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Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine



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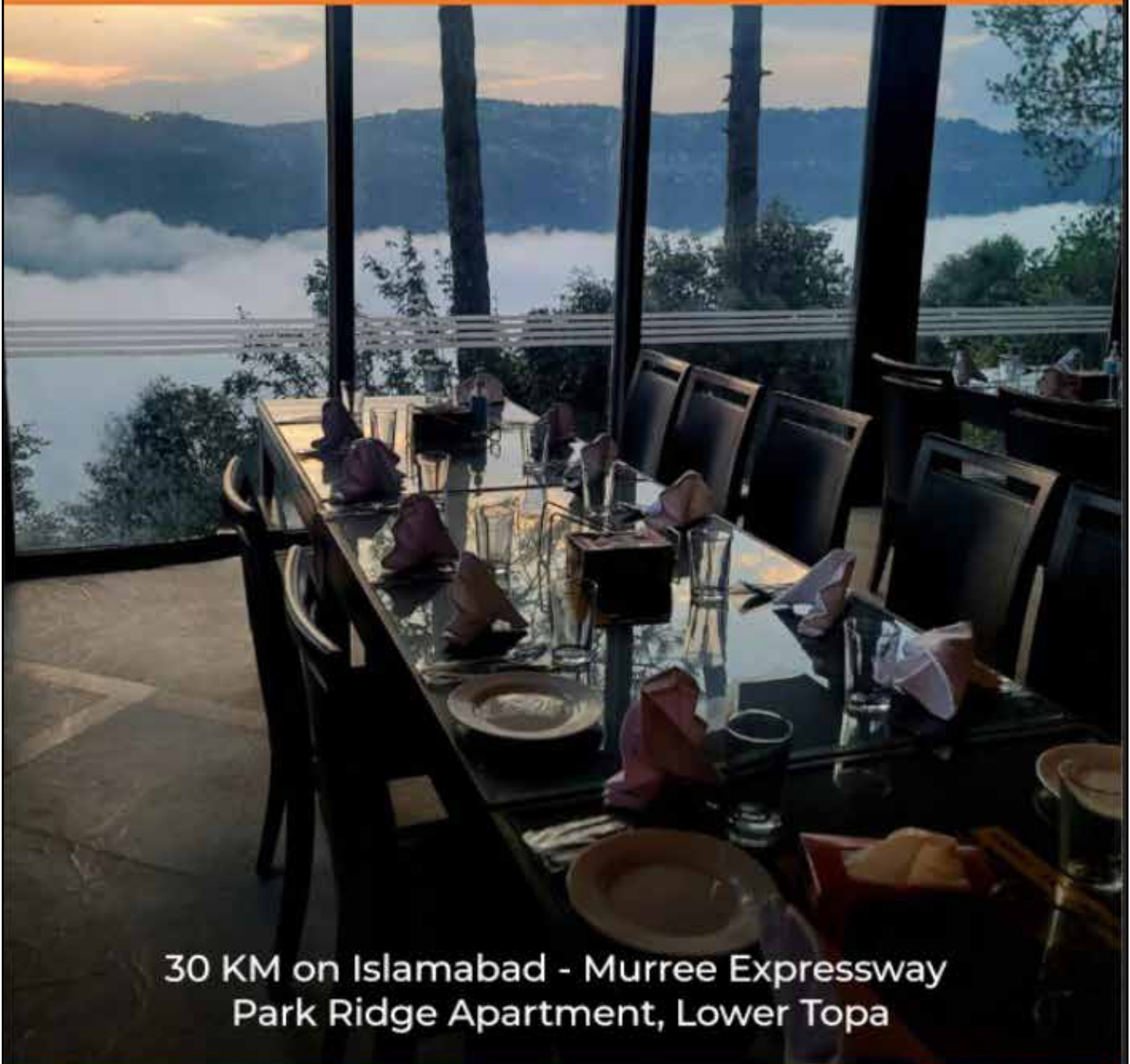
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E-mail: moving@freelinemovers.com - Website: www.freelinemovers.com

Branch Offices

Karachi

Room No.14 &15, 3rd Floor, Kahkashan Mall,
Main Tariq Road, 172-1,Block-2, P.E.C.H.S,
Karachi. Tel: (+92-21) 34530626,34310478
Fax: (+92-21) 34531747
E-mail: karachi@freelinemovers.com

Lahore

F-4, Gulberg Centre,
Main Boulevard, Lahore.
Tel: (+92-42) 35758861, 35761085.
Fax: (+92-42) 35711420
E-mail: lahore@freelinemovers.com

Peshawar

Office No. C-9, 2nd Floor, Zaheer Plaza,
Lalif Abad, Ring Road, Peshwar.
Tel: (+92-91) 2582776
Fax: (+92-91) 2582898
E-mail: peshawar@freelinemovers.com

Kabul

House # 4, Street # 4,
Charahi Ansari Road, Shahr-e-Naw,
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Editor-in-Chief

Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Executive Editor

Mubashar Ahmad Bhatti

Deputy Editor

Abid Raza

Founding Content Head

**Lt. Col Ihsan Piracha (R) (Late)
Advisor**

Prof. Dr. Farid A. Khwaja

Legal Advisor

Raja Khurram Shahzad

(Advocate High Court)

M Yahya Farid (Advocate)

Director Marketing

Fiaz Chaudhry

03005538251

Sub Editors

Farrukh Shehzad

M. Shaheen Qureshi

Saifullah Ansar

Bureau Chief Karachi

Nazir Siyal

Chief Correspondent

Ather Javed Sufi

Online/ Web Editor

Mahnoor Ansar

Photo Journalists

Muhammad Shahid

Head Office: #11, Block 18-A

(Awan Plaza) G-8 Markaz,

Islamabad-Pakistan 44000

Tel: 051-2261960, 051-8488394

Cell: 0333-5203232

centrelinemag@gmail.com

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Futility of Pakistan media exposed during US-Iran talks



THE recent US-Iran talks held in Islamabad were not only a test of diplomacy but also a moment of reckoning for Pakistan's media. While the negotiations themselves ended without any breakthrough, another, equally revealing story unfolded on the sidelines one that exposed the glaring shortcomings of the national media. Despite being provided with full access, state-of-the-art facilities, and a central location at the Jinnah Convention Centre, Pakistan's media failed to deliver even a single meaningful scoop. In contrast, both American and Iranian media outlets consistently broke news and kept their audiences informed in real time. The entire Pakistani media television channels, print journalists, and digital platforms was housed at the Convention Centre with all logistical support in place. There were no apparent restrictions that could justify the lack of reporting. Yet, as events unfolded, it became painfully clear that access alone does not guarantee journalism. What was missing was initiative, sources, and perhaps most importantly, the professional rigor required to operate in a high-stakes international environment.

While Pakistani journalists remained largely passive observers, Iranian media demonstrated how effective communication between the state and media can shape narratives. Iranian government officials were actively engaging with their press, providing timely updates and strategic briefings. It was, in fact, Iranian media that first broke the news that the talks had failed well before any official confirmation reached Pakistani outlets. This was not accidental; it was the result of a coordinated effort to keep their media informed and empowered. Similarly, American media outlets maintained a steady stream of updates throughout the negotiations.

Their reporters, backed by strong institutional networks and access to key officials, were able to provide insights and breaking news as events unfolded. Even when information was sensitive, American journalists managed to stay ahead of the curve, reflecting both their professionalism and the openness of their system in facilitating media engagement. In stark contrast, Pakistan's media appeared disconnected and uninformed. Many well-known anchors, seasoned analysts, and prominent journalists were present at the venue, yet none managed to break a single significant development. The absence of exclusive reporting was not just disappointing it was indicative of deeper structural issues within the media landscape. It raised serious questions about the credibility of those who dominate primetime talk shows and present themselves as authoritative voices on international affairs.

The situation was further underscored during the media interaction held by the US Vice President at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. In a surprising yet telling move, Pakistani journalists were not invited to the briefing. Instead, the interaction was limited to a select group of American reporters. This exclusion was not merely a diplomatic slight; it was a reflection of the perceived irrelevance of Pakistani media in such high-level engagements. When journalists fail to demonstrate value, access is inevitably curtailed. This entire episode should serve as a wake-up call for Pakistan's media industry. The problem is not a lack of talent or resources but a lack of direction and accountability. Over the years, much of the media has become overly focused on sensationalism, political point-scoring, and repetitive talk shows that add little value to public discourse. The ability to cultivate sources, verify information, and break news to have been sidelined. At the same time, the role of the state cannot be entirely absolved. Unlike Iran and the United States, where officials actively engage with their media, Pakistan's communication mechanisms remain weak and inconsistent. The US-Iran talks in Islamabad may have ended in diplomatic failure, but they have provided an important lesson for Pakistan's media. The stark contrast between local and international reporting has laid bare the gaps that need urgent attention.

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 launched Diplomatic News Agency (DNA) in 2012. In May 2020 he launched Pakistan's First & only Diplomatic Newspaper Daily Islamabad POST.

US-Iran Talks end in fiasco: the way forward

Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

THE much-anticipated talks between the United States and Iran, recently held in Islamabad, have ended in what can only be described as a diplomatic fiasco. While both sides attempted to project a sense of guarded optimism before the negotiations, the outcome has laid bare the deep-rooted mistrust and rigid positions that continue to define relations between Washington and Tehran. Iranian officials were quick to point out that expecting a breakthrough in a single sitting was unrealistic, while American representatives maintained that the onus for progress lay with Iran. In reality, however, both sides emerged from the talks claiming that the ball was in the other's court a familiar refrain that underscores the persistent deadlock.

At the heart of the failure lies the core issue that has long plagued US-Iran relations: Iran's nuclear program. The United States reiterated its long-standing demand that Iran hand over its enriched uranium and abandon its nuclear ambitions altogether. For Washington, this remains



“ One of the most critical factors contributing to the failure of the Islamabad talks was the absence of a credible and influential mediator. Pakistan deserves recognition for hosting the talks and providing a neutral venue, reflecting its genuine desire to promote peace and stability in the region. However, Islamabad’s role was largely limited to that of a facilitator. It did not possess the leverage necessary to influence either side in a meaningful way or to push them towards compromise ”

a non-negotiable requirement, framed as essential for regional and global security. Iran, on the other hand, categorically rejected this demand, viewing it as an infringement on its sovereignty and its right to pursue peaceful nuclear technology. This fundamental disagreement proved insurmountable, rendering discussions on other matters largely inconsequential. Indeed, while topics such as the Strait of Hormuz, the situation in Lebanon, and Iran’s ties with groups like Hamas were reportedly discussed, these issues were peripheral compared to the central dispute over the nuclear program. Without movement on the core issue, progress on these secondary matters was always unlikely, the US Vice President also mentioned in his media talk. The talks, therefore, became an exercise in reiterating established positions rather than exploring new avenues for compromise.

One of the most critical factors contributing to the failure of the Islamabad talks was the absence of a credible and influential mediator. Pakistan deserves recognition for hosting the talks and providing a neutral venue, reflecting its genuine desire to promote peace and stability in the region. However, Islamabad’s role was largely limited to that of a facilitator. It did not possess the leverage necessary to influence either side in a meaningful way or to push them towards compromise.

Effective mediation in high-stakes international disputes requires not only neutrality but also significant political, economic, and strategic clout. In this context, countries such as China and Russia or even a collective entity like the European Union are better positioned to play the role of mediator. While reports suggest that representatives from China and Russia were present during the Islamabad talks, their participation was limited to that of observers. They did not actively engage in the negotiations or attempt to bridge the gap between the two sides.

This lack of active mediation proved to be a crucial shortcoming. Mediation is not a passive exercise; it requires sustained engagement, creative diplomacy, and the ability to apply pressure or offer incentives where necessary. Without such intervention, the talks were bound to flounder, as both the United States and Iran remained



firmly entrenched in their traditional positions. Despite the failure of the talks, it would be unfair to dismiss Pakistan’s role as insignificant. On the contrary, Islamabad’s initiative has positioned it as a country willing to contribute constructively to global peace efforts. At a time when tensions in the Middle East continue to pose a threat to international stability, Pakistan’s willingness to host such high-level negotiations sends a positive signal to the global community. It demonstrates a commitment to dialogue and diplomacy, even in the face of daunting challenges.

The Islamabad talks, though unsuccessful, have also created a framework that can potentially be built upon in the future. Diplomatic processes are rarely linear, and setbacks are

often an inherent part of negotiations of this magnitude. What is important is that the channels of communication remain open and that efforts to resolve the conflict continue. Looking ahead, the way forward requires a more structured and inclusive approach. Major global powers, particularly China, Russia, and the European Union, must take a more active role in facilitating dialogue between the United States and Iran. These actors possess the economic influence and political leverage necessary to bring both sides to the negotiating table and to encourage them to adopt more flexible positions.

China, with its growing global influence and strong economic ties with both Iran and the broader Middle East, is uniquely positioned to act as a mediator. Similarly, Russia’s





strategic relationships and experience in regional diplomacy make it a key player in any potential resolution. The European Union, which has historically played a role in nuclear negotiations with Iran, can also contribute by providing a multilateral framework that lends legitimacy and balance to the process. However, the involvement of these powers alone will not guarantee success. Ul-

term benefits of compromise against the costs of continued isolation.

The stakes are too high for both sides to remain locked in a cycle of confrontation. The potential consequences of failure extend far beyond bilateral relations, affecting the stability of the entire Middle East and the global economy. The Strait of Hormuz, a critical artery for global energy sup-

plies, has a vested interest in ensuring that the diplomatic process does not collapse. The Islamabad talks, despite their shortcomings, represent an important step in keeping dialogue alive. They have demonstrated that both sides are at least willing to engage, even if meaningful progress remains elusive. The challenge now is to build on this foundation and to inject new momentum into the process. This will require not only the involvement of major powers but also a willingness on the part of the United States and Iran to move beyond entrenched positions. Confidence-building measures, incremental agreements, and a focus on common ground could help create the conditions necessary for a broader settlement. It is also important to recognize that diplomacy is a gradual process. Breakthroughs are often preceded by multiple rounds of negotiations, each contributing in small ways to the eventual outcome. The failure of one round of talks should not be seen as the end of the road but rather as an opportunity to reassess strategies and to approach the problem with renewed determination.

The Islamabad talks between the United States and Iran may have ended in failure, but they have also highlighted the path forward. The absence of a strong mediator, the persistence of rigid positions, and the focus on non-negotiable demands were key factors that led to the breakdown. Addressing these issues will be essential for any future success. Pakistan's role as a facilitator, while limited, deserves acknowledgment and appreciation. More importantly, the international community must now step up to ensure that the process initiated in Islamabad does not derail. With the active involvement of major powers and a genuine commitment to compromise from both sides, there remains a real possibility of bringing the talks back on track. The alternative continued deadlock and escalating tensions is a scenario that neither the region nor the world can afford. The prevailing situation therefore demands a pragmatic diplomacy and shared responsibility.

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timately, the responsibility for reaching an agreement lies with the United States and Iran themselves. Both sides must recognize that their current approach—marked by rigidity and an unwillingness to compromise—is unsustainable. Continued adherence to maximalist positions will only prolong the conflict and exacerbate tensions, with potentially serious consequences for regional and global security. For the United States, this may require a reassessment of its demands regarding Iran's nuclear program. While concerns about proliferation are valid, insisting on complete abandonment may not be a realistic objective. A more pragmatic approach, focusing on limitations, transparency, and robust verification mechanisms, could provide a viable path forward.

For Iran, greater flexibility is equally essential. While safeguarding national sovereignty is important, engaging constructively with the international community and addressing concerns about its nuclear activities could help build trust and pave the way for sanctions relief and economic stability. Iran must weigh the long-

term benefits of compromise against the costs of continued isolation. The stakes are too high for both sides to remain locked in a cycle of confrontation. The potential consequences of failure extend far beyond bilateral relations, affecting the stability of the entire Middle East and the global economy. The Strait of Hormuz, a critical artery for global energy sup-





Serena Hotels participate in Pakistan Travel Mart 2026

Serena Hotels proudly participated in Pakistan Travel Mart 2026, showcasing its diverse portfolio of destinations across the country. The event provided a valuable platform to connect with industry stakeholders, highlight our latest properties, and celebrate the spirit of tourism in Pakistan. – DNA



Pakistan helped prevent a global conflict: Qaiser Sheikh

Renowned business figures Chairman of Gulf group Syed Ahmed, Shoeb Ahmed and Ali Furqan hosted a diplomatic reception in honour of Federal Minister for Investment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Renowned business figures Chairman of Gulf group Syed Ahmed, Shoeb Ahmed and Ali Furqan hosted a diplomatic reception in honour of Federal Minister for Investment, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh. A large number of ambassadors and high commissioners attended the reception. Diplomats

from Norway, Morocco, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Poland, South Korea, Germany, Thailand, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, France, Indonesia, and Japan were present on the occasion. Addressing the diplomatic community, the minister briefed participants on Pakistan's mediation efforts led by its civil and military leadership, which helped avert a potential war in the region and brought the United

States and Iran to the negotiating table. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said that Pakistan not only facilitated a ceasefire between the United States, Israel, and Iran, but also helped prevent a broader global conflict. He further stated that Islamabad's mediation initiative has received global support, as the conflict had implications for the entire world. Minister emphasized that the international community must continue to monitor the situation and play its role to ensure that the parties adhere to the ceasefire agreement, paving the way for a lasting and peaceful resolution in the region.





Empowering Artisans and Preserving Heritage at Nomad Craft Festival

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels in collaboration with Nomad Art Gallery under the Cultural Diplomacy initiative, proudly presents the Nomad Craft Festival, a vibrant celebration of Pakistan's diverse cultural heritage, craftsmanship, and artistic excellence. The festival brings together master artisans, designers, and craft enthusiasts from across the country, offering a unique platform to showcase indigenous art and promote sustainable livelihoods. Rooted in a shared vision, the collaboration aims to highlight and empower women, honor the indigenous art and artisans of Pakistan, and support communities through skills and creativity in arts and crafts. The festival features an exquisite collection of handcrafted textiles, shawls, gifts, natural foods, ceramics, homeware, jewelry, apparel, and inspiring artworks. These creations repre-

sent the rich cultural tapestry of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir, making them ideal for both personal collections and meaningful gifts.

In this festival, special emphasis is placed on highlighting the traditions of the Saami tribe of Sindh, showcasing their unique cultural expressions and artisanal expertise, and reinforcing the importance of preserving indigenous heritage.

Speaking about the initiative, Nageen Hayat, founder of Nomad Art Gallery, said that the festival celebrates Pakistan's cultural diversity while creating meaningful opportunities for artisans, particularly women, to connect their creativity with wider audiences and sustain their craft.

As the Guest of Honour, Mary O'Neil the Ambassador Ireland to Pakistan praised the initiative for promoting indigenous crafts and empowering local communities. She emphasized the role of cultural platforms in building mutual understanding and appreciation. Serena Hotels remains committed to supporting cultural initiatives by creating meaningful platforms that promote local artisans, preserve heritage, and encourage community empowerment through creative expression.

The Craft Festival promises an immersive cultural experience, developing appreciation for the country's rich traditions while supporting the talented artisans who keep these legacies alive.



Bangladesh 55th Independence Day anniversary celebrated



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad hosted a diplomatic reception to mark the 55th Independence and National Day of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, with a large number of dignitaries, diplomats, and members of civil society in attendance.

The reception and dinner were held at a Islamabad Serena Hotel, where Bangladesh High Commissioner to Pakistan Md. Iqbal Hossain Khan, along with officials of the mission, warmly received the guests.

Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain attended the event as chief guest.

The ceremony was also attended by the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Kundi, federal ministers, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, parliamentarians, ambassadors and high commissioners, representatives of international organisations, senior civil and military officials,

business leaders, journalists, and members of the Bangladeshi community.

The event commenced with the national anthems of Bangladesh and Pakistan, reflecting the spirit of mutual respect and friendship. In his remarks, Rana Tanveer Hussain felicitated the government and people of Bangladesh on their Independence and National Day.

He lauded Bangladesh's impressive socio-economic progress and emphasized the importance of further strengthening bilateral relations for the mutual benefit of both nations. In his welcome address, High Commissioner Md. Iqbal Hossain Khan underscored the shared aspirations of the peoples of Bangladesh and Pakistan to enhance bilateral ties and promote regional cooperation.

He highlighted Bangladesh's commitment to expanding collaboration in key areas including trade, direct air and maritime connectivity, education, tourism, culture, healthcare, agriculture, indus-

try, and energy. The High Commissioner also reaffirmed his country's broader foreign policy objectives, stating that Bangladesh remains focused on advancing development and safeguarding national interests through strengthened partnerships with friendly countries.

He further sought support for Bangladesh's candidature for the presidency of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The ceremony featured cultural elements showcasing Bangladesh's rich heritage, adding vibrancy to the occasion and promoting people-to-people connections.

The event concluded with renewed commitments from both sides to deepen cooperation, promote regional peace and stability, and work towards shared prosperity. The 55th anniversary celebrations were marked with due respect and enthusiasm, highlighting the enduring bonds of friendship and cooperation between Bangladesh and Pakistan.





Sarmad Ali again elected as President of APNS

Centreline magazine again elected as Member of the Executive Committee

DNA

KARACHI: The Annual Meeting of the APNS General Council held on March 31, 2026 at APNS House, Karachi unanimously re-elected Senator Sarmad Ali as President, Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani as Senior Vice President, Shahab Zuberi as Vice President, Muhammad Athar Kazi as Secretary General, Mohsin Bilal as Joint Secretary and Naveed Kashif as Finance Secretary of the Society. The AGM was held under the chairmanship of Senator Sarmad Ali, President of the Society. The Council unanimously approved the report of the Executive Committee for the year 2025-2026 as well as the Annual Accounts of the Society for the year 2025.

The AGM in a resolution, expressed its profound concern on the state of print media due to the present geo-political and economic situation which has caused severe financial crisis for newspapers, many of them are at the verge of collapse. In this situation, the media expected support from the government to brave the financial crunch. The AGM urged upon the Federal Government to implement the decision

of Mian Shahbaz Sharif approved in his last tenure to increase the government advertisement rates. The members in the AGM, requested the Federal and provincial governments to pay the long outstanding dues of newspaper industry, increase the quantum of advertisements and allocate a separate share of print media in the advertising budget so that the newspaper industry would be able to survive in the present situation.

The Annual General Council of the APNS adopted a resolution wherein it showed its dismay over the ban on the Federal, Provincial Govt. ads to Dawn Media for last 17 months. The Annual General Council noted that the newspaper is facing existential survival issue due to denial of Government ads and opined that consistent denial of Govt. ads to Dawn Media is unjust and unfair. The AGM unanimously expressed its solidarity with Dawn Media Group in the hour of financial strangulation.

The General Council attended by 118 members from across the country, formed an Election Commission headed by Mr. Mumtaz Ahmed Phulpoto with Ali Bin Younus and Mr. Nasir Dad Baloch

as members. The Election Commission conducted the election of the Executive Committee for the year 2026-27. Following dailies and magazines were elected unopposed of the Executive Committee of the APNS for the next tenure:

Daily Aghaz, Daily Business Recorder, Daily Dawn, Daily Deyanat, Daily Jasarat, Daily Jiddat, Karachi, Daily Dunya, Daily Jang, Daily Khabrain, Daily Nawa-i-Waqt, Daily Pakistan, Lahore, Daily Tijarat, Daily Ausaf, Daily Sahafat, Daily Awam (Quetta), Daily Mashriq (Quetta), Daily Mashriq (Peshawar), Daily Wahdat, Daily Kaleem, Daily Kawish, Daily Aftab (Multan), Daily Business Report, Daily Paigham, Daily City 42 Daily Pakistan Observer, Daily Halchal, Daily Sayadat on daily seats and Monthly Dastak, Monthly Naey Ufaq, Monthly Naya Rukh, Weekly Tabeer, Monthly Centreline, Weekly AZM and Fortnightly Ibrat Magazine elected on periodical seats. The new Executive Committee elected Mrs. Zahida Abbasi of Daily Nau Sijj, Karachi on woman - publishers seat. The newly elected Executive Committee appreciated the performance of the Election Commission for conducting the elections.



Ambassador of Japan Opens “Spring Reverie: Crafts of Pakistan” Sogetsu Ikebana Exhibition in Lahore



DNA

LAHORE: The Sogetsu Ikebana Annual Spring Exhibition, titled “Spring Reverie: Crafts of Pakistan,” opened at The Residency Hotel Lahore on Friday, April 3rd, in celebration of 100 years of Sogetsu Ikebana. Organized by The Lahore Floritage Sogetsu Study Group under the leadership of Ms. Neveen Syed, Director of the Group, and held in collaboration with Blue Pine Residences, the exhibition highlights the works of Sogetsu Ikebana artists inspired by Pakistan’s rich and diverse craft traditions.

The exhibition will open for public viewing today from 6pm till 10pm and on Saturday, April 4, from 10 am to 5 pm.

The chief guest H.E. Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, inaugurated the exhibition along with Mr. Aamir Shirazi, Honorary Consul General of Japan in Lahore, Mrs. Ghazala Irfan, President of the Pakistan-Japan Cultural Association (PJCA) Lahore and Mr. Ibrar Mumtaz, President of the Horticultural Society of Pakistan.

This year’s exhibition drew inspiration from the rich and diverse craft traditions of Pakistan, celebrating the country’s cultural heritage through the innovative medium of Sogetsu Ikebana. Participating artists researched and interpreted a wide range of traditional crafts, including Multani pottery, Hala ceramics, and Ajrak textiles.

Ambassador AKAMATSU, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony, expressed his appreciation to The Lahore Floritage Sogetsu Study Group for holding an impressive spring exhibition on the 100th anniversary of Sogetsu Ikebana. While congratulating the Sogetsu on achieving the remarkable milestone of hundred years, the Ambassador said this exhibition not only embodies the spirit of cultural exchange but also offers an opportunity to rediscover tradition of Ikebana through the refined and creative expressions of Sogetsu Ikebana by blending the freshness of spring with the rich crafts of Pakistan. “Born in Japan, Sogetsu Ikebana finds fresh expression in Pakistan, harmonizing with local craftsmanship”, remarked Ambassador Akamatsu.

Former Algerian president passes away death widely condoled

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Algeria is deeply saddened to announce the news of demise of Mr. LIAMINE ZEROUAL, former President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (during the period 1994-1999) passed away on Sunday 29th March 2026. In this regard, a book of condolence was opened at the Embassy premises, from Wednesday 1st April from 10:00am.-12:00 and 2:00pm.-4:00pm till Thursday 2nd April 2026 from 10:00am.-12:00p.m. and 2:00pm. - 4:00pm. Books & Literature
Liamine Zeroual (1941-2026) was a prominent Algerian military and political figure who served as President of the Republic (1994-1999). He joined the National Liberation Army (ALN) in 1957 and held high-ranking leadership positions in the People's National Army (ANP) after independence.

He led Algeria during the "Black Decade" in the fight against terrorism, established the National Concord Law, and was known as a "statesman" who laid the foundations for the peaceful transfer of power.

Military Career:

• Birth: Born on July 3, 1941, in Batna. Geographic Reference

• War of Independence: Joined the National Liberation Army at the age of 16 (1957).

• Training: Received military training in the Soviet Union and the French War College (1974).

• Responsibilities: Commander of the Cherchell Military Academy and commanded several military regions (3rd, 5th, and 6th).

• Appointed Commander of the Land Forces with the rank of General Major.

• He resigned from the army in 1989.

Political Career: Politics

• He was appointed ambassador to Roma-

nia (1990-1991), resigning after a year.

• He was appointed Minister of National Defense in July 1993.

• He assumed the presidency on January 31, 1994, and was elected president on November 16, 1995, remaining in office until April 27, 1999.

His Most Notable Achievements and Positions:

• Civil Concord: He was known as a stabilization force through his "Civil Concord Law", aimed at ending the "Black Decade" (a period of intense violence and conflict). He played a key role in combating terrorism and ensuring security, peace, and stability.

• Transfer of Power: He handed over power to the late President Abdelaziz Bouteflika after resigning and calling early multi-candidatures of presidential elections, stating, "I left my post to teach Algerians the meaning of the peaceful transfer of power."

• Death: He passed away on March 29, 2026, at the age of 84.





Romania Presents Choral Arrangement of Pakistan's National Anthem "Qaumi Tarana" to Senate Chairman



ISLAMABAD: In a significant gesture of cultural diplomacy and friendship, Romania has gifted Pakistan the world's first professional choral arrangement and official score of the national anthem, Qaumi Tarana. Romanian Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Dan Stoenescu, personally presented the official album and the written choral score to Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, in a special ceremony. The unique artistic project was realized by Romania's renowned National Chamber Choir "Madrigal – Marin Constantin", with the support of the Embassy of Romania in Islamabad. The arrangement transforms the original orchestral composition of Qaumi Tarana into a refined polyphonic choral work for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass voices. According to Ambassador Stoenescu, the new version preserves the solemnity and spirit of Pakistan's national anthem while adding a fresh musical dimension that beautifully bridges Eastern melodic richness with Western harmonic depth. "This unique artistic project symbolizes more than a musical achievement – it reflects a deep

respect for Pakistan's national identity and a shared commitment to cultural dialogue," the Ambassador stated. The initiative is part of the choir's international programme "Diplomacy – The Anthems of the World," and was launched to mark Pakistan Day (23 March). The album and score are being presented to Pakistan's highest leadership as a token of friendship between the two nations. During the meeting, Ambassador Stoenescu and Senate Chairman Gilani also held substantive discussions on strengthening bilateral relations, with a special focus on enhancing parliamentary cooperation and expanding economic ties. They exchanged views on regional and international issues, including the situation in the Middle East, and emphasized the need for dialogue and stability. Chairman Gilani extended an invitation to his Romanian counterpart, Mircea Abrudean, to visit Pakistan. Ambassador Stoenescu expressed gratitude for the warm welcome and appreciation shown by Chairman Gilani, noting that the gesture highlights the power of culture to bring nations closer together.



Romanian Ambassador celebrates Orthodox Easter with friends



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Solidifying Pakistan-Romania friendship Senate of Pakistan launches national anthem in choral format

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: The Senate of Pakistan hosted a distinguished cultural and diplomatic event, bringing together ambassadors of friendly countries, senators, and guests to mark the official launch of the national anthem of Pakistan, Qaumi Tarana, in a choral format, while celebrating the enduring partnership between Pakistan and Romania. The programme commenced with an informal gathering of ambassadors with H.E. Yousaf Raza Gillani, Chairman of the Senate. It continued with the inauguration of a diplomatic exhibition dedicated to over six decades of Romania-Pakistan bilateral relations, highlighting key milestones in political dialogue, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange. The exhibition was officially opened

through a ribbon-cutting ceremony jointly conducted by Chairman Gillani and H.E. Dan Stoenescu, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan. Foreign Ambassadors and Pakistani parliamentarians toured the exhibition, reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening international cooperation and friendship. A highlight of the event was the performance of the national anthem of Pakistan in its historic choral arrangement by the Romanian National Chamber Choir "Madrigal - Marin Constantin," presented during the opening of the Senate plenary session in the presence of ambassadors, senators, and guests. On this occasion, Chairman Gillani recalled that, on the occasion of Pakistan Day (23 March), Romania offered Pakistan the first-ever professional choral arrangement and

written score of its national anthem. This landmark cultural initiative was presented to the Senate on the auspicious day when Pakistan played a crucial diplomatic role in reaching a ceasefire in the Middle East. He further expressed his appreciation to the Romanian authorities for their support in advancing this historic initiative, emphasizing that the project represents a lasting cultural bridge between Pakistan and Romania, symbolizing friendship, mutual respect, and a shared vision for deepening bilateral relations. During the plenary session, senators from both the government and opposition benches also expressed their gratitude to Romania for this historic gesture. The event reaffirmed the strength of Romania-Pakistan relations and underscored the vital role of cultural diplomacy in bringing nations closer together.

Romania and Pakistan sign MoU on port cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Romania and Pakistan marked a significant step in advancing their economic and maritime partnership with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on port cooperation. The agreement was concluded between the National Company "Maritime Ports Administration" S.A. Constanta and the Karachi Port Trust during an online ceremony. It was signed by Mr. Mihai Teodorescu, General Manager of the Port of Constanta Administration, and Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed SI(M), Sbt. (Retd), Chairman of Karachi Port Trust.

The ceremony was attended by representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Transport of both countries, alongside ambassadors Dan Stoenescu and Ilyas Mehmood Nizami. Representatives of the Pakistan Romania Business Council, including Mr. Sohail Shamim Firpo and Mr. Atif Farooqi, also took part.

The Memorandum reflects the shared objective of enhancing maritime connectivity between Karachi Port and the Port of Constanta on the Black Sea, facilitating more efficient trade flows between South Asia and Europe. It supports Paki-

stan's efforts to develop its maritime sector and blue economy, while reinforcing Romania's role as a key logistical gateway to the European Union.

The Port of Constanta, one of the largest on the Black Sea, benefits from a strategic position that ensures direct access to Central and Western Europe through the Danube corridor. From Constanta, goods can be transported efficiently via inland waterways through Hungary, Austria and Germany, reaching major hubs such as Rotterdam in the Netherlands. This multimodal route offers a cost-effective and sustainable solution for European distribution.

Enhanced connectivity between Karachi and Constanta is expected to generate new opportunities for bilateral trade. Romanian exports - including industrial equipment, machinery, chemicals and agricultural products - stand to gain improved access to Pakistan and wider regional markets, while Pakistani goods will benefit from more efficient entry points into Europe.

The agreement builds on discussions initiated in 2025 in Karachi and establishes a practical framework for cooperation, including the creation of a joint working group. It promotes collaboration in train-

ing, exchange of expertise in port management and operations, and the development of new trade opportunities.

Ambassador Dan Stoenescu highlighted Romania's objective to expand its exports to Pakistan, thereby strengthening Romania's economic presence in Asia and contributing to more balanced trade flows. He emphasized that enhanced maritime connectivity represents a practical tool for deepening regional integration, facilitating trade and promoting shared prosperity. In a context of increasing pressure on existing infrastructure and the need for diversified supply routes, the Romania-Pakistan partnership provides a forward-looking framework for sustainable economic cooperation.

Maritime trade plays a central role in the European Union's economy, with over 75% of the EU's external trade carried by sea, making ports and shipping essential to growth, connectivity and supply chain resilience. Within this context, the EU's Blue Economy strategy promotes sustainable use of ocean resources, innovation in maritime sectors and the development of efficient, green and digital port infrastructure.

Football World Cup Qualifiers



ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors of four nations competing in the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers gathered in Islamabad, highlighting sporting friendship and unity through football. From left to right: the ambassadors of Uzbekistan, Morocco, Türkiye, and Bosnia and Herzegovina posed together at the event, organized to celebrate their countries' involvement in the road to the 2026 World Cup. – DNA

Ethiopia Showcases Tourism & Culture at Pakistan's Largest Travel Expo

DNA

THE Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad, in collaboration with Ethiopian Airlines, opened the "Ethiopian Enclave" at the Pakistan Travel Mart 2026 which kicked off here on Friday in Karachi Expo Center. The Ethiopian Enclave has been designed to showcase the nation's ancient heritage, diverse tourism landscapes, and vibrant cultural identity. The Enclave received a high-profile reception, welcoming senior officials of the Government of the Islamic Republic of



Pakistan including H.E. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Tourism and H.E. Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation. Visitors experienced traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony while discussing bilateral opportunities in hospitality and travel sectors. The exhibit drew a massive response from Karachi residents, media representatives, and travel agencies, successfully positioning Ethiopia as a premier destination for Pakistani travelers.



PRCS in Collaboration with Turkish Red Crescent Organizes Blood Donation Drive at the Embassy of Türkiye



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Regional Blood Donor Center of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) organised a blood donation drive at the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in Islamabad in collaboration with Türk Kızılay (Turkish Red Crescent Society), reflecting the strong humanitarian partnership and shared commitment of both sister National Societies. His Excellency Dr. Irfan Neziroğlu, Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan, along with diplomats and embassy staff, actively participated in the drive and donated blood, demonstrating solidarity with patients in need and support for this lifesaving humanitarian cause.

The event was also attended by Honorable Chairperson, Pakistan Red Crescent Society, Mrs. Farzhana Naek, TRCS Head of Delegation in Pakistan, Ms. Beyza Taner, as well as PRCS and TRCS staff, underscoring the close cooperation and longstanding humanitarian partnership between the two sister National Societies. On the occasion, His Excellency Dr. Irfan Neziroğlu appreciated the efforts of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society in organising the blood donation drive and acknowledged its continued commitment to promoting voluntary blood donation and supporting vulnerable communities. He said that in view of the current humanitarian challenges and crucial situation being faced by communities in need, such collective humanitarian initiatives are of immense importance. He emphasized that extending support to one another in difficult times is both a religious and moral obligation, and that blood donation remains one of the most meaningful and lifesaving ways to stand in solidarity with humanity.

Honorable Chairperson PRCS, Mrs. Farzhana Naek, while thanking

“ The event was also attended by Honorable Chairperson, Pakistan Red Crescent Society, Mrs. Farzhana Naek, TRCS Head of Delegation in Pakistan, Ms. Beyza Taner, as well as PRCS and TRCS staff, underscoring the close cooperation and longstanding humanitarian partnership between the two sister National Societies. On the occasion ”

the Ambassador, the diplomats, and the embassy staff for their generous participation, termed the initiative a highly meaningful and impactful humanitarian gesture. She said that voluntary blood donation is one of the noblest acts of humanity, as a single unit of blood can save precious lives and bring hope to patients in critical need. She noted that this was a great initiative with greater humanitarian impact, and stressed that collaborative efforts are the need of the hour to respond effectively to growing humanitarian needs and ensure the availability of safe blood for those who depend on it. The Pakistan Red Crescent Society remains committed to promoting voluntary blood donation and strengthening partnerships that contribute to lifesaving services and community wellbeing across the country.

Malaysia envoy emphasizes unity, gratitude, harmony

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: In conjunction with the joyous celebration of Eid ul Fitr 2026, His Excellency Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, delivered a warm and meaningful message to the Home-Based Staff and Locally Recruited Staff of the High Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad.

The High Commissioner extended sincere Eid greetings to all members of the mission, expressing deep appreciation for their hard work, dedication, and valuable contributions throughout the year. He described Eid ul Fitr not merely as a festive occasion but as a profound moment to reflect on the spiritual lessons of Ramadan – a month that cultivates patience, humility, compassion, kindness, discipline, and empathy.

H.E. Amb. Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan encouraged the staff to embrace gratitude

for both personal and professional blessings, urging them to carry forward the positive values instilled during Ramadan into their daily lives and workplace. He stressed the importance of fostering a harmonious and respectful working environment, noting that unity and mutual understanding are essential to enhancing the High Commission's effectiveness.

"As representatives of Malaysia abroad, each of you plays a vital role in projecting our nation's identity as a peaceful, respectful, and inclusive society," the High Commissioner remarked. He further highlighted that peace remains a cherished Malaysian value, especially amid global challenges, and called on everyone to uphold these principles while contributing positively to the workplace and the broader community. In a thoughtful gesture reflecting the spirit of sharing and care during Eid, the High Commissioner distributed Eid food packages to all locally recruited

staff as a token of appreciation and goodwill. Extending the festive greetings beyond the mission, H.E. Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan conveyed warm Eid ul Fitr wishes to the Government and people of Pakistan. He expressed gratitude for the strong bilateral relations and the warm hospitality extended to Malaysia and its representatives in Pakistan. He expressed hope for continued friendship, prosperity, and lasting peace between the two nations.

The High Commissioner concluded his message with the traditional Malaysian Eid greeting: "Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Maaf Zahir dan Batin" – conveying heartfelt wishes while seeking forgiveness for any shortcomings, in the true spirit of reconciliation and renewal. This message underscores the close and friendly ties between Malaysia and Pakistan, reinforced through cultural and festive observances at the Malaysian High Commission in Islamabad.





Iconic Monal restaurant reopens with grand fanfare at Imarat Downtown

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: After months of anticipation following the controversial closure of its legendary Pir Sohawa location, the beloved Monal Restaurant has finally opened its doors at the stunning rooftop of Imarat Downtown (Mall of Imarat), drawing hundreds of enthusiastic food lovers on its inaugural day.

The grand opening, coinciding with the holy month of Ramadan, turned into a festive celebration as crowds flocked to enjoy iftar and dinner amid breathtaking panoramic views of Islamabad's skyline. The venue was beautifully decorated with elegant Ramadan-themed accents, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere perfect for family gatherings and special outings.

Scores of signature Pakistani delicacies were served, delighting guests with traditional favorites including

succulent kebabs, aromatic biryanis, rich curries, fresh naans, and an array of desserts that captured the essence of authentic local cuisine. The menu paid homage to Monal's heritage while incorporating modern twists suited to the new urban setting. Chairman of the Monal Group, Luqman Ali Afzal, personally greeted each and every guest on the opening day, warmly welcoming visitors and ensuring a memorable experience for all.

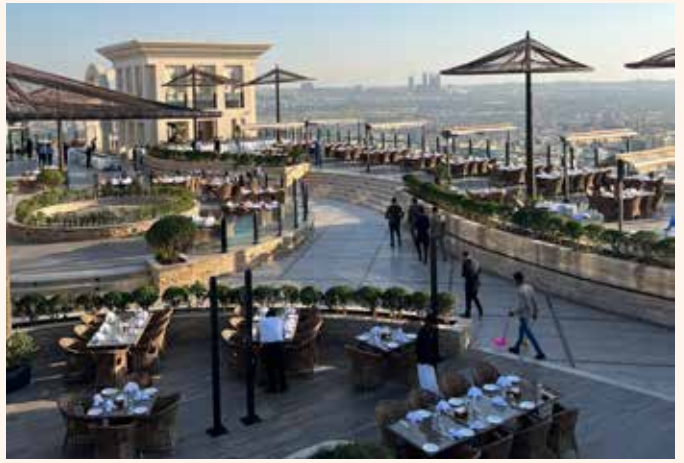
In his remarks, he expressed optimism about the new chapter: "This venue will serve the culinary needs of the people of the twin cities Islamabad and Rawalpindi and even visitors from other parts of Pakistan. We are committed to delivering the same legendary hospitality and flavors that made Monal an icon.

"The relocation comes after the Supreme Court's highly debated order in 2024 mandating the closure of eateries, including the original Monal at Pir Sohawa in Margalla Hills National Park, citing environmental and land-use concerns.

The decision left a void in the hearts of food enthusiasts who cherished the hilltop dining experience with its scenic vistas. The new Imarat Downtown branch, with its open-air terrace and modern ambience, has quickly filled that gap, proving popular during Ramadan for iftar and sehri reservations.

Food lovers have hailed it as a triumphant return, blending nostalgia with fresh appeal in the heart of the capital. As bookings surge, Monal's revival underscores the enduring demand for quality dining experiences in Pakistan's twin cities.





CEO Murree Brewery MNA Isphanyar Bandhara hosts reception



His Highness the Aga Khan marks inaugural visit to Canada, renewing 50 years of partnership

Canada and the Ismaili Imam commit to deepened collaboration on affordable housing, development finance and global diplomacy

OTTAWA: His Highness the Aga Khan, 50th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslim community and Chair of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), began his first official visit to Canada, marking a milestone in a relationship between the Imam and Canada that spans more than five decades. His Highness met with Prime Minister Mark Carney, and was hosted at dinner by Governor General Mary Simon and His Excellency Whit Fraser. His Highness also met today with a diverse group of Senators and Members of Parliament at the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam. Reflecting on the depth of the partnership, His Highness said: "Like my father before me, I believe in the promise of Canada – its values, its principles and its willingness to act on them, even when it is most challenging. That is what we build on, and what makes this relationship enduring."

The visit continues a longstanding relationship between Canada and the Imam, grounded in shared values and a sustained commitment to building a better world. Over five decades, this partnership has produced tangible outcomes in capacity building, economic development and the strengthening of civil society across some of the world's most challenging environments. Building on this historic relationship, Prime Minister Carney and His Highness released a joint declaration outlining new partnerships in housing, economic development and other areas of mutual interest, setting the stage for renewed collaboration.

Three areas of renewed commitment: During substantive discussions with Prime Minister Carney, His Highness and the Prime Minister agreed to advance collaboration across three priority areas: Affordable housing. Prime Minister Carney welcomed a series of investments by the Ismaili Imam in multi-generational not-for-profit housing projects across Canada to improve the supply of affordable housing. In addition, through Build Canada Homes, the Government of Canada will forge a long-term partnership with the Ismaili Imam to develop a series of low- and middle-income housing projects.

Development Collaboration. The leaders also announced the creation of an Economic Partnership Platform to strengthen development financing. FinDev Canada and the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development will pool public and private capital to invest in infrastructure, renewable energy and agriculture across Africa and Asia, combining AKDN's expertise and development models with Canada's resources. In addition, the leaders committed to ongoing joint development programming to advance economic opportunity, health, education, and pluralism, including in critical regions such as Syria. They identified particular opportunities to advance work in skills development related to key economic needs, energy initiatives, and leveraging Canadian innovations and technology in important sectors such as agriculture and climate. Principled global diplomacy. Recognising the urgent need for quiet, principled diplomacy to save lives, end conflict, and preserve human dignity, the Imam and Canada renewed their commitment to work together towards these goals.

New Canadian Representative appointed: Prime Minister Carney also announced that the Honourable David Lametti, currently Canada's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, will also be appointed as the new Representative of Canada to the Ismaili Imam, a role that will help carry this renewed partnership forward.

A partnership built for complexity: Speaking at a parliamentary reception attended by senators, ministers and members of Parliament, His Highness noted that as the world grows more complicated, traditional models of aid are increasingly difficult to sustain. He underscored the importance of new forms of

partnership capable of creating lasting, sustainable prosperity in the world's most challenging regions – and of ensuring that more countries become countries of opportunity for their own populations. His Highness expressed his intention to make this the first of many visits to Canada, and reaffirmed the readiness of the Imam, the AKDN, and the Canadian Ismaili community and its institutions to serve as proud and reliable partners in building a safer, more prosperous and more pluralist world.



His Highness the Aga Khan and Prime Minister of Canada Mark Carney on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on 25 March 2026. – DNA



President Zardari Receives Credentials from Envoys of Six Countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors-designate of the Republic of Cuba, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Portuguese Republic, Kingdom of Spain and United Republic of Tanzania, as well as the High Commissioner-designate of the Republic of Singapore, presented their credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr today. The President felicitated the envoys on the commencement of their diplomatic re-

sponsibilities in Pakistan and conveyed his best wishes for a productive tenure. He expressed the hope that their assignments would contribute to strengthening bilateral relations and advancing cooperation in areas of mutual interest. During his interaction with Ambassador-designate of Cuba, H.E. Mr. Damian Cordeiro Torres, the President reaffirmed the longstanding and friendly relations between the two countries. He appreciated Cuba's support in healthcare and education, including medical scholarships,

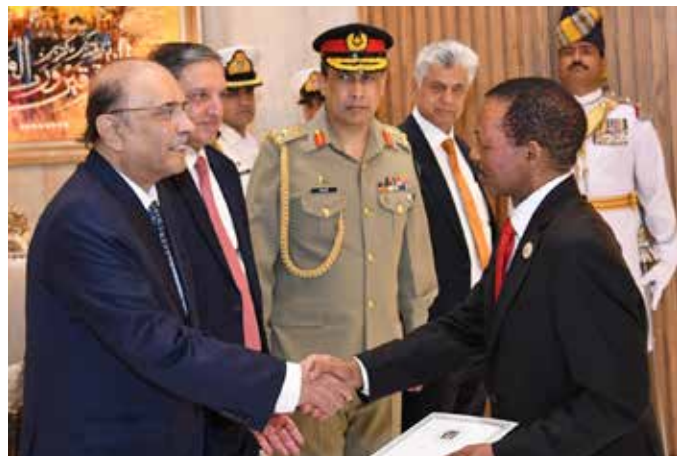
and emphasised the potential for cooperation in health, biotechnology and tourism, as well as continued collaboration at multilateral forums. The President also conveyed Pakistan's deep appreciation for Cuba's support during the 2005 earthquake, noting that this humanitarian assistance remains a lasting symbol of solidarity between the two nations. In his meeting with Ambassador-designate of Ethiopia, H.E. Dr. Oumer Hussein Oba, the President welcomed the opening of Ethiopia's Embassy in Islama-



Ambassador of Portugal



Ambassador of Cuba



Ambassador of Tanzania Non resident



Ambassador of Spain



Ambassador of Singapore Non resident



Ambassador of Ethiopia

bad and the resumption of direct flights. He noted the growing engagement between the two countries and emphasised the need to expand cooperation in trade, aviation, education and technology. In his meeting with Ambassador-designate of Portugal, H.E. Mr. Paulo Miguel Guedes Domingues, the President underlined the importance Pakistan attaches to its relations with Portugal, both bilaterally and within the European Union framework. He noted the upward trajectory in trade and emphasised the need to expand cooperation in trade, investment, IT, agriculture and blue economy, while also highlighting the role of the Pakistani diaspora and prospects for labour mobility and academic exchanges. In his meeting with Ambassador-designate

of Spain, H.E. Mr. Carlos Aragón Gil de la Serna, the President noted the milestone of 75 years of diplomatic relations and appreciated Spain's commitment to multilateralism. He highlighted strong trade ties supported by GSP Plus, encouraged greater investment and cooperation, and underscored the importance of safe and legal migration, as well as cultural and academic exchanges. He appreciated the principled stance taken by Spain in the current Gulf crisis and noted that it reflects a commitment to dialogue, de-escalation and adherence to international law. Talking to Ambassador-designate of Tanzania, H.E. Lt. Gen. (R) Yacoub Hassan Mohamed, the President reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening ties with Tanzania and the East African

Community. He emphasised the need to enhance trade, investment and technical cooperation, and called for stronger business linkages, improved connectivity and greater people-to-people exchanges. Meeting the High Commissioner-designate of Singapore, H.E. Mr. Ishak Bin Ismail, the President highlighted Singapore's importance as a key regional partner and underscored prospects for expanding cooperation in trade, fintech, infrastructure and services. He also emphasised the role of the Pakistani diaspora, the potential for enhanced connectivity and collaboration in climate and digital economy initiatives. Upon arrival, the envoys were presented with a guard of honour. National anthems were played and the envoys reviewed the parade before proceeding to present their credentials.

High Commissioner of Brunei hosts Eid Milan party





Vibrant exhibition celebrates Japan-Pakistan cultural bonds

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Bridging cultures through creativity, the Embassy of Japan in Pakistan, alongside the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) and Pakistan-Japan Cultural Association (PJCA) Islamabad, unveiled the captivating painting exhibition “Japan in Art” at the National Art Gallery, PNCA. H.E. Mr. Akamatsu Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, together with Mr. Ayoub Jamali, Director General PNCA, and acclaimed artist Mr. Jamal Shah, President of PJCA Islamabad, inaugurated the exhibition. The event drew young artists, art enthusiasts, and dignitaries from all walks of life. “Japan in Art” displays around 40 stunning works by emerging Pakistani talents, reimagining Japanese socio-cultural life through innovative lenses. From delicate brushstrokes and colored pencils to the timeless artistry of wood-block printing, these pieces fuse imagination with cultural insight.

Ambassador Akamatsu, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony, deeply appreciated the remarkable skill and imagination of the young Pakistani artists for their portrayal of Japanese culture through the artistic works of paintings. “This event is a beautiful testament to the enduring friendship between Japan and Pakistan, a friendship rooted not only in diplomacy, but also in culture and people to people exchange.”, said the Ambassador. President PJCA Islamabad conferred Ambassador’s Commendation for 2026: At the inaugural ceremony of the ex-

hibition, Ambassador Akamatsu presented the prestigious Ambassador’s Commendation for 2026 to Mr. Jamal Shah, President of Pakistan-Japan Cultural Association (PJCA) Islamabad recognizing his pivotal role in advancing Japan-Pakistan cultural ties. While paying rich tribute to Mr. Shah’s leadership role not only as President PJCA Islamabad but also as a tireless champion of the arts, Ambassador Akamatsu said that the conferment of this Commendation is a meaningful recognition of his sustained dedication to strengthening cultural ties. The Ambassador briefly touched upon the contributions of Mr. Shah as a lead

role at the Expo 2005 Aichi, Japan, as Director of the Pakistan Pavilion and also extending his support, during his tenure as Minister for Culture, for events hosted by the Embassy such as the Emperor’s Birthday Reception and Japan Foundation’s traveling exhibition “Yakishime”. Most recently, Mr. Shah held the “Remains of Ruins” exhibition which highlighted the tragedy of nuclear devastation on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, said the Ambassador. Ambassador Akamatsu expressed his hope that Mr. Shah will continue to contribute to strengthening bilateral relationships and promoting Japanese culture.



France to continue supporting Pakistan, says envoy

Finance Minister, French Ambassador Nicolas Galey discuss Pakistan-France economic engagement



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France Nicolas Galey in a meeting with the Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb. – DNA

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb met H.E. Mr. Nicolas Galey, Ambassador of France to Pakistan, who called on him at the Finance Division.

Welcoming the Ambassador, the finance minister underscored the importance Pakistan attaches to its longstanding and multifaceted relationship with France, particularly in the areas of economic cooperation, investment, and development partnership. He noted that Pakistan remains committed to maintaining macroeconomic stability and advancing structural reforms to support sustainable economic growth.

The finance minister briefed the Ambassador on the Government's ongoing economic priorities, including efforts to preserve hard-earned macroeconomic stability amid evolving global and regional challenges. He emphasized that the Government is proactively monitoring developments and preparing policy responses to safeguard economic gains, ensure continuity in critical supply chains, and maintain investor confidence.

Discussions also covered Pakistan's en-

gagement with international financial institutions. The finance minister shared that Pakistan remains committed to its reform agenda under the IMF-supported programme and expressed confidence in the country's continued progress, noting that ongoing engagements with the Fund are constructive and moving forward positively. The Ambassador appreciated the Government's efforts toward economic stabilization and reform, and acknowledged Pakistan's resilience in navigating external challenges. He reiterated France's continued support for Pakistan's economic development and expressed interest in further strengthening bilateral cooperation across key sectors.

The meeting also included an exchange of views on the evolving international situation and its potential implications for global energy markets and economic conditions. The Finance Minister noted that the Government is closely monitoring developments and is engaged with relevant stakeholders to manage potential risks to energy supply and pricing, while ensuring that appropriate policy measures are in place to respond to emerging challenges.

The Ambassador appreciated the Government's efforts toward economic stabilization and reform, and acknowledged Pakistan's resilience in navigating external challenges. He reiterated France's continued support for Pakistan's economic development and expressed interest in further strengthening bilateral cooperation across key sectors

Pakistan, Norway Seal First-Ever Carbon Market Deal Under Paris Climate Pact



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Norway on Wednesday signed the country's first landmark bilateral agreement under Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement, opening the door to international carbon trading, climate finance and major investment in clean energy and climate-smart agriculture. The memorandum of understanding, signed in Islamabad under the auspices of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, marks Pakistan's formal entry into the global carbon market and is being seen as a breakthrough in the country's climate diplomacy. Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Musadik Malik termed the agreement a "historic milestone", saying it would shift Pakistan from carbon market preparedness to practical implementation. "This is Pakistan's first bilateral agreement under Article 6.2 and an important step towards implementation," Mr Malik said. "It creates a credible pathway for international cooperation and investment in Pakistan's climate priorities." Under the agreement, Pakistan will be able to develop carbon-credit generating projects in sectors such as clean energy, agriculture, transport and waste management and potentially sell the resulting emission reductions to Norway. Officials said the deal would help channel international finance into Pakistan at a time when the country is grappling with recurring floods, heatwaves and other climate shocks. Mr Malik said the agreement would strengthen Pakistan's position in international carbon markets and create new opportunities for the country's emerging green economy. "Carbon markets cannot be treated as an end in themselves," he said. "They must help countries like Pakistan finance transition pathways, create jobs, attract technology and deliver real benefits to communities." The minister said Pakistan had already put in place the country's first national policy guidelines for carbon trading, approved by the federal cabinet in January 2025, and was now moving to establish rules, reporting systems and bilateral arrangements needed to operationalise the market. He said Pakistan had "strong mitigation potential" in sectors such as renewable energy, agriculture, transport and waste manage-

ment, and that the agreement would encourage project developers and investors to move forward. Addressing at the signing ceremony, Norway's Ambassador to Pakistan Per Albert Ilsaas said the accord marked the beginning of a new era in bilateral environmental cooperation. "Pakistan is among the countries most affected by climate change, and we believe this partnership can deliver both measurable emission reductions and real development benefits," he said. The ambassador said Norway, which aims to become climate neutral by 2030, was seeking to purchase Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) under Article 6, not to meet its formal climate targets but to go beyond them. "Norway is not purchasing ITMOs to meet its nationally determined contribution targets. We are purchasing them to achieve climate neutrality beyond those commitments," he said. Mr Ilsaas said Norway's Global Emission Reduction Initiative, launched in 2024 with a budget of \$1.5 billion approved by the Norwegian parliament, would provide carbon finance to countries such as Pakistan. "Through NOGER, we want to channel carbon finance into countries such as Pakistan and help bridge the gap in climate mitigation finance," he said. He added that Norway was looking beyond individual carbon-credit projects and was interested in large-scale programmes in renewable energy, industry and agriculture. "We are looking beyond individual projects," the ambassador said. "We are interested in cooperation across entire sectors where climate policies can generate emission reductions at scale." The ambassador said Norway had already signed similar agreements with Benin, Indonesia, Zambia, Jordan and Senegal and was working to buy 15 million carbon credits by 2030. He also invited Pakistan to present a broader pipeline of projects, specifically pointing to renewable energy ventures such as the Zhenfa 100-megawatt solar project and the Indus wind energy project as possible candidates for future cooperation. Both sides also agreed that the new ambitious pact could significantly boost Pakistan's access to climate finance and private-sector investment, while helping the country pursue low-carbon growth and meet its climate commitments under the Paris Agreement.

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