

CENTRELINE

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine



Accession ceremony of Prince Rahim Aga Khan

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Interchange named after Recep Tayyip Erdogan

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Portuguese writer talks to Centreline

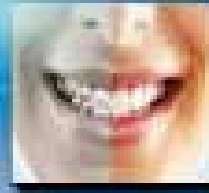
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Carnival for a Cause Raises Funds for Underprivileged Students

Carnival for a Cause conducted by Red Maple brought the community together for a fun-filled day dedicated to supporting **Rishma Community School**, an institution committed to educating underprivileged students.

The event featured games, performances, and food stalls, offering entertainment while ensuring that all proceeds went toward enhancing education and resources for the school. With strong community participation, the carnival successfully blended joy with generosity, leaving a lasting impact on young learners.

Shooting for a Cause



ISLAMABAD: Khazar Farhadov, wife of the Ambassador of Azerbaijan, actively participated in Carnival for a Cause, an event hosted by Red Maple Montessori.



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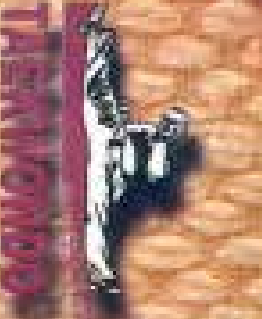
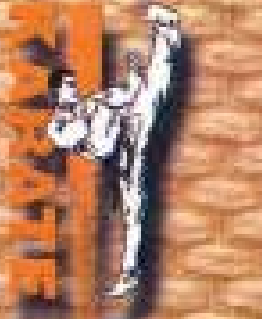
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PM Uzbek visit to further solidify Pak-Uzbek ties



PRIME Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif has recently concluded a highly successful visit to Uzbekistan, marking a significant step towards strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. Upon his arrival in Tashkent, the Pakistani prime minister was accorded a red-carpet welcome, reflecting the warmth and importance of the ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. During the visit, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to enhance the volume of bilateral trade, setting an ambitious target to increase trade from the current \$404 million to \$2 billion in the near future. The two sides also agreed to explore the vast potential for cooperation in the fields of investment, connectivity, and tourism.

This mutual commitment is expected to unlock new opportunities for both nations, fostering economic growth and regional stability. The strengthening of bilateral ties was a key focus of the one-on-one meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, followed by delegation-level talks. One of the most promising agreements reached during these discussions was the commitment to expedite efforts to realize the Trans-Afghan Railway project. This ambitious project aims to connect Central Asia with South Asia, offering a game-changing trade corridor that could significantly boost economic integration in the region. Uzbekistan, the largest of the Central Asian states, holds immense business and cultural potential. The country's agriculture sector is one of the most developed in the region, particularly in cotton production. Pakistan stands to benefit greatly from Uzbekistan's expertise and technology in cotton cultivation. With Uzbek technology, Pakistan could potentially double its cotton production at half the current cost, which would have a transformative impact on its textile industry and overall economy. At the same time, Pakistan's potential in the pharmaceutical, textile, construction materials, and information technology sectors is also of great importance for the Uzbek market. In recent years, bilateral trade between Pakistan and Uzbekistan has grown significantly, reflecting the dedicated efforts of diplomats on both sides. A noteworthy development in this regard was the commencement of direct flights by Uzbek Air from Pakistan, providing easier access to Uzbek markets and other Central Asian states. The resumption of direct Lahore-Tashkent flights in November 2024 is expected to strengthen business ties and bring the peoples of both countries closer. To further bolster connectivity, Pakistan should encourage its national flag carrier and private airlines to launch direct flights to Tashkent and other Central Asian destinations. Improved air connectivity will not only facilitate the movement of people but also boost business and tourism activities, ultimately contributing to stronger economic ties and greater regional integration. There are plans to develop transit trade through the port of Karachi, as well as to create joint investment funds, which of course is a step in the right direction. This will strengthen trade relations between the two countries. The energy sector is also one of the promising areas. Both countries can cooperate on projects to develop renewable energy sources, including solar and wind power plants, hydropower, and gas infrastructure. These joint initiatives will ensure energy security and accelerate the transition to sustainable energy sources. Additionally, in September 2024, Uzbekistan introduced a simplified visa procedure for Pakistani citizens. This gave impetus to an increase in the number of tourists, students and entrepreneurs wishing to visit Uzbekistan. Simplification of visas has opened up new opportunities for cultural exchange, acquaintance with historical monuments and cultural traditions, as well as for establishing business ties. The simplification of visas and the establishment of direct flights will have a significant impact on the growth of tourist flows between the two brotherly countries, and strengthening of cultural and humanitarian relations. Summing up, the visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Uzbekistan has set a positive trajectory for the future of Pakistan-Uzbekistan relations. By capitalizing on the opportunities for cooperation in trade, investment, connectivity, and tourism, both countries can work towards a more prosperous and interconnected region.

Ansar

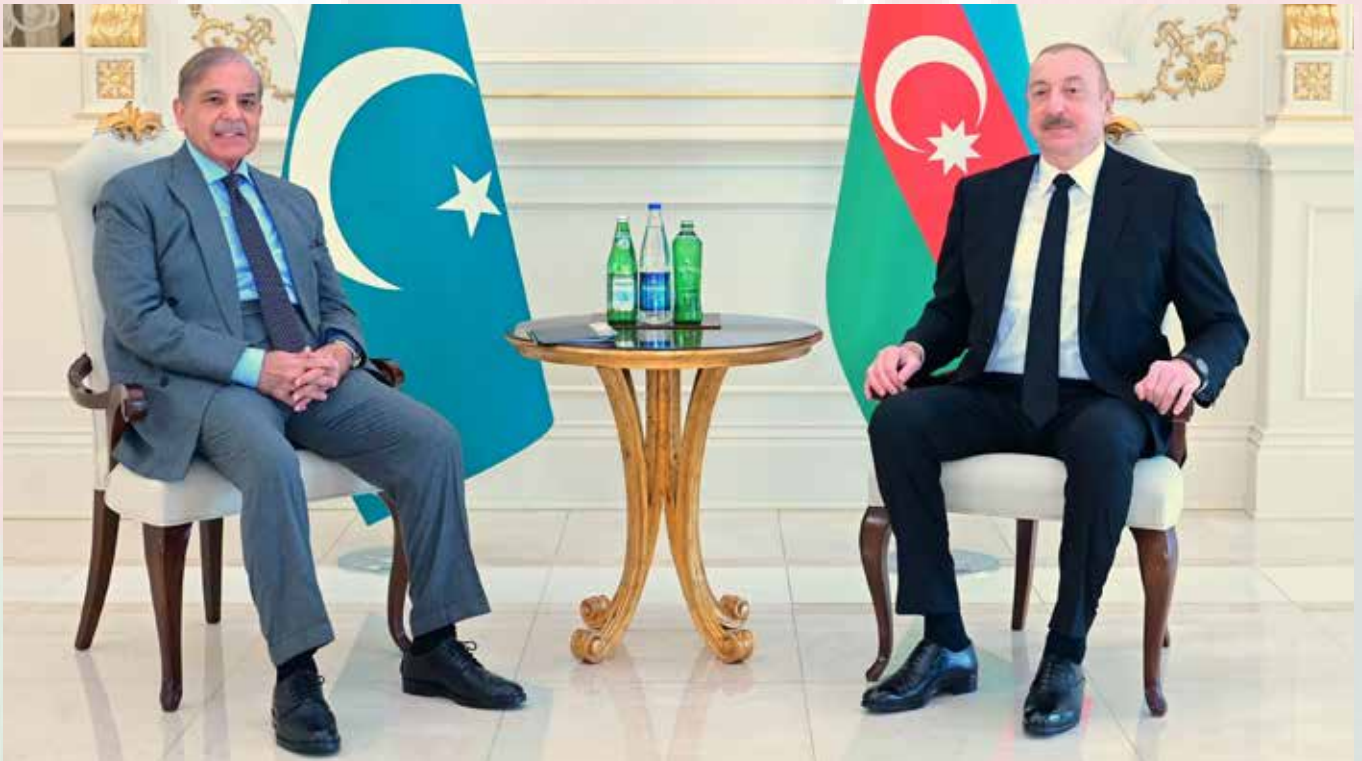
Chief Editor's Profile: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti is a career journalist. He started off as District Correspondent of Daily The Muslim in 1988 from Gujrat. Later he moved to Islamabad and joined Pakistan Observer as Sub-Editor / Op-ed Writer, in 1993. In 1995 he again moved to The Muslim as Sub-Editor and 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.

Azeri president to visit Pak in April

Pak, Azerbaijan reaffirm resolve to boost relations

FRIENDSHIP

Prime Minister Shehbaz said US\$2 billion investment in Pakistan announced by the Azerbaijan President will bring dividends to both countries



DNA

BAKU: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on Monday reaffirmed their commitment to boost trade turnover and increase cooperation across various sectors including defence, transportation and connectivity. During a joint press stakeout, following the exchange of pre-signed documents of various projects, the two leaders emphasized the importance of unlocking

the full potential of bilateral trade and investment in a range of mutually beneficial areas. Prime Minister Shehbaz said US\$2 billion investment in Pakistan announced by the Azerbaijan President will bring dividends to both countries. He said that a one-month time had been given to finalize all the projects and agreements in various sectors to be signed in April this year during the visit of Azerbaijan President to Pakistan. "This will be the first quantum jump in our trade and investment

relations and will be a huge reflection of our fraternal ties," the prime minister said adding that "Our business, trade, and investment ties were not reflecting the true strength of our relations but today we have achieved that target and in a months' time we will celebrate this great decision into action". President Aliyev regretted that the bilateral trade turnover was only several tens of million of US dollars that was needed to be increased. "I think we have the way how to do it",

he said adding that “We received concrete projects from Pakistan, and Azerbaijani representatives are evaluating them, today we put ambitious and realistic targets to finalize all the discussions within one month and by the beginning of April, the documents will be prepared for signing”. The President of Azerbaijan emphasized that these projects covered infrastructure development areas as well as energy, economic, mining and others. He said during his meeting with PM Shehbaz Sharif, they discussed important issues, and reaffirmed resolve to continue to support each other on all issues of international relations. He said they also discussed numerous issues of current international development and cooperation in defence area including defence industry. “Azerbaijan has already acquired defence equipment from Pakistan and we are satisfied with the quality of this equipment and we will continue to do to it. At the same time, he said, they also discussed opportunity of joint manufacturing in defence industrial items, which will be another important sector of bilateral cooperation. As regards connectivity and transportation sectors, he said that the people to people contacts had also been developed successfully between the two countries. “With regular airlines connection, the number will grow and we will see more regular interactions between the two countries.” Praising Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s vision and reforms which he implemented in Pakistan, he said these steps brought important results in areas of economy and political stability. “All is due to your hard work and work of your team, and we as your brother and friend, really happy on the achievements under your leadership,” he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extended his gratitude to the Azerbaijan President for dispatching his delegation to Islamabad to add further beauty and attraction to Islamabad. He also thanked him for his country’s continued support for the cause of Kashmir without any political conditions. “We deeply appreciate this and I hope that resolutions passed by the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council will be materialized one day soon through our collective efforts,” he added. The prime minister underscored that the People of Gaza now needed permanent ceasefire and today was the time that pause in Gaza should now be converted into permanent ceasefire and dream of two-state of this area should be materialized.



"Bridging Cultures Teresa Nicolau on Pakistan, Literature, and the Power of Storytelling"



ISLAMABAD: Acclaimed Portuguese journalist and author, Teresa Nicolau, is currently visiting Pakistan at the invitation of the Portuguese Embassy. Nicolau, a distinguished journalist known for her engaging storytelling and deep insights into culture and media's influence on public discourse, has made significant contributions to both Portuguese journalism and literature. She is currently the Director of Culture at Santa Casa da Misericórdia in Lisbon. Nicolau granted an exclusive interview to Daily Islamabad POST, Centreline magazine, and Diplomatic News Agency. Here are excerpts from her interview. The full interview will be published in the March issue of CENTRELINE.



EXCLUSIVE
Ansar M Bhatti

On Her Impressions of Pakistan

"This is my first time in Pakistan, and it's been a wonderful experience. Having traveled all over the world, I believe that what truly defines a country is its people and culture. It's fascinating to see how a nation identifies itself through its cultural expressions, arts, and traditions. Pakistan is a vast country with a rich, ancient history and a key center of global knowledge. I am especially fond of spicy food, and I must say, Pakistan is one of the best places I've visited for its flavorful cuisine—perfectly spicy!"

On Areas for Mutual Cooperation

"I see this visit as the beginning of a growing cultural exchange. The Portuguese Embassy has previously invited writers like José Luís Peixoto, an important figure in Portuguese literature, to Pakistan. This marks a step toward deeper literary and cultural understanding between our nations. I've had the chance to meet with a few Pakistani writers and discuss ideas on how we can strengthen literary ties further."

On Promoting Cultural and Literary Linkages

"As an author and journalist, I strongly believe in the power of arts and culture to foster diplomatic relations. Culture is often the first point of engagement when you visit a new country, and it is a key symbol of soft power.

Portugal also has a growing Pakistani community, which plays an important role in strengthening people-to-people relations between our two countries."

On Her Inspiration to Become a Writer

"I've been telling stories for the last 30 years, and I absolutely love it—whether as a journalist or an author. Storytelling allows me to explore emotions and connect with real people. All my fiction is based on true stories, because I believe truth is another side of reality. If you write with sincerity, you're telling an authentic story. I am an avid reader, and reading widely has been essential to my growth as a writer."

On the Impact of social media

"Unfortunately, social media has distanced many people from books. However, it's crucial to adapt and embrace digital platforms for publishing. Many writers aren't familiar with social media tools, but those who learn to use them effectively can gain wider recognition.

While I'm not personally active on social media, I understand its importance. If you want to succeed in today's world, you must leverage these platforms. In-



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terestingly, in Portugal, people often buy physical copies of books after reading them online, which shows the enduring love for traditional print."

As regards translation of works in other languages, "I've started with a small English booklet, and I plan to translate my book into English and other languages in the future. Urdu is a language I deeply respect, and translating my books into Urdu will help readers who speak the

language connect with my work."

On Her Visit to India

"I also visited India, specifically Mumbai and Pune, because my daughter was studying there at the United World Colleges (UWC). UWC is an important global educational organization, and their Mahindra school in Pune is particularly well-known. It was a wonderful experience to visit my daughter and explore the culture there."

Dr. Abrar hosts dinner

Dr. Abrar ul Hasnain hosted an elegant dinner in honor of Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, the Sindh Health Minister and sister of President Asif Ali Zardari. The high-profile event drew a significant number of diplomats and dignitaries, creating a vibrant atmosphere of cultural exchange and networking.

Guests included prominent officials from various sectors, fostering discussions on healthcare advancements, diplomatic relations, and Sindh's ongoing health initiatives.

The evening not only served as a platform to celebrate Dr. Pechuho's contributions to public health but also strengthened international ties and showcased the region's hospitality.





Dr. Abrar hosts dinner



Envoy reiterates Japan's unwavering commitment to supporting Pakistan

Ambassador AKAMATSU hosts a reception to celebrate the 65th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: To celebrate the 65th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito, H.E. Mr. AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, hosted a reception at Serena Hotel in Islamabad on the evening of 18th February. The chief guest H.E. Mr. Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister for Commerce, along with other dignitaries graced the occasion. After welcoming the guests and celebrating the 7th birthday since His Majesty's enthronement, Ambassador AKAMATSU, since his arrival in Pakistan in the late November 2024, had met hundreds of Pakistani people and said he was encouraged by many favourable remarks about Japan and the expectation to strengthen the ties with Japan, and realised that "there still lies an unlimited space for co-operation between our two countries."

On the international stage, mentioning that "currently it is our urgent task to restore the peace and stability of the international society, as the rule of law is being challenged in many ways," and emphasized that "Japan is committed to cooperating with Pakistan in order to bring harmony and cooperation to this divided international society."

In terms of bilateral relations, Ambassador AKAMATSU reiterated Japan's unwavering commitment to supporting Pakistan based on its over 70 years of experience in providing Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Pakistan. Such assistance is in accordance with Japan's "assistance philosophy of 'not only providing fish, but also teaching how to fish,' based on mutual respect and collaboration," he said. Ambassador AKAMATSU also expressed his hope for more human resource exchanges and cultural interaction between the two countries. On the occasion of the Expo 2025, Osaka, Kansai from April till October this year, he encouraged more Pakistani people to visit Japan with referring the saying 'seeing is believing.' Ambassador Akamatsu concluded his remarks by wishing that more active exchanges between Japan and Pakistan lead to a friendship that meets the demand of this new age. The reception was joined by the students of the Islamabad Japanese School, who performed traditional Japanese drums and a folk dance called 'So-ran bushi'. It also featured the exhibitions of Ikebana and Bonsai arts, contributed by Lahore Sogetsu Study Group and Lahore Bonsai Society, and the displays by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japanese companies.



At IMCG F 6/2 college

Embassies of Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece Celebrate Ancient Spring Traditions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassies of Romania, Greece, and Bulgaria in collaboration with Ministry of Federal Education came together to celebrate the rich cultural traditions of Mărțisor (Romania and Republic of Moldova), Martenitsa/мартеница (Bulgaria), and Martis/Μάρτης (Greece) at the Islamabad College for Girls, F-6/2 on 28 February 2025. This vibrant event, marking the arrival of spring, was hosted in alliance with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training in the prestigious public institution of ICG. These ancient customs, deeply rooted in the folklore of the three nations, symbolize renewal, hope, and the changing of seasons. The traditions involve the exchange of red and white woven symbols, which are worn as charms for good fortune and prosperity at the beginning of March. Distinguished guests, faculty members, and students gathered to witness a colorful showcase of cultural performances, presentations, and interactive activities highlighting the shared heritage of Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece. Representatives from the respective embassies wearing traditional dresses delivered insightful remarks on the historical significance of these traditions, emphasizing the values of

unity, friendship, and cultural appreciation. Dr Dan Stoenescu, ambassador of Romania, added: "The red and white threads of the Mărțisor symbolize rebirth, vitality and purity, strength and resilience - values deeply rooted in our culture and history - that we also share with the Pakistani people. As we wear and exchange Mărțișoare, we celebrate the spirit of unity and optimism. Mărțisor's recognition by UNESCO as part of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity, reinforces its significance beyond Romania and South-Eastern Europe." Ambassador of Bulgaria Irena Gancheva stated: "As we celebrate the beautiful Bulgarian and Balkan tradition of Martenitsa, we embrace a centuries-old custom that symbolizes health, happiness, and the arrival of spring. This tradition, deeply rooted in our culture, is a testament to our rich heritage and the values we cherish—friendship, unity, and renewal. As we exchange Martenitsa and wish each other 'Chestita Baba Marta,' we also share a piece of Bulgaria's soul with the world. It is heartwarming to see this tradition resonate beyond our borders, connecting cultures and fostering goodwill." The Chargé d'Affaires of Greece Eleni Porichi also underlined: "Martis is a cherished Greek and Balkan tradition that welcomes the arrival of spring, symbolizing protection,

health, and renewal. Wearing the red and white bracelet from March 1st reflects our deep connection to nature and the continuation of a custom rooted in ancient times. This simple yet meaningful tradition unites generations and reminds us of the beauty of seasonal change and new beginnings." The Federal Secretary for Education, Mr Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani in his message, expressed that such vibrant multicultural events bring together diverse communities to honor unity, heritage, and cultural exchange. He added that the traditions of Mărțisor is a testament to the beauty of diversity and the strength of unity. Through this event, we aim to promote cross-cultural understanding and create meaningful connections among communities. He expressed his gratitude to the embassies for fostering cultural exchange and providing students with an opportunity to experience global traditions firsthand. "Events like these not only enrich our students' knowledge but also strengthen the bonds between Pakistan and these three European nations through shared customs and celebrations," he said. The event concluded with the symbolic distribution of Mărțisor, Martenitsa, and Martis tokens among students and attendees, reinforcing the message of optimism and new beginnings that these traditions represent.





Romania Opens Honorary Consulate in Peshawar to Strengthen Bilateral ties

D N A

PESHAWAR: The Embassy of Romania in Pakistan proudly announces the opening of the Honorary Consulate of Romania in Peshawar, covering the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) region. This significant milestone marks a new chapter in strengthening diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties between Romania and Pakistan. His Excellency Dr. Dan Stoenescu, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan, inaugurated the Honorary Consulate in a special ceremony attended by distinguished guests, government officials, business leaders, and members of the diplomatic community. During the event, Mr. Masood Ahmad Qazi was formally appointed as the Honorary Consul of Romania in Peshawar. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Dr. Dan Stoenescu emphasized the importance of the new consulate in fostering bilateral trade, investment, and academic collaboration. "This Honorary Consulate will play a crucial role in strengthening relations between Romania and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, promoting economic and cultural exchanges, and providing support to Romanian and Pakistani citizens," he stated. Mr. Masood Ahmad Qazi, the newly appointed Honorary Consul, expressed his commitment to fostering closer ties between Romania and KP. "I am honored to serve as Romania's Honorary Consul in Peshawar. I look forward to working towards enhancing cooperation in business, education, and cultural exchanges between our two nations," he said. The establishment of the Honorary Consulate in Peshawar reflects Romania's commitment to deepening its engagement with Pakistan, particularly in sectors such as trade, higher education, technology, and tourism. The consulate will facilitate diplomatic and business interactions, offering support to Romanian companies looking to invest in KP while assisting Pakistani businesses seeking opportunities in Romania. The event concluded with discussions on future initiatives to expand cooperation and enhance people-to-people connections. The Romanian Honorary Consulate in Peshawar is expected to play a pivotal role in furthering the longstanding friendship between the two countries.





Russian embassy hosts reception Defender of the Fatherland Day



Embassy of Palestine Hosts "Palestine Was and Will Remain" Photo Exhibition

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Palestine Pakistan in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts successfully hosted a poignant photo exhibition titled "Palestine was and Will Remain" on February 25th. The exhibition showcases a compelling collection of photographs capturing the resilience, heritage, and enduring spirit of the Palestinian people.

The event was inaugurated by Mr. Jamal Shah, President and Chief Curator of Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts, Islamabad. In attendance were

ambassadors from numerous countries including Jordan, Portugal, Libya, Oman, Indonesia, and many others. Muhammad Ayoub Jamali and other distinguished guests were also present to witness the occasion. H.E. Dr. Zuhair Mohammad Hamadallah Zaid, Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, delivered a moving welcome address, stating: "This exhibition is more than just a collection of photographs; it is proof of the existence, resilience, and spirit of the people of Palestine. It is about our history, our sufferings, and our struggle that has continued for generations."

The ambassador emphasized that the exhibition sheds light on the ongoing Nakba,

describing it as "a catastrophe that did not end in 1948 but continues to this very day." He highlighted the exhibition's purpose in documenting the realities faced by Palestinians, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank. "Through this exhibition, we seek to ensure that the world does not look away, that the voices of the oppressed are heard, and that the evidence of these atrocities is observed," Dr. Zaid remarked. The exhibition aims to provide visitors with a firsthand view of the Palestinian experience and urges viewers to "stand on the side of justice, humanity, and truth." The collection serves as a powerful reminder of Palestine's historical presence and ongoing cultural significance.





41ST National Day of Brunei celebrated

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Brunei High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam Colonel ® Pengiran Hj Kamal Bashah Pengiran HJ Ahmad has said Brunei and Pakistan share a warm and cordial friendship, founded on shared values and mutual respect. ‘ Last year, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Brunei and Pakistan; a significant milestone showing our longstanding relations. Our bilateral relations have been rooted in many areas, particularly in defense, education and people-to-people exchanges’. He expressed these views on the occasion of the 41st National Day of Brunei Darussalam. Riaz Hus-

sain Pirzada Federal Minister for Housing and Works was the chief guest. The high commissioner further said, ‘on this auspicious occasion, we reflect on our journey as a sovereign and independent nation, guided by the vision and leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu’izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam’. This year’s theme, “Bersatu Mencapai Cita Negara”, which can be translated as “unified in achieving the country’s aspirations” reaffirms our belief that national unity is crucial in achieving sustainable development, particularly towards our Brunei Vision 2035 he added. He said the well-performing Pak-Brunei Investment Company has also joined the event, a joint venture between Brunei and Pa-

kistan based in Karachi, as well as Mr. Waheed a young entrepreneur from this country, who has successfully established a business in Brunei and has now called Brunei his second home. ‘Tonight, as we celebrate our 41st National Day, we also reaffirm our commitment to working with our friends and partners in the world stage for a peaceful and prosperous future. I take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to all of you for joining us in this celebration’. The high commissioner thanked Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada for his presence and gracing this event.’ Let us continue to uphold the spirit of unity, resilience, and progress. May Allah al-Mighty continues to bless both of our nations with continued peace and prosperity’, he concluded.

Portuguese ambassador witnesses antiques' exhibition in Gujrat

Farooq Riaz's personal collection is a testament to his lifelong passion and dedication to preserving Pakistan's heritage. Over the course of more than thirty years, Mr. Riaz financed his own expeditions across the country, meticulously collecting artifacts from remote corners and forgotten markets

DNA

GUJRAT: The Ambassador of Portugal Frederico Silva visited Gujrat to witness an exhibition of antiques collected by Farooq Riaz. The ambassador took keen interest in the items displayed on the occasion and appreciated the great work of Farooq Riaz. Former provincial minister Mian Imran Masood was also present on the occasion and briefed the ambassador about the history of Gujrat. 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. 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. 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. Locks, pots, and other everyday objects further illustrated the skilled craftsmanship of earlier genera-

tions. The locks in particular captured the attention of many visitors, with Farooq Riaz's collection standing as the largest in Pakistan. Farooq Riaz's personal collection is a testament to his lifelong passion and dedication to preserving Pakistan's heritage. Over the course of more than thirty years, Mr. Riaz financed his own expeditions across the country, meticulously collecting artifacts from remote corners and forgotten markets. His collection, particularly the impressive assortment of locks, stands as a valuable contribution to the preservation of history and culture in Pakistan. His efforts demonstrate the importance of individual contributions in safeguarding our collective heritage for future generations.



Nepali Army Day celebrated



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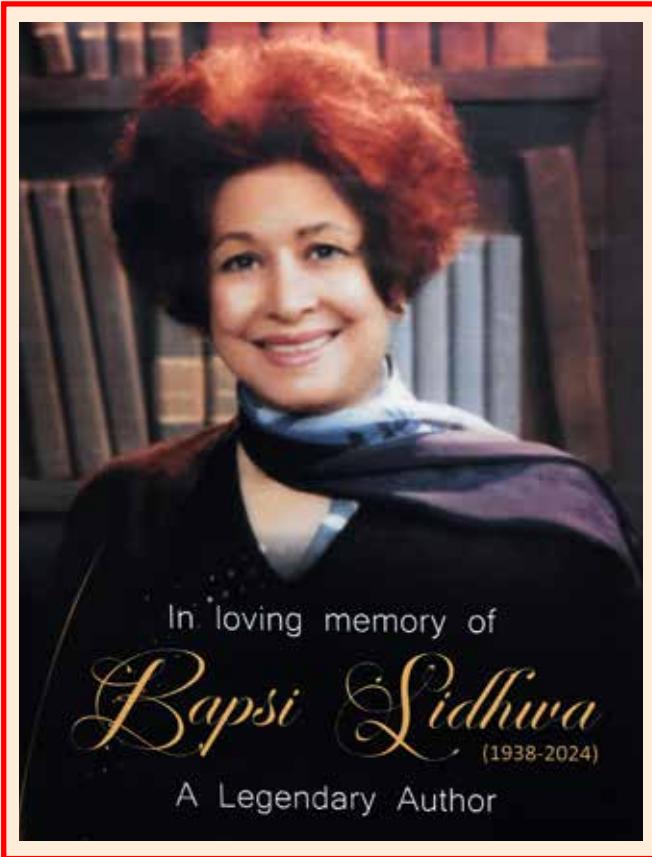
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Speakers pay tributes to legendary Bapsi Sidhwa

A TRIBUTE TO BAPSI SIDHWA (1938 – 2025)



The panel segment was curated by Amna R. Ali, who also moderated the discussion. Ms Perin Boga began with a presentation about the milieu that Bapsi Sidhwa grew up in, the Parsi community to which she belonged and how her writing took flight. Pegging her presentation on some of the architectural delights of Lahore she provided a pictorial journey through Bapsi Sidhwa's beloved Lahore augmented by images taken from FS Aijazuddin's book *Forgotten Images* and the painting of Commercial Buildings by Ijaz Anwar. This was the city which nurtured Bapsi Sidhwa to write her first book *The Crow Eaters* in 1978, followed by *The Bride* in 1982. Senator Walid Iqbal recalled his parents' friendship with Bapsi Sidhwa, reminding the audience that it was his father who helped Bapsi self-publish *The Crow Eaters* in Lahore before it was published in the UK, leading to Ms Sidhwa's international acclaim. Harris Khaliq and Dr Arif Azad also shared their views on the themes of Bapsi Sidhwa's work – the complexity of Partition, pluralism, women's rights, the lives of minorities – and her rich storytelling that brought to life a wide gamut of characters and places. Video tributes were sent in by Feroze Bhandara, Bapsi Sidhwa's younger brother who lives in Houston, Texas; Ameena Saiyid (OBE, SI), Publisher and Managing Director of Lightstone Publications and founder of Adab Festival; Muneeza Shamsie, editor and critic and the author of a literary history, *Hybrid Tapestries* and editor of four anthologies of Pakistani writing in English. And finally, Sadia Uqaili, a Pakistani American artist, and filmmaker, educator and activist, and the producer of *Bapsi* – a feature-length documentary on the life and work of Bapsi Sidhwa. This was followed by a six-minute clip of the documentary, some of it showing a snippet of Bapsi Sidhwa's life in Houston, Texas, USA where she lived after leaving Pakistan. The memorial reference ended with praise for Bapsi Sidhwa's literary legacy and her impactful life which will inspire future generations for years to come.

Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: An event to pay tribute to renowned Pakistani author Bapsi Sidhwa was held in Islamabad today, organised by her nephew, MNA Isphanyar M. Bhandara. Mr Bhandara is the only son of Ms Sidhwa's brother the late Minoos Bhandara (1938-2008), and the CEO of their family business the Murree Brewery founded in 1861. The event was held at the Multipurpose Hall of the Islamabad Club and was attended by Islamabad's literary community as well as friends of the family. A panel of esteemed guests spoke at the event. They included Ms Perin Boga, former literature and drama teacher at Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore and a family friend of Bapsi Sidhwa and the Bhandara family; Senator Walid Iqbal, whose parents Justice Javed Iqbal and Nasira Iqbal were also friends of Bapsi Sidhwa; Harris Khaliq, Secretary-General/CEO of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPP) and also an award-winning poet; and Dr Arif Azad who has written widely on culture, politics, and literature and is also a health and public policy consultant. The event began with a welcome note by Isphanyar Bhandara who remembered his aunt fondly. He recalled her relationship with her brother Minoos and praised her contribution to Pakistani literature in English. The MC of the afternoon's proceedings Nilofar Afridi Qazi followed and invited the panel to take their seats.







Independence Day of Sri Lanka



ACCESSION CEREMONY OF HIS HIGHNESS PRINCE RAHIM AL-HUSSAINI AGA KHAN V

DNA

LISBON (PORTUGAL): His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan V, accompanied by his family, received global leaders of the Shia Ismaili Muslim community at his Accession Ceremony today, 11th February 2025. The event took place at The Diwan of the Ismaili Imamat in Lisbon, Portugal. Leaders of the Ismaili community pledged spiritual allegiance to the 50th hereditary Imam on behalf of the global Ismaili community. Ismailis around the world observed the ceremony via livestream in their Jamat-khanas (places of gathering) in more than 35 countries. In his address, The Aga Khan paid tribute to his late father, Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, and thanked his family for their presence and support. He also thanked the governments of Portugal and Egypt for the way in which they had acknowledged his father's contributions and facilitated the dignified arrangements for his funeral and burial. This was the first occasion on which Aga Khan V was speaking to the international Ismaili community. In his inaugural address, he pledged to dedicate his life to care for the spiritual and material well-being of the Ismaili Jamat. He spoke of the principles of the Ismaili Muslim faith, the importance of keeping a balance between worldly and spiritual matters and the regular practice of the faith. His message focused on universal concepts of peace, tolerance, inclusion and support for those in need. He said that he wanted his community to be loyal and active citizens of the countries in which they live and urged the Ismaili community to lead by example in matters related to climate change. Deeply involved with the work of the Aga Khan Development Network for several decades, His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan committed to balance continuity and stability with a measured pace of change going forward. He also pledged to sustain friendly and constructive relations with governments and partners, and to work closely with them, as did his father, for peace, stability and opportunity.



Bosnia-Pakistan relations multifaced; diverse: envoy

Mahnoor Ansar / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Bosnia & Herzegovina Emin Cohodarevic has said 'We Bosnians and Herzegovinians believe that Pakistan is a fascinating country in many regards, especially culturally and from the perspective of historical values. It is an extremely friendly country, with very competent and amicably people. People hold the key to sound state-to-state relations and friendship comes from exchanges between the people'. The Ambassador made these remarks on the occasion of the Independence Day of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Rana Tanveer Hussain Federal Minister for Industries was the chief guest, while Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaisar Ahmed Sheikh also attended the event along with other dignitaries. Ambassador Emin further said, the multifaceted relations between the two countries have witnessed a steady growth during last thirty years characterized by friendship, mutual respect and understanding. These relations further intensified in last year with the Second Round of Bilateral Consultation between Ministries of Foreign Affairs. 'We hope to further intensify these relations with the proposed two visits in this year. I am proud of all the work we

have accomplished so far, and I look forward to continuing to strengthen the bonds between our countries at a critical time in history. Today, I am particularly proud of the work we have accomplished to increase our educational, cultural and people to people ties'. He said, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a meeting point of civilizations, a bridge the East and the West. Its unique multi-ethnic culture has been woven through one thousand years of tolerance and respect among its citizens, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation. 'Our commitment and destiny lie within the European Union. Bosnia and Herzegovina has made a significant step forward in the process of European integration in the past two years. On December 15th, 2022, Bosnia and Herzegovina was granted candidate status for European Union membership. The decision of the European Council to open accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina on March 21st, 2024, provided a strong incentive to the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue the implementation of key reforms. He said, the struggle for independence and sovereignty in the period from

1992 to 1995 was a general struggle of people who have no other homelands, people who only defend their own, and do not reach out for other people's homeland. That struggle was brought forward by the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, members of all its ethnic, religious or other identities. 'As we celebrate the 33rd anniversary of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Independence Day, let us be reminded that throughout history, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a country of unity, tolerance, and a safe haven for multi-ethnicity, and we are dedicated to upholding those principles today, and always'. 'Also, I would like to stress that Bosnia and Herzegovina is on a pathway to becoming a NATO member. My country has taken part in many collaborative efforts with NATO such as the Partnership for Peace Program, Membership Action Plan, and establishing a Commission for Cooperation', he added. The Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina have made a notable contribution to global peace through participation in peacekeeping missions under the United Nations, placing Bosnia and Herzegovina among countries actively supporting global stability, he said.





Vietnam shows growth in industrial, agriculture, services sectors: ambassador

DNA

FAISALABAD: Vietnam has shown an impressive growth in the industrial, agriculture and services sectors which is the outcome of its broad-based economic transformation strategy. This was said by Ambassador of Vietnam to Pakistan Mr Pham Anh Tuan while addressing the business community in the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) on Wednesday. He said that Pakistan is a big country with a lot of potential in the textile sector as statistically Faisalabad accounts for 30% of Pakistan's textile production and 44% of its textile exports. He mentioned that in 2024, Vietnam's global exported surpassed \$405.5bn while its imports were \$380.8bn. He said that foreign direct investment in Vietnam during 2024 was estimated at \$25.35bn. He said that Vietnam had signed agreements with 34 countries, including nine comprehensive strategic partners, 11 strategic partners and 14 comprehensive partners in addition to signing 19 FTA with vari-



ous countries. About data and statistics of trade between Vietnam and Pakistan, he said that in 2023 bilateral trade between Pakistan and Vietnam was around \$750million. "In 2024 total import and export turnover reached over \$850million", he said and added that exports reached \$522million while imports were \$328million. He said that Pakistan's main exports to Vietnam consist of corn, woven fabrics of cot-

ton and leather while on the other hand Pakistan's imports from Vietnam include electronic equipment, yarn, rubber and tea etc. He said that potential sectors where Pakistan could further enhance its exports to Vietnam include processed meat, pharmaceutical products, fruits and vegetables. He said that there was tremendous room for collaboration in the information technology and tourism sectors. He said that there is a need to find new avenues of trade between Pakistan and Vietnam because Vietnam being an active member of ASEAN, holds great importance for Pakistan. He suggested that a Memorandum of Cooperation between the FCCI and Vietnam Cotton and Spinning Association should be initiated to forge relationships between the business communities of the two countries. Earlier, FCCI President Rehan Naseem Bharara underlined the economic importance of Faisalabad in the national economy and said: "We must collaborate to maintain a strategic balance between bilateral trades". He also stressed the need to further enhance relations with Vietnam in the field of tourism promotion.

Republic Day of India celebrated





Australia bolsters blind women cricket in Pakistan



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission, in partnership with the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) and Serena Hotels, supported a national blind women's cricket training camp and tournament in Islamabad. Women and girls from across Pakistan participated in the event. The initiative followed the historic formation of Pakistan's first blind women's cricket team in 2018, which played its inaugural international T20 match that same year. This year, 50 additional visually impaired women and girls had the opportunity to sharpen their skills and chase their cricketing dreams.

Speaking at the concluding awards ceremony, Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Neil Hawkins, highlighted how sports diplomacy strengthens ties between nations and transforms lives: "Cricket is a powerful force for connection and inclusion. It opens doors for women and girls in Pakistan and Australia, including for those with disabilities, challenging perceptions and breaking barriers." Chairman of the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council, Syed Sultan Shah, praised the initiative: "Blind Cricket has become a beacon of hope for

visually impaired athletes. It's more than a game—it's a statement that no disability can hold you back. With the right support, these women can be champions in sport and in life." The players were coached by some of Pakistan's finest blind cricket mentors, including Abdul Razaq, Ibrar Shah, Shahida Shaheen, and Tahir Mehmood Butt, who have trained world-class athletes. With a legacy of cricketing excellence, Australia has been at the forefront of promoting blind cricket, a sport that was invented in Melbourne in 1922 when visually impaired factory workers improvised by putting rocks in a tin can to create a ball.

Myanmar envoy highlights potential for stronger bilateral cooperation

He also pointed out that both Pakistan and Myanmar offer unique cultural and historical assets—Pakistan with its Gandhara Civilization sites and Myanmar with its religious landmarks – which could serve as a foundation for expanding tourism, especially religious tourism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Myanmar to Pakistan, His Excellency Wunna Han, shared his vision for a stronger, mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries during an interactive session at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). He emphasized the vast potential for foreign investments, trade, and economic cooperation between Myanmar and Pakistan. In particular, he highlighted key sectors such as tourism, Information Technology (IT), and pharmaceuticals where both nations could foster joint ventures and business-to-business (B2B) cooperation. The Ambassador expressed his belief that greater ease of doing business, along with enhanced people-to-people exchanges, could drive significant economic growth. He also pointed out that both Pakistan and Myanmar offer unique cultural and historical assets—Pakistan with its Gandhara Civilization sites and Myanmar with its religious landmarks—which could serve as a foundation for expanding tourism, especially religious tourism.

The Ambassador expressed optimism that these efforts would pave the way for increased trade and economic collaboration between the two countries. He committed to facilitating deeper ties between the two nations' Chambers of Commerce and trade bodies, which could significantly benefit both sides. The President of ICCI highlighted Pakistan's diverse export potential, including sectors such as furniture, textiles, pharmaceuticals, marble, and agriculture. He emphasized the need for Pakistan and Myanmar to address the trade imbalance, encouraging joint ventures that would foster a "win-win" position for both countries. He also

stressed the importance of improving connectivity through direct flights, enhancing cultural exchanges, and promoting medical tourism to strengthen bilateral ties. The Senior Vice President of ICCI emphasized the importance of holding a business forum between the two countries to facilitate better communication and collaboration. He noted that ICCI, as the premier chamber of the capital, is actively working to support business growth and the economic well-being of both Pakistan and Myanmar.

Executive Member Fatima Azeem discussed the historic relations between Pakistan and Myanmar and emphasized the need for more exchanges of women entrepreneurs between the two countries. She stressed the importance of these exchanges in empowering women financially and supporting their entrepreneurial growth on both sides. Executive Member Chaudhry Nadeem Ahmed highlighted the potential for joint ventures in the marble industry, underscoring its significant promise for collaboration between the two nations. Senior Advisor to ICCI President Naeem Siddiqui emphasized the need for medical exhibitions, symposiums, and seminars, along with virtual meetings, to further enhance trade and cooperation between Pakistan and Myanmar. The session concluded with a commitment from all parties to continue strengthening ties between Pakistan and Myanmar through ongoing dialogue and strategic collaboration. The discussions have set a positive tone for future cooperation, and there is widespread optimism about the potential for increased trade, cultural exchanges, and joint ventures that will contribute to the long-term economic success of both countries. Those prominent among the attendees included Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, Executive Members Malik Mohsin Khalid, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Naveed Satti and Waseem Chaudhry.

DNA



Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce Launched

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI), Privatization, and Communication, Abdul Aleem Khan on Wednesday said the inauguration of Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (APCCI) is the foundation for a stronger economic alliance between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, which will enhance the bilateral economic and trade ties between both side. Federal Minister for Board of Investment (BOI), Privatization, and Communication, Abdul Aleem Khan addressing the Inauguration ceremony of Azerbaijan-Pakistan chamber of Commerce and Industry (APCCI) as Chief Guest along with others including, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov and Chairman, APCCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari here. The President Federation Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh and Secretary General of FPCCI, Zafar Bakhtawari also addressed the occasion. Meanwhile addressing on the occasion, he said “We stand at the threshold of a new and dynamic chapter in our bilateral relations, with unwavering optimism,

I am confident that this Chamber will evolve into a cornerstone of our economic cooperation, ushering in a new era of trade, innovation, and mutual success.” Aleem Khan said the APCCI stands as a testament to that enduring friendship, transforming goodwill into tangible economic opportunities. This Chamber is more than an institution and it is a catalyst for innovation, a bridge between ambition and achievement, he said. The Minister said that with ongoing economic reforms, Pakistan is committed to creating a business-friendly environment for Azerbaijani investors and under the leadership of the Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif the government is advancing economic diplomacy, with Azerbaijan as a key partner in this vision. Today, it is not just about the unveiling of an institution; it is about cementing an economic partnership that is poised to redefine the trajectory of our bilateral relations. Pakistan and Azerbaijan share a bond that extends beyond formal diplomacy; it is rooted in history, mutual respect, and an unwavering commitment to shared prosperity. Meanwhile on the occasion, Ambassador of of Azerbaijan to

Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov expressed his deep fraternal sentiments towards Abdul Aleem Khan and mentioned that both countries were taking steps to enhance bilateral cooperation. The Ambassador expressed confidence that Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry would further increase the existing \$ 2 billion investment volume between the two countries. Chairman of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that annual bilateral trade of \$ 100 million between Azerbaijan and Pakistan is not according to the potential and efforts needed to enhance the bilateral trade up \$1 billion in next five years. The President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram addressing the ceremony, hailed the establishment of the APCCI and highlighted its role in introducing Pakistani products to Azerbaijan and Central Asian countries. Meanwhile, on the occasion, Secretary General of FPCCI, highlighted the different aspects of Azerbaijan and Pakistan relation and praised the Federal Minister’s efforts for promoting bilateral ties of the two friend countries.





Iranian envoy for strengthening Iran-Pakistan relations

Iranian Envoy recalls high-level diplomatic exchanges between Tehran and Islamabad

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghaddam, reaffirmed Tehran's commitment to strengthening relations with Pakistan during a ceremony marking the 46th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution. The event, arranged by the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad, was attended by distinguished guests, including Pakistan's Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, who graced the occasion as Chief Guest. In his address, Ambassador Moghaddam highlighted the profound impact of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, describing it as one of the most defining events of the 20th century. "The revolution introduced a new political discourse based on the principles of independence, freedom, and the Islamic Republic," he noted, adding that it fostered self-reliance and sovereignty in Iran, leading to significant advancements in various fields despite external pressures and sanctions. The Ambassador emphasized Iran's longstanding policy of fostering strong ties with neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan. "Our brotherly bond with Pakistan holds a special place and has been consistently emphasized by the Supreme Leader," he said. He highlighted key initiatives undertaken to bolster economic and political collaboration, including the opening of border crossings and trade markets. "These steps have significantly contributed to the economic prosperity of both nations and the wider region," he added. Amba-

sador Moghaddam pointed to the numerous high-level visits exchanged between the two countries in the past year as evidence of deepening ties. He recalled the visit of the late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Pakistan, as well as the visits by Pakistani leaders, including former Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, to Iran. Other significant visits by senior Iranian officials further underscored the growing diplomatic engagement between the two nations. Discussing economic collaboration, the Ambassador highlighted the complementary nature of Iran and Pakistan's economies. "Iran, with the world's largest oil and gas reserves, and Pakistan, with its rich agricultural and livestock resources, are natural partners," he said, stressing the potential for increased economic integration. Iran has always supported efforts to enhance regional connectivity, particularly through transportation networks like the ITI rail route. The Ambassador underscored the importance of expanding port and infrastructure cooperation, which he said would foster prosperity, stability, and sustainable development for both nations. "The Iran-Pakistan relationship, rooted in geographical ties, shared interests, and mutual respect, continues to move towards a brighter future," he remarked, urging both nations to maximize their potential for regional development and economic growth.



Interchange named after Recep Tayyip Erdogan



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that Pakistan and Türkiye were two brotherly nations and they were committed to take the bilateral trade volume between the two countries to \$5 billion mark.

Addressing a meeting of the cabinet, the prime minister referred to the recent visit of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and said that he had always supported Pakistan at all global fora.

He said, "President Erdogan had been a strong voice for Palestine and Kashmir. Pakistan and Türkiye enjoy brotherly ties and both countries also hold regular consultations and support each other at all fora."

The prime minister said that a number of MoUs were also signed during Turkish president's visit and urged the ministry of commerce and other relevant ministries to work jointly for the achievement of bilateral trade mark of 5 billion dollars.

He said that a flyover which was completed in 84 days in Islamabad was named after President Tayyip Erdogan as a sign of affection by the people of Pakistan.

The prime minister also welcomed a recent Gallop's survey, according to which about 55 percent of people had reposed confidence in the government's pro-business policies. However, he stressed that they had to move forward and work hard to accomplish the economic agenda and its key components including Uraan Pakistan. The prime minister, about his meeting with a delegation of World Bank directors, said that they had unanimously expressed their satisfaction over the reforms agenda and the macro-economic stability.

They had praised the government and its credit went to every member of the cabinet, he added. The prime minister said peace in the country was linked with the economic prosperity which would move the wheel of progress rapidly. For economic stability, conducive environment was a requisite, he added. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that the complete elimination of terrorism is the mission of his government, as Pakistan's development and prosperity are linked to it. Speaking at a meeting of the Federal Cabinet in Islamabad today, he commended the sacrifices being rendered by the armed forces of Pakistan in the fight

against terrorism. He said their sacrifices will always be remembered.

Talking about the economic situation in the country, the Prime Minister quoted his discussion with a delegation of the World Bank and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, who commended Pakistan's macroeconomic stability and positive economic indicators as a result of the reform agenda of the government. Shehbaz Sharif further said that fifty-five percent of the business community has shown their confidence in the enabling business environment in a recently conducted Gallup Survey. He further directed the Ministry of Commerce and other related divisions to make all-out efforts in taking the bilateral trade between Pakistan and Türkiye to five billion dollars in light of the resolve expressed during the recently concluded visit of Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Pakistan. The Prime Minister said the Turkish President has always supported Pakistan. He said President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is also consistent in raising his voice for the freedom of Kashmir and Palestine.

CEO Murree Brewery luncheon celebrating Pak religious diversity

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Federal Parliamentary Secretary and CEO of Murree Brewery, Isphanyar Bhandara, hosted a luncheon at his residence in honor of religious minority communities. A large number of people from various faiths attended the gathering. Speaking on the occasion, Isphanyar Bhandara welcomed the at-

tendees and extended his best wishes to them. He emphasized the significant role religious minorities have played in Pakistan's progress and development. Since the country's inception, they have contributed alongside their fellow citizens in various fields and will continue to do so in the future. Bhandara reaffirmed his commitment to fostering interfaith harmony and ensuring that all communities feel valued and included in Pakistan's social and economic fabric.





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