

## CAPS POST-EVENT REPORT

**Title:** Bridging Pakistan and the Asia-Pacific

**Event Date:** May 29, 2025

**Venue:** Hotel Crown Plaza, Islamabad

**Time:** 14:00-16:00

**Moderator:** Sardar Bakhsh, Joint secretary CAPS

### Executive Summary

Amid shifting global dynamics, Pakistan has a growing opportunity to deepen engagement with the Asia-Pacific through citizen diplomacy and people-to-people linkages. In this context, CAPS hosted a session uniting Pakistani-origin scholars and professionals from the region to explore education, cultural exchange, and collaborative development. Speakers emphasized authentic counseling, localized IR narratives, engagement with the South East Asian students enrolled in Pakistani universities as tools to enhance linkages. The forum concluded with calls for more institutional partnerships and individual efforts to amplify Pakistan's presence in this strategic region



## Session highlights

The session was chaired by Dr. Khuram Iqbal, President of CAPS, who highlighted the session as part of a broader citizen diplomacy initiative, emphasizing the growing role of individuals and communities in shaping international relations beyond state-led efforts. He noted that connections between people and Businesses are now at the forefront of building peace and fostering mutual understanding. Citing the 1956 White House summit, led by President Eisenhower, as a milestone in citizen diplomacy, Dr. Iqbal emphasized that the session aimed to unite Pakistani-origin scholars from the Asia-Pacific region and East Asian students in Pakistani institutions to explore how their expertise can strengthen global linkages and positively impact Pakistan's international engagement.

**Nadeem Afzal, graduate of Victoria University, Melbourne,** recounted his journey from a student in Australia to a seasoned education consultant in Pakistan, emphasizing integrity and firsthand experience in guiding students. After studying at Victoria University and working in Australia, he returned in 2007 to pursue a career in student counseling despite societal skepticism. Over 15 years, he has placed more than 1,000 students in Australia through ethical, personalized mentorship and 70 % of them are now Australian citizens. This human capital, he emphasized could be capitalized to build soft image of Pakistan in Australia.

**Dr. Mehmood Hussain,** graduate of Jilin University, China and now Assistant Professor at AIOU, highlighted China's unique "moral realism," rooted in Confucian and Taoist ethics, as a peaceful alternative to Western IR paradigms and emphasized the need for Pakistan to develop localized IR narratives. Advocating for collaborative projects based on shared Chinese and Muslim values, he proposed a three-tier engagement model involving leaders, academics, and youth. He also praised China's inclusive governance and urged Pakistan to adopt similar long-term development planning.

**Dr. Fahim,** graduate of Jeju University, South Korea and now Research Director at Biologics 4U in South Korea, shared his journey in developing ADC therapies and pursuing an integrated PhD after graduating from Sakurai University. He outlined key pathways for Pakistani students and professionals to enter Korea, including scholarships and skilled worker visas, often requiring Korean language skills. He noted Korea's structured academic environment, emphasizing hierarchy, discipline, and intensive workloads, but also highlighted its supportive atmosphere and efficient degree timelines. He encouraged aspiring students to reach out for guidance on opportunities in South Korea.

This was followed by an interactive session featuring not only Pakistani alumni from Asia-Pacific universities but also students from other countries in the region, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand. They shared valuable insights from their experiences living in both Pakistan and abroad, offering diverse perspectives on cross-cultural engagement and academic exchange. The session ended with interactive Q/A, followed by recommendations.

## **Outcomes**

1. Established first contact with seven East Asian students enrolled in International Islamic University, Islamabad. These students could be cultivated with a long term plan.
2. All the East Asians students maintain a vibrant social media presence. They shared the event reels, pics and updates on their social media handles, introducing CAPS to our main audience in the Asia Pacific region
3. First ever gathering of Pakistani scholars who studied from Asia Pacific region, and now back in Pakistan serving in their respective fields. These contacts will be further cultivated for CAPS long-term mission
4. The event was covered by a wide range of print and electronic media houses, bringing national visibility to CAPS