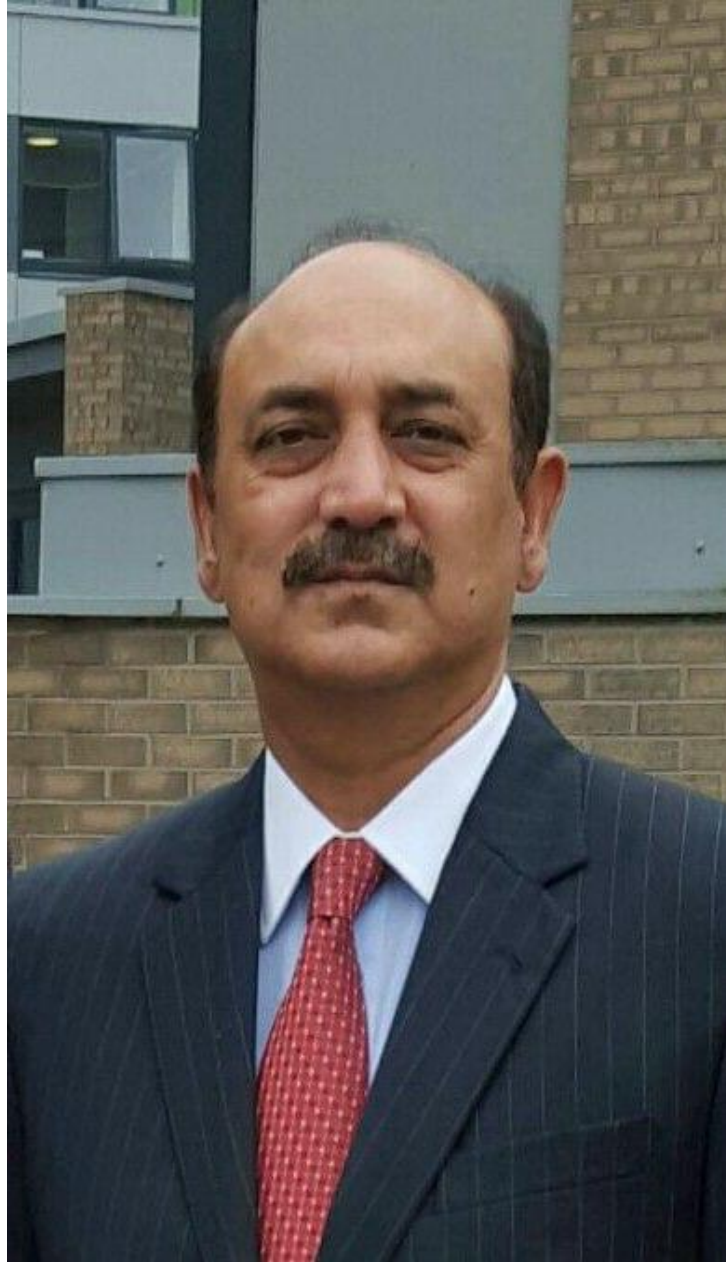


The Demise of a National Pride



Published on June 16, 2026

Document Date: Tue, Jun 16 2026 08:39:44 pm

Category: ,Articles,English,Snippets

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Hockey has been Pakistan's national sport since the country's inception. The Pakistan hockey team has an illustrious history and has brought immense glory to the nation under the aegis of the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF).

For nearly three decades, Pakistan maintained a remarkable winning streak in almost every major international hockey competition. The country won the Hockey World Cup four times, secured three Olympic gold medals, and claimed three gold, three silver, and four bronze medals in the Asia Cup. In addition, Pakistan earned three gold and seven silver medals in the Champions Trophy, alongside numerous other international titles.

Many of our national heroes hold distinguished records and have made invaluable contributions to the sport. It is regrettable that despite their extraordinary achievements, they were never accorded the recognition, respect, and support they truly deserved at any level of governance.

As a sports enthusiast since childhood, I have always observed that cricket received preferential treatment over hockey. The latter, regardless of its achievements, was often neglected.

Governments and sponsors alike displayed a discriminatory attitude towards the sport. People frequently compared the two games by saying, "Hockey Abad and Cricket Colony," or likening them to the difference between "Urdu medium and English medium" institutions.

Cricketers were provided with luxurious accommodation, modern facilities, air-conditioned transport, and every possible comfort during training camps and international tours. In contrast, Olympic and World Cup-winning hockey players were often accommodated in modest hotels or youth hostels. While cricketers received princely treatment, national hockey players were frequently treated as an ordinary team despite their unparalleled achievements.

It is worth mentioning that the concept of the Hockey World Cup and the Champions Trophy was initiated by the late Air Marshal (Retd.) Noor Khan. Ironically, although he served as Chairman of both the BCCP (now PCB) and the PHF, his contributions towards the long-term development and promotion of hockey remained limited.

The decline of Pakistan hockey began approximately two decades ago, and today the sport has reached a state of near collapse. Internal conflicts among PHF officials, many of whom are former players, driven by personal interests, power struggles, and perks, have crippled the federation.

PHF offices now present a deserted and neglected appearance, symbolizing the sport's unfortunate decline.

During hockey's golden era, the game was actively promoted at the grassroots level. Schools, particularly in rural areas, produced extraordinary players who went on to achieve international fame and bring honour to Pakistan.

I salute all our international and national hockey players for their dedication, sacrifices, and contributions in bringing accolades to the country.

It is a tragic irony that the nation which conceived and launched the Hockey World Cup now finds itself unable even to qualify for the tournament.

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