

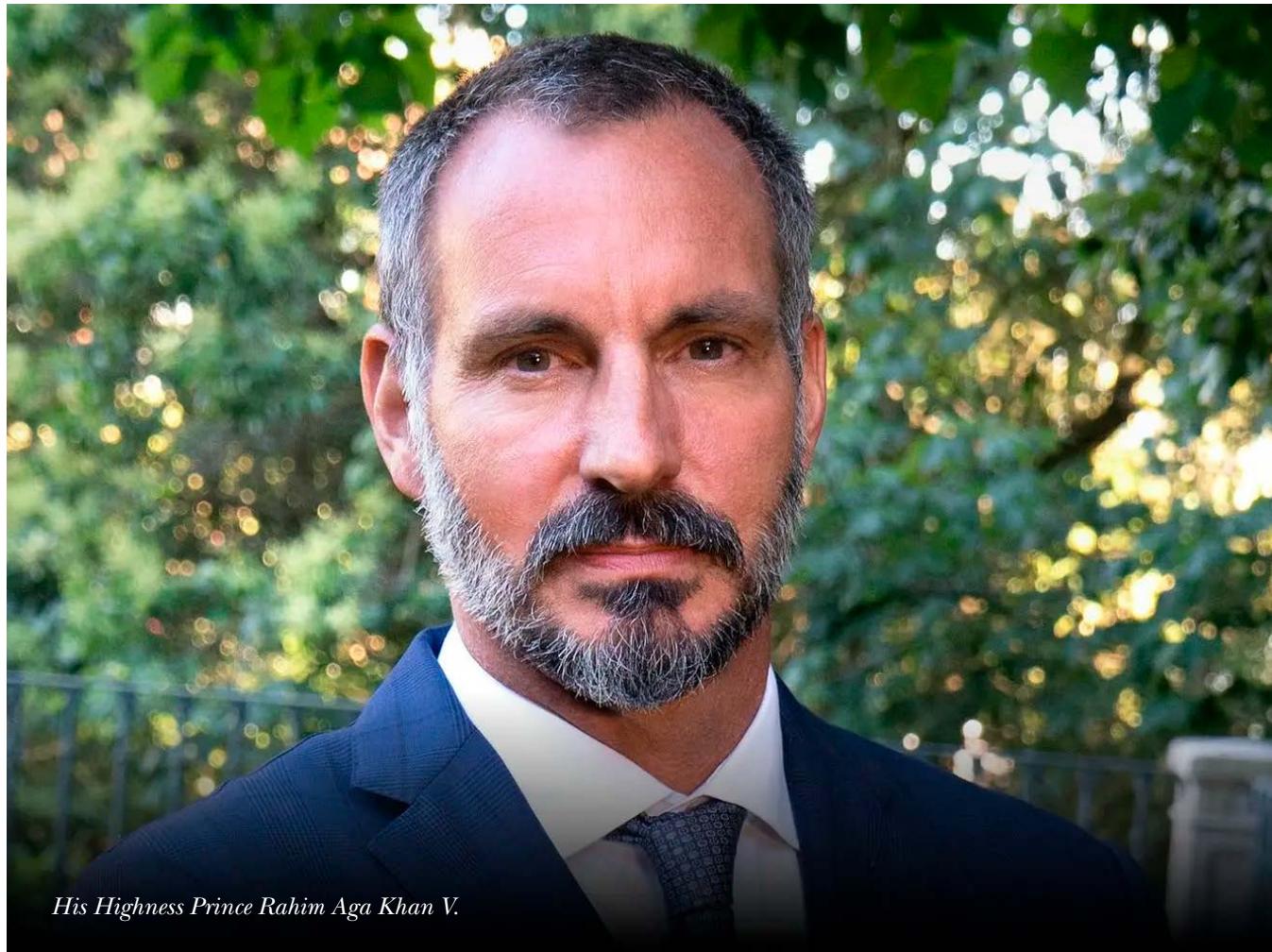


AKDN

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Summer 2025 Newsletter  
*Pakistan Edition*

# His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan V is the 50th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, and the Chair of the Aga Khan Development Network



*His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan V.*

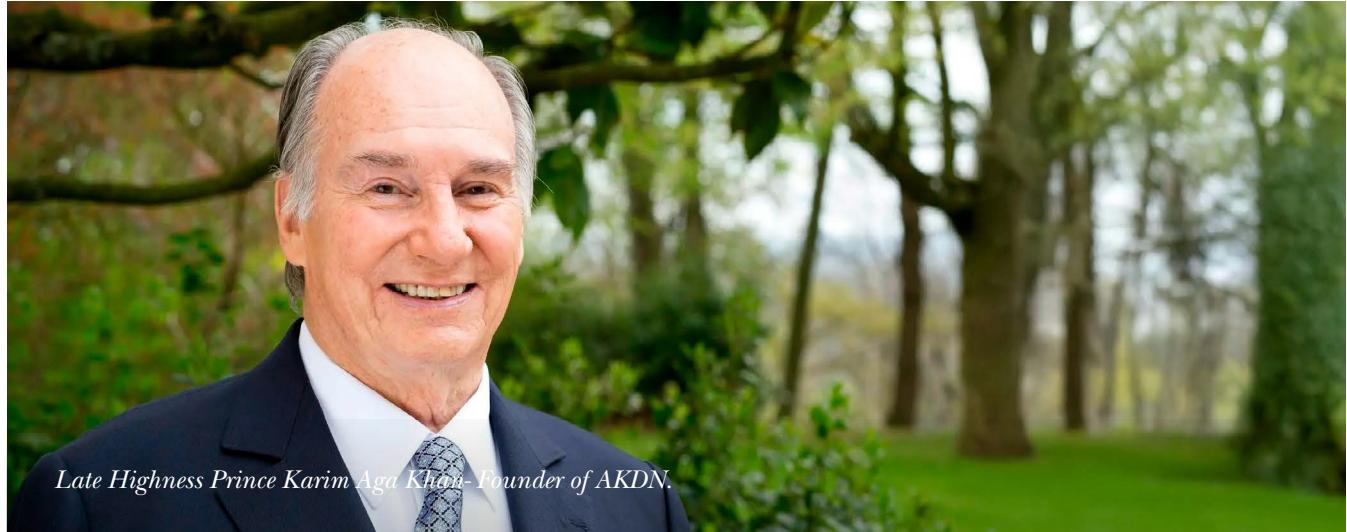
His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan V succeeded his father the late Aga Khan IV Shah Karim Al Hussaini in accordance with historical Shia Imami Ismaili tradition on 4 February 2025 upon his passing. In that capacity, he has assumed the role of Chair of the Aga Khan Development Network. His Highness was educated at Phillips Academy Andover and graduated in 1995 from Brown University with a Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Literature.

His Highness worked closely with his late father for over three decades, serving on the boards of many agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network. He has been particularly concerned with AKDN's drive to protect the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change. He has also given sustained attention to the work of AKDN and the Ismaili community institutions in addressing the needs of those living in

the greatest poverty and supporting the improvement of their livelihoods through education, training and enterprise.

His Highness meets regularly with leaders of government, international organisations, and civil society to strengthen their relations with the Ismaili Imamat and to advance AKDN's efforts to improve the lives of marginalised and vulnerable communities. His Highness was honoured in 2024 for his leadership in advancing path-breaking initiatives in Pakistan in the fields of commercial banking, microfinance, insurance, sustainable tourism, and renewable energy. As a testament to his services to Pakistan, His Highness Prince Rahim was conferred with the nation's highest civilian award, Nishan-i-Pakistan, by President Asif Ali Zardari last year.

# His Late Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan-Founder of AKDN



His Late Highness was born on 13 December 1936 in Geneva. The eldest son of Prince Aly Khan by his first wife, Joan Yarde-Buller, he spent his early childhood in Nairobi, Kenya, and attended the Institut Le Rosey in Switzerland. He graduated from Harvard University in 1959 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Islamic History. At the age of 20, Prince Karim succeeded his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan, as Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslim.

AKDN was founded by His Late Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV. For him, one manifestation of his hereditary responsibilities was a deep engagement with development for more than 65 years. In the context of his role as Imam, His Late Highness Aga Khan IV's concern has been to interpret the faith for the Ismaili Muslim community and to take a lead in improving their quality of life as well as improving the quality of life of the people amongst whom his community live.

Continuing a familial history of public service - his grandfather was twice President of the League of Nations and his uncle was a long-serving UN High Commissioner for Refugees - His Late Highness cared deeply about the continued development of communities and societies, including, but not limited to, his own. This stemmed from the responsibility of the Imam, as he saw it, to help improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable populations. To this end, and guided by the ethical principles of Islam, he established the Aga Khan Development Network to improve living conditions and opportunities for people in some of the poorest most vulnerable parts of the developing world. Today, the AKDN is active in more

than 30 countries, with a particular focus on some of the poorest parts of Asia and Africa. His Late Highness guided all the agencies that comprise the AKDN to work closely with national and local governments on a politically neutral basis, and to identify and implement solutions in a collaborative manner. The alleviation of poverty, enhancement of pluralism and gender equality, and protection of the environment are among its key areas of focus.

In recognition of his exceptional efforts and contributions to human development and improving the social condition of societies globally, His Late Highness Aga Khan IV received numerous decorations, honorary degrees, and awards from institutions and nations across the world. In keeping with the recognition accorded to the previous three Aga Khans by the British monarchs, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II granted the title His Highness to Aga Khan IV in 1957. In acknowledgement of his exceptional contributions to human development and improving the social condition of societies globally, His Late Highness received distinctions of honour from France, Portugal, Kenya, Canada, the United Kingdom, Iran, India, Pakistan and Senegal. He received 44 international awards, including honorary Canadian citizenship and the UN Champion for Global Change Award, and was the recipient of 24 honorary degrees from leading institutions such as Cambridge, Harvard and McGill. His Late Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan (Aga Khan IV) was conferred Nishan-e-Pakistan, the country's highest civilian honour, by the Government of Pakistan in 1983 in recognition of his extensive social and economic welfare contributions in Pakistan, across the Muslim Ummah, and in the developing world.

# Princess Zahra Aga Khan Pro-Chancellor attended the AKU Convocation for the class of 2024



The Aga Khan University in Pakistan celebrated a landmark Convocation this year, honouring its founding Chancellor, His Late Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV. The ceremony, attended by Princess Zahra Aga Khan, marked a historic transition as AKU welcomed His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan V as its new Chancellor and Princess Zahra as its Pro-Chancellor. A total of 473 graduates—more than 70 percent of whom are women—earned bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in 16 different fields in nursing, medicine and education. To date, AKU has awarded nearly 16,000 degrees, diplomas and postgraduate certificates in Pakistan.

"Our founding Chancellor once said that the cornerstone of his vision was opportunity – the opportunity to build a better life for oneself and one's family," President Sulaiman Shahabuddin said. "In Pakistan, His Highness created opportunities for millions of people through AKU and the AKDN. Looking out at the Class of 2024 today, I see women and men who are, without question, ready to play their part in creating a world that is rich in opportunity."

The longest-serving member of AKU's Board of Trustees, Princess Zahra was appointed by His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan V to serve as the University's Pro-Chancellor and act on his behalf. Her appointment was announced by Chair of the Board of Trustees Zakir Mahmood. "Princess Zahra's appointment shows the strong commitment of His Highness to build on and advance the legacy of our founding Chancellor and his conviction in the mission and vision of the University," Chair Mahmood said. "It brings me much happiness that my brother, His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan, in accordance with my father's wishes and the founding charter of AKU, has become Chancellor," Princess Zahra said. "I am deeply honoured that His Highness has appointed me Pro-Chancellor of AKU, so that, together—in our respective roles—we may continue to sustain and strengthen this remarkable institution, remaining true to our father's vision for the University." "His Highness the Aga Khan's vision of pluralism as vital to our existence reminds us of the diverse community we have built here and the inclusive world we aim to shape," Valedictorian Mustafa Saiyoom said.

# AKDN provides support to flood affected communities



Pakistan has been affected by the unprecedented natural disasters triggered by the monsoon rains and intensified by Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF) causing flooding across Pakistan. Since 26 June 2025 the widespread devastation has claimed 883 lives, left 1177 injured, damaged infrastructure including 9261 houses, 239 bridges, and 671 km of roads. More than 6180 livestock have perished. Millions of people have been displaced, and thousands of villages have been submerged, placing immense pressure on food security, health systems, and livelihoods. The affected communities are in urgent need of support.

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) through its agencies, is active on ground working with local communities and authorities to provide relief to the affected people and has been supporting in early recovery and rehabilitation efforts. Over 4500 individuals were evacuated as precautionary measures by the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) volunteers. Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) field teams actively monitored high-risk valleys and disseminated early warnings through SMS, local radio, and in-person outreach. More than 3500 CERT and other volunteers are taking part in the rescue, response and relief operations. AKAH has supported 402 families (Over 3200 individuals) with food and non-food items. Aga Khan Health Services (AKHS) with the support of AKAH and the Regional Health Board, Gupis Yasin conducted three Medical Camps in Khalti Gupis; Harap (Thoi) and; Raushan (Talidass) and examined 511 patients. Following the 22 August Talidass, Ghizer incident that submerged the Ghizer road and cut off the communities in Gupis, Yasin, and Phander valleys from Gilgit, AKDN Helicopters enabled reconnaissance, emergency logistics, and medical evacuations. A total of 6,230 kg of food items and medicine were transported to stranded families upstream of Talidass, Raushan Ghizer. 171 individuals were airlifted including 30 critical patients/attendants, students and professionals. AKDN Helicopters carried out 23 sorties (56 legs were flown (29 hours)) to Gupis

(mostly), Taus, Thoi, Chatorkhan, Gahkuch, Hundur, and Gulmit.

Through the FCDO-funded BRAVE (Building Resilience and Addressing Vulnerability to Emergencies) project implemented in partnership with AKF and Concern Worldwide, AKAH delivered one-month food assistance to 52 families in Ganche, Baltistan and 17 families in Kharman, Baltistan whose homes were fully damaged. Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) has supported the Danyore Local Support Organisation (LSO) in providing water tankers to 231 households in the Gulodas area of Sultanabad and the Syedabad area of Danyore Gilgit to ensure an emergency water supply to save trees and orchards. HBL Foundation provided urgent food relief by distributing over 1,000 ration packages to flood-affected families in Talidass, Raushan, Dain, Khalti, and other villages across Gilgit-Baltistan, ensuring month-long sustenance support in the immediate aftermath.

A total of 36 dewatering pumps were distributed in Southern parts of the country including Karachi benefitting around 25,970 people. AKRSP technical teams are assessing damaged water channels, bridges, and land across all ten districts of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral to initiate rehabilitation and land reclamation projects. The rehabilitation of 44 water channels, repair of nine footbridges and pathways, and reclamation of 225 Kanals of flood-affected land in Gilgit, Ghizer, Diamer, and Ghanche districts are under way.

In the aftermath of the 2025 floods, the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan formally wrote to His Highness the Aga Khan, seeking AKDN's support in relief, recovery, and resilience-building efforts. His Highness graciously responded with deep concern for the affected communities, reaffirming AKDN's solidarity and long-term commitment. The AKDN Agencies in Pakistan collectively responded to those affected by the catastrophic floods, in close collaboration with local authorities and the Provincial/Federal government.

# Emperor Shah Jahan's Palace of Mirrors - An intricate glory of floral and geometrical patterns



The Sheesh Mahal, also known as the “Palace of Mirrors”, dates to the 17th century, during the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan. The palace, considered one of the highlights of the Lahore Fort, features intricate floral and geometrical patterns and semi-precious stones inlaid in white marble columns (Pietra dura work). Meanwhile, convex glass mosaic work, delicate stucco tracery, and the stucco's gilded ornamentation further add to the structure's glory.

Aga Khan Cultural Service - Pakistan (AKCS-P) began its conservation efforts at the Sheesh Mahal in 2023, assembling a diverse team of conservators, architects, artisans, and traditional mirror makers, among others. The Government of Punjab and the United States Consulate financed the technical services provided for the initiative. To ensure adherence to the highest standards, international experts were consulted. Mirror samples and mortar were tested in the Czech Republic and Italy, respectively. Additionally, a consultant

from Germany contributed to the development of scientific procedures and techniques. Between 2023 and 2024, AKCS-P completed the conservation of the prototype area. The intervention, funded by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP), helped establish a baseline for the ongoing work on the Sheesh Mahal.

Special convex mirrors for the palace weren't easily available and eventually were custom-made at a factory in Shikarpur, Sindh, the only place in Pakistan found to have the expertise to produce glass tiles with the required specifications. Nonetheless, the artisans had to significantly adapt their methods to replicate the original mirrors of the Sheesh Mahal. Furthermore, given the countrywide knowledge deficit in traditional stucco and mirrorwork, a cadre of craftspeople was trained in specialized skills to equip them to undertake the conservation project. The monument is expected to be completed by the end of 2027.

# HBL Microfinance Bank is honoured to be recognised as a High Achiever of the Prime Minister's Ramazan Relief Package 2025



Prime Minister handing over the award to Mr. Amir Khan, President & CEO of Microfinance Bank (HBL MfB).



Signing ceremony of the US\$ 80 million Risk Sharing Agreement between HBL MfB and IFC.

HBL Microfinance Bank (HBL MfB) has marked the first half of 2025 with a series of notable achievements underscoring its leadership in financial inclusion and social impact. The Bank was recognised as a High Achiever under the Prime Minister's Ramazan Relief Package 2025. The award was presented by the Honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, to Mr. Amir Khan, President & CEO, acknowledging the Bank's innovative efforts to empower disenfranchised communities through technology-based solutions. As the largest microfinance bank in Pakistan, HBL Microfinance Bank remains at the forefront of transforming the digital financial landscape, driven by a vision to empower every Pakistani.

At the international level, HBL MfB signed a US\$ 80 million Risk Sharing Agreement (RSA) with the International Finance Corporation (IFC), aimed at expanding access to finance for smallholder farmers, microenterprises, and women entrepreneurs.

Amir Khan, President & CEO, HBL Microfinance Bank, while sharing his views on the RSA, said, "This partnership with IFC is a testament to our commitment to financial inclusion. The facility serves as a replicable model for strategic partnerships that mitigate market challenges while driving sustainable development. By pioneering this Risk Sharing Facility in the microfinance sector, we are ensuring that underserved segments of society — especially small business owners and farmers, particularly women, have access to the capital they need to thrive. We are thankful to IFC for their trust in us and look forward to the growth and progress it will bring for underserved Pakistanis".

# Communities Lead the Way: Adapting to Climate Change in GBC



*Plantation in Gilgit-Baltistan.*

In response to the growing impacts of climate change, communities across Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral (GBC) are embracing locally driven solutions. Under the EU-financed Energy Plus: Energy for Climate Resilience project, significant efforts are underway to build community resilience through the sustainable management of natural resources. As part of this initiative, 13 Adaptation and Land Management Plans (ALMPs) have been developed with active community participation, focusing on identifying climate vulnerabilities, impacts and local adaptation strategies. These plans have provided a foundation for targeted and impactful climate adaptation interventions.

In line with the ALMPs, the project has initiated the construction of 10 irrigation infrastructure schemes, including 2 piped and 8 solar-powered lift irrigation systems. Once completed, these schemes are expected to bring approximately 200 acres of new agricultural land under cultivation, improving local food security

and enhancing climate resilience. Afforestation is another major pillar of the intervention to address climate vulnerabilities in the region. So far, half a million trees have been planted across GBC—over 213,000 in Gilgit, 186,919 in Baltistan, and over 102,000 in Chitral—covering a total of 198 acres. These plantation drives have been carried out with strong community involvement, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for the long-term maintenance of local forest ecosystems.

The success of these initiatives is grounded in strong multi-stakeholder collaboration and serves as a compelling example of how inclusive planning, active community engagement, and strategic partnerships can turn climate challenges into opportunities—fostering a greener, more resilient future across the high mountain landscapes of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral (GBC).

## Aga Khan Medical Centre, Booni's timely response saves mother and her child



A 32-year-old pregnant woman from Mulkhow Village, District Upper Chitral came to the Emergency Department at Aga Khan Medical Centre, Booni in critical condition. She was at full term with dangerously high blood pressure, severe shortness of breath, and anemia with a Hemoglobin level of just 7 g/dL, and no blood donors immediately available. Upon evaluation, the patient was diagnosed with heart failure, complicated by pulmonary edema, deep vein thrombosis (DVT), and fetal distress with Transverse Lie. The team swiftly arranged for blood and made the urgent decision to proceed with an emergency cesarean section to save both mother and child.

She was immediately shifted to the operating theatre, where the surgical and anesthetic teams successfully delivered a healthy baby boy weighing 3.2 kg. Both

mother and baby remained stable through the procedure and the first 24 hours postoperatively. However, on the second postoperative day at around 11:00 a.m., the mother suddenly developed severe shortness of breath and her oxygen saturation dropped to a critical level of 14%, most likely due to a pulmonary embolism. The Emergency Resuscitation Team (ERT) was activated without delay. The patient was intubated and resuscitated with intensive efforts.

After nearly six hours of coordinated resuscitation, the patient was successfully extubated as her condition stabilized. She remained admitted for close monitoring and care for two more days and was then discharged in a clinically stable and improved condition. This case is an example of the life-saving impact of opportune decisions.

# Aga Khan University Examination Board Joins Hands with the Government of Balochistan and the World Bank



*Signing of the MoU between AKU-EB and PMU-School Education Department, Government of Balochistan.*

## A Partnership for Improving Quality Education

In a significant step towards improving the assessment and education system in Balochistan, the AKU Examination Board (AKU-EB) has signed a landmark MoU with the PMU-School Education Department, Government of Balochistan on 26 January 2025 with the aim to advance and strengthen the Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission (BAEC). This strategic collaboration, backed by the World Bank, will enhance assessment and examination standards across the region. AKU-EB, through expert-led capacity-building trainings, will equip educators with cutting-edge assessment practices aligned with international standards, fostering improved student learning outcomes and contributing to the continued advancement of education in Balochistan. By extending its expertise nationwide, AKU-EB continues to champion educational excellence, reinforcing its commitment to empowering institutions and shaping the future of learning and assessment in Pakistan.

## Sustainable Hospitality Practices at Hunza Serena Hotel



Situated in the breathtaking Hunza Valley, Hunza Serena Hotel redefines eco-friendly hospitality by blending comfort with a deep commitment to sustainability. Every detail of the property has been thoughtfully curated to reduce its environmental footprint while offering guests a responsible and memorable experience. This commitment starts with the 'IFC - Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies' (EDGE) green-building certification, affirming that modern comfort can coexist with environmental responsibility. At Hunza Serena Hotel, extensive solar power leverages the valley's abundant sunlight to reduce our carbon footprint and promote renewable energy.

Sustainability at Hunza Serena Hotel extends well beyond energy. Water conservation remains a top priority, with an in-house water filtration plant that ensures safe, high-quality water while conserving natural resources. To further minimize waste, sensor-based faucets have been installed throughout the property, proving that even the smallest innovations can

make a meaningful difference in sustainable practices. The use of resources is reinforced by the hotel's advanced approach to wastewater management. A state-of-the-art sewage treatment plant (STP) enables Hunza Serena to treat wastewater, helping to reduce pollution, safeguard natural resources, and protect the surrounding ecosystem.

Equally important is the hotel's effort to preserve the natural beauty. More than 5000 trees have been planted on the property, creating a thriving green space that augments a wholesome ecosystem. Through these combined efforts, Hunza Serena Hotel demonstrates how sustainability can be thoughtfully integrated into every aspect of hospitality. By investing in renewable energy, conserving water and recycling waste, the hotel proves that travel can be both enjoyable and environmentally responsible. Carrying forward this vision, the upcoming Sost Serena Hotel is also being developed with the same sustainability philosophy at its core.

Dear Readers,

We are pleased to bring our latest volume of the summer edition 2025. This year has been an important year for AKDN. His Highness Prince Karim al-Hussaini Aga Khan IV passed away on 4 February 2025, in Lisbon, Portugal, at the age of 88. He was the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and the founder of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). His Late Highness was committed to improving the quality of life of vulnerable populations through the AKDN and was recognised globally as a statesman and humanitarian. For him, one manifestation of his hereditary responsibilities was a deep engagement with development for more than 65 years. His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan V succeeded his father the late Aga Khan IV Shah Karim Al Hussaini in accordance with historical Shia Imami Ismaili tradition on 4 February 2025 upon his passing. In that capacity, he has assumed the role of Chair of the AKDN.

Other highlights include the visit of Princess Zahra Aga Khan to Pakistan to attend the AKU Convocation; AKDN flood response in Pakistan; diving deep into geometrical and floral patterns of Sheesh Mahal-a palace of mirrors; Aga Khan Health Services saving lives; communities adapting to climatic changes; HBL MfB honoured by Prime Minister of Pakistan; AKU EB joining hands with Government of Balochistan and; Sustainable practices at Hunza Serena.

We want to thank the Government of Pakistan for the strong support and all our partners who have been supporting our development work in the country for many decades. Thank you for your encouragement and messages we have received about our work.

If you have any questions about the articles, please contact the editor Laila Naz Taj, Director, AKDN Pakistan Communications, at [laila.taj@akdn.org](mailto:laila.taj@akdn.org).

We want to extend our gratitude to Fayyaz Nurmohamed Director of Communications AKDN Global, Shahed Karim, Senior Manager Communications AKDN Global, Karim Sayani, Carol Oyola, Mustafa Husain (AKU), Abbas Hussain (AKCS-P), Irshad Khan Abbasi and Shahid Nadeem (AKF, P), Janelle Dias (AKU-IED), Shanoz Aqnazabekova (AKU- EB), Imran Hassan, Ambreen Sumar (Serena Hotels Pakistan), Maya Ismail and Haider R. Mojiz (HBL-MfB), Zulfiqar Alikhan (AKRSP), Seema Samad and Mehar Aftab (AKAH,P), Alizay Jaffer and Rafiq Bharwani (AKES,P), Ariba Khan (AKHS,P), Afzal Shahabuddin, Karim Hassan, Department of Communications, The Ismaili Council for Pakistan and Laura Riaza, Graphic Designer (AKDN) for their contributions.

For more information, visit our website [the.akdn/Pakistan](https://the.akdn/Pakistan) and AKDN Pakistan Facebookpage; <https://www.facebook.com/akdnpakistan>.

*Cover Photo Credit: Adrien Buchet*

*The 17th century Sheesh Mahal of Lahore Fort decorated with mirror mosaic work. The glittering effect of these mirrors imitate the night sky bedazzling visitors from all over the world. Located in a court-yard made of white marble, this jewel like palace embodies the artistic finesse of the Mughal era.*  
*— Jordi Llompart (Spanish journalist and film producer).*

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