

# CLAWS Newsletter



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by Shreeya Shubhi Mohanty

This edition of the Afghanistan Newsletter highlights a month characterised by diplomatic outreach, economic engagement, humanitarian challenges, and persistent security concerns. Afghanistan expanded its regional economic partnerships, most notably through enhanced cooperation with Kazakhstan, where high-level engagements, business forums, and multiple commercial agreements reflected growing efforts to increase trade, investment, and regional connectivity. These initiatives underscore Kabul's continued focus on diversifying economic partnerships and strengthening its role within broader Central and South Asian trade networks.

At the same time, Afghanistan faced a range of humanitarian and security-related developments. Cross-border tensions with Pakistan resurfaced following airstrikes along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border, resulting in civilian casualties and renewed concerns over regional stability. International actors continued to engage Afghanistan through humanitarian assistance programmes, with additional support announced to address ongoing humanitarian needs. Domestic developments also drew international attention, including reports of public demonstrations, governance challenges, and continuing debates surrounding social policies. Collectively, the events covered in this edition illustrate Afghanistan's ongoing efforts to pursue economic opportunities and diplomatic engagement while managing complex security realities and humanitarian pressures in a rapidly evolving regional environment.

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## Domestic Affairs

### 26 May ([Ariana News](#)): **Russian Pharmaceutical Company Enters Afghan Market.**

Russian pharmaceutical manufacturer Pharmasintez has reached an agreement with Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health to begin supplying medicines to the Afghan market, marking a significant development in bilateral economic and healthcare cooperation. The company announced that its first shipments are expected to arrive within two months.

The supplies are expected to include insulin, antibiotics, and medicines used to treat cardiovascular diseases and cancer, products that Afghan health authorities have identified as being in high demand. Afghanistan remains heavily dependent on imported medicines, with most pharmaceutical products traditionally sourced from Pakistan, Iran, India, and countries in the Middle East. Industry observers noted that recent disruptions in regional supply chains have created opportunities for new suppliers to enter the Afghan market. Pharmasintez stated that its decision was driven by Afghanistan's need for greater access to quality medicines and pharmaceutical products. Founded in 1997, the company manufactures more than 300 pharmaceutical products across seven production facilities in Russia and exports to several regional markets. According to publicly available information, Pharmasintez is the first major Russian pharmaceutical company to formally enter the Afghan market. The development reflects the expansion of economic relations between Afghanistan and Russia, with bilateral trade increasingly encompassing sectors beyond energy, agriculture, and basic commodities. According to Afghanistan's Ministry of Industry and Trade, annual trade between the two countries stands at approximately \$538 million.

### 9 June ([Reuters](#)): **Afghan Authorities Crack Down on Anti Hijab Protests in Herat.**

Afghan security forces dispersed a rare protest in Herat province after demonstrations erupted over the detention of women accused of violating mandatory dress regulations. Witnesses reported that security personnel used force to break up the gathering, resulting in casualties, injuries, and arrests, although Taliban authorities did not confirm the reported figures. According to residents, the protests were triggered by actions of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which had reportedly detained women over alleged violations of hijab requirements. Protesters gathered in Herat's Jebrail area to oppose the detentions and

restrictions on women. Afghan officials stated that the gathering had disrupted public order and denied allegations that women were arrested solely for dress code violations. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) expressed concern over reports of arrests and the use of force against demonstrators, urging authorities to uphold the rights of women and ensure equal protection under the law. Subsequent UN reporting indicated that at least 30 women had been detained in Herat for alleged hijab violations, contributing to heightened tensions in the province. The incident highlights continuing international concerns regarding restrictions on women's rights in Afghanistan and reflects growing domestic tensions over the enforcement of social regulations by the Taliban administration.

**11 June ([Associated Press](#)): UN Confirms Civilian Deaths in Pakistani Airstrikes on Afghanistan.**

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) confirmed that 13 civilians were killed and 10 others injured in Pakistani airstrikes carried out in eastern Afghanistan overnight between 10 and 11 June. According to UNAMA, the casualties were predominantly women and children, including 11 children, one woman, and one man. The strikes targeted areas in the provinces of Khost, Kunar, and Paktika and marked a significant escalation in tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghan authorities accused Pakistan of carrying out the attacks and reported civilian casualties, while Islamabad rejected the allegations and dismissed the claims as propaganda.

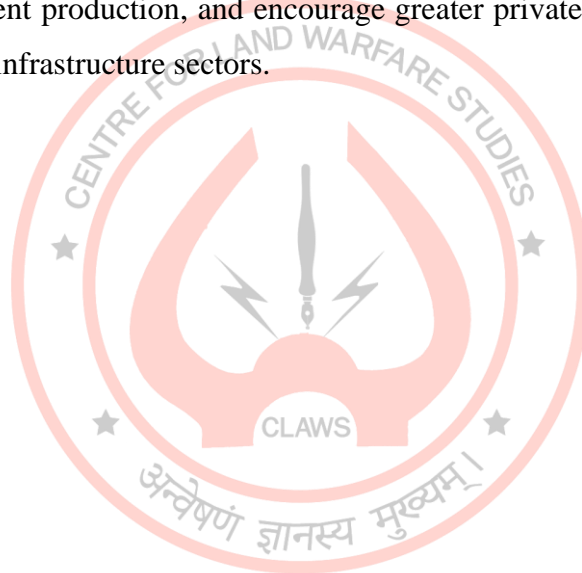
The incident disrupted a month-long period of relative calm following earlier clashes between the two neighbours. Relations between Kabul and Islamabad have remained strained due to recurring border violence, militant activity, and mutual accusations concerning cross-border terrorism. UNAMA expressed concern over the civilian casualties and reiterated the need to protect non-combatants in accordance with international humanitarian law. The mission also called for de-escalation and dialogue to prevent further deterioration of security conditions along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

**18 June ([Ariana News](#)): Afghanistan Signs \$67 Million Cement Production Agreement in Samangan.**

Afghanistan's Ministry of Mines and Petroleum signed a \$67 million contract with Aibak Cement Company for the development of the Aibak Cement Project in Feroz Nakhchir district

of Samangan province. The project forms part of ongoing efforts to expand domestic industrial production and attract investment into Afghanistan's mining and manufacturing sectors. Under the 30-year agreement, the company will pay a royalty of 200 Afghanis to the government for every ton of cement produced, subject to compliance with Afghanistan's mining laws, regulations, and contractual obligations. The Ministry stated that the cement plant will have a production capacity of 1,200 tons per day. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Minister of Mines and Petroleum Hedayatullah Badri said the project is expected to generate employment for approximately 600 people and contribute to Afghanistan's economic development. He also noted that the company has committed to investing around \$1 million in social development initiatives during the duration of the contract.

The project reflects the Afghan government's efforts to strengthen industrial self-sufficiency, increase domestic cement production, and encourage greater private sector investment in the country's resource and infrastructure sectors.



## External Affairs

### 28 May ([Politico](#)): **Russia, Afghanistan Sign Military Cooperation Agreement.**

Russia and Afghanistan signed a military cooperation agreement during the International Security Forum in Moscow, reflecting the continued expansion of ties between the two countries. While the specific provisions of the agreement were not disclosed, Afghan Defence Minister Mohammad Yaqoub described it as an important step in strengthening bilateral relations and security cooperation. During talks with Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu, Yaqoub emphasized the historical relationship between Afghanistan and Russia and expressed Kabul's interest in expanding engagement with Moscow. Shoigu, for his part, called on Western countries to lift restrictions on Afghanistan and assume responsibility for the consequences of their two-decade presence in the country. The agreement follows a series of measures that have brought Russia and Afghanistan closer in recent years. In April 2025, Russia removed the Taliban from its list of banned terrorist organisations, and in July 2025, it became the first country to formally recognize the Taliban administration as Afghanistan's government. The development highlights Moscow's growing engagement with Afghanistan as both sides seek to deepen political, security, and economic cooperation amid evolving regional dynamics.

### 9 June ([The Washington Post](#); [BBC](#)): **Pakistani Airstrikes in Afghanistan Kill Civilians, Escalating Border Tensions.**

Afghan authorities accused Pakistan of conducting airstrikes in the eastern provinces of Khost, Kunar, and Paktika, resulting in the deaths of at least 13 civilians and injuries to 14 others. According to Afghan officials, those killed included 11 children, one woman, and one elderly man. The strikes marked a significant escalation in tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, whose relations have remained strained by recurring border clashes and mutual accusations over militant activity. Pakistan stated that the operation targeted militant hideouts linked to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and claimed that 26 militants were killed during the strikes. Afghanistan rejected these assertions and maintained that civilians were the primary victims. Subsequently, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) confirmed that 13 civilians, predominantly women and children, had been killed and 10 others injured in the airstrikes. UNAMA called for de-escalation, protection of civilians, reopening of border

crossings, and renewed dialogue between the two countries. The incident further underscored the fragility of relations between Kabul and Islamabad, with ongoing disputes over cross border militancy, security concerns, and border management continuing to fuel instability along the Afghanistan Pakistan frontier.

## **20 June ([Afghanistan International](#); [TOLO News](#)): **Kabul, Astana Expand Bilateral Cooperation.****

Afghanistan's Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund met with Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Economy, Serik Zhumangarin, in Kabul to discuss expanding political, economic, and humanitarian cooperation. The meeting was attended by senior Afghan officials, including the foreign minister and the minister of industry and commerce. According to the Islamic Emirate, both sides highlighted longstanding political, economic, religious, and cultural ties. Zhumangarin stated that Kazakhstan views Afghanistan as an important regional partner and remains committed to providing humanitarian assistance, particularly for returning migrants and communities affected by natural disasters. He also announced the delivery of eight railway wagons of humanitarian aid, including tents, medicines, and other essential supplies.

The Kazakh delegation expressed interest in increasing imports of Afghan goods and expanding cooperation across multiple sectors. On behalf of Kazakhstan's president, Zhumangarin invited Akhund to undertake an official visit to Kazakhstan. Akhund welcomed deeper engagement, emphasizing the importance of translating bilateral relations into practical cooperation. He also extended an invitation to the President of Kazakhstan to visit Afghanistan. The meeting reflects Kazakhstan's continued efforts to engage Afghanistan through economic connectivity, humanitarian assistance, and regional cooperation despite the absence of formal international recognition of the Islamic Emirate.

## **17 June ([European Commission](#)): **EU Allocates €161 Million in Humanitarian Aid for Afghanistan.****

The European Commission announced €161 million in humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan in 2025, citing the country's continued humanitarian crisis and the needs of vulnerable populations. Of the total allocation, more than €141 million will support humanitarian operations inside Afghanistan, while €10 million each has been earmarked for

Afghan refugees and affected communities in Pakistan and Iran. The funding will be directed through humanitarian organizations to provide emergency food assistance, healthcare services, treatment for malnutrition, access to clean water and sanitation, protection services, emergency education, and disaster preparedness measures. The EU also announced the arrival of a Humanitarian Air Bridge flight carrying nearly 100 tonnes of essential relief supplies. According to the European Commission, Afghanistan remains one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises, with nearly 22 to 24 million people requiring humanitarian assistance. The EU has provided approximately €2.1 billion in humanitarian support to Afghanistan since 1994 and remains one of the country's largest humanitarian donors. The announcement was made during a high level meeting in Brussels focused on Afghanistan's humanitarian and development challenges, where participants emphasized the need to link emergency assistance with longer term economic recovery and resilience initiatives.

**19 June ([Al Jazeera](#); [Reuters](#)): Afghanistan Conducts Cross-Border Strikes Inside Pakistan.**

Afghanistan announced that it had carried out air strikes against what it described as hideouts used by ISIS-K and hostile intelligence networks inside Pakistan. According to Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence, the strikes targeted locations in Pakistan's Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces on the night of 18 June, alleging that the sites were being used to plan and coordinate attacks against Afghanistan.

The ministry stated that one of the targeted facilities was frequented by senior ISIS-K leaders and claimed that several important objectives had been successfully hit. The operation marked one of Kabul's most significant publicly acknowledged cross-border military actions in recent months amid continuing security tensions between the two neighbours. Pakistan rejected the allegations, with its Ministry of Information and Broadcasting describing Afghanistan's claims as false. Islamabad reiterated its longstanding position that numerous terrorist groups operate from Afghan territory and accused the Taliban administration of providing sanctuary to such organisations. The incident has added to existing tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, whose relations have been strained by recurring border clashes, militant violence, and mutual accusations over cross-border terrorism. The strikes also raise concerns about the durability of the fragile ceasefire and ongoing efforts to reduce tensions between the two countries.

**20 June ([The Diplomat](#); [Tolo News](#)): Afghanistan, Central Asia Enter New Phase of Cooperation.**

A report by *The Diplomat* noted that Central Asian countries have expanded their engagement with Afghanistan since the Islamic Emirate's return to power. While relations initially centered on security and economic concerns, cooperation has increasingly broadened to include political dialogue, transit connectivity, and regional development initiatives.

Speaking at the first Central Asia–Afghanistan Think Tank Forum in Kabul, Jalol Vakhobov, adviser to the President of Uzbekistan, emphasized that Afghanistan should not be viewed merely as a subject of regional discussion but as an active partner in shaping and implementing regional cooperation initiatives. He called for greater Afghan participation in efforts aimed at strengthening connectivity and collaboration across Central Asia. Political analysts highlighted the importance of Afghanistan's engagement with Central Asian states, noting its potential role as a bridge linking Central Asia with South Asia. They expressed hope that enhanced regional cooperation would help address existing challenges and unlock untapped economic and transit opportunities. Earlier, Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, speaking at the first Afghanistan–Central Asia Consultative Dialogue, called for current interactions between Afghanistan and Central Asian countries to evolve into deeper and more sustainable regional integration.

**20 June ([TOLO News](#); [8 am Media](#)): EU Calls for Global Action to Address Hunger Crisis in Afghanistan.**

The European Union has warned that Afghanistan is facing a severe hunger crisis and called on the international community to increase financial assistance and strengthen support for vulnerable populations. The EU's humanitarian arm stated that its ongoing assistance continues to provide lifesaving food and nutrition support across the country but emphasized the need for greater international funding, action and solidarity to address growing humanitarian needs. Meanwhile, Afghanistan's Ministry of Economy urged the international community to separate humanitarian assistance from political considerations. Deputy Minister of Economy Abdul Latif Nazari called for increased support for vulnerable communities, stressing that humanitarian aid remains essential for addressing the country's economic and social challenges. Analysts noted that large scale development projects and increased domestic and foreign investment could help reduce unemployment and improve livelihoods. Residents in

Kabul also highlighted the need for greater employment opportunities as a means of alleviating poverty and strengthening economic resilience. According to previous United Nations assessments, nearly 21.9 million people, approximately 45 percent of Afghanistan's population, require humanitarian assistance, underscoring the scale of the country's ongoing humanitarian and livelihood crisis.

**20 June ([Ariana News](#)): Trans-Afghan Railway Cost Rises to Over \$7 Billion Amid Growing Regional Interest.**

The estimated cost of the proposed Trans-Afghan Railway connecting Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan has increased to more than \$7 billion, according to Uzbek Deputy Minister of Transport Jasurbek Choriyev. The revised estimate reflects ongoing technical assessments and the expanding scope of the project, compared to earlier projections of approximately \$4.8 billion. Speaking at the Tashkent International Investment Forum, Choriyev stated that a comprehensive feasibility study is currently underway and is expected to be completed by the end of 2026. The railway is planned to connect Termez in Uzbekistan with Pakistan through Mazar-e Sharif, Logar, Kharlachi, and Torkham in Afghanistan, providing a direct transport corridor between Central and South Asia. The project includes approximately 760 kilometers of new railway construction within Afghanistan and is expected to reduce transport times between Central Asia and Pakistan from around 35 days to between three and five days. Officials estimate the corridor could handle up to 20 million tons of cargo annually while significantly lowering transportation and logistics costs.

Choriyev noted that several countries, including the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, have expressed interest in supporting the project, while the Eurasian Development Bank has indicated its willingness to participate in financing efforts. The railway is expected to strengthen regional connectivity, facilitate access to international markets, and enhance trade links between Central Asia, South Asia, and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Widely regarded as a strategic infrastructure initiative, the Trans-Afghan Railway is seen as a key component of broader efforts to position Afghanistan as a regional transit and connectivity hub linking major economic corridors across Eurasia.

**20 June ([Ariana News](#); [TOLO News](#)): High-Level Kazakh Delegation Visits Kabul as Afghanistan and Kazakhstan Pursue \$3 Billion Trade Goal.**

A high-level delegation from Kazakhstan, led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Economy Serik Zhumangarin, arrived in Kabul for discussions aimed at expanding political, economic, and trade cooperation between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan. The visit focused on strengthening bilateral relations, promoting investment opportunities, and enhancing regional economic connectivity. Afghanistan's Minister of Industry and Commerce, Nooruddin Azizi, described the visit as a reflection of the growing partnership between the two countries and an opportunity to deepen cooperation across multiple sectors. He noted that annual trade between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan currently stands at nearly \$600 million, with both governments seeking to increase bilateral trade to \$3 billion in the coming years.

According to Afghan officials, discussions covered opportunities to expand trade in agricultural products, food commodities, and other goods. Kazakhstan remains a major supplier of wheat, flour, and processed agricultural products to Afghanistan, while Kabul aims to increase exports of fresh and dried fruits to the Kazakh market. The Kazakh delegation also participated in a joint exhibition showcasing Afghan and Kazakh products, designed to strengthen commercial partnerships and encourage investment. Afghan authorities highlighted opportunities for foreign investment in sectors such as agriculture, industry, transport, transit, and logistics, while reaffirming their commitment to supporting international investors.

Observers noted that the visit carries broader regional significance, as closer economic cooperation between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan could enhance trade corridors, improve regional connectivity, and strengthen economic integration between Central and South Asia. The discussions reflect ongoing efforts by both countries to expand trade, encourage investment, and deepen long-term economic cooperation.

**21 June ([TOLOnews](#)): Astana Offers to Facilitate Afghanistan-Pakistan Dialogue.**

Serik Zhumangarin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Economy of Kazakhstan, stated that Kazakhstan remains committed to resolving disputes through dialogue and is prepared to facilitate discussions between Afghanistan and Pakistan if formally requested by both sides. He noted that President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has consistently encouraged Kabul and Islamabad to address their differences through diplomacy and negotiations.

The remarks come amid continued tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan over security concerns, border incidents, and trade disruptions. Zhumangarin emphasized that Kazakhstan is willing to provide an appropriate platform and conditions for dialogue aimed at reducing tensions and improving bilateral relations.

Meanwhile, former U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad urged Pakistani authorities to prioritize diplomatic engagement with Kabul. He called on Pakistani lawmakers to seek clarity on their government's objectives in its relations with Afghanistan and to support negotiations aimed at addressing mutual security concerns. Khalilzad noted that Afghan officials have proposed several confidence-building measures, including security guarantees, joint coordination mechanisms, and the involvement of a third party to review security-related issues. Political commentators observed that sustained dialogue and regional mediation efforts could contribute to easing tensions and promoting greater stability in Afghanistan-Pakistan relations.

**21 June ([Ariana News](#)): **Kazakhstan Calls for De-escalation Between Afghanistan and Pakistan.****

Serik Zhumangarin, Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Economy, called for a reduction in tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan during his visit to Kabul, emphasizing that disputes between the two neighbouring countries should be resolved through dialogue and diplomatic engagement.

Zhumangarin stated that Kazakhstan is prepared to facilitate dialogue and play a mediating role between Kabul and Islamabad if both sides formally request such assistance. He reiterated Kazakhstan's position that conflicts should be settled through negotiations and peaceful means, in line with the approach consistently advocated by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. The Kazakh official also highlighted the development of relations between Kazakhstan and Afghanistan, noting that Astana maintained its diplomatic presence in Kabul during challenging periods and was among the first countries to elevate its diplomatic engagement with Afghanistan. He further observed that Afghanistan's diplomatic missions in Kazakhstan continue to operate normally.

Commenting on the Islamic Emirate's international status, Zhumangarin expressed hope that discussions regarding formal recognition would advance through diplomatic and political

channels. He also noted that Kazakhstan had removed the Islamic Emirate from its list of banned organizations as part of efforts to expand bilateral engagement. The remarks came during a visit by a high-level Kazakh delegation to Kabul, where both sides discussed opportunities to strengthen political, economic, and trade cooperation between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan.

**21 June ([Ariana News](#)): **Afghanistan and Kazakhstan Sign 25 Private Sector Cooperation Agreements.****

Afghan and Kazakh private sector representatives signed 25 memorandums of understanding following the Afghan Kazakh Forum in Kabul, which featured product exhibitions and business-to-business meetings aimed at strengthening commercial ties between the two countries. According to officials, the agreements cover a broad range of economic sectors, including the import and export of pharmaceuticals, fresh and dried fruits, vegetables, banking services, and essential commodities such as wheat, flour, edible oil, and potatoes. The agreements are expected to facilitate greater trade and investment cooperation between businesses from both countries. The signing ceremony took place during the visit of a high-level Kazakh delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Economy Serik Zhumangarin. The visit focused on expanding economic engagement and exploring new opportunities for bilateral cooperation.

The forum forms part of wider efforts by Afghanistan and Kazakhstan to strengthen trade relations, enhance private sector connectivity, and promote greater economic cooperation between the two countries.

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memorandums are expected to facilitate greater cooperation in trade, investment, and market access between the private sectors of both countries.

The agreements were signed during the visit of a high-level Kazakh delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Economy Serik Zhumangarin. Discussions during the visit focused on strengthening bilateral economic relations and identifying new opportunities for commercial cooperation. The forum reflects ongoing efforts by Afghanistan and Kazakhstan to deepen economic engagement, enhance private sector connectivity, and expand bilateral trade as part of their broader partnership.

## **22 June ([Ariana News](#)): **Afghanistan, Uzbekistan Expand Cooperation in Pharmaceutical Sector.****

Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health announced that a delegation led by Abdul Basir Qane, Director General of Drug and Health Products Regulation, held discussions with Uzbek health officials in Uzbekistan aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector.

During meetings with Abdullah Azizov, head of Uzbekistan's regulatory authority for medical and pharmaceutical industries, and other senior officials, the two sides explored measures to expand collaboration in the production and regulation of medicines and health products. Discussions also focused on facilitating the entry of Uzbek pharmaceutical companies into the Afghan market, implementing inspections in accordance with Good Manufacturing Practice standards, streamlining medicine registration procedures, and increasing bilateral trade in pharmaceutical products. The talks further covered laboratory development, capacity building, and specialist training, as well as the exchange of expertise in regulatory and inspection processes. Both sides also discussed opportunities for broader technical and professional cooperation in the healthcare sector.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening long-term cooperation in pharmaceuticals and health products, supporting private sector engagement, and advancing mutually beneficial joint initiatives through continued dialogue and collaboration.

### **About the Author**

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She completed her B.A. (Hons.) in English from St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi and has a M.A. in International Studies from Christ University, Bengaluru.

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