absolutely foundational.

On the other side, you had PAEC under figures like Dr. Samar Mubarakmand, whose work in missile technology provided the means to deliver a nuclear payload with precision. Enriched uranium without a delivery system is simply potential energy locked away; missile technology turns it into strategic capability.

Project 706, Pakistan's coordinated nuclear weapons development program, depended equally on both these achievements. Without enriched U-235 from KRL and the delivery systems from PAEC, the project's goals would have remained incomplete. CASP, while not formally bound to PAEC through agreements, existed in that broader ecosystem; its research, facilities, and trained scientists contributed to the knowledge base that made such advancements possible.

Inside Pakistan's nuclear quest, there were two titans: KRL under Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan and PAEC under Dr. Samar Mubarakmand. They worked toward the same goal yet often seemed like rival camps. What fueled that quiet Cold War between them?

No one outside the inner circle knows the exact spark, but when you have two powerhouses, each led by strong-willed heads, working on the same high-stakes project, friction is almost inevitable. Still, both camps earned their place in history. If you had walked into KRL or PAEC in those days, you wouldn't have seen halls lined with academic degrees; there were surprisingly few PhDs. The atomic race wasn't won by degrees; it was built on practical genius, long nights, and hands-on problem solving.

The atomic program stretched across successive governments, and each administration seemed to have its "favorite." That shifting political patronage kept the rivalry alive. Whenever one camp was in the spotlight, the other simmered on the sidelines, waiting for its moment. In truth, had Dr. Mubarakmand been tasked with uranium enrichment, he might not have thrived since it wasn't his arena. And if Dr. Khan had stepped into missile technology, the same could be said. They were two specialists, each a master of their own domain. Together, KRL and PAEC worked like two interlocking gears, powering Project 706 all the way to the thunderclap of Chagai-I in 1998. Whatever the rivalries may have been, the mission was the same: it was all about Pakistan.

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An Interview with Director CASP

There seems to be ‘certain coldness’ in Pakistan’s scientific culture. Students do not appear deeply interested in science anymore. How do you see this problem?

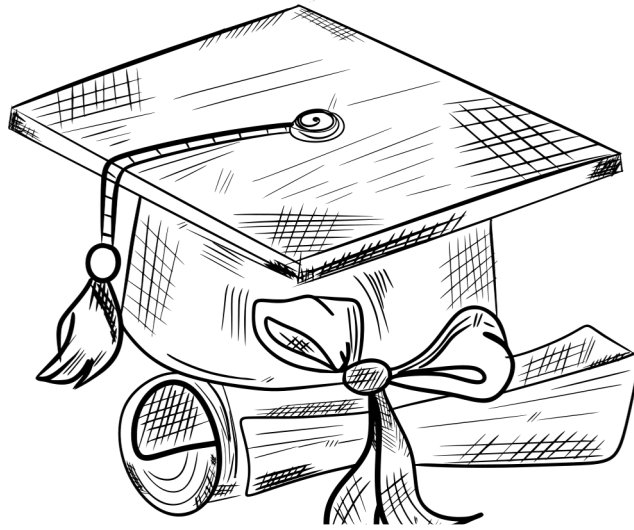
Market demand shapes a lot of what students choose. In 2001, the telecom sector was booming, and suddenly everyone wanted a degree in telecommunications. By 2006, the tide had shifted toward electrical engineering, and CASP responded by launching an Electrical Engineering department. Now, the buzz is around AI and computer science, while fields like applied physics and chemistry get less attention. It wasn’t always like this. There was a time when students aspired to study nuclear physics and dreamt of joining PAEC or KRL. But today, career prospects and hiring trends are the compass. That’s understandable, but dangerous, because we can’t afford to let the basic sciences fade into the background.

The bigger challenge lies deeper: rote learning. When students are trained to memorize without understanding, their conceptual foundations remain fragile. If those same students go on to teach, they pass on the same hollow methods, and the cycle continues. In physics especially, we suffer from a shortage of problem-based instruction and, perhaps more importantly, a shortage of truly inspiring teachers.

Until we rebuild our culture of conceptual learning and nurture passionate educators, the pendulum will keep swinging away from the core sciences, and we’ll keep paying the price

in the long run. Whether you’re in nuclear physics, AI, or any other field, keep your fundamentals strong and your passion stronger. Nations that neglect science risk becoming dependent; nations that nurture it shape their own destiny. The choice is ours.





Beyond the Lecture Halls



Beyond The Lecture Halls

The Role Of Honour

Muhammad Umer Khan, Lecturer

It has often been said that every saint has a past, every sinner a future, and that every Ravian has at some point in their life seen a copy of The Gazette. And though there aren't many things in life we can be sure of, it is reasonably safe to assume that that copy has always remained unread. And therein lies the proof that despite a variety of differences between saints, sinners and Ravians, all share among themselves a common humanity and at least a basic instinct for survival, which would prevent them from handling the magazine for too long, if at all. And rightfully so, for who among us would really trust a person known to habitually read The Gazette from cover to cover? It is almost unthinkable. Almost, I say, because I have indeed met such a person, albeit only once, a sinner who fancied himself a saint but was, undoubtedly, a Ravian.

So, it is with some assurance of remaining unread that I have decided I too should be published in The Gazette. For you see, I feel it is necessary for my development as a research scholar that my thoughts, meticulously crafted into writing, find a final resting place in this literary graveyard visited only by those who have a loved one buried in it or by those morbid few whose lot in life has compelled them to toil here.

Since this writing will remain essentially ignored by the general public, let me be frank: when I received a message requesting that I contribute to this periodical, my suspicions

were immediately raised.

That The Gazette somehow still exists despite nobody ever having fully understood why or even how was not the source of this suspicion. Not at all. Rather, it was the peculiar timing of it all, for I was contacted by someone from the editorial team even as I was concluding my research into the magazine's venerable history, much of which lies shrouded in an almost impenetrable fog of intrigue. I was concerned: could someone have discovered what secrets I now know? Was I a target? I could not say. It was entirely possible that the dark forces responsible for my own eviction from The Gazette many years ago had me in their sights all over again!

Be that as it may, I believe the only way to understand why is it that The Gazette exists is by posing the question: should The Gazette exist? You might interject and say: but is it not better to decide what The Gazette is in the first place before we get into whether it should or should not exist? I would respond to this by pointing out that you exist. And so far, nobody, including yourself, has been able to determine what exactly is it that you are. And all you can offer in lieu of a substantial explanation are ineffectual nouns (human, student, failure) that stand in for other nouns (ape, mammal, plagiarist) in an infinite chain of nouns (ego, self, narcissist) that remain divorced from all meaning forever. On the contrary, if you are experienced enough and have lived a life of any merit at all, you will recognise immediately that though many people are curious about what you are their more immediate concern is whether you should continue to exist or not.

(Continued on the next page)

Beyond The Lecture Halls

So, let us not waste time with What and move on to Should. The question of 'should' is a matter of principle; unfortunately, we live in an age devoid of principles. In fact, you will find that nowadays such questions are often answered by people who pose further questions such as: does it serve a useful purpose? Implying thereby that a thing is only worthy of existence if it fits this arbitrary requirement of usefulness, which limits the whole debate to a cheap, bourgeois, utilitarian frame tethered to human ambition. And if you find humans and their ambitions as unimpressive and tedious as I do, you can respond by asking a question of your own: does a horse exist solely because it is 'useful' to humans? After all, left to its own devices, you'll find that the horse does not simply vanish. It continues horsing.

You may conclude thus that the horse exists simply as one of the many millions, perhaps even billions of answers to the grand old question of life. It exists to be a horse; nothing more, nothing less.

You may object to this line of reasoning, and assert instead that God has definitely made horses for human use. Technically, on that point, you will note that God has also fashioned a brain for you to use, which you'll admit you have never really used except perhaps in times of great need and that too only sparingly. The Gazette, like the horse and the human brain, exists not because it is useful or because it can be of use; it exists in a state of total transcendental indifference to the very concept of usefulness. It simply is. Like a force of nature. Or a lizard. Any use is incidental. Not a feature, but a flaw. If one could ever consider that The Gazette could, God forbid, be flawed!

Based on the discussion so far, you may already have drawn some conclusions as to why I was evicted from The Gazette and never became editor. Let me assure you, however, that my thoughts weren't always a chaotic mess, nor would they have resulted in mass confusion or even public outrage. No, it was because a friend of mine asked me not to apply. He said he really wanted to be the editor, and that if I were to apply I would probably get the position, for I had steadily worked up the ranks and proven myself capable; but, he pointed out, you have so many other opportunities, whereas I have none. The Ravi refuses to accept me, he said, even the Scientific Ravi has turned me out. So, please, he insisted, don't apply! I need that roll of honour to show my parents that I, too, have value, he said as he slumped into a chair Iqbal may have seen but never sat in. If I had known then how the promise of a roll of honour would turn him into a monster, I would never have let his speech get to me!

Instead, moved by his heartrending plea, I withdrew my application for the post. I prioritised, you see, the need of my brother over my own. A foolish mistake! Consequently, he got the job. And almost overnight, he changed. Gone were his humility, his pitiable demeanour, and the sadness in his eyes. Soon thereafter, I began to hear rumours about instances of his inexplicable vitriol against me, but I dismissed them as nonsense. That is, till one day, as I was on my way to the library, I heard him haranguing some juniors in the office, going on about how the post of editor had been promised to him two thousand years ago! That he had always been the chosen one.

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That I had been a usurper, unworthy of the honour...and that I was subhuman, for I could not spell the word 'bureaucratic' correctly without having to resort to using autocorrect. I was outraged. I had told him of my troubles with that word in private! It is usually the only multisyllabic word Ravians know how to spell, chant and revere. I decided to confront him, but when I tried the door, it was locked. I could not get in. You ingrate! I yelled. I took you in when even The Scientific Ravi refused to have anything to do with you!

But there really wasn't much I could do. None of the people who had once been my colleagues would look me in the eye. It was a case of he who holds the roll, commands the honour...and so on.

He went on to receive the roll of honour reserved for the editor of The Gazette by virtue of designation. I believe he had designs despite his claims to the contrary on the Scientific Ravi too, but the United Nations intervened before this annexation went too far. As you are probably aware, a roll of honour is one of the most important, if not the most important, commendations you can receive in life. But no roll of honour comes close to the one you receive for being the editor of The Gazette. My extensive research and scholarship, the publishing of which motivated this article, led me to uncover certain facts that I am about to relate now.

First of all, I discovered from accounts in several ancient reference books hidden away in the central library that the roll of honour for

The Gazette is prepared from a special, one might even say a magical, type of wood acquired from the darkest recesses of the university's botanical gardens. Harvested with a ceremonial silver sickle on the night of a total lunar eclipse, even the slightest touch of this miracle bark endows its recipient with superhuman powers of both mind and body. Equipped with these, unfortunately, my friend's natural tendency to be obsessed with status was considerably amplified. He wanted to be singular and kept insisting that there could never be any other editors of The Gazette. He would brook no comparison. There could be only one!

If you find yourself unconvinced, look up yourself for any of the past editors of The Gazette who have received the roll of honour. Where are they? Go on. Search for them. Scour the world for any trace of their having existed. You can't find them, can you? It seems almost as if they have been wiped clean off the face of the earth. You expect them to have moved on to become prominent members of the community and yet you can't locate them when you need an article to give the magazine some volume. Why? I will tell you why! It is because they have all gone underground! They have acquired false identities in order to protect themselves, because my friend, after assuming the office of editor, decided that nobody else who might lay claim to The Gazette office should survive.

You see, anyone who becomes editor is endowed with prolonged life, peak levels of human health, a full head of lush hair, glowing skin, not a blemish or a scar, no sign of acne, only youthful lustre. Occupying the post immediately increases height, moderates

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weight, improves cortisol and cholesterol levels and eliminates toxins from the body so quickly you could toss an editor into the canal and cleanse it within minutes. Receiving the roll of honour elevates these salutary effects to superhuman levels: X-ray vision, the capacity to spot grammatical errors from a distance of seven kilometers, an inflated sense of self-worth, and enhanced survival skills that allow former editors to thrive in enclosed spaces that may or may not have originally been designed to serve as lavatories. These are only just a few of the innumerable powers one receives with the coveted roll of honour. It is said that one former editor became so powerful that he actually became the sun. His rays now sustain half the plant life on Earth. And someday this messiah will return to install an air conditioner in the office of The Gazette, setting off thereby the beginning of the end of print media in our digital world. And it is this individual that my erstwhile friend now fears most.

But I see you do not believe me. It is evident that nobody has ever informed you of any of this. I am not surprised. It is a closely guarded secret that not many know. Observe any editorial team and you will see signs of a malignant poison that infects the general environment of the office since my friend's departure.

You'll find them conspiring against each other, at times teaming up to eliminate a common enemy, and at other times attacking those they only suspect of harbouring the desire to become editor. Smiling and feigning wholesomeness and discussing mental health

even as they stab each other in the heart! They will destroy all potential rivals, sacrifice red heifers and spill blue ink. They will not shy away from any amount of underhanded efforts to achieve their ends. And they believe all the brutality they enact in the pursuit of this office is ultimately justified by a utopian vision of a glorious end: the roll of honour! It is, however, not entirely their fault. My friend, after he manipulated me out of applying for the post, put a curse on the office, and so any who chose to occupy it ever since has all descended quickly into a madness fueled by ambition and envy. Meanwhile, he, after eliminating countless former editors, soon turned his evil gaze beyond murder and began robbing editors of their rolls of honour. Though he vacated the office many years ago, he still lies in wait during every convocation to attack and steal the mysterious certificate from unsuspecting recipients. He fears the return of the solar-powered digital messiah. The end of print media would forever render him irrelevant

And so he has been collecting as many rolls of honour as he can to deploy them when the messiah of sustainable practices arrives. He intends to attack him armed with a thousand rolls of what he lacks in his very essence: honour! And to finally defeat him in an editorial battle, where semi-colons will confront the Cambridge comma in a fight to the bitter end! So then...what is to be done? How can The Gazette and its devotees be rescued from the clutches of this evil, punctuation-obsessed pedant?

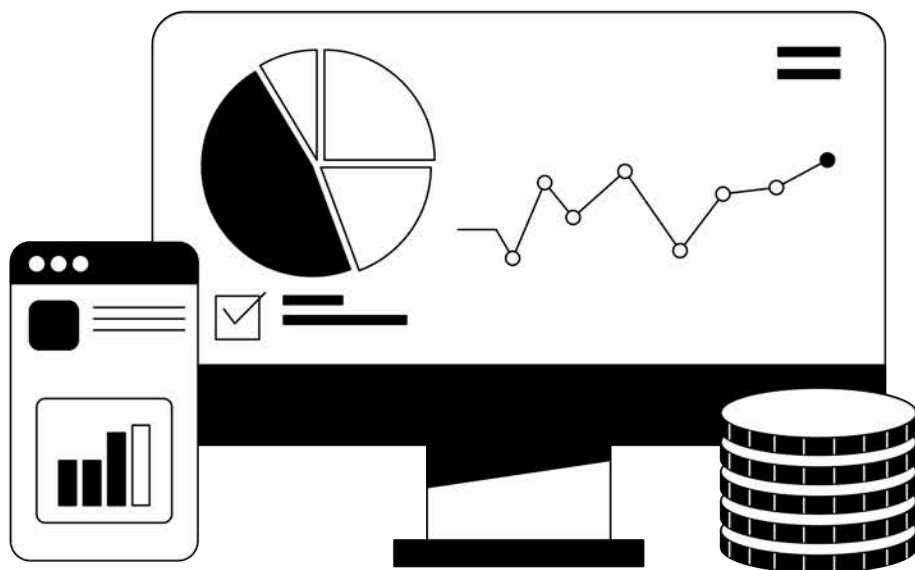
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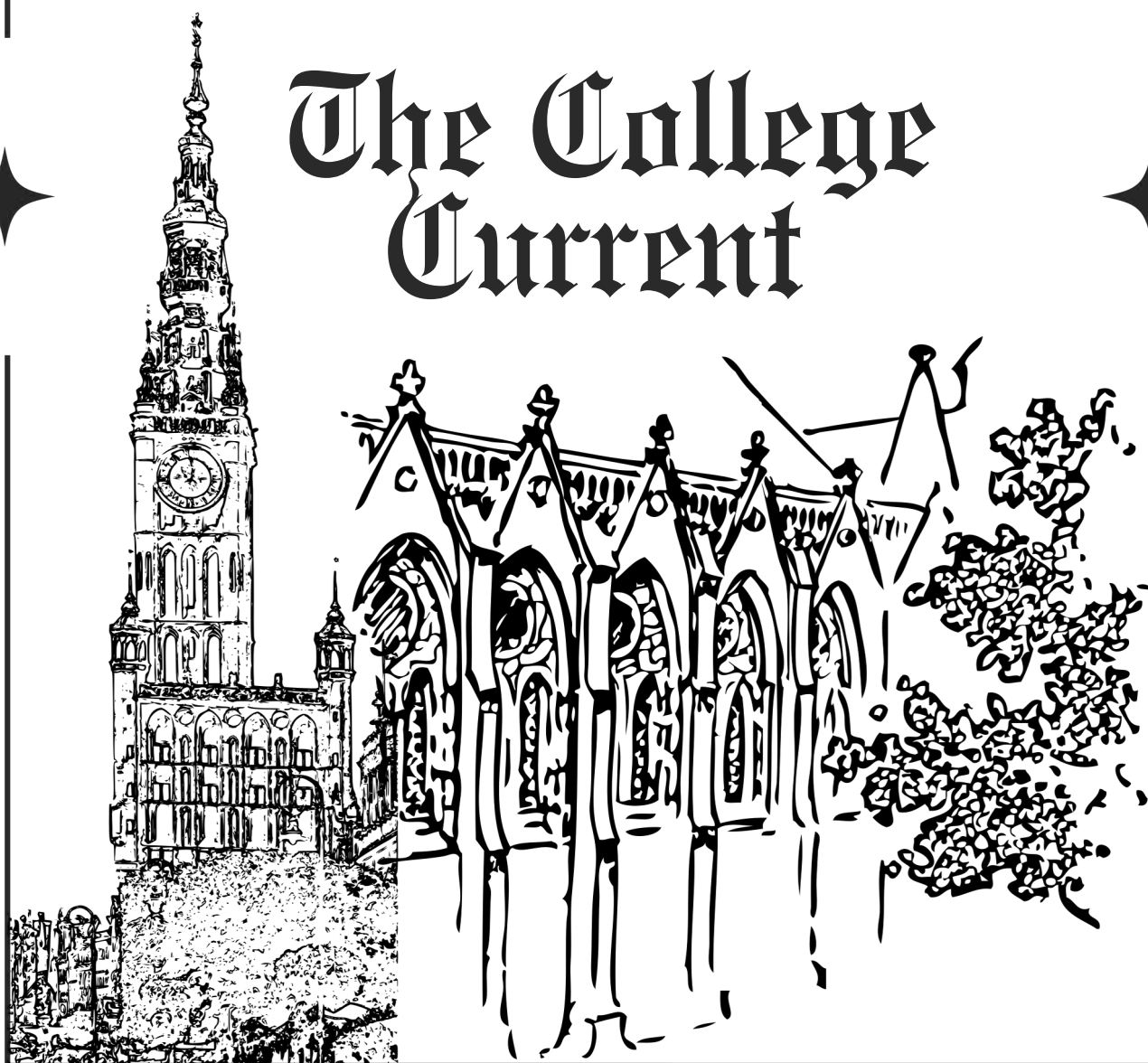
This is the heart of the matter. This is precisely the point to which I have been trying to get. But I hear someone coming. I'm afraid it might be him. There is no time. I must send this unfinished document before it is too late. Even if it is too late for me, you, dear reader, still have time. Be warned! Do not aspire to this office! For even if you fight back against this madman's curse, he might summon dark Western powers to come to his aid. They will claim they are spreading democracy, or liberating brown women by bombing them! Trust no one! All the saints and sinners of our age are complicit! It is better if, like a true Ravian, wherever you find a copy of The Gazette, you ignore it and move on.

Note: The essay is a fictional and allegorical commentary on global systems of power.





The College Current



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Campus Goings-On

Maham Siddiqui, Co-Editor.

Romantic entanglements and society politics... have long been the usual and constant events of campus life, but lately a full-blown epidemic of Instagram reels has swept the campus, watch out! An official notice to ban the recording of such videos on campus has been issued, so by the time you have got the Gazette '25 on your screens, the epidemic may not be as intense as the campus is witnessing it at the moment. So here is what it is currently like: You are walking, minding your business, wearing your best outfit (what's even that?) when suddenly someone stops you. That certain someone has a familiar face; one that runs a self-sponsored fan club bestowing the world with reels based on their self-praise about how their outfits have lately been turning heads all around the campus. Strangely, neither have I nor my friends have had our heads turned for the reason stated in these videos. This wouldn't be worth mentioning, if not for the fact, that you might be featured in their next video. Fortunately, our one-man PR icon asks for your consent before making you a part of their videos (gotta give credit where it's due, consent is key).

The ongoing epidemic comes with several variants of its virus. The horrors of life are not as endless as the kinds of reels being made on campus. The other variant is infinitely worse than the fashion one, it begins its reels with toe-curling, aggravating "Hiiii guyyys!!!!" and approaches strangers for Eidi and bombards them with questions so theoretically questionable that your brain would toot.

The real horror is the fact that some of these reels are staged, and the "strangers" are friends in real life. Theatre of the Fraud. I found out about this scam when I saw these "strangers" in the same class as the person asking the questions. Therefore, chances of you being asked about the details of your outfit are significantly and exponentially higher than chances of you being greeted with "Hiiii guyyys" and being asked to give Eidi or a word to define your ex-it strategy. You can only imagine the level of my vexation when I saw a boy handing out a 500 rupee note as Eidi in one of the reels. I shall only find peace if I run into him on campus and he assures me that he was also a "stranger" and that the video was staged and that he took his money back right after the unnecessary reel finished. You are not telling me that we are the only ones who run a humanitarian aid project to get enough samosas for three.

Keeping the epidemic of Instagram reels aside, there is another epidemic on campus unknown to the point of non-existence. *shivers*. The chairs in the PG Library give you an unforgettable itch on the underside of your thighs that lasts for days. I confess myself wholly unable to fathom why the library-goers are alarmingly and eerily silent about it. Perhaps some want to spread the word about it but they are considerate and do not plan on triggering nausea in the delicate souls around them who never get body itches. But don't you worry; let our Gazette be the source of awareness about this taboo subject.

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This mysterious PG Library-special itch was an observation by one of our assistant editors at first; it is now empirically confirmed by my firsthand experience with a weeklong after-effect. You are better off sitting in the library cabins. Trust my word or suffer. The choice is always yours.

Not going to the library won't help, though. Well...there's another epidemic on campus. I promise this is the last one. It is not occurring on a big scale; in fact the scale is as small as the chances of me landing a job. A soul-sapping and low-impact epidemic of the itch to snitch on your batch mates. Things said in close circles are reaching teachers at the speed of 300,000 km/s. Said you don't like the humor of a certain teacher? Lo and behold, that teacher has now been informed that they must sleep with one eye open. Chances are, if you praise that you like a teacher's sense of humor, they will be told that the batch does not appreciate that lectures are not serious and strictly academic. This epidemic seems to me a madcap scheme to not be in the bad books of at least one teacher. So far, I have been informed about three certified snitchers, there may be more lurking in the shadows. But these three must-tell-the-teachers (three musketeers...three must-tell-the-teachers, get it? Don't hate me. I'm better in person). Anyway, these three, they need to find a different way to fix grades, because the teachers on this campus may give you a kidney but they will make you work hard for the good grade (Nobody is giving any kidneys either, unless kidneys are renamed as assignments. Then yes you'll be getting lots of them).

The departing batch of the English Literature Department has seen all the ongoing campus epidemics, that explains why they look the way they look. They are Lord of the flies 2.0. Polls brought betrayals, final projects sparked power struggles. If anyone deserves a reality show, it's them. If you think you have not seen them, oh, you have. Some of them were seen wearing plague doctors' cloaks, marching in the amphitheatre. Students passing by, witnessed these people perform the oddest of rituals every single day from morning to evening. It became a daily campus spectacle, part theatre, part "should we call someone". None of the spectators knew where those students came from, what they were doing or why they looked so committed and unbothered doing it. Only the batch knew and their teacher who would eventually grade their rituals. Farewell to this batch! They contributed a lot to campus goings-on, in the most unusual, and sometimes enduring, of ways.

Farewell Dinners, great thing. Farewell Dinners at GCU, an abstract phenomenon. Dates and venues are kept strategically vague, because details are just too much for the young students. It always happens, eventually. The venue shifts at the last minute, the planned performances get mysteriously cancelled, and the will to attend the dinner is gone by the time it finally happens. Recently, the Mutual Stubbornness Summit happened over who would get the Bukhari auditorium as their venue. Rules were made optional and petty-palooza was accepted as mandatory.

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Rest in peace, Patras Bukhari! You would not have liked this. Lord of the flies 2.0 recently had their farewell dinner too. And the venue was surprisingly not their imagination. And no, all the above mentioned chaos was not the part of their soul-replenishing farewell dinner. Owing to the aphasia the brilliance of this extraordinary batch causes and the failure of words to express how exceptional they are, the batch did not get farewell speeches from teachers. The job was instead given to qawwals, because what else would be better than qawwalis to express the devotion and awe that the teachers have for this batch.

The Qawwali session was the only source of entertainment arranged for the farewell night, so that the students could have ample time to register the effect totally and wholly. Lord of the flies 2.0 wholeheartedly enjoyed this grand gesture of admiration and shall forever cherish all the efforts that were made to make their farewell unprecedentedly perfect and memorable. Touch wood.

Speaking of qawwalis, people on this campus are coming up with new genres of music these days. These are songs that you never thought you would hear in 2025, or, frankly, ever. The creativity is commendable, no digs on that. But the dilemma is...you know when a song just gets stuck in your head without it being your favorite? Name that genre, which is what the campus is breeding these days. Your ears may go sore, but your neck involuntarily grooves to the song playing in your mind, on an endless loop. The only escape from these creative yet aggravating songs? Possibly a lobotomy. Possibly nothing. Possibly a pistol (No, not just any gun. A pistol)

Beyond *Lord of the flies*, qawwali goodbyes, fashion's demise, Hiiiiii guyyyys, and itchy thighs, the campus is abuzz with a multitude of other happenings; **a Barbie from one city and Ken from another**, a Romeo with dreams so much in contradiction with the values of Juliet's father that their union is impossible, inter-galactic forces breaking the lock of the Gazette office, and so much more. These tropes occur every year; you shall witness these recurring events yourself as they are inevitably part of the lore of every batch. This feature is a sincere endeavor by Gazette '25 to unveil events which might have otherwise remained beyond your knowledge. Hope you enjoyed the read, if not, I highly recommend a reflective timeout in the PG library on its comfortable chairs. Byeeee guyyyyys!!! (No, I don't make those reels with "strangers", but that would have been a hilarious plot twist).



To Stay Or To Go: Where Do Young Ravians See Their Future – A Survey Poll.

Amna Sana, Joint Secretary SMELC 2024-25 & Huzaifa Zeeshan Awan, Co-Editor.

Over the years, Pakistan has acquired the penchant of being the nation which is predominantly distrusted by those who once believed it to be their future—the youth. The last few governments have undergone a number of severe political and economic crises, the effects of which have been felt by

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many at the grassroots level. The Pakistan Economic Survey regrettably notes that up until April 2024, around 13.5 million Pakistanis have left their soil, placing the future of their livelihood across 50 countries. Among these, a notable number are the students of Pakistani educational institutions, who have sought admissions in countries abroad to find more favourable opportunities for employment.

Most of these countries, especially those in the West, often treat Pakistanis with a subtle enmity and disdain which can never be fully called out or responded to. Even then, such individuals are often found prioritising these nations over their homeland, since their capacity to endure hatred at the hands of the majority weighs in more than their distrust in Pakistan's rulers to fix problems which have made the country decrepit for years. To access what opinions the students of Government College University hold with regard to the current socio-economic landscape of Pakistan, the Gazette conducted a campus-wide survey, engaging with Ravians from various academic backgrounds.

The survey aims to understand whether students and alumni of GCU, an institution historically known for churning out graduates who have contributed significantly to the fields of bureaucracy, art, science and literature in the country, plan on staying in Pakistan, or if they wish to move abroad to a First World country.

current socio-economic landscape of Pakistan, the Gazette conducted a campus-wide survey,

Question: Do you plan to emigrate to a First World Country (e.g. UK, USA and Canada) in the near future?

Yes (60.3%) No (23.8%) Not Sure Yet (15.9%)

It can be observed that a vast majority of individuals choose to emigrate to a First World country for their future. Each of those who voted was then asked to provide a reason for their choice. Most of those who chose "Yes" stated financial/political instability, religious extremism, climate change, job scarcity and corruption as the main causes for leaving the country. One responder stated:

"Emigrating to first-world countries such as the USA or the UK can offer numerous advantages. These nations often provide better economic opportunities, including higher wages, stronger job markets, and more secure labour rights. Political stability, strong legal frameworks, and greater personal freedoms, such as freedom of speech and religion, also attract me".

The ironic significance of such a remark cannot go unnoticed, as Pakistan, a post-colonial country which once claimed to be free from the shackles of Western Colonialism, finds itself unable to match up to the same powers that enslaved its people a century ago.

Other responders also desired to leave due to the controlling norms that seep into every facet of Pakistani society. One person remarked:

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“Because there is no freedom, and we are enslaved by these brutal politicians and the establishment”

This indicates that even though no one holds a grudge against Pakistani ideology in and of itself, it is always the folly of those who are in power, often jilting political processes and the writ of the state for personal political gains.

Those who voted “No” mostly expressed their enthusiasm to stay back and help their homeland through taking part in social activism, bureaucracy, along altruistic efforts to help the country’s downtrodden class. One responder mentioned:

“As the recent studies have shown that educated people are leaving Pakistan at very quick pace, I consider that a country which has given me everything till my graduation and made me capable enough to go to a first world country doesn't mean that I should use this option and leave my country as it is just to make my life easier. If the country has given me so much, I must pay back my country. If all educated people decide to leave, then who's gonna serve the country to make it better? Although this statement of mine seems delusional, I believe that it is possible”.

Some also expressed a reluctance to leave because of their family members who still reside in Pakistan. A few who voted on the third option still meditated on what they had to choose, with some stating that perhaps they would call for leaving the country if it could have been affordable:

“too mediocre financially to leave this place, too mediocre academically to get a scholarship and belong to a too mediocre conservative family who might not allow me to go overseas for studies alone”.

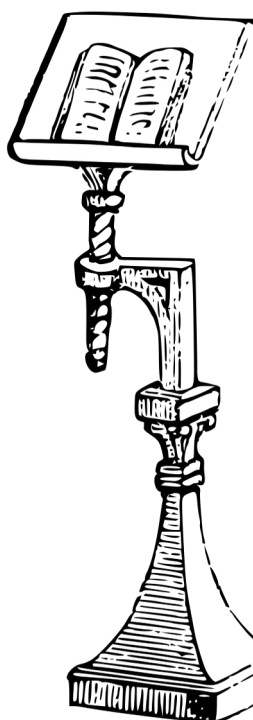
This certifies that the system has not yet helped many of the students achieve their full potential, inducing lacklustre feelings of inactivity, self-consciousness and exhaustion.

To conclude, the educated youth of any country plays a crucial role in determining its future development. The overwhelming number of responses of those who wish to leave the country represents the disillusionment which many people face in the light of crippling inflation and continuous political controversies that make the democratic processes unstable for the masses. Although bleak, some hope remains as there are also individuals present who still carry an egalitarian patriotic fervour, wishing to give back to the homeland that bestowed them with all the pre-requisites of a meaningful life: shared history, identity and culture.





Essays & Reflection



Essays & Reflections

GCU's Commute Narrative: The Pigeon Flying Out of Bus No. 6

Sajjar Shabbir, Co-Editor.

For four years, our days dawned with an uncertain, pulsing predictability as the amber sun learnt to stretch its golden limbs over Lahore. The sun languished with idle anticipation, I had perfected over the years, waiting for GCU bus no. 6 to round the corner near Mozang Chungi. That bus, mustard-yellow and dusky-white with tall, intruding windows and memories of a thousand students layered like old, chipping paint on its tired body, has been more than a liable vehicle. It is a country stitched together by the morning smog of December and the descending indolence of May's heatwaves. Each day, I climbed aboard with a book, riddled with dog ears, tucked under my arm and a world inside my head. Still, soon enough, I would abandon both to observe the far more theatrical characters who shuffled in and out of the rattling beast that carried us from our homes to the alluring, homelike grandeur of Government College. Lahore is a cosmopolitan space that reverberates with poetry under the rustling shades of amaltas and mulberry trees in summers, where the buses stand for sixty seconds in wait of ascending bodies.

The students, with their feet trembling alongside the palpitating engine, exhale history in dust-covered, tight-spaced, overcrowded seats.

From the moment the bus turned onto Ferozepur Road, we could smell it; a city steeped in tandoori fumes, the tang of sweat mixing with many a note of gifted perfumes, and the occasional drift of jasmine tangled in a woman's scarf and over a man's begrudging ear. On rainy days, the air would turn rather acidic because of the smell of wet concrete, decade-long construction sites, and roasting corn, and everyone in the bus would be wearing a thin film of city and unresolved monsoon dreams. The students inside the buses were their ethnography, glued together with dialects and destinies. In every bus, be it no. 3, where I bid adieu to my dearest friends, or no. 8, that carried my nemesis to outskirts of Lahore, there will be a girl who had a fixed seat, always near the back, humming away works of Ghalib or Iqbal to herself like it was a private prayer, an evening ritual.

A boy with oversized, baggy jeans, with ink-stained bag and cuffs always muddied, as if he had run through the world to catch this ride, leaning his head outside the window, welcoming accidents and the divine. A girl with a ginormous bag and knitting supplies, accompanied by another with music blasting in her ears at unhealthy volume and an added credit for nonchalance. Radiohead, The Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, The Rolling Stones, The Doors, you name it.

Moreover, you will find groups of boys playing cards in the last row, which they claim is only forbidden on university premises, betting on samosas and quoting Bulleh Shah when they win.

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Another group with the latest gossip from the hostels, inter-departmental dilemmas, society's power struggles and commentaries on new absurd disciplinary policies.

There would be many who had a habit of forgetting bus cards, and still more who had learned to enter the wrong bus. There was never a shortage of intermediate boys with slicked-back hair and too much perfume, who claimed to know every shopkeeper on Mall Road. The mysterious souls of Bangla Campus wrote poems in the margins of their chemistry books, invested in philosophical texts hidden in the vastness of biotechnology practical copies. People slept, sketched, snored, and sometimes cried silently behind dupattas. Someone was always standing in the aisle, rehearsing a debate or eating and then offering fries to strangers. Every journey was a small theatre, chaotic and communal, where the mundane had acquired the knowledge of transforming into memory.

Come winter, there was the romance of fog, of breath turning into smoke, of cheeks reddened like crisp apples, and the delicate scent of clove and cardamom escaping from thermos lids opened in secret sips. As the bus swam through the molten city, I would find myself watching a boy with almond eyes, sketch faces on the fogged-up window. They melted as quickly as they appeared, like the promises of politicians and the sugar and khoya in melting kulfis. The road shimmered, and outside, Lahore sprawled like an unruly sonnet; rickshaws negotiating with natural ferocity, flattened goats on motorbikes, women shielding their hennaed hands from the sun, men swatting flies as if they were rejecting existential dread.

The city did not know how to breathe; it pulsed. In the evening, the bus wore silence like a shawl. Everyone was wrapped in layers and thoughts; the driver sipped chai from a glass balanced precariously near the gear stick, the girls nearing their destination, R.A. Bazaar, capturing the skies and hooded silhouettes of their beloved friends who had stolen their window seat minutes earlier. There were heartbreaks, freshly wounded by orangish hues of the setting sun, and we all witnessed pain in quiet glances exchanged across rows. Then there were effortless debates on politics, religion, and the price of mangoes that could turn the air inside the bus electric. Lahore entered us not just through the windows but through conversations, through scents, through the old film songs that someone's Bluetooth speaker would always play too loudly. Noor Jehan reigned supreme on Wednesdays.

On spring mornings, pigeons will find their way inside, seeking warmth and comfort. They would sit calmly, filling the overwhelming emptiness of long-standing buses, under the grandness of the gothic lady, before the students began to pile in, dreading pigeon droppings on their preferred seats. During the commotion, they will fly out as if summoned by poetry. The city outside changed with every kilometre. Old Lahore breathed in calligraphy and crumbling brick, while Model Town flaunted its symmetry.

The Lahore Canal wore seasons like a diva; pink with blossoms in spring, golden in autumn, green with algae in monsoon, and barren like longing in winter. We passed it

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daily, and it passed through us too. At times, I felt like I was ageing with the city, not against it, and the bus was our shared timeline.

On my last day of university, I boarded bus no. 6 and leaned against the window, holding Ulysses, cheek pressed to the cool, translucent glass, watching the city fold into itself like a tired poet. Somewhere between Davis Road and Mozang, I felt a sudden, inexplicable tenderness for the soon to become strangers around me, as though we were all verses in the same ghazal, paused but unfinished. Years from now, when I will have traded this commute for conferences and coffee shops, and the bus will likely have retired into forgotten routines, I will still remember the scent of Lahore in the morning, the shudder of the bus over a pothole, the mosaic of lives unfolding around me. This city is not linear, and neither is this journey.

Lahore, like bus no 6, is not about arriving. It is about noticing, about belonging, and about being perpetually, beautifully, on the way.

Where Are All The People At?

Ayesha Musharraf.

The close-knit neighbourhoods in Lahore seem to be a near-extinction legend that will soon haunt us. The complexion of cultural warmth is slowly waning out. Even a rare, real sight of seeing children playing cricket on the street teeters on the brink of an almost-nostalgic feeling. The question, which I hope teases not

just a few of us, begs to be asked: Where are all the people at? Outside? The roads? But those are the habitats of cars. I can't see a human being in a thing that crosses the street like a flash of light; I didn't catch a human sound, but a loud rusty engine blending with music bursting through speakers. The only time people are witnessed inside the car is when the window of the slightly levitated public bus allows me to peer into their lives unfolding upon a space in motion. Children cramming their syllabus at 7 AM in the morning on their way to school. A makeshift paratha and jam were handed to the kids last minute by their mothers.

Dry cleaned clothes on a hanger hanging by the grab handle of the car door. I am also fond of buses for the way we are connected with people seated inside, just by virtue of being in the same confined space as them.

What about friends? They stay, remain, enlighten, encourage and eventually morph into a virtual phantom as once a shelter of context that ties us together disperses. A green dot indicates they are online but busy. A meme exchange never graduates into a conversation. A promised meet-up is eclipsed by hesitation to reconnect. A "failed mourning" occurs; they are still friends, but are eventually gaining semblance to memory. A persistent wound that isn't sutured by time only hurts when scraped. It is not anybody's fault. Some relationships thrive on the catalyst of context-specific spaces, such as a university.

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If it's the friends who stay, it is rather the spaces that betray. Distances of an ever-expanding city continue like a devil's gut. It is too expensive to travel to see friends. The restaurants, on the other hand, are infamously ironic. All factors there ritually banish any probability for a conversation to take place. Scorching music. Acoustics principles thrown out of the hypothetical window (due to a tragic lack of a real one). Awkwardness in the air for overstaying in an air-conditioned hall longer than what is prescribed on an invisible timer.

What of the community-based activities? We have all heard. They have a paywalled human connection. Now you get to pay thousands of rupees to paint a mug, sculpt a pot or tell a story to another human being. Also, when have crowds been the antidote to urban loneliness? So, cross out malls as a cure, too. Crowd is an absence disguised as presence. It is a visual that paradoxically affirms my fidelity to loneliness. At least, we share a common purpose for shopping. People are now only situated upon the thin threads of routine rhythms that I co-participate in.

The takeaway cannot be an insufferable gloominess. Art comes to the rescue. It sublimely preserves the remnants of people at their most profound. Books are dialogues, speaking to us in the "here and now". Even being conceived in history, it is a telephone wire emerging through the centuries.

When I watch a Tarantino film, I don't just feel the warmth of the characters he has carved out, but all the cultural references that kept him company in the video archive store, before he

responded to his inner call of making films. More so, the family is a social bond under the veneer of abundance: we see them often, they are always available, but await being discovered as people.

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter.

Ruhma Saeed, BS English Literature.

From the circular tables of the Inter Library to the more social-distancing friendly rectangular ones of the Postgraduate Library, to the reclusive study carrels in both—each equipped with glaring tube lights, at times covered with paper sheets that serve as impromptu light diffusers, flowing over the light from the shelf above with the grace of a bashful bride's veil—coming with complementary (what appear to be) pest-infested chairs that ensure the students' physical well-being by making prolonged sitting palpably impossible: Government College University is undoubtedly a site of historical wonder. Perhaps Ashfaq Ahmad's famous play on the word *darsgāh* (a place of instruction) transforming into *dargāh* (a shrine) in his description of the 'chosen' place was taken a little too literally by the forthcoming batches who scribbled and doodled on the desks with an air of creating timeless masterpieces on otherwise quite mediocre furniture. These inscriptions range from pithy aphorisms by the philosophically minded to cell-phone numbers and, with modernity, Snapchat IDs of the more technologically inclined details—that might be replaced by QR codes in near future.

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The desks are evocative of the walls of dargāhs where frustrated visitors commemorate their unrequited love by writing the names of their lost lovers often with a heart struck with Cupid's arrow separating them.

Here you find all kinds of information from exorcist Bengali Babas who claims to bring maḥbūb to one's feet to the contact details of the Sufi master Rumi himself. The place like the desks in it is a palimpsest, a site of an ongoing dialogue between the past, present and the future, a dynamic concurrence of an ostensible absence and a hauntological presence.

A soul flutters through the brick walls of the institution, weathered by time, tracing its journey from the travails of the colonial epoch to a newfound hybridity—one that now gleams through the fairy lights adorning those same walls on Eid Milād-un-Nabī. It animates the place transmuting into multitudinous forms like the breeze stirring the wayward branches of the trees framed by the arched windows, the water gushing out of the protruding gargoyles of the main building on rainy days and the fuchsia blossoms of the bougainvillea near Salaam Hall. Lurking in the shallow depressions of the linear engravings it traverses through the crevices of the columnar shafts bifurcating the arches as it makes its way through the perforated spandrels mingling a little with everything.

These subsumed impressions rise from the sharpness of the arches, echo in the resounding footsteps on the checkered floor and linger in

the awkward pauses of the quick exchanges that happen in the building.

There it perches like a guldān in the niche of the arched windows of MB-16 like an 'unravished bride of quietness' invisible yet recognizable through its eternal fragrance. Even the famous Urdu poet Ghalib couldn't deny the impactful timelessness of arches as he wrote about being enamoured by the beauty of the beloved's arched eyebrows:

*Jo kuchh hai mahv-e-shoḳhi-e-abrū-e-yār hai
āñkhoñ ko rakh ke taaq pe dekhā kare koī*

*Lost in the contemplation of the beauty of the
beloved's eyebrows is everything herein.*

Like the settings of Poe's fiction the aesthetic intertwines with moral through the mediation of a hauntological presence of the tainted glory of the past years that still inheres in the hallways of the Gothic building.

The brief interval that I spent at Government College University was marked by unanticipated moments of stasis dilating the rapidity of the passage of time. A tapestry of emblematic images and a concoction of situations coexisting in a flurry of moments. A manner that sticks with you for a lifetime, precipitating into eerie illuminations on tranquil recollection. As the sun dips into the fathomless horizon, relinquishing its restraint and allowing itself to bleed out in a soft gradient rose and peach every evening in the backdrop of boys playing football in the Oval ground, running after it till they get it. Thought plateaus arise out of these tiny moments of emotional affluence.

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A restlessness that gives rise to limitlessness.
Stealthily the moon blooms obliquely on the
other corner cut into pieces by the bare
branches as ghazals written by the poets who
once frequented the place ricochet in your ears,
the old and new intermingle, while the white
bench stays fixed to the same spot...





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IWT: A Treaty that Refuses to Die?

Durre Zahra, BS International Relations

Over the span of six decades, the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) has remarkably flowed against the tide of persistent conflict. Brokered by the World Bank, it was signed between India and Pakistan in 1960, dividing the rivers of the Indus Basin—granting India control over the eastern rivers and Pakistan over the western ones. Today, among rising geopolitical tensions and the accelerating impacts of climate change, the IWT stands both, a testament to resilience and as a symbol of its growing obsolescence.

In its early years, the treaty proved resilient against the deep-rooted mistrust in India-Pakistan relations. It was not peace but pragmatism that preserved it. Despite the 1965 war, the water-sharing arrangement remained largely unaffected. Even during the secession of East Pakistan in 1971, the IWT endured as silent, functional, and curiously respected. By the 1990s, however, cracks began to appear as regional tensions increased. The Kashmir insurgency, the Kargil conflict, and the nuclearization of both states pushed the boundaries of diplomacy, yet the treaty withstood these pressures.

With the dawn of the new millennium and rapid advancement, a more technical phase of disputes arose. India's development of hydroelectric power projects on the western rivers, interpreted as permissible under the

treaty, was perceived by Pakistan as a strategic threat.

Legal challenges and international arbitration initiated, leading to years marked by inspections, rising suspicion, and legal arguments. By the 2010s, climate change further complicated the scenario. Drafted in the essence of Cold War geopolitics, the treaty turned out to be increasingly outdated. Yet, despite its limitations, its symbolic weight continued to outweigh its technical shortcomings.

Tensions escalated again following the Pulwama attack in 2019. Indian officials declared, "Blood and water cannot flow together," ushering in a combative discourse. Still, the treaty was never formally suspended. However, by late 2024, India's calls for renegotiation signaled a tilt, reflecting the state's evolving strategic and environmental nature.

The year 2025 brought the IWT to a historic crossroads. In April, India unilaterally suspended the treaty, citing Pakistan's alleged support for cross-border terrorism following the Pahalgam attack. By declaring the treaty "in abeyance," India ceased its treaty obligations, raising concerns over water security in Pakistan. This action runs counter to international legal norms, particularly Articles 26, 54, and 60 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969), which prohibit unilateral suspension of treaty obligations by a signatory state.

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The military standoff in May 2025 further strained bilateral relations. India, citing the same justification, breached Pakistan's sovereignty, yet the crisis de-escalated into a ceasefire, without any movement toward restoring the treaty. Notably, when India released water from the Chenab Dam towards Pakistan, it became evident that the IWT serves India's own interests in flood forecasting, resource management, and hydroelectric development. International mediation amid this destabilization has pointed toward a potential second phase of the IWT: renegotiation.

The Indus Waters Treaty has outlasted wars, diplomatic breakdowns, and natural disasters over 65 years, now it stands at a decisive juncture. It has been the agreement that refused to die. Yet as it remains suspended, one must ask: can an aging framework endure the demands of new realities? And if cooperation collapses now, what floods or political tensions lie ahead?

Reflections on Wartime

Rawhawn Ali, Co-Editor & Visiting Faculty.

"It's not safe," the man said to me. "War has come to your land."

"What did you say, Uncle?"

"I laughed and said I'd be a martyr if I died for my homeland, and a ghazi if not."

I often think about this exchange with my maternal uncle, which happened at the airport shortly after he arrived from Abu Dhabi, hours

before the airspace was shut down due to strikes at Bahawalpur and other key cities in May. It, I think, captures a very essentially Pakistani mindset, deeply rooted in loyalty to the land.

It is a very curious psychological make-up that us Pakistanis have. There is not much unity to speak of: we are divided into ethnic subgroups, cultures, and so much more, we follow more than enough ideologies for each Pakistani to have their own version of an ideology, but when faced with a common threat, Pakistanis meld together as beautifully as the favours in chai.

This situational unity, I feel, was paralleled in my class. The only unanimous decision we ever took in four years of university was to never arrive at a unanimous decision, and we were supremely successful at that- until the echo of the word "war" pushed us into unity.

"Twenty-three," a classmate said. "I received twenty-three calls from my mother last night." She looked haggard, tense, and very, very much alive to the reality of the situation: here she was, stranded in Lahore, the most populous border city and provincial capital, and all routes were shut down due to security reasons. Others repeated similar stories; of frantic parents, of limited communication, and of apprehension, even fear, multiplied by distance. I and the other day-scholars dealt with the same fear and with parents' reservations at home. Perhaps I would like to say that I quoted poetic passages at home, or put forth eloquent arguments for continuing to go to university, but the truth is that when

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I packed my bag, I simply exchanged a look with my parents: they knew I would go, having raised me as much their son as a son of this beautiful city.

It is all very well to pretend, in hindsight, that all of us puffed our chests out and stood with bravado, but that is not what happened. I think that all of us felt fear, that we confronted it, and still managed to overcome it and march to university. Being there, in wartime, was an act of courage - for what is courage if not committing to duty, despite the knowledge that you might never return to your loved ones?

I woke up to the sound of blasts from my area - and to a flood of messages asking about me and my family's health- dozens asking "Why are you here?" when I came to university. A similar situation was faced by another day-scholar, a female student from Gulberg, where a drone was shot down.

"For the attendance," she said half-jokingly.

Attendance, of course, was a primary issue, with a stringent academic environment, and I am rather sure that many people may have felt the need for more wartime "holidays" than we had.

But looking back, one understands that in times of chaos, even the semblance of normalcy lends a little hope and a little strength to all. Like Dr. Rieux, we were there to do our jobs- to study, as a matter of "common decency", inspired also by our teachers who travelled extensively to take

classes on time. They led us well, and we followed, because at heart, perhaps we all knew that these hallowed halls had heard gunfire before and weathered. They would stand again, and we would return to normalcy, if that is truly in the Pakistani version of existence.

As I write this, I realize that this is what Saramago talked about when he said that as a writer, one must take up responsibility. It is my responsibility to preserve this as a record, and present it for all in the present and those who may come across it in the future. Wartime for us Pakistanis is more of a unifying event than Independence Day, I feel. We are a hardy folk; we are not unaware of circumstances, and neither were we uninformed about the war, or sitting in secure IT cells and making memes as mockery of the situation.

Rather, we knew that war had come, and we were prepared to face it, with smiles, with courage, and with commitment to our parts.

Dear all: let it be known that the Ravian spirit proved to be stronger than the fear of war, and the Ravians sallied forth to their posts with courage and commitment, and neither the students nor the teachers ever shirked from duty with cowardice. That, I think, is all that needs to be said: the hallowed halls of this institute are filled with courageous people, who shall forever ensure that duty prevails over fear.

Palestine: A Battered People's Struggle for Salvage.

Ali Waqar

This article, originally published in The Gazette (1991, Vol. 106, No. 6), offers a comprehensive account of the history of Palestine up to that year. The forthcoming edition will carry the continuation of this history, tracing developments from 1991 to the present.

Palestine has for millennia been the focus of religious and nationalist passions. To the Jews, dispersed throughout the world, it is the Promised Land for which they have yearned for 18 centuries; in it, the Zionist movement has striven to build a new Jewish nation. To the Christians, Palestine is the Holy Land where Jesus lived and suffered. Among the Muslims, too, it is venerated second to Hejaz, while for Arabs, it is their home, where they have lived for 13 centuries.

The seed of the present crisis was sown in 1855, when an estate was purchased near Jaffa for a Jewish settlement. Since then, Jewish immigration, mainly from Russia and Romania, has increased steadily. Palestine was conquered by Britain in 1918. The previous year, in November, the British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour had issued the famous "Balfour Declaration", in which the establishment of a Jewish national home was pledged. The immigrant Jews and local Arabs clashed frequently during the 1920s. The Nazi ascension to power in Germany in the early 1930s led to a significant increase in the number of incoming Jews. In 1937, Lord Peel prepared a report which recommended the partition of Palestine.

The area of the Land allocated therein to the Jews was much larger than their existing landholdings. Arab leaders rejected the plan. In 1939, Great Britain issued another White Paper, which stated that an independent Palestinian state would be considered in the next ten years. On the other hand, U.S support for Zionism grew. In a meeting held in New York in May 1942, the Jewish leaders demanded the establishment of a Zionist army and called for converting Palestine into the Jewish Commonwealth.

A UN Commission of Enquiry recommended on August 31, 1947, the partition of the country into an Arab and a Jewish state, which would retain an economic union; Jerusalem and its environs were to be international territory. 55% of the area was to comprise the Jewish state. The recommendations were adopted by the General Assembly in a resolution dated November 29, 1947.

Their resistance implemented the resolution of impossibility. UN's Palestine Commission yielded to the pressure, and the U.S. called for a truce, pledging further debate on the issue in the General Assembly. In the interim, the Zionists made major gains on the battlefield. Arabs were ill-equipped and lacked leadership, so one after another, towns fell to the Zionists. Tens of thousands of Arabs were pushed into the neighbouring countries. Forced by public opinion, all the Arab nations except Egypt decided to step into the fray. Egypt joined these forces a few days later.

On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed, and within a few hours, it won de

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facto recognition from President Truman of the US. Armies of Syria, Trans-Jordan (later named Jordan), Iraq and Egypt attacked Israel but were beaten back. By 1949, Israel had concluded armistices with its neighbouring countries. She had also been recognised by more than 50 governments, had joined the U.N., and had established sovereignty over 8000 square miles of Palestine, west of the Jordan River.

The remaining 2000 sq. miles were divided between Trans Jordan (The West Bank), henceforth to be known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and Egypt (the Gaza Strip) - Palestine ceased to be. The mass exodus of 700,000 Palestinians to the neighbouring countries followed. In 1964, an Arab Summit meeting led to the formation of the PLO. In the meantime, Palestinians had formed a secret organisation called Al-Fatah. The Palestine National Council was the supreme body of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, while an executive committee oversaw its activities. In 1968, al-Fatah joined the P.N.C. Other significant militant groups also joined the Council in 1969. A struggle for power within the ranks of P.N.C. brought about the accession of Yasser Arafat, the chief of al-Fatah, to the chairmanship of the executive committee.

The Arab-Israel war of 1967 was nothing but devastation for the Arab nations. They were utterly humiliated. But it was Palestinian guerrillas who raised the morale of the

downtrodden Arabs. They inflicted heavy casualties when Israel attacked one of their bases in Jordan in March 1968. Jordan was the base camp of the militant activities of the Palestinians against Israel. But their increasing operations gave birth to latent tension within Jordan. Things came to such a pass that a short, bloody civil war resulted in September 1970, when the government tried to control the guerrilla movement. Eventually, guerrillas were driven from Jordan. Still, more than half of the population of the country is Palestinian.

The freedom fighters continued to operate out of Lebanon. Israel replied to their activities by air raids on their bases in Southern Lebanon. In December 1968, Israeli planes attacked Beirut International Airport and destroyed the Lebanese commercial air fleet. The government tried to limit guerrilla operations, so the civil war began. A cease-fire agreement was reached in November 1969.

The PLO made important political gains in the year 1974. Egypt and Jordan accepted it as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians. On September 22, the General Assembly included the "Palestinian Question" as a subject for debate in its agenda. On October 14, it invited the PLO to take part in the debate on the issue. On October 21, French Foreign Minister met Yasser Arafat, and on October 24, the President of France acknowledged the Palestinians' right to a homeland. At an Arab summit meeting in Rabat on October 26-28, a fighting fund was established. It allocated US\$50 million to the PLO.

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During the year 1975, Palestinian activities from Lebanon continued, which were quelled by Israeli air raids on the camps of Palestinian refugees. But this activity was overshadowed by the civil strife that developed in the same year, along Christian-Muslim lines. Palestinians sided with the Arab leftists.

The presence of 400,000 stateless Palestinians was in itself a factor in the eruption of the civil war. The conflict continued for the whole year. On January 22, 1976, a ceasefire was imposed by the Syrian government.

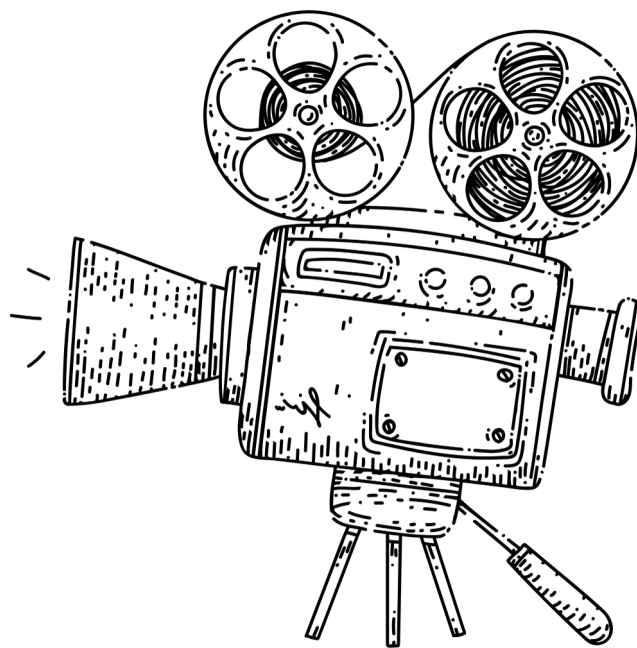
On March 11, 1978, Palestinian guerrillas raided Israel, leaving 37 dead and 82 wounded. Israel attacked Southern Lebanon on March 14 and occupied several towns. On March 19, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 425, which called for Israeli withdrawal and the setting up of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon. Israelis evacuated the areas by mid-June. In 1977, the Secretary General of the UN proposed a Palestinian "mini-state" on the West Bank of the Jordan River and in the Gaza Strip instead of an Arab-Jewish state comprising the whole of Palestine.

During the 1980s, the struggle for freedom continued. Towards the end of the 80s, Intifadah was formed. Now, every Palestinian, whether a child, a woman, or a man, is a soldier. Their weapons are bricks and stones against the bullets and batons of the Israelis. They are not allowed to offer their prayers in the open.

The Gulf War erupted in 1990. Iraq attacked and occupied Kuwait. To restore the sovereignty of a state, i.e. Kuwait, U.S.-led Allied Forces drove out the occupying troops from the area. The rapidity with which resolutions against Iraq were adopted in the UN, which led to the action, is remarkable.

So quick an implementation of the UN recommendations raised hopes that resolutions, vis-à-vis, Palestine, would be carried out, if necessary, by force. But America resorted to "peaceful" initiatives and sent its foreign minister to the Middle East to get the involved nations on speaking terms. Evidently, the United States demonstrates little genuine commitment to the Palestinian cause; rather, its efforts appear directed toward fostering Arab-Israeli relations at the expense of Palestine. In this context, the prevailing sentiment reduces to a passive anticipation of some transcendent force that might secure for the "battered nation" its rightful claims.





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Students of the English Department at GCUL tell the harrowing tale of Lahore's decline into a wasteland – Ecocritical Play installed on December 16, 2024

Haiqa Hassan, BS English Literature.

Amphitheatre, Government College University, Lahore – Dhobi ka Kutta, a short, non-scriptocentric, ecocritical play was presented on December 16, 2024. Directed by Noor Khalid, written and produced in its entirety by final year students of the English Department at Government College University, in collaboration with GCU Women Development Centre, the play was a part of their project for the course: Theatre and Performance (ENG-4106).

Dhobi ka Kutta appeared at large as a post-modern commentary on how climate change and various sources of pollution have turned Lahore into a wasteland. Thus, it aligned with several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), health, education, gender equality, sanitation, consumption and production, and chiefly climate. However, following Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed as its theoretical framework, the play also unraveled itself as a space where each actor expressed, in their own way, what they felt about the different forms of repression, corruption, and oppression that society has inflicted upon them.



Some sequences were deliberately left up to the spontaneous whims of the actors, others that changed due to external variables, and the eventual break in the fourth wall that beckoned the audience to become spect-actors, echoed Peter Brook's concept of the Immediate Theatre. Thus, each individual in the audience was, at all times, free to infiltrate and change the theatrical space as they willed. They were treated as a part of that space before they even realized it; Dhobi ka Kutta simply strived to evoke that realization in them.

The proverb behind the play's title, 'Dhobbi ka kutka, ghar ka na ghaat ka,' hinted at a liminal space in which those who stand on neither side of (any) threshold exist. This performance thus occurred in liminality, where boundaries dissolved, and both actors and audience tried to come to terms with the issues that exist around them, and the activism they must take on to eradicate these problems.



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The crew of *Dhobi ka Kutta*, while raising awareness about pollution through performance, also practiced what they preached, as before the installment of the play, they went out on the streets of Lahore and collected the garbage their setting required. The play opened with two rows of plague doctors marching down the stairs of the amphitheatre into a heavily littered stage, who served as harbingers of death and instilled an uncanny sensation in the audience, with their ritualistic movements, for what could potentially ensue from then on.



It was followed by a mournful dirge in Punjabi, lamenting the various ways in which pollution has impacted Lahore. Then came a child whose corrupted nursery rhymes and mechanical movements portrayed the death of innocence brought on by the actions of adults.

Next, a sequence involving two friends divulged how social media facilitates fake friendships. Another was a critique of the widespread influencer culture, whereby performative kindness succeeds in masking utter indifference to important social issues. The refrain of “Ducdame”, coupled with its

contextualization by representatives of academia, urged the audience to realize their agency, inviting them to invade the stage. The dog thus overcame Fate, its cruel owner, and unleashed itself.

Meanwhile, a water hoarder controlled and capitalized on the supply of water. A burnt Ophelia, embodying feminine rage and helplessness in one, failed to find respite from her pain. The scales of Justice fell apart. The only tree on the stage died. The chameleon left behind a trail of fire. Smog came next and took everyone in its fold.

Lastly, a patch of land was forced into gorging on the consequences of its citizens’ ignorance until it became a wasteland, a void, a monster that would not rest until it consumed every one of its culprits.

Dhobi ka Kutta did not offer the audience catharsis. It left some dazed, others horrified, and a few more others, completely unfazed. What it did offer them all was a choice. A choice to no longer be passive spectators watching their city burn down to ashes, but to actively help restore its serenity.

An audience member invaded the dramatic space, trying to stop an actor from setting fire to their hair, transforming one of the acts being performed. Most people exhibited concerned expressions for the chameleon on fire. Quite a lot of the audience members responded positively to the group’s appeal to help collect the garbage from the amphitheatre and thus, like the dog, found a way to purge themselves.

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February 02, 2025 | Bagh-e-Jinnah, Open Air Theatre: Basri Theatre group performed Dhobi ka Kutta for the second time during Family Fest 2025, in collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), Punjab Institute of Language, Art & Culture (PILAC), and Women Development Centre (WDC).

February 24, 2025 | LUMS REDC Ground: The group put up their third installation in collaboration with Feminist Society (FEMSOC) at LUMS, Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), Punjab Institute of Language, Art & Culture (PILAC), and Women Development Centre (WDC).

This theatrical performance marks a significant step towards meaningful theatre, focused on the depiction of major social and environmental issues surrounding our communities, as well as on-site, action-based inclusivity for tackling such problems.



Spotlight on Skills: GCU honors the Co-Curricular activities at 23rd Convocation – January 21, 2025.



The year 2025 began on a celebratory note as Government College University, Lahore hosted its 23rd Convocation, honouring students for their outstanding achievements in both academic and co-curricular pursuits. While the first day recognised academic excellence, the second day of the convocation shone a spotlight on students who excelled beyond the classroom. A total of 125 students walked proudly out of the historic gates of GCU, bearing Rolls of Honour in debates, drama, music, arts, and other co-curricular fields.

The awards were conferred by the Governor of Punjab, Sardar Salim Haider Khan, who graced the ceremony as Chief Guest, alongside Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah. The Bukhari Auditorium brimmed with applause, its walls echoing with pride and the sheer energy of youthful talent. Adding melody to the celebration, the Nazir Ahmad Music Society captivated the audience with a

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stirring rendition of Kalam-e-Iqbal. Their performance so impressed the Governor that he extended an invitation for the society to perform at the Governor's House.



In his address, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah congratulated the award recipients and urged them to take pride in GCU's legacy as the alma mater of Allama Iqbal. He also announced a \$1 million partnership with Getz Healthcare to establish a state-of-the-art Diagnostic and Research Lab at the Dr. Ikram-ul-Haq Institute of Industrial Biotechnology, which will offer subsidised services to more than 50,000 families.

Highlighting the university's commitment to inclusivity, Prof. Shah shared that in 2024, 426 students received Chief Minister Honhaar Scholarships, while thousands more benefited from PEEF, HEC, and GCU's own financial aid programmes. Additionally, twelve students were honoured with gold medals in sports, marking another proud moment in the university's history.



Mind or Machine in Economics: Which one is here for the long run? February 13, 2025.

The Mehboob-ul-Haq Economics Society at GCU organised a thought-provoking panel discussion on the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence and Automation in the field of economics. Experts including Dr. Shahzad Hussain, Head of the Department of Public Policy and Governance, and Dr. Fareeha Zafar, Assistant Professor at the Department of Computer Science, shared their insights on how technology is reshaping the economic landscape.

Opinions ranged from the assertion that

"IT skills have become indispensable"

to the call for

"an urgent revision of academic curricula to ensure students are technologically equipped."

The speakers collectively emphasised that embracing technological innovation is crucial for sustainable economic growth. The session concluded with an engaging Q&A segment, leaving students with new perspectives on the evolving intersection of economics and machine intelligence.

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Her-Story Made on 124th Annual Sports at GCU as Female Athletes Front Sports Parade – February 14, 2025.



The 124th Annual Sports at GCU began on a historic note as two remarkable female athletes Asian Youth Netball Champions Muqaddas Fatima and International Footballer Noreen Baig led the Grand March-Past, etching their names into the University's enduring legacy. The Oval Ground came alive with the spirit of inclusion and perseverance, as physically challenged students displayed extraordinary courage and determination. Over the course of three days, nearly 10,000 students from 42 departments competed in a diverse array of sporting events, celebrating teamwork, endurance, and sportsmanship.



In the much-anticipated Best March-Past competition, the Department of Commerce claimed the top honour, followed closely by the Institute of Industrial Biotechnology. The closing ceremony on Sunday featured a series of light-hearted and entertaining events, from

the Ministerial Staff Race and Naib Qasid Race to the Four-Legged Race, Pillow Fight, Chatti Race for Girls, and the Obstacle Race, making it a memorable celebration of community, joy, and athletic spirit at GCU.

Curtains Rise on Anarkali: GCU Dramatics Club Breathes Life into a Century – Old Play, February 24-28, 2025.

*Zainab Haroon, Digital and Visual
Correspondent & Areej Rehman, Reporter.*



Spirited places, once a witness to the conception of extraordinary tales, refuse to let them go. The stories are wound up in the tallest windows of forbidden towers, they echo in dungeons, and sing of their own praise. The cage becomes a co-creator, and by the time it's consecrated to an altar, it rises as a new being: a 100-year-old fetus. Such is the case with Imtiaz Ali Taj's "Anarkali" and the weathered building of Government College University. The play was written within its premises in 1923 to be exclusively dramatised on the College stage. The elevated arches and sagging vines harboured "Anarkali" as a dream for a century and three years. It fed on and nourished on raw sunbeams, until the fervent spirits of those who could give a body to its soul found it reclining gracefully in some sacred corner of the Main Building.

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In February 2025, under the direction of Umer Darr, GCDC brought the play back home and rejuvenated it in the Bukhari Auditorium. “Anarkali” emerged as a testament to Taj’s skill, his stature as a literary and a playwright. “Anarkali” has inspired cinema, performing arts, and musical theatre since its conception.

From its first adaptation as a silent film in 1928, to a musical directed by R. S. Choudhry in 1935, and the cultural hallmark film, “Mughal-e-Azam” in the 1960s, Taj’s play gave life to many a story but remained vagrant until housed by its very kin in 2025.

A cinematic trailer of the play, directed by Salar Sindhu and produced by Zeeshan Hidayat, released a month before the first show, was already a cross-border sensation. The play ran successfully for five days from February 24 to 28th. The curtain-raiser was not only a full circle for Taj’s dream, but a milestone for revival for Urdu Literature, and Pakistani theatre as a whole. Student-actors

revived the Mughal glory, and the eminent drama was stirred back to life for five consecutive evenings in the Bukhari auditorium. The reader must be aware that the staging of a seventeenth-century story as the annual play, almost a century later, is more than just a homecoming. As much as it is a tribute to the playwright, it rouses the 2000-year-old spirit of Lahore, a city that flows by the river Ravi.



Theatre is not accidental, nor is the choice of theatrics. One might not find the wall that houses the tragedy of Anarkali, the young maiden from Akbar’s palace, but one still encounters human emotions that linger under the pretences of propriety and status, their making and unmaking.

(Continued on the next page)

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More than a palace conspiracy, Anarkali is the failure of a system that is built by Kings, for the convenience of other Kings (and their sons, if they give up Anarkali). It is the structural absence of a bridge between two opposing classes.

For five nights, the play whispered that Anarkali, when and if allowed to become a part of the royal narrative, can only find her place cemented and silenced between the royal baked bricks. Even from a class-centric lens, “Anarkali” is a quintessential tragedy as it includes two inescapable dooms of the tragic figure: impoverishment and womanhood.

Taj writes in the preface of the 1939 edition of the play:

“Whether this is a tragedy of Anarkali and Saleem, or of Akbar, “Anarkali” holds such charm that while suggesting a name [for the play] it was quite impossible to consider any other character.”

Not only is this statement a testament to the doubly tragic character of Anarkali, it subtly reflects the glorification of feminine misery as it relates to Anarkali, a palace maiden whose corpse earned her, her glory.

This play follows a classical Three-Act structure of exposition, climax, and resolution. As much as the smooth running of the show stood on the two-month-long intensive rehearsal period, every minute of every show unfolded a new story, for in the closed system of a theatre, the spectator’s inactivity is also considered a contribution.

Festivity had stimulated the campus air since the beginning of the ticket sales, and it reached a new excitement on every one of the five days as the show sold out completely. Those who witnessed narrate that a fraction of the traditional glory from the past came alive and occupied the Bukhari Auditorium. Among the audience were those who sat romancing the tale for two hours, and those whose spirits



recognised the long forgotten resynthesized symphony of the river Ravi, for it might have been quiet for decades, but it has not left the collective subconscious of its dwellers just yet. Kafoor Begum, as she brought indisputable joy to the audience, made some reconsider the idea of farce and associated stereotypes in traditional theatre.

Art is life, distilled in its purest form; it did not escape the eyes of the aesthetes who searched for emotion and reaction on Anarkali’s face until the end of the third act, when they gathered all of it and more, and were rendered speechless not by her words but by her art. A truly meaningful Kathak sequence was performed by Timsal Fatima, the student-actor who played Anarkali—what powerful speech is

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the absence of it! Saleem, played by Ahmed Mughal, submerged in carefree riches and naming love after blossoming buds of the Spring of 1599, made the viewers reflect on the nature of freedom that power enables, and on the constraints that confine that freedom within the power structure. Dilaram, easily a crowd-favourite and played remarkably by the fiery Saira Iftikhar, turned the skin of a villain inside out for the audience to witness and relate to.

In short, a shot of power, a drink of desperate fancy, the hunger pangs of an empty cell, empty words, empty resolutions, and empty stead still stood and told the story of a love that was never meant to be. Lin-Manuel Miranda said in his 2016 speech after winning Tony's award for the best musical, and I quote:

"And love, is love, is love, is love, is love, is love, is love!"

Cannot be killed or swept aside!

I sing Vanessa's symphony,

Eliza tells her story,

Now fill the world with music, love, and pride."

Through the Lens, a Lament: GCU Walks for Gaza – March 19, 2025.

The GCU Palestine Society organised a thought-provoking photo-walk titled "Through Gaza: Stories in Frames" to depict the history of Palestine and expose the brutality of its

genocidal oppressor through the power of visual storytelling. The exhibition's participants used photography to document the profound human and educational devastation in Gaza, drawing attention to the destruction of over 80% of schools — a tragedy that has silenced classrooms and shattered young dreams.



The event was inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Babar Aziz, Dean of Arts and Social Sciences, and Prof. Dr. Fauzia Ghani, Chairperson of Political Science, alongside Ahmed Raza Khan, Head of International Relations, and Shahzad Ahmed, Controller of Examinations. Sharing his reflections, Muhammad Manzoor Elahi, Advisor to the Palestine Society, underscored the significance of helping students grasp Palestine's rich yet tragic history, urging continued awareness and empathy through academic and creative expression.

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Pakistan's Climate Future Takes Center Stage at GCU – Major Climate Conference on April 22, 2025.

*Zohaa Abbas Saddal, Digital Correspondent, WDC
Ghania Ibrahim, Haiqa Hassan, and Zainab Haroon,
Assistant Reporters.*

Lahore – A one-day CO2 conference was hosted by Government College University (GCU) Lahore on April 22, 2025 under the supervision of GCU's Sustainable Development Study Centre (SDSC). The event was jointly organised in collaboration with the Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the National Climate Council (NCC).



The conference was facilitated in cooperation with organizations recognized for their commitment to sustainable industry practices, such as TTI Testing Laboratories, BHS Apparel, Limton, Kay and Emm, Cotton Web,

FAAZ International, Stylers Plus, and Body Media International, among others. Meanwhile, the event was co-organised and jointly overseen by Women Development Centre (WDC), Nazir Ahmed Music Society (NAMS) and Government College Dramatics Club (GCDC).

The initiative was closely aligned with Pakistan's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, as well as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Discussions were anchored around five key pillars that define the national and global sustainability discourse: circularity, decarbonization, compliance, digitalization, and inclusivity. These thematic areas were formulated to guide the development of forward-looking, context-specific solutions aimed at achieving measurable climate outcomes and systemic transformation. This high-level dialogue aimed to catalyze transformative action by embedding sustainability at the heart of national development strategies.

Dr. Ayyaz ud Din (Chairman PRGMEA) in his opening remarks stressed the importance of the urgent need for decarbonisation. The Vice Chancellor of Government College University, Lahore, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Omer Chaudhry, in his welcome address, highlighted the urgent health impacts of environmental degradation. Prof. Dr. Faiza Sharif (Director Sustainable Development Centre) delivered a presentation, highlighting the role of afforestation in reducing emissions, noting that Pakistan's AFOLU sector contributes 46.75% of total emissions.

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Yulia Bazhenova (Head of Project Textiles at GIZ) emphasized the importance of joint collaboration between Germany and Pakistan to promote sustainability and circularity, especially within the textile and garment sector. A key focus was the EU's Green Deal and Trade Scheme, and its implications for Pakistan's industrial landscape. She stressed the need for capacity-building support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to help them comply with upcoming sustainability regulations. She noted that Pakistan has a competitive advantage in recycling infrastructure, with active clusters in Lahore and Islamabad producing recycled cotton—a valuable resource for global supply chains.

Dr Zulfiqar Younis (Additional Secretary for Climate Finance at the Ministry of Climate Change), in a comprehensive address, outlined the country's evolving carbon market landscape, aligned with Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. He noted that Pakistan has received international recognition for its Carbon Market preparedness.

Sobia Becker (Advisor for PGCEP at GIZ) presented findings from a report on decarbonization in the apparel sector. She underscored Germany's €380 million climate partnership with Pakistan, supporting 26 grant-based projects aligned with the Paris Agreement and SDGs. A recent report highlights critical challenges in Pakistan's textile sector, especially in light of shifting EU regulations and global trade dynamics. While major manufacturers have adopted net-zero targets, SME engagement remains limited.

A panel discussion, on sunlight harvesting, titled “Maili Maili Dhoop” was moderated in multiple languages, namely Urdu, Punjabi and English, fostering a culturally indigenous discourse curated for a diverse audience. Renowned poet Anwar Masood reflected on the deep environmental and cultural loss caused by pollution, lamenting how natural resources and traditional values have been tainted in the name of progression. Drawing from his poetic anthology “Maili Maili Dhoop”—the first of its kind centered on environmental themes—he urged the audience to reconnect with nature and not take its purity for granted. Khalid Waleed (Head of Energy and Climate SDPI) emphasized the urgent need to rethink Pakistan's approach to the interconnected “three Es”—economy, energy, and environment, and advocated a shift from consumption-driven models to conservation and solar harvesting.

Hammad Naqi Khan (WWF - Pakistan's Director General) delivered a talk on water conservation and the interlinkages between biodiversity and climate. A panel discussion on circularity, decarbonization, and inclusivity was moderated by Minhas.

Dr Arif Bashir (Director Technical Operations - DG Cement) emphasized on the need to start taking on projects where we can work on generating biogas to produce power and also produce compost. The discussion also highlighted the need for equitable access to digital technologies and telecommunications, especially in underserved areas, to foster growth and innovation.

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The day closed with a theatrical performance titled “Libas ka Safar” by the GCU Dramatics Club, followed by a final address from Prof. Dr. Muhammad Omer Chaudhry, and a closing dinner and networking session.

This conference marks a significant step forward in the national discourse on climate action, offering a platform for informed dialogue and collaborative problem-solving in pursuit of a more sustainable and resilient future for Pakistan.

“Lights, camera and no drugs”: GCU Students Curtain Call on Drugs through Theatre – May 06, 2025.

GCU Lahore transformed the stage into a platform for social change at its third annual Thespian Art Gala, where students from leading universities addressed the urgent issue of drug abuse through powerful theatrical performances. The event was graced by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Omer

Chaudhry, Anti-Narcotics Force Punjab Regional Commander Brigadier Sikandar Hayat Chaudhry, and veteran actor Rashid Mehmood.

Addressing the audience, Brigadier Sikandar Hayat reminded that addiction shatters not only individuals but entire families, commending GCU’s Anti-Narcotics Society as a model for awareness initiatives. Prof. Chaudhry highlighted that art must act as a catalyst for social reform, enabling the youth to channel their creativity toward meaningful causes.

Students from the University of Home Economics, Lahore College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Beaconhouse National University, and the University of Management and Technology brought the theme to life through emotionally charged performances with Lahore College of Pharmaceutical Sciences emerging as the winner of the competition.

In a landmark moment, GCU’s Anti-Narcotics Society Theatre Wing presented its first-ever solo performance, a one-man act that captivated the audience and earned special commendation. The jury, comprising Rashid Mehmood, Umar Dar, Amna Anwar Khan, and Ayesha Shehzad, lauded the gala for its seamless blend of artistic brilliance and social consciousness, reaffirming GCU’s legacy as a beacon of art with purpose.

Campus Activities & Reports

From Stage Fright to Standing Ovals: GCUDS Summer Camp 2025 takes the Stage.

*Huzaiifa Zeeshan Awan, Joint Secretary
GCU DS 2024-25*

Established in 1864, the Government College University Debating Society (GCUDS) stands as one of the subcontinent's oldest and most prestigious forums for public speaking, renowned for introducing the House of Commons Style Debate in 1952. To sustain and carry these traditions forward, GCUDS organises an extensive summer training camp every year, dedicated to acclimatising new and aspiring speakers to all topics of debate, which engage with the most pertinent issues of the current world. This year, Debating Summer Camps began on June 16, 2025, consisting of Parliamentary Style Debates, Declamations, and Model United Nations, the sessions of which were held regularly in their respective venues throughout the week. The purpose of these sessions was to lay special emphasis on inducting speakers into their preferred formats who are currently in their freshman or sophomore years.

The Summer Camps this year contained a myriad of activities, including content sessions, speaking camps, and internal competitions. Content camps were conducted every week, whereby assigned readings from varying fields of knowledge, i.e. Current Affairs, Philosophy, Economics, Art, and

Literature, were given out to budding speakers. They were required to go through them to get a brief idea of the discussions beforehand. These camps were led by esteemed experts from diverse fields and backgrounds that have extensive command of the relevant domains and topics. Sessions also entailed a Q&A segment at the end.

The Debating Society also organised internal competitions to ensure participants could have firsthand experience with the art of competitive debating. In June, GCUDS organised the annual Intravarsity Parliamentary Debating Championship (IVPD) in which new speakers were paired with experienced debaters in an internal debating competition. This session was adjudicated by former debaters and alumni. Similarly, in July, GCUDS organised the Intra-Model United Nations, which aimed to familiarise speakers with the art of diplomacy and documentation. Individuals participating in these camps were evaluated at the end of the Program, and prizes were distributed among the winners. Consequently, their performance and engagement during the session indicate their future involvement in competitions.

With consistent training and mentorship, Debating Summer Camps 2025 have ensured that the intellectual development of its members allows them to be more critical, informed, and articulate about the opinions that they hold. This is a small step among many which strive to make a change in the hearts and minds of the people, for the better.





Chronicles in Rhymes



Chronicles in Rhymes

Ghosting in Nine Movements

Mr. Azhar Iftikhar, Assistant Professor.

live. (but only in hashtags)
like. (algorithm's ghost)
long. (scrolling into void)

levitate. (or was it just WiFi?)
linger. (buffering...buffering...)
Loath. (your own reflection in the screen)

love. (swipe right for authenticity)
lust. (404: soul not found)
labyrinth. (you are here. you are here. you
are—)

(exit? no exit. reload.)

On GPA and Student Societies

Jazib ud Din, Debating Society President 2024-25

So what?
if my wings are in flames.
I never asked to fly,
instead, my descent begins
to the depths of light.

Scraping hell,
a friend's hand clasping my arms,
leaves of fall
falling on my sleeves.
Each flower, fading
like a tutor
I've silenced for good.

Because the difference
between medals & roses
is what you taste in a bite.

Can air sharpen a blade,
can sound shape a man?

Is a podium,
& a chair,
& a name on an oak board, enough?

If so,
let it be.

& when ideas touch sound
& are a voice no more,
but a reality, uttered—
however bleak,
& meaningless,
is my own.

So let I crumble with creativity,
If success is having
redundancy crawl into my throat.

red bricks and reverie

A Tribute to the Stairs of GCU

Sajjar Shabbir, Co-Editor

how the sun drapes our cracked, home-like bricks,
a harpist plucking the gut of afternoon, in love
o clandestine stairs, o forlorn, forbidden throne

we gather around you, bruised and blazoned, our
mouths a latticework of uneven breaths and blood.
the main building gnaws on history's tainted rivets,
tilts its locked jaw against the whispering garden
oh, how the shahab sighs, april-bled, april-fed,
an orchard where love hums in the leafy veins,
and stealing of broken, wooden benches laden
with fragrance of plucked gains.

Chronicles in Rhymes

with our spirits languid and libidinous, we sit
under the yoke of stone angels, we come forward
with lint in our pockets and mulberries in hands

skins freckled by unkempt philosophical musings
our hearts burdened with theoretical frameworks
bunkers of lectures, defectors of duties, the unholy
we unwrap bread of knowledge, we prostrate before
small coins of hungers and fruitions, as our smiles
absorb into the dusty steps of our borrowed griefs.
we bring words, red, morbid and eerily twitching
like newborn sparrows

these enduring pillars turn into a dusky brown hush
between a silent man and his ever-lurking shadow
ashfaq's ghost floats around our moonlit shrine

we, devoted monks, offer our unworthy sacrilege
in soft-spoken things, in courtly holding of hands,
in small illegal marriages of ideas and thoughts.
the heresies we seed in the cracks, the wisps of
names slipping in fever, a hand cupped in rumor.
here, our hearts cut their teeth, on the edge of
beloved's laughter, in the cocoon of love's lyre
in the gaps in braids filled with raat ki raani
on the shy reluctance of a gaze held too long,
tears hidden in a borrowed shawl's careful turn

oh memory, you guttering, melting mold of candle,
drip down the whitewash, down the pious sandstone,
stipple and mark the stairs with soft, abiding elegies

for once we leave, the stones will remember us,
the fearless, blunt boots of ascending freshmen,
the gold-throated songs of bereaved final-years,
and the love hanging from thick, white fibers
we take off of oranges and sangtaray, alike,
the stairs will remember our elliptical poems
they will be a memoir of how stubbornly love
seeds itself, between prohibition and prayer.

how the forbidden becomes the desired altar
and we, the accidental saints, clutching many
a phoneme, invoking, invoking, invoking
the crude, immense miracle of
belonging.

what shrine ever grew so tender,
so obstinate,
so alive





Campus News Update

Campus News Update

Government College University, Lahore

Debating Society

Notice

The following orators have been appointed to the posts mentioned against their names for the academic year 2025-2026:

No.	Posts	Names
1	President	Mr. Hassan Shehriyar
2	General Secretary	Mr. Saran Ullah Khan
3	Senior Vice President	Mr. Huzaifa Zeeshan
4	Vice President	Ms. Maheen Amir Ms. Fatima Ismail Mr. Mekaal Mirza
5	Joint Secretary	Mr. Mian Abdul Latif Mr. Abuzar Ibn Fayyaz Ms. Mahnoor Aizaz Mr. Nalain Abbas Ms. Rana Hijaab Majid
6	Associate Secretary	Mr. M. Tayyab Mr. Abdul Rehman Anwer Mr. Hamza Shabbir
7	Secretary Reading and Discourse	Mr. Ali Rasheed
8	Assistant Secretary	Mr. Ali Jan Mr. Adam Izhar Khan Mr. Muhammad Ali Muzammil Mr. Abdul Wajid Wattoo Mr. Abdul Rehman

Campus News Update

Nazir Ahmad Music Society Cabinet 2025-2026

Notice

The following have been appointed to the designations mentioned against their names for the academic year 2025-2026:

Sr.	Designation	Name
1	President	Ghulam Qamber
2	Vice President	Mubashar Hassan Syeda Amna Batool
3	General Secretary	Alisha Mehboob
4	Senior Event Manager	Salman Yaqoob
5	Event Manager	Zunair Arshad
6	Joint Secretary	Rida Batool
7	Office Secretary	Noman Qaiser
8	Technical Coordinator	Abuzar Ali Ali Zar
9	String Coordinator	Efran Gill
10	Executive Members	Shujaat Ali Hussain Asghar Awan Obaid Yousaf

Campus News Update

GCU Dramatics Club Cabinet 2025-2026

Notice

The following students have been appointed office bearers of the GCU Dramatics Club for the session 2025-2026:

President	Mr. Ahmad Mughal
Associate Secretary	Mr. Muhammad Talal Mr. Zeeshan Hidayat
Joint Secretary	Ms. Meliha Zubair



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