

# CENTRELINE

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine



## Pakistan, Belarus pledge to solidify relations in all fields



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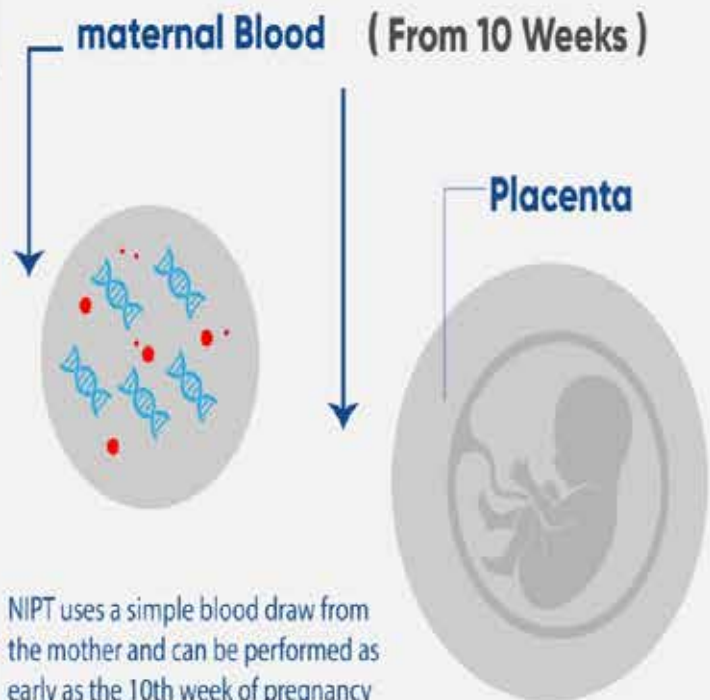
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# Of disjointed PTI leadership



THERE is a saying that behind every successful man, there is a woman. However, in the case of Imran Khan, it appears the opposite might be true. It is widely believed that during his three- and half-year tenure as Prime Minister, his wife, Bushra Bibi, played a significant role in decision-making. Allegedly, under her influence, close associates such as Farah Gogi and others benefited immensely through questionable practices involving transfers, postings, land acquisitions, housing schemes, and more. One prominent controversy linked to this dynamic is the Toshakhana case, which has landed the PTI founder in jail. Reports suggest that it was Bushra Bibi who insisted on retaining valuable gifts, including the high-profile watch gifted by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and later suggested selling it. This decision not only tarnished Imran Khan's reputation but also provided the government with a strong basis to initiate legal action against the former prime minister. The recent D-Chowk debacle is closely tied to Bushra's intransigent stance. Despite clear instructions from Imran Khan to avoid the location, she insisted on marching towards D-Chowk. PTI leaders claim that Imran Khan had agreed to hold a sit-in at Sangjani, but Bushra reportedly compelled Ali Amin Gandapur to head to D-Chowk at all costs. What unfolded at D-Chowk is now part of history—tragically, numerous lives were lost on both sides, and many others suffered serious injuries. Notably, both Bushra and Gandapur managed to make a safe exit from the scene, leaving others to bear the consequences. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi explicitly alleged that these figures are acting under the direction of so-called “hidden hands”—a term often used in Pakistan's political lexicon to refer to unseen forces, frequently implying elements of the establishment or other influential actors operating behind the scenes. Naqvi's remarks further frame Bushra and Gandapur as symbolic rather than substantive leaders, portraying them as “puppets” whose actions are controlled by these unseen forces. This perspective not only undermines the credibility of PTI's internal decision-making but also casts doubts on the role of Imran Khan as the central figure of the party. The broader implication of this narrative is the perception of political maneuvering by shadowy entities to destabilize or redirect PTI's trajectory, potentially to align with their strategic interests. Such allegations, if unsubstantiated, may be viewed as politically motivated rhetoric aimed at discrediting PTI leadership during a period of heightened political tension. However, for PTI supporters, such claims are likely to be dismissed as part of a broader campaign to weaken the party's position and its influence over its voter base. The noticeable absence of PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar and Secretary General Salman Akram Raja from key protests, including the recent D-Chowk episode, raises questions about the leadership's commitment to leading from the front during pivotal moments. Their absence is not just a matter of optics but one that directly impacts the morale and enthusiasm of party workers and supporters on the ground. In any political movement, especially one reliant on mass mobilization, the visible presence of the top leadership is crucial. It not only energizes the participants but also sends a strong message of unity and resolve to opponents and onlookers. Without the leadership at the helm during such critical junctures, the movement risks appearing disorganized or lacking resolve. The government's handling of the PTI protests has drawn widespread criticism, with many condemning the excessive use of force employed to suppress the dissent. This approach not only resulted in the tragic loss of numerous lives but also severely damaged the reputation of the country's security forces, both domestically and on the global stage. It is imperative for the government to reconsider its approach and prioritize dialogue and reconciliation over force. A failure to address the root causes of discontent risks deepening the divide, potentially pushing the country into further turmoil.

**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.

# Pakistan, Belarus pledge to solidify relations in all fields

D N A

Joint Statement between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Belarus

1. The President of the Republic of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko paid an official visit to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan from 25 to 27 November 2024, at the invitation of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. During the visit, the two leaders comprehensively reviewed the full range of bilateral relations and reaffirmed their mutual commitment to deepening friendly ties between the two countries across political, trade, economic, cultural, social, and other areas.

2. This year marked the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Belarus. Both sides acknowledged that their relationship had grown into a durable, broad-based, and comprehensive partnership of increasing significance. Pakistan congratulated Belarus on its full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), with Belarus noting Pakistan's early support for its accession. The Prime Minister appreciated the active participation of the Prime Minister of Belarus in the SCO Council of Heads of Governments meeting, hosted by Pakistan in October 2024. The two sides agreed to work closely within this important forum to further strengthen their cooperation.

3. During their meeting, the two leaders emphasized the importance of advancing political dialogue and strengthening inter-parliamentary relations. They also focused on expanding trade and economic cooperation, adopting a collaborative approach to regional economic integration and connectivity and enhancing the legal framework to facilitate bilateral collaboration.

4. Recognizing Belarus's advanced agricultural manufacturing capabilities and the needs of Pakistan's agriculture-based economy, the two sides agreed to promote the establishment of joint ventures in the agriculture and industrial sectors, including for the production of high-tech and large-scale agricultural machinery.

5. Both sides also agreed to collaborate in sales, manufacturing and servicing of vehicles, including through partnerships between private and public organizations of both countries. This initiative aims to leverage the strengths of both countries in automotive manufacturing and technology, boosting industrial growth and innovation.

6. Both sides also agreed to cooperate in expanding the network of sales and services of Belarusian agricultural machinery in various Pakistani cities, including through partnerships with Pakistani private and public organizations. Additionally, they considered initiating educational programs in sphere of agricultural machines manufacturing.

7. During the visit, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), in collaboration with the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BelCCI), organized

a Belarus-Pakistan Business Forum. The event saw participation from over thirty Belarusian companies and nearly one hundred Pakistani counterparts from various sectors, fostering valuable interactions and potential business opportunities.

8. The two leaders expressed their satisfaction at the successful organization of the forum. They also agreed to encourage both government and private sectors to collaborate and organize series of seminars on "Doing Business with Each Other" aiming to reduce trade barriers and facilitate market access.

9. To enhance trade linkages, both sides welcomed signing of an MOU between the National Logistics Corporation (NLC) and Beltamozhservice and agreed to encourage other stakeholders, including logistics companies, to develop optimal maritime and land routes for efficiently delivering goods to each other's markets. This initiative aims to streamline transportation, reduce costs, and improve the overall efficiency of trade between the two countries.

10. Recognizing the immense potential for expanding collaboration in science and technology, and noting the progress made over the past decade, both sides agreed to establish stronger ties between their scientific communities. The sides plan to focus on joint scientific and technical projects under the umbrella of the Joint Commission on Science and Technology. During the visit, two agreements in this domain were signed to formalize and promote this enhanced collaboration.

11. Both sides emphasized the importance of enhancing bilateral trade in pharmaceutical products, medical devices, health-related items, and over-the-counter products. Both parties agreed to develop strategies aimed at improving trade facilitation by identifying and addressing trade barriers, particularly regulatory challenges, to streamline market access. Additionally, the







sides committed to exploring and implementing policies that enhance mutual market access for these sectors, ensuring compliance with national regulations, while promoting growth and cooperation.

12. The two sides underscored the importance of strengthening cooperation in the field of education and culture, including the promotion of cultural exchange programs, boosting people-to-people contacts through art, music, literature, and other cultural activities. Both countries also committed themselves to enhancing academic collaboration, facilitating student exchanges, and supporting joint research projects between universities in the two countries.

13. During the visit, the two sides signed fifteen important agreements and MOUs, including the “Roadmap for Comprehensive Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of Belarus for the period 2025-2027.” This roadmap focuses on enhancing bilateral economic cooperation through various initiatives, such as high-level meetings, timely meetings of inter-governmental commissions, and promoting collaboration in key sectors of mutual interest. Other significant documents are:

- Cooperation in E-Commerce
- Cooperation in Science and Technology
- Cooperation in the field of Accreditation
- Cooperation in Auditing field
- Cooperation in the Exchange of Financial Intelligence Related to Money Laundering and terrorism financing
- Exchange of Customs Statistics Data of Bilateral Trade
- Cooperation in Science and Technology
- Cooperation in International Road Transport
- Cooperation in the field of Environment & Climate Change
- Cooperation in Disaster Management
- Cooperation the field of Vocational Education
- Extradition Treaty
- Cooperation in the field of Health Services
- Cooperation in Halal Trade

14. These arrangements are expected to open new prospects for the continued development of bilateral relations,

based on the principles of mutually beneficial friendship.

15. The two sides also discussed important regional and international issues. The Pakistani side briefed the Belarusian side on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. Both sides underlined the need for resolution of all international disputes through peaceful means and in accordance with the UN Charter and UN Security Council resolutions.

16. The two State leaders expressed deep concern over the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, which has led to a devastating humanitarian crisis and significant civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. The Parties called for an immediate, unconditional and permanent cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, strikes on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, ensuring uninterrupted and safe delivery of humanitarian aid, restraint against the background of the threat of expanding the zone of confrontation, stressed the need to intensify their efforts to achieve peace, stability and security for the entire region.

17. The Parties reaffirmed their support to the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the basis of the two-state formula, in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the General Assembly.

18. The two leaders underscored the paramount importance of a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ukraine, emphasizing the need for diplomatic efforts and constructive dialogue. They highlighted that the ongoing conflict has far-reaching consequences, not only for the region, but also for global stability and security. Both leaders called on all parties involved to prioritize negotiations and peaceful means to address all underlying issues, reaffirming their commitment to supporting initiatives that foster lasting peace and stability in the region.

19. President Aleksandr Lukashenko expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the peo-

ple of Pakistan, for their warm hospitality and invited the Prime Minister to visit Belarus at a convenient time, which was gratefully accepted by the Prime Minister.

**LIST OF MOUS AND AGREEMENTS SIGNED BETWEEN BELARUS AND PAKISTAN**

- Roadmap for cooperation between Belarus and Pakistan
- MoU between the Ministry of Commerce Pakistan and Ministry of Anti-Monoploy Regulation of Belarus on Electronic Commerce Cooperation
- Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation between National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research
- MoU in field of accreditation between Pakistan National Accreditation Council of Pakistan and Republican Unitary Enterprise Belarus
- MoU on cooperation between the Committee of State Control of Belarus and Office of the Audit General of Pakistan
- MoU between department of Financial Monitoring of the state control committee of Republic of Belarus and Financial Monitoring Unit Government of Pakistan
- MoU between Pakistan Customs, FBR and State Customs Committee of Belarus
- Agreement between National Academy of sciences of Belarus and Pakistan academy of sciences
- Agreement between Govt. Of Pakistan and Govt of Belarus on International Road Transport
- MoU on cooperation in the field of Environmental protection between Ministry of Natural Resources Belarus and Ministry of Climate change Pakistan
- MoU between Ministry of Emergency Situations of Belarus and NDMA Pakistan in fields of prevention and elimination of emergencies
- MoU between NAVTTC Pakistan and Educational Institution of Belarus
- Treaty between Republic of Belarus and Republic of Pakistan on extradition
- MoU on cooperation between DRAP, Ministry of National Health Services Pakistan and Republican Unitary Enterprise Belarus for expertise and Tests in health services
- MoU for cooperation in Halal Trade between Pakistan Halal Authority Ministry of Science and technology and Belarusian Halal Standardisation and Certification Center of Belarus.



# National Day of Romania





# Celebrating Progress and Commitment to Europe on Romania's National Day

**Dan Stoenescu**

**D**ECEMBER 1st is not only a day for Romanians to celebrate the historic union of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Romania in 1918, but also a moment to reflect on how far our country has come since its accession to the European Union. As we commemorate our National Day, we are reminded of the undeniable progress that Romania has made, driven by the transformative power of EU membership. One hundred and six years ago, the centuries-long ideal of national unity was achieved, building the foundation of the modern Romanian state. Thirty-five years after the fall of the Iron Curtain in Europe, replacing totalitarianism with democracy, we are living in a complex international context, marked by the illegal, unjustified, and unprovoked aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, instability and radicalism. Determination and solidarity remain essential values. With a predictable foreign policy, anchored in European and transatlantic democratic values, Romania is currently an essential contributor to Europe's security, continuing, as long as necessary, the firm and multidimensional support for Ukraine and its citizens and its constructive engagement in strengthening security in the Black Sea region and NATO's Eastern Flank. Romania does not address these difficulties and challenges in isolation. Today, Romania is part of the strongest collective security alliance, NATO, which brings a billion people under its protective umbrella. Romania celebrated 20 years of NATO membership this year, in the year in which the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance turned 75. The two decades of NATO membership have strengthened our country's strategic profile as a promoter of transatlantic solidarity and allied unity, as an active supporter of the "open door" policy, and of support for partners who share the same principles and values. Since joining the European Union in 2007, the benefits for Romania and its citizens have been undeniable. Our daily lives have been shaped by an influx of investments, enhanced economic ties with other member states, and access to a shared space of values and principles. From the improvements in living standards to the substantial growth in our economy, Romania has emerged as a success story of European integration. The EU has not only strengthened our economic foundation but has also contributed to the development of modern infrastructure, the digitalization of key sectors, and a more competitive labor market. Looking back at the past 17 years, the numbers speak for themselves. Romania has received over 60 billion euros in EU funds, more than offsetting our contributions to the EU budget. These funds have been a driving force behind transformative projects across transport, healthcare, education, and the environment. As a result, Romania's GDP has tripled, and GDP per capita has nearly quadrupled. Our citizens are experiencing tangible benefits, from increased wages to more opportunities for travel, study, and work across the EU and beyond. Starting 2025 we will be fully fledged members of the Schengen zone and travel visa-free around the world, including to the USA. Today, Romanians enjoy the freedom of movement and the advantages of a larger, unified European market, which has opened doors for entrepreneurs and businesses. Romania's progress extends beyond the numbers; it's felt in the everyday lives of our people. The minimum wage has increased twentyfold in the past two decades, and the average salary has grown significantly. These changes are not just about economic growth, but about lifting the standard of living for all Romanians. The EU has played a crucial role in this transformation, offering expertise, funding, and a clear path towards modernization. Whether through the Erasmus program, which has allowed over 44,000 Romanian students to study abroad, or the vast improvements in infrastructure, Romania has become more connected to the world



and better positioned to face the challenges of the future. However, this is just the beginning. As we look to the future, Romania has a unique opportunity to continue building on these gains, particularly in areas like digitalization, healthcare, and education. The European Union's budget for 2021-2027, along with the Next Generation EU recovery plan, provides Romania with over 79 billion euros in funding for reforms and investments. This is a crucial opportunity to accelerate our development, improve our infrastructure, and address the challenges posed by global crises, such as the war in Ukraine and the lingering effects of the pandemic. Romania's unwavering commitment to EU values will ensure that we contribute to the broader European project, strengthening the EU's resilience and unity. Romania has also played a pivotal role in the EU's response to global challenges. Our support for the European integration of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, for example, is a testament to our dedication to the European project and to building a more stable and secure region. As we celebrate December 1st, we should also recognize our role in advancing European unity and cohesion, particularly in the face of difficult times. The future of Romania lies in its continued integration into the European project. Our place in the EU is not just about economic benefits, but about shaping a society based on shared values of democracy, freedom, and the rule of law. Romania's National Day is not just a celebration of our past, but a reminder of the bright future that lies ahead—a future defined by growth, innovation, and a deepening of our ties to Europe. Romania and Pakistan enjoy very good bilateral relations and Pakistan represents an important partner for Romania in the South Asian region. Moreover, this year, Romania and Pakistan celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations, and this link has been constantly developed throughout the years. This mutual motivation has rendered a fruitful political dialogue, reflecting the clear desire of both states to develop a pragmatic relationship in fields of common interests. Our two countries are bound to take forward the bilateral agenda and the cooperation within the EU-Pakistan framework and in multilateral formats, especially within the UN. As we celebrate Romania's National Day, let us honor the progress we have made and commit to pushing forward in the years to come. Together with our European partners, we will continue to build a Romania that is prosperous, secure, and fully integrated into the European family and a strong partner of Pakistan!

– Dan Stoenescu is the ambassador-designate of Romania to Pakistan

# Khawaja Asif leads commemoration of Japan Self Defense Forces Day

DNA

ISLAMABAD: TAKANO Shuichi, Chargé d' Affaires A.I. of the Embassy of Japan in Pakistan, and Mrs. TAKANO Asako hosted a reception on Wednesday, December 4th, 2024, to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) Day. Defense Attaché, Colonel ABE Kazuo represented the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) at the Embassy. AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador-designate of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and Mrs. AKAMATSU Yumiko were also present at the occasion. Air Marshal Muhammad Sarfraz, HI(M), Deputy Chief of Air Staff (Projects), Air Headquarters, was the chief guest on the occasion. The reception was attended by the military officials as well as Ministers, parliamentarians, senior members of the Government of Pakistan, members of the diplomatic community and other dignitaries from the public and private sectors. In his remarks, Mr. TAKANO stated, "I am pleased to see the progress

in defense exchanges and cooperations between Japan and Pakistan" and "I believe that the deepening of the exchanges and cooperation between the JSDF and Pakistan Armed Forces will lead to strengthening the Japan-Pakistan relations."

In August this year, the Pakistan Navy PNS YARMOOK together with Japan's Counter Piracy Enforcement Unit, JS SAMIDARE, conducted a goodwill exercise in the Gulf of Oman that contributed to deterring pirate activities and ensuring the safe navigation of merchant vessels navigating in the Gulf of Oman. Next year in February, the multilateral joint exercise "AMAN25" will be hosted by the Pakistani Navy. Japan is participating in AMAN25. We regard it as an important exercise, contributing to the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" in cooperation with like-minded navies.

With regard to disaster relief cooperation, Mr. TAKANO mentioned that in the earthquake in 2005 and the floods in 2010 in Pakistan, the JSDF dispatched helicopter units to transport relief supplies and af-

ected people as part of the Japan Disaster Relief Team. He paid gratitude to the Pakistani people residing in Japan who had extended immense support to the Japanese people during the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 by giving food and distributing relief supplies to the affected people.

In his brief remarks, AKAMATSU stated that he feels very fortunate to have been appointed as the Ambassador to this wonderful country and expressed his desire of working together to further strengthen the ties between Japan and Pakistan. "Japan and Pakistan share a long-standing friendship, built on mutual respect and cooperation. Together, we can build a future that fosters mutual growth and understanding", said the Ambassador-designate.

The JSDF Day was originally celebrated when the Japan Defense Agency (upgraded to the Ministry of Defense in 2007) and the JSDF were established on July 1st, 1954, but the date has been changed to November 1st as the JSDF are expected to respond to natural disasters such as frequent typhoons in summer season in Japan.









# National Day of Thailand celebrated









# German Christmas Market 2024 attracts huge audiences

Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Islamabad orchestrated a festive extravaganza by hosting an annual Christmas Market at Islamabad Serena Hotel. This enchanting event immersed attendees in the rich traditions of German Christmas celebrations, offering a delightful blend of culinary delights, shopping, and joyous merriment.

The market showcased an array of authentic German delicacies that tantalized the taste buds of visitors, including homemade cakes and cookies meticulously crafted to capture the essence of German holiday traditions. Attendees were treated to a sensory journey, experiencing the warmth and flavors synonymous with Christmas in Germany. The air was filled with the spirit of the season as visitors strolled through the market, discovering unique treasures and handcrafted gifts that reflected the artistry and craftsmanship of German culture.

From charming ornaments to exquisite trinkets, the shopping experience transported attendees to a winter wonderland brimming with festive cheer.

The ambiance was further heightened by the vibrant atmosphere, resonating with laughter and the joyful sounds of the season. Families and friends came together to partake in the festivities, creating cherished memories against the backdrop of the embassy's beautifully adorned Christmas Market. In organizing this event, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany aimed to share the magic of German Christmas traditions with the local community, fostering cultural exchange and promoting the universal spirit of joy and togetherness during the holiday season. The Christmas Market served as a testament to the enduring bonds of friendship and goodwill between Germany and Pakistan, as both nations came together to celebrate the most wonderful time of the year in true German style. The German Ambassador to

Pakistan, Alfred Grannas, said on this occasion: "With this bazaar we want to welcome the merriest time of the year – especially for all those away from their homes. Christmas is all about sharing our joy. This is why the proceeds from this event will be donated to families in need."

The German ambassador also visited various stalls and showed keen interest in items displayed on the stalls. He interacted with the stalls owners as well and got first hand information about their experiences. Earlier the German Defence Attache Christian Ziese spelled out salient features of the Christmas bazaar. He welcomed the audience. Last year, the German embassy successfully hosted a bazaar at the same venue. The event garnered significant attendance, with diplomats and the general public alike participating in large numbers. Their presence reflected a shared commitment to supporting the German embassy's commendable initiative, which aims to provide substantial assistance to those in need.











# 41st Anniversary of the Proclamation of the TRNC

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkiye, Irfan Neziroglu, former Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, former Senator Talha Mehmood and TRNC representative in Islamabad, Dilsad Senol along with others cutting cake to celebrate the 41st anniversary of the proclamation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. – DNA

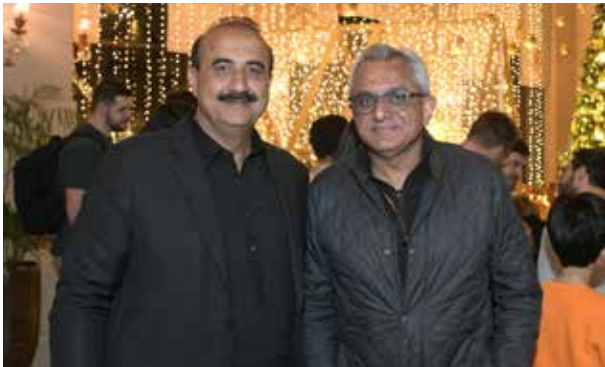








# Christmas Tree lighting celebrations at Islamaad Serena Hotel







## A Tribute to Pakistan's Art and Artisans

# Serena Hotels, Nomad Art gallery host crafts festival

**Andrea Wicke emphasized the importance of cultural exchange and the role of such platforms in promoting mutual understanding and appreciation of artistic traditions**

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, in collaboration with Nomad Art Gallery, organized a vibrant two-day Crafts Festival on December 7th and 8th, 2024, celebrating 40 years of Nomad's contributions to art and culture. The festival brought together artisans and craftsmen from across Pakistan, showcasing exquisite creations from Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir. The festival featured a diverse array of jewelry, textiles, and other handcrafted treasures, highlighting the rich cultural heritage and artistic excellence of the country. The Austrian Ambassador, H.E. Andrea Wicke, graced the occasion as the Chief

Guest and commended the efforts of Serena Hotels and Nomad Art Gallery for their unwavering commitment to preserving and promoting Pakistan's cultural heritage. In her remarks, she emphasized the importance of cultural exchange and the role of such platforms in promoting mutual understanding and appreciation of artistic traditions. This Crafts Festival is part of Serena Hotels' ongoing Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, a foundation of its mission to support and celebrate the arts. Through events like this, Serena Hotels has been actively working to preserve indigenous traditions, empower artisans, and promote sustainable economic development in the artisan community. Ms. Nageen Hayat, Founder of Nomad Art Gallery, expressed her gratitude for the collaboration, saying, "This

milestone of 40 years is a tribute to the resilience and creativity of Pakistan's artisans. Together with Serena Hotels, we aim to honor their artistry and ensure these traditions thrive for future generations." The crafts festival not only provided artisans with a platform to showcase their skills but also offered visitors a chance to experience the beauty and diversity of Pakistan's cultural landscape. Serena Hotels is renowned for its commitment to excellence in hospitality and its dedication to promoting cultural, social, and economic development through its various initiatives. The Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, under which the crafts festival was organized, highlights the vision to connect communities and promote mutual understanding through art, heritage, and dialogue.



# French ambassador hosts reception for global polio eradication initiative board



## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Polio Oversight Board (POB), the highest decision-making body of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, is currently visiting Pakistan to engage with government officials, diplomatic representatives, and donor communities regarding the current polio outbreak. French Ambassador Nicolas Galey hosted a reception to welcome the POB delegation, highlighting the international community's commitment to polio eradication efforts in Pakistan.

**The visit aims to:**

***Assess current polio eradication progress***

***Identify key challenges***

***Develop strategic interventions to address the nationwide outbreak***

The POB's regular visits are critical in providing strategic oversight and maintaining momentum in Pakistan's fight against polio.

The Embassy of France and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) are proud to support the global effort to eradicate polio. While the current polio outbreak in Pakistan poses significant challenges, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the program. This includes the \$55 million concessional loan, which comprises a \$20 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This funding, announced by the AFD in 2023 and finalized in July 2024, was made possible through a partnership with the Government of Pakistan and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Today, this financial support helps WHO and other partners implement core components of the polio eradication program in Pakistan, including paying frontline workers and supporting monitoring and surveillance activities.



The Polio Oversight Board consists of the heads of agencies from the leading partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI): the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, WHO, UNICEF, US CDC, Rotary International, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. During this November visit, the Board is joined by senior representatives from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which recently pledged \$500 million to the global polio initiative. The Board's delegation includes Dr. Chris Elias, Chair of the Polio Oversight Board and President of Global Development at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Dr. Hanan Balkhy, Regional Director for WHO Eastern Mediterranean; Mr. Sanjay Wijesekera, Regional Director for UNICEF South Asia; Mr. Aziz Memon, Rotary International Trustee and Chairman of the National PolioPlus Committee; and representatives from the US Centers for Disease Control and the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief), along with Saudi dignitaries.









# Envoy highlights strong ties with Pakistan

The Ambassador of Poland also emphasized Poland's vibrant relationship with Pakistan, noting that the two countries have been diplomatic partners for 62 years and share historical ties that go back even further

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Polish Embassy in Pakistan hosted a memorable celebration in Islamabad to mark Poland's Independence Day and Armed Forces Day, with distinguished guests including Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Pakistan's Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development. The Polish Ambassador delivered a speech highlighting Poland's hard-earned independence and expressing solidarity with other nations in their fight for freedom and peace. Reflecting on Poland's turbulent history and struggle for sovereignty, the Ambassador linked these past challenges to current global events. He emphasized Poland's support for Ukraine in resisting Russian aggression, calling it vital for European stability. "The aggressor must be repelled, not rewarded," he stated, underscoring Poland's view that Ukraine's victory is essential for a just and lasting peace. He also called for civilian protection in conflict zones, particularly in Gaza and Lebanon, and expressed support for a peaceful resolution in the Middle East that respects the right of Palestinians to a state alongside Israel. The Ambassador paid tribute to the partnership between Poland and Pakistan, which has grown significantly in the areas of trade and investment. He noted that bilateral trade is approaching the \$1 billion mark, with Polish companies such as Orlen involved in gas exploration in Pakistan's Sindh region. "Polish investors in the energy sector have proven successful and resilient," he said, commending the ongoing collaboration in Pakistan's industrial sector. As part of Poland's commitment to sustainable development, the Embassy organized a recent trade mission to Pakistan, focusing on green technology solutions through its GreenEvo program. "I am happy to note that some conversations which began during this mission are continued," he added. The Ambassador congratulated Pakistan on its recent election to the UN Security Council and emphasized the two countries' shared commitment to the UN Charter's principles, such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, self-determination, and human rights. He expressed optimism for

future collaboration to uphold these values in the international arena. Celebrating a longstanding cultural connection, the Ambassador reflected on the history of Polish exploration in Pakistan. He marked the 100th anniversary of Polish explorer Bronisław Grąbczewski's 1888 expedition across the Pamirs and Hindu Kush. This journey, documented in Grąbczewski's book, inspired future generations of Polish mountaineers, leading to Poland's lasting fascination with Pakistan's northern landscapes. He paid tribute to iconic Polish climbers like Wanda Rutkiewicz and Jerzy Kukuczka, who achieved historic feats on Pakistani peaks, and recognized Polish glider pilots who recently flew over K2, capturing breathtaking views of the Karakoram.

The Ambassador also remembered the contributions of Polish aviators who helped establish Pakistan's Air Force, particularly Air Commodore Władysław Turowicz and his wife Zofia. He expressed hope that a street in Islamabad might soon be named in their honor, paying tribute to their role in Pakistan's early aviation history. In a show of friendship, the Ambassador acknowledged the achievements of renowned Pakistani climbers Nazir Sabir and Sirbaz Khan, both of whom collaborated with Polish climbers. Sabir, the first Pakistani to summit Mount Everest, and Khan, who conquered all fourteen eight-thousanders, embody the spirit of camaraderie between the two nations. The evening ended with a musical performance by women musicians from Hunza, led by Meher Angez Hunzai. The Ambassador described music, like mountains, as a universal language that transcends physical and cultural boundaries. "Both invoke mystery, spirituality, and freedom," he said, celebrating how the shared love for Pakistan's mountains has created a lasting bond between Polish and Pakistani people. The event underscored the strength of the "Pak-Polish Dosti" or Polish-Pakistani friendship, which has deepened through mutual respect, cultural exchange, and economic collaboration. With Poland's upcoming European Union presidency, the Ambassador reaffirmed Poland's commitment to peace, unity, and continued partnership with Pakistan.



# PAF-Serena Hotels Squash Championship concludes

ISLAMABAD: Winner and the runners-up of the Chief of the Air Staff-Serena Hotels International Squash Championship posing for a picture with the top management of the Serena Hotels and officials

of the Pakistan Air Force. The final was played at the Mushaf Squash complex Islamabad. The Serena Hotels management assured to continue patronizing sports under its Sports Diplomacy initiative. – DNA



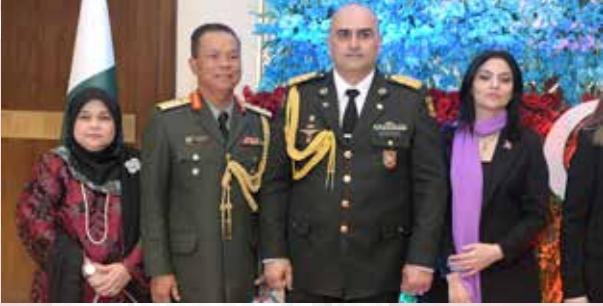




# Victory Day of Azerbaijan Celebrated











# Independence Day of Finland celebrated







# National Day Of Qatar

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif attended the National Day reception of Qatar, hosted by Ambassador Ali Bin Mubarak Al-Khater. During the event, the Prime Minister participated in a ceremonial cake-cutting alongside the Ambassador. The Prime Minister's presence at the reception highlights the deep and enduring bonds of brotherhood between Pakistan and Qatar. This gesture is particularly significant as it is uncommon for the Prime Minister to personally attend national day celebrations of other countries. – **DNA**



# Spanish artist presents a mesmerizing performance

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The event in Islamabad, which showcased renowned Spanish artist Sara Calero's performance, was a celebration of Flamenco Dance, an expressive and captivating art form deeply rooted in Spanish culture. Held at the luxurious Serena Hotel, the event was a collaboration between the Spanish Embassy and Serena Hotels, aimed at promoting cultural exchange and appreciation between Spain and Pakistan. Sara Calero, a prominent figure in the Flamenco dance world,

brought an authentic and mesmerizing experience to the stage, highlighting the deep emotional and artistic elements of Flamenco. Known for her passion and intricate choreography, Calero's performance likely captivated the audience with the intensity, rhythm, and elegance that define Flamenco, blending music, dance, and storytelling. The event not only offered a rare opportunity for Islamabad's art enthusiasts to experience a traditional Spanish cultural form but also strengthened ties between Spain and Pakistan by promoting cross-cultur-

al understanding. Through such celebrations, the Spanish Embassy and Serena Hotels foster a platform for showcasing global art forms and encouraging international dialogue. Flamenco, with its powerful movements and soulful music, is more than just a dance; it represents a centuries-old tradition that blends influences from various cultures. This celebration at the Serena Hotel was an immersive experience that likely allowed the attendees to not only watch but also feel the profound cultural heritage of Spain through the medium of Flamenco.









# Malaysia positioned as gateway to ASEAN market for Pak businesses

Ambassador Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan affirmed the High Commission's commitment to fostering a conducive environment for business partnerships and highlighted the importance of leveraging the outcomes of the Malaysia's Prime Minister visit to boost economic cooperation



**Mahnoor Ansar**

ISLAMABAD: High Commission of Malaysia, Islamabad hosted an engagement attended by more than 50 prominent Pakistani industry leaders and stakeholders. The event was organized as a follow-up to the recent official visit of the Prime Minister of Malaysia to Pakistan in October 2024, with a particular focus on enhancing trade, investment, and business collaborations between the two countries. Event tickets The engagement provided a platform for industry leaders to discuss key issues, share insights, and explore opportunities in trade and investment. Discussions centred on the potential to strengthen bilateral economic ties and address challenges that may hinder collaboration. In his remarks, H.E. Ambassador Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan affirmed the High Commission's commitment to fostering a conducive environment for business partnerships and highlighted the importance of leveraging the outcomes of the Malaysia's Prime Minister visit to boost economic cooperation.

The Ambassador shared that the official visit was very fruitful, resulting in two (2) government-to-government and four (4) business-to-business MOUs. Additionally, Malaysia plans to import USD 100 million worth of halal meat and 100,000 tonnes of basmati rice from Pakistan. The High Commissioner also highlighted the recent opening of a MATRADE office in Karachi to further facilitate business engagement between both sides, and encouraged Pakistani business leaders to consider Malaysia as a gateway to the ASEAN region, which has a market of 680 million people. During the event, attendees provided valuable feedback on the current landscape of trade and investment between Malaysia and Pakistan, emphasizing the need for continued dialogue and collaboration to unlock potential for mutual benefits. In closing, Ambassador Dato' Azhar thanked all attendees for their ongoing support in strengthening trade ties between Malaysia and Pakistan. The engagement underscored the shared commitment of both nations to foster and solidify cooperation in trade and investment to a higher level.







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# Networking Hi-Tea with Pakistani stakeholders and friends of Malaysia



## Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: The High Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad hosted a Networking Hi-Tea with Pakistani stakeholders and Friends of Malaysia. The event aimed to expand the High Commission's network and foster closer ties between the two countries, focusing on trade, investment, and business collaboration. The event brought together members of the National Assembly, Senate, senior government officials, present and former military personnel, and the High Commission's Home-Based and Locally Recruited Staff. In his remarks, the High Commissioner emphasized the importance of Malaysia-Pakistan relations, highlighting key achievements from the recent state visit of Malaysia's Prime Minister to Pakistan. The visit saw agreements to boost trade, invest-

ment, and cultural exchange, with direct flights between Karachi and Kuala Lumpur increasing to seven per week starting December 2024. The High Commissioner also highlighted the strong bond between the two countries. He praised Pakistan's beauty, resilience, and the warmth of its people, while expressing Malaysia's gratitude for the contributions of the Pakistani diaspora to Malaysia's development. With over 200,000 Pakistanis living in Malaysia, their role in strengthening ties and fostering goodwill was invaluable. On economic opportunities, the High Commissioner highlighted the USD1.4 billion trade volume in 2023 between Malaysia and Pakistan. He emphasized the immense potential for further collaboration, particularly in agriculture, the halal industry, and technology. Malaysia's expertise in the halal sector

was offered to help Pakistan become a regional hub, leveraging its agricultural strengths. Additionally, he invited Pakistani investors to explore opportunities in Malaysia, especially with the country preparing to chair ASEAN in 2025. The High Commissioner also took the opportunity to highlight the atrocities faced by Palestinians, commended Pakistan's unwavering support, and reaffirmed Malaysia's commitment to advocating for justice on international platforms. Attendees had the opportunity to network and explore ways to strengthen bilateral relations. The High Commission remains committed to facilitating cooperation that benefits both nations and builds a foundation for long-term partnership.

**Prepared by: High Commission of Malaysia, Islamabad**  
**28 November 2024**



# A Gamble for Peace

THE prospect of Donald Trump's return to the White House has generated significant discourse in Tehran, where the primary concern is not what policy trajectory the incoming administration might adopt toward Iran but whether the Islamic Republic should engage in negotiations with the former president. Prominent Iranian officials, including experienced diplomats, argue that Tehran must exercise its agency and signal a willingness to negotiate. This perspective posits that Trump's strong mandate, as evidenced by the electoral outcome, provides him with the political latitude to broker a mutually beneficial agreement with Iran. However, whether such calls will influence Tehran's posture in the wake of Trump's inauguration remains uncertain. In 2018, during Trump's first term, his administration's withdrawal from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the subsequent imposition of a "maximum pressure" sanctions campaign devastated Iran's economy. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei categorically dismissed the possibility of negotiations with Trump, labeling the American president as unworthy of engagement. Khamenei's assessment relied on the belief that Trump's presidency represented an anomaly in U.S. politics. This gamble, however, backfired as U.S.-led sanctions decimated Iran's oil revenue and international trade, while escalating tensions culminated in the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani in January 2020. Today, the geopolitical landscape has shifted markedly. Trump's political position appears stronger, and Iran faces increasingly severe domestic and international challenges. The prevailing sentiment in Iranian media underscores an urgent need for recalibration. As one commentator observed, "The era of no war, no peace is over. It's now the era of either war or peace." With the Republican Party controlling all three branches of the U.S. government, proponents of negotiation assert that a potential agreement with Trump would carry more durability than the JCPOA, which faced resistance from congressional Republicans. Iranian commentators also highlight Trump's unpredictability. While his rhetoric often aligns with anti-war sentiments, his unconventional governance style leaves the possibility of military confrontation open. A Republican-controlled Congress affords Trump significant latitude in foreign policy, potentially allowing him to initiate military action without the constraints faced by previous administrations.

This dynamic poses a significant risk to Iranian strategic assets, including its nuclear facilities, should Tehran resist engagement. At the same time, the possibility of a negotiated settlement remains on the table. Figures close to Khamenei suggest a cautious approach, advocating for a wait-and-see strategy to evaluate Trump's intentions. For instance, Ali Larijani, a moderate advisor to Khamenei, has suggested that Trump may adopt a more constructive approach in his second term. Similarly, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has encouraged Trump to abandon his "maximum pressure" campaign in favor of "maximum wisdom," signaling that Tehran could reciprocate constructively to avoid conflict. The Iranian government harbors deep-seated grievances from Trump's first term, which saw measures such as the "Muslim ban," the designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization, and the targeted killing of Soleimani. Despite these hostilities, Trump consistently expressed willingness to negotiate with Iran albeit on terms perceived as highly unfavorable by Tehran. Iranian officials as tantamount to a call for capitulation dismissed his administration's infamous 12-point demand list. Nonetheless, there are signs that Trump's second administration might adopt a different approach. His decision to exclude former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, a staunch Iran hawk, from his new team has been interpreted in Tehran as a potential olive branch. However, the composition of Trump's national security team remains fluid, leaving uncertainty about the influence of hawkish versus isolationist elements within his administration. A straightforward compromise between Trump and Khamenei could center on Iran's nuclear program. Trump's primary demand is the prevention of Iranian nuclear weaponization, a position ostensibly aligned with Khamenei's 2012 fatwa declaring nuclear weapons un-Islamic. However, tensions extend beyond nuclear issues, encompassing Iran's regional activities and its role in supporting allied groups across the Middle East. Addressing these broader concerns will likely require concessions from both sides. In this context, regional developments could play a pivotal role. Tehran is reportedly optimistic that Trump might pressure Israel into accepting a ceasefire in conflicts involving Gaza and Lebanon, potentially creating space for dialogue on select regional issues. Larijani's recent visits to Damascus and Beirut, where he conveyed reassurances to



**Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer**

Iran's allies while advocating for a ceasefire, suggest that Tehran is exploring options to de-escalate regional tensions. Despite these overtures, Tehran faces a profound strategic dilemma. Should it prioritize preserving the Axis of Resistance—a network of regional proxies—or pursue a reorientation of its regional agenda to align more closely with international expectations? While immediate priorities appear to favor the former, growing domestic and international pressures may necessitate a broader rethinking of Iran's strategic framework. Khamenei's reluctance to engage with Trump during his first term reflected confidence in Iran's ability to withstand external pressures. However, the cumulative impact of sanctions, regional setbacks, and domestic unrest has significantly eroded Tehran's position. Consequently, there is increasing recognition within Iranian policymaking circles that negotiations with Trump, while fraught with uncertainty, may offer a pragmatic pathway to alleviating external pressures. The return of the maximum pressure campaign, albeit under a different guise, remains a central concern for Tehran. While the Biden administration maintained existing sanctions, it did not enforce them with the same vigor as Trump's first administration. Tehran anticipates that Trump's renewed emphasis on sanctions could lead to the reactivation of snapback provisions under the JCPOA, particularly if European powers frustrated by Iran's support for Russia in the Ukraine conflict align with Washington. At the same time, Tehran sees potential opportunities in the shifting geopolitical landscape. China, a critical buyer of Iranian oil, is unlikely to abandon its partnership with Tehran given its own tensions with Washington. Similarly, Arab states appear inclined to avoid entanglement in U.S.-Iran conflicts, prioritizing regional stability over alignment with American strategies.



# PFOWA Charity Bazaar 2024 attracts huge audiences

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar inaugurated the Charity Bazaar organized by the Pakistan Foreign Office Women's Association (PFOWA)

## D. N. A

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar inaugurated the Charity Bazaar organized by the Pakistan Foreign Office Women's Association (PFOWA), aimed to support underprivileged communities. The event featured a diverse range of cultural stalls, representing various foreign embassies, and was held at the Foreign Office. One of the key attractions of the Bazaar was the wide variety of delicacies from different countries, with Central Asian and Arabian cuisines being particularly popular among visitors. These offerings provided guests with the opportunity to experience and appreciate the diverse culinary traditions from around the world.

The Bazaar also showcased the cultural heritage of numerous countries, creating an environment of multicultural exchange and celebration. However, it was noted that many of the European missions did not participate this year, which could have affected the overall diversity of the event. Additionally, a 'Parade of Nations' was held, featuring children of diplomatic staff. These children, dressed in the traditional attire of their respective countries, presented lively tableaux and proudly waved their national flags, further adding to the festive and cultural atmosphere of the event. Through this initiative, the PFOWA Bazaar not only provided a platform for cultural exchange but also played an important role in raising funds for the support of underprivileged communities in Pakistan.









# PFOWA Charity Bazaar 2024 attracts huge audiences





# PFOWA Charity Bazaar 2024 attracts huge audiences





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