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**National Day  
of Italy  
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# Are we heading towards elections?



PAKISTANI politics is yet again witnessing some interesting and intriguing times. While the formation of the King's Party spearheaded by business tycoon Jehangir Khan Tareen may be in the offing, the PDM on the other hand appears to have been caught in a state of to be or not to be. When the purging process in the PTI kick-started after the May 9 incidents, the PDM and especially the PML N, expressed jimjams for it believed nobody could stop it from regaining the power after the general elections after fragmentation of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. But to much of its disappointment and astonishment, the powers-that-be seem to have decided to

cobble together a new party obviously with a view to giving tough time to the PDM parties in the elections and make sure that no party gets absolute majority. The PML N leadership ostensibly needs to be worried over these developments as the power-sharing formula carries fewer seats for N league as compared with the PPP. As regards the PTI and Imran Khan it has become almost certain that Imran Khan may not be allowed to take part in the elections. The Minus-Imran formula has been put into motion. The meeting of Fawad Chaudhry with Shah Mahmood Qureshi in Adila Jail on May 31, 20223 was in fact part of the plan. The PTI deserters tried their best to convince Qureshi to part ways with Imran and lead the party. However, according to the son of Qureshi, his father outright rejected the proposal and told them that he was the vice chairman of the party and how he could do it. They also tried to bring Qureshi round for joining hands with Jehangir Tareen party, nevertheless this option may not work as both Qureshi and Tareen belong to diametrically different mindsets. Additionally, they come from the same belt and thus have deep political rivalry as well. Even when both of them were part of the PTI, their bilateral fights were well-known within and without the party.

Actually the PTI deserts, after leaving the party feel themselves isolated and abandoned. No party is ready to accept them and they cannot win elections on their own therefore they made an attempt to remain a part of the PTI minus Imran Khan. This idea, from the face of it, seems to have failed, though they are likely to make another attempt. Second option for these deserters is to join the Tareen's King's Party, but since they all happen to be the 'seasoned' politicians therefore they have a clear understanding that King's parties are only made to damage the vote bank of the mainstream parties. They cannot form governments independently.

PPP turns out to be the frontrunner when it comes to formation of government at the Federal level. The PML N may be considered for Punjab while Sindh may go to PPP again. While PPP would be more than happy with this arrangement, the PML N for sure would not accept it come what may, so we can anticipate another round of political haggling and fight this time among the PDM parties. It is widely perceived that these parties shall be at daggers drawn with one another once the election schedule is announced. PML N has a history of estranged relations with the Establishment. It never completed its tenures simply because it developed difficult relations with the Establishment soon after coming to power. Taking a lead from the past we can say that there exists a huge trust-deficit between PML N and the Establishment. PPP on the other hand has somehow succeeded in mending fences with the Establishment. Then, the PPP turns out to be a flexible party. It can mould itself in order to be able to flow with the current.

As regards the future of the PTI, it looks bleak at the moment. But as we know nothing is certain or uncertain in politics, especially in Pakistani politics. No time can be opportune for Imran Khan than this to openly admit that the fragmentation of the PML N in 2018 was a wrongful act and that he came to power with the help of the Establishment. He may gain a lot politically by making these assertions.

The fluid political scene may serve as a stumbling block in the way of foreign investments and financial assistance from donors and international financial institutions as well. Therefore a strong and stable government is needed of the hour with a view to effectively matching the existing and future challenges.

*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 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 also served in Pakistan Telecommunication Company (PTCL) as Media Advisor/ Director Communication. He launched Diplomatic News Agency (DNA) in 2012. In May 2020 he launched Pakistan's First & only Diplomatic Newspaper Daily Islamabad POST.



CH. USMAN NISAR

# A businessman par excellence

**My dream came true by meeting Dr. Tun Mahathir Mohammad a great leader of Malaysia and Muslim ummah, told by renowned and influential Pakistani Malaysian businessman, Chairman Panjtan group Ch.Usman Nisar in an exclusive interview to CENTRELINE magazine. Here are excerpts from his interview**

**Javed Akhtar**

**1: What motivated you to come to Malaysia and settled here?**

I came to Malaysia in 2007 for study. I did my MBA from UM, and further on decided to settle down in Malaysia. Since then I am residing in Malaysia.

**People tend to go to America, Europe, and Middle East for job and business but you selected Malaysia, why?**

Reason for me to choose Malaysia was because it had same internation-

al standard universities like US or UK and on top of that it's an Islamic country with freedom of religious expression and belief. Malaysia offers a plethora of incentives to even those who wish to explore various business opportunities here.

**3: How will you compare Malaysian and Pakistani business environment?**

After getting the freedom from British in 1958 Malaysia's economic growth has been constantly on the move. It is a result of continuation of trade policy

and political stability unlike Pakistan where we have been facing unstable governments with no vision. Countries that ensure peaceful environment to businessmen get more and more foreign investments.

Malaysia offers a lot of incentives to foreign as well as local investors. As you know Malaysia is a peaceful country and its government makes sure that foreign businessmen are given all required support. In Pakistan political instability happens to be the major stumbling block in the way of foreign investments. We know that many countries want to invest in Pakistan but due to political instability they cannot do it. **Are you satisfied with circumstance and facilities for business in Malaysia?**

As I said earlier, Malaysia is an industrial hub and called the Centre point for ASEAN region with exports of over 350 billion \$ per year. The ease of doing business in Malaysia is very lucrative that makes it a top favorite destination for international investors.

**Would you like to brief us about your current business and what are your aims in future?**

Panjtan Group of Companies started 15 years ago with first company was formed named Monzsat Services Sdn



With Tun Mahathir





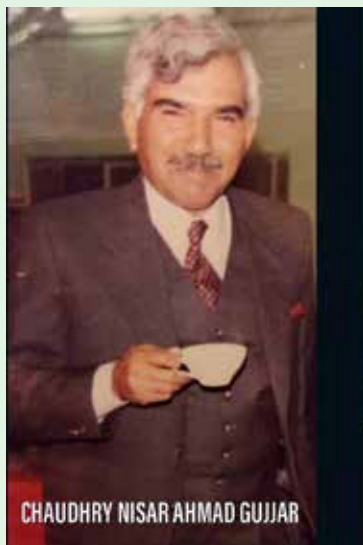
H.E Madam Amina Baloch (High Commissioner of Pakistan to Malaysia) Tan Sri Azumi (ex Army Chief Malaysia) & Mr Shafqat Niazi (Trade and Investment Consul Pakistan HC)



With Tan Sri Richard Koh



Mr. Abdul Razaq Dawood, Ten Sri Aziz & Tan Sri Danny



CHAUDHRY NISAR AHMAD GUJJAR



CHAUDHRY USMAN NISAR

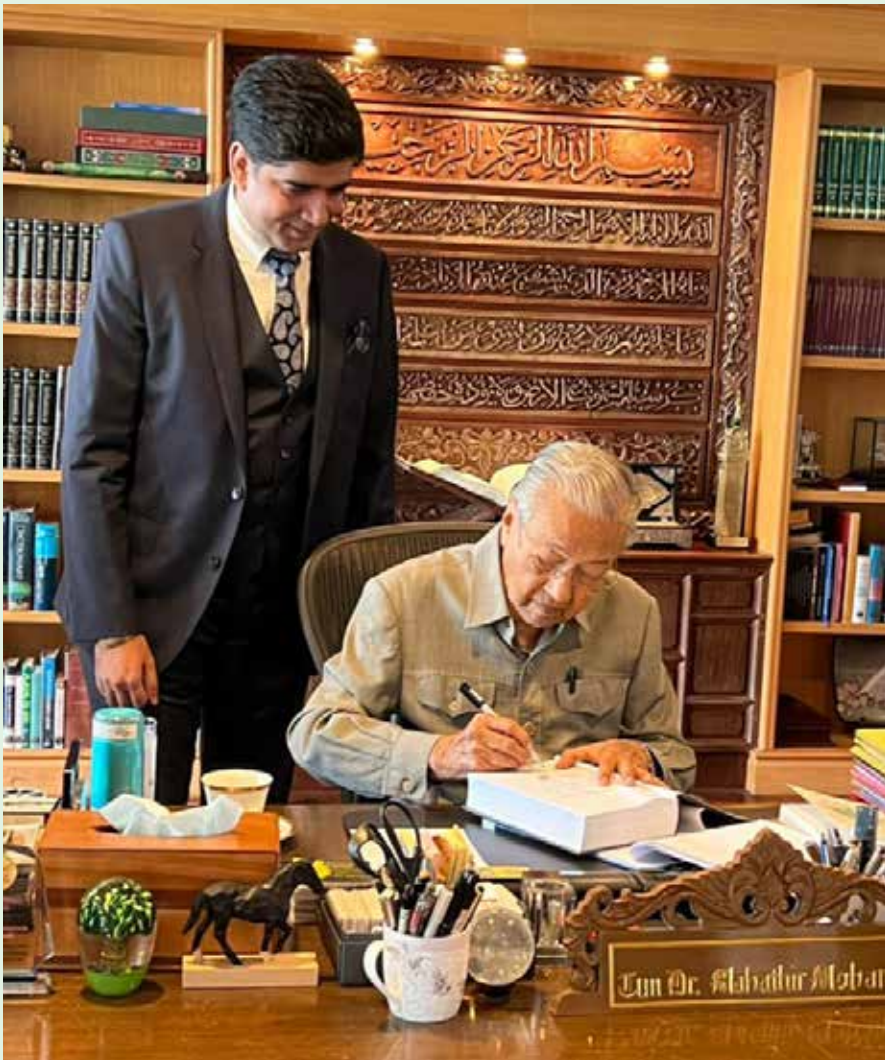


With High Commission of Pakistan to Malaysia (Madam Amina Baloch)



With Jordan Belford (Wolf of Wallstreet)





ness people from both sides to cash in on this opportunity and use these direct air linkages to promote bilateral business activity.

**How you see future of Pak, Malaysia business ties ? Please also shed some light of the tourism potential.**

With more and more tourists coming to both countries we are very hopeful that's the ties between the two countries will strengthen more and we are looking forward to have more trade opportunities among the two brotherly nations.

Tourism industry is a multi Billion \$ industry. Malaysia has a population of 30 million and 30 million tourists come to Malaysia in a year. Pakistan can learn a lot from Malaysia how to promote tourism to attract international tourists specially by participating in international Tourism Fairs and Exhibitions. First thing required is the infrastructure including Hotels, Resorts Villas to cater to the international tourists.

Secondly Transportation including flights and tourism Buses and cars has to be of international standards. All in all with a little bit of appreciation from Pakistan Govt Pakistan Tourism has a lot of potential to become the major contributor towards the economic growth of the country in near future.

My success is a result of family brought up and pure hard word , never felt shy or doing any work , no matter how small is it, & Allah has grantee me the success. I always say one thing for myself **“People earn money, I earn people”**

Being the student of PhD in Public Relations I have realized one thing “Your Network is your Net-worth”. I was

lucky I got the chance to meet all the prominent figures or so to say the movers and shakers of the society, starting from Ex PM Banezir Bhutto, Imran khan, Ex PM Malaysia Tun Mahathir Muhamad, Ex PM Malaysia Najib Razak , Ex Army Chief Malaysia Tan Sri Azumi, and the list goes on.

“You are who you associate with”. It's important who your friends, who you mix with are. “Show me your friends and I show you your future”

I believe mindset is everything, before you win the battle on the field you have to win the battle in your mind. You must have dreams otherwise you can't have dreams come true.

Bhd in 2007.

At present Panjtan Group has a diversified profile. We can proudly say we are the leaders in Commodities Trading, Mining and Minerals, Development and Housing and Human Resource Development & Management Services in Pakistan and Malaysia.

**Pakistan is your home country but is facing difficult economic conditions these days. What would you suggest to improve economy of Pakistan?**

Being the prominent member of Pakistani Diaspora in Malaysia we have been working very closely with both governments to promote the bilateral trade among the two countries, specifically promoting Pakistan's Tourism in Malaysia. With our efforts Northern

Areas of Pakistan have become the first choice destination for Malaysian tourists who want to enjoy the breath-

taking scenery and natural beauty of Pakistan. As you know there is a direct flight between Pakistan and Malaysia. PIA operates from Islamabad to Kuala Lumpur and from Lahore and other cit-

**“ Reason for me to choose Malaysia was because it had same international standard universities like US or UK and on top of that it's an Islamic country with freedom of religious expression and belief. Malaysia offers a plethora of incentives to even those who wish to explore various business opportunities here ”**

ies there are also flights. This direct air link has further strengthened bilateral relations. It is now up to the busi-



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PM of Malaysia**



**With Tan Sri Micheal  
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**Tun Mahathir son Mukhris  
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**At Graduation**



**Graham Baldwin  
(Business Partner)**



**Deputy Foreign Minister  
Datuk Sri Marzuki Yahya**



**With Jimmy Choo  
(Designer)**



# AFRICA DAY CELEBRATIONS AT ISSI

**T**HE Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organized a special event to celebrate “Africa Day 2023.” The Speakers included: Chief Guest, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan, Mr. Qamar Zaman Kaira; Dean of African Corps/Ambassador of Morocco, H.E. Mohammed Karmoune; Additional Secretary Africa, Mr. Javed Ahmad Umerani; Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood; and Director CAMEA, Ms. Amina Khan. The Heads of African Missions in Pakistan and Heads of Pakistan Missions in Africa also spoke on the occasion. Academics and members of the business community and students participated in the celebratory event. Stalls exhibiting African products were also set up by the African Missions in Islamabad.

In this keynote address on the occasion, Adviser to the Prime Minister Mr. Qamar Zaman Kaira said that Africa was a Continent full of opportunities and potential and was poised to play an increasingly important role globally, in the years to come. He added that Pakistan’s “Engage Africa” policy was a testament to Pakistan’s commitment to strengthening its relations with African nations in myriad field. He further added that this policy was encouraging trade and investment between Pakistan and African countries. Reaffirming Pakistan’s commitment to the “Engage Africa” policy, he stated that we must overcome any challenges and keep moving forward towards greater progress. Director General ISSI Amb. Sohail Mahmood, in his welcome remarks, said Pakistan’s relations with Africa were long-standing - marked

by warmth, cordiality, mutual respect and close cooperation. Africa, with its vast natural resources, young population and untapped potential had emerged as a land of immense opportunities. The Continent was experiencing rapid economic growth and technological advancement. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) had multiplied those possibilities and it was no wonder that Africa was called the ‘Continent of the Future.’

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood added that this Africa Day was an important occasion to acknowledge the significance of “Engage Africa” policy as part of Pakistan commitment to comprehensively upgrade its partnership with African countries, both on the bilateral and Continental plane. This policy recognized Africa as a priority in Pakistan’s foreign policy agenda. Besides geo-political considerations, the key driver of “Engage Africa” policy was Pakistan’s pivot to geo-economics. This policy framework was aligned with the African Union’s Agenda 2063 as well. He concluded by stressing the importance for both Pakistan and African partners to have clear vision, consistent policy, and long-term strategy.

Director CAMEA Amina Khan, while giving her views, said that every year CAMEA at ISSI commemorates ‘Africa Day’. This served as a testament to ISSI’s unwavering commitment to foster closer relations between Pakistan and the African Continent. She added that Pakistan had established and strengthened diplomatic missions across the Continent to facilitate meaningful dialogue and promote cooperation in diverse areas of mutual interest. Economic cooperation formed a vital pillar of Pakistan’s engagement with Africa and therefore rec-

ognized the tremendous potential for trade and investment between the two sides.

Ambassador Mohammed Karmoune, Dean of the African Corps in Pakistan, while expressing his views said that Africa was now building its single market to facilitate trade among States parties to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and with the rest of the world. He further said that the African Union had made the ‘Acceleration of the African Continental Free Trade Area implementation’ its main theme for the year 2023 to increase the attractiveness of the African market for trade and investment, though a number of critical protocols were yet to be negotiated, finalized and implemented. He noted that the ‘Engage Africa’ policy had resulted in the organisation of three Trade and Development Conferences in Africa. The objective of these forums had been to highlight the untapped potential of trade and investment relations with African countries and to present Pakistan’s export sectors to African business communities. He also shared his thoughts on how the economic relationship could be further deepened and broadened.

Mr. Javed Ahmad Umrani, Additional Secretary (Africa) at the Foreign Office, underlined that Africa Day served as a significant reminder of the historic struggles and aspirations of the African people in their journey towards independence, self-determination and unity, which Pakistan had fully supported. Pakistan and Africa shared bonds that went beyond geographical proximity and these historical bonds had been reemphasized with the introduction of the ‘Engage Africa’ policy by Pakistan, which had become an important part of the country’s foreign policy agenda.











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# Pakistan, UK to join hands to eliminate hate content

During the meeting, the promotion of bilateral diplomatic relations including cooperation in various fields of media, digital media, media training and filmmaking was also discussed



## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and United Kingdom on Wednesday agreed to work together to eliminate content related to hate and terrorist attitudes on social and online media. The decision was made during a meeting between Acting British High Commissioner Andrew Dagleish and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb. During the meeting, the promotion of bilateral diplomatic relations including cooperation in various fields of media, digital media, media training and filmmaking was also discussed. The minister congratulated the ambassador and the people of UK over the coronation of King

Charles III. Marriyum Aurangzeb said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to the United Kingdom and his participation in the coronation of King Charles III were manifestation of the friendship based on respect and trust between the two countries. Stating that Pakistan attached special importance to bilateral relations with Britain, she expressed the determination to further strengthen the bilateral ties. During discussion on the cooperation in film policy and media training, the minister said film and drama played an important role in highlighting the culture and positive identity of any country. Marriyum Aurangzeb appreciated the role of British government for

development of health, education, governance and human resource in Pakistan. She said Pakistan government would get help from Britain's modern media curriculum to provide training to journalists. The Acting British High Commissioner appreciated the progress made in the information sector including the economic policies of the present government of Pakistan. He hailed Pakistan's improvement of 7 ranks in the Global Media Freedom Index and congratulated the Information Minister over the achievement. The High Commissioner also assured all possible cooperation to reduce the economic crisis of Pakistan and expressed his good wishes and deep interest in promoting bilateral relations.





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# Australia to continue supporting Pakistan, says HC



## D N A

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins hosted a reception to celebrate 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Pakistan, at his residence. While speaking on the occasion the high commissioner said ‘we wanted to celebrate this event with you people in order to recognize your role in bringing the two countries together’. Neil Hawkins further said Australia was one of the first countries to recognize in-

dependence of Pakistan back in 1947. He said around 50,000 Pakistanis students are currently studying in Australia.

He said both Australia and Pakistan have many things in common including love for Cricket, Commonwealth heritage, the federal system of government and of course shared challenges of climate change. ‘We know that Pakistan is passing through challenging times these days. As a sincere friend Australia would continue to provide all possible assistance through technical cooperation and giving frank messages.



# Constitution Day of Norway



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Norway Per Albert Ilsaas speaking at the Norwegian Constitution Day reception held at the Norwegian residence. A large number of guests hailing from various walks of life attended the reception. Ambassador Ilsaas talked about bilateral and multilateral relations. He particularly talked about the Russian invasion of Ukraine and termed it unwarranted. He said the Russian war against Ukraine is a threat to international peace, security and law. The Ambassador said that in December they will be marking 75 years of diplomatic relations between Norway and Pakistan. He said the event shall be celebrated in a befitting manner. – DNA







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# Islamabad Serena Hotel under its CSR activity distributes lunch boxes among students of Master Ayub in F6









**Direct air links to further solidify ties: Amb. Arega**

# Pakistan greatly values its relations with Ethiopia: Hina

Ethiopian embassy in Islamabad formally inaugurated; committed to take relations to new heights: Amb. Jemal



## Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: The State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar has said Pakistan greatly values its relations with Ethiopia adding opening of the embassy in Islamabad would certainly further strengthen these relations. She expressed these views on the occasion of the formal opening of the Ethiopian embassy in Pakistan. Ethiopian State Minister Ambassador Misganu Arega along with Hina Rabbani inaugurated the embassy. The Ethiopian State Minister had led a high level business delegation to Pakistan. The delegation arrived in Pakistan by the Ethiopian Airlines maiden flight that landed in Karachi from Addis Ababa on the night of May 8. Minister Hina Rabbani Khar further said former Prime Minister Zulifqar Ali Bhutto had inaugurated the Pakistan embassy in Ethiopia back in 1973. Since then both countries maintain excellent relations. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs said that the new Ethiopian Embassy and the airlink would provide limitless opportunities to boost bilateral ties through enhanced trade and investment as well as people-to-people connections.

She said a country's diplomacy must be geared towards opening doors and opportunities for its people, trade, and investment. Hina Rabbani Khar said the economic and developmental challenges of the two countries were similar but also, there was commonality in the resilience of the two people to achieve these goals. She said Pakistan has always supported Africa throughout history. Hina Rabbani Khar said Pakistan wished to engage with Africa meaningfully and partner in its growth and prosperity journey. Highlighting the significance of direct flight operations by Ethiopian Airlines to Karachi, she said opening direct flights between the two countries would boost trade and people-to-people contacts. She ex-

pressed the hope that the new Embassy would be instrumental in materializing that potential for the mutual benefit of our countries. She lauded the services of a new Ethiopian ambassador in Islamabad Jemal Beker Abdula, who made a mark in his short eight months. In his remarks, Ethiopian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Misganu Arega said that the opening of the Ethiopian Embassy marked a new history in the diplomatic, political, economic, and social cooperation between the two countries. He said the commencement of Ethiopian Airlines flight to Karachi would connect Pakistan with the "Land of Origins-Ethiopia" and more than 60 destinations in the continent of Africa and 130 more globally. The state minister said the opening of the Embassy was a concrete example of the importance the Ethiopian government attached to its bilateral relations with Pakistan. He said Ethiopia considered Pakistan as a strategically important and strong partner in Asia, and the signing of the Political Consultation guided the aspiration of the two governments and peoples to play their appropriate role in international issues like climate change, terrorism, migration, and peace and security. Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jemal Beker Abdula thanked to the government of Pakistan for extraordinary support to launch the airline and for providing a friendly environment for business. He further said that ever since his arrival in Pakistan he had tried his best to take bilateral relations to new horizons. He said, Ethiopia and Pakistan established their bilateral diplomatic relation in 1950s, he said, adding the major initiatives including inauguration of Ethiopian Airlines and the Embassy in Pakistan and visit of over 70 Pakistani businessmen to Ethiopia had changed landscape of bilateral relations altogether.







# Zahid Latif President CEO Club Islamabad Chapter hosts dinner for diplomats









# France to offer more educational opportunities to Pak students

French Ambassador Nicolas Galey says role of alumni is essential because they are the best ambassadors of higher education in France and an aspiring source to explain educational and living experiences in France to their Pakistanis



## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France to Pakistan, Nicolas Galey has said that the French Embassy was keen to increase educational opportunities for Pakistani youth in France by providing more scholarships and strengthening the Campus France Pakistan office. Addressing the French Alumni Day in Islamabad, he said that the mission of the Campus France Pakistan office is to promote studies in France and help students find the establishment corresponding to their project among the vast offer of higher education in France, including many taught in English.

The role of alumni is essential because they are the best ambassadors of higher education in France and an aspiring source to explain educational and living experiences in France to their Pakistanis.

He stressed that both countries are working to enhance bilateral relations and cooperation, particularly in higher education. The day was celebrated worldwide to reconnect the hundreds and thousands of people from all countries who got their higher education and professional training, or part of it, in French universities or other educational institutions, the Ambassa-

dor noted with pleasure. He stressed that the French Alumni Pakistan was a Pakistanis platform who have attended French universities and can inspire the younger generation to choose those prestigious institutions to build a successful career. He said that the relationship between Pakistan and France in higher education dates back to the early 1960s, adding that the number of Pakistani students recently decreased. Still, the French Embassy is determined to reverse this situation with the support of the Pakistani authorities.

He said the efforts to enhance Pakistani students' number at French universities began in 2003 when the HEC launched a scholarship program for PhDs in France. So far, 670 Pakistani students have received higher education in France. The Ambassador said the French government and universities fund 30 scholarships for Pakistani students annually. In European countries, too, dozens of students get scholarships each year, he said. Only last year, 170 students got scholarships to study in Europe; 40 started their Masters's degrees in France. More than 250 Pakistani students and researchers choose France annually for a semester exchange, an internship, a short course, a full master/Ph.D. degree, professional training, or a research study.



# Australian envoy in action



**ISLAMABAD:** Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins posing for a picture with the players of the Nishtar Hockey Club. Neil Hawkins joined the team as a player. The Australian envoy also took part in the match and praised the hockey skills of especially the youngsters. – DNA



# Türkiye Cuisine Week kick-starts in the Capital

Turkish cuisine presents its distinctive and diverse flavors to the world during 'Turkish Cuisine Week' from May 21-27: Ambassador Mehmet Pacaci



## Centreline Report/DNA

ISLAMABAD, Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan Dr Mehmet Paçacı inaugurated 'Turkish Cuisine Week', featuring unique recipes from local dishes of Hatay province. Addressing the audience, the Ambassador said, "Shaped by more than a thousand years of cultures and traditions, social heritage, and stories, Turkish cuisine presents its distinctive and diverse flavors to the world during 'Turkish Cuisine Week' from May 21-27. "In its second year, the cuisine introduces Türkiye's rich gastronomic culture to a broad audience at home and abroad through the representations of the Republic of Türkiye," he added. Talking about the similarity of foods between Türkiye and Pakistan, he said, "The food in some regions of Türkiye is similar to Pakistani food, especially the food of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and northern regions."

Featuring more than 650 dishes, Hatay's gastronomy is a Mediterranean cuisine characterized by fresh vegetables, quality olive oil, and legumes and cereals. Hatay menu, showcased in this year's international events, includes flatbread with red pepper paste, olive salad, hummus, kisi (fine bulgur salad), oven-baked kebab, and rose syrup. During 'Turkish Cuisine Week', numerous dishes reflecting timeless and sustainable Turkish cuisine will be prepared with local ingredients and traditional cooking techniques. Events held across Türkiye's 81 provinces will showcase all aspects of Turkish cuisine, including Turkish coffee, Turkish tea, and Turkish delight. Timeless, Sustainable: Turkish Cuisine is Back on the World Stage! 'Included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in

gastronomy, the city of Antakya in Hatay province has long been world-renowned for its diverse cuisine. Featuring more than 650 dishes, Hatay's gastronomy is a Mediterranean cuisine characterized by fresh vegetables, quality olive oil, and legumes and cereals. Hatay menu, showcased in this year's international events, includes flatbread with red pepper paste, olive salad, hummus, k s r (fine bulgur salad), oven-baked kebab and rose syrup', the ambassador added. He further said, Turkish cuisine is naturally waste-free, with recipes that use every component of each product and stand out with a sustainable structure. Meals are prepared without wasting ingredients, and tables are laden with healing specialties such as vinegar and pickles that are made of food scraps. Ambassador Pacaci further said, the transformation of potential food waste into edible delicacies reveals a gastronomic tradition that preserves biodiversity and is ecologically sustainable. Turkish cuisine also stands out due to its cultural sustainability – featuring dining and drinking rituals formed around feelings of unity and solidarity. Tables, where the entire family gathers and guests are accepted as guests of God, bring together people of all ages, conditions and social classes, playing an essential role in social cohesion, he added. It may be mentioned here that the traditional tables are one manifestation of the generosity of the Turkish people, their love of sharing and solidarity, and a daily life-affirming culture that has existed for thousands of years. Turkish cuisine, also an essential component of Türkiye's intangible social heritage, guarantees the transfer and sustainability of cultural heritage to new generations in this respect.









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## MoU signed with AKAH

# Serena Hotels commitment to responsible tourism above board

Ready to set new benchmarks in green building practices and providing our guests, says Aziz Boolani

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, a leading hospitality group committed to sustainable tourism, has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) to pursue IFC EDGE (Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies) Building Certification for its two upcoming hotels, Hunza Serena Hotel and Sost Serena Hotel. The signing ceremony took place at Islamabad Serena Hotel on May 31, 2023.

The MoU signifies a significant milestone for Serena Hotels as it further strengthens the company's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable practices in the construction and operation of its properties. The collaboration with the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat Pakistan, (formerly known as Aga Khan Planning and Building Service, Pakistan or AKPBSP), a global leader in promoting resilient and sustainable habitat solutions, will technically assist that the new hotels are designed and built to the highest international standards of energy efficiency and resource conservation.

EDGE Certification is a globally recognized green building rating system devel-

oped by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group. It promotes sustainable practices in the building industry by incorporating measures for energy efficiency, water conservation, and the use of environmentally friendly materials. By pursuing this certification, Serena Hotels aims to minimize the ecological footprint of its hotels and provide guests with an exceptional and sustainable hospitality experience.

During the signing ceremony, Management from Serena Hotels and AKAH expressed their enthusiasm for the collaboration and their shared vision of creating environmentally responsible and climate resilient structures. They emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism in preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the regions where the hotels are located. Speaking about the collaboration, Mr. Aziz Boolani CEO Serena Hotels, South and Central Asia said, "We are delighted to partner with the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat in our pursuit of IFC EDGE Certification for our new hotels. Sustainability lies at the heart of Serena Hotels' ethos, and this collaboration will enable us to enhance our commitment to responsible tourism. We look forward to setting new

benchmarks in green building practices and providing our guests with an unforgettable and environmentally conscious stay." Ms. Nusrat Nasab, CEO AKAH Pakistan stated, "Our collaboration with Serena Hotels will contribute towards the AKDN's Environment & Climate Commitment and our net-zero carbon emission goal. AKAH brings technical expertise in green buildings, climate smart initiatives and nature-based solutions. Hotel industries that are environmentally responsible, culturally sensitive, and aesthetically pleasing will definitely promote eco-friendly sustainable tourism and employment opportunities in the region". The Hunza Serena and Sost Serena hotels, currently under construction, are strategically positioned in the breathtaking landscapes of Hunza and Sost in Pakistan. These properties are designed to blend harmoniously with the surroundings, taking inspiration from local architectural traditions and incorporating modern sustainability principles. Once completed, Hunza Serena and Sost Serena hotels will join Serena Hotels' portfolio of environmentally conscious properties, which have been recognized globally for their sustainable practices and commitment to community development.







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# Independence Day of Azerbaijan celebrated

## Azerbaijan, Pakistan relations bound by strong friendship, brotherhood

Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov says this year we celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of our National Leader Heydar Aliyev in Azerbaijan, Pakistan, and other brotherly countries

**Ansar M Bhatti**

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov has said after the restoration of Azerbaijan's Independence in 1991, Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of Azerbaijan. 'Azerbaijan and Pakistan are bound by the relations of strong friendship, brotherhood, and strategic partnership based on historical and cultural roots. The two countries have always supported each other both bilaterally and within international organizations'. Ambassador Khazar Farhadov made these remarks on the occasion of May 28 - Independence Day of the Republic of Azerbaijan

He further said, brotherly relations between the two countries are deepening, developing, and strengthening every year. Azerbaijan gives great

importance to Pakistan. In 2022, under the instruction of Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, our country was among the first countries who rushed for help during the large-scale flood in Pakistan.

While talking about bilateral ties the Ambassador said, the ties between the two brotherly countries continue to grow in an upward trajectory in all fields. Direct flights between Azerbaijan and Pakistan which are being operated since 2022 tremendously contribute to these relations.

He said, roughly 50,000 Pakistani tourists visited Azerbaijan in 2022. 'I must mention that Pakistan is one of the countries that is included in the online ASAN visa system of Azerbaijan. The citizens of Pakistan can easily obtain a visa online within 3 hours and visit Azerbaijan'. This direct connectivity brings people from all circles of

the two countries closer. In 2022, the Government of Azerbaijan, taking into account the fraternal relations, exempted rice from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan with the same origin from import customs duty. It is not a coincidence that trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Pakistan has almost tripled last year and this year we are expecting more, he added.

He said, May 28 is celebrated as the Independence Day of the Republic of Azerbaijan every year. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic which was the first democratic secular republic in the Muslim East was established on May 28, 1918. The newly established Azerbaijan Democratic Republic honorably fulfilled the difficult historical task it undertook. 'The first Parliament and Government of Azerbaijan, the state apparatus was formed, the borders of the country were deter-







mined, the flag, anthem, and coat of arms were created, the Azerbaijani language was declared the state language, serious measures were taken in the field of state building'. Ambassador Khazar said, the country's territorial integrity and national security were ensured, highly combat-capable military units were created in a short period of time, state bodies were established in accordance with national requirements and democratic principles, and special attention was paid to the development of education and culture. The first university of Azerbaijan was founded, education was nationalized, and exceptionally important works were done in terms of the history of public opinion, which prepared the ground for the cultural advancement of the nation in the following years. Recognition of equal rights of all citizens regardless of ethnic and religious affiliation, and giving women the right to vote even before

many European countries was one of the great successes of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic existed for only 23 months till the Bolshevik's occupation on April 28, 1920. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the people of Azerbaijan established an independent Republic of Azerbaijan based on the traditions of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, he added. 'In May-June 1993, when the government crisis became extremely acute and there was a threat of civil war and loss of independence in the country, the National Leader of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev was brought to power for the second time at the demand of the people and Azerbaijan entered a new stage of independence. Under the leadership of Great Leader Heydar Aliyev, tremendous efforts were done and steps taken to strengthen the independence of Azerbaijan and the era of prosperity

and economic development started for the country'. He said this year we celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of our National Leader Heydar Aliyev in Azerbaijan, Pakistan, and other brotherly countries. Azerbaijan continues this successful tradition under the leadership of Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan which was inherited by our National Leader Heydar Aliyev. Talking about the war with Armenia the Ambassador said, these successes are reflected in all aspects of the Azerbaijani people's lives. As a result of the Patriotic War in 2020, Azerbaijani Army liberated our territories from Armenian occupation within 44 days. Right after the liberation, the Government of Azerbaijan started large-scale restoration and reconstruction works there and the Great Return of former Azerbaijani IDPs and refugees to their land has begun.







# Senator Talah Mahmood hosts dinner for the visiting Saudi delegation





# pakistan greatly values ties with italy, says asif

Italy remains among top ten exporting countries for Pakistan in the world, says Ambassador Andreas on the occasion of National Day of Italy



## Ansar M Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said both Pakistan and Italy enjoy excellent relations adding this relationship is poised to grow more in the coming days. The Defence Minister expressed these views while speaking on the occasion of the anniversary of 77th anniversary of the Republic Day, National Day of Italy. A large number of MPs, members of the civil society, media persons and civil and military officials attended the reception.

The Defence Minister further said Italy was an important country in the European Union and had always supported Pakistan be it GSP plus or any other issue. He said Pakistan duly recognize Italian goodwill gesture. Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan Andreas Ferrarese in his speech said that our cooperation encompasses, but is not limited to political, economic, cultural and social spheres. Italy values the vital support and continued cooperation that Pakistan extended to the international community.

He said, worker remittances from Italy to Pakistan have been on all-time high in past two years (more than 1 billion Euro

a year). Italy was the seventh largest source of worker remittances to Pakistan globally, and the top one within the EU countries. Both countries appreciate the importance of people-to-people contacts that foster bilateral ties. The Embassy is strongly committed to improve consular services.

While talking about the joint commission he said, the fifth Italy-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission (JEC) took place on 29-30 May in Rome, where the two sides agreed to establish a joint framework to deal with climate change and cooperation in water management. Both sides signed an important "Roadmap for Cooperation" which covers climate change, trade & investment, heritage & culture, agriculture, technical cooperation, higher education and transfer of technology in related sectors.

'We shall continue to explore the avenues with focus on agriculture, renewable energy, textiles, construction and tourism. Collaboration in fields of textiles, agriculture, livestock, marble, pharmaceuticals and mass manufacturing would help enhance Pakistan's industrial scope and increase exports of value added goods'.







# Portuguese Ambassador visits UNESCO World Heritage Site

Abid Raza

LAHORE: His Excellency Frederico Silva, the Portuguese Ambassador to Pakistan, visited the UNESCO World Heritage site of Lahore Fort on Friday to witness one of the most significant ongoing restoration projects in Pakistan. The restoration work is being undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and its country affiliate, the Aga Khan Cultural Service-Pakistan (AKCSP), in close partnership with the Government of Punjab and the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA).

Mr. Tausif Ahmad, the CEO of AKCSP, accompanied by Mr. Wajahat Ali, the Director of Conservation and Design, gave a tour of the restoration projects visiting various sections of the Lahore Fort.

The Ambassador had the opportunity to witness the meticulous restoration efforts undertaken for the world renowned Sheesh Mahal along with other monuments including the Naulakha Pavilion, Royal Kitchen, Loh Temple, and the Fort's iconic 400-year-old Picture Wall, hailed as one of the largest murals in the world.

Expressing his deep admiration for the restoration work, His Excellency Frederico Silva stated, "The beauty of Lahore and Lahore Fort is indescribable. The Conservation Works and Projects undertaken by the Walled City of Lahore and Aga Khan Cultural Service are magnificent, supporting the growth of local artisans and ensuring the preservation of these assets for future generations." He was particularly astounded by the beauty of the Sheesh Mahal and the Naulakha Pavilion, acknowledging that the commendable conservation efforts will endure for generations to come.

This visit by the Portuguese Ambassador highlights the relationship between Pakistan and Portugal, paving the way for enhanced cultural cooperation and exchange. CEO of AKCSP, Mr. Tausif Ahmad, com-



mended the decade-long partnership with the Walled City of Lahore, with whom the Aga Khan Cultural Service has been working as technical partners since 2014. He expressed the aim to complete the conservation of the major monuments within Lahore Fort in the next 5 to 7 years. Mr. Wajahat Ali explained the best practices in conservation followed by AKCSP, which have garnered several UNESCO Awards for exceptional conservation work, including the conservation of the Shahi Hammam (Royal Bathhouse) and several monuments in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The AKTC and its country affiliate, AKCSP, have been actively involved in the rehabilitation of the Walled City of Lahore and the conservation of its Mughal-era monuments since 2007 through its Historic Cities Program. In collaboration with the Government of Punjab and the Walled City of Lahore Authority, the program has achieved significant milestones, including the restoration of the Wazir

Khan Mosque, the Shahi Hamman, and the Royal kitchen. The program has also successfully restored major forts, traditional settlements, mosques, and public spaces in the high valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan province, such as the Baltit and Altit Forts in the Hunza Valley, as well as the Shigar Fort and Khaplu Palace in Baltistan. Several of these projects receive co-funding from France, Norway, Germany, and the USA. Ongoing restoration work at Lahore Fort focuses on conserving the world's largest Picture Wall, the Sheesh Mahal, and various other monuments. Recently, a 22 million loan agreement was approved for the Heritage and Urban Regeneration of Lahore (HURL) project, promoting tourism, creating revenue-generating activities (especially for women), and strengthening resilience against climate change. The project also includes establishing a Visitor Interpretation Center within Lahore Fort Summer Palace and revamping existing galleries to showcase restored artifacts.







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