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Requiem for the Pakistan cricket team



AN ignominious defeat at the hands of cricket minnows USA during the T20 World Cup opening match did not bode well for the future of the Pakistan cricket team. After restricting Pakistan to a modest total of 159, the USA managed to chase down the target on the last ball, forcing the match into a super over. In the super over, the USA scored 18 runs. The Pakistani openers then failed to reach this target, bringing disrepute to themselves and their country. This is for the first time that Pakistan could not qualify for the quarters finals consequently in future Pakistan had to appear in the qualifying round to be able to be eligible for the T20 World Cup. Let's delve into the various factors that led to this

debacle, starting with team fitness. Key player Imad Wasim was brought back into the team to strengthen Pakistan's middle order. However, he became unfit before the crucial match. The team had undergone numerous fitness tests at the Pakistan Military Academy in Kakul before departing for Ireland and England. After the rigorous sessions at PMA, it was expected that fitness issues would not trouble the players. Another player, Muhammad Amir, who had announced his retirement and was previously sentenced for involvement in betting, was also called back to the squad. He was chosen to bowl the super over, during which he conceded 18 runs, including 8 runs from extras. This proved to be a poor decision, especially with regular bowler Shaheen Afridi available.

We witnessed yet another disappointing performance from Azam Khan, both as a wicketkeeper and a batsman. It remains a mystery who is behind his selection for the team. I cannot recall any player in any sport with a physical structure like Azam Khan's performing well. His physique appears unfit for any kind of sport, yet he continues to be part of the team. The frequent changes in management at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) are a significant factor contributing to the team's lackluster performance. Often, PCB Chairmen lack a cricketing background, leading to the captain and senior team members dominating the selection process. Currently, Captain Babar Azam is believed to have formed a strong group of like-minded players within the team, thereby exerting considerable influence over team management decisions. The incumbent PCB Chairman, Mohsin Naqvi, appears to be inexperienced and easily influenced due to his lack of cricketing knowledge and administrative skills. Consequently, the team seems to be in disarray.

Taking a cue from the past and considering the current system at the PCB, it is evident that everyone aspires to be the PCB chairman due to the substantial perks and privileges associated with the position. Beyond the monetary benefits, the PCB chairman enjoys free travel, five-star accommodations, and other luxurious amenities while accompanying the team. The opportunity to grant favors to close associates further enhances the appeal of this role. The overall political system of a country undeniably has a direct impact on sports. In Pakistan, the political landscape is fluid, uncertain, and fraught with anomalies, which has disrupted the country's systems, including sports. Appointments to key positions often ignore the merit principle, leading to poor performances in various sports disciplines. Recently, Pakistan hired South African star player Gary Kirsten as the head coach of their cricket team. However, he cannot be blamed for the recent defeat as he did not have sufficient time to coach the team. Additionally, he likely had minimal influence over team selection, which is unfortunate. His post-debacle press conference is a testimony to the fact that all is not well within the team. The Pakistan hockey team performed well in the Azlan Shah Cup and the National Cup in Poland, largely due to the influence of Dutch coach Roelant Oltmans, who was given the authority to select the team. This situation arose because of disagreements between two parallel selection committees within the hockey federation. Drawing from this experience, it might be beneficial for cricket to adopt a similar approach, eliminating the need for a separate selection committee and allowing the coach to make team selections directly. This arrangement will also do away with various pressure groups within the team.

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.

Prince Rahim Aga Khan awarded Pakistan's highest civilian honour

DNA



ISLAMABAD: The President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, today conferred the Nishan-e-Pakistan, the nation's highest civilian award, on Prince Rahim Aga Khan. The award recognises individuals who have rendered services of the highest distinction to Pakistan, and was given at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the President's official residence in Islamabad. Prince Rahim is currently visiting Pakistan to review AKDN projects in renewable energy, microfinance, and information technology, as well as meet government officials and leaders of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the Ismaili community.

Noting Prince Rahim's role as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development and Chair of the Aga Khan Development Network's Environment and Climate Committee, the award citation states:

"Prince Rahim Aga Khan, through his many leadership roles within the Aga Khan Development Network, has, for more than a quarter century, dedicated his untiring efforts to improving the quality of life of peoples in resource-constrained regions of Asia and Africa...His personal engagement in assuring that initiatives impacting the economic, health, educational and cultural well-being of poor and marginalised communities respond to evolving and contemporary needs, upholds a multigenerational legacy that traces its origins, in Pakistan, to the founding of the nation."

Upon receiving the Nishan-e-Pakistan, Prince Rahim said: "I am honoured to accept such a distinguished award on behalf of the Aga Khan Development Network, my colleagues, our staff, and the many volunteers who work tirelessly to improve the lives of the people of Pakistan. I express my warmest gratitude to the President and Government of Pakistan for this immense recognition." His Highness the Aga Khan, founder and Chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network, received this award in 1983 for his social and economic welfare activities in Pakistan, in the Muslim Ummah as a whole, and in the developing world. Past recipients include other world leaders, such as Nelson Mandela and Queen Elizabeth II.

Notes: Aga Khan Development Network in Pakistan Institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) have been operating in Pakistan since 1905. Today, it operates activities aimed at improving the overall quality of life in the regions in which AKDN works. Involvements range from rural development and financial inclusion to advanced medical research and access to quality education, meeting both immediate needs and investing in Pakistan's future. AKDN programmes have been replicated in all the provinces of Pakistan as well as neighbouring countries.

Prince Rahim Aga Khan inaugurates new Software Technology Park



DNA

NASIRABAD: Through a partnership between the Special Communications Organization (SCO) and the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (AKF, P), the new Software Technology Park in Nasirabad, Hunza will support the sustainable development of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) by providing uninterrupted power supply, high-speed internet, and a co-working space for small and growing start-ups, freelancers, and chambers of commerce. The Nasirabad Software Technology Park will act as the central resource for a hub and spokes model linking other IT facilities in more remote areas of the region. This will enhance access to distance learning, entrepreneurship and career counselling, and digital skills development, while catalysing freelance business opportunities. Present on the occasion were the Director General of the Special Communications Organization, Major General Umar Ahmad Shah; the Director of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development and Chairman of Habib Bank Limited, Mr Sultan Ali Allana; the President of the Ismaili Council for Pakistan, Mr Nizar Mewawalla; and the Chief Executive Officer of AKF, P, Mr Akhtar Iqbal. Chairman Sultan Ali Allana expressed his optimism that the new Software Technology Park will strengthen the economy of

the region: “The users of this new facility will be reliably connected to businesses in Pakistan and around the world. This will provide a range of opportunities nationally and internationally, foster innovation, facilitate the creation of new business networks, and drive economic growth in the region.” Major General Umar Ahmad Shah thanked the Aga Khan Development Network and remarked, “SCO Vision 2025 focuses on youth empowerment through the provision of a sustained IT environment. We are committed to rapidly expanding IT and Free-Lancing Hubs (FLHs) across Azad Jammu and Kashmir as well as Gilgit Baltistan. The initiative harnesses the potential of our youth, creates job opportunities, and brings in foreign remittances. The transformed IT landscape is helping the socio-economic uplift of the region as youth are actively contributing to the overall development and prosperity of these areas.” Speaking about the importance of the initiative, the CEO of AKF Pakistan, Mr. Akhtar Iqbal noted, “Gilgit Baltistan has great potential to become a hub for software companies in Pakistan. With access to high-speed internet, 24-hour electricity supply, co-working spaces, and an attractive geographical location, it will attract national and international tech companies and digital nomads who can have a significant beneficial impact on the economy of the country.”

Prince Rahim Aga Khan visits Hunza district

Solar Power Plants in Hunza, Gilgit-Baltistan

Phase I of Duiker Solar Power Plant, which has a generation capacity of 1MWp and 0.6MWh battery storage, commenced operations in November 2023, increasing the daily power availability for more than 11,000 people, from 10 to 17 hours in summer and from 4 to 9 hours in winter

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HUNZA: Prince Rahim Aga Khan visited Hunza district in Gilgit-Baltistan to launch the development of Duiker Phase II and Nasirabad Solar Power Plants with a total capacity of 3.6 MWp.

Phase I of Duiker Solar Power Plant, which has a generation capacity of 1MWp and 0.6MWh battery storage, commenced operations in November 2023, increasing the daily power availability for more than 11,000 people, from 10 to 17 hours in summer and from 4 to 9 hours in winter. When commissioned in November 2024, Duiker Phase II will expand generation capacity from 1MWp to 1.6MWp, and battery storage from 0.6MWh to 1MWh, providing increased electricity to an additional 8,760 people. Crucially, Duiker replaces diesel power generation, leading to an annual reduction of 1,100 metric tons of CO2 equivalent.

A 2MWp Solar Power Plant with 1MWh battery storage will also be constructed in Nasirabad in lower Hunza. This will supply power to an additional 23,400 people. The Nasir-

abad Solar Power Plant is expected to be commissioned in June 2025.

NPAK Energy Limited, a subsidiary of Industrial Promotion Services (IPS), the industrial and infrastructure development arm of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED), is investing \$6m in these projects. Project financing blends equity, sustainable debt, and grants. An additional \$14m has been secured from development partners for the enhancement of the region's energy infrastructure.

Over the next five years, NPAK Energy will mobilise additional investments in clean, sustainable sources of electricity across Hunza and surrounding areas, addressing the region's acute energy deficit while contributing to global efforts to mitigate climate change. The company is committed to improving public service delivery by creating a sustainable, self-reliant utility operation that catalyses economic opportunities and job creation, and models an innovative and efficient public-private partnership that contributes to sustainable development.



Meeting with Prime Minister & President of Pakistan



ISLAMABAD: On the final day of his visit to Pakistan, Prince Rahim Aga Khan met with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, at his official residence in Islamabad. Welcoming him, the Prime Minister thanked Prince Rahim for the work that AKDN is doing for the wellbeing of the people of Pakistan. He also expressed his deep appreciation for the role that Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III, played in the creation of Pakistan. Prince Rahim was accompanied by Mr Sultan Ali Allana, Director of AKFED, and Shafik Sachedina, who heads the Department of Diplomatic Affairs of His Highness the Aga Khan.



Prince Rahim Aga Khan and Mr Sultan Ali Allana Director of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) & Chairman HBL meeting the Honourable President of Pakistan.



Prince Rahim Aga Khan Inaugurates HBL MfB's RHQ Gilgit-Baltistan: A Commitment to Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship



GILGIT, Pakistan – 9th June 2024 – HBL Microfinance Bank (HBL MfB) inaugurated today its new Regional Headquarters for Gilgit Baltistan. The ceremony was attended by Prince Rahim Aga Khan, Chair of the Executive Committee of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED); Mr. Sultan Ali Allana, Chairman, HBL; Mr. Muhammad Nassir Salim, President & CEO, HBL; Mr. Raymond Kotwal, Chairman, HBL MfB; and Mr. Amir Khan, President & CEO, HBL MfB. The building underlines the Bank's commitment to sustainability, innovation, and local community development. A blend of modern architecture and local cultural elements, the building meets some of the highest international standards of green construction. It has earned the LEED Gold certification and EDGE Advanced certification, one of the first buildings in the country to achieve this. The LEED Gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council highlights the building's superior performance in energy and water efficiency, sustainable site development, and indoor environmental quality. The EDGE Advanced certification, granted by the International

Finance Corporation (IFC), underscores the building's commitment to resource efficiency, achieving significant energy and water savings. The building is well equipped to produce 40 percent of the overall electricity required for its day-to-day functions. "The inauguration of HBL Microfinance Bank's Regional Headquarters Gilgit-Baltistan is a remarkable milestone for both the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the Bank," said Prince Rahim Aga Khan. "It is a major step towards AKDN's goal of achieving Net-Zero by 2030. As we continue our journey to a better and more sustainable future, this building serves as a symbol of continued progress, sustainability, and prosperity for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan."

Mr. Raymond Kotwal, Chairman HBL MfB, remarked, "The inauguration of our Regional Headquarters, Gilgit Baltistan is a testament to our commitment to sustainable development and the well-being of the communities we serve. Gilgit holds a special place in the journey of HBL Microfinance Bank, as we started here more than two decades ago.

This building is a symbol of our dedication to fostering economic



growth while preserving the region's environment. By integrating sustainable practices with local culture, HBL Microfinance Bank has set a new benchmark in environmental stewardship and corporate responsibility. We take pride in contributing to the development of the Gilgit-Baltistan region and look forward to continuing our support for all Pakistanis."

Mr. Amir Khan, President & CEO HBL MfB, added, "The flagship Regional Headquarters Gilgit Baltistan exemplifies the strength, stability, and resilience of Pakistan's best microfinance bank. The Regional Headquarters not only boosts our operational capabilities but also represents progress and hope for the Gilgit-Baltistan region. Throughout the project, particular attention was paid towards the area, which is why 27 percent of the total project cost was allocated to boost the local economy, through the onboarding of regional suppliers and the creation of employment opportunities."

About HBL Microfinance Bank:

HBL Microfinance Bank Ltd. was established in 2002 as the first private sector microfinance bank, licensed by the State Bank of Pakistan. HBL MfB was created through a structured transformation of the credit and savings section of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), an integrated development program to pioneer the microfinance sector in the country, operating since 1982 in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. HBL MfB was established with the mission to respond to poverty and contribute to the social and economic well-being of society by providing opportunities to thousands of underprivileged households. Through targeted financial and multi-sectoral products and services based on the evolving needs of the poor, HBL MfB enables its clients to strengthen their entrepreneurial base and build financial, physical, and human capital to secure their future.

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Chinese concerns about CPEC, some musings



Ansar M Bhatti

“Chinese investments in Pakistan's media, both in cash and kind, seem to have proven counterproductive. Mainstream media houses that are not beneficiaries of these investments often express their frustration through reports that may not always be unfounded but are invariably negative from the Chinese perspective”

MINISTER of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC), Liu Jianchao, during his recent visit to Pakistan acknowledged the support provided by Pakistan's armed forces in ensuring the security of Chinese nationals and development projects in Pakistan. However, he expressed serious concerns about the ongoing attacks on Chinese nationals, stating that the security situation in Pakistan remains a major issue for Chinese investors. The minister also emphasized the critical need for political stability in Pakistan and underscored the importance of achieving political consensus to help the country navigate its current crises. The minister said, "In a turbulent world of rising uncertainties, stability within the country is essential for development. Faced with complex internal and external challenges, Pakistan is navigating carefully through turbulent rivers,". The security of Chinese nationals working on various projects in Pakistan has been a consistent concern for both Chinese authorities and the Pakistani security establishment. Since the launch of the China-

Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in 2013, numerous Chinese nationals have been killed, particularly in Balochistan province, which is the focal point of CPEC activities. Minister Liu's statements about the security situation, made in front of representatives from all major political parties, are highly significant. Such statements are typically not made publicly, suggesting that if a high-level Chinese dignitary chose this prestigious gathering to voice concerns, it indicates that all back-channel options have likely been exhausted. It is now widely known that during the recent visit of Pakistan's Prime Minister and Army Chief to China, similar concerns were expressed emphatically. To improve political stability in Pakistan, it's important to understand that genuine political stability is crucial for addressing security concerns effectively. Political divides provide opportunities for miscreants to carry out subversive acts. China is likely aware of this, which is why their minister has called for political stability. The question, then, is how to achieve this stability. The Chinese side has demanded of the Pakistan government to establish a special security unit for the protection of the





Chinese nationals and the projects in Pakistan. Pakistan, on the contrary, claims that it has already established such force, however the security challenges posed by the terrorists still remain there.

The most viable way to achieve political stability is through free and fair elections, allowing the legitimate winners to govern. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, free and fair elections have often been elusive. Winning parties are frequently prevented from taking charge, damaging the democratic order in the country. The Chinese minister rightly pointed out that China wants to work with all political parties in Pakistan, a rational approach. However, China's apparent preference for the PML N over the PPP or PTI has been a source of concern for other political parties. Right or wrong, this inclination gives the impression that China feels more comfortable with PML N governments, which complicates the political landscape in Pakistan.

In 2018, when the Nawaz Sharif-led PML-N government was dislodged to bring in the PTI, spearheaded by Imran Khan, China did not welcome the change, fearing it might impact the well-being of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. In this context, it took almost a month or more for the Chinese ambassador in Pakistan to call on the then Prime Minister Imran Khan and congratulate him on his election. The delayed Chinese response was not well received within the ranks of the PTI, which had always viewed the CPEC projects with skep-

ticism. During the PTI government, work on all CPEC projects was halted mainly because the government ordered a thorough audit of the projects, suspecting large-scale corruption. Although China did not have a role in the removal of the PTI government, the incoming PDM government was seen as a positive development in terms of reviving the CPEC projects. Minister Liu also mentioned the 'negative' role of certain media outlets, accusing them of spreading 'false' information about the CPEC. While the minister may have grounds for his claim, it is crucial for the Chinese leadership to review and reassess their media policy. Problems arise when a one-sided media approach is adopted in dealing with the Pakistani media. Often, media officers in the embassy are unavailable, or their ranks are too junior to effectively interact with senior Pakistani journalists. This lack of coordination seems to be the primary source of the dissemination of misinformation whatsoever. Most importantly, Chinese investments in Pakistan's media, both in cash and kind, seem to have proven counterproductive. Mainstream media houses that are not beneficiaries of these investments often express their frustration through reports that may not always be unfounded but are invariably negative from the Chinese perspective. The Chinese government should reconsider its policy of financially assisting media houses directly or indirectly. This approach either needs to be eliminated or rationalized to ensure balanced and unbiased coverage.

A China media club is also existing in Islamabad which mainly comprises government officials and a few journalists and that two from least known media houses. To have such kind of media clubs ostensibly a good idea however it can only yield results provided it is a truly representative and club composed of genuine and leading media personnel.

Apart from media problems, another phenomenon that has adversely affected China's image happens to be the "think-tank syndrome." Since the launch of the CPEC project, there has been a mushroom growth of one-man or one-woman think tanks. Hefty sums are allocated to these think tanks, mostly run by pseudo-intellectuals. China needs to engage with genuine and reputable think tanks, which are abundant in Pakistan. This will certainly help augment efforts to strengthen the CPEC projects. CPEC undoubtedly holds immense benefits and opportunities for both Pakistan and China. It has ushered in an era of significant infrastructural development in Pakistan. The project, therefore, must be protected, supported, and strengthened. A partnership with China can bring about a revolution in Pakistan. Islamabad must address the genuine security concerns expressed by the Chinese minister. Similarly, the Chinese side should reconsider its policies, particularly in the areas mentioned above, to make this collaboration durable, trusted, and mutually beneficial.



Independence Day of Belarus celebrated





Indonesian Embassy, COMSTECH host the International Seminar

Sustainability of Palm Oil Industry and its Derivative Products

Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Islamabad in collaboration with COMSTECH jointly organize the international seminar on “Sustainability of Palm Oil Industry and its Derivative Products” at COMSTECH Auditorium, Islamabad (25/6). The international seminar aims to raise more awareness of the sustainability of the palm oil from Indonesia to the Pakistani public and maintain the awareness that the palm oil and its derivative products are not harmful to the health even beneficial for the well-being. By this seminar, more potentials are expected to explore the untapped potential of palm oil derivatives beyond culinary application. In his remarks, COMSTECH Adviser Prof. Dr. Syed Khurshid Hasnain mentioned that COMSTECH have strong commitment to support the natural products coming from the OIC member countries and expect more applied research on more application of the natural products for the industrial purposes that could benefits to the OIC member countries. He believed that science and technology should be applicable and give economic benefits to the people. On his turn, the Indonesian Chargé D’Affaires (CDA), Mr. Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma underlined the importance of palm oil for Indonesia as it contributes to 4.5 percent to the Country’s GDP, which absorbs more than 17 million direct and indirect workers. Given its significance, the Government of Indonesia successfully improved the approaches on palm oil production

to be more eco-and-labour-friendly.

“Please keep up with the Indonesian palm oil in our bilateral trade relations, and let us make it as milestone to improve more trade volumes between the two countries,” CDA said, inviting the Pakistani business community to participate Trade Expo Indonesia 2024 this October. The seminar discloses the minerals contained in the palm oil are very beneficial for the industry, compared with another vegetable oils and could be used for raw material of cosmetics, daily appliances, pharmaceuticals, paints, plastics and even biofuel. Palm oil is also considered very efficient in cost since it provides a high yield at a very affordable cost.

The seminar also showcases the scientific and academic research about the health benefits for the palm oil consumers and discloses the palm oil from Indonesia as having sustainable farming standards by putting human rights, deforestation, and environment as the core of the production process, even contributes to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The speakers of the seminar are Prof. Dedi Budiman Hakim, Bogor Agricultural Institute; Mr. Rashed Jan Muhammad, President BQATI; Prof. Muhammad Asim Shabir, University of Faisalabad; Mr. Djono Albar Burhan, Indonesia Palm Oil Association; Dr. Humaira Fatima, Quaid-e-Azam University; and Mr. Shahid Pervez, Secretary General of PVMA. The event was attended by a significant number of participants from entrepreneurs, scholars, students, and journalists in Pakistan. All participants received goodie bags from Indomie Pakistan, the world largest instant noodle brand based in Faisalabad, which is also a palm oil-based product. The government of Indonesia and COMSTECH have a successful history of collaboration in advancing science and technology among the OIC member countries. The COMSTECH research fellowship program in virology and vaccine technologies has been annually held since 2022. Both parties are also expected to co-organize an exhibition focusing on nutraceuticals and cosmetics made with natural and halal ingredients later this year.

Workshop ‘An insight into Thai hospitality’ organised

Specially for this workshop, the Royal Thai Embassy had invited lecturers and chef from Wandee Culinary Art School and Wandee Culinary Technological College, a renowned culinary school accredited by the Ministry of Education of Thailand



D N A

RAWALPINDI: Miss Kamolwan Sriposil, Charge d’Affaires and Mr. Pornarong Budhavadhana, First Secretary of Cultural Affairs from the Royal Thai Embassy in Islamabad organized a training and workshop titled “An Insight into Thai Hospitality” in collaboration with College of Tourism & Hotel Management (COTHM), Rawalpindi campus. Specially for this workshop, the Royal Thai Embassy had invited lecturers and chef from Wandee Culinary Art School and Wandee Culinary Technological College, a renowned culinary school accredited by the Ministry of Education of Thailand.

The school has also been approved to be the “National Testing Center” in Thai cuisine chef qualification by the Ministry of Labor of Thailand. Mr. Pasit Sriyaphai, Deputy Director, Miss Chounchom Song-

kraopan, Chef and Miss Sukanya Saisuwan, media personnel graciously traveled from Thailand to impart their knowledge, expertise, skills and wonderful tips to more than a hundred COTHM’s students in the arts of Thai hospitality and Thai cooking.

Mr. Pasit began with an in-depth lecture on the principles and practices of Thai hospitality. He emphasized the cultural values that underpin Thai hospitality, such as respect, humility, attention to details and a genuine desire to make guests feel at home. These values are seamlessly woven into every aspect of Thai service, from the welcoming gestures to the meticulous preparation of food. He also demonstrated the service character for food and beverage students.

One of the highlights of the day was the culinary workshops, where the students had the opportunity to prepare traditional Thai dishes under the guidance of experienced chefs. The workshops included the prepa-

ration of two iconic Thai dishes: Golden Cup and Creamy Red Curry with Chicken. The “Golden Cup” is a Thai Appetizer found in Thai heritage since King Rama V. During his trip to Penang, there was a gathering event with a wealthy person. There were various appetizers so called “peranakan top hat”. It was made into crispy cup in European hat shape with yam, shrimp, crab, cucumber, and corn mixed with sauce. Later on, people brought this cooking back to Thailand and cooked this dish widely by adding more ingredients. The second dish, “Creamy Red Curry with Chicken” has unique characteristic with condensed texture and salty sweet taste.

In addition to the culinary workshops, the Royal Thai Embassy also featured a display of delicate fruit and vegetable carvings, which is an integral part of Thai cuisine. This traditional art form involves transforming ordinary fruits and vegetables



into intricate and beautiful sculptures. In addition, there was also a display of Thai products and ingredients. Many of these ingredients can be found in supermarkets all over Pakistan. From fragrant herbs and spices to specialty sauces and fresh produce, the display highlighted the quality and variety of ingredients that form the backbone of Thai cuisine. This showcase not only enriched the culinary experience, but also provided insights into the cultural and economic aspects of Thai cuisine. In addition, the Royal Thai Embassy is pleased that COTHM and Wandee Culinary Art School are in talks for further academic

collaborations. The event has also paved the way for future collaborations between the Royal Thai Embassy and COTHM. Plans are already underway for similar workshops and training programs that will continue to explore the rich cultural heritage of Thailand and its contributions to the global tourism and hospitality industry. Such initiatives are expected to further enhance the skills and knowledge of hospitality professionals in Pakistan, fostering a spirit of innovation and excellence. The training and workshop on "An Insight into Thai Hospitality" at COTHM was a resounding success, offering a unique

blend of education, cultural exchange, and culinary artistry. The event not only highlighted the timeless appeal of Thai hospitality but also underscored the importance of cross-cultural collaboration and people-to-people connection in the ever-evolving world of tourism and hospitality. As participants departed with new skills, knowledge, and a deeper understanding of Thai culture, the event left an indelible mark on all who attended. It was a day of learning, sharing, and celebrating the universal language of hospitality—a fitting tribute to the spirit of cooperation between Thailand and Pakistan.

ASEAN Movie Night at the Indonesian Embassy: Creative Economy as Means for Managing Diversity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, in collaboration with the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI) organized an ASEAN Movie Night event featuring the award-winning Indonesian film “Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap” (Missing Home), directed by the Indonesian Producer Bene Dion Rajagukguk. The event was a delightful fusion of cinema and cuisine, celebrating the rich cultural ties and immense similarities between Indonesia and Pakistan. On this occasion, the Indonesia Chargé d’ Affaires (CDA) Mr. Rahmat Hindiarta in his welcoming remarks apprised the distinguished guests from diplomatic and Pakistani community that the ASEAN Movie Night reflects the spirit of continuously bolstering friendship among ASEAN family members. “Moreover, I also wish to transfer the spirit of friendship among us to our brothers and sisters in Pakistan and beyond,” he said. The Indonesian CDA also called Pakistani film makers to ‘Look East’

for further exploring potentials of creative economy in Indonesia and ASEAN region. Elaborating the huge economic potential of Indonesian creative industry he said, “The film industry is currently the fastest-growing sub-sector of Indonesia’s creative economy. The number of moviegoers in the country were more than 55 million in 2023. And in 2023, the local film industry in Indonesia set a new record with 20 movies, attracting over 1 million viewers each. In recent years, the film and entertainment industry in ASEAN countries, have experienced robust growth.” The event commenced by screening the video on ASEAN Summit 2023 held in the enchanting paradise of Labuan Bajo as one of Indonesian ten new Balis followed by the screening of Indonesian movie that provided a cinematic treat showcasing Indonesia’s perfect blend of humor, mutual respect, ideal parenting, local wisdom and morality, cultural richness, and beauty of natural landscape. Released in 2022, “Ngeri-Ngeri Sedap” is

a comedy film that tells the story of an elderly couple from the Batak tribal family in Toba Lake, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Known for their rich customs and social structure, the Batak community places a strong emphasis on patriarchal hierarchy and respect for elders. The film portrays the couple’s three sons who have left home to pursue their careers far away from their village. In a humorous twist, the parents pretend to divorce to compel their sons to return home. The movie is pictured in the breathtaking backdrop of Lake Toba—the largest volcanic lake in the world, recognized as a UNESCO Global Geopark since 2020. The audience also savoured a variety of mouth-watering Indonesian dishes, including bakso (meatball soup), chicken satay (sweet saucy BBQ), onde-onde (glutinous rice balls dessert), and much more on this occasion. After the movie, all the guests received goodie bags from Indomie, the world’s largest instant noodle brand, which manufactures in Faisalabad with the flavors tailored to the Pakistani market.





Empowering Change

Serena Hotels partners with Behbud association for fundraising gala



D. N. A

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels proudly partnered with the Behbud Association to host a memorable fundraising event under the banner of cultural diplomacy. The event's proceeds went directly to the Behbud Maternal and Children's Hospital, a vital institution providing comprehensive healthcare services to mothers and children, enhancing the quality of care within the community.

The evening featured a spectacular fashion show featuring apparel by artisans from Behbud and a mesmerizing musical performance by Saakin, blending entertainment with philanthropy to make a significant impact. Fashion enthusiasts and music lovers were treated to an unforgettable experience, showcasing the stunning dresses and creations of Behbud Association's skilled artisans. This event highlighted their exceptional craftsmanship, traditional techniques, and unique designs, supporting community development and empowerment.

Models on the runway helped bridge the gap between artisans and a broader audience, promoting the preservation of traditional crafts and supporting sustainable livelihoods for the workers involved. Abida Malik, President of the Behbud Association, expressed, "Our artisans create stunning apparel that illustrates their exceptional craftsmanship and dedication to traditional techniques. These pieces are not just fashion statements but symbols of our cultural heritage. With Serena's invaluable support for our fundraising efforts, we can channel proceeds towards our hospital project, providing better healthcare facilities and supporting the overall development of our community." Serena Hotels recognizes the importance of community development and is committed to playing its part in creating positive change. Supporting initiatives that uplift and empower communities is fundamental to our values. Serena Hotels is proud to stand behind such endeavors, working together towards a brighter future for all.



Reverie of Highlands" by Gaynor Shaw Launched at Islamabad Serena Hotel

D N A

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, under the banner of Cultural Diplomacy, hosted the book launch of "Reverie of Highlands" by Gaynor Shaw at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. The event celebrated Shaw's journey through the northern regions of Pakistan, capturing the enchanting landscapes, vibrant culture, and resilient people through her lens as an artist and photographer. The book launch was attended by diplomats, cultural patrons, tourism enthusiasts, and

members of the literary community, making it a significant cultural event. Gaynor Shaw, the wife of former Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr. Geoffrey Shaw, has artfully documented her experiences and insights in this compelling book. "Reverie of Highlands" is a tribute to the beauty and diversity of Pakistan's northern areas, reflecting her deep connection and appreciation for the region. Former Pakistani diplomat Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry shared his impressions of the book, highlighting its significance in promoting Pakistan's cultural heritage, fol-

lowed by an inspiring speech from Shaw herself, offering insights into her journey and the creation of her book. The event continued with Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins addressing the audience, emphasizing the importance of cultural exchanges and the role of such works in fostering understanding and appreciation between nations. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, underscored the hotel's commitment to supporting cultural and literary initiatives, marking the formal launch of this remarkable publication.





National Day of Portugal Relations with Pakistan based on trust: envoy

Ambassador of Portugal Fredrico Silva says Portugal supported the recent election of Pakistan to a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council



Ansar M Bhatti / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal Fredrico Silva has said Portugal supported the recent election of Pakistan to a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council for the period 2025/26. 'I also would like to remind that Portugal is candidate to the equivalent position for the biennium 2026/27. We consistently support the indispensable role of the United Nations, including its Secretary-General, the Portuguese António Guterres'.

The ambassador expressed these views on the occasion of the National Day of Portugal, celebrated at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Federal Minister for Housing, Minister Maritime Affairs Qaisar Ahmed Shiekh, Director General ISPR Lt. General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry also attended the event.

The ambassador said, the bilateral relations between Portugal and Pakistan are long and well established, friendly and based on trust and cooperation. 'Since my arrival to Pakistan, February last year, I have been able to travel extensively inside this big and fascinating country, visiting, among other places, Lahore and Karachi, Faisalabad and Peshawar, Nowshera and Abbotabad, Murrey and Taxila, Chilas and Gilgit-Baltistan'. In 1949, Portugal

established an Embassy in Karachi, what was followed in 1954 by the opening of the Embassy of Pakistan in Lisbon.

Political bilateral consultations were held last year in Islamabad in the medium term. A new round is expected to take place in Islamabad in the medium term. As of today, the main areas of bilateral interaction, both at official and civil society levels, include Renewable Energy and Water Management, Education and Culture, Tourism and Agriculture, Blue Economy and Green Technologies, Trade and Investments. In Ukraine, he said, it has to be clearly reminded that sovereignty and territorial integrity are the cornerstone of international order. Russia's unjustified war against Ukraine creates a very dangerous precedent for the rest of the world; it must be stopped.

Talking about Palestine issue, the ambassador said, Portugal strongly condemned the ongoing Israeli offensive in Raffah and is gravely concerned with the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation. 'We also maintain our longstanding position of respect for the jurisdiction, independence and impartiality of the International Criminal Court'. He said, Portugal considered the recognition of the Palestinian State as an important step, with the underlying concern of choosing the best timing and context, to maximize its effect and send a positive political message to both parties. Giving a histor-



ical background, he said, Portugal is one of the oldest nation states on Earth. Today we celebrate 885 years of existence, since 1139. We have indeed a long history as the western most country in Europe, facing the Atlantic Ocean on our maritime mainland coast and around the Archipelagos of Madeira and Azores. The Portuguese were the first to sail south down the Atlantic Ocean, the first Europeans to pass the Equator, to circumnavigate the African continent and to sail into Asia. In 1498 with Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese were the first to reach the Indian subcontinent by sea from Europe, and to reach Ceylon and Sumatra, Java and Thailand, Malaca and Timor, and so on. They were also the first Europeans to reach and trade with both Japan and China by sea, and the first ones to view

Australia. In the Americas the Portuguese reached Brazil, he added. 'In 1974, with the Carnation Revolution, Portugal began an era of democracy, decolonization and development and this opened the path for a reinvigorated Portugal, that became a EU state member in 1985. Today, Portugal is consistently considered one of the most safe and secure countries in the world, benefitting from good levels of economic and social development, he added. Touching upon the Day of LUIS DE CAMOES the Ambassador said, 'We also celebrate on 10th June, Luis Vaz de Camões, poet and writer, author of "The Lusíads", the major Portuguese national epic. 10th June was the day, in 1580, Camões, Luis Vaz de Camoes, died. And that is why, in an original manner, 10th of June is the National Day of Portugal.



Rising Stars Hockey player Jawairia gets rousing welcome



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Jawairia Azeez, a member of the Rising Star Girls Hockey Academy in Islamabad, has been selected for the Pakistan Education Board Hockey Team's tour of Turkey. Upon

her arrival at the ground, she received a rousing welcome. Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins, High Commissioner of Brunei Kamal Ahmad, and other team officials greeted her enthusiastically. The diplomats commended Jawairia's efforts and encouraged her to maintain her excellent performance.

Africa Day celebrations in Islamabad



Africa Day celebrations in Islamabad



Africa Day celebrations in Islamabad



Africa Day celebrations in Islamabad





ISLAMABAD: Former Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Managing Director Pakistan Sweet Homes Zamurrad Khan, Ambassador of the Philippines Maria Agnes Cervantes, Heads of Missions of the ASEAN countries cutting cake to celebrate the National Day of the Philippines. – DNA



Brunei gets ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI) Chairmanship from Philippines

ISLAMABAD. The Ambassador of the Philippines and Chair of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad, H.E. Maria Agnes M. Cervantes, presided her concluding ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI) Heads of Mission meeting at the Faisalabad Meeting Room Serena Hotel. During the meeting, the ACI Chairmanship was also turned over to H.E. Pg Kamal Bashah Pg Ahmad, High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam. Ambassador Cervantes, in her closing remarks, thanked all members of the ACI for their cooperation in making her term successful by involving in activities that promote public and economic diplomacy for all ASEAN members. She added that the increased

visibility of ASEAN is attributed to the active participation of all ACI Members and looks forward to Brunei's Chairmanship. The meeting also served as the sendoff meeting of the ACI to Ambassador Nguyen Tien Phong of Vietnam who is ending his more than three-year tour of duty in Islamabad. Also in the meeting were the High Commissioner of Malaysia H.E. Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, Charge d'Affaires of Myanmar Mr. Aung Kyaw Thuya, Charge d'Affaires of Indonesia Mr. Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma, the Charge d'Affaires of Thailand Ms. Kamolwan Sriposil and representatives from various the diplomatic missions in Islamabad. – DNA





Culture

ASEAN Movie Festival: movie screened at the Brunei residence



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Brunei to Pakistan Kamal Ahmad organized a movie night at his residence in connection with ASEAN movie festival. All heads of missions of the ASEAN countries including Myanmar, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand and their families attended the event. – DNA





ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei along with his staff visited the Norwegian embassy and met with Ambassador of Norway Per Albert Ilsaas to thank the Norwegian government for recognizing Palestine state. – DNA

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