



Peshawar Literary Festival 2025 (April 18,19,20 - 2025)

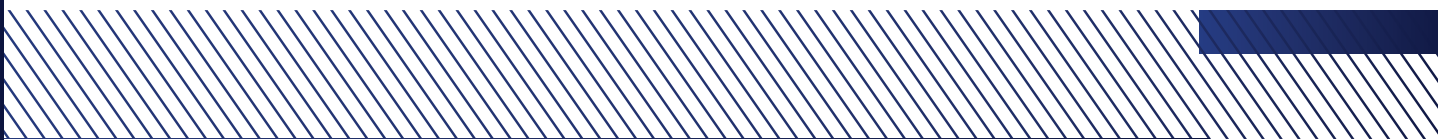
Introduction


The Peshawar Literary Festival (PLF) 2025 aims to celebrate the rich literary heritage and cultural vibrancy of Peshawar, one of the oldest cities in South Asia. As a city that has been a crossroads of civilizations, Peshawar's historical significance and its contributions to art, literature, and philosophy provide an ideal backdrop for this transformative event. Literary Festivals are intellectual platforms, providing a safe space for debate and celebrating the classic and contemporary literature a society possesses. They offer opportunities to connect with other readers, as well as the chance to engage with authors and their words and ideas in singular and sometimes surprising ways. Such events foster a culture of intellectual growth and acceptability.

Literature is not merely an art form; it is a mirror reflecting society's evolution. In the case of Peshawar, a distance has been imposed between our stories and us. Our sense of expression has been held hostage by traditions, social upbringing, and numerous other factors. Our stories have often been appropriated by other voices, with our traumas ignored or, at worst, ridiculed in popular discourse. The complexity of our situation is further compounded by the political turmoil that has plagued our land. This alienation between individuals and their stories has adversely affected society, with young students being the most significant casualties. Their communication skills, mental health, self-expression, critical thinking, and creative imagination have all suffered as a result.

The Peshawar Literary Festival seeks to bridge this gap. By providing a platform that facilitates students and the broader community in recognizing and polishing their creative capabilities, the festival aims to restore our connection to our stories and give voice to our narratives. It is an opportunity to create a breathing space that inspires new storytellers, rekindling the collective imagination of a society in dire need of expression and intellectual growth.

In addition to promoting literature and culture, PLF 2025 will spotlight themes that are critical to the region's socio-political fabric, including climate change and the unique dynamics between Afghan refugees and host communities in Pakistan. Afghanistan's cultural and literary heritage has profoundly influenced Pashto literature and arts, shaping a shared legacy between the two nations. The festival will dedicate significant attention to the contributions of Afghan refugees to Pakistan's social and cultural fabric, celebrating their resilience and creativity. Through activities such as joint poetry symposiums and a special art gallery featuring works by Afghan and Pakistani artists, the festival will foster cross-cultural dialogue and harmony. By engaging with these pressing issues, the festival aligns with broader developmental goals and addresses the challenges marginalized and vulnerable communities face. The festival will also explore the urgent need for environmental stewardship, climate resilience, and sustainable practices, particularly in regions vulnerable to ecological degradation. Discussions and sessions will highlight the role of literature and policy in addressing environmental challenges, advocating for green solutions, and fostering sustainable urban and rural development.

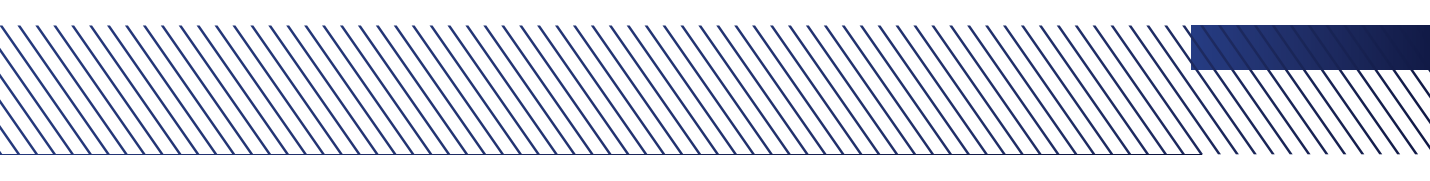





PLF 2025 will bring together writers, poets, scholars, and literary enthusiasts from Pakistan and beyond, offering a transformative experience that celebrates the power of words and ideas. It is designed to be a vibrant and dynamic event, offering a diverse range of activities that cater to various interests and audiences:

- **Workshops on Creative Writing:** Facilitated by seasoned authors and poets, these workshops aim to nurture aspiring writers by helping them hone their craft.
- **Master Class on AI:** An insightful session exploring the intersection of artificial intelligence and creative processes, addressing its influence on storytelling and literature.
- **Theatre as a Form of Expression:** A workshop highlighting the transformative power of theatre in self-expression, storytelling, and community building.
- **Photography and Videography Crash Courses:** Hands-on sessions for beginners and enthusiasts to explore visual storytelling through the lens of modern media.
- **Panel Discussions:** Engaging dialogues featuring experts and thought leaders on critical topics, including climate change, refugee integration, and cultural preservation.
- **Theatre Performances:** Live enactments showcasing stories that resonate with local and shared histories, bridging cultural divides.
- **Poetry Symposiums:** A unique gathering of young poets from Pakistan and Afghanistan, providing a platform to share their works and build connections.
- **Art Exhibition:** A celebration of creativity, bringing together artists from Pakistan and Afghanistan to display their works and foster cross-border artistic dialogue.
- **Musical Evening:** A mesmerizing night of music, where musicians and singers from both countries collaborate to promote harmony and celebrate the universal language of music.

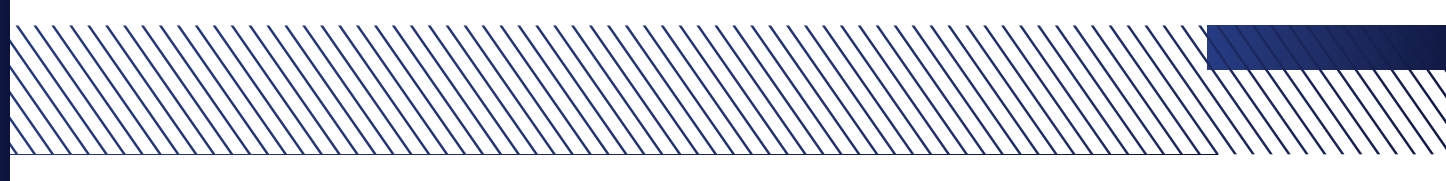
Theme for 2025: Literature, State, and Politics (Adab, Riyasat, Siyasat) This year's theme emphasizes the intersection of literature, state, and politics. Each day of the festival will focus on a specific dimension of this theme:

- **Day One: Regional –** Discussions and activities will delve into the political dynamics within the region, with a particular emphasis on the relationships and shared histories of the various segments in the region.
 - **Day Two: State (National Topics) –** Panels and sessions will explore pressing national issues, reflecting on the role of literature.
 - **Day Three: International Affairs–** The final day will highlight the international cultural and political landscape, fostering dialogue and collaboration between international and Pakistani voices. Out of the ten planned sessions, one will focus on the contributions of Afghan refugees to Pakistan's social and cultural fabric, including a joint poetry symposium and an art gallery dedicated to showcasing their work.
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The other broader issues, themes , topics, and cases that will be discussed are; Water issue (Paani marr raha hay- inspired by a book written by Amna Mufti, one of the panelists) , Statehood and identity (Qoum, Mulk, Sultanat – Inspired by a book written by Ali Qasmi , one of the panelists), Climate Change and the folk knowledge , Sahafat Neeli, Peeli, or Kali (inspired by the book title “The dark side of journalism” written by Syed Irfan Ashraf , one of the panelists) , Rights and responsibilities debate (Royasta hogi maan k jaisay), and many other contemporary topics.

As the Peshawar Literary Festival 2025 unfolds, it promises to be more than just a celebration of words and ideas. As the Themes from last season, and this on indicates, this festival is a testament to the resilience of culture, the power of storytelling, and the transformative role of literature in shaping societies. By fostering a space where intellectual curiosity meets artistic expression, the festival is going to provide a platform for a collective imagination long subdued by socio-political challenges. This festival is going to serve as a bridge between generations, between tradition and modernity, between local narratives and global dialogues. PLF 2025 is not just an event; it is a movement—one that restores agency to our stories, amplifies marginalized voices, and cultivates a more thoughtful, informed, and connected society. As the words give shape to some excellent poetry, prose, and discourse, the festival will leave behind a legacy of inspiration, urging all who partake to continue writing, questioning, and envisioning a future where literature remains a beacon of hope and change.



Glimpses from the past – Season 1

Last year more than 6000 people were engaged through various mediums directly, more than 30,000 through social media interactions, and so many more indirectly. Past talks are available on our social media platforms:

Social Media Handles on all platforms: @lfpeshawar

Highlights Day 1 and 2 : Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/lfpeshawar/videos/739348257847869>

<https://www.facebook.com/lfpeshawar/videos/790943459218883>

- **Talks Playlist : Youtube :**

<https://www.youtube.com/@plfofficial/videos>



Agenda – 2023



Agenda for Day 1

Saturday, 4th February 2023



Time

Sessions

Children Literary Activities

9:30 AM

Dr. Noor ul Basar, Gul Arbab, Raj M. Afridi, Afsar Afghan,

12:00 PM

Opening Ceremony

01:00 PM

پاکستان کا تعلیمی نظام اور طالب علموں کی تخلیقی صلاحیتیں

Sikandar Tangi (Moderator)

Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy, Dr. Nasir Jamal Khattak, Dr. Shabana Gul

2:30 PM

Writing workshop

Dr. Nasir Jamal

4:30 PM

کیا بڑی زبانیں چھوٹی زبانیں کھا رہی ہیں؟

Dr. Usman Shah (Moderator)

Zubair Toorwali, Mehraban Elahi, Dr. Khalid Sohail Malik,
Dr. M Ali Deenakhel

5:45 PM

پستون خوا، ادب کلتور او تاریخ

Abdur Rehman (Moderator)

Dr. Abaseen Yousafzai, Adil Safi, Dr. Nasrullah Wazeer,
Prof. Yar Muhammad Maghmoom

مشاعرہ

Akbar Hoti (Moderator)

Rahmat Shah Sayil, Prof. Darwesh Durrani,

7:00 PM Dr. Abaseen Yousafzai, Bakhtzada Danish, Prof Aseer Mangal

Dr. Tariq Danish, Hasena Gul, Mumtaz Orakzai, Kalsoom Zeb,

Dr. Iqbal Shakir, Zafar Khan Zafar, Shamshad Angar,

Shahid ali Shahid, Dr. Habib Nawaz, Jalbal Ashnagharay,

Anwar Nigar, Ghazal Mohmand,

Agenda – 2023



Agenda for Day 2

Sunday, 5th February 2023



Time

Sessions

10:00 AM

Theatre Workshop

Ahad Ali Siddiqui

10:00 AM

Urdu Writing Workshop

Amna Mufti

12:00 PM

Journalistic Writing Workshop

Wusatullah Khan

12:00 PM

Pashto Writing Workshop

Dr. Abaseen Yousafzai

2:00 PM

ادب اور ماحولیات کا امتزاج

Dr. Aamir Taj (Moderator)

Dr. Aurangzaib Niazi, Wajahat Malik, Amna Mufti

3:30 PM

ادب، امن اور شناخت

Warda Shehzadi (Moderator)

Khadim Hussain, Dr. Hafeez Jamali, Dr. Gulzar Jalal

4:15 PM

طنز و مزاح کے نشیب و فراز

Adeel Afzal (Moderator)

Wusatullah Khan, Gul e Nokhaiz Akhtar, Saad ullah jan Barq

5:30 PM

مجھے کیوں بلایا؟

Adeel Afzal

6:30 PM

Swaang Theatre: منٹو رامہ

مشاعرہ

7:30 PM

Syed Zubair Shah (Moderator)

Nazeer Tabassum, Nasir Ali Syed, Dr. Sughra Sadaf,

Dr. Izharullah Izhar, Dr. Awais Qarni, Bushra Farrukh,

Dr. Sagheer Aslam,

Gallery – Print Media Coverage

INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

Literary festival's soft launch

Bureau Report | Published January 7, 2023

PESHAWAR: The soft launch of Peshawar Literary Festival (PLF) took place at a private hotel here that was attended by poets and writers from across KP.

Speaking at the ceremony, Prof Abaseen Younsfai said that such events were the need of the hour. He said that the festival would not only provide recognition to the literature of the region but also would promote the soft image of Peshawar.

Bushra Farukh said that the festival would bring different languages together. Alder Mori, Mehraban Elahi, Kaloomzeb and Ali Gul Faraz also appreciated the step and termed it a good beginning of the new year for Peshawarites.

Hamid Khan, deputy director of youth affairs, in his brief speech said that youth directorate appreciated such activities and in the past had taken various initiatives for youth.

The festival, supported by the US embassy in Paktistan and youth directorate, would take place from Feb 3 to 5. It will host writers from across the country and also conduct workshops on creative writing and theatre. The ceremony concluded with musical performance by Saf.K and Bilal Khattak.

Published in Dawn, January 6th, 2023

DAWN

Soft launch of Peshawar Literary Festival held

Reference | Bureau report | January 10, 2023

PESHAWAR: The soft launch ceremony of the Peshawar Literary Festival took place at a local hotel in which noted poets and writers from across the province participated.

PESHAWAR: The soft launch ceremony of the Peshawar Literary Festival (PLF) took place at a local hotel in which noted poets and writers from across the province participated.

Speaking at the ceremony, Prof Abaseen Younsfai said that such events were the need of the hour, as it would not only provide recognition to the literature of the region but would also promote the soft image of Peshawar.

Bushra Farukh, a well-known poetess, said that the good thing about the festival was that it would bring different languages being spoken together. Alder Mori, Mehraban Elahi, Kaloomzeb and Ali Gul Faraz, also appreciated the step and termed it a very good beginning of the New Year, for Peshawarites.

Hamid Khan, deputy director of Youth Affairs Directorate, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in his brief speech mentioned that the directorate always welcomed such activities, and in the past had taken various initiatives for the youth and would do so in future as well.

The festival, supported by US Embassy in Pakistan, and youth directorate, would take place from February 3-5, 2023.

DAWN

E-Paper | February 05, 2023

Two-day literary festival held

Bureau Report | Published February 5, 2023



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PESHAWAR: Speakers at a festival urged literati to use language as a tool to promote peace and cultural diversity.

The literary festival was arranged under the banner of US embassy and directorate of youth affairs at a local hotel here on Saturday.

Through seven sessions and a mushaira, the participants shed light on various aspects and role of different languages being spoken in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They demanded of the government to preserve and promote languages for ensuring peace.

Students, teachers, poets, research scholars and intellectuals from Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad attended the event.

Gallery – Print Media Coverage



INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

Literary festival's soft launch

Bureau Report | Published January 9, 2023

Festival in the city

Sher Alam Shinwari | Shehr | February 19, 2023



Discussions at the Peshawar Literary Festival changed the sombre mood that had settled

DAWN

E-Paper | February 05, 2023

Call to strengthen social cohesion through music

By Sher Alam Shinwari

PESHAWAR: Rights' activists, artists and music buffs on Friday stressed the need for strengthening social cohesion and interfaith harmony through music.

Being an effective medium, musical expression could bring closer communities beyond ethnic, racial and religious boundaries, they said, adding that social cohesion and interfaith harmony could be strengthened through traditional folk music.

They were speaking at a

music concert titled 'tunes for harmony' arranged under the banner of Culture, Literature, Arts and Development Organisation (Clado), a non-profit body, at the main hall of Ideas of School of Arts (ISA) here on Friday evening.

The main theme of the initiative was to highlight the power of traditional folk music and its significance in advancing the cause of social cohesion and interfaith harmony. Peace activists from Hindu, Sikh, Christian communities and a few Afghan artists also turned up at the event.

Abdur Rahman Afridi, chief

of Clado, in his opening remarks stated that music being a universal language had no regional, racial, religious or ethnic boundaries, and had played a significant role in cementing human ties down the ages.

He added social cohesion and interfaith harmony always brought communities together both through instrumental and vocal tunes.

Alamgir Halaj, chief organiser of the event, remarked that his organisation in collaboration with Chaman Development Association used literature and performing arts to promote

social cohesion and pluralism in the society.

Coordinator ISA Hanifur Rahman said that such activities not only brought society back to life but also created a breathing space for economic empowerment of the artists' community from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Folk artists Khan Agha, Jalal Zaheri and Edwin Yousaf mesmerised the audience with their electrifying instrumental music of rabab, harmonium and tabla while budding musicians also entertained the music buffs.

Rajish Kumar, a young participant, told this scribe that he along with four friends enjoyed the event, saying it would promote the cause of interfaith harmony in the region.

"Folk symphonies would help break the militants' narrative," he stated.

Peace activists Shahabuddin Khan, Mohammad Haris Khan and Anwar Khan shed light on various aspects of folk music.

Javeria Fayyaz and Khurram Fazal, both music critics, appreciated the initiative, arguing that such events should be encouraged at all levels in the city.

Gallery – Panel Discussions



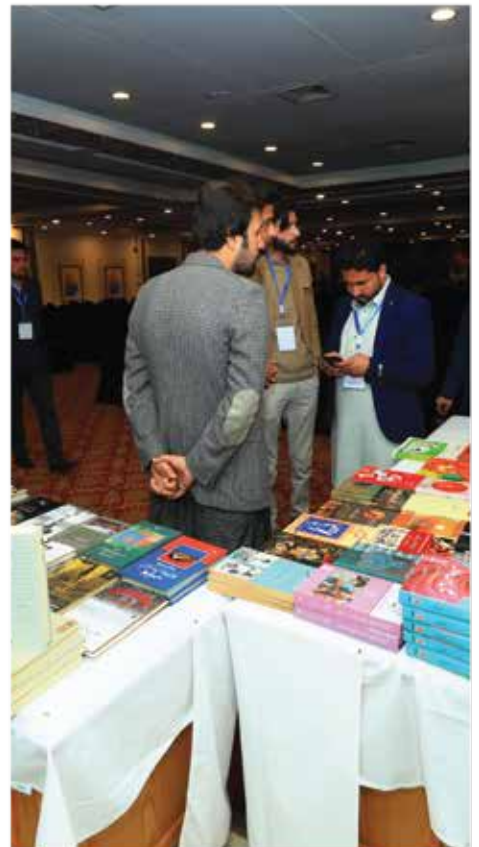
Gallery – Writing workshops



Gallery - Audience



Gallery – Art Exhibition



Gallery – Poetry Symposiums



Gallery – Workshop on Theatre of the oppressed



A collage of nine photographs showing various activities at the Peshawar Poetry Festival. The photos depict award presentations, performances, and group photos on a stage decorated with a large, colorful, star-shaped banner. A central white rectangular area contains a torn paper effect with a photo of a man in a white kurta and a woman in a black dress.