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**Indonesia, Pakistan
Ties from Cordial
to Excellent**



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At Serena Hotel
Celebrated**

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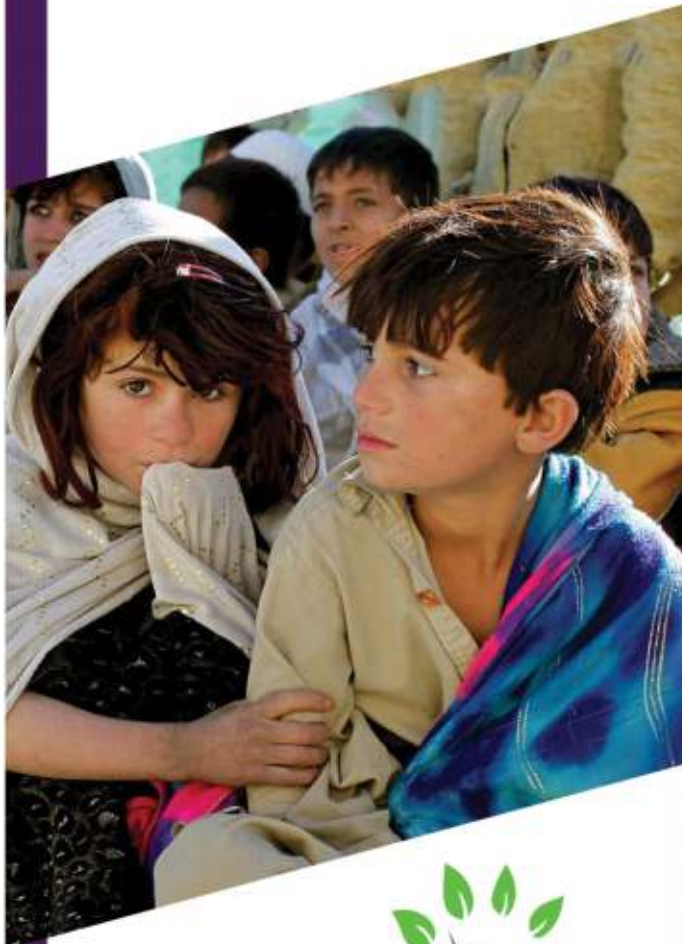


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HEALTH CARE

1

- Providing basic health facilities to the under privileged
- Develop effective health care plans to provide access in remote areas

EDUCATION

2

- To make education accessible to children in remote areas
- Facilitating learning and acquisition of knowledge
- Making strategies to reduce illiteracy

CLEAN WATER

3

- To use resources to provide clean drinking water
- Awareness about the importance of clean drinking water in order to tackle infective diseases
- Installation of water filtration plants and digging of wells

GREEN ENVIRONMENT

4

- Aim to raise the awareness of sustainable green environment
- Increase numbers of parks and plantation to reduce harmful effects of dangerous gases and chemicals
- To provide strategies for waste disposal mechanism

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

5

- Aim to support people to become creative entrepreneurs in order to stand on their feet
- Provide both financial and technical support to the deserving people
- Building financially stable nation

HEALTH CARE:

6

- Aim to support people to gain self-confidence and improve decision making abilities for the best interest of their communities and for the whole nation
- Leadership training camps certificates and degrees
- Targeting remote areas for flourishing of the country



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Vote of confidence and aftermath



The Prime Minister got vote of confidence on March 6, 2021 from the National Assembly. Confidence vote was not a problem for the PTI along with its allies, forms majority in the house. Besides, the confidence vote somehow contributed to healing wounds of ruling alliance caused by the defeat of Finance Minister Hafeez Shaikh. Another development that govt and the prime minister should take rather seriously is the reaction of the Election Commission of Pakistan to the speech of the premier on national hook-up on Thursday night in which he chose to take the ECP to task for what he termed 'its failure in plugging horse-trading' due to which Yousaf Raza Gillani emerged victorious despite the fact the Opposition alliance did not have the required number of votes in the National Assembly.

All said and done, what happened in the Senate elections is not something new. Pakistan's history is fraught with such sad incidents but as the Election Commission mentioned in its press release that if things have come to such a pass, the respective governments themselves are responsible for that. It was their duty to do legislation to put an end to such practices however they failed to do so mainly because of political expediency and vested interests.

The government demand for an open ballot was more than genuine but unfortunately it seemed politically motivated. The govt wanted to get its candidate elected for it knew very well even PTI members may not vote for Hafeez Shaikh. Now when this election is over, the question is will the govt still believes in open ballot for future elections?

The opposition parties are only concerned about dislodging the government come what may. They never talk of problems the common folks are experiencing on daily basis. We, perhaps, are right in the middle of the quagmire that if we do not want to continue with this govt then who? The want of any suitable options seems to be a source concern for all and sundry and powers that be. The PTI government has a mandate of ruling or rather serving this country and countrymen for five years. It has every right to complete its term. But it has to deliver. And deliver to the satisfaction of the people who voted this government to power.

On international front, Pakistan is facing isolation. Our closest friends have chosen to keep a distance. Mega projects like CPEC are almost at a standstill. FATF sword is still dangling on over heads. GDP growth is not showing desired improvement. Exports targets are yet to be met. In such circumstances we need friends not foes, both at home and abroad. Nobody questions and doubts honesty, commitment and integrity of Prime Minister Imran Khan, but people do expect that all those working under him shall also contribute to nation building with same zeal and spirit. Nobody knows better than Imran Khan that how important the team work and the TEAM is to emerge as victorious out of even tumultuous times.

Ansar

Chief Editor's Profile: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti is a career journalist. He started off as District Correspondent of Daily *The Muslim* in 1988 from Gujrat. Later he moved to Islamabad and joined *Pakistan Observer* as Sub-Editor / Op-ed Writer, in 1993. In 1995 he again moved to *The Muslim* as Sub-Editor and he left *The Muslim* in 1997 to join *The Nation* as City Editor and Diplomatic Correspondent, where he remained till 2002. His association with *The News* spans over three years from 2002 to 2005 as Columnist. In 2005 Mr. Bhatti switched over to Khabrain Group as Columnist / Special Correspondent. In 2010 he was made Resident Editor of *The Post*, a sister publication of *daily Khabrain*. In 2010 he launched his own publication *Centreline*. He has authored two books on European Union. He has also served in *Pakistan Telecom Company (PTCL)* as Media Advisor/Director Communications. He Launched Diplomatic News Agency (DNA) in 2012. In April 2020 he launched Pakistan's first & only Diplomatic Newspaper *Daily Islamabad Post*.

ADAM TUGIO

Indonesia, Pakistan Ties from Cordial to Excellent

*Ambassador of Indonesia Adam Tugio
talks to CENTRELINE, DNA and Daily Islamabad Post*

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

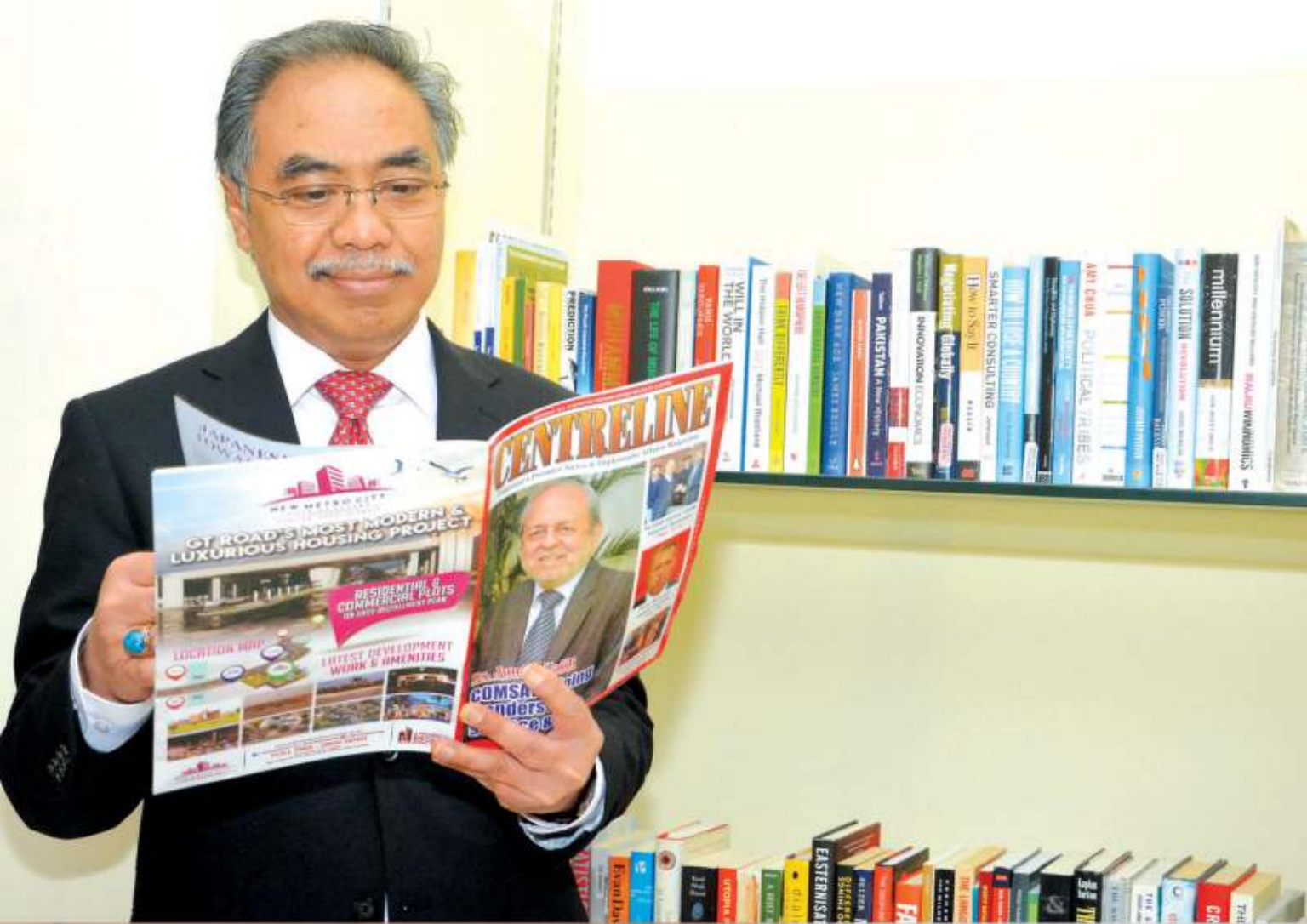


1) Thank you very much for sparing some time for us. Let us welcome you in Pakistan with this hope that bilateral relations will further be strengthened during your tenure as well. Please share with us some details about yourself such as your previous postings etc.

It is an honor for me to serve in this beautiful country of Pakistan, my second home for now. Pakistan is a great country with such rich diverse culture, and friendly people, for which I have developed true affection and admiration. Speaking of personal experience, I joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1991 and spent most of my overseas assignments in the United States and in Europe. My early jobs in Jakarta were covering border managements and law of the sea since Indonesia shares maritime areas with 10 countries and land border with 3 countries. Following completion of last assignment in Washington DC in 2013, I oversaw general affairs and procurement of the Ministry for 3 years before moved to cover bilateral relation between Indonesia and countries in the North and Central America.

2) How would you describe political and cultural relations between Pakistan and Indonesia and how can these relations be further cemented?

The diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Pakistan are unique and deep-rooted. Soon after the independence of Pakistan in 1947, Indonesia opened its first representative



office in Karachi, which was elevated to the status of the Embassy and became fully functional in 1950.

As young nations, both the countries had comparable challenges and went through turbulent phases during their journey towards becoming democracies and emerging economies. The marked feature of our wonderful friendship is trust and mutual respect and understanding based on common religious, cultural and social values. The two countries stand proudly together as two largest Muslim populous countries and emerging economies of creative and talented people.

Indonesia attaches great importance to Pakistan as a reliable partner in South Asia and commends Pakistan's active role and contribution to maintain regional peace and stability in the region. We strongly consider the geo-economic importance of Pakistan, which serves as a hub to connect to Central Asia, South Asia and Middle East. With total population of 1.95 billion in South Asia and 75 million in Central Asia, there exist a huge potential market for the regions. We should also need to add into this potential, ports infrastructures along 1,046 km coast line of Pakistan that provides access for trade to Middle East

and Africa – thus supporting 'Engage Africa' economic diplomacy initiative of the Pakistani Government. Various infrastructure developments on land and harbor that being developed by CPEC will strengthen the connectivity not only within Pakistan but also to the wider regions, and will eventually bring benefit for economic development of Pakistan.

Our two countries have kept a steady positive momentum in our constructive and cooperative relationship. Especially during the last decade, we have seen substantive growth in our two-way ties in the areas of trade, education, culture and defense. Over the years, the implementation of Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and Defense Cooperation Agreement have paved the way for frequent interactions among the toplevel government officials and business community of the two countries. Private sectors have contributed to this end, notably with the active role of Pakistan-Indonesia Business Forum (PIBF) and universities of respective countries in promoting exchange of visits and education linkages.

Our relationship is now becoming stronger, dynamic and more comprehensive. I would especially like to

mention here the state visit of President of Indonesia Mr. Joko Widodo to Pakistan in 2018, which opened new avenues of mutually beneficial cooperation. It marked a historic milestone when President Widodo addressed the Joint Session of the Parliament of Pakistan as a special gesture of the democratically elected leader of the largest Muslim populous country and the fourth largest democracy in the world. It was for the second time after President Soekarno, who addressed the highest institution of Pakistan in 1963.

Some positive developments during the last few years are the accomplishment of the 1st Bilateral Political Consultative Forum in 2017, Joint Committee meeting as a follow up of the Defence Cooperation Agreement, relaxation of visa requirements for Pakistani citizens, MoU's with travel agencies to boost tourism, MoU's with universities to promote educational linkages, working mechanism of defence cooperation that includes all spectrum of military cooperation (Navy, Army and Air Force). In addition, Policy Planning Dialogue was initiated by Foreign Ministries of both sides, July 2018 in Islamabad.



Indonesia considers Pakistan as an important partner in South Asia and desires enhanced cooperation with Pakistan at the multilateral forums. Pakistan and Indonesia stand by each other at every platform and support each other for common future of peace, progress, prosperity, stability, and development. Both countries highly value their ties and encourage all-around cooperation to further strengthen the fraternal bonds between the two nations. Indonesia and Pakistan also work together in promoting the interest of Ummah in global world, and on global issues of shared concern such as climate change and addressing COVID-19 pandemic.

As regards our **cultural** ties, I believe that culture has the power to reduce the distance and to unite the people with different background, region and traditions. Happily, the Indonesia-Pakistan friendship has a strong foundation of shared values and similarities in culture. It is true that the similarities are primarily based on the Islamic faith and traditions, but the relationship go even deeper in the history of our two nations as both remained part of the great Buddhist and Hindu

civilizations and later their population gradually converted to Islam. It is important therefore, that we constantly nurture these cultural bonds which are greatly valued by our peoples. The promotion of cultural ties is an important part of our efforts to strengthen the people-to-people contact to further foster the bonds of friendship.

Pakistan and Indonesia are also desirous to increase cooperation in the fields of **education, science & technology**. To foster cultural & academic linkages, the Embassy continues to engage the Pakistani educational and cultural institutions, students and other segments of the civil society. Education is one of the areas that offer some great potential for the bilateral cooperation to benefit from and bring the people of the two countries even closer.

In recent years, academic cooperation has seen some significant improvement as number of MoU's on academic cooperation between 10 Indonesian universities with equal number of university partners in Pakistan had been signed and more were under process or consideration.

Following the success of the Indonesian government scholarships of KNB and

Dharmasiswa in Pakistan, there has been growing interest among the Pakistani students to pursue higher education programs in Indonesia. More recently, master and doctoral level partially funded scholarships offered by some Indonesian universities have also received encouraging response from the Pakistani students. Therefore, in view of the Pakistani student's interest, there is opportunity for the universities of the two countries to capitalize and lay foundation for a solid academic cooperation.

Another attractive area of cooperation with big potential is **tourism**. It is generally about leisure and pleasure but it also promotes cultural exchange and provides opportunity to people of various cultures to meet and understand each other. It also brings people of the similar taste and profession together and opens up windows of many opportunities.

These days, tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. In addition to the opportunities for recreation, tourism industry has emerged as a big source to generate employment opportunities, grow service sector and help earn foreign exchange. Hence, tourism spurs the overall economic growth worldwide.

Despite very cordial and brotherly ties and having the great existing tourism potential that our two countries offer, it is important to find why the two-way tourists' traffic is almost limited. Recent statistics of 2019 suggests that tourist arrival in Indonesia from Pakistan has remained very low with only 14,000 tourists from Pakistan.

Pakistan on the other hand is an absolutely stunning country blessed with famous mountain peaks, beautiful green valleys, Mughal architecture, Gandhara art and civilization, religious tourism sites and deserts filled with remnants of ancient civilization. Both the countries can share experiences to develop infrastructure and hospitality industry to facilitate tourism.

3) Business ties between the two countries are constantly on the move. COVID has though impacted this momentum, yet resolve and will is always there to take business ties to new heights. Your comments please.

I believe that in the area of bilateral trade, we are now moving in the right direction by advancing our bilateral trade partnership through providing access and opportunities to our corporate sectors for a sustained economic growth. The real trade potential of our corporate sector is far above than the trade figures and what we need is more concerted efforts to materialize this potential.

Following the implementation of the Indonesia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement in 2013, bilateral trade figures have reached to historic high. Since then, the relations of the two countries in the economic sector are becoming stronger and stronger while the bilateral trade is also increasing on a year-on-year basis. It is also a very encouraging sign that there is a new wave of interest in the business community of both the countries to establish long-term trade relations. For further increase of bilateral trade volume, we need more promotions and interactions between the business community through the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, participation in trade Expo, market survey to explore the trade opportunities, exchange of trade data and country information with facts & figures to support the momentum of growth.

The outbreak of coronavirus disease indeed has severely affected the global economy, including Indonesia and Pakistan. In this kind of pandemic situation Indonesia and Pakistan must work together for the sustainable trade relations between both countries.

One of the efforts that can be done is by intensifying communications and consultations between stakeholders of both countries. In addition, business activities such as exhibitions and

business forums, etc. also can still be done in a virtual way to further explore potential economic cooperation between both sides. Those strategies are believed could uplift business, economic and other aspects of the bilateral ties in the time of pandemic, like today. The volume of bilateral trade between the two countries in 2019 was USD 2.3 billion. Despite the pandemic, the whole 2020's bilateral trade volume from January - November 2020 remained US\$2.2b with a slight correction.

With a large population and demographic bonus, both Indonesia and Pakistan have acknowledged that there is considerable untapped potential to expand trade, and to improve the trade imbalance under the mechanism of the trade agreement between the two countries. This constitutes priority of my assignment in Pakistan.

In order to meet those objectives, we are currently in the process of the negotiation on upgrading the PTA to a Trade-in-

Goods Agreement (TIGA). The first negotiation was conducted in 2019 in Islamabad. Further negotiations are scheduled to be carried out soon.

4) COVID-19 as we know has affected all and sundry. Please share Indonesian government steps to deal with this pandemic and when do you think Indonesia shall be open for international visitors?

It is universally agreed that Covid-19 pandemic is an extraordinary situation so that the response must also be extraordinary, both at the national and global levels. This pandemic which was initially viewed as a health issue, has been then developed into an issue that has a deep global impact on socio-economic aspects. Globalization itself has a role in the spread of COVID-19, where the movement of people becomes limitless and results in uncontrolled spread, and affected almost all over the world, including Indonesia.



For Indonesia the first impact was on the household consumption or purchasing power, which is the 60 percent support for the economy, fall deeply. On the other hand, the pandemic also causes prolonged uncertainty so that investment weakens and has implications for the cessation of business. The third impact where the entire world is experiencing a weakening economy, causing commodity prices to fall and Indonesian exports to several countries also declined deeply.

Anticipating the worse impact, Indonesia has taken several strategic steps both at the national and global levels by developing National Economic Recovery Program (NERP). In sum, the strategy addresses the health emergency, and simultaneously allocating safety net for social protection program, and by providing stimulus for SME industries and to boost domestic consumption.

The government at **national level** provides NERP a stimulus up to Rp. 700 Trillion (approx. USD 48 billion), allocated to healthcare sectors, strengthening social safety nets, and as an incentive for micro, small and medium businesses. The other part of the stimulus is targeted for business incentives, which include tax incentives, to support ministries and regional administrations, and also to stimulus measures for state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and labor-intensive businesses. The bigger allocation for corporations also allocated as working capital loans for labor-intensive businesses. Part of this fund was also allocated to support healthcare industry, such as production of medical equipment, masks, including vaccines.

On vaccine itself, Indonesia is now developing a homegrown vaccine namely 'Merah Putih' vaccine - representing the country's red and white flag - that expected to start clinical trial by end of this year.

Like other countries, Indonesia is also enforcing health protocol namely '3M'. The 3M stands for "menggunakan masker" (mask-wearing), "mencucitangan" (hand-washing) and "menjagajarak" (social-distancing). Simultaneously, we use '3T' - Tract, Tracing and Treatment. The later refers to building pocket of small isolation and health centers to prevent spreading of corona virus to wider regions. Lockdown policy was also enacted in different scales including Large-scale Social Restriction (PSBB) policy from early April 2020 and the government periodically reviews this policy, taking into account the latest development.

Indonesia is fully aware that 'no one is safe until everyone is safe'. Therefore, at **global level** Indonesia along with UN is ensuring that every country has rapid, fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines once safe and effective vaccines become licensed. Recently Indonesian Foreign Minister, Retno Marsudi was appointed as Co-Chair of the COVAX AMC Engagement Group, initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Vaccine Alliance (GAVI). Along with Ethiopian Health Minister and Canadian Minister of International Development, Foreign Minister Marsudi will lead the COVID-19 vaccine procurement and distribution program for 92 COVAX AMC member countries.

In the United Nations, Indonesia initiated a resolution on International cooperation to address challenges faced by seafarers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to support global supply chains. The resolution secured co-sponsorships from more than 70 countries and was the first General Assembly resolution that recognized the contribution of seafarers to global supply chains. The resolution is an important breakthrough in galvanizing international attention to maritime safety issues, particularly the well-being of seafarers in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Seafarers around the world face grave challenges as Covid-19-related restrictions render crew changes and repatriation of seafarers difficult. It is hoped that the resolution will encourage international cooperation in facilitating the change of crew members, an important factor in seaborne trade and the global supply chain.

In terms of availability of medical equipment around the world, Indonesia also calls on the importance of creating a voluntary list of manufactures related to personal health and medical devices. Since at the beginning of the pandemic, many countries had difficulty getting materials for these devices so that a voluntary list should be created to facilitate access for countries in need.

This step would allow state and business sector to be able to meet the needs of their countries and on a wider scale to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic which is sweeping across the globe.

Indonesia is also stimulating a travel corridor arrangement for Southeast



Asian countries, by which the countries that are successfully containing the outbreak can open their borders to each other to allow free movement of essential business travelers within the bubble. Currently due to the recent development of the COVID-19 situation and the new variant of the COVID-19 Indonesia temporarily conducts entry restriction into the territory of the country that has been extended until 8 February 2021.

5) Indonesia is an important ASEAN country and Pakistan wishes to deepen its cooperation with ASEAN countries through its Look East policy. How do you view this approach?

ASEAN is a dynamic organization of 10 members, spanning an area of 4.4 million square kilometers, a population of over 649 million, and a GDP exceeding US\$2.9 trillion or the fifth largest economy in the world. ASEAN and Pakistan have great potential for cooperation in various sectors. Pakistan's total bilateral trade with ASEAN is over \$7 billion while the trade between Indonesia-Pakistan reached up to \$ 2.3 billion in 2020. It suggests that there is huge scope for Pakistan to scale up its economic engagement with ASEAN through its member-states.

Indonesia along with other ASEAN members continue to support close friendly ties with Pakistan as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner and an active member

of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Indonesia supports Pakistan when it was accorded the sectoral dialogue status of ASEAN at the 26th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on 23 July 1993. Indonesia also supports Pakistan to be full dialogue partner of ASEAN. Due to moratorium the process of Full Dialogue Partner is still pending. Despite this, Indonesia encourages Pakistan's collaboration with ASEAN region particularly in the areas of trade & investment, education, human resources development and tourism which could bring huge economic benefits to Pakistan.

ASEAN and Pakistan have many similarities including strong cultural and religious affinity. There are approximately 242 million Muslims which are about 42% of the entire population, with majorities in Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia as well Southern Thailand and parts of Mindanao in the Philippines respectively. Those similarities serve as a reservoir of goodwill in relation between ASEAN and Pakistan. However, there are potentials still untapped and many ways to enhance the relation and the cooperation between ASEAN and Pakistan including the dialogues with the think tanks of both countries.

Indonesia highly values Pakistan's 'Vision East Asia' policy. The implementation of this policy, we believe will contribute to

further strengthen political, economic and cultural ties with ASEAN and its member states. To this end, Pakistan's outreach to ASEAN needs to be deepened at political level among other through exchange of high-level visits and those of business community to make their presence felt.

6) Other

Bilateral relations between the two countries are already quite excellent nowadays. So far there has been a mechanism at the technical level, bilateral consultation forums and policy dialogue, defense cooperation dialogue and Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA). As an effort to strengthen bilateral relations we need to encourage a more structured dialogue at ministerial level to provide future directive to attain mutually beneficial objectives.

In addition, high intensity of interaction between high-ranking officials and parliamentary cooperation are necessary to further develop ties. Of equal importance is cementing of cultural bridge through two-way technical and socio-cultural cooperation, which will certainly encourage people to people contact among others. Particular reference should be made to the participation of millennial, whom we invest our efforts to build more prosperous Indonesia and Pakistan.

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COMSATS and ANSO contributing to South-South Cooperation

COMSATS perennial ties with one of its member country, China, for strengthening international research collaboration has expanded with COMSATS accession to the Alliance of International Science Organizations (ANSO) in November 2019. With determination to progress on the leave no one behind agenda in context of global development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental, thirty seven national and regional scientific organizations and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) as leading and founding member, agreed in November 2018 to establish a long-term effective and multilateral cooperation mechanism, the Alliance of International Science Organizations (ANSO)



Ms. Huma Balouch

As the process of developing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development started, the world was increasingly conscious of the need to develop new and innovative cooperation modalities. This brought a new impetus to the developing countries in the South to increase the depth and breadth of their cooperation to address common socio economic and development challenges, such as Global health, climate change, food security, good governance etc.

Over the past three decades, the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation has been

particularly highlighted by the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS). As stated in the Foundation document establishing the Commission in 1994, its basic purpose is to "provide leadership and support for major South-South and North-South cooperative schemes in education, training and research" to its member states. Utilizing South-South cooperation as mechanism to improve member countries' capacities to better deal with the global challenges and to join the knowledge and resources in the South in a more collective and effective manner, COMSATS encourages the Governments, development agencies, research institutions, private sector, and civil society in developing countries to collaborate, combine their efforts and expertise and to form necessary partnerships to promote science-based solutions for common development.

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and founding member, agreed in November 2018 to establish a long-term effective and multilateral cooperation mechanism, the Alliance of International Science Organizations (ANSO). ANSO facilitates ST&I cooperation among countries in the Belt and Road region around their shared challenges and concerns to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. Within these few years, ANSO has made important strides in facilitating collaborative priority-setting for innovation and research cooperation in cross-cutting fields, policy and strategic advice, capacity building and development, and conducting solution-oriented projects among several countries.

COMSATS membership to ANSO enabled COMSATS Member States and Centres of Excellence to participate in ANSO's activities including fellowship and scholarships; prize and awards; training program; collaborative research; and professional associations. COMSATS and ANSO endorsed South-South cooperation as a more relevant and responsive strategy for the implementation of its Programme of Action and are actively pursuing close cooperation in S&T to help member countries achieve their development goals. COMSATS-ANSO cooperation involved institutional support, scientific training, joint research programmes, and technology transfer, to equip the South with stronger and effective mechanisms

for South-South cooperation. COMSATS and ANSO jointly supporting the building of research capacity in developing countries in the South through PhD-level training and short courses on research training organized by ANSO in China. Examples of ANSO and COMSATS major initiatives of South-South cooperation include collaborative research activities through multi-lateral cooperation by focusing on issues of immediate concern to member organization or its respective country. With an aim to initiate and improve action-oriented interdisciplinary research, with greater focus on early identification, prevention and appropriate intervention for emerging problems and opportunities, ANSO announced a Call for Collaborative Research Project for 2020-2021, for which two research projects R&D projects of COMSATS Centre of Excellence have been granted sums of about US\$ 150,000/- each, on the recommendation of, and as a result of efforts made by COMSATS. These Collaborative research & innovation projects entitled "Mosquitome of Flying Syringes-*Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* & their Fitness vis a vis their Competency to Transmit Infection With Changing Climate" and "Energy and Raw Material Recovery from Treatment Sludge as a Conceptual of Zero Waste" are being carried out by consortia of academic and

research organisations from Pakistan, China, Palestine, Tanzania, Thailand and Turkey. In parallel, COMSATS also providing opportunity to the less technologically advanced member institutions to join International Thematic Research Groups (ITRGs) for working in collaborative project to benefit from the expertise and experience of the superior Lead Centre. COMSATS, along with its partner organizations, has also been organizing a series of webinar on theme of South-South Cooperation in which the eminent experts from member countries and international partner organizations are sharing their insights on how to effectively address the socio-economic needs of the developing countries through South – South and Triangular cooperation in science and technology. To highlight opportunities for South-South and triangular cooperation and the role of the Alliance of International Science Organizations (ANSO) in scaling up SSC in the region, Prof. Dr. Jinghua Cao, Executive Director, Alliance of International Science Organizations (ANSO), China, delivered a talk on 'Insight on South-South and Triangular Cooperation in S&T' on 23rd February 2021. ANSO's support for international R&D collaboration is directed at the researcher or at institutional level, both in and

outside Belt and Road region. Providing unique cooperation models for research–practice collaboration, knowledge transfer, most of these R&D collaboration activities take place at overseas centres of Chinese Academy of Sciences in partnership with member institutions and organizations and other relevant counterparts. A few include: the Sino-Africa Joint Research Centre - China-Africa Partnership on ecosystem services, biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture and food security; Alliance of International Science Organizations on Disaster Risk Reduction (ANSO-DRR) to enhance the B&R countries' resilience against natural hazards; China-Pakistan Joint Research Centre on Earth Sciences (CPJRC) to carry out pilot technologies for eco-environmental protection and recovery; and ANSO-Rice & Wheat Variety Technology Innovation and Transfer (ANSO-RWIT) to further develop agricultural innovation & technology in nations alongside the Belt and Road.

Ms. Huma Balouch, is Senior Assistant Director at COMSATS Secretariat, Islamabad. With her Doctoral degree in Biotechnology underway, her research interests include molecular biology and microalgae biology



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Indonesia Adam Tugio hosted dinner for Daily Islamabad POST Chief Editor Ansar Mahmood Bhatti at his residence. Also seen in the picture are Naveed Miraj, Pramudya Sulaksono Minister Counselor, Ahmed Firman Sejati Counsellor and Syarif Shahabudin Second Secretary. DNA

Bakshi brothers present spell-binding show at Serena Hotels Sarangi Lounge

Held at the lush green Serena Business Complex Lawns, the live music concert brought happiness and liveliness on the faces of all and sundry those probably were waiting for such kind of events ever since the pandemic had limited their mobility and networking. So all present on the occasion were all praise for the management of Serena Hotels, particularly the CEO Aziz Boolani for taking this initiative.

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels provided a real feast to the Sufi music lovers especially by engaging well-known artists Bakshi Brothers whose mesmerizing performance left the audience spell-bound. Held at the lush green Serena Business Complex Lawns, the live music concert brought happiness and liveliness on the faces of all and sundry those probably were waiting for such kind of events ever since the pandemic had limited their mobility and networking. So all present on the occasion were all praise for the management of Serena Hotels, particularly the CEO Aziz Boolani for taking this initiative.

The diplomatic community that attended the event in large numbers

despite Covid, equally enjoyed the music though songs were sung in Urdu and Punjabi. However they could not resist themselves in praising and appreciating the artists after their captivating performances. It may be mentioned here that Sarangi, which was launched in October 2017 is a part of Serena Hotel's Cultural Diplomacy Initiative which aims to protect and promote the cultural heritage of Pakistan by encouraging young talents and giving them an opportunity to become the nation's rising star.

Serena continues to promote the arts and intercultural activities to inspire a culture of peace and hope. We truly believe in providing platform to the

emerging artists so that they are recognised by a larger audience. Serena Hotels has already held many Sarangi seasons and competition among the talented youth of Pakistan. Social media was used for the competitions that received tremendous response from all over Pakistan.

Under the Sarangi initiative Serena Hotels have so far held a number of competitions in order to encourage young talent. During the pandemic period, all such bouts were held online. However now when the pandemic seems to be on its way out, Serena Hotels has taken the initiative of holding such event live and in the presence of modest gathering







Book from Landi Kotal to Wagah: cultural heritage along the Grand Trunk Road launched

The development and publication of the book was supported by the Embassy of Switzerland, the European Union and the World Bank. The author is Mr. Salman Rashid, a preeminent travel writer and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: UNESCO and Government of Pakistan Launched Coffee table Book, 'From Landi Kotal to Wagah: Cultural Heritage along the Grand Trunk Road at the Pakistan National Council of Arts.

The result of a collaboration of more than two years, the coffee table book explores the built and intangible heritage along the Grand Trunk Road (GT Road) in Pakistan, combining a thoroughly researched narrative with a

wealth of photos that illustrate the diverse and rich panorama of this 2500-year-old historical trade road.

Over the centuries, the road has been extensively travelled by traders, pilgrims and great civilizations like the Greeks, Turks and Mughals who left their marks, perpetuating the mythical status of this legendary road. The aim of the book is to foster tourism, promote awareness and ultimately protect the little known historic sites (largely non-Muslim) along the GT road that spans over 2400km from Bangladesh to Afghanistan.

The development and publication of the book was supported by the Embassy of Switzerland, the European Union and the World Bank. The author is Mr. Salman Rashid, a preeminent travel writer and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. The book is richly illustrated with photographs taken by Mr. Asad Zaidi. It is distributed in a co-publishing arrangement with Sang-E-Meel Publishers.



At the book launch, Ms. Patricia McPhillips (Country Representative and Director, UNESCO) welcomed the guests and thanked all partners for their support and contribution. She stated that, through this book, UNESCO hoped to highlight the vast potential cultural development in various parts of Pakistan, and the pressing need to preserve and protect heritage sites, in order to further our shared cause of encouraging cultural pluralism and social cohesion.

Welcoming the publication of the book, Mr. Benedict de Cerjat Ambassador of Switzerland highlighted the rich and Impressive cultural heritage of Pakistan. He emphasized that the Grand Trunk Road is one of Asia's oldest and longest major roads, which linked Central Asia to the Indian Subcontinent, facilitated trade for centuries and is still used for transportation. He commended UNESCO for its valuable initiative and encouraged the guests to follow the author's journey and discover the many fascinating places among the historical road.

In her speech Ms. Androullah Kaminara Ambassador of European Union to Pakistan emphasized; "Over the centuries, along the Grand Trunk Road not only goods but Cultures, Ideas, Religions and languages were exchanged, leaving the permanent trace on the societies along the road today. The rich manifestation of Cultural diversity that needs to be protected and promoted, especially for its key role in attracting tourism and boosting economic growth— which are both priorities of the Government of Pakistan."

The author of the book Mr. Salman Rashid spoke about the many years he has spent traveling around the GT Road, and the fascinating history and culture he has experienced in his travels, which can now be shared with readers through this book.

The Chief Guest, Mr. Shafqat Mahmood Federal Minister for the National Heritage and Culture Division appreciated the role this book will play in fostering tourism, while also preserving the history and heritage of Pakistan for generations to come.

All partners emphasized that this unique book serves to encourage the people and government of Pakistan to protect and preserve the heritage which forms an integral part of the history of the land that is now Pakistan.

The book will be available for sale online and in major.



SERENA HOTELS HOST "EMBROIDERING DREAMS" EXHIBITION AT BAZAAR COURT

I. P. REPORT



ISLAMABAD: Behbud Association in collaboration with Serena Hotels arranged Crafts Bazaar at Serena Hotel Court Bazaar. A number of business concerns participated in the Crafts bazaar and showcased their products.

Various stalls were established where traditional items from these areas were displayed. The diplomatic community particularly evinced interest in handicrafts and hand-made traditional dresses. CEO Serena Hotels Central and

East Asia Aziz Boolani inaugurated the Crafts bazaar. General Manager Islamabad Serena Hotel Michel A Galopin was also present during the inauguration.

The visitors and exhibitors praised Serena hotels for facilitating such an impressive event and providing the people with an opportunity of buying traditional handicrafts and other stuff. The visitors said crafts festival was nothing less than a treasure hunt and a chance to enlarge people's collections without burning a hole in their pocket.

CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani assured that his organization would continue to hold such events with a view to promoting cultural and traditional heritage of Pakistan.





WALID MUSHTAQ HON CONSUL GENERAL BELAURS AND CEO ROOTS INTERNATIONAL HOSTS DINNER FOR LORD AAMER SARFRAZ





UZBEK ENVOY CALLS FOR ENHANCED BILATERAL COOPERATION

Speaks at event organized by CGSS and Punjab University; also attends exhibition; speakers highlight importance of Pakistan, Uzbekistan relations

ABID RAZA/DNA

LAHORE: Aybek Arif Usmanov Ambassador of Uzbekistan has vowed to further enhance the bilateral relationship between the two brotherly countries. He also praised the hard work of the students for their impressive art pieces and documentary production.

The Ambassador expressed these views while speaking as chief guest at a one day international event titled **“Legacy of Zaheer-Ud-Din Mohammad Babur and Its Relevance in Contemporary Bilateral Relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan”** held at University of the Punjab, Lahore.

This event was jointly organized by Regional Integration Center, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan and Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad.

Aybek Arif Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan visited the University and was received by Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar, Vice Chancellor, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between University of the Punjab, Lahore and NUKUS State Pedagogical, Uzbekistan for cooperation in the academic and research exchange.

Aybek Arif Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan also attended the Art Exhibition on **“The Rich Cultural and Islamic Heritage of Uzbekistan”** which was organized by the College of Arts & Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore. His Excellency appreciated the students for their inspiring art work.

Later, an International Conference



on **“Legacy of Zaheer-Ud-Din Mohammad Babur and Its Relevance in Contemporary Bilateral Relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan”** was also held. The Conference

highlighted the socio-cultural and historic legacy and common heritage of the two countries and avenues of cooperation and collaboration between Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

The Conference commenced with the speech by Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad. Mr. Khalid welcomed the worthy guests and participants of the event. He stated that Pakistan and Uzbekistan enjoy cordial relations and can collaborate in other economic and social spheres as well for further enhanced cooperation.

Prof. Dr. Faraz Anjum, Department of History and Pakistan, University of the Punjab, Lahore highlighted the legacy which Babur bequeathed to his descendants and which served as an example for them to follow. He stated that Babur's personality became an example for the latter rulers to follow. Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Member Board of Experts, CGSS and Regional Geo Political Analyst stated



that Babur is the most captivating personality in oriental history. He created one of the most powerful Empire in the history of East and was the first one to establish a divine connection with the soil of Pakistan.

Prof. Dr. Rukhsana Iftikhar, Department of History and Pakistan, University of the Punjab, Lahore stated Babur's life is documented more than any other figure in the entire precolonial Islamic world.

Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan, Director, Area Study Centre (Russia China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar stated that Babur was a man of extraordinary qualities. He was a leader, a soldier, an architect and an administrator. Zaheer ud Din Babur was a lover of nature. He was best in generating loyalty and devotion amongst his followers.

Dr. Mahboob Hussain, Chairman, Department of History and Pakistan Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore highlighted the significance of the newly established Babur Center. He stated that a framework will be devised for academic exchange between University of the Punjab, Lahore and Universities in Uzbekistan to find out the relevance in the shared history for the study of the contemporary world.

A Documentary was also screened at the occasion on **"Uzbekistan-Pakistan: Shared Cultural & Islamic History"** which was produced by the students of the Institute of the Communication Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore. In the end, prize distribution ceremony was held where His Excellency Aybek Arif Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan presented shields and certificates to the winners and participants of the Art Exhibition and Documentary Production. Memento to speakers of the Conference were also presented.

Concluding the event, Prof Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, Pro-ViceChancellor, University of Punjab, Lahore in his remarks stated that University of the Punjab, Lahore will organize exchange programs for students and faculty. We also plan to invite Uzbekistan scholars to participate and study in Pakistan and also interact with the student fraternity of Pakistan.



GM MARRIOTT HOTEL HOSTS RECEPTION TO INAUGURATE CHINESE NEW YEAR

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: (DNA) – In keeping up with the tradition to celebrate the Chinese New Year, the General Manager of the Islamabad Marriott Hotel Mr. Maurizio Romani hosted a poolside reception. Members of the civil society, diplomats and a number of Chinese nationals attended the reception. Ambassador of People's Republic of China Nong Rong was the chief guest and cut the cake along with the General Manager. Guests attended the reception in large number. Strict Covid protocols were followed throughout the reception. Guests enjoyed mouth-watering Chinese as well Pakistani cuisines. The General Manager in his brief remarks welcomed the guests and greeted Chinese nation and government on the inauguration of New Year.







Australia gifts a Miyawaki forest to Pakistan

The Australian Government has committed \$1.5 billion for global climate finance and over \$15 billion domestically to make Australia's natural resources, environment and water infrastructure more resilient to climate disasters

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr Geoffrey Shaw on Wednesday joined the Minister of State for Climate Change, Zartaj Gul to inaugurate a Miyawaki Forest at Fatima Jinnah Park Islamabad.

The Australian High Commission gifted the forest to the public park as part of an initiative, organised by the Capital Development Authority to support Pakistan's Miyawaki Forest and the Spring Tree Plantation Campaign 2021. Speaking at the tree plantation ceremony, Dr Geoffrey Shaw said, "This Miyawaki Forest is a gift from the Australian Government to the people of Pakistan. I hope that the trees and shrubs planted here today help regenerate not just the environment of Islamabad but contribute to making Pakistan cleaner and greener."



Australia has longstanding cooperation with Pakistan on the environment and tackling climate change including improving water management and security, access to clean drinking water, flood forecasting and disaster risk reduction.

"Green initiatives such as this are becoming ever more important in the face of the growing impacts of climate change affecting our region – something both Australia and Pakistan are keenly aware of and taking action on," Dr Shaw added. Director General Capital Development Authority, Naveed Tareen said, "Miyawaki is one of the techniques to develop forests quickly and Prime Minister Imran Khan has taken keen interest in its implementation.

We all are aware of the threat of global warming and how it's already affecting our lives. Right and timely initiatives like this are much needed. We are thankful to Australian High Commission for their collaboration in this amazing initiative." Australia is committed to combating climate change and is on track to beat our 2030 emissions reduction target under the Paris Agreement, having achieved 17 per cent reduction in emissions since 2005.

The Australian Government has committed \$1.5 billion for global climate finance and over \$15 billion domestically to make Australia's natural resources, environment and water infrastructure more resilient to climate disasters.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Sheikh / Saoud bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, met with Her Excellency Mrs Khadija Mohammed Al Makhsumi, Ambassador of Somalia in Islamabad. They discussed Qatari-Somalia relations and scopes of bilateral cooperation between the two countries.=DNA

FALSIFYING THE REALITIES: WESTERN MEDIA'S NEGATIVITY ON CHINA AND XINJIANG



Irfan Shahzad Takalvi

There certainly is a method in this madness. It is obvious. Vilify China, malign the country, its institutions and beyond that its very people, is the ostensible objective.

China's ban on airing of BBC World has generated a lot of debate in recent days. Prior to that, however, the UK had also banned airing of CGTN. Yet, it was not only a tit-for-tat decision on part of Beijing.

Global media's especially BBC's reporting on China in general as well as Hong Kong and Xinjiang in particular need to be understood in proper context. What has been reported about Xinjiang, specially, is devoid of required journalistic standards of fact-fullness and transparency. It amounts to slander. It is based on flimsy and in some cases out-rightly concocted 'evidence'. In case of origin of COVID-19 and China's response to pandemic as well, facts have been twisted, situation has been angled to give a certain, preconceived message.

Add to it the reports about situation in Hong Kong – where those vandalizing public and private properties and putting thousands of lives in danger are promoted as 'heroes of democracy'. One can easily decipher that this falls drastically short of standards and level of journalism expected from a media houses of global repute. Impartiality is lacking.

Why so? My understanding is that it is out of desperation. This is not limited to any one major Western media house but some indeed are doing it with noted intensity. As mentioned above, anti-Chinese

'reporting' is a common thread of propaganda that runs through almost all the media in the West. The objective is to demonize China, to present China in a negative light, to falsely show China as a nation that has no regard for rights of people, including its own.

This desperation is a result of failing to digest China's miraculous peaceful rise, and in recent months, failure to digest China's splendid successful effort against pandemic. It is aimed at creating an image of China that ignites doubts in the minds of people in increasing numbers of countries that are flocking to China as partners of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Xinjiang, again, is an example worth mentioning. Xinjiang, undoubtedly, is bridge between China and the Muslim World – more so between China and Pakistan. What the West is trying to do is to turn this bridge into a wall. Western media is serving as the vanguard in this attack, in the form of misinformation and disinformation. That is how BRI, and its flagship projects such as CPEC, are being targeted – for sabotage.

The reality is that Xinjiang of today is a peaceful, fast developing, increasingly open region of China. I have had chances to visit Xinjiang a number of times over past about 13 years, repeatedly. I have met people of all ethnic backgrounds and all walks of life. It would not be an

overstatement to say that Xinjiang's people are living happy, content lives.

Yes, there may always a segment of society in every country which is never happy with their government and state's policies. No country and region is an exception, and so may be Xinjiang of China. But one has to talk about the majority. My own direct observation is that 99.9% of people are happy being the citizen's of a rising global power; they are confident about the way their nation is developing continuously and their lives are being transformed, towards the better.

Let us make no mistake that the way China has dealt with extremism and terrorism has brought peace and stability not only to Xinjiang, but it has also contributed positively to peace and stability in the whole region of Central and west Asia. Furthermore, vocational training and educational centers – what the Western media so falsely labels as 'camps' – have changed the lives of thousands – if not hundreds of thousands of families towards better. While reporting about Xinjiang, Western media so conveniently and unprofessionally highlight the concocted stories of few individuals whose sole purpose is to garner undue sympathies, seek asylum and get visas – so on and so forth. And it is not limited to Western media alone: the same we see increasingly elsewhere.

It is a professional duty of independent and impartial media that China's story – be it response to pandemic or effective de-radicalization, anti-terror and anti-extremism policies – is reported that way it exactly is. Importantly, how China's policies contribute towards regional and global peace, stability and development must be told. Transformation of people's lives, and their socio-economic development, particularly in Xinjiang, should be reported about as those actually are. Examples of inter-ethnic harmony must be shown to the world. China's transnational development and connectivity initiatives that are making hugely positive impact on the lives of partner countries must be reflected to the world.

The author is founding president of Eurasian Century Institute (ECI), Islamabad, which also runs a center dedicatedly studying Xinjiang. He may be accessed at irfanzad@gmail.com

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RUSSIA-CHINA SUPREMACY IN VACCINE DIPLOMACY



Dr Muhammad Ali Hamza

Covid-19 vaccines are turning out to be an important form of diplomatic currency around the world; a tool for soft-power gains. Russia and China have been challenging the West for years. Their military build-ups, infrastructure projects and targeted economic support have already strengthened their geopolitical influence. And now, as the deadly coronavirus pandemic upsets the world, the two powers are presenting themselves as global rescuers. They offer the most in demand commodity what everyone desperately needs; yes the COVID-19 vaccine. Russia produced the first ever corona vaccine proven to have 95% efficacy. President Putin proudly presented 'Sputnik V Serum' after 8 months development and courageously offered his daughter for the first shot. Naming vaccine after the world's first satellite launched by the USSR explicitly evokes images of Russia as a superpower. Vaccine was a big win for Putin administration domestically as well as internationally. It portrayed to its people that the current regime is strong and capable to face any challenge. China quickly followed Russia by two of their own manufacturers Sino-Vac and Sino-Pharm. Though western media tried it's all best to accuse China for the pandemic, and Trump even called it a China-Virus, but Beijing is busy leading a fight against the Corona tragedy. It is an understood fact that China look forward to a positive response of her vaccine generosity from the receivers of Chinese vaccine. Global vaccine race is political and pulls in lot of business. As USA being a global player seems absent from the vaccine race and EU is looking inward, it is no surprise that

Russia and China have rushed into fill the vacuum. The global vaccine race is a part of international power game and the west is in danger of losing more ground. In fact the damage to American and EU standing is already done.

European Union (EU) failed badly on supplying vaccine to their own citizens, even their closest neighbor like Serbia is sticking her hopes to Russia and China. Hungary is the first EU member state to approve Chinese vaccines; a huge credibility boost to Beijing. Even EU giant nations like Germany, opening the idea of buying Chinese or Russian Vaccine once they are approved; are they waiting for western approval? The EU pledges from the start to help developing and poor nations. It invested heavily on research and development, and sealed deals with 6 different drug manufacturers to secure 2 billion doses of vaccine where as their need was only 450 million doses. Indeed the rest was planned for the world but those promises seem to have been postponed as vaccine supply is too slow for their own people. EU which buys vaccines on behalf of its 27 member states has authorized three shots developed in Germany, the US and the UK. But the bloc was slow to sign contracts and authorize the shots, while manufacturers have struggled to deliver the doses promised. Shortages have been even worse in non-EU countries in Europe. Have some European capitalist gobbled the public money? The story needs attention.

The world is witnessing that US and EU are unable to maintain a balance of domestic needs fulfillment on one hand and helping the needy on other. They are struggling to immunize their own people but Russia and China is making their offerings at a time when the United States and other rich nations are scooping up the world's supplies.

Some small European governments are turning to China for Covid-19 vaccines as EU procurement stumbles and Western vaccine makers' production hiccups hamper the fight against the pandemic. This trend would definitely increase China's influence in the region. China was one of the first countries to make a diplomatic vaccine push, promising to help developing countries last year even before the nation had mass produced a vaccine that was proved to be effective. Just in February China donated 500,000 vaccine doses to Pakistan and it would donate 300,000 vaccine doses to Egypt in the same month. Other low to middle-income countries from Brazil and Nigeria to Algeria are looking to Moscow and Beijing for doses. Chinese vaccines are finding buyers in Latin America and the Middle East. Vaccines from state-owned Sino-Pharm are distributed in the United Arab Emirates and the Balkans. Sino-Vac received orders from Turkey and Brazil. Russia has received orders for 1.2 billion doses of 'Sputnik V Serum' and Iran started mass vaccination by giving a Sputnik V dose to the son of its health minister.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi of China toured four countries: Myanmar, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines, in January this year, and since October, he has visited every country in Southeast Asia except Vietnam. At each destination Wang assured that helping others through vaccine is top priority of Chinese foreign policy. The world is witnessing that US and EU are unable to maintain a balance of domestic needs fulfillment on one hand and helping the needy on other. They are struggling to immunize their own people but Russia and China is making their offerings at a time when the United States and other rich nations are scooping up the world's supplies. West is once again on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure.

Strangely the western media showed their ignorance about this development and western critiques were stingy in appreciation; rather the critics say Russia and China threatening the international order. Instead of accusing, shouldn't we be applauding Russia and China for their efforts? and why not? Instead of forcefully sending troops under a deception of securing a country and later destroying nations, Russia and China are protecting the countries by saving lives, by saving their economy, by helping with their vaccination.

British DHM hosts reception for Chevening participants

The Chevening Mentoring Scheme has played an important role in promoting gender equality, inclusion and opportunity for all which are integral to our work in Pakistan. We had 80% women as mentees in the scheme, and a record 60% of women were selected for Chevening scholarships in the UK last year

STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: Iona Thomas, Acting Deputy High Commissioner at the British High Commission in Islamabad, hosted a reception at her residence on Thursday for participants of the inaugural Chevening Mentoring Scheme.

The British High Commission launched the inaugural Chevening Mentoring Scheme last year. The project was designed for entry level lawyers and entrepreneurs with leadership potential, to enhance skills, knowledge and work performance. A total of 10 mentees (eight women and two men, including one each from minorities) were inducted in the scheme.

Chevening alumni who participated as mentors included: Yasmeen Rehman, former member of the National Assembly and entrepreneur; Aasia Sail Khan, entrepreneur, pharmacist, and gender consultant; Hassan Shah, lawyer and entrepreneur; and Khadija Ali, legal practitioner and development consultant. The year-long scheme helped the mentees to grow professionally and learn to meet challenges at the workplace. It also helped the mentees to enhance their communication skills and confidence as well a chance to attend formal trainings.

Acting British Deputy High Commissioner, Iona Thomas said: "Our Chevening alumni are contributing to a brighter future for Pakistan by

helping build the capacity of future lawyers and entrepreneurs.

"The Chevening Mentoring Scheme has played an important role in promoting gender equality, inclusion and opportunity for all which are integral to our work in Pakistan. We had 80% women as mentees in the scheme, and a record 60% of women were selected for Chevening scholarships in the UK last year."

The UK Government's Chevening Scholarship enables outstanding emerging leaders across Pakistan to pursue fully funded one-year master's degrees in the UK; and is a unique opportunity to develop leadership potential, network with students from across the world and experience the best of the UK's first class education offer.

Since 1983, around 2,000 Pakistani have been awarded the Chevening Scholarship. To receive applications for the next academic year 2022-23, the online application window will open in August 2021. Interested candidates can sign up for alerts, by visiting the Chevening website www.chevening.org



SOUTH AFRICA CONSIDERS PAKISTAN AN IMPORTANT MARKET FOR TRADE COOPERATION: MADIKIZA

South Africa High Commissioner visits RCCI, urges for collective efforts to build partnership between private sectors of the two countries



Rawalpindi: South Africa High Commissioner Methuthuzeli Madikiza has said that South Africa considers Pakistan an important market for trade cooperation and is keen to further enhance bilateral trade with it as the two countries have good potential for trade in many areas. Pakistan is the 14th big exporter to South Africa. He said that the trade relations between the two countries, Pakistan, South Africa, the Chamber of Commerce and the private sector needed to be further strengthened. The high Commissioner expressed these views during his visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here on Thursday. He was accompanied by Deputy head of Mission and Political Consular, Christo Janse Van Noordwyk. President of the Chamber Muhammad Nasir Mirza, Senior Vice President Usman Ashraf, Vice President Shahraiz A Malik, members of the executive committee and chamber

members were also present on the occasion.

During the meeting, the High Commissioner said that the volume of bilateral trade could increase to one billion dollars in the next few years. Cooperation and joint ventures can be initiated in other sectors, including tourism, agriculture, pharmaceuticals and services. The efforts of the Rawalpindi Chamber in expanding trade activities and promoting trade relations are commendable. The High Commissioner considers the Rawalpindi Chamber as an important partner for promoting trade ties. The Corona epidemic has affected trade activities in many parts of the world. Meeting new challenges requires joint efforts and cooperation, he added. The high Commissioner offered RCCI to organize its annual achievements awards in Cape Town and also accepted the invitation to participate in Build Expo 2021 being organized by the Chamber.

Earlier, Chamber President Nasir Mirza briefed the High Commissioner about the ongoing activities and future programs of the Chamber. He said that the Chamber had successfully conducted the trade forum with African Countries through a virtual platform despite the Corona epidemic. Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) were also signed with South Africa and the Minara Chamber on the sidelines of the International Chambers Summit (ICS 2021).

In order to increase trade with South Africa, trade related information should be shared and exchanged at the delegation level, he suggested. He also apprised the High Commissioner about the investment opportunities in Pakistan. Joint ventures can also be launched in the fields of information technology and construction, including pharma, marble, engineering, poultry and textiles, he further added.

AEO AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION EXPO ATTRACTS HUNDREDS OF STUDENTS IN LAHORE



LAHORE, (DNA): With the world gradually moving back to normal, the day when international borders of top study destinations of the world will open for foreign students, is coming closer. It is time that the students gear up and start preparing themselves to realize their dreams to study at top-ranked international universities.

With over 5000 alumni and 200,000+ IELTS registrations, AEO Pakistan over the past two decades has established itself as Australian & Global Education Specialists, the most trusted IELTS Official Test Centre and now the official OET Test Centre in Pakistan. AEO Pakistan operates as the official Liaison office for over 40 leading Australian Universities/ Institutions and facilitates the enrolment of International students at these Universities/ Institutions. Since 2002, AEO Pakistan has been conducting Australian Education Expos providing an excellent opportunity to Pakistani students

planning to Study in Australia. Over the years thousands of students have benefitted from AEO expos held twice annually, across all major cities of Pakistan.

This February once again AEO Education Expo is being organized across 9 major cities of Pakistan i.e., Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi, Multan, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Abbottabad, Peshawar and Hyderabad. The AEO expo is providing an ideal platform to prospective students across the country, to get free expert advice and counselling about how to apply to study in at top ranked international universities in Australia, USA, Canada and UK. Representatives of more than 19 universities/ institutes are participating at the expo providing golden opportunity for Pakistani students to get free guidance and counseling for their future study endeavors. Information about IELTS test and preparatory classes is also being provided at the expo.

The first exhibition of the series was

successfully held today in Lahore at PC Hotel. Hundreds of students along with their parents participated at the expo with great interest and excitement to enroll for admissions at top ranked Australian and other leading International Universities. The participants appreciated AEO's effort in provision of a perfect platform offering free counselling sessions with official representatives of international universities to explore the options of enrolling for a degree of their choice. The next expo of the series is scheduled to be held in Sialkot on 24th February Hotel the Jeeven's, Islamabad 25th February Serena Hotel, Faisalabad 25th February Hotel One, Multan 26th February Hotel One, Karachi 27th February Movenpick Hotel, Abbottabad 27th February Hotel One, Peshawar 28th February PC Hotel and Hyderabad 28th February Indus Hotel. Entry to the exhibition is FREE with a mask and Scholarships up to 75% opportunities are also available.

30th ANNIVERSARY OF THE VISEGRAD COOPERATION

Embassies of Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic hold press meet; Ambassador of Poland keen to see more business exchanges between two countries once pandemic is over; Hungarian ambassador announces 200 scholarships offered to Pakistani students; Czech DHM says students can get visas any time



Ambassador of Poland Piotr Opalinski flanked by envoys of Hungary and Czech Republic addressing a press conference. DNA

ISLAMABAD (DNA): Ambassadors of Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic gathered on Monday to share experience of Visegrad cooperation on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the alliance. Spearheaded by Piotr A. Opalinski, the Ambassador of Poland, the event provided the audience with first hand information about the four-country alliance. Slovakia is also part of the alliance however there is no Slovak embassy in Islamabad. Antonin Hradilek, the Deputy Head of Mission represented the Czech embassy.

Ambassador of Poland Piotr A. Opalinski in his remarks highlighted the significance and relevance of the alliance. He said thirty years ago, on 15 February 1991, the presidents of Poland and the Czech Republic, and the prime minister of Hungary signed the Declaration on Cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in Striving for European Integration in the castle of Visegrad, Hungary.

The Ambassador said, the Declaration provided political framework for extensive cooperation between Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and brought closer the societies of the three, and later four, countries. The original aim

of cooperation was the striving for the full recovery of the states' independence, democracy and liberty, eradication of symptoms of totalitarian regimes, construction of parliamentary democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, establishment of free market economy, comprehensive participation in the European political and economic system, as well as the security and legislative system. The accession of our countries to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and later joining the European Union, symbolically closed this first stage and opened new perspectives for the Visegrad cooperation. Today, besides friendship and good neighborly cooperation, the Visegrad Group countries are also united by the awareness of common social and economic challenges, understanding the value of regional solidarity, and the willingness to realise common goals of both European and foreign policy, he added. From a 30-year perspective, the Visegrad Group became not only one of the symbols of the new united Europe and a successful political and economic transformation of the countries of the region, but also an example of effective format of regional cooperation within the European Union which contributes to the

shaping of European policies and enhancing its economic competitiveness. Ambassador Piotr further said, V4 is not only about political cooperation. One of emblematic institutions of our cooperation is the International Visegrad Fund which, since its establishment in 2000, has granted nearly 2400 scholarships and supported almost 6000 projects by NGOs, local governments, scientists and artists, mainly across our four countries, but also in the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan states.

We are pleased that the Visegrad Group's anniversary coincided with Poland's presidency of the Group from July 2020 until June 2021, the ambassador added. The Polish ambassador on the occasion recited a few verses from Allam Iqbal poetry in Urdu. Ambassador Piotr is fluent in Urdu language as he has spent over 12 years in Pakistan.

The ambassador hoped that once the pandemic is over we can see business activity between the two countries. He hoped post-Pandemic era will see enhanced tourism activity also.

Ambassador of Hungary Bela Fazekas also spoke on the occasion. Ambassador Fazekas is in Pakistan for second time. He served as Hungarian ambassador in Pakistan almost 15 years ago also.

The ambassador dilated upon the alliance and shed light on the role Hungary was playing within the alliance. Replying a question the Hungarian ambassador said Hungary had offered 200 scholarships to Pakistani students. He shared with the audience information that for these 200 scholarships over 9,000 students appeared in a test, which shows their keen interest in the scholarship programme.

Regarding CPEC the all three envoys were unanimous that CPEC was included in the areas of interest of these countries and they had been following developments keenly. Antonin Hradilek, Deputy Head of Mission of Czech embassy told that pandemic had hit his country also hard however as regards student visas the embassy was still issuing visas to students.

"Mărțișor" Tradition in Romania

The tradition of Mărțișor on 1st of March symbolizes the rebirth of the nature and marks the beginning of spring and changing of seasons in Romania, being the first in line of a series of celebrations in the month of March.

Mărțișor is an old tradition celebrated all over Romania and archaeological discoveries (small stones painted in red and white) suggest that the Mărțișor traces its history more than 8,000 years back. Some ethnologists believe that the Mărțișor celebration has Roman origins while others support the

trees were flowering the Mărțișor were hung on tree branches.

Nowadays, on March 1, Romanians buy silky red-white threads (șnur) tied into a bow to which a small trinket is attached and offer them to their (female) family members, friends and colleagues to show friendship, respect or admiration.

All these small items are considered talismans and special in their own way, some Martisoare have a specific significance. Although this specific is up to anyone's imagination, here you have a few examples: a four-leaf clover is a symbol of good luck - the



theory that it is an old Dacian tradition. In ancient Rome, the New Year's was celebrated on the 1st of March. March ('Martius') was named in the honor of the god Mars. Mars was not only the god of war but also the god of agriculture, which contributes to the rebirth of vegetation. The Dacians also celebrated the New Year's on the first day of March. Ample spring celebrations were consecrated to this event.

In the old times, Mărțișor were made of small river pebbles, colored in white and red, strung on a thread and worn around the neck. They were worn, to bring good luck and good weather, from March 1 until the first trees would bloom. When the first

four leaves represent hope, faith, love and luck, the horseshoe Mărțișor is also among the most popular in Romania, as it is also said to bring



good luck and good fortune, a heart-shaped Martisor is the symbol of love and affection, a star martisor is also a symbol of good luck, while an owl Martisor is the symbol of wisdom.

The tradition of Martisor is spread not only in Romania, but also in the neighboring countries like Moldova, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia etc., and has been included since 7th of December 2017 in the UNESCO's list of "intangible heritage of humanity". Starting with 1st of March, and all the way to March 8th, Martisoare are offered to dear and beloved ones - small symbolic items tied with a red and white entwined cord, white for purity, red for life, as a sign of friendship, respect and affection.



PIA to start flights to Baku and Tashkent

Likewise PIA is planning to start Lahore, Baku flight also, which shall enable visitors to visit this beautiful country. From Lahore to Tashkent it takes only two hours while in case of Baku the distance shall be covered only in three and half hours

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plans to operate flights from Lahore to Tashkent by the end of March this year and permission has been sought in this regard.

CEO PIA Air Marshal Arshad Malik and Chief Commercial Officer Ali Tahir Qasim and airline officials met with Ambassador of Uzbekistan in Pakistan Aybek Arif Usmanov and Pakistan's Ambassador to Uzbekistan Ali Asad Gilani to seek formal permission for flights.

Both the ambassadors expressed their keenness to have air links between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, a place of mosques and shrines, while Tashkent, Bukhara and

Samarkand have a rich Islamic culture and history.

PIA is planning to expand its network to Central Asian countries and increasing frequency of flights to Afghanistan.

It may be mentioned here that Uzbek air is already operating from Lahore to Tashkent while there was no direct flight from Pakistan to Azerbaijan.

Due to virus issue, the Uzbek air had temporarily discontinued its operations in Pakistan however it is likely to resume services in March.

Therefore PIA and Uzbek air will provide the passengers with options to travel to Uzbekistan. Likewise PIA is planning to start Lahore, Baku flight also, which

shall enable visitors to visit this beautiful country. From Lahore to Tashkent it takes only two hours while in case of Baku the distance shall be covered only in three and half hours.

For the moment visitors who wish to travel to Baku have to either take Qatar or Turkey route. In Qatar case it takes almost 10 hours to reach Baku while in case of Turkey it takes almost 22 hours because there is 12 hours transit in Istanbul in case passengers travel via Istanbul.

The Uzbek government announced to attract more and more tourists this year therefore it is making all possible to arrangements to provide easy and quick access to tourists to Uzbekistan.

Ambassador of Jordan Ibrahim Al Madani visit PARC headquarters and various sheds



Dr. M Azeem Khan, Chairman PARC is presenting a PARC-Shield to Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, His Excellency Ibrahim Almadani The Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan on his visit at NARC Islamabad on 03-03-2021. (Dte. of PR&P) PARC



Huge potential for Turkey-Pakistan cultural cooperation, says envoy

STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: *Chairman of Pakistan Cultural Forum Zafar Bakhtawari is presenting his book to Turkish Ambassador Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul, Ahsan Bakhtawari and Waqar Bakhtawari were also present on the occasion*

ISLAMABAD: There is a huge potential for cultural development between Turkey and Pakistan. These views were expressed by Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul during a meeting with Pakistan Cultural Forum Chairman Zafar Bakhtawari, Ahsan Bakhtawari and Waqar Bakhtawari at Turkish embassy. Zafar Bakhtawari presented his newly published book 'Jahan Dost' to Turkish Ambassador. Turkish Ambassador said that at present there trade volume between two

countries is 1 billion dollar which can be multiplied very easily through various means. He further said that Turkish dramas have played an important role in introducing Turkish culture in Pakistan and bringing the two countries closer. Zafar Bakhtawari on the occasion briefed him about the articles written in his book about Pakistan and Turkey relations. He also called for the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries and the restoration of the cargo train between Pakistan,

Iran and Turkey. He said there is a need to set up a joint forum to bring together the writers and intellectuals of both the countries regarding Allam Iqbal and Rumi ideology. Waqar Bakhtawari said on the occasion that it takes 40 days for the imported goods to reach Pakistan from Turkey via sea route. The Turkish Ambassador said that after the cargo train, the goods will reach Pakistan in two days. Ahsan Bakhtawari also stressed on the need to introduce Turkish food in Pakistan.

Ways to Promote Women's Rights through Unified Approach



Amb. (R) Fauzia Nasreen

Every year on 8 March International Women's Day is celebrated to renew the global commitment to empower women and uphold their rights safeguarded in a number of conventions and covenants. In 2021 8th March is being celebrated under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic and very aptly the theme is "Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a Covid-19 world". It reflects the realities of the current environment hugely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The spirits however, have not been dampened amid hopes for a better recovery. The rapid response by the scientists and medical community has rekindled aspirations for moving beyond the COVID-19 environment building the post COVID-19 world on the pillar of international solidarity. In this women and girls are equal partners aspiring to enjoy the support of all stake holders.

In the struggle against the pandemic women and girls have been at the forefront and at the same time they have been impacted in multiple ways. Women have shouldered the responsibility as health workers, caregivers, innovators and community leaders. They have risen to the call of duty and shown exceptional dedication which has been recognized and commended worldwide. Women leaders have demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities as heads of state and governments and as professionals. The imperative of their integration and mainstreaming has been reinforced. It presents an opportunity to explore ways to promote their rights as equal contributors to growth and development.

Transformative gender equality has become critical under the current conditions now more than ever before. The 2030 Sustainable Development agenda cannot be achieved without an equitable participation of women in the entire spectrum of development; political, economic, socio-cultural, security, science and technology. Since gender equality and the empowerment of women is the core of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) almost all the goals and targets touch upon this aspect in a substantial way. Women participation and leadership is essential together with a consensual approach towards issues pertaining to the rights of women and girls in different spheres. Unified approach that would help achieve women's rights rests on participation and decision making as well as supportive legislative or legal framework. Rationale for such a unified approach is that

Full political participation in public life ensures that voice of women is heard on all issues affecting the lives of women.

In order for them to play an active part in public and private sectors their capability matters immensely. Hence their health and wellbeing, solid nutrition along with quality education and skills would be necessary.

Education matters for gender equality. We are all familiar with the close link

between a girl's education and social and economic development. Societal commitment to upholding women and girls' right to education would go a long way in building their capacities.

Women participation in economic and commercial activities has twofold benefits; first it gives financial independence to women and more importantly it boosts the overall economic growth of the state and society. Creating an enabling environment would be a step in the direction of promoting smart economy.

Poverty eradication measures need to ensure equal access to financial and other resources of the state and society which includes agriculture productivity and entrepreneurial assets.

In our efforts towards securing the rights of women and girls, society has an important role to play. Without that support and general understanding the task becomes arduous. Most importantly as SDG 5 calls for ending "all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere" as well as ending "all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres..." In order to bring about a transformative shift the entire notion and regressive ideas associated with women would be required. Transition to a more conducive structural paradigm would be necessary-along way to go but the new normal does create an opportunity to do so. This opportunity can be capitalized within the context of post COVID-19 recovery.

The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees rights for all. There are a number of laws that have been passed over the last several decades. However, it is the enforcement and implementation of the laws which is deficient. For this structural adjustments and changes are needed bringing about a transformative change in approaches towards women issues. Pakistan will stand to gain by moving along the global paradigms on development, growth and gender equality. SDGs do provide space for accommodation of national priorities and local environment. But for our own sake that environment must be made sustainable by pro-women rights-based approach

The author served as Ambassador of Pakistan in different countries of the world. Lastly, she remained posted as Advisor COMSATS Secretariat on SDGs.

However, it is the enforcement and implementation of the laws which is deficient. For this structural adjustments and changes are needed bringing about a transformative change in approaches towards women issues. Pakistan will stand to gain by moving along the global paradigms on development, growth and gender equality.

DIRECT FLIGHTS TO BOOST PAKISTAN-KYRGYZSTAN LINKS

Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Erik Beishembiev urges business community to avail good investment opportunities through joint ventures in pharmaceutical, agriculture, education and tourism sectors

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan Erik Beishembiev has urged business community to avail good investment opportunities through joint ventures in pharmaceutical, agriculture, education and tourism sectors.

"Kyrgyzstan is not developed in pharmaceutical sector and offers great opportunities to the Pakistani pharma companies", he said during a meeting with President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry Mian Tariq Misbah. Vice President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry, former Senior Vice President Amjad Ali Jawa, former Vice President Zeshan Khalil and Executive Committee members were also present. The ambassador said that his country greatly valued relations with Pakistan and that was why it sought further diversification and strengthening of the relations. He said that Kyrgyz-Pakistani historical relations could be traced back centuries ago.

"Our peoples have long-time and close

cultural and spiritual ties", he said. He said that direct flights between the two countries on regular basis would help improve trade and cooperation in tourism sector. He said that both countries were rich in mineral resources, have high skilled human resources, excellent opportunities for developing industry and agriculture, attracting foreign investments for joint production and supply of goods. He said that Kyrgyzstan is interested in development of short transportation links through its territory between Central Asia and China and Pakistan with access to the Gwadar and Karachi ports, using railway and roads, which are being constructed in the framework of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Today, shortest roads are connecting China to Kyrgyzstan through two border mountain passes in Kyrgyzstan - Torugart in the North and - Erkeshtam in the South, located only about 200-km from Chinese city of Kashgar. He said



that Pakistani businessmen can invest individually or through joint ventures in Kyrgyzstan. He said that Pakistan can use Kyrgyzstan as a gateway to enter into the EU market and can avail benefits from GSP Plus status.

Pakistan's credible news service

DNA

DIPLOMATIC NEWS AGENCY

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Pakistan sets up stall at Minsk book fair

Ambassador Sajjad Haider Khan visited the exhibition and received and briefed several dignitaries, officials and general public at the Pakistan stall

DNA



MINSK The Embassy of Pakistan is currently participating in the 28th edition of the Minsk International Book Fair at the exhibition centre from 18-21 Feb 2021. The exhibition features over 250 exhibitors from 20 countries, including Austria, Azerbaijan, Germany, Iran and China.

A variety of books on Pakistan's cultural and religious diversity, political and economic milieu, arts, craft and tourism attractions have been placed at the exhibition.

Ambassador Sajjad Haider Khan visited the exhibition and received and briefed several dignitaries, officials and general public at the Pakistan stall on the Inaugural day.



SOUTH AFRICAN ENVOY KEEN TO DEEPEN TIES WITH PAKISTAN

The High Commissioner of South Africa shared his vision of taking the bilateral relations further ahead. He mentioned particular areas where both Pakistan and South Africa could strengthen and diversify their engagement

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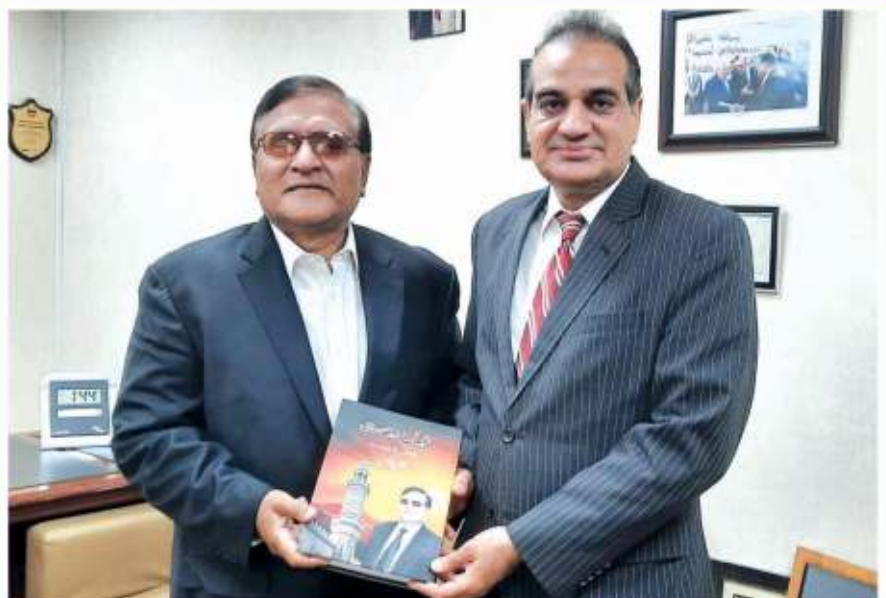


ISLAMABAD: The South African High Commissioner giving a signed bat to grandson of Zafar Bakhtawari. DNA

The high commissioner talked about cricketing ties as well. He said both countries rank prominent among the cricket playing nations. He hoped the PSL matches discontinued due to virus cases, shall soon be resumed. The envoy also presented a signed bat to the grandson of Zafar Bakhtawari. Zafar Bakhtawari thanked the high commissioner for sparing time and sharing his views regarding promotion of bilateral relations. He assured the high commissioner that he would do its best to contribute to further strengthening of Pakistan-South Africa relations.

ISLAMABAD: Former President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chairman Pakistan Cultural Forum and Ahsan Bakhtawari former Vice President of ICCI hosted dinner for the High Commissioner of South Africa Mthuthuzeli Madikiza.

The High Commissioner of South Africa shared his vision of taking the bilateral relations further ahead. He mentioned particular areas where both Pakistan and South Africa could strengthen and diversify their engagement. He told that his country offered a lot of opportunities to businessmen especially from Pakistan adding Pakistan govt's Look Africa policy has played central role in bridging gaps between Pakistan and the African continent countries.



Zafar Bakhtawari Chairman D WATSON GROUP presenting his book to Chief Editor Islamabad POST Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Serena Collects Women Empowerment initiatives under one platform



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Serena Hotels hosted a Women's Day Breakfast and Crafts Bazaar to acknowledge the trailblazing women of society and to provide support and representation to women social enterprises.

Wife of the President of Pakistan Mrs. Samina Arif Alvi was the Chief Guest at the occasion which was attended by prominent women leaders from politics, sports, healthcare and charities as well as other segments of society including journalists and members of the Diplomatic corps and their spouses. An exhibition of social enterprises for women empowerment as well as organisations working to support persons with disabilities and social justice was set up which included a colourful crafts

bazaar. The exhibitors included the Pakistan Foreign Office Women Association (PFOWA), Behbud Crafts, Indus Heritage Trust, Mashal Association, Andaaz, Rozan, Nomad Gallery, Care for Special Persons Foundation, Aga Khan Economic Planning Board for Pakistan and Pakistan Air Force Women's Association (PAFWA).

CEO Serena Hotels South and Central Asia Mr. Aziz Boolani said that Serena Hotels is working to create a workplace where everyone can advance, and a culture of equality that unlocks human potential. "We are proud to be the first EDGE (Economic Dividends for Gender Equality) certified hospitality company in Pakistan. Today we celebrate the achievements of women and pledge to collectively create an inclusive world."





MASOOD KHAN HON CONSUL GENERAL LITHUANIA HOSTS DINNER

ISLAMABAD: Hon. Consul General of Lithuania Masood Khan and his wife hosted a dinner for the newly-arrived ambassadors of various countries and some Pakistani friends, at his residence. Ambassadors of South Korea Suh Sangpyao, Hungary Bela Fazekas, Belarus Markian Chuchuk and High Commissioner of Maldives Farzana Zahir attended the dinner. Among Pakistanis former Air Chief Marshal Abbas Khattak, former Ambassador Hamayum, Omar Durrani and Editor Daily Islamabad POST/CENTRELINE Ansar M Bhatti also attended the event.

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Pakistani and German Governments Launch "Urban Cohesion Hub" for Afghan Refugee and Host Communities in Rawalpindi

German Ambassador Bernhard Schlagheck and Federal Minister of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan, inaugurated the 'Urban Cohesion Hub' in Rawalpindi today. The Hub is a community center which will serve as a place for encounters between urban Afghan refugees and Pakistani host communities residing in Rawalpindi and Islamabad and will thereby help to foster social cohesion.

Funded by the German Federal Foreign Office and established in cooperation with the Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees under the Ministry of SAFRON, the Hub is set to support more than 30,000 refugee and host community members with integrated services in health, education, skills training, legal support, and recreational activities. While welcoming all community members, the initiative emphasizes supporting vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, working children, elderly people, youth, and women.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Hub, Minister Sultan said:

"For the last 40 years, Pakistanis have shown exemplary kindness, empathy and solidarity towards Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The Urban Cohesion Hub is a prime example of the German Government's cooperation and assistance towards refugees and host communities."

Ambassador Schlagheck added:

"The Urban Cohesion Hub is testimony to the close and multifaceted German-Pakistani bilateral relations which will witness their 70th anniversary this year. The services that will be provided through this Hub will promote peaceful coexistence in an important urban refugee affected and hosting area of Pakistan."



Riders Show Huge Interest in EU-Support Cycling Event

SHUJAAT HAMZA



ISLAMABAD: Cars disappeared on Sunday to make way for 'Cycling Sunday' and hundreds of cyclists and walkers of all ages and abilities.

The joyful and carefree moment highlighted a serious message: the need for sustainable means of transportation in light of climate change and rapid urbanization. It also encouraged citizens to make healthier and more sustainable lifestyle choices, for themselves, the community and the environment.

The event was organized by Urban Innovation, Islamabad Capital Territory Administration and the Islamabad Cycling Association. Support was provided by the European Union. Every first Sunday of the month, Jinnah Avenue, the capital's primary thoroughfare, is open exclusively for cyclists from Centaurus mall to D-Chowk.

Taking advantage of the safe, traffic-free space, cyclists participated in fun races with categories for all ages, skills parkour for kids and other activities. And they simply enjoyed a car- and carefree ride on the central avenue. Cities around the world are confronted with problems such as traffic congestion, air and noise pollution, and road accidents. In response to these pressing issues, policy-makers are increasingly looking for ways to develop more eco-friendly, diverse and flexible transportation systems, and

influence behaviors to encourage a shift away from the reliance on private cars. Cycling is considered an ideal alternative, not only for shorter distances, due to its cost-effectiveness, and multiple benefits in terms of health and environment.

Cycling Sunday promotes cycling as a safe mobility in line with the Prime Minister's Clean and Green Pakistan initiative. On the eve of the International Women's Day, the event particularly encouraged women to become cyclists and underlined the need to address the concerns of women in terms of safety and access to public spaces and transportation. Naveed Iftikhar, founder of Urban Innovation and one of the initiator of the event, said, "The feeling of cycling in the city center is something which I aspired to regenerate through this event. Such events will invite people to consider cycling as a great option not only for leisure, but also for commuting and in daily life. Finally, we call on the government to create safe spaces for cyclists to encourage cycling as a sustainable means of transportation."

Haroon, Secretary of Islamabad Cycling Association, said, "There are more and more people who are cycling in their free time to stay fit and as a sport. It is great to see this trend growing and we are delighted to bring it to the heart of the city with races for the ambitious riders, but also just for fun."



The European Union supported the initiative in light of its global priorities related to climate change, but also as cycling has become a major trend in Europe in the last years. Transport accounts for nearly 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions and this figure continues to rise as demand grows.

The European Green Deal is a set of policy initiatives by the EU with the overarching aim of making Europe climate neutral in 2050. This means moving to more sustainable transportation, by putting users first and providing them with more affordable, accessible, healthier and cleaner alternatives – and promoting active modes of transport such as cycling. Covid-19 has given a boost to the trend seen across most European cities.

More and more Europeans are using a bicycle in their daily lives. And cities are adapting by providing more space for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport to solve traffic problems and make the cities more livable and sustainable for all. In this context, the EU is looking forward to working with the authorities to share experiences and create awareness of the potential of cycling and other active and clean modes of transport.



EU HOSTS WEBINAR ON DIGITALIZATION INITIATIVES

ISLAMABAD (DNA): The Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan convened a webinar to showcase European policy initiatives on Digitalisation and to discuss the challenges and potential of the digital economy in Pakistan.

With the Covid19 pandemic accelerating the digital transformation, but also exposing its challenges, the webinar was a timely opportunity to share experiences and expertise. Policy experts from the European Union, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) introduced a wide range of areas concerning the digital transformation in both the EU and Pakistan.

The webinar was attended by over 30 representatives and experts from federal and provincial government and agencies, foreign missions, IT and telecommunication companies and civil society.

The speakers shared the EU's experiences in developing the European Digital Strategy, Data Strategy, Digital Services Act, as well as ensuring data protection and security. Speakers also highlighted how digitalisation has impacted

infrastructure, education and social systems in EU Member States and its partner countries and offered examples of potential venues for cooperation.

The Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, Androulla Kaminara, stressed the importance of making technology work for people to create a fair and competitive economy, as well as an open, democratic and sustainable society. She added that digital transformation for economic growth and recovery requires close collaboration, shared learning and exploring opportunities to work together on areas such as health, governance and satellite mapping.

In the discussion, the need was underlined for regulation of the digital space to ensure respect for human rights, including the right to privacy and freedom of speech and safety of vulnerable groups such as women and children.

This event is intended to start a continuous process of sharing best practices and legislative approaches between the EU and Pakistan, which can create opportunities for dialogue, partnerships and investments promoting regional and global connectivity



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Name of Post:	Consultant (PMC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Undergraduate degree in Medicine (MBBS) with any additional degree/diploma in Medical AdministrationAt least 15 years of relevant experience. A distinguished record with high professional integrityExcellent written and oral communication skills
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- The plan will include the strategic policy document along with business plan for effective implementation.
- Any other task, as may be assigned by the competent authority.

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- Only eligible candidates will be called for interview. Interviews of eligible candidates can be arranged via audio/video conference.
- No TA/DA will be admissible for appearing in interview.

For Enquiries, Please Contact:

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Higher Education Commission, Sector H-9, Islamabad
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