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Much ado about PTI, govt talks



PAKISTANI politics is a dynamic and ever-evolving landscape that rarely fails to capture attention. The phrase "never a dull moment" aptly describes the constant flux of activity, marked by a whirlwind of developments that unfold on a daily basis. These events keep the public, political analysts, and media highly engaged, fueling widespread debates and speculation. On one hand, the relentless pace of political happenings ensures that there is always something new to discuss, whether it be parliamentary maneuvers, shifting alliances, legal battles, or policy decisions. On the other hand, this very dynamism often leads to a plethora of controversies, ranging from allegations of corruption and misuse of power to heated rivalries between political parties and institutions. The combination of high-stakes drama, deep-seated divisions, and an ever-watchful public ensures that Pakistani politics remains both captivating and contentious. The recent development indicating the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s willingness to engage in talks with the government introduced a new layer of intrigue to the already vibrant and volatile political landscape of the country. This gesture initially sparked interest and speculation about potential breakthroughs in the ongoing political stalemate. However, the momentum seemed to falter following former Prime Minister Imran Khan's scathing criticism of the party's leadership for their perceived conciliatory approach toward the government.

The talks saga finally ended on January 23, 2025 when Imran Khan directed his party leaders to call off parleys as the government had failed to form a judicial commission to probe the May 9 incidents. The PTI huddle is likely to announce protest schedule, which means Pakistani politics is going to see tumultuous times. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had outlined specific preconditions for engaging in talks with the government, including the formation of a judicial commission to investigate the May 9 incidents and the release of all political prisoners. However, the government deemed it fit not to comply with the PTI demands and hence talks ended without rendering any results.

One critical issue was that these conditions largely fell outside the government's direct purview. The investigation into the May 9 incidents, which involved attacks on military installations, and the detention of political activists were matters deeply intertwined with the military establishment's authority and influence. The government, therefore, lacked the mandate or capacity to address these demands independently. The PML-N ranks included a faction that strongly advocated for dialogue with the PTI, arguing that it aligned with the government's broader strategic interests. This group contended that engaging in talks could serve as a tactical maneuver to reduce the likelihood of the government being ousted before completing its constitutionally mandated five-year term. It is a view within the govt ranks that initiating discussions with the PTI could create an environment of political stability, which is essential for maintaining investor confidence and fostering national development. They argue that even a partial resolution or temporary truce could help ease tensions, allowing the government to focus on pressing economic and administrative priorities without the constant specter of political unrest. By addressing the underlying friction through dialogue, this group hoped to mitigate the risks posed by the PTI's adversarial tactics and contribute to a more stable political landscape. But as the saying goes, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride. The ruling clique must recognize that its mandate and powers are limited. The real authority lies with those who have constructed the entire system. It ultimately depends on them whether the government is permitted to engage in such talks—especially if they intend to bring in a new setup in the near future.

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.

The Chinese efforts to cultivate friendly relations with the Pakistani mainstream media and think tanks appear to have faced significant challenges. A key issue has been their choice of media partners. Instead of engaging with leading media outlets that have wide reach and influence, Chinese investments were directed towards smaller, less prominent media houses

What is the likely future of CPEC and Pak-China ties?

Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

THE Pakistani side often uses lofty and poetic phrases like "sweeter than honey, deeper than the sea, and taller than the Himalayas" to describe its relationship with China. However, it's worth noting that the Chinese side has never reciprocated with such extravagant language when describing its engagement with Pakistan. Instead, the Chinese approach has consistently been pragmatic and focused on practical and economic outcomes.

China views bilateral relations largely through the lens of business and investment considerations, prioritizing the protection of its economic interests above all else. This realistic approach underscores China's preference for clear, measurable objectives over sentiment-driven rhetoric. While this strategy has enabled China to advance its economic agenda effectively, it has also led to unintended consequences.

Some analysts argue that in its attempt to foster close ties with specific political parties or factions within Pakistan, China has inadvertently alienated others. This selective engagement risks creating a perception of favoritism, which can generate resentment among excluded political groups. Over time, such dynamics could undermine Chi-

na's broader strategic goals, as it may struggle to maintain a balanced and inclusive relationship with Pakistan's diverse political landscape. This situation highlights the challenges inherent in China's interest-driven foreign policy approach.

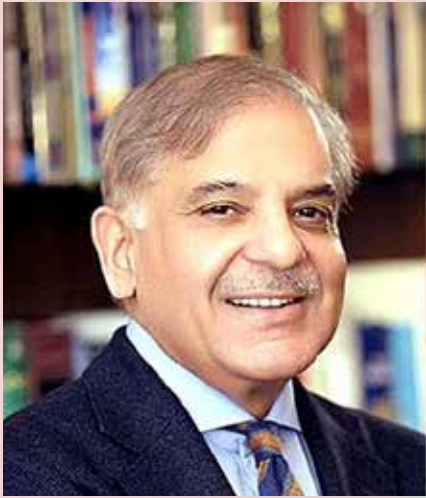
It is widely believed that China has historically shown a stronger affinity toward the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) compared to other political parties like the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). This perception is rooted in China's consistent preference to engage with the PML-N leadership and its long-standing rapport with the Sharif family. Over the years, China's interactions with the PML-N government have been marked by strategic collaboration and personal connections, setting them apart from its dealings with other political entities in Pakistan.

During Shehbaz Sharif's tenure as the Chief Minister of Punjab, China frequently invited him to participate in high-level visits and bilateral meetings. These engagements, which often excluded other provincial chief ministers, highlighted China's focus on building ties with the PML-N leadership. This pattern has continued, further reinforcing the perception of a special relationship. For instance, more recently, the current Punjab Chief Minister, Mary-

am Nawaz, received a special invitation to China, where she was accorded exceptional protocol. This move caused notable discontent among the chief ministers of other provinces, particularly those from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Sindh, who felt sidelined by this overt display of preference.

While it remains uncertain whether the other provincial leaders will be invited for similar engagements at a later stage, the optics of China's selective invitations have underscored its apparent favoritism toward the PML-N. This perceived bias not only underscores China's longstanding association with the PML-N but also highlights its emphasis on maintaining strong ties with the Sharif family, which appears to be a cornerstone of its diplomatic strategy in Pakistan.

China paid a significant price for its lopsided approach during the tenure of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government when the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) came to power in 2018. Given the strong rapport between China and the PML-N, the newly formed PTI government, led by Prime Minister Imran Khan, ordered a comprehensive audit of all Chinese projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This step marked a shift in Pakistan's approach towards its strategic partner-



ship with China. The audit uncovered widespread anomalies, including instances of financial mismanagement and corruption. Responding to these revelations, the Chinese government took punitive action against the companies implicated in these irregularities, signaling its zero-tolerance stance on corruption. However, Beijing was deeply displeased with the PTI government's decision to initiate such an audit, as it effectively brought CPEC projects to a standstill.

This strained the historically strong Pakistan-China relationship. Prime Minister Imran Khan, who took office in August 2018, received a congratulatory message from the Chinese leadership only after two months, delivered by the then Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan. Throughout the PTI government's tenure, bilateral relations remained in a state of limbo, with minimal progress on CPEC projects. The fallout from this period continues to linger. Even today, Pakistan-China relations have yet to regain their former momentum, and work on CPEC Phase 2 remains crippled. This impasse has raised concerns about the future of the CPEC initiative and the broader strategic partnership between the two nations. The Chinese efforts to cultivate friendly relations with the Pakistani mainstream media and think tanks appear to have faced significant challenges. A key issue has been their choice of media partners. Instead of engaging with leading media outlets that have wide reach and influence, Chinese investments were directed towards smaller, less prominent media houses.

This strategic misstep not only alienated the top-tier media organizations

but also failed to achieve the intended outcomes. As a result, a perception has developed that Chinese entities are willing to pay significant amounts to have their materials published, creating a transactional relationship that undermines credibility. Now, major media houses are reportedly reluctant to publish Chinese content without financial incentives, further complicating their media management strategy. Similarly, China's cooperation with

a reputable and genuine think tank, signaling a more strategic and effective approach to fostering intellectual and policy-level cooperation.

Despite all ifs and buts, China remains Pakistan's cornerstone ally for economic prosperity and infrastructure advancement, standing firm amid challenges and uncertainties. While Pakistan must pursue a pragmatic and realistic approach to its relationship with China, ensuring mutual trust and

“ China paid a significant price for its lopsided approach during the tenure of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government when the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) came to power in 2018. Given the strong rapport between China and the PML-N, the newly formed PTI government, led by Prime Minister Imran Khan, ordered a comprehensive audit of all Chinese projects under the CPEC ”

Pakistani think tanks has been sub-optimal. Instead of collaborating with well-established and credible institutions, they have largely engaged with lesser-known and under-resourced think tanks, often consisting of only one or two individuals. This approach has limited the ability of Chinese perspectives to reach influential intellectuals and policymakers in Pakistan. However, there has been a recent positive development with the establishment of a “China Corner” at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI). This initiative marks a significant shift towards working with

long-term collaboration, Beijing too has a critical role to play in fostering a balanced and inclusive strategy. China's engagement in Pakistan should be rooted in accommodating diverse political perspectives, as the current opposition could form the future government. The strategy of selective partnerships and narrow alliances is unlikely to yield sustainable outcomes in Pakistan's dynamic political landscape. Both nations need to strengthen this relationship with a comprehensive, inclusive, and forward-thinking approach to ensure mutual benefits and long-lasting cooperation.

History through Heritage: An Exhibition Celebrating the Past

A similar exhibition also took place in Islamabad Serena Hotel on Thursday January 18, 2025. A large number of diplomats witnessed the exhibition and praised the work of Farooq Raiz



Dr. Muhammad Kashif Ali

THE Hayatian Historical Society of the Department of History & Pakistan Studies at the University of Gujrat, recently organized a highly anticipated exhibition titled “History through Heritage.” This event took place at the prestigious Hafiz Hayat Campus and showcased an extraordinary private antique collection owned by Farooq Riaz, a passionate collector from the district of Gujrat. The exhibition provided a unique opportunity for students, faculty members, and the public to immerse themselves in centuries-old history through the lens of material culture, offering a rare glimpse into Pakistan’s rich cultural legacy. A similar exhibition also took place in Islamabad Serena Hotel on Thursday January 18, 2025. A large number of diplomats witnessed the exhibition and praised the work of Farooq Raiz.

A Journey Through Time: The exhibition featured an impressive array of historical artifacts spanning several eras, including rare locks, intricate timepieces, vintage swords, pots, firearms, postcards, stamps, and historical documents. These artifacts serve as tangible links to the past, preserving the essence of local culture and society. They allow visitors to engage with the everyday lives, technological innovations, and artistic achievements of people who lived hundreds of years ago. In doing so, the exhibition reinforces a community’s sense of identity and continuity, fostering a deeper connection to Pakistan’s multifaceted heritage.

Unlocking History through Artifacts: Artifacts like manuscripts, old passports, and postcards are invaluable for documenting the political, social, and economic developments of earlier times. For historians and scholars, these items offer rare insights into the evolution of trade, governance, and legal systems over centuries. Historical documents on display provided a direct link to past events

and societal shifts, helping trace the trajectory of Pakistan’s regional interactions, commerce, and diplomacy.

Weapons as Symbols of Power: Among the most striking exhibits were weapons like swords, guns, and spears, which offer an essential perspective on military history and the power dynamics of various civilizations. These pieces not only represent the conflicts, conquests, and defence mechanisms of past societies but also serve as symbols of authority and prestige. In particular, the variety of swords displayed illuminated the craftsmanship and prestige associated with military leaders and warriors of past centuries, highlighting the cultural significance of weaponry in various regions of Pakistan.

Craftsmanship in Everyday Items: Locks, pots, and other everyday objects further illustrated the skilled craftsmanship of earlier generations. The locks in particular captured the attention of many visitors, with Farooq Riaz’s collection standing as the largest in Pakistan. The variety of locks, ranging from those made during the Mughal era to British colonial times and modern periods, demonstrate the technological advancements and ingenuity involved in their creation.

Pakistan and Africa: Unlocking Opportunities Through Trade, Culture & Collaboration



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Roots International Education Group, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, successfully hosted the MIUC Dialogue Series 2.0 today. The event, titled “Pakistan and Africa: Unlocking Opportunities Through Trade, Culture & Collaboration,” brought together an esteemed panel of diplomats, policymakers, and scholars to discuss avenues for strengthening ties between Pakistan and African nations. The dialogue featured an impressive lineup

of speakers, including Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, H.E. Jauhar Saleem (Ambassador, IRS), H.E. Sohail Mehmood (Ambassador, R), and H.E. Hamid Asghar Khan (Additional Foreign Secretary for Africa, MOFA). Joining them were ambassadors from African nations, including H.E. Mohamed Karmoune (Morocco), H.E. Titus M.J. Abu-Basutu (Zimbabwe), H.E. Hareriau Fatou (Rwanda), H.E. Sheikhnur Mohamed Hassan (Somalia), and H.E. Saima Syed (Pakistan’s Ambassador to Senegal). Other notable participants included Ms.

Amna Khan (Director General, ISSRA), Mr. Sameh Ahmed (DHM, Egypt), and Mr. Brian Witbooi (Counsellor, South Africa). Representatives from academic and strategic institutions added valuable insights, including Maj Gen (R) Raja Aftab Khan (Principal, CIPS, NUST), Brig Imran Ahmed Tahir (Director ME&A, Directorate DEPO), Col. Badar Munir (Deputy Director Africa, Joint Staff HQs), and Lt. Col (R) Faiz (ISI). Contributions from Dr. Sadia Sulaiman (Director, Area Study Center, QAU), Ms. Nadia Rauf (Deputy Director Africa, MOFA), and Ms. Ariba (Research Associate, ISSI) further enriched the discussion. This engaging session explored trade, cultural exchange, and strategic partnerships, highlighting the shared potential for economic and cultural growth between Pakistan and Africa. The dialogue underscored Pakistan’s commitment to fostering collaboration and building bridges for mutual prosperity. The ultimate goal of this initiative is to provide our students with valuable opportunities for learning and growth. By engaging with thought leaders, we aim to empower them with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in a globalized world. This dialogue and future initiatives will open doors for students, helping them become leaders who can shape a better future for themselves and their communities.



Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Pitfalls of misplaced priorities: some musings

As I have emphasized in my earlier pieces, the only viable solution seems to be the holding of free and fair mid-term elections. Any other arrangement would likely prove counterproductive, especially in the current circumstances where politics is at its nadir, and the economy is in complete disarray

POLITICS in Pakistan continues to evolve with each passing day, but the challenges it faces are deeply rooted in its history. Since its inception in 1947, the country has been marked by persistent political upheavals, a phenomenon that has significantly hindered its ability to achieve steady progress and development. These disruptions have not only delayed nation-building efforts but also left Pakistan struggling to keep pace with other nations that gained independence around the same time, such as India and South Korea, which have made considerable strides in economic and political stability. One of the fundamental reasons behind Pakistan's stagnation lies in the entrenched feudal and autocratic mindsets that took hold in its early years. The dominance of feudal lords in politics has perpetuated inequality and slowed democratic reforms, as these elites prioritize their own interests over the welfare of the populace. Simultaneously, repeated

military interventions and authoritarian regimes have further stifled the growth of democratic institutions, creating a cycle of instability and mistrust in civilian governance. This blend of feudalism and dictatorship has left little room for inclusive policies, economic innovation, or robust institutional frameworks, preventing Pakistan from fully realizing its potential. Overcoming these challenges required concerted efforts to dismantle entrenched power structures, strengthen democratic institutions, and promote accountability and transparency in governance but unfortunately nobody either from the political or military side, ever endeavored to put things in order simply because none of them was ready to establish a system that adhered to constitutional principles. Despite the apparent need for reform and stability, efforts to bring order have been hindered by self-serving motives or power dynamics. Neither the political class nor the military appeared ready to relinquish their

control or influence in favor of a governance model based on the rule of law and constitutional integrity. This reluctance perpetuated a cycle of instability, undermined public trust, and hampered the country's progress toward democratic ideals and institutional accountability. It is both fascinating and disheartening that, even after the passage of 77 years, the status quo continues to dominate the socio-political landscape of Pakistan. The enduring tug-of-war between the Establishment and politicians remains the defining feature of governance, perpetuating a cycle of power struggles that have stymied progress. This relentless pursuit of control, with each side seeking to assert its dominance over all facets of national life, has had far-reaching consequences.

The repercussions of this power imbalance are profound. The very essence of democracy—a system that thrives on representation, accountability, and the people's will—has been compromised. Instead of fostering unity and prosperity, the ceaseless contest for authority has sown discord and stagnation. Meanwhile, the ordinary citizens, burdened by decades of neglect, corruption, and instability, find themselves trapped in a precarious state, grappling with economic hardships, social inequalities, and an uncertain future.

Even after more than seven decades of independence, the nation seems to be at a crossroads, uncertain about its trajectory. The question of what the future holds for Pakistan remains as pressing today as it was in the early years of its formation. Without meaningful reforms and a collective commitment to prioritise the needs of the people over the ambitions of a few, the country risks perpetuating this cycle of uncertainty and missed potential.

Recently, military courts convicted civilians involved in the May 9 incidents, a decision that appears to have deepened the already fragile civil-military relationship. The convictions lacked domestic and international support, raising questions about their legitimacy. Analysts argue that these individuals could have been prosecuted in civilian courts, leaving many to wonder why the military opted for its own tribunals, thereby inviting widespread public disapproval. The United States, European Union, and United Kingdom strongly criticised these trials, deeming them contrary to the spirit of Pakistan's Constitution. While the sitting government appears unbothered by the rebuke from these nations, it is well aware of the potential long-term consequences if such criticism gains traction. The challenges facing the incumbent ruling clique are expected to intensify once the Trump administration assumes office in the United States. Whether one likes it or not, the U.S. consistently plays a pivotal role in Pakistan's major decision-making processes. It even has the ability to influence regime changes in the country. Therefore, any signals from advisors of the incoming U.S. administration—whether in favor of certain politicians or otherwise—should not be ignored and must be taken seriously.

Insiders familiar with these developments suggest that what has been observed so far is merely the tip of the iceberg. The real implications will become evident once the Trump administration is fully in charge. The challenges faced by those in power are numerous and complex. The recent escalations at the Western border present yet another difficult issue for the security establishment to address. The situation in Kurram remains dire, with no resolution in sight. Meanwhile, any confrontation with the Taliban government under the current circumstances risks exacerbating the situation. This is particularly concerning as the Taliban have explicitly stated their intention to respond to Pakistani airstrikes

within Afghan territory. Political stability at home appears to be the only viable option to address both internal and external threats effectively. The ongoing discussions between PTI and the government hold the potential to contribute to this stability, provided they yield meaningful results. However, given the dismissive response from some government ministers to PTI's offer for dialogue, the chances of these talks succeeding seem slim. Unfortunately, certain ministers, including the defense minister, appear determined to derail these negotiations, regardless of the consequences.

The current setup lacks both credibility and public support. As I have emphasized in my earlier pieces, the only viable solution seems to be the holding of free and fair mid-term elections. Any other arrangement would likely prove counterproductive, especially in the current circumstances where politics is at its nadir, and the economy is in complete disarray. The government has announced a significant restructuring initiative involving the abolition of over 150,000 posts and the merging of several ministries. This move is projected to save billions of rupees, according to official claims, and may offer some financial relief by reducing administrative overheads and improving operational ef-

“ Insiders familiar with these developments suggest that what has been observed so far is merely the tip of the iceberg. The real implications will become evident once the Trump administration is fully in charge. The challenges faced by those in power are numerous and complex ”

iciency. However, while such cost-cutting measures are commendable, they fail to address the country's most pressing and deep-rooted issue: corruption.

Corruption remains a pervasive challenge that undermines governance, discourages investment, and erodes public trust in institutions. Without a robust and transparent mechanism to curb corruption, even the savings achieved through this restructuring may not translate into meaningful progress. Mismanagement, favoritism, and misuse of resources could persist, negating the intended benefits of this initiative. To ensure sustainable development and good governance, the government must prioritize tackling corruption alongside structural reforms. This requires implementing stringent accountability measures, enhancing transparency in public spending, and empowering anti-corruption bodies with the independence and resources they need. Without such efforts, the potential gains from these administrative changes risk being overshadowed by the inefficiencies and injustices caused by unchecked corruption.

— *The writer is the Editor of Daily Islamabad POST, Centreline and DNA News Agency.*



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Serena Hotels Cultural Diplomacy: Sarangi Season 7 draws huge interest

Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Sarangi Season 7, a celebrated initiative under Serena Hotels' Cultural Diplomacy, concluded its finale with remarkable performances from emerging musical talents across Pakistan. This platform continues to promote and celebrate the rich musical heritage of Pakistan while inspiring the next generation of artists. The judging panel for this prestigious season included renowned music producer Ali Mustafa, celebrated folk-rock artist Arieب Azhar, and acclaimed singer Natasha Baig. Their expertise and mentorship added immense value to the competition, guiding the finalists through their artistic journeys. The talented

finalists of Sarangi Season 7 represented diverse regions of Pakistan, showcasing the country's rich cultural mosaic through their performances. The finalists included Haider Abbas from Okara, Rahat Khokhar from Quetta, Muzammil Riaz from Bhurewala, Humaira Javed from Hunza, and Adnan Ali from Gilgit. Each artist delivered captivating performances, reflecting the depth of musical talent in the country. Sarangi, as part of Serena Hotels' Cultural Diplomacy efforts, remains dedicated to nurturing young musical talent by providing a platform for artists to share their artistry. The initiative continues to be a beacon for emerging musicians, celebrating diversity and cultural expression through the power of music.







ASEAN Islamabad Committee Chair handed over to Myanmar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Brunei Col (Retired) Pengiran Kamal Bashah Pengiran Ahmad, handing over ASEAN Committee Chair to Ambassador of Myanmar Mr Wunna Han. The ASEAN Islamabad Committee Chair rotates among the member countries after six months.





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Mihai Eminescu , Allama Iqbal monument to be restored

The monument, which symbolizes the cultural bond between Pakistan and Romania, was inaugurated approximately 21 years ago by then-Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, in recognition of the literary contributions of the two iconic poets



ISLAMABAD: A view of the original image of the monument, which unfortunately is not in the same shape anymore. DNA

Ansar M Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, announced that an FIR has been registered against those responsible for vandalizing the monument dedicated to Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu and Pakistan's national poet Allama Iqbal. In a statement shared on X (formerly Twitter), the Chairman emphasized CDA's commitment to preserving national heritage. He stated, "An FIR has been lodged, and an investigation into the incident is underway." Additionally, he directed the Environment Directorate to initiate restoration efforts on the damaged monument without delay. The primary objective is to meticulously repair and rejuvenate the structure, ensuring it is restored to its original condition and grandeur. This includes preserving its historical and cultural significance while employing expert craftsmanship and appropriate materials to maintain authentic-

ity. The restoration process will also involve consultation with heritage conservation specialists to ensure the monument regains its former glory while adhering to international standards of preservation. Expressing gratitude, Romanian Ambassador to Pakistan, Dan Stoenescu, praised the CDA's swift response. In his message on X, the ambassador remarked, "Thank you for your commitment and efforts to restore this unique monument celebrating our national poets, Mihai Eminescu and Allama Iqbal, as well as the enduring friendship between our nations." The monument, which symbolizes the cultural bond between Pakistan and Romania, was inaugurated approximately 21 years ago by then-Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, in recognition of the literary contributions of the two iconic poets. Both Pakistan and Romania have historically enjoyed strong bilateral relations, marked by mutual respect and cooperation across various fields. The establishment of the monument symbolized the enduring

friendship and collaboration between the two nations, serving as a testament to their shared values and diplomatic ties. This monument stood not only as a cultural and historical landmark but also as a beacon of goodwill between the two countries. The respective Romanian ambassadors and the Pakistani government demonstrated unwavering commitment to maintaining the monument, dedicating substantial efforts and resources to ensure its preservation and upkeep. Their collaborative endeavors underscored the significance of the monument as a representation of their partnership. Unfortunately, in recent times, the monument suffered damage due to an act of vandalism. This incident has marred the monument's legacy and raised concerns about the protection of such symbolic structures. The act highlights the need for stronger measures to safeguard cultural and diplomatic heritage, ensuring such incidents do not undermine the efforts invested in fostering international relationships.

Turkish envoy for strengthening academic and cultural relations

Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Türkiye, H.E Irfan Neziroglu, along with the Education Attache, Dr Mehmet Toyran, visited the National University of Modern Languages. The visit, marked by meaningful discussions and a series of engaging activities, reinforced the enduring ties between Pakistan and Türkiye while exploring new avenues for academic and cultural collaboration. Upon arrival, the Turkish Ambassador was warmly received by the Dean and Head of the Department.

The Ambassador met with the Rector NUML, Major Gen (r) Shahid Mehmood Kayani HI(M), where discussions centred on enhancing bilateral cooperation in research and education. DG NUML, Brig Shahzad Munir was also present during the meeting. Rector NUML lauded the strong brotherly relations between Pakistan and Türkiye, emphasizing the shared history, cultural affinity, and mutual respect that unite the two nations. The Rector also high-

lighted NUML's commitment to fostering educational excellence and deepening collaboration with Turkish institutions, especially in areas like language learning, faculty exchange, and joint research initiatives. Following the meeting with the Rector, the Ambassador and Education Attaché toured the Rumi Block, accompanied by the Dean and department faculty. During the tour, they visited classrooms, the library, the teachers' lounge, and the Head of Department's office, gaining insights into the university's academic environment and resources.

In his address to the students and Faculty of the Turkish department, the Turkish Ambassador, Irfan Neziroglu, extended warm greetings from the people of Türkiye to Pakistan and the students and faculty of NUML. He underscored the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation in education, trade, and defence, citing the mutual benefits such partnerships offer. Addressing the students, the Ambassador encouraged them to excel in mastering the Turkish language, describ-

ing it as a gateway to unique opportunities and success. He shared his optimism about the promising role these students could play in fostering closer ties between Türkiye, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan. On the occasion, the Dean of the Faculty of Languages, Dr Jamil Asghar Jami, expressed profound gratitude and honour for hosting the Turkish Ambassador. He highlighted Türkiye's pivotal role as a geographical and cultural bridge and underscored the longstanding friendship between the two countries. The Dean emphasized the opportunities for Pakistan to learn from Turkey's advancements in education, technology, and cultural preservation. The visit concluded with a vibrant interaction session where the Ambassador engaged with students and faculty in a friendly and informal setting. He reiterated the importance of creating supportive environments for language learning and cross-cultural understanding. The Turkish Ambassador was bid a warm farewell by the Rector, Dean, and faculty members.



Wild Life Board obduracy led to closure of Monal

At the behest of chairperson Islamabad Wildlife Board, La Montana and Monal were not only closed, but the buildings of these restaurants built with government money were also demolished

DNA

ISLAMABAD: At the behest of chairperson Islamabad Wildlife Board, La Montana and Monal were not only closed, but the buildings of these restaurants built with government money were also demolished.

Margalla National Park has a law and boundary, Margalla Hills, and Pir Sohawa Road have neither any legal status nor any separate law. If the Chairperson Wildlife Board has discovered such a law, then the general public should also be informed about it. The wildlife law applies equally to Islamabad Club, Riding Club, Polo Club, Gun Club and more than 100 restaurants and commercial centers located in The Margalla Hills National Park. Shah-Allah Ditta, Shakarparian, Club Road and all the commercial centers in Saidpur are still doing their business. The affectees held a protest demonstration and asked the Chairperson Wildlife Board, 'our question is about the double standards of the ordinance, why do officers have separate laws

for their children and separate for public spaces? At the behest of the Chairperson Wildlife Board, demolishing only two restaurants out of 113 commercial centers in the national park is not personal enmity, then what else is? Our only demand to the Chairperson Wildlife Board is that all the restaurants used by officers and their children in Margalla National Park should also be brought under the preview of the National Park Law. What could be a greater example of the excesses of the Chairperson Wildlife Board than the fact that after the demolition of Monal and La Montana, a huge restaurant in Daman Koh was licensed to do business within the limits of Margalla Park. But the Chairperson Wildlife Board refused to meet the 1,100 employees who were rendered unemployed. 'These actions of the Chairperson Wildlife Board made us unemployed on the one hand and on the other hand, the entire area was made a hub of criminal activities. In the last four months, three murders and several robberies have taken place on Pir Sohawa Road, the record of which is avail-

able at Kohsar police station. Not only this, Pir Sohawa Road is also completely damaged at this time and garbage and dirt are seen everywhere. Why don't the so-called environmental pollution authorities see all this now? With the closure of the 4 acres restaurants in the 31,000-acre Margalla National Park, which were located in the name of chowki in the Master Plan of Islamabad and have been providing entertainment to the general public, has the wildlife in Margalla National Park been relieved of all the problems faced by them? and Due to the demolition of both the restaurants, has the wildlife started using Pir Sohawa Road? not at all, it is a blatant joke and lie. 'We demand from the Chairperson Wildlife Board that all unemployed employees should be given licenses to open kiosks on the land adjacent to Monal and La Montana and if our legitimate demand is not met, our next step will be a sit-in in front of the Islamabad Club and will continue till the law of the Wildlife Board is equally implemented on Islamabad Club. Hope It doesn't happen', the protestors added.



Envoys of Romania, Somalia, Nepal, Japan & Bangladesh present credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari



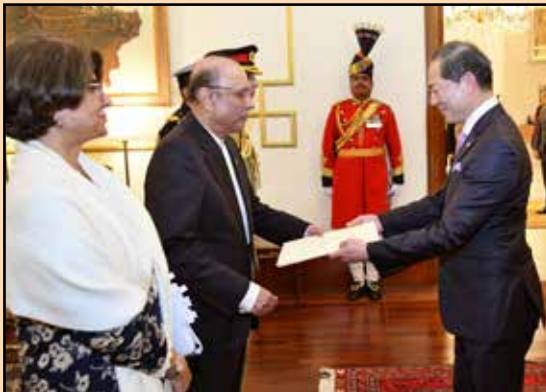
AMBASSADOR OF ROMANIA



HIGH COMMISSIONER OF BANGLADESH



AMBASSADOR OF NEPAL



AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN



AMBASSADOR OF SOMALIA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors from Romania, Somalia, Nepal, Japan, and Bangladesh presented their diplomatic credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari during a ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr today. The President received credentials from the Ambassador-designate of Romania, Mr Dan Stoenescu; the Ambassador-designate of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Sheikh Nur Mohamed Hassan; the Ambassador-designate of

Nepal, Ms Rita Dhital; the Ambassador-designate of Japan, Mr Akamatsu Shuichi; and the High Commissioner-designate of Bangladesh, Mr Md. Iqbal Hussain Khan. Welcoming the envoys, the President congratulated them on their appointments and expressed hope that they would play their role in further strengthening bilateral relations with Pakistan in the areas of trade, economy, and culture. Earlier, the envoys were accorded a guard of honour by a contingent of the Pakistan Armed Forces upon their arrival at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Wild West Year End Dinner at the Malaysian High Commission



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We will continue to support Ukraine, says Polish ambassador

Says he was happy to report that our bilateral trade with Pakistan has been steadily increasing, with a significant jump from €456.74 million in 2018 to €861 million in 2023. This growth in trade is a reflection of the strengthening economic ties between our two countries



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Poland to Pakistan Maciej Pisarski addressing the year-end media briefing. – DNA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Poland to Pakistan Maciej Pisarski has said both Poland and Pakistan have developed friendly and productive cooperation over the 62 years. A broader framework of this relationship is to uphold the international order based on the UN Charter and other relevant international treaties. ‘Respect for sovereignty, legal equality of all states, territorial integrity and rejection of military means as a way of solving international problems are among the most fundamental values of that order.’ The ambassador expressed these views in an extensive media briefing. The ambassa-

dor touched upon various issues ranging from bilateral issues to regional and international challenges confronting the world today. Ambassador Pisarski further said, Poland congratulates Pakistan on the election to the UN Security Council for 2025-2026 and looks forward to working with Pakistan on preventing and solving conflicts and crisis which undermine our security. ‘We believe that activity of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in this international body will contribute to building lasting peace and security in the world. We fully appreciate a long-standing participation of Pakistan in the UN peacekeeping missions.’ Talking about the trade relations

the Ambassador said, he was happy to report that our bilateral trade with Pakistan has been steadily increasing, with a significant jump from €456.74 million in 2018 to €861 million in 2023. This growth in trade is a reflection of the strengthening economic ties between our two countries.

He highlighted the successful economic mission led by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Islamabad under the GreenEvo initiative. The mission brought together representatives from nine Polish businesses providing innovative green technology solutions, and featured business events in Karachi and Lahore. We believe that such initiatives will help to further boost our bilateral trade and economic cooperation. ‘Polish Oil and Gas Company/Orlen Group through its Pakistan Branch has been in operation in Pakistan since 1997. Since 2005 the company has been operating in the Kirthar concession. As a result of the work done, the company has made three tight gas discoveries (Rehman, Rizq, and Rayyan fields), making it a pioneer in the exploration and production of unconventional gas deposits in Pakistan. The company has made over USD 450 million in investments thus far, he added.

Talking about Poland's Economic Growth and Resilience the ambassador said, the level of our trade is not satisfactory. It does not yet reflect and strength of the Polish economy and the potential of the Pakistani markets. To ensure a conducive, stable, transparent and fair economic environment for foreign companies and investors who have operated or consider to establish a relationship with Pakistani partners is of a paramount importance. 'Firstly, I would like to highlight Poland's remarkable economic growth since 1989. Our GDP has increased by an impressive 826.96%, making us the most successful economy in Europe. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Polish people, as well as the effective economic policies implemented by our government. We have also become the fastest-growing large economy in the world among upper-middle-income and high-income countries, surpassing even the Asian tigers such as South Korea and Singapore'. Our GDP per capita PPP has almost tripled, from \$10,300 in 1990 to over \$28,000 in 2018. This significant increase in GDP per capita has resulted in a substantial improvement in the standard of living for Polish citizens. According to the OECD Economic Outlook, Poland's GDP is expected to rise by 3.4% in 2025, solidifying our position as a robust and resilient economy. On Ukraine he said, the goals of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine and durable security for Europe are inseparable.

Ukraine must prevail. This is why after more than 1,000 days of Russia's illegal war against Ukraine, we remain steadfast in our solidarity. We will continue to support Ukraine in its right of self-defence against Russian aggression. 'We condemn Russia's decision to escalate its war of aggression through brutal and deliberate attacks against Ukraine's cities and critical civilian infrastructure, by the deployment of DPRK troops and by using intermediate range ballistic missiles to attack Ukraine'. Using North Korean troops joins up Europe's and Asia's security paradigms in a dangerous and destabilizing fashion. (Asia is being dragged into a war in Europe). The Russian aggression against Ukraine is not "an European war" – as some of analysts have claimed – any longer. 'Regrettably, we are witnessing a surge in disinformation campaigns orchestrated by Russia, aimed at destabilizing Poland, Ukraine, and the EU. These disinformation campaigns are a key component of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy, which seeks to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine'. He said, regarding the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border, we have witnessed a significant increase in attempts to illegally cross the border. According to data from the Polish Border Guard, there were over 15,000 attempts to illegally cross the border in 2022, and this number has continued to rise in 2023 and 2024. We are working closely with our EU partners to address this challenge and ensure the security of our borders.

The ambassador also talked about the Middle East situation saying international protection of civilian population and humanitarian law must be respected. 'We are also committed to supporting international efforts to address the Middle East crisis, particularly in Palestine. In 2024, Poland contributed \$5 million to humanitarian efforts for Palestinians, and we have provided assistance worth over \$12.2 million to Palestine in 2023-24'. Briefing the media people about the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2025 he said he would like to highlight Poland's upcoming presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2025. Our presidency will focus on building a secure and resilient Europe, with seven key security dimensions, including defense and security, protection of people and borders, and resistance to foreign interference and disinformation. During our presidency, we will prioritize measures to strengthen the EU's defense and security capabilities, including the development of a European Defense Fund and the enhancement of EU-NATO cooperation. We will also focus on protecting the EU's external borders and addressing the root causes of migration. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Poland's commitment to strengthening our bilateral and international relationships, promoting economic growth and development, and addressing the key security challenges facing our region and the world. Thank you for your attention, and I welcome your questions.

Mountain Melodies

Honoring Pakistan's Folk music and cultural heritage

Serena Hotels remains at the forefront of promoting Cultural Diplomacy through various initiatives that celebrate and preserve Pakistan's rich heritage



Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, as part of its Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, joined hands with Aga Khan Cultural Services Pakistan and the Aga Khan Foundation to celebrate and promote the rich cultural music and heritage of Pakistan through a delightful evening of folk music. The event was a mesmerizing journey into Pakistan's vibrant traditions, featuring melodious tunes and captivating performances that showcased the essence of the nation's cultural identity. Renowned artists, including Dr. Masuma, Ustad Noor Bakhsh, Ustad Doshambay, and talented students from the Leif Larsen Music Centre, performed live, leaving the audience fascinated with their artistry and passion. The Leif Larsen Music Centre, founded in April 2011 at the historic Altit Fort,

serves as a beacon of the revival of folk music of the region. It provides invaluable facilities for traditional musicians and performers from Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, enabling them to mentor youth in diverse traditions and genres of mountain music, ensuring the continuity of these cherished art forms. The event was further graced by the Norwegian Ambassador H.E. Per Albert Ilsaas, who attended as the Chief Guest. In his address, the Ambassador highlighted the profound impact of cultural initiatives in bridging communities and promoting mutual understanding. He highly praised the collaboration between Serena Hotels, Aga Khan Cultural Services Pakistan, and the Aga Khan Foundation as a shining example of how cultural exchange can celebrate diversity, preserve heritage, and

strengthen the bonds between different cultures. The Ambassador emphasized that events like these not only showcase the richness of Pakistan's traditions but also serve as a universal language that unites people across geographical and cultural boundaries. Serena Hotels remains at the forefront of promoting Cultural Diplomacy through various initiatives that celebrate and preserve Pakistan's rich heritage. These include the Satrang Art Gallery, dedicated to exhibiting contemporary art; crafts festivals that honor and support the work of local artisans; and the musical platform Sarangi, which promotes traditional musical talent. Through these endeavors, Serena Hotels reaffirms its commitment to preserving cultural traditions while encouraging interchange and artistic collaboration on both national and international levels.



UAE, Pak share deep-rooted friendship, says Amb. Alzaabi

The ambassador further said, we see huge potential for collaboration in various sectors, including renewable energy, artificial intelligence, sustainability, economic diversification and agricultural innovations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Alzaabi has said the UAE and Pakistan share a deep-rooted friendship, built on mutual respect, shared values, and a common vision for regional peace and development. Looking ahead, the UAE is committed to further strengthening our partnership with Pakistan. He expressed these views on the occasion of the Na-

tional Day reception, which was attended, among others, by the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The ambassador further said, we see huge potential for collaboration in various sectors, including renewable energy, artificial intelligence, sustainability, economic diversification and agricultural innovations. Together, we can create new opportunities for our youth and drive innovation that benefits not just our

two countries, but the entire region. The ambassador further said, as we celebrate this historic occasion, let us reaffirm our commitment to the values that have guided our nation: unity, determination, and compassion. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Government and people of Pakistan for their warm hospitality and continued support. 'May the friendship between the UAE and Pakistan continue to grow for generations', he concluded.





Moroccan envoy fetes Pak-Morocco Parliamentary Friendship Group

ISLAMABAD: A dinner was organized by the Moroccan Ambassador to Pakistan, Mohammad Karmoune, at his residence in honor of the members of the Pak-Morocco Parliamentary Friendship Group. A large number of parliamentarians also attended the event. The participants included Additional Foreign Secretary for Africa Hamid Asghar Khan, former Prime Minister and Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf, Deputy Speaker National Assembly Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry, Mirza Ikhtiar Baig, Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, Bilal Azhar Kayani, Syed Naveed Qamar, Sardar Nabeel Ahmed Gabol, Senator Sahar Kamran, Shaista Pervez Malik, Nuzat Sadiq, Syed Khursheed Shah, Barrister Aqeel Malik, Zahra Wadood Fatemi, Sharmila Farooqui, Sabeen Gouri, Shagufta Jumani, Muhammad Khan Jamali Wahaj Bin Tahir, Rabia Basri, Mirza Ishtiaq Baig, Mian Akram Farid and renowned businessman Shahbaz Zaheer.

On this occasion, the Moroccan Ambassador, who hosted the event, said that it is important for the parliaments of both countries to start a bilateral cooperation program that includes exchange of visits, exchange of experiences on legislative issues and exchange of documents, exchange of expertise. This exercise is associated with the aim of contributing to the consolidation of the rule of law. Exchange of good work of democratic institutions. At the multilateral level, our legislative institutions need to harmonize their positions.

Especially, there should be close cooperation on such factors that affect food, environment, and security. Speaking on this occasion, Ikhtiar Baig, Convener of the Pak-Morocco Parliamentary Friendship Group, said that I consider Morocco as my second home, I do my business in Morocco and have spent twenty years of my life in Morocco. And that is why representing the Pak-Morocco PFG is my first priority. Now I will talk about Morocco, Tariq bin Ziyad and Ibn bin Batuta, one of whom was a great general and the other a great traveler. Both great personalities hailed from Morocco. Morocco is the gateway to Africa and the Spanish coast is just a few kilometers away from Morocco. Tangier, the largest port in Africa and the Mediterranean, and Africa's new high-speed train 'El Buraq', with a speed of 350 km/h, faster and more comfortable than the Bullet Train and Eurostar, are all testaments to the dynamic and capable leadership of King Mohammed. You will be happy to know that the next FIFA World Cup is going to be held in Morocco. Morocco has become the most popular tourist destination and more than 16 million tourists visited Morocco last year. The volume of bilateral trade between Pakistan and Morocco has increased to \$800 million and has the potential to increase this trade to \$1 billion in the coming years. It is important to recognize the importance of our bilateral relations, especially in the context of our history, there are events between the two countries that touch the heart. – DNA





ASEAN FAMILY GALA ATTRACTS HUGE INTEREST





ASEAN FAMILY GALA ATTRACTS HUGE INTEREST



ASEAN FAMILY GALA ATTRACTS HUGE INTEREST





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