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COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY OF CHINA



Institute for a Community
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Galloping into Prosperity: Pakistan and China Welcome the Fiery Year of the Horse!



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Hey friends, can you feel that buzz in the air? Today, February 17, 2026, the streets of Beijing are alive with red lanterns swaying in the wind, firecrackers popping like excited heartbeats, and families reuniting over steaming plates of dumplings. It's Chinese New Year—Spring Festival—and this year, we're galloping into the **Year of the Fire Horse!**

If you've ever watched a horse run free across open plains, that's the vibe: energy, speed, courage, and a whole lot of forward momentum. The Fire element adds that extra spark—think passion, transformation, and the kind of drive that turns dreams into reality. After the quieter, more reflective Year of the Snake, this Horse year feels like a fresh breeze pushing us all ahead.

The Spirit of the Fire Horse

In Chinese astrology, the Horse symbolizes freedom, adventure, and unbridled energy. People born in Horse years are known for their enthusiasm, independence, and charisma. Add the Fire element to this already dynamic sign, and you get something truly extraordinary. Fire Horses are believed to be passionate, courageous, and visionary—qualities that resonate deeply with the spirit of both Pakistan and China as we forge ahead together.



The last Fire Horse year was 1966, sixty years ago. This rare convergence happens only once every 60 years in the Chinese zodiac cycle, making 2026 particularly auspicious. It's a year for bold initiatives, transformative projects, and fearless pursuit of shared goals. For Pakistan and China, two nations already racing forward together, the Fire Horse year couldn't be more fitting.



A Bond That Transcends Borders

Now, here in Pakistan, this isn't just China's holiday—it's ours too, in a way. Our bond with China isn't just on paper; it's in the everyday warmth we share. Think about it: the Karakoram Highway winding through our mountains like a shared heartbeat, the CPEC projects lighting up homes and factories, the thousands of Pakistani students studying in China, and the Chinese engineers who've become part of our communities. We're iron brothers, after all—through thick and thin, we've got each other's backs.

A Journey Through Time: 75 Years of Friendship

This year hits extra special because 2026 marks **75 years** of diplomatic ties between Pakistan and China. Seventy-five years of trust, laughter over shared chai (or tea, depending on whose house you're at), and building a future together.

The Early Years: 1951-1970s

When Pakistan recognized the People's Republic of China on January 4, 1950, becoming one of the first countries to do so, few could have imagined the depth of friendship that would follow. The 1960s brought the iconic Karakoram Highway project—an engineering marvel that locals call the "Eighth Wonder of the World."



Chinese and Pakistani workers labored side by side at dizzying altitudes, often in treacherous conditions, to carve this road through some of the world's most challenging terrain. More than 800 workers from both nations gave their lives to connect our countries. Every time we travel this route, we're driving on a path built with shared sacrifice and determination.

The highway wasn't just about connecting Islamabad to Kashgar; it was about connecting hearts. Stories from that era tell of Chinese engineers learning Urdu phrases to



communicate with local workers, of Pakistani families hosting Chinese teams during harsh winters, of friendships that lasted lifetimes. This spirit of cooperation set the foundation for everything that followed.

Growing Stronger: 1980s-2000s

Through the decades, as both nations faced their own challenges, the friendship never wavered. When Pakistan faced natural disasters—earthquakes, floods—China was always among the first to send aid. When China needed support on international platforms, Pakistan stood firm. This wasn't transactional diplomacy; it was family looking out for family.

The 1990s saw increased defense cooperation, not out of aggression, but mutual security concerns. The JF-17 Thunder fighter aircraft, jointly developed by Pakistan and China, became a symbol of technological collaboration. Pakistani and Chinese engineers worked together, sharing knowledge, overcoming technical challenges, and creating something neither could have achieved alone.

The Modern Era: CPEC and Beyond

Then came 2013, and President Xi Jinping's visionary Belt and Road Initiative, with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as its flagship project. Suddenly, our "all-weather friendship" took on tangible, transformative dimensions.

CPEC: Building Dreams Together

Let's talk about CPEC for a moment—not just as an economic initiative, but as a testament to what's possible when two nations truly commit to each other's prosperity.



Infrastructure Revolution

The Peshawar-Karachi Motorway, once just a dream, is now becoming reality. Imagine: a journey that used to take days can now be completed in hours. Small business owners can



transport goods faster, families can visit relatives more easily, and opportunities that seemed distant are now within reach. The Sukkur-Multan section alone has created thousands of jobs and reduced travel time by more than half.

The Karakoram Highway upgrades have made the historic route safer and more accessible. Where landslides once regularly blocked the path, modern engineering has created safer passages. Trade between Pakistan and China's Xinjiang region has flourished, benefiting communities on both sides.

Energy Revolution

Remember the dark days of load-shedding? Those endless hours without electricity that frustrated families and crippled businesses? CPEC's energy projects have been game-changers. The Sahiwal Coal Power Plant, Port Qasim Power Plant, and numerous wind and solar projects have added thousands of megawatts to our national grid.

But here's what the statistics don't tell you: these projects mean a small business owner in Faisalabad can run his machinery without worrying about power cuts. They mean a child in rural Sindh can study under electric light. They mean hospitals can provide uninterrupted care to patients. That's the real impact of CPEC—measured not just in megawatts, but in transformed lives.

Gwadar: A Port City's Transformation

Gwadar, once a sleepy fishing town, is evolving into a modern port city. The deep-sea port development has brought employment to thousands of local families. New schools, hospitals, and infrastructure are rising. Chinese companies have hired and trained local workers, transferring valuable technical skills.

I met Hassan, a young man from Gwadar, who told me his story. His father was a fisherman, and Hassan expected to follow the same path. But CPEC training programs gave him skills in port logistics. Today, he manages operations at the port facility, earning enough to support his family and send his younger siblings to school. "China didn't just build a port," he told me. "They built a future for people like me."



Special Economic Zones

The Special Economic Zones being developed across Pakistan—from Rashakai in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Dhabeji in Sindh—are becoming hubs of industrial activity. Chinese companies are setting up manufacturing facilities, creating jobs, and transferring technology. Pakistani entrepreneurs are partnering with Chinese investors to launch new ventures.

At the Faisalabad Industrial Zone, I watched Pakistani and Chinese workers collaborating on a textile production line. The Chinese supervisor, Mr. Wang, spoke passable Urdu, often joking with his Pakistani colleagues. "We're not just coworkers," one Pakistani worker told me. "We're friends. We celebrate Eid together, and last month, we all celebrated Chinese New Year at his place."

Cultural Bridges That Connect Hearts

But CPEC is just one dimension of our relationship. The cultural bonds run even deeper.

Educational Exchanges

Did you know that over 30,000 Pakistani students are currently studying in China? From engineering to medicine, from business to arts, young Pakistanis are gaining world-class education in Chinese universities. Many receive Chinese government scholarships, a generous gesture that's investing in Pakistan's future.

Ayesha, a medical student from Lahore studying in Beijing, shared her experience: "When I first arrived, everything felt foreign—the language, the food, the weather. But my Chinese classmates welcomed me warmly. They helped me navigate the campus, taught me Mandarin phrases, and even learned to cook biryani from my recipes! Now, four years later, China feels like my second home."

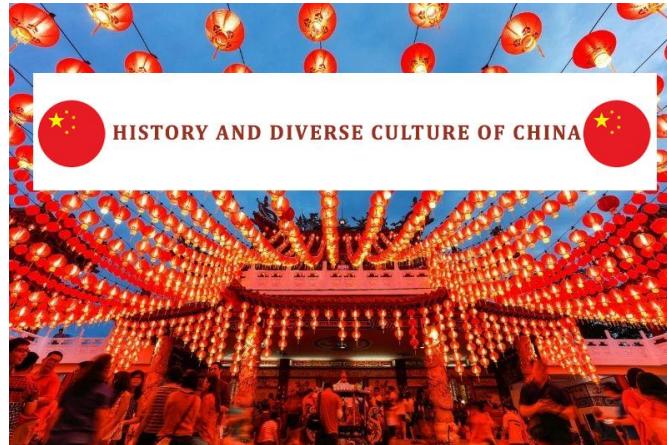
These students return to Pakistan not just with degrees, but with friendships, cultural understanding, and appreciation for Chinese civilization. They become bridges between our nations, carrying forward the friendship to the next generation.



Language and Culture

Mandarin Chinese classes are increasingly popular in Pakistani schools and universities. The Confucius Institutes in Islamabad and Karachi are always full of eager learners. Similarly, in China, more students are learning Urdu, drawn by interest in Pakistani culture, literature, and Sufi poetry.

Cultural centers in both countries regularly host events celebrating each other's heritage. Pakistani qawwali performances in Beijing move Chinese audiences, even when they don't understand the Urdu lyrics—the spiritual intensity transcends language. Chinese opera performances in Karachi fascinate Pakistani viewers with their elaborate costumes and ancient traditions.



Sister Cities and Cultural Festivals

Islamabad and Beijing, Karachi and Shanghai, Lahore and Chengdu—these sister city partnerships facilitate regular cultural exchanges. Art exhibitions, music festivals, food fairs, and sports competitions bring people together.

The annual Pakistan-China Friendship Festival in Islamabad attracts thousands. You'll see Chinese calligraphy demonstrations next to Pakistani truck art displays, Chinese dumplings being served alongside Pakistani samosas, and children from both nations playing together, language barriers melting away in the universal language of laughter.

Food: The Delicious Diplomacy

Let's talk food—because nothing brings people together quite like good meals! Chinese restaurants in Pakistan have evolved beyond the standard "Chinese" fare. Now you can find authentic Sichuan hotpot in Islamabad, Lanzhou hand-pulled noodles in Karachi, and Xinjiang lamb kebabs in Peshawar.



Meanwhile, Pakistani restaurants in Chinese cities are introducing locals to the glories of biryani, nihari, and karahi. I heard about a Pakistani restaurant in Guangzhou that's so popular, customers line up for hours on weekends. The owner, originally from Peshawar, told me he employs both Pakistani and Chinese chefs, creating fusion dishes that honor both traditions.

People Behind the Partnership

Beyond the official ceremonies and big projects, it's the personal stories that truly define our friendship.

The Engineer's Story

Chen Wei, a Chinese engineer, has worked in Pakistan for eight years on various CPEC projects. He arrived not speaking a word of Urdu and knowing little about Pakistani culture. Today, he's fluent in Urdu (with a Punjabi accent, his friends tease), married to a Pakistani woman he met through friends, and raising their daughter bilingual. "I came for a job," he laughs. "I stayed for love—love for this country, its people, and yes, for my wife!"

The Student's Journey

Muhammad Farhan went to Shanghai on a business scholarship in 2018. The entrepreneurial environment there inspired him. He noticed Chinese factories producing high-quality sports goods efficiently. After graduating, he partnered with a Chinese manufacturer to export Pakistani sports goods to China while importing specialized Chinese machinery to Pakistan. His small startup now employs 50 people in Sialkot and is growing rapidly. "China taught me to think big," he says. "And Pakistan-China friendship gave me the network to make it happen."

The Doctor's Mission

Dr. Liu Ming, a Chinese medical expert, has spent five years working at a hospital in Gwadar, training Pakistani doctors in advanced surgical techniques. He's performed



hundreds of surgeries and trained dozens of Pakistani surgeons. Local people call him "Dr. Laal" (Red Doctor) affectionately. "I could work anywhere," he tells visitors. "But here, I feel I'm making a real difference. The warmth of Pakistani people makes it home."

Community Integration

In Islamabad's diplomatic enclave, Chinese families have become part of the neighborhood. They shop at local markets, their children play cricket with Pakistani kids, and during Ramadan, Pakistani neighbors invite them for iftar dinners. Similarly, Pakistani professionals working in Beijing, Shanghai, and other Chinese cities find themselves welcomed into Chinese communities, invited to celebrate Spring Festival, and treated as friends, not foreigners.

Spring Festival Celebrations Across Pakistan

Today, as China celebrates, Pakistan celebrates with them. Let's take a quick tour:

Islamabad: Official Grandeur and Grassroots Joy

At the Chinese Embassy, a grand reception brings together diplomats, government officials, and cultural figures. President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif sent heartfelt messages today, wishing the Chinese people health, happiness, and prosperity. PM Sharif even kicked it off with a classic "Gong Xi Fa Cai!"—may you prosper! It's the kind of greeting that makes you smile because you know it's genuine.



But the real magic happens at the grassroots level. The Islamabad Club of Chinese Enterprises hosts a community celebration where Chinese expats and Pakistani friends gather. Children perform dragon dances they've been practicing for weeks. Pakistani students of Mandarin present Chinese poetry recitations. The highlight is always the



dumpling-making competition, where Pakistani participants compete enthusiastically, often with hilarious results that everyone enjoys.

Karachi: Port City's Multicultural Celebration

At Port Qasim, where Chinese engineers and Pakistani workers have collaborated on power plants, a special celebration brings the workforce together. Red lanterns hang from cranes, and a temporary stage hosts performances blending Chinese and Pakistani music. A Chinese erhu (traditional two-stringed instrument) duets with a Pakistani tabla, creating a melody that's uniquely theirs.

The Karachi Chinese School organizes an open day where Pakistani families are welcome to experience Chinese New Year traditions. Children try their hand at calligraphy, learn about zodiac animals, and enjoy traditional Chinese snacks. Pakistani mothers compare notes with Chinese mothers about parenting, schooling, and the challenges of raising children in a multicultural world.

Lahore: Cultural Capital's Artistic Fusion

At the Alhamra Arts Council, a joint Pakistan-China Spring Festival Gala features performances by artists from both countries. Pakistani classical dancers perform alongside Chinese ribbon dancers. A Pakistani rock band covers Chinese pop songs, and a Chinese choir sings a Punjabi folk song, their pronunciation carefully coached but their enthusiasm genuine.

The Lahore Museum hosts a special exhibition: "75 Years of Friendship: A Photographic Journey." Vintage photographs from the 1950s show early diplomatic meetings, the Karakoram Highway construction, cultural exchanges through the decades, and recent CPEC projects. Visitors linger over images, many sharing their own stories of connection with China.

Peshawar: Border City's Warm Welcome

At China Window, a Chinese cultural center in Peshawar, the celebration has special significance. This city, so close to the Karakoram Highway's start, has deep historical



connections to China. Traders who've been traveling between Peshawar and Kashgar for decades share stories of how the route has evolved, how friendships have deepened.

A special feature this year is a video call connection with Kashgar, allowing families and friends separated by the border to celebrate together virtually. Tears flow as elderly traders see their old friends in real-time, exchanging New Year wishes, promising to meet soon once travel resumes fully.

Messages of Friendship

President Asif Ali Zardari's message emphasized the unbreakable bond between the two nations: "As China celebrates the auspicious Year of the Fire Horse, Pakistan stands shoulder to shoulder with our iron brother. For 75 years, our friendship has weathered every storm and emerged stronger. May this year bring prosperity, progress, and peace to the great Chinese people."

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's message was equally warm: "Gong Xi Fa Cai to President Xi Jinping and all our Chinese friends! The Fire Horse symbolizes courage and dynamism—qualities that define both our nations. As we celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations, we look forward to the next 75 years of even deeper cooperation, greater people-to-people connections, and shared prosperity. Pakistan and China: together, always."

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, in his message, highlighted cultural connections: "Spring Festival reminds us that despite our different languages and traditions, the values we cherish—family, friendship, hard work, and hope—are universal. Pakistani people join Chinese people in celebrating not just a new year, but the enduring friendship that makes both our nations stronger."



The Fire Horse Vision: Galloping Forward Together

So, as families in China sit down for reunion dinners tonight, let's take a moment here too. Light a virtual lantern (or a real one if you're feeling festive), think about the journeys we've taken together, and look ahead with hope.

What the Fire Horse Brings

The Fire Horse year is about bold steps, unbreakable spirit, and chasing what's next—perfect for deepening the all-weather friendship between our two nations. In Chinese tradition, the Horse represents progress and success. The Fire element brings passion, transformation, and innovation. Together, they signal a year of dynamic advancement.

For Pakistan and China, this symbolism aligns perfectly with our shared aspirations:

Infrastructure Expansion: CPEC's second phase focuses on agriculture, science and technology, and industrial cooperation. New special economic zones will create hundreds of thousands of jobs. Agricultural cooperation will enhance Pakistan's food security while exporting quality Pakistani products to Chinese markets.

Technology Cooperation: Both nations are investing in digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, and 5G technology. Pakistani IT professionals are collaborating with Chinese tech companies on innovative projects. Joint research initiatives in universities are producing breakthrough work in areas from renewable energy to biotechnology.

Green Energy Future: Climate change affects us both. CPEC's pivot toward green energy—solar, wind, and hydroelectric projects—demonstrates commitment to sustainable development. The Diamer-Bhasha Dam, when completed, will be a monument to sustainable development and cooperation.

Educational Goals: Plans to increase Pakistani students in China to 50,000 by 2030 will create a whole generation of Pakistan-China friendship ambassadors. Similarly, more Chinese students coming to Pakistan to study our languages, culture, and history will deepen mutual understanding.



Health Cooperation: The COVID-19 pandemic showed how China supported Pakistan with medical supplies, vaccines, and expertise. Going forward, joint health initiatives, medical research collaborations, and knowledge exchanges will make both nations healthier and more resilient.

Cultural Renaissance: Establishing more cultural centers, expanding film and television co-productions, and promoting tourism will let more people experience each other's rich heritage. Imagine Pakistani dramas becoming popular in China (beyond the expat community), and Chinese films finding wider audiences in Pakistan.

The Next 75 Years

As we celebrate 75 years, let's dream about the next 75. By 2101, what will Pakistan-China friendship look like?

Perhaps the Karakoram Highway will be just one of many modern transport corridors connecting us. Perhaps Pakistani and Chinese scientists will be collaborating in space exploration. Perhaps Urdu will be commonly spoken in Chinese cities, and Mandarin in Pakistani ones. Perhaps our economies will be so integrated that the prosperity of one is inseparable from the other.



But more than economic integration or technological advancement, may the next 75 years bring even deeper human connections. May more Pakistani children grow up with Chinese best friends, and vice versa. May more families be binational, carrying both cultures in their hearts. May our cuisines continue to blend, creating delicious fusion dishes that become classics. May our artists collaborate to create works that speak to universal human experiences.



Youth Leading the Way

The future of Pakistan-China friendship lies with young people. In Pakistani universities, Chinese language clubs are buzzing with activity. In Chinese schools, students are curious about Pakistani culture. Social media has connected Pakistani and Chinese youth in ways previous generations couldn't imagine.

On platforms like WeChat and Instagram, young people share their lives, breaking stereotypes, building friendships. Pakistani fashion influencers collaborate with Chinese brands. Chinese food vloggers explore Pakistani street food. Gaming communities bring together players from both countries, competing and cooperating in virtual worlds before meeting as friends in the real one.

This digital-native generation doesn't see nationality as a barrier—they see it as an opportunity to learn, share, and grow together. They're creating the future of Pakistan-China friendship, one post, one message, one collaboration at a time.

A Moment of Reflection

Whether you're in Lahore dreaming of Beijing's fireworks, or in Guangzhou missing home-cooked biryani, know this: across borders, hearts are connecting tonight. Prosperity, good health, endless energy, and maybe a little extra luck for all of us.

The Fire Horse year reminds us that friendship, like the horse, needs freedom to run, courage to overcome obstacles, and energy to keep moving forward. Pakistan and China have demonstrated all these qualities over 75 years. Our friendship has run free despite global uncertainties, shown courage in supporting each other through challenges, and maintained tireless energy in pursuing shared goals.

As lanterns glow in Beijing, Shanghai, and across China, as Pakistani friends gather in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar to celebrate with their Chinese brothers and sisters, we're reminded that some bonds transcend geography, politics, and



circumstances. The Pakistan-China friendship is one such bond—forged in mutual respect, nurtured through cooperation, and strengthened by genuine affection.

Looking Forward with Hope

Tonight, as Chinese families reunite over special dinners, sharing traditional foods laden with symbolic meaning—fish for abundance, dumplings for wealth, sweet rice balls for family unity—Pakistani hearts celebrate with them. We may not all be gathered at the same table, but we're all part of the same family.

The coming year will undoubtedly bring challenges. The world faces uncertainties—economic fluctuations, climate change, geopolitical tensions. But if 75 years have taught us anything, it's that Pakistan and China face challenges better together. Where one is weak, the other provides strength. Where one lacks resources, the other shares generously. Where one has knowledge, the other learns eagerly.

This is what "iron brothers" means. Not just agreements on paper, not just trade statistics, not just official visits—though all these matter. It means the Chinese engineer who considers Pakistan home. The Pakistani student who dreams in Mandarin. The families that blend both cultures in their daily lives. The workers who've labored side by side on projects that will outlive them all. The children who don't see "Chinese" or "Pakistani" but just "friend."

Gong Xi Fa Cai!

So, as 2026 begins under the auspicious sign of the Fire Horse, let's gallop forward together. Let's embrace the Horse's energy, the Fire's passion, and the proven strength of our friendship.

To health and happiness for all Chinese families celebrating tonight.

To prosperity and progress for both our nations in the year ahead.



To the students, workers, entrepreneurs, artists, and ordinary citizens who embody the Pakistan-China friendship every day.

To the next 75 years—may they be even more remarkable than the last 75.

Gong Xi Fa Cai, everyone! May the Year of the Fire Horse carry Pakistan and China to even greater heights—together, always.

Happy Chinese New Year from one friend to another.

In the words of an old Chinese proverb: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Pakistan and China took that first step 75 years ago. Today, we've traveled far together, and the road ahead looks brighter than ever. Here's to the journey continuing, the friendship deepening, and the future we'll build together—one bold step at a time.

Happy Spring Festival! Happy Year of the Fire Horse!

Pakistan Zindabad! China Zindabad! Pakistan-China Friendship Paindabad!