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The advertisement features a background image of a table set with various Asian dishes. In the foreground, there are several white bowls containing different types of food: one with noodles, one with a meat and vegetable stir-fry, one with a dark sauce and meat, one with rice, and one with a vegetable stir-fry. A glass of green smoothie is also visible. In the background, there are white flowers and green plants. The text 'Asian Wok by MONAL' is prominently displayed at the top, and a red banner with white text reads 'LUNCH BOWLS, THE ASIAN WOK WAY!'. Below this, a paragraph describes the lunch bowls, and a section provides pricing and availability information. The bottom of the ad has a red banner with contact details.

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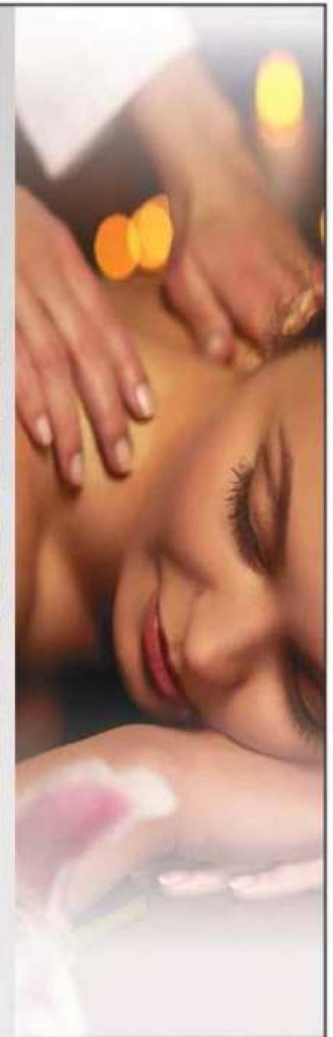
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Post-war diplomacy: India, Pakistan seek global support



IN the aftermath of a brief but tense military escalation between India and Pakistan, both nations launched diplomatic offensives aimed at garnering international support. While the dust of confrontation has barely settled, emissaries from New Delhi and Islamabad were dispatched to various world capitals, each side presenting its narrative and seeking allies in a volatile regional and global climate. India's diplomatic effort was spearheaded by seasoned diplomat and politician Shashi Tharoor, known for his articulate and persuasive style. Tharoor led delegations to Western and Asian capitals, where the focus appeared to be on framing Pakistan as an aggressor and warning of the risks posed by what India perceives as Pakistan's use of proxies and cross-border adventurism.

In contrast, Pakistan opted for a multi-pronged diplomatic approach. Several teams were formed, with the primary group led by former Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Pakistan's outreach focused on explaining the circumstances under which it responded to Indian aggression. Pakistani representatives emphasized that their military response was reactive, not provocative, and highlighted the potential dangers of unchecked escalation between two nuclear-armed states.

The international observers suggested that Pakistan may have had more success in presenting its narrative. Islamabad's emphasis on restraint, self-defense, and adherence to international norms has resonated with several countries and international organizations. Pakistan's diplomats have also focused on the human rights situation in Kashmir and the risks posed by India's increasingly unilateral policies in the region.

Another flashpoint in the India-Pakistan standoff is the future of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), signed in 1960 with World Bank mediation. The treaty has survived multiple wars and political upheavals, serving as a rare example of cooperation between the two rivals. However, India has recently indicated that it may withdraw from or unilaterally modify the treaty, an action widely considered illegal under international law.

So far, India has not followed through with concrete steps to halt the flow of river waters into Pakistan. However, experts warn that any such move would significantly heighten tensions and possibly trigger a broader conflict. Water is a critical resource for Pakistan, and any disruption in its availability could endanger agriculture, livelihoods, and economic stability. Both India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons, a factor that makes any military conflict between them exponentially more dangerous. Pakistan's officials have repeatedly warned that a full-scale war would be catastrophic for both nations and could destabilize the broader South Asian region.

What makes the current situation even more tragic is that both India and Pakistan are grappling with profound internal challenges. Poverty, inflation, unemployment, and social unrest plague both nations. Resources that should be directed toward education, healthcare, and economic development are instead being funneled into military preparedness.

This shared vulnerability underscores the need for dialogue and de-escalation. While governments may be locked in conflict, the people of both nations face similar struggles. True security will only come when the two countries prioritize human development over militarization. At the heart of the India-Pakistan conflict lies the Kashmir dispute—a territorial conflict that has festered since the partition in 1947. Resolving the Kashmir issue is critical to achieving lasting peace. The international community, particularly major powers like the United States and China, has a significant role to play. Both countries enjoy strategic partnerships with India and Pakistan, respectively. They must use their influence to encourage restraint and mediate a peaceful resolution. Instead of taking sides, global actors should act as facilitators of dialogue. The current post-war scenario offers both danger and opportunity. The danger lies in missteps, miscalculations, or deliberate provocations that could lead to another war—potentially one with nuclear consequences. The opportunity lies in choosing dialogue over destruction. The world cannot afford a war between two nuclear powers. And India and Pakistan, with their shared history, culture, and aspirations, owe it to their citizens to choose peace over conflict, dialogue over war, and cooperation over confrontation.

ANSA

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.

Interview: Dr. Zuhair Zaid,
Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan

‘Unity among Muslim world a must for an independent Palestine’

The Ambassador of the State of Palestine, Dr. Zuhair Zaid, recently gave an exclusive interview to Daily Islamabad POST, Centreline journal and Diplomatic News Agency (DNA). Having recently assumed his duties in Pakistan, Ambassador Zaid spoke candidly about various dimensions of the ongoing Gaza crisis. He offered insightful commentary on the international community’s approach to the Palestinian issue and shared his perspective on the evolving situation. Below is the full text of his interview

Exclusive

Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Q: Your Excellency, how do you see Pakistan’s support for Palestine?

As a Palestinian, I want to express our deep and heartfelt gratitude for the unwavering support we have continuously received from Pakistan. This solidarity—both in word and deed—has been a source of strength and comfort for our people, especially in times of hardship and crisis. Pakistan’s position on the Palestinian cause has always been principled, clear, and steadfast. On the international stage, whether at the United Nations, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), or other global forums, Pakistan has consistently raised its voice in defense of Palestinian rights. It has never hesitated to condemn injustice, illegal occupation, and human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people. This diplomatic support reflects a deep-rooted commitment to justice, freedom, and the right of people to self-determination. Importantly, this solidarity is not con-





fined to the corridors of power. The people of Pakistan—across all walks of life—have shown immense empathy and unity with the Palestinian cause. From peaceful demonstrations and awareness campaigns to heartfelt messages on social media, the national consensus in support of Palestine is both overwhelming and deeply moving. It is rare to witness such a unified front across an entire nation, and it speaks volumes about the moral compass of the Pakistani people.

Beyond political support, Pakistan has also extended a generous hand on the humanitarian front. Numerous Pakistani relief organizations, often encouraged and facilitated by the government, have provided vital aid to Palestinians in times of dire need. From medical supplies and food packages to tents and emergency assistance, Pakistan's humanitarian outreach has reached our people in refugee camps, conflict zones, and besieged areas. These acts of compassion and brotherhood are not forgotten—they are etched in

our hearts as a reminder that we are not alone in our struggle. In every way, Pakistan has stood by us. This enduring friendship is a beacon of hope for our nation, and we are profoundly grateful for it.

Q: You have mentioned a desire for practical cooperation between Pakistan and Palestine. Could you elaborate?

Yes, we are keen to move beyond symbolic gestures and establish practical cooperation. We have already presented several agreements to the Government of Pakistan for consideration. With full cooperation from Pakistan, I am hopeful that we will soon sign these agreements, enabling us to enhance cooperation on economic, educational, and cultural levels. This is my vision—to see concrete progress during my tenure.

Q: Is there any parliamentary-level cooperation being considered?

Absolutely. I believe the Pakistani Parliament and Senate fully support the Palestinian cause. I see no obstacles—legal or otherwise—in enhancing our cooperation. In fact,

there have been previous discussions about inviting Pakistani parliamentarians to visit Palestine.

Such visits, especially to meet Palestinian prisoners, can be a source of moral support. But the challenge is that Israel controls all borders, making such visits practically impossible unless Israeli authorities allow entry.

Q: You were once imprisoned in Israel. Would you share that experience?

Certainly. I am part of my people and their struggle. I spent 14 years in Israeli prisons. Over one million Palestinians have faced imprisonment. Many are detained under so-called “administrative detention”—without charges or trial—based on intelligence reports. The initial detention is for six months, often renewed repeatedly. Some remain imprisoned for years under this unjust system.

Q: How do you assess the humanitarian aid currently reaching Gaza?

The current situation in Gaza has surpassed the bounds of humanitarian crisis, embodying a systematic and



calculated campaign of violence, displacement, and deprivation. The insufficient aid trickling into the region barely scratches the surface of the dire needs on the ground. Israel's ongoing blockade and deliberate restriction of essential resources—food, water, medicine—constitute a form of collective punishment that violates international law and moral conscience alike.

The demolition of homes, arbitrary arrests, and settler violence operate in tandem with official state policy to dispossess Palestinians of their land and identity. What is unfolding is not just a military conflict—it is the systematic cleansing of a people from their homeland, pursued through both overt aggression and structural oppression.

Q: What does the Nakba mean to Palestinians?

Nakba, or “catastrophe,” refers to the events of 1948 when Palestinians were expelled from their homeland. It began much earlier, with the Balfour Decla-

ration—supported by the British and Americans—granting Zionists the right to establish a state in Palestine.

This was an unjust and illogical decision. Palestinians are paying the price for crimes committed against Jews in Europe—crimes we had no part in. Historically, Muslims and Arabs welcomed Jews fleeing persecution, offering them shelter and respect.

Q: How do you view the roles of Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran?

We, as Palestinians, look to our brothers and sisters across the Muslim world with hope and expectation. Our cause is not just a national struggle—it is a humanitarian and moral issue that resonates deeply with the Islamic Ummah. We do not ask for war or conflict; rather, we appeal for meaningful and sustained diplomatic, political, and economic pressure on those who continue to deny our fundamental rights. In today's intercon-

nected world, political influence and international alliances can be powerful tools to advocate for justice and to hold aggressors accountable.

We particularly commend the principled position taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The clear and unwavering stance—that normalization with Israel cannot proceed without a just and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue—has been a significant and encouraging development.

This policy not only affirms the importance of Palestinian rights but also sends a strong message to the international community that peace cannot be built upon injustice. We trust the leadership of Saudi Arabia, whose central role in the Muslim world and on the global stage gives weight to its positions. With their support, we feel stronger, more hopeful, and less alone in our struggle. Likewise, the roles played by coun-

tries such as Egypt and Jordan have been vital. As neighbors with direct stakes in the region's stability and with longstanding historical ties to the Palestinian people, their involvement has been instrumental in diplomatic efforts, humanitarian support, and mediation during moments of crisis. We believe that the collective strength of the Muslim world—when guided by unity, justice, and compassion—can influence international dynamics in favor of a just and lasting solution.

Q: Some countries like UAE and Bahrain have normalized ties with Israel. Your thoughts?

We respect sovereign decisions, but we must question what has been gained. Unity within the Arab League and commitment to its initiatives are vital. Without collective Arab consensus, such moves weaken our position. The Zionist mindset still sees Arabs and Muslims as adversaries, regardless of peace deals. As regards the role of the OIC and the Arab League, both work in harmony. Both institutions have always supported Palestine on political and humanitarian fronts.

Q: What role do Palestinian youth play in the resistance?

Our youth have always been at the forefront of the struggle. From student movements to social media activism, they are deeply engaged. Even in Pakistan, we have over 400 Palestinian students enrolled in various universities, with many having graduated already. They are our future and a crucial part of our resistance.

Q: Has social media impacted global opinion on Palestine?

Yes, immensely. Social media has played a pivotal role in shaping global awareness and opinion regarding the ongoing atrocities committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. Through platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, graphic evidence of the destruction in Gaza, the suffering of civilians, and violations of international law are being disseminated in real time. This direct flow of information has bypassed traditional media filters and given the global public, especially the youth, unfiltered access to the truth.

“Across the United States, Canada, and Europe, we are now witnessing a historic shift. University students, young activists, and even schoolchildren are organizing protests, sit-ins, and public

awareness campaigns demanding justice for Palestine.

These movements reflect a global awakening—a deep moral response from younger generations who have grown up with values rooted in human rights, equality, and social justice. They no longer rely solely on state narratives; instead, they seek the truth, and they stand firmly on the side of the oppressed.”

“The power of social media has allowed Palestinian voices—voices that were once marginalized or silenced on international platforms—to be heard loudly and clearly. It has also fostered solidarity movements, linking people from different cultures and backgrounds in a united front against oppression. The impact has been so significant that governments and institutions have begun to respond—sometimes with suppres-

civilian—is unparalleled. My message, especially to youth, is to keep Palestine in your hearts. We pray for peace, prosperity, and stability for Pakistan, and we are forever grateful for your solidarity.

Pakistan has always stood by the choices of the Palestinian people—firmly supporting our legitimate rights and legal institutions. This unwavering support is deeply valued.

To those political parties in Pakistan that may hold differing views, my humble message is this: unity is vital. Pakistan should continue to serve as a unifying force for the Palestinian cause, not one that contributes to division.

As for the various organizations involved—whether political or humanitarian—they are merely instruments. We, as freedom fighters, are also

“Beyond political support, Pakistan has also extended a generous hand on the humanitarian front. Numerous Pakistani relief organizations, often encouraged and facilitated by the government, have provided vital aid to Palestinians in times of dire need. From medical supplies and food packages to tents and emergency assistance, Pakistan’s humanitarian outreach has reached our people in refugee camps, conflict zones, and besieged areas”

sion, but increasingly with calls for inquiry and accountability.”

“This shift in global consciousness, driven largely by the youth and amplified through social media, gives us hope. It assures us that the Palestinian cause is not isolated. It is part of a broader global struggle for dignity, justice, and human rights. And as long as these voices continue to rise, the truth cannot be buried.”

Q: Finally, Your Excellency, a message for the people of Pakistan?

The people of Pakistan are our beloved brothers and sisters. The love and support we receive from every Pakistani—young, old, political, or

instruments. The ultimate goal for all of us is one and the same: Palestine. Allah SWT blessed us to be the guards of the first Qibla of Al-Masjid Al-Mubarak. We know that this holy land for all and also for Pakistan. Keep always Palestine above everything.

The liberation of the Palestinian people is our shared objective. This goal should be embraced as a guiding principle by our Pakistani brothers and sisters. Lastly, I want to express that just as the people of Pakistan love, respect, and support us—we, too, feel the same for you. We pray for Pakistan’s stability, for peace across your land, and for your continued development and prosperity.

Read Japan Project: the Nippon Foundation Donates Books to the National University of Technology (NUTECH), Islamabad

DNA

THE Embassy of Japan in Pakistan, in collaboration with the Nippon Foundation, has donated a collection of 92 books on Japan to the National University of Technology (NUTECH) Islamabad as a part of the "Read Japan Project" aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of Japan's rich culture, politics and economics through books. H.E. Mr. AKAMATSU Shuichi, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, on behalf of the Nippon Foundation, presented the books to Rector NUTECH, Lt. General (Retd) Mr. Moazzam Ejaz at a ceremony held on Friday June 27 at the university premises. The 92 carefully selected books in English language cover a range of topics related to Japan such as history, politics, economy, security, philosophy, literature, art and culture.

Speaking on the occasion, H.E. Ambassador AKAMATSU congratulated the students and teachers for receiving this valuable gift from the Nippon Foundation and expressed the hope that with these books, students, faculty members, and intellectuals will have more fascinating information on Japan as these books are windows into Japan's rich history, vibrant culture, advanced technology, and unique values. The Ambassador appreciated the services rendered by NUTECH for offering not only



the degree programs but also vocational training and language courses and has cultivated talented students, contributing to Pakistan's human capital. He said that NUTECH's relationship with Japan is noteworthy as it's a registered organization which is sending interns for Japan's Technical Intern Training Program (TITP). "I believe that NUTECH is playing a pivotal role in people-to-people exchange between Japan and Pakistan," said the Ambassador. In his remarks, the Rector NUTECH Lt.

General (Retd) Moazzam Ejaz thanked the Nippon Foundation and the Embassy of Japan for their generous gift of knowledge, expressing hope that the students will use this opportunity to learn about Japan and strengthen future Japan-Pakistan bilateral relations. The "READ JAPAN PROJECT" was initiated by the Nippon Foundation in 2008 to promote the understanding of Japan through the donation of Japan related books in English to universities and libraries around the world.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy head of mission embassy of France in Pakistan Jean-Charles Allard, cutting the ribbon during inauguration ceremony of painting exhibition titled "The Gravity of Grace" of different artists at Gallery-6, in the Federal Capital. – DNA

Ethiopian Embassy, United Nations coordinate for food systems

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad and the United Nations, Pakistan, have agreed to cooperate on mobilizing international participation for the 2nd United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktake, taking place from July 27-29, 2025 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Tourist attractions The important discussion to this end held during a meeting between H.E. Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and H.E. Mr. Mohamed Yahya, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Pakistan. Both sides exchanged views on the critical importance of Pakistani leadership's participation in the Summit, which is being co-hosted by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Italy. Ambassador Dr. Jemal briefed the Resident Coordinator on the extensive preparations underway in Addis Ababa to host the Food Systems Summit Stocktake with an aim to review progress and boost collaborations for a global transformation of food systems. "The summit will be a great opportunity to



further strengthen the bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Ethiopia and Pakistan," the Ambassador stated. He informed the Resident Coordinator about the visionary steps taken by Prime Minister H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed for climate adaptation and mitigation, green development, and food self-sufficiency, citing initiatives like the Green Legacy Initiative, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and the Bounty of Basket program. He highlighted the growing cooperation between Ethiopia and Pakistan, particu-

larly in areas of climate change and food security. Mr. Mohamed Yahya commended Ethiopia's significant efforts in forestation and afforestation, food security, and green development initiatives. He assured the Ambassador of his full support to ensure the conference's success and the achievement of its objectives. He also lauded Ethiopia's proactive role in promoting food security, and a strong commitment to multilateralism demonstrated by Addis Ababa by hosting numerous international conferences and summits in the recent years.

Ethiopia, Italy discuss cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN—The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Republic of Italy have discussed cooperation to engage the leadership of Pakistan for the 2nd United Nations Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4). The UNFSS+4, co-chaired by Ethiopia and Italy, will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from July 27-29, 2025. To this end, H.E. Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia, met with H.E. Marilina Armellini, Ambassador of Italy in Pakistan, at the Italian Embassy Islamabad. They discussed matters of mutual interests, including bilateral and multilateral cooperation in trade, investment, food security, energy, and connectivity. Both Ambassadors emphasized their shared commitment to transforming food systems for enhanced food security worldwide and in their respective countries as well. Ambassador Dr. Jemal briefed the Italian Ambassador on the Ethiopian Embassy's efforts to engage the Government of Pakistan for participation of its leadership in UNFSS+4. He highlighted that preparations for hosting the summit in Addis Ababa are well underway. "The summit will provide a crucial platform to reflect on past efforts and foster increased collaboration to build robust and transformed food systems," he remarked.



He also informed the Ambassador about Ethiopia's commitment to green economic development and food self-sufficiency, citing initiatives like the Green Legacy Initiative, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and the Bounty of Basket program. The Ambassador of Italy, on the other hand, reiterated the Italian Government's strong support to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. She reiterated Italy's commitment to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Ethiopia, acknowledging significant steps taken by Ethiopia to address climate change, achieve food security, and promoting green economic development. H.E. Ambassador Marilina Armellini assured H.E. Ambassador Dr. Jemal of her full support in contributing to the success of UNFSS+4. A day earlier, H.E. Ambassador Dr. Jemal Beker met with H.E. Mr. Mohamed Yahya, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Pakistan and discussed cooperation to this end.

Supreme Court verdict on reserved seats: 'A death knell for democracy'

"The current ruling alliance appears powerful on the surface. With the judiciary's decision gifting them enhanced parliamentary strength, they now wield near-absolute authority. But this power is conditional, fragile, and temporary. History tells us that the moment this "same page" narrative with the establishment fades, the very powers that elevated them will become their undoing"

Ansar Mahmood Bhatti



THE recent Supreme Court decision regarding the distribution of reserved seats in the National Assembly has sent shockwaves across Pakistan's political spectrum. By denying Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) its share of reserved seats and directing that these be distributed among other political parties, the apex court verdict appears to have shifted the balance of parliamentary power. With this verdict, the ruling coalition—comprising PML-N, PPP, and allied parties—is poised to gain a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly. This supermajority, made possible not by electoral strength but by judicial endorsement, has been rightly labelled by many as an undemocratic, even unjust, outcome. Whether or not PTI fulfilled the legal prerequisites to claim these seats is beside the point; what matters is that the ruling parties, who themselves did not contest these seats, are now reaping the political dividends. This manufactured majority is not a reflection of the people's mandate—it is a result of 'judicial engineering', and it will have long-lasting consequences for Pakistan's political landscape. This decision is a glaring example of how

state institutions, instead of playing a neutral role, have once again appeared to side with the powers that be. In this case, the ruling elite and the establishment seem to be the ultimate beneficiaries, while democracy lies 'bruised and battered'. Indeed, Pakistan has never enjoyed a fully functional democratic system, but the small semblance of representative governance that did exist has now been severely undermined. Let us be candid. The PTI government during its tenure failed on multiple fronts. Governance was chaotic, corruption reached record levels, and institutional dysfunction grew exponentially. PTI failed to live up to its lofty promises and instead indulged in political vendettas, poor policymaking, and an overall disregard for consensus-building. But does that justify the unprecedented crackdown on the party after its fallout with the establishment? Absolutely not. The way PTI has been marginalized—its leaders jailed, its members coerced into disassociating from the party, and now, its rightful political space usurped—is not just troubling; it is dangerous. This appears to be a punishment not for incompetence, but for disobedience. PTI's real crime was refusing to toe the line, to continue playing puppet. The current ruling alliance appears powerful on the surface. With the judiciary's decision gifting them enhanced parliamentary strength, they now wield near-absolute authority. But this power is conditional, fragile, and temporary. History tells us that the

moment this "same page" narrative with the establishment fades, the very powers that elevated them will become their undoing. We have seen this cycle repeat with the PML-N, PPP, and now PTI. The question is: for how long will this vicious cycle continue? This institutionalized power game is crippling the country. It has distorted the foundations of governance, hollowed out democratic institutions, and left the common citizen disillusioned and disenfranchised. With each passing day, poverty grows, corruption festers, and the gap between the rulers and the ruled widens. The state appears more interested in maintaining its internal power equilibrium than addressing the needs of its people. It is a shameful reality that we continue to celebrate IMF bailouts as achievements, rather than confronting the root causes of our economic dependence. The ruling elite seems disconnected from the ground realities. Inflation is choking the masses, public services are deteriorating, and lawlessness is spreading. Yet, the corridors of power remain preoccupied with political maneuvering, rather than public welfare. Governance has become a sideshow to the main drama of power consolidation and political survival. This Supreme Court verdict has not just handed over a few parliamentary seats—it has fundamentally altered the political equation of the country. It has given legitimacy to a distorted electoral outcome and has validated the exclusion of one of the



largest political parties from the democratic process. The consequences of this will be far-reaching. It may create a short-term political stability for the ruling alliance, but it will do so at the cost of long-term national cohesion and democratic development. Pakistan's democratic journey has always been fraught with interruptions, but never before has the erosion been so systemic, so institutional, and so unapologetic. If the political class does not unite to resist this ongoing decay, the very idea of representative democracy will be rendered meaningless. What is needed now is not just an outcry from civil society and political commentators, but a serious introspection by all stakeholders—including the judiciary and the establishment—on the damage being done to the constitutional order of the country.

It is time to ask ourselves: What kind of Pakistan are we building? One where power is determined not by the ballot but by boardroom deals? One where judicial decisions tilt political fortunes? One where parties that challenge the status quo are decimated through non-political means? If this trajectory continues, then we are hurtling toward authoritarianism, whether civil or military, masked in democratic attire.

There is no doubt that PTI made grave mistakes during its tenure. It alienated allies, mishandled the economy, and eroded institutional trust. But political mistakes should be corrected through the democratic process—not by sidelining an entire party through legal, administrative, and coercive tools. Democracy demands inclusion, competition, and accountability. What we are witnessing is exclusion, manipulation, and repression. The Supreme Court decision on reserved seats may have resolved a legal question, but it has opened a moral and political wound. The judiciary may have thought it was interpreting the constitution, but in doing so, it has added fuel to the fire of political polarization. This verdict, rather than being a triumph of law, will be remembered as a setback for democratic ideals. The road ahead for Pakistan appears even more uncertain, and unless corrective steps are taken soon, the dream of a democratic, prosperous Pakistan will remain elusive.

The first and most immediate casualty of the recent Supreme Court verdict on the

distribution of reserved seats is likely to be the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-led government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The decision, which has significantly altered the political calculus at the national level by denying PTI its share of reserved seats and allocating them to rival parties, is expected to embolden efforts to dislodge the provincial government in KP—a stronghold of PTI.

There is a growing consensus among influential quarters that KP, given its geostrategic significance and security sensitivities, cannot be left under the control of a party that is perceived to be defiant and uncooperative with the federal government and other state institutions. In this context, the PTI government is increasingly being viewed as a destabilizing factor rather than a legitimate stakeholder in the democratic process.

However, replacing the PTI government in KP is not a straightforward task. Despite

national dynamics, and long-standing opposition to certain federal policies make it a difficult coalition partner.

Given these constraints, an increasingly likely scenario is the imposition of Governor's Rule in the province. This would effectively place KP under direct federal control—an extraordinary move that may provoke legal and political challenges but is being seriously contemplated. The justification offered will likely center on maintaining law and order, national security, and the need to ensure "governance continuity." However, such a step would also risk exacerbating the political divide and could trigger strong public and institutional reactions in KP and beyond.

Beyond the immediate provincial implications, the Supreme Court's verdict could pave the way for deeper, more structural changes in Pakistan's political framework. One potential and highly consequential outcome could be the introduction of a constitutional amendment aimed at formalizing the role of the Establishment in political decision-making. Such a move would, in effect, legitimize the behind-the-scenes influence that the Establishment has historically exerted over civilian governments. This would not only insulate it from criticism but also provide legal cover to its interventions in political processes, including elections, governance, and parliamentary affairs.

If pursued, this amendment would mark a significant shift in Pakistan's constitutional order—one that would further blur the lines between civil and military domains. While

“In sum, the Supreme Court’s verdict is not just a legal pronouncement—it is a political earthquake with aftershocks that may fundamentally reshape Pakistan’s political and constitutional architecture. KP stands on the frontlines of this unfolding drama, with its future governance structure hanging in the balance”

the political will to oust PTI, the practical question remains: who will run the province in its absence? Neither the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) nor the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has the numerical strength in the KP Assembly to form a government. The only feasible political player with some presence in the province is the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman. Yet, bringing the JUI-F on board is not without its complications. The party's ideological rigidity, inter-

proponents might argue this ensures political stability and national security, critics would view it as a step backward for democratic norms and civilian supremacy.

In sum, the Supreme Court's verdict is not just a legal pronouncement—it is a political earthquake with aftershocks that may fundamentally reshape Pakistan's political and constitutional architecture. KP stands on the frontlines of this unfolding drama, with its future governance structure hanging in the balance.

NATIONAL DAY OF PORTUGAL





ZTBL: A beacon of agricultural progress under visionary leadership

Mumtaz Ahmed Bhatti



ZARAI Taraqiati Bank Limited (ZTBL) stands today as the largest and most impactful agricultural bank in Pakistan, playing a critical role in the socio-

economic development of the country by supporting the backbone of the national economy—its farmers. Established more than six decades ago, ZTBL has transformed into a highly effective, profit-generating institution offering tailored financial services to the rural sector. With a vast network of 501 branches across all provinces and regions including AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, and the tireless work of its trained mobile credit officers, ZTBL has become an indispensable lifeline for Pakistan's farming community. This remarkable institutional turnaround has been made possible through the exceptional leadership of President and CEO Mr. Tahir Yaqoob Bhatti and his dedicated team, including Senior Vice President Inamullah Khattak. Their strategic foresight, innovative mindset, and unwavering commitment to reform have led ZTBL from stagnation to becoming a benchmark in public sector financial management. ZTBL's modernization has been driven by a bold digitization strategy. The introduction of its user-friendly mobile application and the enhanced functionality of its official website have allowed farmers—especially those in remote areas—to access critical financial services and agricultural information at their fingertips. These steps have not only increased efficiency but also expanded financial inclusion. ZTBL's online platform offers detailed insights into its wide range of services, corporate structure, loan products, and investment options, further affirming its commitment to transparency and customer service. This transformation has contributed significantly to ZTBL becoming the only public sector bank in Pakistan that consistently generates

profits, a distinction that underscores its operational strength and sustainable strategy. The bank has maintained a sterling credit rating of AAA/A-1+ for five consecutive years—clear evidence of its financial health and institutional resilience. ZTBL's success is rooted in its comprehensive suite of loan and financial products designed specifically for Pakistan's diverse agricultural landscape. These offerings support a wide spectrum of agribusiness activities and farming innovations. From floriculture, greenhouse farming, and beekeeping to biofloc fish farming, dairy value chain financing, and high-efficiency irrigation systems, ZTBL is equipping farmers with modern tools and techniques. Notably, the bank's attention to inclusive growth is evident in targeted initiatives such as the "Khawateen Rozgar" program, "Youth Business Loans," and "Women Financial Services," which empower women and youth—two crucial yet historically underrepresented demographics in rural finance. Beyond agricultural loans, ZTBL provides services such as crop insurance, Hajj schemes, treasury services, and government tax collection facilities. The inclusion of locker services, over-the-counter banking, and digital banking services such as IBFT (Inter-Bank Funds Transfer) have elevated ZTBL's stature from a traditional agricultural bank to a full-fledged rural financial institution. ZTBL's transformation has also been marked by a shift in organizational culture. Under the leadership of CEO Tahir Yaqoob Bhatti, the bank has adopted a performance-driven ethos, where excellence is rewarded and underperformance is addressed. This cultural shift has energized the workforce and instilled a renewed sense of purpose among employees. Mr. Bhatti has also demonstrated an impressive ability to bring high-caliber talent from outside institutions into ZTBL, thereby strengthening its internal capacity. More than 600 graduates have been provided with employment opportunities, reinforcing ZTBL's role not only as a financial institution but also as a driver of employment and social development.



ZTBL's achievements in recent years are unprecedented in the history of Pakistan's public sector banking. Under Tahir Yaqoob Bhatti's stewardship, ZTBL has distributed 37 billion rupees in easy loans to farmers under the Prime Minister's Kisan Package. The bank posted an astounding profit of over 43 billion rupees and contributed more than 16 billion rupees to the national treasury through taxes. Overall, ZTBL disbursed 163 billion rupees in loans to farmers, serving over 600,000 smallholder farmers and onboarding 40,000 new beneficiaries. This record-breaking performance has effectively reversed decades of losses, positioning ZTBL as a profit-making entity for the first time in its history. It is a feat that many thought impossible, but one that Mr. Bhatti has made a reality through sheer resolve and strategic insight. ZTBL's impact has not gone unnoticed. The bank was recently honored with



the “Financial Literacy Champion Bank Award” among all mid-size banks under the National Financial Literacy Program (NFLP) 2023–24. The award, presented by the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan on April 14, 2025, is a testament to ZTBL’s commitment to financial education and empowerment. During FY 2023–24 alone, ZTBL exceeded the State Bank’s assigned target by conducting 320 financial literacy sessions—reaching over 10,400 individuals, including more than 5,200 women. These efforts led to the opening of 9,351 new bank accounts,

directly promoting financial inclusion. Since July 2021, more than 37,000 individuals have benefitted from these trainings, further solidifying ZTBL’s role in national development. The bank has received 17 awards, shields, and certificates from the State Bank of Pakistan and its regional offices since 2018—an impressive record that illustrates consistent excellence and recognition at the highest levels. Behind ZTBL’s revitalization also stands the tireless efforts of Senior Vice President Inamullah Khattak. His contributions, particularly in

strategic communication and public engagement, have been vital in bringing the bank’s successes to public attention. Mr. Khattak ensured that the transformative initiatives led by the bank were effectively projected across mainstream and digital media platforms, fostering transparency and strengthening public trust in the institution. His work has elevated ZTBL’s public image and showcased its achievements to a wider audience—locally and internationally. ZTBL is now poised for even greater achievements. Its leadership team, grounded in values of integrity, innovation, and inclusion, continues to focus on expanding its reach, embracing digital transformation, and supporting the evolving needs of the agricultural community. As the bank continues to promote financial literacy, facilitate agricultural modernization, and contribute to economic stability, it serves as a model of what public institutions can achieve with the right leadership and vision. The road ahead demands continued focus on performance management, employee empowerment, and technological innovation. If ZTBL sustains its current trajectory, it will not only consolidate its position as the leader in Pakistan’s rural banking sector but also gain recognition among the world’s foremost financial institutions.



Philippines and Pakistan: a friendship forged in shared struggles and aspirations

Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: In a heartwarming and poignant ceremony held at the Philippine Embassy in Islamabad, Ambassador of the Philippines to Pakistan, Fernandes, commemorated the 127th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence. The ambassador hosted a grand reception attended by government dignitaries, members of the diplomatic corps, civil society representatives, and fellow Filipinos residing in Pakistan.

Chief Guest for the evening was Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Hon. Rana Tanveer Hussain, who joined the celebrations alongside a number of ambassadors, diplomats, and Pakistani officials.

In his address, Dr. Emmanuel R. Fernandez Ambassador of the Philippines eloquently recounted the historical significance of June 12, 1898 – the day when the Filipino people declared their independence after a prolonged and painful struggle against colonial oppression. “Almost a century and a half ago, the Filipino people asserted their right to be free. It was an assertion that was preceded by a long and bloody struggle against colonial rule,” he said.

Paying homage to the forefathers of the Philippine independence movement, the ambassador said the occasion was not

only to honor their sacrifice but also to renew a national commitment. “More importantly, tonight, we Filipinos renew our commitment to safeguard that freedom and to use it to shape a better future for our country,” he remarked.

Drawing a meaningful parallel between the histories of the Philippines and Pakistan, Ambassador Fernandes emphasized the shared legacies of resilience and sacrifice. “Like the Philippines, Pakistan also won its freedom and independence at a very high cost. And, like the people of the Philippines, the people of Pakistan know what it means to endure, to struggle, and to triumph – again and again – over all forms of adversities and challenges,” he said.

The ambassador described this shared historical narrative as the foundation of a strong and enduring bilateral relationship between the two countries. “I believe that it is our common experience of having to fight long and hard for our freedom that makes Pakistan and the Philippines natural friends,” he noted.

Recalling the early days of bilateral engagement, the ambassador highlighted that the Philippines was among the first nations to recognize the newly independent Pakistan in 1947. Since then, he said, the two countries have cooperated extensively across sectors including education, culture, trade, and climate change resilience. “Indeed, the

Philippines has every reason to consider Pakistan its abiding friend,” he stated.

In a message brimming with optimism, Ambassador Fernandes conveyed his hope for a future marked by deeper co-operation and shared prosperity.

“We have achieved much together during the past 76 years. We can do more together in the coming years to attain the common aspirations of our people – for peace, for prosperity, and for a future marked by inclusivity and innovation,” he said.

The ambassador concluded his speech with the traditional Filipino greeting of goodwill, “Mabuhay!” – meaning “Long live!” – before offering a heartfelt tribute to both nations: “Long live the Philippines! Long live Pakistan!”

The evening featured traditional Filipino music, cuisine, and cultural performances, offering guests a vibrant glimpse into the rich heritage of the Southeast Asian nation. The ceremony not only celebrated the independence of the Philippines but also stood as a testament to the strength of bilateral relations and people-to-people connections between the Philippines and Pakistan.

As both countries look to the future, their enduring friendship, shaped by shared histories and strengthened by mutual respect, remains a beacon of diplomatic goodwill in the region.





Russia National Day

Pakistan considers Russia as a major global power: Zardari

President Asif Ali Zardari Extends Congratulations to Russia on its 35th National Day

A. M. Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of the 35th National Day of the Russian Federation, President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari extended warm greetings to President Vladimir Putin, the Russian Ambassador in Islamabad, and the people of Russia. In his speech, President Zardari said Pakistan joins in celebrating the joy of Russia's National Day, reflecting the friendly and growing ties between the two nations. He noted that Pakistan-Russia relations have steadily improved over the past years, based on mutual respect, cooperation, and shared interests across various sectors. "High-level engagements between the two countries have increased in recent times, laying a strong foundation of understanding and trust," the President stated, adding that these developments signify the deepening of bilateral relations. President Zardari further emphasized that Pakistan and Russia continue to maintain close cooperation on regional and global

platforms, underscoring Pakistan's recognition of Russia as a major global power. He acknowledged Russia's key role in ensuring regional peace and stability in the Eurasian region, highlighting its importance as a strategic partner. Referring to a recent meeting between Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatemi and Russian Foreign Minister in Moscow, the President described it as "highly encouraging." He said both sides stressed the importance of regional peace and stability during their discussions. President Zardari expressed confidence that the bonds of friendship between Pakistan and Russia would grow stronger, pointing out the immense potential for expanding cooperation in trade, investment, technology, and people-to-people contacts. "Let us renew our commitment to fostering greater understanding and collaboration between Pakistan and Russia," he urged. "Long live Pakistan-Russia friendship," President Zardari concluded. Earlier, in his welcome address, Ambassador Albert Khorev emphasized

that Russia remains a sovereign, powerful, and resilient nation, driven by the unwavering support of its people. Reflecting on the words of President Vladimir Putin, the Ambassador noted that Russia has historically played a unifying role in the region, stretching "from the Baltics to the Caucasus." Highlighting the steady progress in Pak-Russia relations, Ambassador Khorev stated that bilateral cooperation is advancing at a satisfactory pace across various sectors. He expressed appreciation for Pakistan's growing interest in Russian language and culture. "We commend the Pakistani enthusiasm for learning the Russian language," he remarked. "The Russian Mission is actively supporting the establishment and expansion of language learning institutions across the country." The Ambassador also reaffirmed Russia's continued support for Pakistan on various international platforms, noting that both nations are working together to deepen ties in education, diplomacy, and mutual development.





Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted Mango Festival at Serena Hotel



Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in partnership with Serena Hotels and Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Association (PFVA), hosted a Mango Festival at Serena Hotel today. The event celebrated Pakistan's world-renowned mangoes, honoring the growers, exporters, scientists, and trade partners who have elevated Pakistani mangoes to a global brand. Federal Minister of Commerce, Sardar Jam Kamal Khan, graced the event as Guest of Honour alongside Foreign Secretary Ambassador Amna Baloch. The CEO of Serena Hotels, Aziz Boolani, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador Atadjan Movlamov of Turkmenistan, Patron-in-Chief of PFVA Waheed Ahmed, Senior Vice Chairman of PFVA Ch. Shoaib Ahmed, and Chief Executive TDAP Faiz Ahmed were present on the occasion. A large number of Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Islamabad also participated in the event. The Federal Minister for Commerce, in his remarks, highlighted Paki-

stan's distinction as producer of over 250 varieties of finest mangoes which provided an opportunity to promote Mango Diplomacy. He announced that Pakistan will continue its tradition of sharing mangoes through its diplomatic missions worldwide this year. The Federal Minister thanked the Foreign Ministry, Serena Hotels and the Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Association (PFVA), for arranging the festival coinciding with the start of the mango season. In her remarks, the Foreign Secretary shared that the Mango Festival is not just a celebration of Pakistan's king of fruits—it is a symbol of vibrant Pakistani culture, its cuisine, and commerce. It reflects the richness of our soil, the dedication of our farmers, and the spirit of our people. The event was attended by over 300 guests, including members of the Diplomatic Corps, senior government officers, business executives, representatives of the Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Association, and officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This event showcased the potential of Pakistani mangoes as a popular fruit not only in Pakistan but also in the international market.

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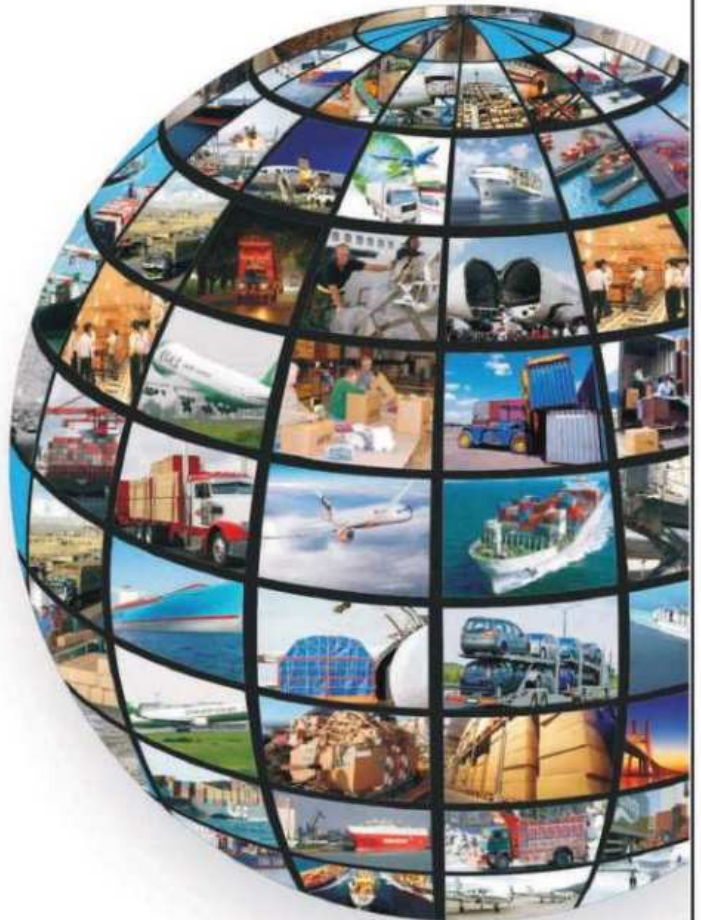
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Tarar greets Italy on Republic Day

Says Pakistan greatly valued ties with Rome

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has extended warm felicitations to the people and government of Italy on the occasion of Italy's Republic Day, reaffirming Pakistan's strong commitment to its longstanding and friendly ties with Italy. In a message celebrating the National Day of Italy, Minister Tarar emphasized the importance of the 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, noting the steady and fruitful cooperation in diverse areas such as trade, investment, security, and regional stability. "Pakistan greatly values its relationship with Italy. Our ties are marked by mutual respect, shared goals, and a common vision for regional peace and development," he said. The minister lauded Italy's growing role as a key partner in Pakistan's development and economic progress, pointing out the current volume of bilateral trade stands at approximately USD 1 billion. He highlighted the presence of a number of leading Italian companies operating in Pakistan, contributing positively to eco-

nomic growth, technology transfer, and employment.

Minister Tarar also acknowledged the significance of high-level engagements between the two countries. He termed the recent visit of the Italian Minister to Pakistan as an important step in strengthening mutual understanding and exploring new avenues of cooperation. He further emphasized the role of continuous dialogue between Islamabad and Rome in maintaining a robust and forward-looking relationship. "Both nations are committed to deepening bilateral dialogue at political, economic, and cultural levels," he added.

Appreciating the vibrant Pakistani diaspora in Italy, the minister said the community serves as a strong bridge between the two nations. He also commended the efforts of the Pakistani Ambassador to Italy for promoting bilateral ties and working diligently to enhance the image and interests of Pakistan in Italy. "On this important day for the Italian people, we extend our best wishes for continued peace, prosperity, and progress. We look forward to further strengthening our friendly relations and cooperation in the years ahead," said Minister Tarar in his concluding remarks.





Celebrating culture and craft

Serena Hotels and Nomad Art Gallery host vibrant event

Syed Fahim Inam Chief Marketing Officer (Group) of Serena Hotels said, “Our goal is to provide a platform where culture, community, and creativity can converge

Mahnour Ansar / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, in collaboration with the renowned Nomad Art Gallery, brought Islamabad to life with a vibrant cultural event that seamlessly merged art, craft, and cinema into an inspiring experience for visitors from all walks of life. Held at the prestigious Serena Hotel premises, the event drew diplomats, artists, entrepreneurs, and members of the public in celebration of Pakistan's diverse cultural heritage. The event was inaugurated by the Ambassador of Austria to Pakistan, Andrea Wicke, alongside the Ambassadors of Ireland and Jordan and the management of Serena Hotels. In their opening remarks, the dignitaries underscored the vital role that art and culture play in promoting peace, tolerance, and understanding among communities. Ambassador Andrea Wicke, in particular, highlighted the power of cultural expression to bridge divides and foster dialogue. A major highlight of the event was the Crafts Bazaar, which offered a carefully curated selection of handmade crafts from across Pakistan. The bazaar presented a colorful and captivating showcase of textiles, jewelry, accessories, and home décor, all crafted by talented artisans representing a wide range of cultural traditions. Visitors had the rare opportunity to interact with the artisans, understand the stories behind their work, and purchase items directly—sup-

porting local talent and community-based entrepreneurship. Exhibits included a diverse range of products from Nomad Art Gallery's artisan partners spread across the country. These included vibrant Ajrak prints from Sindh, finely woven Kashmiri shawls and embroidery, eco-friendly block-printed textiles, handmade toys by Granmani, and exquisite silver jewelry by Amna Shariff and the SS Collection. The event highlighted the immense potential of Pakistan's traditional crafts sector, particularly when supported by platforms that value cultural integrity and sustainability.

Serena Hotels, known for its consistent efforts to promote art and culture in the region, reaffirmed its commitment to supporting such initiatives. Syed Fahim Inam Chief Marketing Officer (Group) of Serena Hotels said, “Our goal is to provide a platform where culture, community, and creativity can converge. By empowering artisans and facilitating dialogue through art, we believe we can contribute to positive, lasting change in society.” Nomad Art Gallery, a long-time promoter of indigenous art and social dialogue, also reiterated its dedication to creating spaces where art meets activism. The gallery has played a pivotal role in nurturing young artists, women entrepreneurs, and marginalized communities through exhibitions, workshops, and cultural collaborations. The cultural event at Serena was a celebration of identity, a showcase of talent, and a call for inclusion and peace through the universal language of art.





World Bicycle Day celebrated with a rally promoting health and sustainability

The event was organized as part of Serena Hotels' Sports Diplomacy initiative, which uses sports as a bridge to bring communities together and inspire healthy lifestyles

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, in collaboration with the Embassy of Turkmenistan, organized a vibrant and inclusive World Bicycle Day Rally in Islamabad to promote the health benefits of cycling and its positive impact on the environment. This marks the third consecutive year of this collaboration, underscoring a shared commitment to sustainability and community well-being. Cyclists from all walks of life including diplomats, civil society members, corporate professionals, families, and youth gathered at D-Chowk for an early evening rally and, cycled to Islamabad Serena Hotel embodying the spirit of unity and purpose be-

hind the global observance.

The event was organized as part of Serena Hotels' Sports Diplomacy initiative, which uses sports as a bridge to bring communities together and inspire healthy lifestyles. Under this platform, Serena Hotels has also championed numerous inclusive programs, including free golf training camps and tennis clinics for young girls, blind cricket, squash, polo, and winter sports. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Aziz Boolani, CEO of Serena Hotels, emphasized the significance of cycling in modern urban life:

"Cycling is more than just a mode of transport; it is a path toward personal well-being and a greener planet. Through this rally and many other initiatives under our Sports Diplomacy

program, we aim to create inclusive opportunities for people of all backgrounds to engage, grow, and thrive." The rally was graced as the chief guest, by Mr. Syed Ali Asad Gillani, Additional Foreign Secretary (Afghanistan & West Asia. His remarks highlighted the value of collaborative diplomacy in promoting regional peace and environmental sustainability. Also addressing the audience were Mr. Ali Gulfranz, President of the Islamabad Cycling Association highlighted the importance of cycling culture and appreciated the growing support for such initiatives in Pakistan. The evening concluded with a group photo and high tea, marking yet another successful edition of a now-anticipated annual tradition.







Bulgaria-Pakistan diplomatic ties celebrated with cultural exhibition

Mahnoor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Bulgaria in Islamabad hosted a vibrant reception titled "The Ancient Treasures of Bulgaria" to mark the Day of the Bulgarian Alphabet and Culture, as well as the 60th anniversary of Bulgaria-Pakistan diplomatic relations. The event brought together diplomats, officials, scholars, and cultural enthusiasts for an evening of celebration and cultural exchange.

Ambassador of Bulgaria, H.E. Irena Gancheva, welcomed the guests and highlighted the strong and friendly ties between Bulgaria and Pakistan, forged over six decades of cooperation and mutual respect. She emphasized the importance of cultural diplomacy in deepening people-to-people connections and enhancing bilateral relations.

The chief guest, Additional Foreign Secretary for Europe, Mohammad Ayub, congratulated Bulgaria on its national cultural day and appreciated the embassy's efforts to promote cultural understanding. He noted the historical depth of both nations and expressed hope for continued collaboration in education, culture, and trade.

A key highlight of the evening was a special exhibition, "The Ancient Treasures of Bulgaria," showcasing Bulgaria's rich archaeological and cultural heritage. The exhibition was introduced by a visiting Bulgarian assistant professor, who offered insightful commentary on the artifacts and historical narratives. She noted the striking similarities between Bulgarian and Pakistani heritage — particularly in traditional crafts, folk music, and community values.

Ambassador Gancheva proudly empha-

sized Bulgaria's role as the birthplace of the Cyrillic script, one of the world's most influential writing systems, used by millions across Eastern Europe and Central Asia. "The Cyrillic alphabet is one of our major contributions to the European Union," she noted. "It would not be an exaggeration to say that Bulgaria is perhaps the only country in the world, or among the very few, that celebrates its alphabet and culture in such a dedicated manner."

For Bulgaria, the alphabet is more than just a system of writing—it is a core component of national identity. Ambassador Gancheva explained that the Bulgarian script has been instrumental in preserving the nation's literature, history, and cultural legacy throughout the centuries. "The Bulgarian alphabet is the main factor for the preservation of our identity," she said. "It has protected our cultural spirit and literary tradition across generations."

The occasion was made even more meaningful as it coincided with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Pakistan. Ambassador Gancheva reflected on the strong bonds of traditional friendship and mutual understanding that have developed over the decades. While the diplomatic relationship was officially established 60 years ago, she highlighted that the two countries have been connected for over six decades through shared values and cooperation.

Looking to the future, the ambassador expressed Bulgaria's continued commitment to strengthening bilateral ties with Pakistan. "We remain committed to further developing political dialogue, people-to-people contacts,

trade and economic cooperation, as well as fostering partnerships in science, education, and culture," she said. She expressed hope that with joint efforts, both nations will continue to see positive developments in their relations, to the benefit of their peoples.

Ambassador underscored the symbolic and practical importance of celebrating these two occasions—a national cultural day and an anniversary of diplomatic friendship—with a cultural event. Culture, she noted, is a powerful diplomatic tool, capable of bridging gaps and building empathy among people from different backgrounds. "It is not by chance that we decided to celebrate with a cultural event," she explained. "Culture has an important role to play in connecting people, fostering understanding, and conveying messages of unity, especially in today's world."

In an era marked by global crises and complex challenges, the ambassador highlighted that the role of culture in diplomacy is more important than ever. Culture allows people to identify shared values and challenges, helping to build bridges between continents, countries, and communities. "Culture creates a spirit of togetherness despite our differences," she said. "It speaks the universal language of humanity." Before concluding her remarks, Ambassador Gancheva expressed heartfelt gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the event. Though she chose not to name individuals, she acknowledged their hard work and dedication in organizing cultural events not only in Islamabad but also in Lahore. She extended her thanks to the audience for their presence and engagement.





Egyptian National Day celebrated in style

Mahnor Ansar

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Serena Hotel was abuzz with diplomatic camaraderie as Egypt's National Day was celebrated with great fervor. The event, graced by high-profile dignitaries, highlighted the deep-rooted ties between Pakistan and Egypt. Chief Guest Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for Food Security, and Egyptian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Ihab Abdelhamid led the celebrations, which were attended by diplomats, government officials, business leaders, and civil society representatives.

The highlight of the evening was the ceremonial cake-cutting by Rana Tanveer Hussain and Ambassador Dr. Ihab Abdelhamid, symbolizing the enduring friendship between the two nations. The guests raised toasts to Egypt's prosperity and the strengthening of bilateral relations. The event showcased Egyptian culture, with traditional music, cuisine, and art adding a vibrant touch to the festivities. In his address, Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain praised Egypt as a key partner in the Muslim world and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to enhancing cooperation in trade, agriculture, and defense. He emphasized the need for increased collaboration in food security, given global challenges such as climate change and supply chain disruptions. Ambassador Dr. Ihab Abdelhamid expressed gratitude for Pakistan's warm hospitality and reiterated Egypt's desire to expand economic and cultural ties. He highlighted the potential for joint ventures in renewable energy, technology, and pharmaceuticals, noting that both countries share a vision for regional stability and development.



Rwanda National Liberation Day







Chief Editor of Daily Islamabad POST/ CENTRELINE meets Romanian Ambassador

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Editor of Daily Islamabad POST and CENTRELINE Ansar Mahmood Bhatti held a meeting with H.E. Dan Stoenescu, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan. During the meeting, both sides discussed matters of mutual interest, with a focus on enhancing bilateral relations. Ambassador Stoenescu expressed Romania's keen interest in

expanding cooperation with Pakistan across multiple sectors, particularly emphasizing the importance of strengthening people-to-people contacts. He noted that Romania values its partnership with Pakistan and continues to welcome skilled workforce from the country, recognizing their potential and contribution to Romania's economy and society.

Portuguese and Danish Ambassadors visit AKDN programmes in Chitral



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan, His Excellency Frederico Silva, and the Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan His Excellency Ambassador Jakob Linulf recently visited various programmes of the Aga Khan Development Network in Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Ambassadors, who were accompanied by Mr Akhtar Iqbal, CEO of the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan, Ms Nusrat Nasab, CEO of Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH), Pakistan and Ms Laila Naz Taj, Director AKDN Pakistan Communications saw programmes in Garam Chashma, Chitral town and Kalash Valley including projects related to disaster preparedness and mitigations, climate change action, education, women entrepreneurship, infrastructure development, youth employability and renewable energy projects. His Excellency Frederico Silva and His Excellency Ambassador Jakob Linulf expressed their deep admiration for the comprehensive approach of AKDN towards protecting the environment and mitigating climate change. His Excellency Frederico Silva, the Portuguese Ambassador to Pakistan shared that, "It was greatly rewarding to appreciate the integrated development of AKDN in the Chitral region. The multipronged approach has produced a visible impact on the grassroot communities, elevating

its empowerment and local capabilities. I was very happy to visit the AKRSP established Mogh Microhydel that is now very well managed by the Valley community itself. The Mogh Micro hydel provides electricity to 8000 people, 14 schools, a hospital and 165 enterprises. Among many other positive developments, it significantly reduced the workload of the women as well as the environmental degradation. The Aga Khan Higher Secondary School in Chitral city was also a highlight of my visit, showcasing the highly enabling environment it provides for great minds to flourish and achieve excellence. Students from this school regularly reach very renowned universities in Pakistan and abroad. From natural resource management, education, IT employment and training platforms to climate change resilience, AKDN has been able to bring true community ownership to the far-flung valleys of Chitral." His Excellency Ambassador Jakob Linulf added that AKDN's multi-input area development has significantly improved the quality of life of the local people. Communities have been able to adapt to the changing climate and ensure sustainable livelihoods. While speaking about the programme funded by the Embassy of Denmark, 'Increasing Community Resilience to Climate

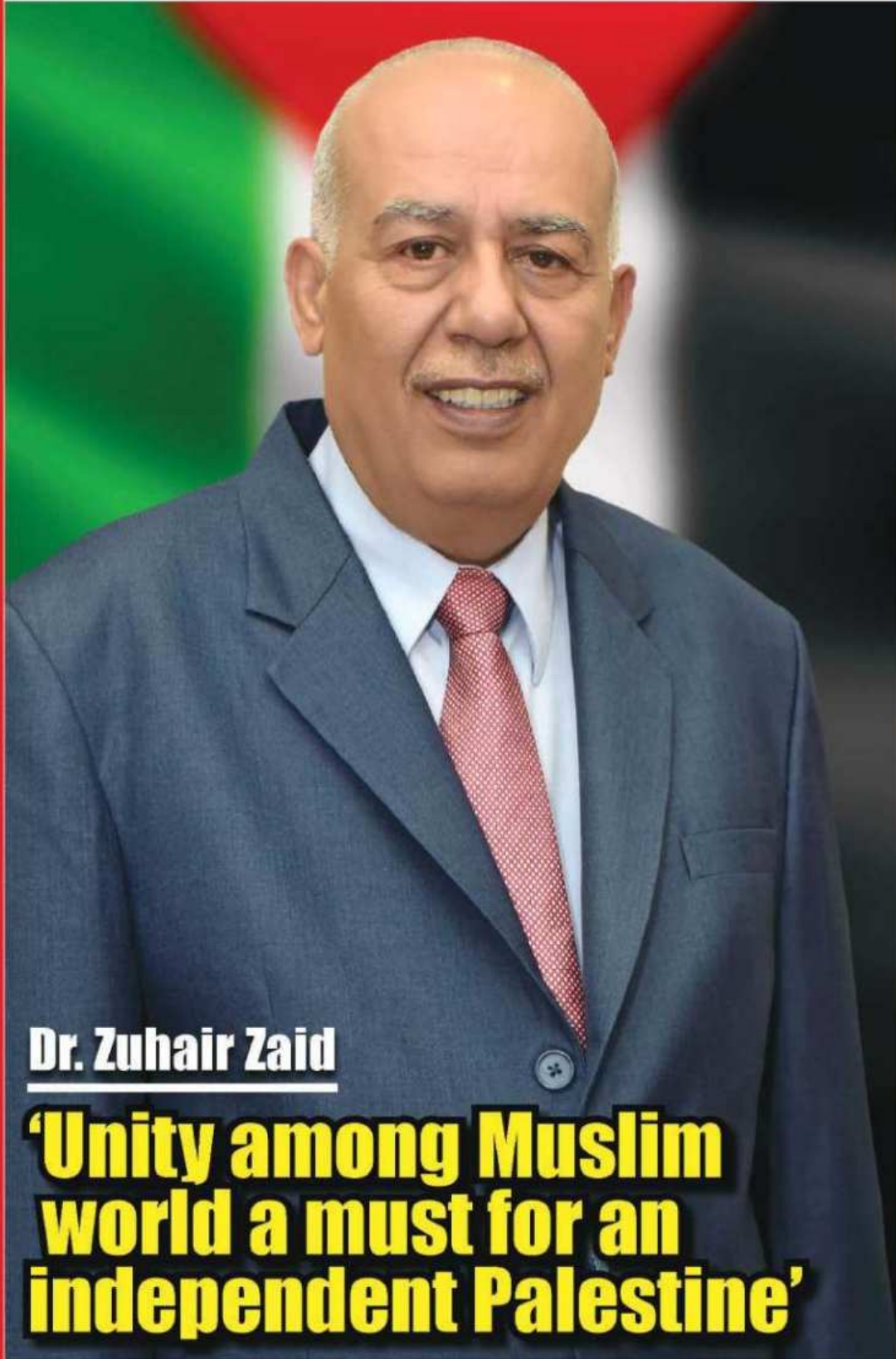
Change (ICRCC)' which is being implemented by the Aga Khan Foundation through the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme and the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, he noted, "These areas are prone to natural disasters and efforts are needed to escape the worse impacts of the climate change. The focus of the programme on generating clean energy, nature-based solutions, installation of irrigation infrastructure, harnessing solar power for lift irrigation, empowering communities to establish passive solar greenhouses and training farmers on climate smart agricultural practices can promote environmentally conscious solutions that can reduce the impact of climate-induced disasters." During the last two years, four micro-hydels have been rehabilitated, six passive solar green houses have been built, five irrigation channels have been rehabilitated through the programme. Comprehensive habitat plans for 10 villages have been developed; WASH facilities have been improved in ten schools along with the provision of emergency response materials in 15 schools. The programme has established community-based disaster risk response teams, ensuring local communities are equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to effectively respond to emergencies.

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