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Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine



Ni Made Ayu Marthini

**Indonesia welcomes
Pakistani investors**



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Cultural
PATTERNS
AND MODERN HUES



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Indonesia: a nation of diversity and cultural riches



INDONESIA, a country located in Southeast Asia, which happens to be the world's largest archipelago, stands out for its vibrant society, rich culture and extremely hospitable people. It is the warmth of the Indonesians and the breathtaking natural wonders that make it the most sought-after tourist attraction. Much has changed in the largest Muslim country since 2019 when I last visited Indonesia. Since the country was frequented by millions of tourists therefore it was also hit-hard by the Covid pandemic like other countries with huge influx of visitors. But hats off to the Indonesian government because of its tireless efforts tourists flow has resumed. Courtesy the Indonesian embassy in Islamabad the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, I had a chance to again visit the wonderful Indonesia together with few other colleagues as part of the FAMTRIP 2023. After staying in Jakarta for a few days our delegations then left for Lombok – a place that appears to be top on the agenda of the Tourism Ministry, which is being developed and offered to the international as well domestic tourists as an exotic destination packed with spell-binding attractions. Ni Made Ayu Marthini Deputy Minister for Marketing, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy while talking to our delegation said that their primary focus was on developing 10 Tourism Priority Destinations in the period of 2023-24. In 2019 I had a chance to visit Labuan Bajo, which is yet another attraction that offers stunning white-sand beaches and enchanting blue water snorkeling and surfing opportunities. Komodo Island is also located in the same area, which is part of the Komodo National Park. It is famous for its population of Komodo dragons, which are the largest living lizards on Earth. Indonesia takes great pride in preserving its cultural heritage. The country is home to numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites. Indonesian and Pakistani cuisines have similarities, such as the use of aromatic spices and flavors. Both countries have their versions of rice dishes, curries, and grilled meats, although the specific ingredients and cooking techniques may vary. Both Indonesian and Pakistani cultures emphasize respect for elders and the importance of family values. Therefore Pakistani visitors feel at home while being in Indonesia and vice versa. The Indonesian embassy in Islamabad spearheaded by Ambassador Adam Tugio has published a few books on Indonesian cuisines and similarities between the two cultures. These books provide a deep insight into culinary and cultural aspects of bilateral relations. All said and done, there are certain areas that pose a challenge to the Indonesia government though. Rapid urbanization, environmental issues, and socio-economic disparities are among the issues the country is working to address. However, Indonesia's government and civil society organizations are actively promoting sustainable tourism, environmental conservation, and community empowerment initiatives to ensure a brighter future for the nation. The Deputy Minister for Marketing during her interview hoped to see more and more investors and tourists come to Indonesia. After visiting the newly-introduced tourist attractions I can say on authority that these places offer potential business avenues, especially the Labuan Bajo and Lombok islands. The government extends certain business incentives to investors that make the prospects even brighter. There are some hiccups nevertheless, which if addressed, can ensure enhanced flow of tourists and businessmen to Indonesia. As informed by the Pakistani embassy in Jakarta, many Pakistani visitors had to face problems at the airports at the immigration desks. In some cases visitors were even denied entry. The Indonesian authorities are aware of this happening and assured this issue sooner rather than later, when the matter was taken up with them. They said that it was not a Pakistan-specific problem and some drastic steps had already been taken to improve working of the immigration counters. To Sum up, the Presidential election in Indonesia is going to take place in February 2024. Three contenders are in the run. The incumbent President Joko Widodo is not in the game as law does not allow him to stand for the third time. Interestingly, some of his cohorts suggested him to amend the Constitution to be eligible for a third term nevertheless he outright declined this proposal, which unequivocally shows his character and commitment to the rule of law and upholding of the Constitution. Obviously, countries that do not respect their Constitution have to face stupendous challenges i.e political instability; economic consequences; corruption and crime; weak adherence to the rule of law; human rights violations and international reputation.

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 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.

NI MADE AYU MARTHINI

Indonesia welcomes Pakistani investors, says Dy Minister

We primarily focus on developing 10 Tourism Priority Destinations in this period by optimizing accessibility, attraction, and amenities (3A) in the prioritized areas: Ni Made Ayu Marthini Deputy of Marketing

INTERVIEW

Ansar Mahmood Bhatti



Deputy Minister's career at a glance

1. Deputy Minister for Marketing, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (October 2022-now)
2. Director for Manufactured Export Development, Ministry of Trade (July)
3. Director of Export Cooperation, Ministry of Trade (December 2021-June 2022)
4. Director of Bilateral Trade Negotiations, Ministry of Trade (2016-2021)
5. Director for Strategic Issues, Ministry of Trade (2016)
6. Director of Trade Policy Harmonization, Ministry of Trade (2015-2016)
7. Chief of Staff to the Minister of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia (2015-2016)
8. Trade Attaché to the US, Indonesia Embassy, Washington D.C., USA (2011-2015)
9. Assistant to the Trade Minister of the Republic of Indonesia (2006-2011)
10. Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Indonesia to the United Nations, New York (2001-2004)
11. Diplomat at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (1996-2006)

Professional Achievements

1. Top 3 Indonesia's Best Civil Servants Award 2021 (Anugerah ASN 2021), Category Echelon 2, for the Achievement, Leadership and Innovation, awarded by the Ministry of State Apparatus and Bureaucratic Reform (December 2021)
2. Awarded Civil Servant Special Promotion to the highest rank (IV.E), for being the Top 3 Best ASN Awardee.
3. Lead/Chief Negotiator for Indonesia in various trade negotiations, such as with the European Union, Australia, Turkey, UAE, Pakistan, Tunisia, Bangladesh, Japan, Chile, Sri Lanka, Mozambique (2016 - 2021)
4. Concluded seven Bilateral Trade Negotiations (Indonesia-Australia CEPA, Indonesia-Chile CEPA, Indonesia-Korea CEPA, Indonesia-Mozambique PTA, Indonesia-EFTA CEPA, Indonesia-Japan EPA General Review, and Indonesia-Pakistan PTA Review (2016 - 2021)
5. Featured in the book "Going Global" as one of 16 Indonesian Professionals with international level careers (2017)
6. Lead Coordinator for Development and Marketing Pilot Projects for Strategic Commodities (2016-2017)
7. Reipient of "Satyalancana Karya Satya" Awarded by the President of the Republic of Indonesia for 20 years of service to the country (2016)
8. Executive Education, Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (2015)
9. Founder of the "Business Incubator Program" to support Indonesian Entrepreneur Diaspora in the U.S. (2014)
10. Reipient of various Scholarships, such as the British Chevening Award, JICA Award, Singapore International Foundation Award.

BALI, INDONESIA: Ni Made Ayu Marthini Deputy Minister of Marketing Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia has said Indonesia welcomes Pakistani investors to come here and explore various business avenues as her country offered huge potential, especially in the tourism sector.

She added, 'we are seeing an opportunity in the common characteristic of Indonesia with Pakistan, which is similar in having a majority of the Muslim population'. Mrs. Ni Made Ayu Marthini expressed these views while giving an exclusive interview to the Pakistan media delegation, which is currently in Bali as part of the Indonesian government's FAMTRIP program. The visit is jointly organized by the Indonesian embassy in Islamabad and the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy.

While replying to a question about investment opportunities in Indonesia she said, Indonesia is the world most sought after tourist destination and let me put it like this that the tourism is in fact the jewel in the crown of Indonesia. We would like to promote this and I'm so glad that journalists from Pakistan are here today to see by themselves that what progress Indonesia has made in this sector.

She said investment is a big part of the success of tourism that is why we are whole-heartedly working to fetch more and more foreign investments including from Pakistan. Let me tell you that there are a lot of opportunities for the Pakistani investors because the trajectory of growth that we see is very high. She said Indone-



“ I hope one day we see more and more Pakistanis investors to come to Indonesia and be part of innovative growth story. Let me emphasize again, we have to be adaptive. We have to be innovative. And lastly, we have to be collaborative and work together with everybody to achieve happiness. We are eying 8.5 million tourists this year and I am glad to share with you that 3.2 million tourists have visited already. So we’re quite happy and I believe everyone is very optimistic about future prospects ”

sia had an open policy to make it easy for investors to come and explore business opportunities. “I hope one day we see more and more Pakistanis investors to come to Indonesia and be part of innovative growth story. Let me emphasize again, we have to be adaptive. We have to be innovative. And lastly, we have to be collaborative and work together with everybody to achieve happiness. We are eying 8.5 million tourists this year and I am glad to share with you that 3.2 million tourists have visited already. So we’re quite happy and I believe everyone is very optimistic about future prospects. The minister further said, the media plays a vital role in promoting the two countries’ potential, and people-to-people contacts especially with the similar characteristics of Indonesia and Pakistan, countries with a majority Muslim population. ‘Generally, Indonesia provides convenient access to mosques and halal foods, the essential needs for Muslims. Having said that, we are confident to promote our Muslim-friendly destinations, with the highlight of our award-winning designated halal destination, Lombok’, she added. She said they had plenty of destinations to offer to Pakistani tourists, with Moslem-friendly tourism as the cherry on top. While talking about the scope of tourism in Indonesia she said, according to the National Medium Term Development Plan 2020-2024, the tourism sector has become one of the essential strategies for national economic transformation. ‘We primarily focus on developing 10 Tourism Pri-

ority Destinations in this period by optimizing accessibility, attraction, and amenities (3A) in the prioritized areas. In the future, the optimization of 3A is expected to accelerate the value added in the tourism sector’, she said.

The minister said one of her main jobs was to promote Indonesia’s destination to all over the world, and that of course, includes Pakistan. Our promotional activities for international market include participation in international travel and tourism exhibitions, conducting familiarization trips, arranging sales missions, and joint promotion with potential partners.

To yet another question she said in the era of tourism recovery, we believe the key to tourism strategies are innovation, adaptation and collaboration. For innovation, we attempt to uplift potential destinations in Indonesia, particularly 10 Tourism Priority Destinations. Hence, tourists can have more diverse experiences beyond Bali, which has already become top of mind for popular destinations. The innovation in tourism is expected to absorb more workforce and increase foreign capital in Indonesia. ‘In terms of adaptation, we strive for sustainable recovery. One of the ways is to ease the transaction with various digital payment methods. This benefits not only the tourists but also the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to emerge the cashless methods that offer flexibility’, she further said, She said, ‘we continuously aim for Penta helix collaboration with academicians, business entities, government (local, national, and foreign government), community, and media’.

Giving an account of new destinations she said, ‘currently, we are highly promoting our 10 Tourism Priority Destinations, namely Lake Toba in North Sumatera, Borobudur Temple in Central Java, Mandalika in West Nusa

Tenggara, Labuan Bajo in East Nusa Tenggara, Likupang in North Sulawesi, Tanjung Kelayang in Bangka Belitung, Bromo-Tengger-Semeru in East Java, Wakatobi in Southeast Sulawesi, Morotai Island in North Maluku and Raja Ampat in West Papua. The first five aforementioned destinations are designated as Tourism Super Priority Destinations.

In addition, as we understand halal tourism demand as extended service has increased in popularity, we proudly introduce Lombok as the compass for our halal tourism. Located in one of 5 Super Priority Destinations, Lombok provides amazing destinations and simplicity for Moslem Tourists to find mosques and halal foods. Halal services’ excellence has led Lombok to achieve the first rank for the World’s Best Halal Tourism Destination, according to the Global Muslim Travel Index in 2019.

We believe Lombok will be the next popular destination after Bali for Pakistan tourists, she added.

The deputy minister further said, first and foremost, MoTCE continuously adapts to the latest global tourism safety and security standards. By all means, cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability (CHSE) protocol has become the priority for Indonesian tourism. The safety and comfort of tourists during their visit to Indonesia is our top priority, especially after the pandemic. Therefore, we also keep the utmost efforts to accelerate

vaccination for tourism and creative economy workers as they are the “frontliners” of the industry.

Vaccination for tourism workers and implementing CHSE measures are integral to the recovery and growth of the tourism industry. Vaccination protects the health of workers and visitors, instills confidence, and enables the smooth resumption of international travel. CHSE practices prioritize cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability, enhancing the overall tourism experience and ensuring the well-being of all stakeholders involved.

While replying to yet another question the minister hoped opening of direct flights between Indonesia and Pakistan shall give new impetus to bilateral relations. She said efforts were on from both sides in this regard and hoped a breakthrough shall be achieved sooner rather than later. She called upon the media and the stakeholder of the hospitality industry to play role once the direct air link is established.

The deputy minister while responding to yet another question said, in Lombok new racing track Circuit Mandalika has been put in place on the pattern of Formula 1. Last year a big racing event took place there, which attracted huge interest and support from all and sundry especially the sports loving people. Apart from this promotion of cultural linkages with other countries also appears on top of our priority. Village tourism is yet another area where we have been focusing a lot and you may have witnessed this during your trip as well, she concluded.





Jakarta's Taman Mini Park; a must visit place

Taman Mini Jakarta was the brainchild of Indonesia's second president, Suharto, and his wife, Tien Soeharto. The idea was to create a recreational park that would represent the diverse cultures, traditions, and natural beauty of the Indonesian archipelago. The project started in the late 1970s, and construction began in 1971.

Ansar Mahmood Bhatti in Jakarta

JAKARTA: Taman Mini Jakarta, the iconic cultural park located in the heart of Indonesia's vibrant capital city Jakarta, invites visitors to embark on an enchanting journey through the diverse and captivating tapestry of Indonesian culture. This most-sought-after tourist attraction showcases the Indonesia nation's cultural heritage, providing an immersive experience that celebrates the unique traditions, arts, and customs of the Indonesian archipelago. Taman Mini Jakarta, affectionately known as "Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park,"

encompasses an expansive area that encapsulates the essence of Indonesia's diverse regions. Designed as a microcosm of the entire country, the park offers visitors a remarkable opportunity to explore Indonesia's myriad cultural treasures in one place, said Ms Claudia Ingkiriwang, the President Director of the Park while briefing the Pakistani media delegation. The Pakistani media delegation comprising senior journalists and a Vlogger is currently on a visit to Indonesia as part of the Indonesia Embassy Familiarization trip organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism of Indonesia. FAMTRIP is a regular feature

of the Indonesian embassy's initiatives undertaken with a view to promoting the idea of "Wonderful Indonesia". It is a well-known branding campaign used by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy to promote tourism in the country. Claudia Ingkiriwang further said that Taman Mini is a place for all. She said visitors to Taman Mini Jakarta are enthralled by the park's architectural grandeur, as each pavilion represents the distinct cultural heritage of Indonesia's 36 provinces. From the ornate temples of Bali to the traditional longhouses of Kalimantan, the park authentically recreates the traditional

Concept and Construction

Taman Mini Jakarta was the brainchild of Indonesia's second president, Suharto, and his wife, Tien Soeharto. The idea was to create a recreational park that would represent the diverse cultures, traditions, and natural beauty of the Indonesian archipelago. The project started in the late 1970s, and construction began in 1971.

Inauguration:

Taman Mini Indonesia Indah was officially inaugurated on April 20, 1975, by President Suharto. The park was opened to the public as a way to promote national unity and pride in Indonesian culture.

Park Layout:

The park covers an area of approximately 250 acres and is designed as

a miniature representation of Indonesia. It is divided into different sections, each representing a particular region or province of the country. There are traditional houses, museums, gardens, theaters, and recreational facilities spread throughout the park.

Cultural Exhibits:

One of the main attractions of Taman Mini Jakarta is its cultural exhibits. Each regional pavilion showcases the unique architecture, traditions, and art forms of its respective region. Visitors can explore traditional houses, observe traditional dances and performances, and learn about local customs and traditions.

Museums and Galleries:

Taman Mini Jakarta is home to several museums and galleries that provide insights into various aspects of Indonesian culture. Some notable ones include the Museum of Indonesia, which displays historical artifacts and cultural objects, the

Museum of Transportation, which exhibits various modes of transportation used in Indonesia, and the Indonesian Children's Palace, which focuses on the education and development of children.

Recreational Facilities:

Apart from the cultural and educational aspects, Taman Mini Jakarta also offers recreational facilities for visitors. There is a lake where visitors can rent boats, an amusement park with rides and games, a cable car that provides a panoramic view of the park, and an IMAX theater showcasing educational films.

Evolution and Expansion:

Over the years, Taman Mini Jakarta has undergone various renovations and expansions to improve the visitor experience. New attractions, facilities, and exhibitions have been added to keep up with the changing times and to offer a more comprehensive representation of Indonesian culture.

architectural styles, showcasing the rich craftsmanship and architectural diversity that exists throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

She said the park boasts an array of captivating museums, each dedicated to a specific facet of Indonesian culture. Visitors can delve into the nation's history at the History Museum, admire the intricate craftsmanship of

Indonesian textiles at the Textile Museum, or discover the unique flora and fauna of the region at the Indonesian Flora and Fauna Museum.

Taman Mini Jakarta is not only a visual feast, but it also offers visitors a chance to witness the vibrant performing arts of Indonesia. The park regularly hosts cultural performances, including traditional dance, music, and puppet shows,

showcasing the dynamic and diverse artistic expressions that thrive across the archipelago.

In addition to its cultural attractions, Taman Mini Jakarta provides a range of recreational activities for visitors of all ages. The park offers various outdoor recreational facilities, including cycling tracks, boat rides, and a large lake where visitors can relax and enjoy the picturesque





Director Taman Mini Park



Newly opened Atlas Beach Club Bali

surroundings, she added. Taman Mini Jakarta remains committed to promoting sustainable tourism practices and preserving Indonesia's cultural heritage for future generations. Efforts are made to ensure the park's operations align with eco-friendly practices, and initiatives are in place to educate visitors about the importance of environmental conservation. It may be mentioned here that the Park covers approximately 150 hectares of land and features miniature replicas from all the provinces of Indonesia. Taman Mini is not just a tourist attraction but also serves as an educational center for visitors to learn about Indonesia's history, culture, and traditions. Because of its attractions and cultural heritage it has become a must-visit place. The Indonesia Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy

deserves credit for giving a complete new-look to the Park. As compared with 2018 when I first visited the Park, the place has a lot more to offer to the visitors. In order to encourage local as well international tourists an affordable entry fee is charged. Millions of tourists visit this place annually and enrich their know-how about the Indonesian culture and lifestyle of various regions. The Pakistan media delegation was given a warm welcome upon its arrival. Special cultural performances ostensibly provided a real feast to the delegation. The thrilling and mesmerizing performance by the Papua region people was touching and impressive. It is accurate to say that those who have not visited Taman Mini have visited nothing!!



Pakistan media delegation posing for picture with R Wisnu Sindhutrisno
Director Asia Pacific Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. – DNA

Bali beyond Travel Fair 2023 opened

A media and tour operators' delegation from Pakistan also took part in the Fair



DNA

BALI: The Bali Beyond Travel Fair was formally opened on Thursday. The officials from the Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Foreign Minister of Tourism Infrastructure, Deputy Minister of Marketing Ni Made Aye Marthini, Deputy Governor of Bali and other prominent figures participated in the Travel Fair. A media and tour operators delegation from Pakistan also took part in the Fair. BBTf is an annual event with the intention to establish a benchmark for travel & tourism events and destinations in Indonesia. Supported by the Ministry of Tourism of Indonesia, BBTf held a B2B events and aims to advance the tourism industry through business session and direct promotion of the best practices in MICE and Leisure Management. Together with exhibitors and buyers from

numerous countries around the world, BBTf facilitates Pre-Scheduled Appointments (PSA) and business sessions for buyers and sellers to negotiate on their long-term leisure and corporate travel needs. Corporations, travel agents, hotel & resort chains, cruise operators, convention planners, venue operators and travel buyers can leverage the two and half days of business-to-business sessions to enhance their respective brands in the Indonesian and Asia Pacific markets. In addition to the B2B sessions, the travel fair will have an extensive program of activities for all delegates. From the fantastic networking events, to the inspirational knowledge program, the business of meetings has never been so rewarding. Bali was chosen as the venue because it is the gateway to Indonesia's Archipelago for global travelers and the island contributes up to 40% of all visitors to the nation each year.

This annual event is led by passionate committees and supported by members of ASITA, public sectors and Government to promote and facilitate the tourism business and development. Member of ASITA BALI consists of 420 tours and travel bureaus (BPW) and 13 associate members spread all over Bali. ASITA BALI is a member of Stakeholder of Indonesian Tourism Industry Association (GIPI) Bali or better known as Bali Tourism Board. BALI & BEYOND TRAVEL FAIR, is recognized as Indonesia's leading international travel fair that focuses on promoting tourism in Indonesia to the world by bringing together buyers and sellers in a single B2B forum. This year, the ninth BBTf was held in Bali, Indonesia's gateway of tourism to the world, taking the date from 14 - 17 June 2023 at the Bali International Convention Center (BICC), ITDC, Nusa Dua, Bali.

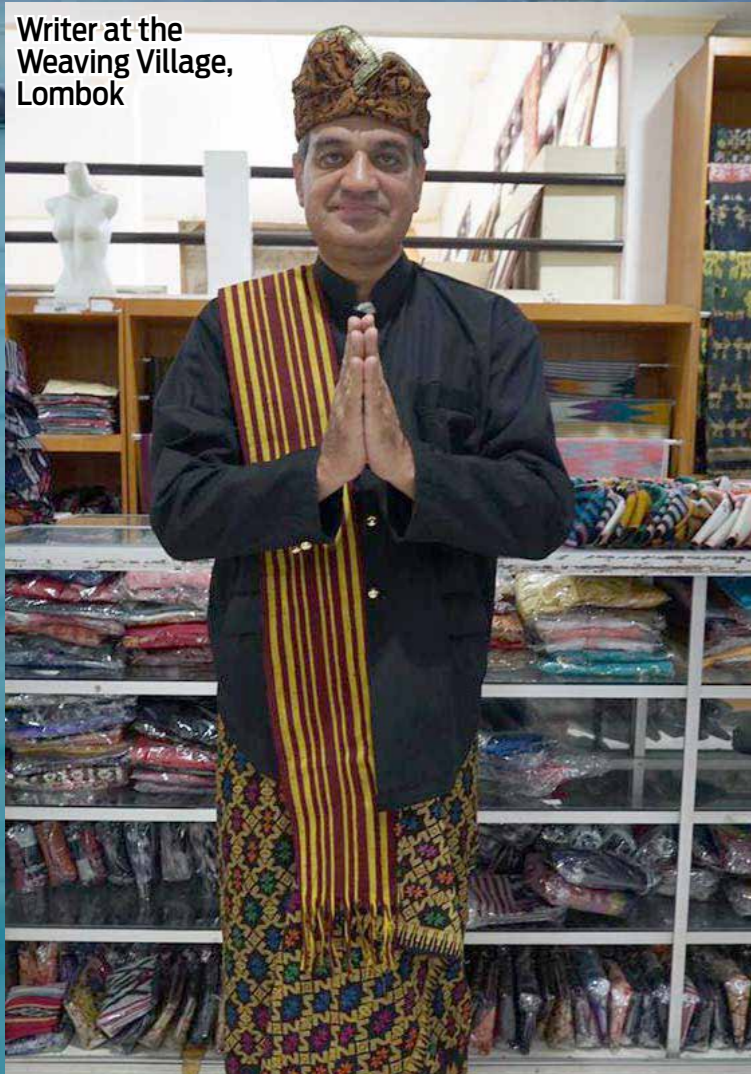
Lombok: a jewel in Indonesia's crown

Ansar M Bhatti / Lombok

Photos by the Writer and Aslam Malik

I HAD heard a lot and read articles about the Lombok Island, which is nestled in the West Nusa Tenggara province, but was ostensibly thrilled and amazed to visit this exotic place as part of the FAMTRIP organized by the Indonesia embassy in Islamabad in collaboration with the Indonesian Tourism and Creative Economy Ministry. The island that is located close to iconic tourist destination Bali, Lombok is known for its stunning landscapes, beautiful beaches, and vibrant culture. The Island population comprises 85 percent of Muslims yet the place can rightly be termed as a perfect model of Unity in Diversity. The capital city of Lombok is Mataram, which is located in the western part of the island. Other major cities and tourist destinations include Senggigi, Kuta (not to be confused with the more famous Kuta in Bali), and the Gili Islands. The word Mataram, as told by our local guide stands out for respect and dignity. 'Mata' is influenced by Hindi, which means Mother. Mataram, a small yet gorgeous town, is located in the Western part of Lombok. It

takes almost an hour to reach the main city from the airport. As we were accommodated in the North part of Lombok so it took us almost two hours to reach the Gili Islands, another wonderful tourist attraction in the Wonderful Indonesia. On the way to Gili Islands, we passed by the Capital City of Mataram. As told by our local guide, Lombok is often referred to as "Bali's sister island" due to its close proximity and similarities in terms of natural beauty. However, Lombok has its own unique charm and attractions that make it a popular destination for travelers seeking a less crowded and peaceful surroundings. The island is renowned for its picturesque beaches, such as Tanjung Aan, Selong Belanak, and Mawun Beach. Lombok is also home to Mount Rinjani, an active volcano and the second-highest peak in Indonesia, offering opportunities for trekking and breathtaking views from its summit. The local Sasak culture is prevalent on the island, and visitors can explore traditional Sasak villages, witness traditional ceremonies, and learn about the unique customs and traditions of the Sasak people. On our way to the hotel from the airport our first stop was at a village called Sasak Ende. The population of this village may not be more than 200 inhabitants yet it presented a true picture of traditional Indonesian countryside lifestyle. People were welcoming and hospitable. As is a tradition and culture even in Pakistani villages as well that hospitality is spontaneous and whole-hearted. The idea of such model villages is quite rare but unique and an instant tool of disseminating information about the cultural heritage of the respective countries. This is an area where Pakistan also needs to collaborate with Indonesia in order to promote its culture and village life. As various reports suggest, in recent years, Lombok has been developing its tourism infrastructure to accommodate increasing visitor numbers. The international airport in Lombok, Lombok International Airport (LOP), serves as the main gateway to the island, with regular flights from major Indonesian cities and some international destinations. Overall, Lombok offers a mix of natural beauty, cultural experiences, and outdoor activities, making it a popular destination for those seeking a tropical getaway in Indonesia. Access to Lombok is very easy. If you are already in Bali, you can take a ferry from Padangbai or Gilimanuk to Lombok. The ferry ride takes around 4-5 hours depending on the route and sea conditions. There are both



Writer at the Weaving Village, Lombok



Gili Islands, Lombok



public and private ferry services available. The public ferry is more economical, while private fast boats offer a quicker journey but happen to be a little bit expensive.

Nestled off the coast of Lombok, Indonesia, the Gili Islands have emerged as a sought-after tourist destination for those seeking an idyllic tropical getaway. Comprising three pristine islands—Gili Trawangan, Gili Air, and Gili Meno—this archipelago offers a harmonious blend of natural beauty, blue waters, and a serene atmosphere. The island of Gili Trawangan is often described as the Party Island. And it looked so when we reached there. A lot of hustle and bustle; huge influx of tourists, mostly from the Western countries makes it a perfect destination for those who want to see nature at its best.

The Gili Islands are renowned for their stunning beaches, characterized by powdery white sands and crystal-clear waters. Each island has its own distinctive charm: Gili Trawangan boasts a lively beachfront with a bustling atmosphere, while Gili Air offers a more relaxed vibe and tranquil stretches of coastline. Gili Meno, the smallest of the three, entices visitors with its secluded beaches, ideal for a romantic escape or peaceful solitude. I will remember the Gili Meno because there I did for the first time in my life the snorkeling exercise. It was indeed a daunting task for persons like me who do not know how to swim, to perform this drill in the deep sea, albeit with the life jacket.

Underneath the turquoise waters surrounding the Gili Islands lies a breathtaking underwater world teeming. Scuba diving and snorkeling enthusiasts will find themselves in awe as they explore the underwater treasures, encountering graceful sea turtles, colorful tropical fish, and even the occasional reef shark. With numerous diving schools and centers scattered across the islands, both beginners and experienced divers can partake in unforgettable underwater adventures, our guide informed us.

For those seeking adventure beyond the beaches, the Gili Islands offer a variety of thrilling water sports and island-hopping opportunities. Rent a kayak or paddleboard and venture out into the ocean, or embark on a glass-bottom boat tour to witness the mesmerizing marine life without getting wet. We also took the glass boat on our way to the islands, though on our way back a speed boat transported us from the Gili to

the The Kayana resort where the delegation was offered dinner by the hotel management. The Gili Islands have managed to retain their charming, laid-back island atmosphere, even as they have gained popularity among tourists. These islands are predominantly car-free, relying on horse-drawn carts known as cidomos or bicycles for transportation, further enhancing the relaxed ambiance. Engage with the friendly locals, immerse yourself in their rich cultural heritage, and savor the delicious local cuisine, featuring freshly caught seafood and traditional Indonesian dishes. The Gili Islands Lombok, with their enchanting tropical beauty, abundant marine life, and laid-back island culture, provide an unforgettable escape from the pressures of everyday life. So, pack your bags, leave your worries behind, and embark on an unforgettable journey to the mesmerizing Gili Islands. Here the Indonesian government and tourism ministry also deserve credit the way they have developed the infrastructure in these areas. It was undoubtedly an uphill task to revive the industry after the covid pandemic but the Indonesian authorities have done it in a miraculous manner. It is therefore expected that by next year the tourism industry would be fully revived to pre-pandemic levels.

Weaving village

While Lombok is renowned for its beaches, it also has some traditional villages where various handicrafts are practiced, including weaving. One such village famous for its weaving is Sukarara, located in Central Lombok. Sukarara is often referred to as the “Weaving Village” due to its rich tradition of handwoven textiles. The village has a long history of producing exquisite traditional fabrics called “ikat” and “songket.” Ikat is a technique of tie-dyeing threads before they are woven into cloth. The process involves tying and dyeing the threads in specific patterns, creating intricate designs. The weavers in Sukarara use traditional wooden looms and intricate patterns passed down through generations. The resulting fabrics are vibrant, with bold geometric patterns and motifs. Songket, on the other hand, is a luxurious handwoven fabric created using metallic threads, typically gold or silver,



Writer at the Weaving Village, Lombok



Enjoying snorkeling at the deep sea in Gili Islands



Writer enjoying swimming in the Gili Islands



Cycling in the Gili Islands



Dinner hosted by Kayana resort, Lombok



woven into a silk or cotton base. The production of songket requires meticulous weaving skills, and the patterns often depict traditional motifs and designs. Visiting Sukarara allows you to witness the weaving process firsthand and appreciate the skill and artistry involved. You can observe the weavers working on their looms, creating intricate patterns and transforming simple threads into beautiful fabrics. Many weavers in the village are happy to share their techniques and stories, giving visitors insight into the traditional weaving culture of Lombok. In addition to observing the weaving process, Sukarara offers visitors the opportunity to purchase handwoven textiles directly from the weavers. The village is filled with small shops and stalls where you can find a wide range of woven products, including scarves, sarongs, wall hangings, and traditional clothing. Visiting Sukarara and exploring the weaving village in Lombok is not only a chance to acquire unique and authentic textiles but also a way to support the local community and preserve the traditional craft.

Mandalika Circuit: motorsport track



DNA

THE Mandalika Circuit is a motorsport race track located in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone on the island of Lombok, Indonesia. It is a part of the larger Mandalika Resort development, which aims to promote tourism in the region. The Pakistani media delegation visited the track. The management briefed the delegation about the working of the track. The Mandalika Circuit is designed to host various motorsport events, including For-



Sunrise from Mount Boutor

mula 1 (F1) races. The track was chosen as the host of the Indonesian Grand Prix, which was set to return to the F1 calendar in 2021. However, please note that my knowledge cutoff is in September 2021, and I do not have information on any developments or changes since then. The circuit is expected to be a street circuit, utilizing both public roads and newly constructed sections. It is designed to provide a challenging and exciting racing experience while showcasing the natural beauty of the surrounding area.

The Mandalika Resort development also includes hotels, resorts, and other tourism-related infrastructure, aimed at attracting visitors to the region. The project aims to boost tourism, generate employment opportunities, and stimulate economic growth on the island of Lombok. For the most up-to-date and detailed information about the Mandalika Circuit and its current status, I recommend referring to official sources, news websites, or contacting the Mandalika Special Economic Zone directly.

Discovering Indonesian Diversity

Dr M Ali Hamza

EMBARKING on an adventure, I found myself leaving the bustling streets of Lahore, Pakistan, for the exotic allure of Indonesia. Equipped with excitement and curiosity, my short journey promised to be a whirlwind exploration of Indonesia's rich culture, history, and vibrance.

Jakarta:

My first 2 days were schedule for Jakarta; the capital of Indonesia. We reached at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in afternoon, and I was greeted by the warm tropical air that instantly enveloped me. The friendly smiles of locals set the tone for the day ahead. I quickly made my way to Mercure hotel, checked in and commenced my Jakarta experience.

To start exploring Jakarta, I headed to Kota Tua, also known as Jakarta's Old Town. Stepping into this historic district felt like stepping back in time. The cobblestone streets and colonial architecture transported me to the days of Dutch influence. Exploring Fatahillah Square, I visited the Jakarta History Museum, which housed artifacts and exhibitions detailing the city's past.

Next morning, I woke up at 5 a.m. and walked all my way to Monas; a national museum and a symbol of Indonesian independence, just like Minare-Pakistan. People were jogging, enjoying aerobics, playing foot-sole, dribbling basketball, and cherishing the morning in

their own ways. I had to wait till 8 a.m. to see the museum in the basement of the monument and to go to the top deck for panoramic view. Meanwhile I met students from one of the junior schools. I was told that it is compulsory for all public and private schools to offer students a recreational visit to Monas during their junior school. At last, 8 a.m. struck on the clock and we entered into the museum. Here, I immersed myself in Indonesia's rich heritage, marvelling at ancient artifacts, traditional art, and historical exhibits. The museum offered a captivating glimpse into the nation's diverse cultural tapestry. Later ascending the monument, I reached the observation deck, where panoramic views of Jakarta awaited. The sprawling cityscape, dotted with skyscrapers and colorful neighbourhoods, provided a stunning introduction to modern Jakarta and its grandeur.

Later in the day I visited Taman Mini Indonesia Indah. Taman means park and Mini means tiny, but this park covers 150 hectares of land. In fact, the park is the miniature or tiny representation of entire Indonesia. This expansive park showcased Indonesia's diverse cultural heritage through recreated traditional houses, museums, and performances. There are 34 provinces in Indonesia and Taman Mini has 34 pavilions to represent each province. A welcome was given with a traditional music and dance performance. Strolling through lush gardens and serene ponds, I marvelled at the country's natural beauty. Exploring just the park requires minimum 3 days but

we had only few hours. Beside visiting different pavilion at the park, I had a chance to interview the President of Taman Mini Ms. Claudia Ingkirwang. She explained the philosophy behind Taman Mini and how this park helps children to get introduced and engaged with all cultures of Indonesia. The day was almost over. We had our late lunch at Karimata restaurant hosted by Ministry of tourism and creative economy Indonesia.

We had dessert and coffee at Jakarta's highest open rooftop café SKYE on 56th floor. SKYE offered not only delectable cuisine but also breathtaking panoramic views of the city's iconic skyline. The café is stylish and offers sophisticated atmosphere. The dim lighting and cozy seating arrangements created an intimate and relaxing ambiance, perfect for a memorable dining experience. The highlight of SKYE Café was undoubtedly its outdoor terrace, offering an unrivalled view of Jakarta's sprawling skyline. As I stepped onto the terrace, a breathtaking panorama unfolded before me. The twinkling lights of the cityscape, combined with the warm evening breeze, set the stage for an enchanting evening.

The day was not over for me yet. I had to see the night life of Jakarta. So visited the Asia's biggest night club **The H Club**; an electrifying destination that promises an unforgettable experience. As twilight descends, H Club comes alive, pulsating with energy and music. The sleek and stylish interior creates an immersive atmosphere, beckoning partygoers to the dance floor. The talented DJs spin



Visit to Black Lava and Black Sand spot

an eclectic mix of beats, setting the stage for an exhilarating night of dancing and celebration. The expertly crafted drinks flow freely, further enhancing the festive ambiance. H Club's lively and energetic environment, coupled with its electric atmosphere, ensures that every visit is a night to remember in the heart of Jakarta's nightlife scene.

Very next morning we met the president Antara News Agency. Antara is an Indonesian news agency organized as a statutory corporation. It is the country's national news agency just like APP (Associate Press of Pakistan) in Pakistan, supplying news reports to many domestic media organizations. It is the only organization authorized to distribute news materials created by foreign news agencies. As a respected and influential figure in the media industry, the President Director Antara Mr. Meidyatama Suryodiningrat radiated professionalism and knowledge. Their passion for journalism and commitment to delivering accurate and reliable news was palpable. Engaging in conversation, their insights and perspectives provided valuable glimpses into the intricacies of the news agency's operations. It was an honour to witness firsthand the President's dedication to upholding journalistic integrity and promoting press freedom. This encounter left a lasting impression, reminding me of the vital role media plays in shaping society and fostering informed dialogue. In the evening one of our friends had birthday and we celebrated his day with zeal and joy. This night was hard, because next day I had to leave Jakarta unexplored, checkout and catch the flight, but at the same time there was an excitement to witness another part of Indonesia.

Lombok:

From the bustling metropolis of Jakarta, I embarked on a journey to the tranquil paradise of Lombok, Indonesia. Nestled amidst the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean, Lombok promised pristine beaches, lush landscapes, and a vibrant local culture. Once Garuda International; the national carrier of

girl and hide her from their family. Then a messenger from the man's side will visit the woman's family to inform her location and discuss the proposal and marriage plans after a consensus is reached by both parties.

Now it was 3 p.m. and I was starving like anything. I had my westernized lunch; burger, and drove to see Mandalika International Street Circuit; a motorcycle racing track located in the Mandalika resort area on Lombok island. The Madalika Circuit in Lombok is a thrilling spectacle that brings together speed, skill, and adrenaline. This world-class racing facility showcases the island's passion for motorsports, attracting both local and international enthusiasts. The track has 4.3 km length with 17 corners and 4 sharp turns. Though we could not witness the roar of engines but I had a chance to paddle the bicycle on the track. Madalika Circuit is not only a display of top-tier racing but also a celebration of Lombok's growing presence in the motorsport's world. The day was over, we checked into Novotel Lombok Resort; a beautiful 4-star resort only 60 min away from the airport. Though it was tiring day but I was more excited to visit Gillis next morning.

Indonesia, touched down at Lombok International Airport, I immediately sensed a change in atmosphere. The island's laid-back charm welcomed me, providing a refreshing contrast to the bustling city life I had left behind. Lombok is also called 1000 mosque island because 90% of the population is Muslim.

It was around 1p.m. and we drove to see Sade village; located in the southern part of Lombok Island. In local language Sade means medicine or consciousness. The Sasak tribe has maintained and cured traditional life style of their village for 15 generations. The culture of Sasak tribe derives its inspiration from Islamic teachings. All social affairs, like marriage etc., are settled at the mosque. In order to preserve the authenticity of the residents, Sade Village implements the one-family wedding custom, which means that Sade people cannot marry a person outside their tribe. Our guide Uji Ghaffar told us about a unique tradition of eloping (kawin lari). Tradition is that if a man wants to propose to a woman to be his wife, he must kidnap the

Gili means small island, and the plan was to visit 3 gilis. We drove for 1 hour and reached a port, transferred to the boat, and voyaged to Gili Air. That day tides were high and as the tide rises, crystal-clear waters become even more alluring. Equipped with snorkelling gear, I plunged into the sea, surrounded by a kaleidoscope of colourful corals and exotic marine life. Discovering the beauty beneath the surface in a truly unforgettable way. After spending half an hour in water Uji took us to Gili Meno which was 15 minutes away.

Gili Meno, a serene island nestled among the Gili Islands in Lombok, Indonesia, offers a unique and captivating experience for underwater enthusiasts. As I delved into the depths of its azure waters, I discovered an extraordinary sight that took my breath away. The underwater sculptures of Gili Meno emerged



before me like submerged treasures. These intricate artworks, created by talented artists, have transformed the ocean bed into an enchanting gallery. As I swam among the sculptures, the fusion of nature and art became evident, as colourful fish and vibrant corals embraced the statues, creating a mesmerizing juxtaposition. Gili Meno's underwater sculpture experience is a testament to the harmonious coexistence between art and the marine world. This all was creating a sense of awe and wonder. Now I wanted to wander on land. So, we docked at Gili Trawangan.

Exploring Trawangan, one of the captivating Gili Islands in Lombok, Indonesia, on a bicycle is an adventure that allows you to soak in the island's beauty at your own pace. Pedalling along the sandy pathways, I felt the warm breeze caress my skin as I passed by lush greenery and picturesque coastal views. After a delightful cycling session, I stumbled upon a quaint beachfront restaurant, where I savoured a tasty lunch. The aroma of freshly grilled seafood filled the air, and the flavours tantalized my taste buds. With a full belly and a heart filled with joy, I continued my cycling journey, cherishing the blissful experience of exploration and gastronomy on Trawangan. Now evening was setting its grip. We were boarded to Kanaya beach. I was told that sunset at Kanaya beach is serene experience, and I must admit that it was right. Kanaya Beach sunset is a reminder of the beauty and wonder that nature bestows upon us, a moment to pause, reflect, and appreciate the magnificence of the world we live in. We had our dinner at Kanaya restaurant and reached back hotel around 9 p.m. Next morning, we checked out, drove to explore Sukarara village in Lombok. The village is famous for its indigenous hand weaving cloths. The art transfers from mothers to their daughters and it's been happening since many generations. Strangely, they don't use any technology or computer to draft design. The design is in their minds and they transfer it directly to the fabric while weaving. I wore their traditional dress and we took pictures at their traditional Sasak houses. It was time to catch our flight and land at the worlds' most attractive tourist destination, non-other than Bali; Island of the gods.

At 7 p.m. we landed in Bali and before getting to our hotel we were taken to a world class beach club; Atlas, held on the stunning shores of Bali. The club offers a full fest that is unforgettable for music enthusiasts. Atlas showcases an eclectic lineup of talented artists, both local and international, who deliver captivating performances. We had dance, drinks and dinner. Then at 11 p.m. checked in Anvaya hotel; a 5-star resort that offers true Balinese hospitality for your exotic tropical vacation. As per schedule we had to leave the hotel in next 3 hours to witness unbelievable sunrise at mount Batur. Took a little nap and started our journey toward mount Batur at north west of Bali.

We were transported by our van to Kintama-



ni, and from there exhilarating jeep adventure to mount Batur for a breathtaking sunrise began. The weather was strikingly different from central Bali. It was cold and had winterish feeling. The anticipation builds as you reach the peak, just in time to witness the first rays of sunlight painting the horizon in a vibrant palette of oranges, blues, whites and pinks. The panoramic view of Lake Batur and the surrounding volcanic landscape is awe-inspiring. We were not alone at the peak, there were around 1000+ jeeps filled with tourists to witness such a spectacular moment. The jeep adventure adds an extra thrill to the journey, immersing you in the raw beauty of Mount Batur as the world awakens to a new day. Later we were taken to see black lava and black sand. Bali is home to three active volcanoes, and the black lava and black sands are a result of regular volcanic activity across the island. The site creates a striking contrast against the island's lush greenery, adds unique natural features to Bali's beaches and highlights the island's geological diversity. It was time for taking hot bath. We went to Toya Devasya; natural hot spring aqua park. Had great fun and delicious lunch. The day was yet not ended. We drove all the way to visit Tampak Siring in Bali; a spiritual journey that takes you to the heart of ancient rituals and healing waters. The sacred spring of Tirta Empul is believed to possess purifying pow-

ers, where locals and tourists alike partake in the ritual of cleansing. Tampak Siring offers a glimpse into Bali's rich cultural heritage and provides a chance to connect with the island's spiritual essence. Now was the time to reach



hotel, take dinner and go dead to the world. Yes, I slept after 48 hours in fact. The next morning rather last day in Indonesia, we had another jam pack day. In the morning we were to see the world's 4th tallest statue but worlds most complexed and meticulously designed statue, the Garuda Wisnu Kencana. The colossal statue of Lord

Now was a time to see the sunset at Jimbaran beach. It was the last sunset we had in Indonesia. One of its own kind. The beach was filled with thousands of people cherishing the moment. We had dinner, lots of selfies and moved to buy few souvenirs. We went to the biggest souvenir shop in Bali, they even claim to be the biggest in South-East Asia; Krisna Oleh. Spent few hundred dollars, came back to hotel, packed for early morning flight, checked out by 4 a.m., boarded and said good bye to our hosts with heavy heart. Maudy, Gadis, Lusiana, and Malik miss you all. Returning from Indonesia to Pakistan is a bittersweet farewell. Memories of stunning landscapes, and warm-hearted locals accompany you on your journey home. The vibrant colours of batik and intricate woodwork transport you back to the bustling streets and traditional crafts. The beauty of Indonesian beaches and ancient temples remain etched in your mind. With gratitude, you carry these cherished memories, knowing that a piece of Indonesia will forever reside within you.



Tracing the Confluence of Civilizations Distinct ancient heritage is a treasure for both nations

Ambassador Adam Tugio says Indonesia and Pakistan are heirs of one of the oldest civilizations in the world with a marked history of religious-cultural communication



Bureau Report

LAHORE: The colorful opening ceremony of photo exhibition titled “A Night at Lahore Museum: Tracing the Confluence of Civilizations Between Indonesia and Pakistan” jointly organized by the Indonesian Embassy and Lahore Museum enthralled the audience with its spectacular display of ancient cultural connectivity through meticulously selected photographs. The week-long exhibition provides a fresh perspective on the cross-regional interaction between the two biggest Muslim populated countries from past to present. Addressing a large gathering of prominent guests from different walks of life, the Ambassador of Indonesia Mr. Adam Tugio said that distinct cultural-historic heritage is a revered treasure for the two brotherly nations that has continuously been preserved during the course of history. He especially pointed out that Indonesia and Pakistan are heirs of one of the oldest civilizations in the world with a marked history of religious-cultural communication and this exhibition aims to highlight the

cross-regional cultural influences through selected photographs and videos of artifacts, sculptures and inscriptions from both sides. “From cuisine to old healing practices, from religious traditions to cultural norms and from ancient history to modern civilization, there is a long list of striking similarities between the two brotherly nations”, he remarked. Elaborating the existence of early historic inter-regional connectivity, the envoy pointed out that ancient Gandhara region mainly comprising North West region of present day Pakistan, was a melting pot of different civilizations. “The spread of Buddhist and Islamic civilization to the Indonesian archipelago is also attributed to influence of Gandhara civilization”, added the envoy. Ambassador Tugio especially thanked the Lahore Museum for providing generous support and to all the guests for their participation and warmly invited Pakistani friends to the Exhibition to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the two Muslim brotherly countries. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Guest Prof. Dr. Javed Akram, Minister of Health

Punjab appreciated the Embassy’s initiative of organizing the Exhibition to promote the shared cultural heritage. He emphasized the need to strengthen academic linkages and people to people contacts to materialize the benefits from existing strong bonds of friendship between the two countries. The Director Lahore Museum Mr. Mohammad Usman commended the idea of the Indonesian envoy to organize this exhibition and said that both the nations have strong historical connections with striking similarities in culture and traditions. He highlighted the historical significance and pivotal role of Lahore Museum in promoting cultural activities and expressed commitment to support such kind of purposeful events. Through interactive display, the Exhibition will allow visitors to trace the confluence of civilization between Indonesia and Pakistan in a variety ways. The exhibition also features spices and some popular products from Indonesia with the kind support of Indomie, the largest food producers of Indonesia which has been operating in Faisalabad.

Pakistan is ideally placed as hub of regional connectivity and economic integration



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is at the crossroads of connectivity development and is a gateway to resource pooling in central and west Asia to bring together and connect the states to achieve greater economic integration and connectivity that is necessary for sustainable development. This was stated by Syed Ahsan Raza Shah, the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while speaking to a group of foreign diplomats on “Connectivity and Emerging Role of Pakistan” here at Islamabad Stock Exchange auditorium. The briefing was organized by the Asian Institute of Eco-civilization Research and Development (AIERD). Highlighting the importance of connectivity in the region, Mr Shah said that return of peace and stability Afghanistan’s is an important factor in this connection. He said economic growth and connectivity are linked to each other and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a vehicle towards greater regional economic growth and prosperity. To a question, Mr Shah said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is, at Headquarters as well as at Pakistan Embassies abroad, actively engaged with the business community towards enhancing Pakistan’s exports and attracting investments. Missions abroad are under instructions to facilitate greater B2B engagements, he added.

In his welcome address, Zahid Latif Khan, Chairman, Asian Institute of Eco-civilization Research and Development, said Pakistan needs to exploit full potential of its strategic location and market size. “Pakistan will have to build reliable and efficient soft infrastructure and mechanism for connectivity on the principle of win-win cooperation,” he said, adding that “after the completion of first phase of CPEC, Pakistan must start benefitting from it.” He said: “There is no second opinion that CPEC helped build state-of-the-art hard infrastructure, but without soft infrastructure we cannot move forward. Shakeel Ahamd Ramay, Chief Executive Officer, AIERD, emphasized on the efficient working which he said is the need of hour. He said Pakistan is surrounded by a number of competitors therefore, it needs to speed up its efforts for regional connectivity. He said CPEC that is a flagship project of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), will certainly play the role of gamechanger soon. During the interactive session, the participants said that Pakistan’s private sector is quite active and has great potential in terms of growth expansion with a great enthusiasm to extend trade relations with the world. They said Pakistani businessmen have great ethical values and professionalism, which is the hallmark for trade connectivity and overall economic stability of the region. They said Pakistan government should make its youth aware of the products with potential and greater demand for exchange.

Canadian High Commission, Serena Hotels screen “Minahil”

“A story of inspiration, hope and believing in dreams”

Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: The film “Minahil”, directed by Wajahat Malik, premiered at the Serena Hotel Islamabad. Minahil is an inspirational docu-drama about a young girl from Chitral playing ice-hockey and how her participation in the sport has contributed to her empowerment. The film was co-funded by Serena Hotels and the Canadian High Commission in Islamabad. Serena Hotels has been actively supporting women in sports via sponsorships. Notable mentions are acclaimed mountaineer Samina Baig whose first solo climb was in sponsorship of Serena Hotel talented footballer Karishma Ali to attend the Global Sports Week in Paris, France. Other sports and adventure initiatives include partnerships with diplomatic missions such as supporting cricket for blind girls, where professional Australian players train young girls & Serena hosts matches to hone their talent, providing them with skills to help them build their futures. Along with a mentorship programme that the management launched with professional female golf players to encourage the participation of females in golf. Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, South and Central Asia, believes in supporting gender equity & empowerment through our various initiatives. Serena Hotels partners with the High Commission of Canada in Pakistan to uplift and empower rural communities, one example of this partnership is supporting girls playing ice-hockey as a part of the High Commission’s signature winter sports public diplomacy initiative. This collective effort by the High Commission, in partnership with other local partners, aims to empower women and girls, drive socio-economic development at the community level, promote sustainable tourism, and raise awareness about climate change and environmental conservation in line with Canada’s Feminist Foreign Policy. This year, the High Commission of Canada in Pa-

kistan and Serena Hotels supported Eyebex Films with the hopes of bringing the stories of personal victories and achievements of some of the beneficiaries of the programme to the big screen. The docu-drama “Minahil” highlights the inspiring journey of the Booni Girls ice hockey team from Chitral, showcasing their determination and the transformative power of inclusion and gender equality. Through this we hope to inspire support for women and girls’ equal access to all aspects of socio-economic life. It serves as a poignant reminder that human rights are universal and that women’s rights are human rights. Speaking at the premiere, Amanda DeSadeleer, First Secretary for Political and Public Affairs at the High Commission of Canada, expressed her enthusiasm for the project, stating, “The Booni story is a powerful one, and that is why we were thrilled when film director Wajahat Malik wanted to take on the job of capturing the work of the Booni Environmental Academy and how ice hockey, specifically girls ice hockey, has been at the heart of their journey. We hope you, and the rest of the world, will be as inspired as we have been to watch these courageous girls become confident and successful young women, both on and off the ice.” Imran Hassan, Corporate Director of Sales & Marketing, Serena Hotels, South and Central Asia, commented on the film’s impact, stating that stories like this should be showcased on a global platform, as it promotes and showcases the potential of the females of Pakistan positively and proactively, especially in sports. The premiere of “Minahil” proved to be an extraordinary event, uniting supporters of gender equality, sports enthusiasts, and champions of women’s empowerment. Through this collaboration, Serena Hotels and the High Commission of Canada have demonstrated their commitment to support the empowerment of rural communities, promote inclusivity, gender equality and inspire positive change for environment conservation.”



Azerbaijani forces fully prepared to defend motherland

DNA

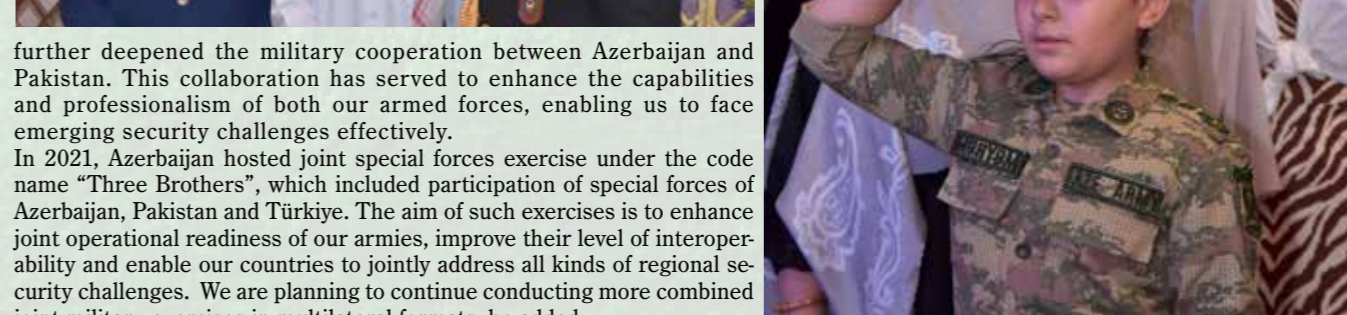
ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov has said Azerbaijan armed forces were fully prepared to defend their motherland adding victory in the Patriotic War unequivocally showed our forces bravery and commitment to defend its borders come what may. He made these remarks on the occasion of the 105th Anniversary of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces reception. A large number of guests hailing from various walks of life attended the reception. A special musical performance by the Pakistan Army band added color to the event. Air Marshal Irfan Ahmed, Deputy Chief of Air Staff Projects was the chief guest. Ambassador Khazar Farhadov further said, 'today we celebrate the 105th anniversary of the establishment of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces. Undoubtedly, the peak of the warpath of our National Army during this period is the glorious Victory gained in the Patriotic War - Karabakh Victory. There has been no similar Victory in the centuries-old history of our nation'. The Ambassador further said, on June 26, 1918, by the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the first regular military unit - the Combined Azerbaijan Corps - was created. The task of creating an army of 25 thousand people was set by the Government. On August 1, 1918, the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan was established. The creation of the modern National Army started in 1991 after the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. However, those who led our country in the first years of independence could not cope with the important and responsible task of army building at that time when Armenia occupied our lands. The encroachment of the enemy on our lands was expanding more and more. Azerbaijan faced the threat of losing its independence. At such a difficult time, the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev, who returned to power at the request of the people, eliminated chaos and anarchy, economic and political difficulties in the country and started the process of building a regular army. After the National Leader's return to power, our army and people had a firm belief in Victory. At the call of Heydar Aliyev, a large-scale mobilization was held, and military units were fully equipped in the country, he added. While talking about the war



with Armenia the Ambassador said, the 44 days Patriotic War of 2020 which resulted in the liberation of our territories from Armenian occupation by the brave Azerbaijani Army under the leadership of Supreme Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev was written in golden letters in our history. It is no coincidence that the military operations of the Azerbaijani Army, especially the Shusha operation are studied in the leading military schools of the world today. While talking about the bilateral relations he said, today we can see that Azerbaijan and Pakistan's bilateral relations are at a high level in all fields, including military and defense cooperation 'I would also like to mention that over the past 30 years, mutual visits have been carried out in the military and military-technical fields. I am confident that these ties will be further strengthened and deepened'. Colonel Mehman Novruzov, Azerbaijan Defence Attaché to Pakistan in his speech said the people of Azerbaijan have for centuries fought for liberty and statehood along its ancient history. Because of rich natural resources and strategic location, our motherland has always undergone pressures and military aggressions by strong states. After regaining independence, all state attributes of Azerbaijan, including Armed Forces were restored and on May 22, 1998, with the presidential decree, June 26 was declared as the Day of Azerbaijan Armed Forces. Since its establishment on 26 June 1918, the Azerbaijan Armed Forces have faced

many security challenges and demonstrated remarkable resilience, unwavering dedication, and a strong commitment to safeguarding security and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. He said the turning point in the history of Azerbaijan Armed Forces came in 2020 during the 44-Day Patriotic War of Azerbaijan. In response to Armenian provocations, Azerbaijan launched a successful counteroffensive military campaign to retake its 20% territories, which had been under Armenian occupation for almost 30 years. The Azerbaijan Armed Forces carried out the war of the 21st century and destroyed the Armenian fascism on the battlefield, thus demonstrated the strength, determination and professionalism of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces. 'The counteroffensive operation of Azerbaijan Army with the later adopted "Iron Fist" code name, made the aggressor state of Armenia, to admit its unconditional capitulation in 44 days. Azerbaijan managed to fulfil the requirements of the international law, implement on the battlefield the 4 UN Security Council resolutions that remained on paper for 27 years'. Talking about bilateral relations he said, Azerbaijan and Pakistan enjoy strategic partnership relations which also cover the cooperation in the defense and security fields. The Azerbaijan-Pakistan military cooperation has been built on the foundations of brotherhood, shared values, and common objectives. The exchange of high-level military visits, participation in training programs, conducting joint exercises, as well as growing military technical cooperation have

Ambassador Khazar Farhadov and Defence Attache Colonel Mehman Novruzov host Azerbaijani Armed Forces Day



further deepened the military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. This collaboration has served to enhance the capabilities and professionalism of both our armed forces, enabling us to face emerging security challenges effectively. In 2021, Azerbaijan hosted joint special forces exercise under the code name "Three Brothers", which included participation of special forces of Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Türkiye. The aim of such exercises is to enhance joint operational readiness of our armies, improve their level of interoperability and enable our countries to jointly address all kinds of regional security challenges. We are planning to continue conducting more combined joint military exercises in multilateral formats, he added.



Independence and Nationhood Day of the Philippines



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Monal Group installs bird nesting and Feeding poles in Capital parks

The Monal group earnestly believes that the bird nesting and feeding poles should be part of a broader conservation and wildlife management effort

D.N.A

ISLAMABAD: Living up to its traditions and as part of its corporate social responsibility the Monal Group has installed 200 bird nesting and feeding poles in various Islamabad Parks in collaboration with the CDA. By installing bird nesting and feeding poles in the park, the purpose is to provide valuable resources for birds, offer educational opportunities for visitors, and contribute to the overall biodiversity and enjoyment of the parks environment.

A wild bird family has given birth to a healthy brood of birds! The Monal management hopes that this family will thrive as they are surrounded by an abundance of Grain and Fresh Water which is Replenished Twice a Day by our dedicated staff and we reinforce our pledge to continue to undertake similar initiatives for the betterment of our beautiful city.

The Monal group earnestly believes that the bird nesting and feeding poles should

be part of a broader conservation and wildlife management effort. It's essential to create a habitat-friendly environment by preserving native vegetation, minimizing pesticide use, and ensuring the park is a safe space for birds to thrive.

In order to feed birds properly there is need to include a variety of bird feeders on the poles to attract a diverse range of bird species besides offering different types of bird food, such as seeds, suet, nectar, or fruit, to accommodate the dietary preferences of various birds. The Monal group has ensured that the feeders are easily accessible and can be refilled regularly.

Moreover a regular inspection and maintenance of the bird poles is also ensured besides the maintenance of the nesting boxes, and feeders. The feeders are cleaned on a regular basis to prevent the spread of diseases, and damaged or worn-out components are immediately replaced. The Monal group initiative has widely been hailed by social and political circles and termed it a worth-emulating step.

Romanian ambassador passes away; end of an era

Diplomatic Corps and all Pakistanis are shocked; Ambassador Nicolae Goia contributed a lot towards promotion of Pakistan and Romanian bilateral relations during his tenure in Pakistan a number of agreements were signed between the two countries

OBITUARY

ANSAR M BHATT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan, Nicolae Goia passed away on Sunday, June 24 2023, Ambassador Nicolae Goia of Romania was in Pakistan for more than five years. He had already completed his term, but because of his health reasons, his stay in Pakistan was extended. According to his close aides, he was under treatment in Pakistan for quite some time. It was because of his health that he had decided to extend his stay in Pakistan in order not to disrupt the treatment process. Ambassador Nicolae Goia was a senior Romanian diplomat who was at the last leg of his career. He was about to finish his diplomatic career and retire from service. Ambassador Nicolae Goia contributed a lot towards promotion of Pakistan and Romanian bilateral relations during his tenure in Pakistan a number of agreements were signed between the two countries. During his tenure in Pakistan also a number of high level delegations visited Pakistan and from Pakistan high level delegations were visited Romania the diplomatic community in Islamabad has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the sad demise of Ambassador Nicolae Goia, who was very popular among the diplomatic community because of his professionalism and easygoing personality.

A few days ago, Ambassador Nicolae Goia attended a diplomatic reception, which in fact proved his last official appearance. Those who met him at that reception, including myself, simply cannot believe that he has left us because he was very much in his spir-



The smiling face heads to his eternal abode, leaving his near and dear ones in shock and pain

its, hale and hearty with benign and welcoming smile on his face. It was indeed shocking news a friend share this news with me. The dean of diplomatic corps had sent a communication to entire diplomatic community and informed them of the death of Romanian Ambassador. Then the news spread like a jungle fire because Ambassador Goia was extremely popular not only among the diplomatic corps but Pakistani people as well.

To me, he was more than just an elder brother; he was a cherished companion and a devoted reader of my newspaper, the Daily Islamabad POST. Consistently, he offered valuable feedback on the contents and

overall quality of our publication. Each time he shared his thoughts, they resonated deeply with me and provided a wellspring of inspiration. His guidance and suggestions were invaluable, as they propelled me to strive for excellence in every aspect of the newspaper. With his astute observations and insightful comments, he pushed me to explore new avenues, and expand the horizons of our publication. His dedication to our newspaper was unwavering. The officials of the ministry of foreign affairs are in touch with the Romanian embassy and extended full support to them for the repatriation of the coffin to Romania. The Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif has also expressed his heartfelt condolences. PM Shehbaz said, the ambassador will be remembered for his active role in strengthening Pakistan-Romania relations.

The sudden and unexpected news has left everyone feeling deeply saddened and overwhelmed with gloom. The departure came as such a shock that it has taken everyone by surprise, leaving them in a state of disbelief. In times like these, our hearts are heavy as we come together to remember the life of the departed soul. Let us send our deepest prayers and wishes for his eternal peace and tranquility. May his spirit find solace and rest in the embrace of a higher power. Let us also acknowledge the strength and resilience of the bereaved family. In the face of this profound loss, they stand tall, united by love and the memories they hold dear. RIP NICOLAE GOIA!!

Uzbekistan greatly values ties with Pakistan: envoy

Uzbek embassy celebrates International Day of Journalism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan Aybek Arif Usmanov has said relations between Uzbekistan are growing with the each passing day adding trade volume has increased considerably. He expressed these views while speaking to media persons on the occasion of the International Day of Journalism. He further said on June 27, 1906 in Tashkent was published first ever in Central Asia Uzbek newspaper under the title "TARAQQI". As I learned 1st ever newspaper in Urdu by the name "Jam-e Jahon Nama" was published 1822 in Kolkatta, and "Daily Jang" urdu newspaper was published in 1939 in Karachi, then "Daily Imroze" in Urdu launched in Lahore in 1947. He said journalists play an important role in society as a source of news, information and opinion. They provide an important public service by uncovering the truth and holding the powerful accountable. Journalists help create informed citizens who can make decisions based on facts rather than rumor.

He said Located at the crossroads of the Great Silk Road, Uzbekistan and Pakistan for centuries serve as a strong bridge connecting Europe, the Middle East, West, South and East Asia with its rich cultural and historical heritage.

'For thousands of years, Uzbekistan and Pakistan are cradles for the world civilization where various nationalities and religions lived in peace, and doing their livelihoods and connected where the cultures of different peoples enriched each other'.

Ambassador Arif said today we are meeting with you in the eve of the Presidential elections in Uzbekistan and also the coming parliamentary elections in Pakistan. 'The renewed Basic Law unites society around the idea of building a new Uzbekistan. It states that Uzbekistan's foreign policy is based on the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity of states, non-use of force or threat of force, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and



norms of international law'. He said Uzbekistan pursues a peaceful foreign policy aimed at developing bilateral and multilateral relations with states and international organizations.

Global and regional cooperation processes have reached a new level. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's international initiatives have received broad support from the international community. The foreign policy of the New Uzbekistan has led to fundamental changes in the political atmosphere in Central Asia and to the recognition of close interconnectivity with South Asia and interdependence at the sub-regional and global levels. 'In order to further strengthen relations with neighbouring countries in the Central and South Asian regions, in last years we have witnessed high-level events with delegations from nearly 30 partner countries and international organizations, and experts from foreign think tanks representing more than 40 states including the delegates of brotherly Pakistan'.

The renewed Constitution which was adopted by people of Uzbeki-

stan opens new horizons for bilateral and multilateral interaction. Talking about bilateral relations he said, Uzbekistan-Pakistan Inter-governmental Commission on Trade-Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation (IGC) was held in February 24th this year in Tashkent. The Road Map agreement to increase bilateral trade upto \$1 billion was signed during IGC meeting and the next step will be the signing Road map on Industrial cooperation, Inshallah.

Transit Trade and Preferential trade Agreements which became effective since March of this year allowed to reach bilateral trade volume of \$150 mln. It's 2 times larger compared to the same period of 2022 (\$87,6 mln). Both countries enjoy increases in exports. Uzbekistan's delivered to Pakistan exports worth of \$79 mln, growth 2,5 times and Pakistani exports to Uzbekistan reached \$71 mln, growth 1,2 times. 'Let me express my belief that it is a high time for us diplomats and journalists to be a humble servants of further cementing of brotherly relations and re-connectivity between Pakistan and Uzbekistan'.



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