

# CENTRELINE

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine



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# Political landscape



**F**RICTIONS among stakeholders in the political system are intensifying with the each passing day. According to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's announcement the elections shall take place as per the new census. This statement has caused ripples not only among the ranks of the coalition partners but the PML N as well. The Nawaz Sharif camp especially is simply speechless about Shehbaz assertion. The Nawaz camp fears that if the elections are allowed to be delayed for a few months, then there is no guarantee that they will be held after few months. It is worth noting that the Chief Justice of Pakistan is set to retire next month, and President Arif Alvi's tenure will come to an end in September. The PML-N speculates that the replacement of the sitting Chief Justice with Justice Faez Isa might favorably impact Nawaz Sharif's situation, potentially facilitating his safe return.

As per the PML-N's plan, after the departure of CJP Umar Atta Bandial, they intend to file a plea for the protective bail of Nawaz Sharif. If the plea is granted, the PML-N supremo will return to Pakistan to participate in court proceedings with the aim of seeking a favorable outcome. It is essential to keep in mind that these developments are subject to legal processes and institutional procedures, and the situation might evolve as events unfold. Amidst swirling speculations of potential election delay, the political arena brims with fervent activity. Parties have wasted no time in launching their electioneering efforts, forming strategic alliances and diligently courting those who stand on the precipice of decision. Interestingly, no party currently appears to have a bright chance of achieving a clear victory if the elections are held in a free and fair manner. Two main factors contribute to this situation: First, the incumbency factor will play an important role if the two mainstream political parties, PML-N and PPP, perform poorly in the elections. Second, there are claims that the powers-that-be will ensure no political party attains an absolute majority. Some insiders suggest that no party will secure a majority in elections for the next two decades or even longer.

Ideally, a timely transition of power through representative elections is beneficial for the stability and progress of a country's political system. However, the effectiveness of such elections can be compromised if the same group of politicians returns to power repeatedly, rendering the electoral process futile. To enhance the electoral system and ensure meaningful outcomes, several key improvements can be considered such as encouraging a diverse range of candidates to participate in elections, representing various backgrounds, expertise, and perspectives. This can bring fresh ideas and alternative solutions to the table. By implementing new ideas, the electoral process can become more effective, inclusive, and meaningful, ultimately leading to a stronger and more responsive representative government for the benefit of the country and its people. Unfortunately, no government has ever tried to reform the electoral process simply because they don't want to allow sincere and genuine leaders to emerge. This happens to be a fundamental flaw in our electoral system and without rectifying this flaw holding of independent and all inclusive election shall always remain a dream.

As for the possibility of Nawaz Sharif becoming the next Prime Minister of Pakistan, it seems to be a formidable challenge in the current scenario, though not entirely without hope. The country's influential establishments have a reputation for retaining long-lasting impressions. The statements made by Nawaz Sharif and his daughter, especially concerning the military and the former Army Chief General Bajwa and ISI Chief Faiz Hameed, still resonate vividly in the minds of the people. Therefore the PML-N has to do a lot in order to win Establishment support for Nawaz Sharif if it earnestly wants him back as the PM. Summing up, the 15-month tenure of the government appears to have been a complete failure. Even the members of the ruling parties, particularly the PML-N, openly acknowledge that they couldn't meet the expectations of everyone due to having too many leaders at the helm. The lack of a clear chain of command led to chaos and disorganization. Many within the PML-N sincerely believe that forming a coalition with the PPP was a significant mistake. According to them, the PPP had nothing to lose from joining the government, while the PML-N, unfortunately, sealed its own political fate by making that decision.

**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.

### JOURNEY TOWARDS SUCCESS

# Shavkat Mirziyoyev re-elected as Uzbekistan's President

**Pakistan values its relations with Uzbekistan, rooted in religious affinity, common values, geo-strategic significance, potential for mutually beneficial and enhanced economic and defence cooperation**

**Ansar Mahmood Bhatti / DNA**

**P**RESIDENT Shavkat Mirziyoyev has secured a landslide victory in the presidential election held on July 9, being re-elected as the President of Uzbekistan with an overwhelming 87.1% of the vote. The Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan announced the preliminary results, revealing the extent of the president's popular support. A significant number of voters participated in the election, with 15.6 million citizens, accounting for 79.8% of registered voters, casting their votes. Among them 87.05% voted in the favour of Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Voting across the landlocked country of around 36 million people began at 8:00 am

local time which continued uninterrupted till 8 pm. In some areas voting concluded even before time. The Uzbek government had made elaborate arrangements for the Uzbek Diaspora living in various countries. The Uzbek missions in various countries were turned into the polling station and the process was completed well before the holding of the Presidential election on July 9, 2023. Under the rule of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan has strengthened traditional relations with Beijing and Moscow. Both Pakistan and Uzbekistan also enjoy excellent relations. The recent visit of the Uzbek President to Pakistan had

further strengthened this relationship. Pakistan values its relations with Uzbekistan, rooted in religious affinity, common values, geo-strategic significance, potential for mutually beneficial and enhanced economic and defence cooperation. On several occasions leaderships of both countries have reiterated the desire to further enhance bilateral relations including efforts for peace and security in the region. It may be mentioned here that a high powered Pakistan delegation comprising parliamentarians and media people also witnessed the electoral process. Among them included Pakistani Senators Faisal Saleem Rehman, Sitara Ayaz, Editor Daily Islamabad POST/





DNA and Centreline magazine Ansar Mahmood Bhatti and others.

After the referendum while talking to members of the Parliament the President had said that it's easy to say, but we have to work hard to put the reforms into practice. For these purposes, allocating an additional 30-40 trillion UZS from the State budget annually is necessary. Due to this, every year, we will have to build hundreds of new kindergartens, schools, and hospitals.

'As a priority task, we will also use new opportunities to raise youth policy, development of education and upbringing, science, culture, and sports to a new level. We will regularly increase wages, pensions, allowances, and stipends. We will further expand the range of social services for our veterans, lonely elderly people, people with disabilities, and citizens in need of special attention and care", the President said. In the renewed Constitution, Uzbekistan is defined as a state of law. The number of norms on human rights guarantees has also increased thrice, he said.

Uzbekistan has been one of the most successful economies in the post-Soviet space. Since 1991, its GDP has grown at an average annual rate of 6.5%, which is significantly higher than the average for other former Soviet republics. This growth has been driven by a number of factors, including: Gradual economic reforms: Uzbekistan has implemented a number of economic reforms, such as privatization, trade liberalization, and financial sector reform. These reforms have helped to improve the efficiency of the economy and attract foreign investment.

High levels of foreign direct investment: Uzbekistan has attracted significant levels of foreign direct investment (FDI). In 2022, FDI inflows to Uzbekistan amounted to \$2.7 billion, which is the highest level in the country's history. This FDI has helped to finance the development of new industries and infrastructure in Uzbekistan.

A strong focus on agriculture: Uzbekistan is a major agricultural producer, and agriculture accounts for a significant share of the country's GDP. The government has focused on improving agricultural productivity and infrastructure, which has helped to boost agricultural output.

A young and growing population: Uzbekistan has a young and growing population, which provides a large pool of potential workers. This demographic dividend has helped to support economic growth in Uzbekistan. As a result of these factors, Uzbekistan has become a middle-income country. In 2022, the country's GDP per capita was estimated to be \$4,210, which is above the global average. Uzbekistan is also a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which has helped to boost trade and investment in the country.

Tourism Development: Uzbekistan is



## Pak-Uzbek trade relations on right trajectory: PM

### PM talks to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, felicitates him on his re-election

**Ansar Mahmood Bhatti**

**ISLAMABAD:** Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone call with the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev. During the call, the Prime Minister congratulated the Uzbek President on his re-election in the presidential elections held on 9th July 2023. Terming the re-election of President Mirziyoyev as the reiteration of the confidence of the Uzbek people in his leadership, the Prime Minister expressed his strong confidence that bilateral relations between the two countries would continue to strengthen under his stewardship. The Prime Minister underscored the importance attached by Pakistan to bilateral relations with Uzbekistan. He noted with satisfaction the operationalization of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and the Uzbekistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (UPTTA). Both these agreements would enhance economic and trade relations between the two countries, he added. Recalling their previous interactions in Samarkand and Astana, the two leaders discussed the prospects of accelerating regional development and agreed on the need to further expand bilateral cooperation in the fields of energy, connectivity, agriculture, IT, textiles, and logistics. It may be mentioned here that the Uzbek President clinched a seven-year term after landslide victory in the Presidential elections held on Sunday July 9, 2023. The President returned to the office by grabbing more than 87 per cent votes.

DNA



renowned for its rich cultural heritage and historical sites. The government has focused on developing tourism as a key sector of the economy. Efforts have been made to promote the country's historical cities, such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Uzbekistan has simplified visa procedures, improved infrastructure, and increased international promotion, resulting in a significant increase in tourist arrivals. Education and Human Development: Uzbekistan has made substantial progress in improving its education system. The government has prioritized education reforms, including curriculum development, teacher training, and the modernization of educational infrastructure. Efforts have also been made to increase access to education, particularly in rural areas. These initiatives have led to higher literacy rates and improved human development indicators.

**Regional Cooperation and Diplomacy:** Uzbekistan has actively pursued regional cooperation and diplomacy in Central Asia. The country has played a crucial role in fostering dialogue and cooperation among Central Asian nations on various issues, including water management, transportation, and security. Uzbekistan has also improved its relations with neighboring countries and actively participated in regional organizations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO). These success stories illustrate Uzbeki-

stan's progress in various areas, including economic development, agriculture, tourism, education, and regional cooperation. However, it's important to note that challenges remain, such as the need for further reforms, ensuring inclusive growth, and addressing social issues.

**“ Regional Cooperation and Diplomacy: Uzbekistan has actively pursued regional cooperation and diplomacy in Central Asia. The country has played a crucial role in fostering dialogue and cooperation among Central Asian nations on various issues, including water management, transportation, and security. ”**

Despite all the challenges, Uzbekistan is a success story. The country has achieved significant economic growth in recent years, and it is now a middle-income coun-

try. Uzbekistan has the potential to continue to grow in the future, but it will need to address the challenges it faces.

## **TOURIST ATTRACTIONS OF UZBEKISTAN**

**Samarkand:** One of the oldest inhabited cities in Central Asia, Samarkand is a UNESCO World Heritage site and a must-visit destination. The city is famous for its breathtaking architectural marvels such as the Imam Bukhari Mausoleum, Registan Square, Gur-e-Amir Mausoleum, and Bibi-Khanym Mosque. A new tourist center has been established in the outskirts of Samarkand. It was in fact created on the occasion of the recently held SCO summit in which heads of states and governments participated. Pakistan was represented by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. This new tourist center is likely to become a must-visit place. During my recent visit to Samarkand in July 2023 I had a chance to visit this place.

**Bukhara:** Known as an open-air museum, Bukhara is another UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the best-preserved medieval cities in the world. It is home to numerous historical sites, including the Ark Fortress, Kalon Minaret, Po-i-Kalyan complex, and the stunning Lyab-i-Hauz complex. **Khiva:** Situated along the Silk Road, Khiva is a well-preserved ancient city with an extraordinary architectural ensemble. The Itchan Kala, the old inner city, is a UNESCO World Heritage site and offers a glimpse into the rich history and culture of the region.

**Tashkent:** The capital city of Uzbekistan,

# UZBEK PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Tashkent, is a vibrant metropolis blending modernity with historical landmarks. Visit the Old City with its traditional mosques and mausoleums, explore the impressive Independence Square, and visit the Chorsu Bazaar for a taste of the local culture.

Shakhrisabz: Birthplace of the great conqueror Amir Timur (Tamerlane), Shakhrisabz is home to his mausoleum and other stunning architectural structures. The Ak-Saray Palace and the Kok Gumbaz Mosque are notable attractions.

Fergana Valley: This picturesque region is known for its beautiful landscapes, traditional handicrafts, and rich cultural heritage. Explore the cities of Fergana, Margilan, and Kokand, and visit the Rishtan Ceramics Workshop to witness the production of exquisite ceramic art. These are just a few highlights of the many tourism attractions Uzbekistan has to offer. The country's rich cultural heritage, warm hospitality, and fascinating history make it an increasingly popular destination for travelers.



## KTC receives award for 'best export performance'

RECORDER REPORT PUBLISHED JULY 26, 2023



KTC, with its fully integrated production facility and years of expertise, has been able to use Pakistan-produced tobacco to manufacture products that meet international standards. KTC is also the third largest cigarette manufacturer of Pakistan and was the first company to implement the Track and Trace system for cigarettes. KTC is listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange and has exported millions of dollars of tobacco in the last financial year. KTC contributed just under PKR 4 billion to the national exchequer in taxes in FY 22/23.

Governors of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh gave Khyber Tobacco Company CEO Samera Irfan the prestigious award for Best Export Performance in a well-attended ceremony.

For nearly 60 years, KTC has worked to ensure that clients get superior-quality tobacco products at a competitive price, says a press release. It says that the company is located in the centre of Pakistan's tobacco-growing region and is the largest tobacco company. It has won several export awards and medals over the years. KTC is known for exporting threshed strips/re-dried tobacco, cut tobacco blends and manufactured cigarettes to UAE, South and West Africa, Sri Lanka, Jordan and many more countries.

The establishment of KTC coincided with tobacco cultivation in Pakistan in the 1950s. FCV, Rustica (WP), and DAC are the three types of tobacco usually used to produce cigarettes. FCV is mainly produced in KP but Punjab also produces this crop. It is estimated that 85.5 M. KG FCV will be produced this year.

## Serena Hotels, Pakistan Squash Federation celebrate Hamza Khan victory

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Despite all odds, our youth has always made us proud by showing their resilience and determination to succeed. Pakistan's Hamza Khan won the World Junior Squash Championship in Melbourne on Sunday, a feat which was last accomplished by Jansher Khan in 1986. In an epic finale against his Egyptian opponent Mohamed Zakaria, Hamza scored 10-12, 14-12, 11-3, and 11-6 by bringing the title of World Champion back to Pakistan after 37 years, creating history

and motivating thousands of young players across the country. In a ceremony hosted by Serena Hotels under its sports diplomacy initiative partnering with the Pakistan Squash Federation, Senior Vice President, Air Vice Marshal, Mr. Kazim Hamad, was the chief guest on the auspicious occasion, and he presented Hamza Khan with the Trophy along with his family making it even more special for the young athlete. Hamza Khan has accomplished so much while facing a lot of difficulties

in his career at an extremely young age and has made the whole nation proud, commented Group Captain Mr. Zafaryab Khan, the Honourary Secretary of Pakistan Squash Federation, congratulated Hamza, and his family for his momentous win. The evening was graced by media colleagues, senior government officials, the corporate community, and other notable members of society. The evening was an ode to Hamza, his resilience, and his accomplishments against all odds.



# It is time for Surgical Solution



**Dr Luay Shabaneh**

**O**N 14 July, the Law and Justice Commission and the Federal Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation, and Coordination organized an international conference on calibrating population and resources to enhance Pakistan's resilience. The conference brought national, provincial, and high-level experts from different parts of the world to explore ways and opportunities on population dynamics and the success stories in other regional and international experiences. It was a bitter moment for many participants to see that statistics categorized Pakistan's performance in the group of underperforming countries suffering from conflict such as Afghanistan and Somalia; Pakistan deserves to have performed better.

While the conference acknowledged the important initiatives by the federal and provincial governments on the population narrative and improving services and advocacy, the recommendations of the conference sent three important broad messages that Pakistan needs to accommodate urgently to make genuine changes in the spectrum of calibrating population and resources.

Only human rights-based approaches can bring sustainable solutions and make genuine change. Governments can not impose on families or women if or how many children they should have; it is their sole right to families themselves. Couples do not consult demographic trends, population size, or governments' plans anyway when they decide to have another baby, but they consult their own circumstances. Government, as a duty-bearer, must ensure that couples, as a right-holder, are empowered to implement their own decisions by providing them with high-quality, accessible, and affordable women-preference contraception services, and relevant information about family planning and its methods, benefits, etc. This includes empowering women to enjoy their reproductive rights, meaning being protected

from forced marriage, and forced pregnancy, and to be able to plan with their husbands their own spacing schemes. Reproductive rights include also but are not limited to, women having the choice to invest in their own human capital including delaying marriage until they complete the aspiration of education and economic empowerment, as well as being protected from gender-based violence. Women in Pakistan comprise a missed economic and social opportunity, and investing in their skills, education, and opportunities is a strategic direction to make a genuine change in the population agenda.

Enhancing the concept of accountability is instrumental to track progress. Accountability means that all government engagements and initiatives are not measured by activities initiated and money spent, but by the actual change that was made in the life of people. The

**“Enhancing the concept of accountability is instrumental to track progress. Accountability means that all government engagements and initiatives are not measured by activities initiated and money spent, but by the actual change that was made in the life of people. The current governance structure for entities engaged in population agenda is not the most effective and efficient option and does not involve the concept of AAP (accountability to affected population)”**

current governance structure for entities engaged in population agenda is not the most effective and efficient option and does not involve the concept of AAP (accountability to affected population). Furthermore, the population agenda is a national concern; it cannot be left to the population welfare and health departments with the current segregated structures and programs. It should be upgraded at the chief minister and prime minister level while PWDs and HDs lead the implementation. Ministries of finance, planning, education, and other ministries are key partners and leaders

and equally own the population agenda. The segregation of population programming between different structures limits the ability of inclusive programming; integration, modernization (or reform) might be an option to create an enabling environment for the AAP approach.

A surgical solution that creates enabling incubator for genuine change is the most viable option; business as usual is not an option. This includes revisiting the NFC formula to make it target-focused instead of demand-driven when it comes to population agenda. It is important that the NFC incentives and Taxing system encourage achieving population targets as stipulated in Pakistan's Vision such as gender equality, literacy rate, minimizing out-of-school adolescents, women's economic participation, women empowerment, reducing GBV, the increase in the rate of the prevalence of modern contraceptive, and other relevant output indicators instead of incentivizing population growth. This also includes empowering the culture of data-driven decisions and evidence-based policy and program implementation. Knowing that more than half of SDG targets do not have available data to measure is a real challenge to measure progress. Data accessibility and making official statistics a “Public Good” and enhancing the right to access public information are important to make a real change. Census is one of the most important instrumental tools for planning at the lower disaggregated level, most of the federal systems keep the census as a federal function to ensure impartiality and independence because it is a symbol of sovereignty where governments count people in their sovereign territories. Pakistan might consider aligning its national statistical system with the ten fundamental principles of official statistics of the United Nations and their consequent revisions and ethical codes of conduct.

The conference has shown that political momentum and anxiety about population growth can be translated into commitment and action that leads to genuine change; this has happened in Bangladesh, India, Iran, Tunisia, Indonesia, and other countries. But to achieve that, Pakistan needs champions and leaders who are decisive and equipped with knowledgeable teams. UNFPA is committed to supporting the government of Pakistan both at the federal and provincial level and I am sure all other development actors and donors are willing to help once Pakistan decides to move from anxiety to genuine action and where to go and how to grow.

# CPEC: A Bridge to the Future



**Qamar Bashir**

**O**VER the last decade, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been a huge success story. The project has aided in the improvement of communication between China and Pakistan, as well as the economic prosperity of both countries. It has been a decade of success in terms of enhancing connectivity between China and Pakistan, including the transformation of Gwadar into a modern port city, the upgrade of the Karakoram Highway, and the facilitation of goods and people movement between the two nations. It has been a prosperous decade, as the CPEC has promoted economic development in both China and Pakistan, increased investment, and helped both countries' economies thrive. CPEC has brought the two countries closer together and has contributed to the development of trust and understanding. A decade of hope: CPEC has aided in the improvement of infrastructure, the creation of jobs, the expansion of the economy, and the giving of hope to people for a better future. CPEC is a success story that is still unfolding, and it is certain to have a long-term positive impact on both the countries and the region.

According to an authentic research study conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), CPEC has the potential to increase China's GDP by \$2.5 trillion and Pakistan's GDP by \$350 billion, while also creating up to 7 million employment in Pakistan by 2030. According to another analysis by the Centre for Global Development, CPEC may enhance trade between China and Pakistan by \$30 billion while lowering transportation costs up to 30%. According to these analyses, the economic benefits of CPEC are and will continue to enhance the lives of millions of Pakistanis by improving access to roads, railroads, and power, provided that concerns about debt sustainability and environmental damage are addressed.

The tangible advantages gained to Pakistan in the last 10 years have been summarised eloquently by the Ambassador of Pakistan to China Mr. Moin ul Haq, with whom I had the honour to work as a Press Minister in the Embassy of Pakistan to France (2015-2020). He is an accomplished gentleman, a compassionate, caring, and affectionate senior, with distinct communication and leadership skills, who supports a clear vision and is passionate about Pakistan. In the following comments, he described tangible benefits in a report delivered to the president for his review. Over the last ten years, 888 km of road network have been constructed, and 13 major energy projects have added over 8000 MWs of

energy to Pakistan's national grid. A new 878-kilometre transmission line has been constructed to evacuate 4000 MW of electricity. An 820 km long cross-border optical fibre cable has been installed, which cumulatively has enhanced Pakistan's GDP by 1-2%. After the second phase of CPEC is completed, the contribution of CPEC is expected to grow exponentially. These tangible outcomes of CPEC have negated the concerns expressed by the United States, India, and some Western countries that CPEC will give China too much influence in the region and that Pakistan's debt burden will increase and would make Pakistan more vulnerable to Chinese influence.

Both Pakistan and China have held several events in both countries to highlight the achievements accomplished by CPEC over the previous ten years. As the finale of these events, Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng has already arrived in Pakistan (30th July, 2023) to preside over a ceremony commemorating the tenth anniversary of the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Mr. He, a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, is in-charge of China's global economic relations and the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, of which CPEC is a flagship project. He will meet with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Arif Alvi separately, in addition to being the ceremony's Chief guest with Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif.

CPEC is the flagship project of China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Chinese government launched OBOR in 2013 in an effort to connect Asia, Europe, and Africa via a network of highways, railways, ports, and other infrastructure projects to facilitate trade, investment, and connectivity. In 2013, President Xi announced the initiative during state visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia. The plan had two components: the Silk Road Economic Belt on land and the Maritime Silk Road. Initially referred to as the One Belt, One Road initiative, the two were eventually renamed the Belt and Road Initiative.

According to the Green Finance and Development Center, China's investment in BRI projects in 2022 was about \$67.8 billion and in pursuance of this initiative so far China has signed over 200 deals with Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal and quite a few other countries. This is however far less than the commitment made by the Chinese government in 2017 to invest over \$ one trillion under this initiative. In Pakistan, the road and highways arteries built under CPEC are providing much-needed connectivity within Pakistan and with regional and international countries. Under this project, approximately 888 kilometers of brand new motorways and highways have been constructed, with another 853 kilometers of world-class roads currently under construction.

In the first phase, the completed motorways included KKH Phase II (Havelian - Thakot Section), Peshawar-Karachi Motorway (Multan - Sukkur Section), Hakla - D.I. Khan Motorway, and Orange Line Metro Train - Lahore.

Moreover, package I of the Main Line-I (ML-I) railway upgrade project will be initiated in the middle of this year. New Gwadar International Airport, Pak-China Friendship Hospital, Gwadar East Bay Expressway, and Gwadar Technical &

Vocational Institute have all been completed.

Gwadar, Pakistan's deep sea port on the Arabian Sea, is a key component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and has the potential to become a major regional trade and transit hub. The government has made substantial investments in the development of Gwadar port and the associated infrastructure, including roads, railways, and pipelines, which will increase connectivity and facilitate trade with neighbouring nations including China, Iran, and Afghanistan.

Eleven power projects totaling over 6,370 MW have been completed, 880 km of transmission lines have been installed, and projects totaling around 1200 MW are anticipated to be completed by 2023-2024 which will provide much needed power pivotal for socio-economic and industrial growth. Additionally, approximately 192,000 jobs have been created by CPEC investments and their secondary effects.

The CPEC has already entered its second phase, during which socioeconomic development, science and technology, agricultural cooperation, and industrialization will be the focus of cooperation.

Of the agreed-upon 27 socioeconomic development projects, 17 fast-track projects have been initiated and are proceeding smoothly, while seven projects have been completed and five are in progress.

During the most recent meeting of the outgoing Chinese ambassador, Mr. Nong Rong, with President Alvi, which I also attended, the President expressed his satisfaction with the substantial progress made to complete the already commissioned projects, launch new projects, and advance the ML-1 project in order to accelerate the country's development.

The President specifically mentioned Chinese-Pakistani cooperation in the joint production and marketing of JF-17 Aircraft on the global market, which, according to him, would expedite the export of cutting-edge fighter aircraft and meet the security needs of the purchasing nations. The President mentioned in particular the success of a garment factory that was established in Lahore in a record-setting five months and began producing garments for internationally renowned brands. It was also decided to replicate this model of success in other regions of the country. Both Pakistan and China have time and again reaffirmed their commitment for speedily implementing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, to take the decades-old geopolitical relations to geo economic orbit. CPEC would ultimately help in creating a regional economic bloc of three billion people through improved regional integration and connectivity, and Pakistan could play a critical role being located in the centre of three engines of growth -- South Asia, Central Asia and China.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a multibillion-dollar initiative that has the potential to revolutionise the economy of Pakistan. To realise the full benefits of CPEC, Pakistan's leadership, bureaucracy, government, and nation must all contribute.

As CPEC takes shape, we must be patient and understanding. CPEC represents a fantastic opportunity for Pakistan. However, it is merely an opportunity. It is up to Pakistan to grab this opportunity and ensure its success.



**CEO Monal Group Luqman Ali Afzal and his wife host farewell dinner for Ambassador of Jordan Ibrahim Al Madni**









# Ambassador of Egypt Tarek Dahroug hosts grand reception to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of Egypt Pakistan friendship





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# National Day of France celebrated





# *Independence Day of Belarus celebrated*









# 75 years of the Netherlands Pakistan friendship

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## **Korean ambassador bids farewell to his Pakistani friends**





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# Turkiye embassy hosts ceremony to mark the FETO and 15 July coup attempt



## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Türkiye Mehmet Pacaci hosted ceremony to mark the FETO 15 July coup attempt. The Speaker of the National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf was the chief guest. Ambassador of Türkiye in his speech said, "Today we commemorate the seventh anniversary of the thwarted coup attempt carried out by the FETO terrorist organization in Türkiye on July 15, 2016. After 2016, every year the day is now for us "15 July Democracy and National Unity and Martyrs' Day" in order to remember our martyrs and pray for them and also to celebrate the victory that our courageous people won for the sake of our country, democracy and identity. The evening and night of the 15th of July was a night of unprecedented betrayal in Türkiye, as well as a night of unprecedented heroism, until dawn. The night of July 15 was a long night, and it was the night when Turkish democracy was protected by the firm will of the people of Türkiye. And that night was the one when Türkiye's territorial integrity, demographic integrity and cultural integrity, in every sense, were protected by its own citizens under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Thou-

sands of civilians took to the streets to stop this treacherous coup attempt. Not only did the Turkish people take to the streets, they also resisted with their bare hands against terrorists who dared to attack their own innocent citizens with heavy weapons. That night, FETO members, who had infiltrated the military for decades, left the barracks and occupied key points in the cities. With the tanks they captured they blocked the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul, with warplanes and combat helicopters, they bombarded strategic points such as the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, the Presidential Complex, the military and the police headquarters. They attempted to kill the President by sending an assassination team against the Him, and attacked the Prime Minister's car. That night, the perpetrators cold bloodedly killed 251 innocent civilians from among hundreds of thousands of people having resisted them in Ankara, Istanbul and other cities, and injured thousands. 15 July night, the Turkish people defended democracy simply at the cost of their lives. This brave response, however, was never awaited by the conspirators. FETO was founded as a so-called "religious movement". Especially under the guise of promoting education and inter-

religious dialogue. Having done so they managed to cover up their bad intentions. For decades, this organization had stolen the children of the country. They took away bright minds from their families, brainwashed them and made them their adherents having turned them against first their families, their own society and finally their own country. A full-scale plot, the final phase of which was revealed on July 15, 2016, had been conducted in secret since the 1960s. For decades, FETO members had well-planned and widely infiltrated political parties, the military, law enforcement, intelligence, judiciary, numerous other ministries and government agencies, universities, press, social media, business and even sports clubs. In addition to controlling a significant part of educational institutions, FETO also became the owner of many financial institutions. Bank accounts were fed by prominent members of FETO's industrial and commercial network and people who were blindly attached to them. Many innocent civilians were also tricked into contributing to the financing of FETO by manipulating their piety. Enormous revenue from its schools around the world was diverted to these accounts, which secretly awaited their final move. The organization has

also set up media houses to shape public opinion for and against any individual, group or idea. Many people in Türkiye who opposed the organization were lynched by its media, its secret affiliates in judiciary and its men in the law enforcement agencies. The FETO apparatus used its power to liquidate the opponents of the organization with illegal wiretapping, fabricated evidence and unlawful arrests, intimidating and blackmailing a wide segment of society from politicians to businessmen, journalists to sports people. The organization stole the entrance exam questions for universities and government institutions. In this way, it has ensured that its supporters had infiltrated the institutions over the years and been unfairly placed in high positions in the institutions’.





# Pakistan, Italy sign debt swap accord

Andreas Ferrarese, the Italian Ambassador in Pakistan and Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, signed the EoL and extended the timeline of the PIDSA

Ansar M Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Italy reached an agreement to extend the timeline of the Pakistan-Italian Debt Swap Agreement (PIDSA) through the Exchange of Letters (EoL). Andreas Ferrarese, the Italian Ambassador in Pakistan and Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, signed the EoL and extended the timeline of the PIDSA up to 31st December 2024 on the same procedures, modalities, terms, and conditions as defined in the signed Agreement dated November 4, 2006, between Pakistan and Italy. During the extension period, the remaining activities of PIDSA will be completed i.e., the remaining debt will be canceled, completion of ongoing PIDSA projects, handing/taking over of assets, impact evaluation of the PIDSA Programme, and final report of the PIDSA Programme. The Government of Pakistan and the Government of Italy had signed an agreement for Development Swap, on November 4, 2006, which came into force in 2009. Approximately \$100 million (US \$26.52 million &

Euro 58.74 million) equivalent to PKR 8.276 billion of Pakistan's debt owed to Italy is to be swapped for expenditure on development projects around the country on Health, Education, Agriculture, and Environment, Micro Credit Schemes, Poverty Alleviation, Rural Development and Infrastructure. Management Committee (MC) is the highest decision-making body of Pakistan Italian Debt Swap Agreement (PIDSA), co-chaired by H.E. the Italian Ambassador and Secretary Ministry of Economic Affairs along with representatives of the Federal and Provincial Governments. To date, 48 projects have been approved and funded by PIDSA, out of which 45 projects have been completed and 3 are in progress. The Secretary, of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, thanked the Government of the Republic of Italy for providing assistance under the Debt Swap Agreement and other Technical Assistance and emphasized further enhancing the bilateral ties between the two countries.



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## BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: ENSURING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION



# Serena Hotels hosts a panel discussion about bridging the divide; ensuring access to higher education

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels under its Public Diplomacy initiative Raabta hosted a panel discussion on the challenges and opportunities surrounding access to higher education in Pakistan. Due to limited access, and or lack of awareness amongst the talented students it hinders social mobility, perpetuates inequality, and constrains the country's progress. The panel discussion brought together experts, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to explore the barriers, discuss effective strategies and propose actionable recommendations to enhance access to higher education in Pakistan.

The moderator of Raabta, Sidra Iqbal, a vocal advocate of social issues related to gender inclusion and diversity, curated the event. The event was attended by members of academia, non-profits' representatives working for education outreach, members of diplomatic missions, government officials and students from various colleges and universities.

The panel comprised of eminent educators, policymakers; Dr. Osman Hasan, Pro-rector Academics NUST, Mr. Saleem Abdul Razaque, Programme Director USEFP, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Chairman Higher Education Commission Pakistan and Ms. Sarah Pervez, Head of Education, British Council. The dis-

cussion revolved around the work of various frameworks & institutions in providing education on all levels, including the role of the higher education commission in creating opportunities which are inclusive for all genders.

A Q & A session followed the discussion that engaged the audience, comprising of students from various educational institutions, were responded with by the panel of experts and were informed about various outreach programmes that are available, for future leaders of tomorrow. The discussion was broadcast live for those who were unable to attend in person to ensure access to the discourse for all wishing to participate.



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# Online Course showcases modern Indonesia for mutual learning

Ambassador Adam M. Tugio says that the OIP brings a wealth of Indonesian experiences and similarities to share with the participants

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Indonesian Embassy and Bahria University are organizing an International Online Internship Program (OIP) featuring prominent experts and scholars from Indonesia to showcase modern Indonesia, share views and explore mutual learning opportunities for further development of ties between Indonesia and Pakistan. The OIP was inaugurated virtually by Dr. Teuku Faizasyah, Indonesian Deputy Foreign Minister for Public Diplomacy. Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Guest said that the OIP applies a two way learning approach, firstly it provides a platform to analyze Indonesia from various aspects and secondly it allows participants to explore potential for cooperation from the current state of bilateral relations. "Through this program we hope to enrich participant's knowledge about Indonesia and at the same time we hope that this program will also stimulate exchanges of views on the topics of discussion among scholars, students and people in general", added the Deputy Minister.

Dr. Teuku Faizasyah further said that our two countries have many similarities being the largest Muslim population and shared history of colonization and today both strive for economic and social betterment of its citizens respectively. "Let us not forget that in 1959 Indonesia and Pakistan together with Sri Lanka, Myanmar and India initiated the Asian African Conference to advocate the values of solidarity friendship and cooperation. These values remains relevant in the context of today's geo politic and geo economic landscape where we face global competition among major powers".

It is therefore, he added, important for two countries to strengthen our cooperation amidst these challenges and continued to invest in efforts to strengthen mutual understanding and people to people between our two countries. He hoped that OIP is one the path to achieve this goal and offered selected OIP alumni to participate in the public diplomacy programs such as Indonesia-ASEAN cultural scholarship and friends of Indonesia. Director General Bahria University, Islamabad, Rear Admiral Zakaur Rehman in his welcome remarks expressed his gratitude to the Chief Guest, Dr. Teuku Faizasyah for his virtual presence at the OIP's inaugural session. He commended Ambassador Tugio's initiative of organizing the OIP which reflected the level of Indonesian Ambassador Interest in furthering the



fraternal ties between Indonesia and Pakistan through education. He urged the participants to fully benefit from the Indonesian panelists discussion on diverse range of topics to enhance their understanding of emerging Indonesia's contemporary dynamics. Speaking on the occasion, Indonesian Ambassador Adam M. Tugio said that the OIP brings a wealth of Indonesian experiences and similarities to share with the participants. He said that beside the religious and cultural similarities the OIP will also highlight Indonesia's great struggle to overcome the successive and multiple enormous challenges including political and economic crises that were quite comparable in nature what Pakistan is experi-

encing these days.

Ambassador Tugio mentioned that in Pakistan Indonesia was synonymous to its founding father President Sukarno, Palm Oil and Bali. "Indonesia was much more than that because it is also a third largest democracy, a global emerging economy of inclusive growth and a pluralistic society with the largest Muslim population in the world", added Tugio. The envoy expressed his pleasure in sharing that Pakistani students were among the highest recipients of scholarships in Indonesia in the last three years. He expressed hope that the OIP will attract more students from Pakistani to study about modern Indonesia and in Indonesia as well.



# Indonesian Envoy hosts lunch for the FAMTRIP participants



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## 24th Anniversary of the Accession to The Throne of King Mohammed VI of Morocco

ISLAMABAD: Chief guest Rana Tanveer Hussain Federal Minister for Education, Ambassador of Morocco Mohammed Karmoune and others cut the cake to celebrate the 24th Anniversary of the Accession to The Throne of King Mohammed VI of Morocco.

Rana Tanveer Hussain in his speech highlighted cooperation between Pakistan and

Morocco. He added both countries enjoy excellent relations. He thanked the ambassador for inviting him as the chief guest.

Ambassador of Morocco thanked the guests for attending the event. He said relations between both brotherly countries are excellent. He hoped these relations will further expand. – DNA







# Malaysian High Commissioner hosts dinner for the former participants of MTCP

High Commissioner Mohammad Azhar Mazlan says Malaysia sees MTCP as integral towards strengthening mutually beneficial bilateral relations

**D.N.A**



ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan Mohammad Azhar Mazlan hosted a dinner reception for the former participants of the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Program (MTCP). A large number of former MTCP participants attended the dinner reception. The Additional Secretary Asia Pacific Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan Ameer Khurram Rathore also attended the event. The Malaysian High Commissioner in his speech welcomed the guests and shared salient features of the program. He said the purpose of the event was to establish closer relations and strengthen networking between the High Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad and former MTCP participants, particularly from Pakistan. Malaysia attaches great importance to its bilateral relations with Pakistan.

The long standing bilateral relations and close cooperation between our two brotherly countries have covered various areas in trade, investment, education, tourism, culture, defence and technical assistance on human capital development. He added, the MTCP reflects Malaysia's commitment to South-South cooperation, particularly technical cooperation and formulated based on Malaysia's principle that the development of a country depends on the quality of its human resources. In addition, Malaysia sees MTCP as integral towards strengthening mutually beneficial bilateral relations. He highlighted that the Malaysian High Commission is planning to offer more courses in various sectors for Pakistan. The envoy reiterated the Malaysian High Commission's commitment to sharing developmental experiences and expertise by providing various human capacity-building program and technical assistance to Pakistan. "Hopefully the MTCP participants would utilise the knowledge and experience to further contribute for the betterment of Pakistan," the Malaysian envoy added. It may be mentioned here that the MTCP emphasizes human re-



sources development mainly through training and capacity-building courses including short-term courses at Malaysian public and private training institutions, and long-term courses at Malaysian public universities. Annually, Malaysia's flagship MTCP offers technical training and capacity-building programmes in vast areas of development in collaboration with leading local training institutions and international development partners. Malaysian Government aims to encourage more future participation from Pakistani officials in the MTCP, as it would not only be beneficial for the bilateral relations but it would also assist in the career development of the participants. Some of the former participants including a senior joint secretary in the Ministry of Information Technology shared his experiences. He said he participated in the programme almost two decades ago however he still fondly cherished his days spent in Malaysia under the MTCP.



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