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There Is Significant Untapped Potential in Tourism Between Our Two Countries - Rear Admiral Fred Seneviratne, Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Pakistan



Thailand Marks Armed Forces Day in Islamabad, Highlights Defence Ties with Pakistan



Isphanyar Bhandara, A Dynamic Force in Business, Philanthropy and Public Service



Masood Ahmad Qazi, A Driving Force Behind Peshawar's Diplomatic and Cultural Revival



**Toyo
Nasic**
Clarity Inspires

A Legacy of **Clarity**

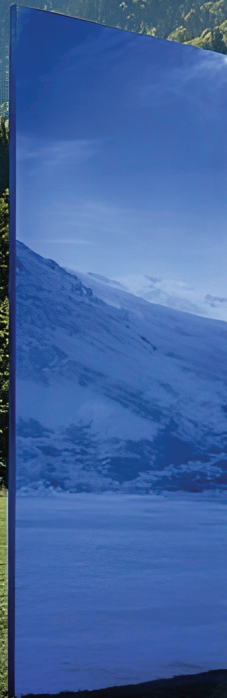
That Defined Pakistan's
Glass Industry



**Sandblasted
Glass**



**Clear
Float Glass**



**Tinted &
Reflective
Glass**



**Aluminium
Coated Mirror
Glass**



Editor' Profile

Tahir Farooq, a senior Pakistani journalist and a political and foreign policy commentator serves as the Editor of ITTEHAD GROUP OF NEWSPAPERS, one of Pakistan's few Urdu dailies, published simultaneously from Peshawar, Islamabad, Karachi and Abbottabad.

Maintaining this strenuous and time-consuming position, He is Editor of Monthly 'Peace International' published from the capital of Pakistan. Mr. Farooq knows the art of striking the balance as he also serves his country in the strategic capacity of the Vice-President of KPK chapter of Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE).

Mr. Farooq is associated with journalism since his youthful years. Being the son of a senior journalist and a worker of Pakistan Movement, Late Sharif Farooq (Tamgha-e Imtiaz), he has upheld the journalistic ethics and values as transferred by his father. Carrying this vision further by embracing and advocating nationalistic sentiment at International forums.

Mr. Farooq has published several articles defending Pakistan's geo-strategic position in South Asia and Central Asia. His views are widely read and appreciated in intellectual circles.

Mr. Farooq's journalist career spans over two decades, during which he has represented Pakistan at several international events worldwide.

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Rs: 750/-
Monthly Islamabad
PEACE
INTERNATIONAL

Volume: 29 | Issue:3-4 | March-April 2026

Editorial



Islamabad Talks Reinforce Pakistan's Diplomatic Role

The recent Islamabad talks, facilitated by Pakistan and attended by high level delegations from Iran and the United States, mark a significant diplomatic milestone not only for the region but for Pakistan's global standing. At a time when tensions in the Middle East threaten wider instability, Pakistan's ability to bring two long standing adversaries to the same table is, in itself, a remarkable achievement. It signals a renewed recognition of Pakistan as a credible and neutral platform for dialogue in an increasingly polarized world.

For decades, a narrative has been aggressively pushed, particularly by India, that Pakistan stands isolated on the global stage. The Islamabad talks have effectively challenged this perception. The presence of US Vice President J. D. Vance and senior Iranian leadership in Islamabad demonstrates that Pakistan is not only relevant but trusted in matters of global consequence. This development has dealt a significant blow to attempts aimed at portraying Pakistan as diplomatically sidelined.

It is also important to acknowledge the role played by Pakistan's leadership. Both J. D. Vance and Iranian officials appreciated Pakistan's efforts in facilitating dialogue, particularly recognizing the leadership of the Prime Minister and the central role played by Field Marshal and Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir. Pakistan's diplomatic and strategic engagement ensured that communication channels remained open at a time when escalation seemed imminent.

Criticism suggesting that the talks "failed" reflects a misunderstanding of the complexity of the conflict. The issues between Iran and the United States are deeply entrenched, spanning decades of mistrust, strategic rivalry, and conflicting interests. Expecting a comprehensive resolution in a single round of talks is unrealistic. What Islamabad achieved was far more important, it initiated direct engagement between two adversaries that had not engaged at this level for years.

Encouragingly, both sides acknowledged areas of convergence during the discussions. Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister also indicated that several points of understanding had been reached, and importantly, Pakistan has extended an invitation for another round of talks. This continuity is crucial. Diplomacy is a process, not an event, and Islamabad has successfully laid the groundwork for sustained engagement.

Beyond the immediate diplomatic context, the broader implications are equally significant. The conflict between Iran and the United States has already disrupted global energy markets and created uncertainty in international trade. By facilitating a ceasefire and initiating dialogue, Pakistan has contributed to stabilizing a situation that directly impacts the global economy. In this sense, Pakistan's role extends beyond regional mediation, it becomes a stakeholder in global economic stability.

Most importantly, these talks have repositioned Pakistan as a responsible peace facilitator. In a world increasingly defined by confrontation, Pakistan's ability to bridge divides offers a constructive alternative. It reflects a maturing foreign policy that prioritizes dialogue, stability, and cooperation.

The Islamabad talks should therefore be viewed not through the narrow lens of immediate outcomes but through their long term impact. They have reaffirmed Pakistan's diplomatic relevance, strengthened its international credibility, and opened new avenues for engagement. Far from being a failed effort, this was a decisive first step, one that has the potential to shape the trajectory of regional peace and reinforce Pakistan's role as a key player in global diplomacy.



There Is Significant Untapped Potential in Tourism Between Our Two Countries

- Rear Admiral Fred Seneviratne, Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Pakistan

Q: Excellency, how would you describe the present state of Sri Lanka Pakistan relations, especially in terms of political trust, people to people links, and mutual understanding.

A: At the outset, let me extend my sincere gratitude to Peace Magazine for providing this opportunity. I truly consider it an honor to contribute to such a respected platform and to share my thoughts on the relations between our two nations, as well as the promising avenues for future cooperation.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka share a strong and trusted friendship, having always stood by each other in times of need. In recent years, regular consultations in key areas were affected by unavoidable circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Sri Lanka's economic crisis, and regional developments. It is therefore the paramount duty of our Mission to harness this untapped potential and further strengthen our bilateral relations.

Q: Over the past few years, both countries

have faced economic challenges. In your view, what lessons can Sri Lanka and Pakistan share with each other regarding resilience, reform, and stability.

A: The economic crises in Pakistan and Sri Lanka can be attributed to a similar set of factors, notably political instability, natural disasters, and terrorism.

Within Sri Lanka, societal cohesion has remained strong despite political, ethnic, and religious differences, even during challenging periods. A significant milestone contributing to the country's current economic growth is the present government's attainment of a two-thirds parliamentary majority, coupled with its strong commitment to good governance. It is also worth noting that Sri Lanka's education system has been a key contributor to this socio-political resilience.

Q: Trade between our two countries has significant untapped potential. Where do you

see the most promising sectors for enhanced trade and investment cooperation.

When traditional trade is considered, the export baskets of both countries are quite similar, leaving little room for improvement. However, there is potential to introduce new, country-specific items that are in growing demand from the other country, which can be discussed during the upcoming Economic Joint Commission meeting. Therefore, the most promising sectors for economic collaboration are tourism and hospitality, agriculture and livestock, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, and textiles and apparel.

With the new Sri Lankan government's emphasis on development of agriculture and livestock sector, the country can source high-quality materials and services from Pakistan. Steps have already been taken in this direction, such as importing breeding bulls and their semen.

Given the strong growth of Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry, the country can serve as Sri Lanka's trusted partner for affordable medicine imports and for investment in local manufacturing in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is currently seeking foreign investors across various sectors. Prominent projects include the Port City Colombo development and seven prospective BOI zones, which present substantial opportunities for Pakistani investment.

Finally, both nations possess robust textile industries. Joint ventures focused on fabric finishing, apparel manufacturing, and mutual technology upgrades would be highly beneficial for each country.

Q: Many observers believe tourism can become a powerful bridge between Sri Lanka and Pakistan. What collaborative initiatives can be introduced to encourage two way tourism flows.

A: Based on my research, I believe there is significant untapped potential for tourism between Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Each country possesses unique and complementary attractions. Sri Lanka's splendid beaches and ideal climate are highly admired by Pakistani travelers, while Pakistan's adventure travel opportunities and ancient historical sites, particularly those connected to Buddhist heritage, hold strong appeal for Sri Lankan tourists. To capitalize on this, I see three particularly promising areas for collaboration:

Religious and heritage tourism. We can leverage Pakistan's ancient Gandhara region, a major pilgrimage site for Buddhists, to attract travelers from Sri Lanka's majority-Buddhist population. Conversely, for Pakistani tourists, we can promote Sri Lanka's multi-faith sacred sites. A prime example is Adam's Peak (Sri Pada), which is revered by Muslims and holds significant spiritual appeal. This creates a powerful, two-way cultural and religious exchange.

Wellness and Ayurvedic Tourism. Sri Lanka is a globally recognized leader in authentic Ayurveda. We can leverage this to attract Pakistani visitors seeking holistic medical treatments, wellness retreats, and preventive healthcare. This can be effectively combined with leisure travel, allowing tourists to extend their stay for recovery or relaxation after exploring the country's other attractions.

Family Reunion Tourism. Given the current visa restrictions between Pakistan and India, Sri Lanka could serve as a neutral meeting point for Pakistani citizens and their relatives residing in India. This initiative extends beyond tourism into a form of humanitarian assistance.

To capitalize on this, I would recommend initiating joint tourism promotion campaigns that highlight these strengths. Furthermore, success would depend on improving key enablers such as simplifying visa processes, enhancing air connectivity, and introducing discounted airfare packages to make travel more accessible and appealing.

Q: How do you evaluate the role of Sri Lankan and Pakistani business communities in deepening economic engagement, and what support mechanisms can governments provide to them.

A: I believe that strengthening business-to-business (B2B) linkages will be a vital engine for sustainable growth. In this regard, active engagement by business communities, particularly chambers of commerce, through regular trade fairs, specialized business forums, and structured networking events is very important. These interactions will help identify new opportunities, build trust, and translate policy directives into tangible commercial partnerships for both Pakistan and Sri Lanka.





At the same time, both governments should actively promote joint ventures by encouraging Pakistani investors to establish production units in Sri Lanka in sectors such as textiles, cement, and agro-processing, while facilitating Sri Lankan investment in Pakistan's food processing, tea distribution, and tourism sectors. This shift from mere trade to co-production and investment is essential for building deeper and more sustainable economic ties.

Q: Education, culture, and media play an important role in shaping perceptions. What more can our institutions do together to promote cultural exchanges, student linkages, and joint academic collaboration.

A: There are several valuable opportunities for strengthening academic linkages between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, particularly under the framework of the Higher Education Cooperation Programme, which was established through a mutual agreement in 2016. This initiative aims to connect leading Pakistani universities with Sri Lankan higher education institutions to promote collaborative engagement in the field of education.

One of the flagship initiatives under this programme is the Allama Iqbal Scholarship Programme, which provides fully and partially funded scholarships to 1,000 Sri Lankan students to pursue undergraduate, Master's, and PhD degrees across a wide range of disciplines at universities in Pakistan. This initiative not only enhances

academic mobility but also builds long-term people-to-people ties.

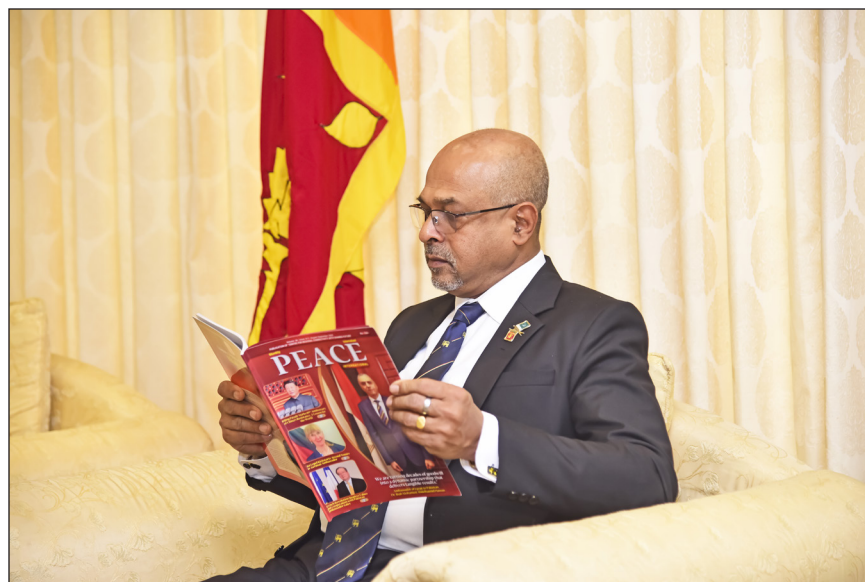
Expanding Professional and Capacity-Building Initiatives: The existing training programs for government officials are a great model. We can expand this to include specialized short courses and certifications for professionals in both countries, perhaps focusing on areas like Port City Management, Education Leadership, or Disaster Preparedness. This positions our universities as active contributors to national development and mutual growth.

The media can also play a vital role in shaping perceptions, particularly in promoting culture, tourism, and bilateral

relations, as you mentioned. Two roadshows have already been conducted in Karachi and Lahore to promote Sri Lankan culture and tourism, with the participation of media from both countries. Action is now being taken to promote Pakistani culture and tourism in Sri Lanka as well.

Q: Connectivity and regional integration are key drivers of growth today. How can Sri Lanka and Pakistan work more closely within regional platforms to advance shared economic objectives.

A: It is clearly evident that no country has ever developed in isolation. Regional connectivity fosters strong bonds and reduces barriers, allowing nations to





maximize their potential across borders. Real-world examples, such as the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), effectively demonstrate this principle.

For South Asia, regional connectivity and people-to-people linkages are paramount. They are essential to transforming the region's fragmented economies into a powerful, integrated economic bloc and to empowering its massive youth population with opportunities for shared prosperity.

Although SAARC's primary objective is to promote regional integration, economic growth, and social progress among its member states, the organization is currently paralyzed by political and security disputes. However, there is a possibility to revitalize SAARC by focusing on less controversial areas like trade, culture, sports, technology, education, and medical research, as all member states share common interests in these fields.

Q: At a diplomatic level, what priorities guide Sri Lanka's engagement with Pakistan, and how do you see these priorities evolving in the coming years.

A: Due to unfavorable conditions in Sri Lanka in the recent past, no high-level visits to Pakistan have been conducted. Recognizing this lapse, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka is scheduled to visit Pakistan during the first quarter of this year.

In addition to the Prime Minister's visit, the Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, the Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs, and the Deputy Minister of Defence will

also undertake visits. They are expected to hold bilateral dialogues and sign relevant Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) pertaining to their specific fields.



Q: Pakistan has always stood by Sri Lanka in difficult moments, and Sri Lanka has reciprocated with friendship and support.

How do you see this spirit of solidarity translating into future cooperation

A: This is a very good point to discuss. There is a series of situations in our history which both countries have stood for each other. One of the most recent situations occurred when the Sri Lankan government took firm action for its national cricket team's visit to continue in Pakistan. This decision was made amid significant security concerns, even after a bomb blast in Islamabad while the first ODI was being played.

Likewise, following Sri Lanka being hit by the devastating Cyclone Ditwah in December last year, the Pakistani government took prompt action. It dispatched 200 tons of relief items and a C-130 aircraft loaded with additional relief supplies.

Therefore, I believe the core objective should be to translate this enduring spirit of solidarity into actionable modern partnerships. This can be achieved by actively channeling it into contemporary economic and cultural ventures.

Furthermore, this shared foundation creates a strategic platform for the two nations to

“The Most Promising Sectors for Collaboration Are Tourism, Agriculture, Pharmaceuticals, and Textiles”

advocate for joint solutions in international forums and collaboratively explore approaches to sustainable development and climate resilience.

Ultimately, the success of future bilateral cooperation will depend on the effectiveness and implementation of these specific initiatives.

Q: What message would you like to convey to Pakistani investors, entrepreneurs, and policy thinkers about opportunities in Sri Lanka.

A: Today, Sri Lanka is on a remarkable journey of resilience and transformation following the economic crisis, under the visionary leadership of H.E. President Anura Kumara Disanayake. The government is committed to maintaining

Q: Finally, looking ahead, what is your vision for Sri Lanka Pakistan relations over the next decade, particularly in economic, diplomatic, cultural, and strategic spheres.

A: Based on a shared vision and recent high-level initiatives from both governments, Sri Lanka-Pakistan relations over the coming decade is firmly oriented toward deepening a multifaceted and strategic partnership.

“Strengthening Business to Business Linkages Will Be a Vital Engine for Growth”

strict fiscal discipline while combating corruption and the misappropriation of public funds. As a result, the economy is now growing rapidly, and the political climate remains stable, creating a highly investor-friendly environment.

In this context, we warmly invite Pakistani entrepreneurs and investors to explore opportunities in Sri Lanka’s dynamic sectors, including tourism, information technology, agriculture, and shipping. Likewise, the Sri Lankan business community is eager to strengthen its engagement with Pakistan’s vibrant industries, fostering mutually beneficial partnerships for both nations.

Q: From your personal experience as High Commissioner, what has impressed you most about Pakistan, its people, and its outlook toward partnership with Sri Lanka.

A: I recognize that Pakistan, much like Sri Lanka, is situated in a strategically vital location. It has the potential to act as a gateway to Central Asia for the wider world and possesses vast potential for economic development through its mineral resources and agriculture.

I am truly inspired by Pakistan’s breathtaking natural majesty—from the iconic peaks of Hunza and the serene valleys of Swat and Neelum to the formidable Karakoram range. The beauty of its Islamic architecture in historic cities and the rich heritage of the ancient Gandhara civilization are equally remarkable.

Furthermore, I have found the Pakistani people to be exceptionally friendly and hospitable. I am therefore personally experiencing a very welcoming environment in which to continue my role as High Commissioner.

The shared objective is to evolve the historically strong bilateral friendship into a more integrated, economically vibrant, and strategically aligned collaboration. Some key areas are:

governments emphasize moving beyond the narrow traditional export basket. The next decade should see concerted efforts to diversify the trade basket and encourage joint ventures, particularly in sectors like aggro-processing, textiles, construction materials, tourism, pharmaceutical production and information technology. This aligns with Sri Lanka’s national focus on strengthening its export ecosystem.

Gateway Connectivity and Economic Complementary: Sri Lanka stands to benefit from Pakistan’s maritime infrastructure, such as the ports at Gwadar and Karachi, to access markets in Central Asia and beyond. Enhancing air and sea connectivity is a mutual priority to boost growth. Finding new, high-value areas for trade and investment will be key to a transformative economic partnership.

Deepening Defense and Security Ties: Cooperation is set to deepen following



Leveraging the Free Trade Agreement (FTA): Pakistan-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (PSFTA), operational since 2005, provides a critical platform. The immediate focus is on boosting utilization up to its potential by addressing pertaining issues.

Trade Expansion and Diversification: Both

dialogues like the recent 5th Bilateral Defence Dialogue, which focused on enhancing operational cooperation, intelligence sharing, and maritime security. This annual dialogue is expected to continue, with plans for more structured collaboration through working groups on joint research and capacity-building.

Iqbal

A Bridge Between the East and the West



An academic and intellectual roundtable discussion titled “Iqbal: A Bridge Between the East and the West” was organized by MUSLIM Institute Islamabad. The purpose of the discussion was to promote literary and intellectual dialogue between the East and the West, while strengthening bilateral relations and highlighting shared human values through literature and philosophy. The speakers emphasized that, in the current global context, enhancing connections between the East and the West has become increasingly essential. Participants noted that Pakistan and Hungary share several common literary values, which can serve as a foundation for expanding cooperation at academic, cultural, research, and public levels.

The Ambassador of Hungary to Pakistan,

Dr. Zoltán Varga, participated as a special guest. In his address, he expressed his commitment to further expanding educational and cultural cooperation between the two countries and stated that literary dialogue can play a vital role in strengthening bilateral relations. The speakers of the event included Dr. Zoltán Varga, Ambassador of Hungary to Pakistan; Dr. Nazir Ahmad Zafar, Dean of the Faculty of Information Sciences and Technology; Dr. Abdul Basit, Department of Media Sciences, Bahria University Islamabad; Dr. Sajid Mahmood, Assistant Professor at Government Postgraduate College Mansehra; and Muhammad Azeem, a PhD Scholar from the University of the Punjab, Lahore. The session was moderated by Professor Zunaira Mumtaz.

The speakers highlighted that Allama Muhammad Iqbal continues to serve as an intellectual bridge between the East and the West. His thought, they noted, provides guidance for promoting dialogue, tolerance, and shared human values at the global level. Participants observed that, in the contemporary global environment, there could be no stronger foundation for harmony among civilizations than the philosophy of Iqbal. During the discussion, researchers also presented a comparative analysis of the revolutionary poetry and concepts of freedom articulated by Allama Iqbal and Hungary’s national poet Sándor Petőfi. According to the speakers, themes such as freedom, selfhood, human dignity, and national awakening are prominently

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President Zardari Receives Credentials from Envoys of Six Countries, Discusses Expanding Bilateral Cooperation



Ambassador-designate of Ethiopia, H.E. Dr. Oumer Hussein Oba, presents credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



Ambassador-designate of Spain, H.E. Nic Carlos Arag3n Gil de la Serna, presents credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



Ambassador-designate of Cuba, H.E. Mr. Damian Cordero Torres, presents credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



Ambassador-designate of Portugal, H.E. Mr. Paulo Miguel Guedes Domingues, presents credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



High Commissioner-designate of Singapore, H.E. Mr. Ishak Bin Ismail, presents credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



Ambassador-designate of Tanzania, H.E. Lt. Gen. (R) Yacoub Hassan Mohamed, presents credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Uzbekistan and Pakistan Deepen Strategic Partnership for Regional Connectivity

Pakistan and Uzbekistan are steadily advancing a more substantive partnership shaped by economic cooperation, connectivity, and institutional engagement

A roundtable discussion titled “Uzbekistan – Pakistan: Bridging Regions and Creating New Opportunities” was held at the International Institute for Central Asia in Tashkent, bringing together representatives of government institutions, business circles, analytical centers, and the academic community. The event was organized in cooperation with the Embassy of Pakistan in Uzbekistan and focused on strengthening the growing strategic partnership between the two countries.

Participants highlighted that relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan have entered a new phase in recent years. The formalization of a strategic partnership in 2021 marked a significant milestone, reflecting the shared commitment of both countries to deepen cooperation and promote regional connectivity.

Today, bilateral engagement is characterized by active political dialogue, expanding trade and economic relations, growing investment opportunities, and enhanced cultural and people to people exchanges. Both sides increasingly view closer cooperation as an important factor in advancing economic development and stability across the wider region.

Speakers also emphasized the importance of the official visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Uzbekistan in February 2025, which provided renewed momentum to bilateral relations. During the visit, both countries reached important understandings aimed at expanding cooperation in trade, transport, science and education, culture, and security,



while setting a target of increasing bilateral trade to two billion dollars.

Recent economic developments demonstrate encouraging progress. Bilateral trade between the two countries reached approximately four hundred million dollars last year, reflecting Pakistan’s growing role as a key economic partner for Uzbekistan.

Institutional cooperation has also strengthened with the establishment of the UzbekPak International Trading Centre and the UzbekPak Cultural Centre in Karachi. These initiatives provide important platforms for promoting industrial and agricultural products while also enhancing cultural exchanges between the peoples of the two countries.

Transport and logistics cooperation remains a major priority in Uzbekistan Pakistan relations. The proposed Uzbekistan Afghanistan Pakistan Trans Afghan Railway project was highlighted as a strategic initiative

with the potential to significantly improve connectivity between Central and South Asia and provide landlocked Central Asian states with greater access to global markets through Pakistan’s ports.

Participants also discussed efforts to enhance air cargo connectivity between Tashkent and Karachi, particularly for the transportation of agricultural goods, which is expected to facilitate trade expansion and faster commercial exchanges.

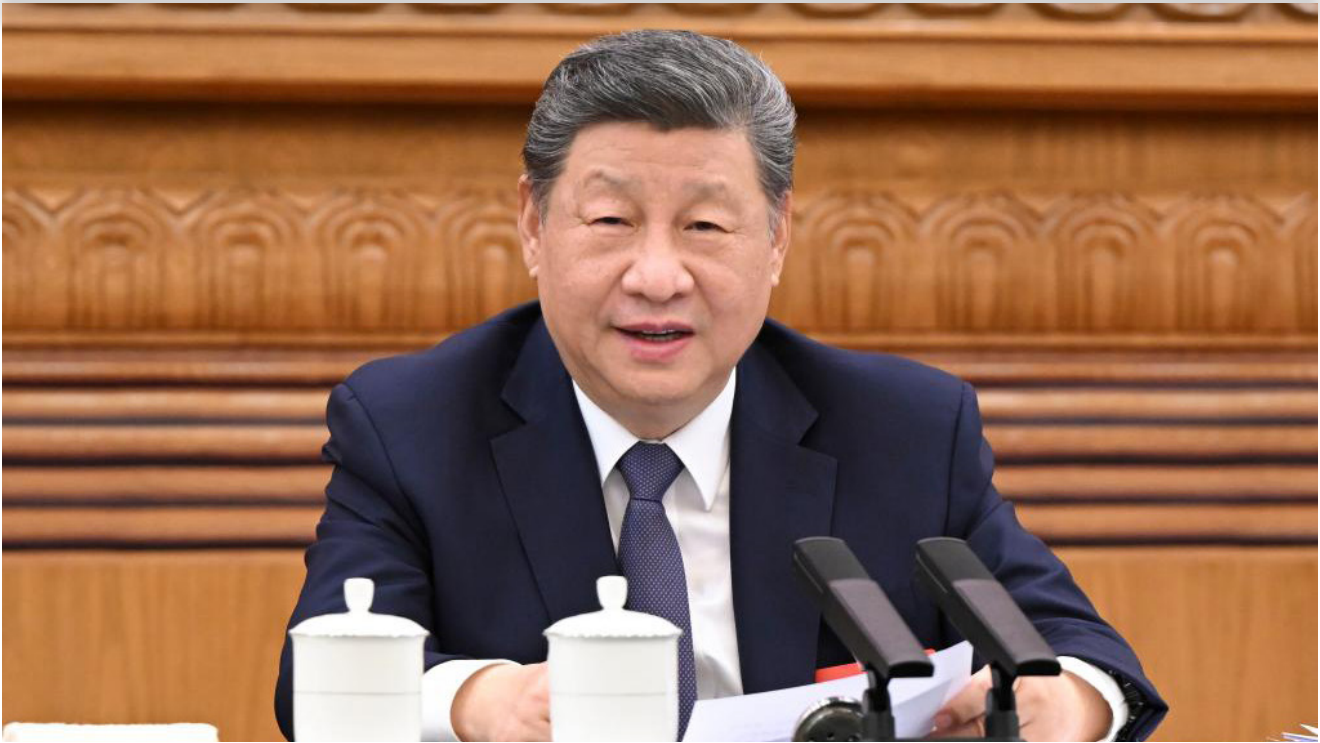
The roundtable provided an important platform for policymakers, researchers, and business leaders to exchange views on advancing the next phase of cooperation. Discussions focused on practical initiatives in trade, transport, education, science, tourism, and cultural collaboration.

Special attention was given to strengthening interaction between analytical institutions, universities, and business communities of both countries. Participants also presented practical recommendations aimed at advancing high level dialogue and expanding Pakistan’s engagement with Central Asian countries.

Overall, the discussion in Tashkent highlighted that Uzbekistan Pakistan relations are steadily evolving into a partnership built on trust, economic pragmatism, and shared regional interests. The roundtable at the International Institute for Central Asia marked another meaningful step toward strengthening the bridge connecting Central and South Asia and unlocking new opportunities for cooperation.



China's Two Sessions Signal a Confident Path Toward Innovation Driven Growth



By: *Maarij Farooq*

At a time when the global economy is grappling with uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, and uneven growth, China's annual political gatherings, widely known as the "Two Sessions," continue to attract considerable international attention. The meetings of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference are not merely procedural events within China's governance framework. They represent an important moment when the country reviews its progress, sets policy priorities, and signals its economic and strategic direction to the world.

The 2026 Two Sessions carried particular significance. They marked the beginning of the 15th Five Year Plan period covering 2026 to 2030, a phase that is expected to play a decisive role in China's broader goal of achieving the status of a moderately developed country by 2035. At a moment when the international system is witnessing structural shifts in technology, trade, and development models, the policy signals emerging from Beijing offer insight into how the world's second largest economy intends to navigate

the coming decade.

Expectations ahead of the meetings were understandably high. Global observers were keen to see how China would balance the imperative of maintaining economic momentum with the need to transition toward higher quality growth. The Government Work Report presented during the sessions reflected a measured yet confident approach. China set its economic growth target for 2026 within a range of approximately 4.5 to 5 percent, a figure that may appear modest compared to the double digit expansion of earlier decades but one that reflects a deliberate shift toward sustainable, innovation driven development.

This approach is consistent with the broader transformation underway in the Chinese economy. Rather than relying solely on traditional drivers such as large scale infrastructure investment or export led manufacturing, China is steadily moving toward a model anchored in technological innovation, digital transformation, and green development. The emphasis on these sectors reflects not only economic necessity but also a strategic vision for long term competitiveness.

President Xi Jinping's leadership and policy framework have been central to shaping this transition. Over the past decade, Xi has consistently articulated the concept of Chinese modernization, a development path that combines economic dynamism with social stability, technological advancement, and environmental sustainability. His remarks during various deliberations surrounding the Two Sessions reinforced the importance of innovation as the core driver of future growth. Artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, green technologies, and the digital economy are no longer peripheral sectors. They are now integral to China's national development strategy.

Equally important is the long term planning embodied in the Five Year Plan system. The 15th Five Year Plan continues a tradition of strategic foresight that has often distinguished China's economic management from more short term policy cycles seen elsewhere. The plan seeks to consolidate China's progress in research and development, strengthen industrial capabilities, and expand the digital economy while maintaining a strong commitment to environmental protection

and public welfare.

One of the notable policy directions emerging from the sessions is the continued expansion of research and development investment. China aims to maintain robust annual increases in R&D spending, recognizing that technological leadership will be a decisive factor in the global economy of the future. At the same time, the country is placing increasing emphasis on the digital economy, with the value added of core digital industries expected to rise significantly as a share of national output.

Environmental sustainability has also become a central pillar of China's development strategy. The commitment to reducing carbon emissions intensity reflects a broader understanding that economic progress and ecological balance must advance together. In this respect, China's transition toward green energy and sustainable industrial practices is likely to have implications well beyond its own borders, given the scale of its economy and its role in global supply chains.

The Government Work Report also outlined



partner for a vast number of countries and plays an increasingly important role in shaping global supply chains, technological standards, and investment flows. As such, China's economic direction inevitably influences global markets and development trajectories.

In an international environment marked by fragmentation and uncertainty, China's emphasis on long term planning, technological innovation, and sustainable growth offers a model of development that prioritizes continuity and resilience.



an ambitious set of 109 major national projects to be implemented over the coming five years. These initiatives span a wide range of sectors, including technological innovation, infrastructure modernization, and improvements in public well being. The emphasis on cultivating what Chinese policymakers describe as “new quality productive forces” suggests a forward looking strategy designed to strengthen China's industrial base while fostering emerging sectors that will define the next phase of global economic competition.

Beyond domestic policy considerations, the outcomes of the Two Sessions carry broader international implications. China today occupies a central position in the global economic landscape. It is a major trading

partner for a vast number of countries and plays an increasingly important role in shaping global supply chains, technological standards, and investment flows. As such, China's economic direction inevitably influences global markets and development trajectories.



The beginning of the 15th Five Year Plan thus marks more than just another stage in China's economic journey. It represents a moment when the country is consolidating the gains of the past while preparing for the challenges of the future. Under President Xi Jinping's leadership, China appears committed to pursuing a path that integrates economic modernization with social progress and environmental responsibility.

If the objectives outlined during the Two Sessions are implemented effectively, China's development trajectory over the next decade could further reinforce its role as a major driver of global economic stability and technological progress. In a world searching for new engines of growth and cooperation, the direction set in Beijing will continue to command close attention.

Thailand Marks Armed Forces Day in Islamabad, Highlights Defence Ties with Pakistan



The Royal Thai Embassy in Islamabad hosted a reception to celebrate the Royal Thai Armed Forces Day, known as Wan Kong Thap Thai, marking a historic moment in Thailand's history. The event commemorates the legendary victory of King Naresuan the Great in an elephant duel against the Burmese Crown Prince in 1592 to 1593, symbolizing courage, sovereignty, and the enduring spirit of the Thai armed forces.

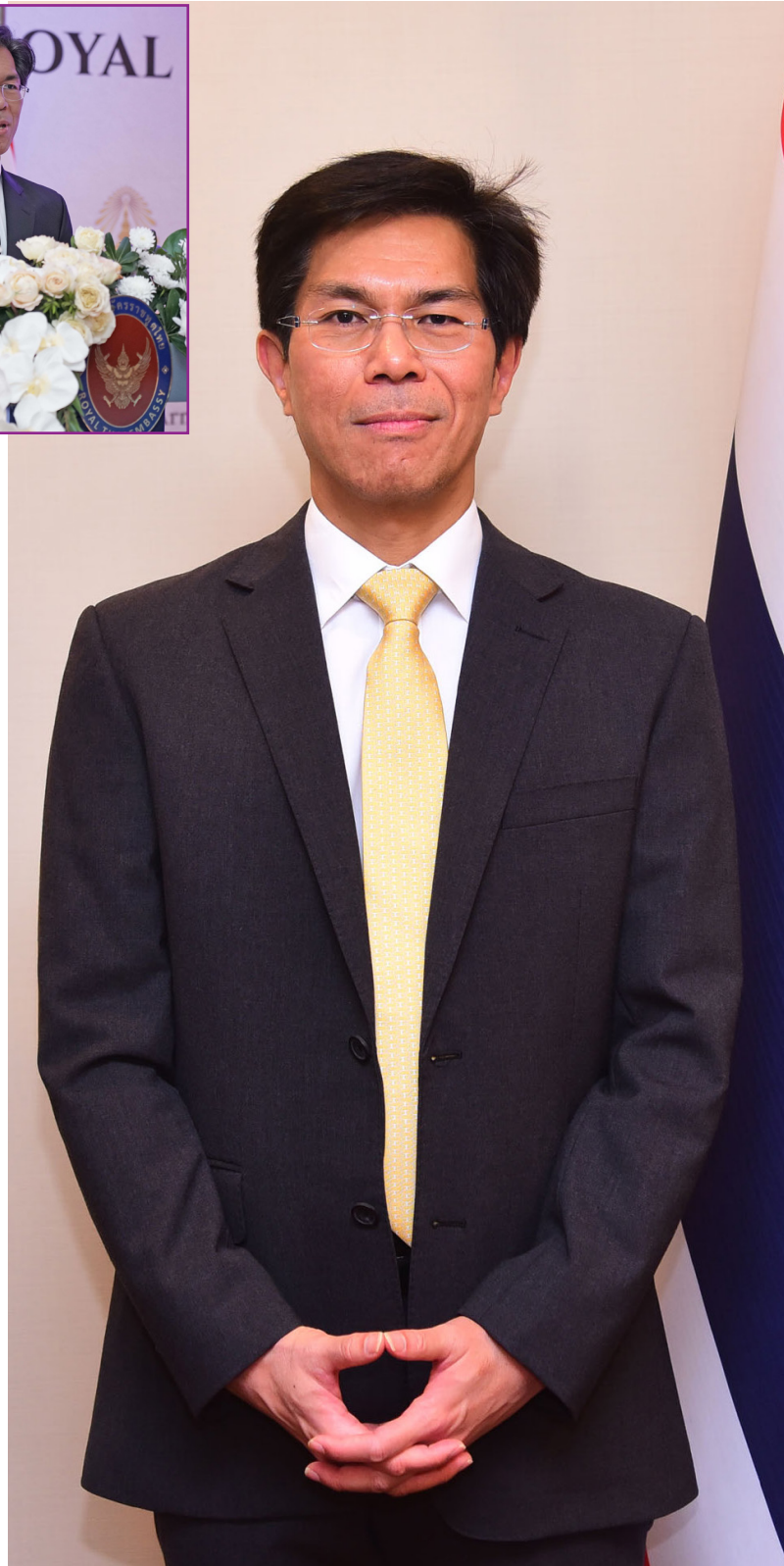
The reception was hosted by Ambassador H.E. Mr. Rongvudhi Virabutr and Defence Attache Colonel Nikhom Chumpoo at a local hotel in Islamabad. Vice Admiral Syed Ahmed Salman, Hilal i Imtiaz (Military), Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff of Pakistan, attended the event as the chief guest. The gathering was attended by senior officials from Pakistan's armed forces, ambassadors from ASEAN countries, and defence attaches representing a wide range of countries.

In his address, Ambassador Rongvudhi Virabutr welcomed the guests and highlighted the important role played by the Royal Thai Armed Forces in safeguarding national sovereignty and contributing to regional stability. He also noted Thailand's active participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world.

Defence Attache Colonel Nikhom Chumpoo, in his remarks, described the day as an opportunity to honor the men and women who serve Thailand with dedication and discipline. He emphasized that the occasion reflects the enduring values of courage, leadership, and duty that have guided Thailand's armed forces for generations.

Colonel Chumpoo also paid tribute to those who sacrificed their lives in the defense of Thailand's sovereignty and recognized the contributions of Thai service members in maintaining peace and stability.

Highlighting Thailand Pakistan relations, he noted that both countries have enjoyed friendly diplomatic ties since 1951. Defence cooperation between the two nations has grown steadily over the years and was further strengthened by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Defence Cooperation in 2021. The agreement provides a framework for dialogue, training, professional exchanges, and participation in international defence and maritime forums.





He added that military education and professional exchange programs between the two countries continue to play an important role in strengthening defence relations, including participation in staff level education at the Command and Staff Colleges of both countries.

The Royal Thai Armed Forces are primarily responsible for protecting Thailand's sovereignty and territorial integrity, maintaining public order, supporting disaster relief operations, and contributing to national development through cooperation with civilian institutions.

The event concluded in a cordial atmosphere, reflecting the strong and growing partnership between Thailand and Pakistan, particularly in the field of defence cooperation.



Vietnam Celebrates Lunar New Year in Islamabad, Ambassador Highlights Expanding Trade with Pakistan



The Embassy of Vietnam in Islamabad hosted a reception to celebrate the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, known as Tet, bringing together diplomats, business leaders, members of civil society, and friends of Vietnam to mark one of the most significant cultural festivals of the Vietnamese people. The event was hosted by Ambassador Pham Anh Tuan and his spouse, while Deputy Head of Mission Thang Truong and embassy staff welcomed the guests to celebrate the Year of the Snake.

The reception was attended by former Pakistani ambassadors to Vietnam, ambassadors and high commissioners from ASEAN countries including Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei, Myanmar, and Indonesia, along with representatives from Pakistan's business community and civil society. The gathering reflected the growing engagement between Vietnam and Pakistan in both cultural and economic spheres.





Traditional Vietnamese customs formed an important part of the celebration. A decorated “lucky tree,” carrying envelopes symbolizing prosperity and good fortune, attracted great interest among the guests. Attendees also enjoyed traditional Vietnamese cuisine, while a documentary showcasing Vietnam’s economic progress and development achievements was screened during the event.

In his address, Ambassador Pham Anh Tuan highlighted the cultural importance of Tet for Vietnamese people around the world and noted that the festival represents unity, tradition, and renewal.

He also shared Vietnam’s economic achievements, stating that the country recorded a strong growth rate of 7.09 percent in 2024, while attracting nearly 40 billion dollars in foreign direct investment and reaching a record trade turnover of nearly 800 billion dollars.

The ambassador also highlighted the growing economic cooperation between Vietnam and Pakistan. Bilateral trade between the two countries surpassed 800 million dollars in 2024, an increase of more than 21 percent compared to the previous year. He noted that the prime ministers of both countries have expressed determination to raise bilateral trade to over one billion dollars in the coming years.

Ambassador Pham Anh Tuan concluded by expressing optimism about the future of Vietnam Pakistan relations and reaffirmed the embassy’s commitment to promoting stronger economic, cultural, and diplomatic cooperation between the two countries. The event concluded in a warm and festive atmosphere celebrating both the Lunar New Year and the strengthening friendship between Vietnam and Pakistan.



Iran Marks 45th Islamic Revolution Anniversary in Islamabad



The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Islamabad hosted a reception to mark the 45th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution and Iran's National Day, attended by senior government officials, diplomats, military representatives, and media figures. The event highlighted the importance of Pakistan-Iran relations and ongoing efforts to strengthen bilateral cooperation.

Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam, hosted the ceremony, while Pakistan's Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani attended as chief guest, signaling Islamabad's commitment to improving ties with Tehran. The presence

of senior officials, including ministers and military representatives, reflected the significance of the relationship.

Held at a time of recent tensions, the event symbolized the resilience of Pakistan-Iran relations, rooted in shared history, geography, and cultural connections. A wide range of diplomats from Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia Pacific also attended, indicating broad international engagement.

In his remarks, Foreign Minister Jilani reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthening ties, while Ambassador Moghaddam highlighted Iran's progress in

science, technology, and industry despite external pressures. He also emphasized Tehran's independent foreign policy and regional priorities.

Economic cooperation was a key focus, with both sides working to enhance trade and connectivity, particularly through border markets and links between Gwadar, Karachi, and Chabahar ports. Bilateral trade has surpassed 2.5 billion dollars, with a target of reaching 5 billion in the coming years.

The event concluded in a cordial atmosphere, reflecting a shared commitment to deepen cooperation and promote regional stability and prosperity.



Kazakh President Tokayev's Visit to Pakistan Strengthens Bilateral Cooperation



President of Kazakhstan Kassym Jomart Tokayev paid an official visit to Pakistan, marking an important step in strengthening the growing partnership between the two countries. The visit was undertaken at the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and was accompanied by a high level delegation of ministers and senior officials.

Upon his arrival in Islamabad, President Tokayev received a warm welcome and was accorded a ceremonial reception. During the visit, he held meetings with President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, where both sides discussed ways to enhance cooperation in trade, investment, connectivity, and regional collaboration.

A key highlight of the visit was the signing of several agreements and memorandums of understanding aimed at expanding economic cooperation and strengthening bilateral ties. The discussions also focused on increasing trade volumes,

improving transport and logistics links, and promoting investment opportunities between the two countries.

President Tokayev also participated in the Pakistan Kazakhstan Business Forum, where business leaders from both sides explored opportunities to expand commercial partnerships and strengthen private sector engagement.

Connectivity remained a central theme of the discussions. Kazakhstan views Pakistan as an important gateway to international markets through its seaports, while Pakistan sees greater engagement with Central Asia as a key element of its regional connectivity vision.

Overall, President Tokayev's visit reaffirmed the commitment of both countries to deepen political, economic, and regional cooperation. The visit is expected to open new avenues for partnership and further strengthen the longstanding friendship between Pakistan and Kazakhstan.



Russian Embassy Commemorates Defender of the Fatherland Day in Islamabad



The Embassy of the Russian Federation in Islamabad hosted a special ceremony to commemorate Defender of the Fatherland Day, paying tribute to Russia's longstanding traditions of military honour, service, and sacrifice. The event brought together diplomats, senior Pakistani civil and military officials, and members of the diplomatic community.

Addressing the gathering, Ambassador Albert P. Khorev highlighted the historic and symbolic significance of the day for the Russian people. He described Defender of the Fatherland Day as a reflection of Russia's enduring commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty and national security, while honouring the courage and dedication of those who have served the country.

"Defender of the Fatherland Day represents continuity across generations and stands as a reminder of the enduring readiness of Russia's armed forces to protect the nation," the ambassador remarked while welcoming the distinguished guests.

Ambassador Khorev traced the origins of the observance to the establishment of Russia's regular armed forces in January 1918, when





the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and Navy were formed. He noted that on February 23 of the same year, a historic decree titled "The Socialist Fatherland Is in Danger!" called upon citizens to defend their homeland, a moment that later became associated with the annual commemoration of the day.

Reflecting on Russia's historical journey, the ambassador observed that despite the sweeping political and institutional transformations the country has experienced over the past century, the dedication of its armed forces to defending the nation has remained steadfast.

He also recalled some of the most significant chapters of Russia's military history, paying tribute to legendary commanders whose leadership shaped the country's strategic legacy. Among them were Alexander Suvorov, renowned for his remarkable record of never losing a battle, and Mikhail Kutuzov, whose strategy during the Patriotic War of 1812 played a decisive role in defeating Napoleon's invading army.

"These historical figures symbolize the deep bond between the Russian armed forces and the people they serve," Ambassador Khorev said.

Special tribute was also paid to the Soviet Union's victory in the Great Patriotic War during World War II. The ambassador acknowledged the immense sacrifices made in defeating Nazi Germany and highlighted the leadership of distinguished military commanders including Georgy Zhukov, Konstantin Rokossovsky, and Alexander Vasilevsky, whose contributions were instrumental in securing victory.

Turning to contemporary developments, Ambassador Khorev noted that the armed forces of the Russian Federation continue to play a central role in ensuring national security. He emphasized that Russia's military remains committed to strengthening its professionalism and operational capabilities, supported by modern technologies developed domestically.

The ceremony served as both a commemoration of Russia's military heritage and a recognition of the enduring role of its armed forces in safeguarding the country's sovereignty and stability.





Germany Urges Structural Reform as It Reaffirms Long Term Trade Partnership with Pakistan



Germany has reiterated its strong commitment to strengthening economic cooperation with Pakistan, particularly in the value added apparel sector, while simultaneously emphasizing the urgent need for structural reform, diversification, and regulatory compliance to unlock long term export growth.

During an extensive engagement with representatives of Pakistan's garment and hosiery industry, the German Ambassador highlighted that Pakistan's apparel exports, currently valued at approximately ten billion dollars, have remained largely stagnant for more than a decade. This stagnation, she noted, reflects structural bottlenecks rather than lack of potential. She stressed that Pakistan must move beyond reliance on basic textile exports and instead focus on higher value products, innovation driven manufacturing, and sustainability standards that meet evolving European Union requirements.

Germany, as one of Pakistan's key trading partners within the European Union, plays a critical role under the GSP Plus framework. However, the Ambassador cautioned against taking preferential market access for granted. Continued access depends on credible implementation of international labor conventions, environmental protections, and human rights obligations. Strict adherence to International Labour Organization standards was identified as essential not only for compliance but also for enhancing Pakistan's global credibility.

Industry leaders present at the session acknowledged ongoing challenges. These include high energy costs, taxation complexities, bureaucratic hurdles, and difficulties in participating in international trade exhibitions due to visa constraints. They emphasized the need for domestic policy reforms to improve competitiveness and integrate Pakistan more effectively into global supply chains.

Germany also reaffirmed its willingness to support Pakistan through technical and vocational training programs. A skilled workforce aligned with international standards is viewed as central to upgrading the apparel sector and attracting higher quality investment. Discussions also touched upon the importance of digitalization, sustainable production methods, and transparent supply chains.

The dialogue reflects a mature economic partnership where candid assessment is paired with constructive cooperation. Germany's position signals that the next phase of Pakistan Europe trade relations will depend not only on goodwill but on measurable reform, innovation, and regulatory alignment.





Women's Voices Celebrated at the Danish Embassy in Islamabad

On the eve of International Women's Day, the Embassy of Denmark in Islamabad hosted a thoughtfully curated gathering that brought together culture, dialogue and advocacy under one roof. Titled "Women's Voices", the evening was designed as a celebration of women's resilience, creativity and contributions, while also serving as a platform to highlight the importance of inclusion and equality in today's world.

The event was hosted by Denmark's Ambassador to Pakistan, Maja Derrous Mortensen, who welcomed an audience comprising diplomats, policymakers, media professionals, civil society representatives and advocates for women's rights. The atmosphere reflected both celebration and reflection, as guests engaged in meaningful conversations about the evolving role of women in shaping societies and institutions.

Among the distinguished guests was Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja. Her participation underscored the growing recognition of women's contributions in fields ranging from governance and policymaking to technology and innovation. Speaking about the importance of creating inclusive spaces, she emphasized that empowering women and amplifying their voices is essential for building a more equitable and progressive society.

A highlight of the evening was a captivating visual storytelling presentation by Danish photographer Laura Riis. Through her photographs, the audience was introduced to powerful glimpses of women's lives across Pakistan. Her work captured moments from diverse communities, including scenes from the Kalash valleys and portraits of young girl cadets in Sindh. Each frame told a story of ambition, strength and identity, offering a rare window into the lives and aspirations of women whose voices are often underrepresented.

The presentation resonated deeply with the audience, as it portrayed not only the challenges women face but also their determination and spirit. The

visual narratives reflected the richness of Pakistan's cultural landscape while highlighting the shared human experiences that connect communities across borders.

More than a ceremonial reception, the event stood as a reminder of the transformative power of storytelling. By combining art, dialogue and diplomacy, the Danish Embassy created a space where perspectives could be shared and voices amplified.

As the evening concluded, the message was clear. Celebrating women's achievements is important, but equally vital is ensuring that their voices continue to be heard, respected and included in shaping the future. Events like these serve as meaningful steps toward that goal, reinforcing the belief that when women's voices are empowered, societies grow stronger and more inclusive.





France Honors Pakistani Leadership in Child Rights and Public Health Cooperation

Faisal Sheikh

France and Pakistan strengthened their partnership in human rights and public health cooperation following the conferral of the National Order of Merit upon Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child and National Coordinator for Polio Eradication.

The prestigious Chevalier rank award was presented at a formal ceremony attended by senior government officials, diplomats, and representatives of international organizations. The French Ambassador commended Ms Farooq's longstanding commitment to child rights, legislative reform, and public health advancement, particularly her leadership role in Pakistan's polio eradication campaign.

France highlighted that Pakistan has made measurable progress in reducing polio cases despite operational challenges. The recognition was framed not merely as an individual honor but as acknowledgment of Pakistan's collective efforts in child welfare and healthcare reform.

The ceremony also emphasized bilateral cooperation between France

and Pakistan in combating child labor, increasing school enrollment, and supporting healthcare initiatives. Projects implemented in collaboration with development agencies have contributed to addressing educational access gaps and strengthening social protection mechanisms.

Recent legislative measures in Pakistan concerning child protection were also acknowledged as positive steps forward. However, French officials emphasized that continued reform and enforcement remain essential for sustaining progress and strengthening Pakistan's international commitments.

Ms Farooq, in her remarks, dedicated the award to her family and colleagues, highlighting the collective dimension of social reform. She noted that the recognition symbolizes shared determination to safeguard children's rights and ensure equitable access to healthcare.

France's engagement in Pakistan increasingly blends diplomatic dialogue with development partnership. By recognizing leadership in human rights and public health, France reinforced a relationship grounded in shared values and long term institutional cooperation.



Japan Deepens Multidimensional Partnership with Pakistan Through Development, Industry and Cultural Diplomacy



Japan's engagement with Pakistan is entering a deeper and more structured phase, marked by parallel progress in grassroots development, economic cooperation, cultural diplomacy, and institutional dialogue. Recent months have demonstrated that bilateral ties are not only stable but increasingly multidimensional.

At the community level, Japan reaffirmed its commitment to human security through the Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects program. Under this initiative, USD 85,429, equivalent to approximately PKR 23.9 million, has been allocated to two Pakistani organizations for projects in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In District Chakwal, funding will support the construction of a Maternal and Child Healthcare Center designed to provide 24-hour safe delivery services, emergency obstetric care, and neonatal treatment under one roof. The facility is expected to benefit more than 10,000 patients annually while promoting maternal health awareness in underserved communities. In District Mansehra, infrastructure improvements to a local road will enhance mobility, safety, and access to education, healthcare, and markets for more than 2,400 direct beneficiaries and thousands more indirectly.

Diplomatic engagement has also intensified. As Japan and Pakistan marked 74 years of

diplomatic relations, emphasis was placed on expanding people-to-people exchanges, strengthening economic ties, and deepening cultural cooperation. Growing interest among Pakistani youth in learning Japanese reflects a generational shift toward educational and

and achieving localization rates exceeding 60 percent in parts manufacturing. Discussions extended to hybrid vehicle production, sustainable fuel alternatives such as biogas, and the importance of workforce training rooted in continuous improvement principles.



professional engagement with Japan. The increasing number of candidates sitting for Japanese language proficiency examinations underscores this trend.

Economic cooperation remains a central pillar. At the Japan Pakistan Business Seminar 2026 in Islamabad, stakeholders from both countries examined industrial collaboration and technology transfer. Japanese automotive companies operating in Pakistan were recognized for creating more than 100,000 jobs

Cultural diplomacy further strengthened ties during celebrations marking the birthday of Japan's Emperor. Pakistan's participation in the Osaka Kansai Expo 2025, where its pavilion secured international recognition, was highlighted as a symbol of renewed bilateral visibility. Japan's comprehensive engagement strategy reflects a mature partnership framework, balancing development cooperation with industrial modernization and long-term human capital investment.

Honouring Women and Strengthening Solidarity at the Turkish Embassy

The Turkish Embassy in Islamabad marked International Women's Day this year with an evening that blended diplomacy, dialogue and celebration. Held on 8 March 2026 at the embassy residence in Islamabad's diplomatic enclave, the reception brought together an inspiring group of Pakistani women leaders, diplomats and members of civil society to honour the achievements and resilience of women across society.

Hosted by the Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan, Dr. İrfan Neziroğlu, alongside his wife, the gathering was not only a celebration but also a reminder of the shared commitment of both countries to the empowerment and advancement of women. The elegant setting provided the perfect backdrop for conversations that ranged from public service and social welfare to media leadership and diplomacy.

The guest list reflected the growing influence of women across Pakistan's public life. Among those present were Ambreen Jan, Chairperson of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority, Samina Khalid, Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme, and Senator Sherry Rehman, a senior leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party. Each of them represents a different sphere of national leadership, yet their collective presence highlighted a common narrative, the increasing role of women in shaping Pakistan's political, social and economic landscape.

Members of the diplomatic community also joined the evening, adding an international dimension to the celebration. Representatives from several missions, including the Ambassador of Rwanda and the Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, exchanged views and experiences on women's empowerment in their respective societies. These interactions underscored how International Women's Day continues to serve as a global platform for solidarity and cooperation.

International Women's Day, observed annually on 8 March, recognizes the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women while also drawing attention to the challenges that still remain. Across Pakistan, this year's observance carried the theme "Rights, Equality and Action for All Women and Girls," emphasizing the importance of translating commitments into meaningful progress.

The reception at the Turkish Embassy reflected that spirit. Beyond formal speeches and diplomatic courtesies, the evening created space for thoughtful conversations about the evolving role of women in leadership, policy making and community development.

As the evening drew to a close, what remained was a sense of optimism. Events like these are more than ceremonial occasions, they reinforce the importance of dialogue, collaboration and recognition. In Islamabad's diplomatic circles, International Women's Day was marked not only as a celebration of women's achievements but also as a renewed commitment to building societies where equality, opportunity and respect for women continue to grow.





Brunei Darussalam Signals Broader Economic and Educational Engagement with Pakistan

Brunei Darussalam marked its 42nd National Day in Islamabad with a reception that reflected the depth of bilateral goodwill between the two countries and underscored the growing importance of people centered diplomacy. The event, hosted by the High Commission of Brunei, coincided with the holy month of Ramadan and was integrated with an iftar gathering, symbolizing shared cultural and religious affinities.

The reception brought together members of the diplomatic corps, senior Pakistani officials, business representatives, and members of the Pakistani community. In his address, the High Commissioner emphasized Brunei's national journey of development and stability, highlighting the country's continued commitment to economic diversification, education advancement, and sustainable growth under its national vision framework.

Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening people to people engagement between Brunei and Pakistan. Educational exchanges, youth interaction, and cultural collaboration were identified as avenues with significant untapped potential. Brunei's interest in expanding educational cooperation, especially in technical and higher education sectors, aligns with Pakistan's growing youth demographic and skills development initiatives.

The event also reflected an informal yet meaningful dimension of diplomacy through sports engagement. The High Commissioner's interaction with members of a local hockey club illustrated how sports diplomacy can complement traditional diplomatic channels. Such gestures reinforce personal connectivity and community level engagement, which often serve as the foundation for deeper institutional cooperation.

Brunei and Pakistan share strong bonds within the framework of Islamic cooperation and ASEAN engagement. While bilateral trade volumes remain modest, there is growing recognition that collaboration in halal industries, agriculture, tourism, and education could expand significantly. Brunei's stable economic environment and sovereign wealth capacity position it as a potential investment partner in selected Pakistani sectors.

The Ramadan setting added symbolic depth to the celebration, reinforcing shared values of solidarity, charity, and unity. As Brunei continues to strengthen its regional and international engagement, its diplomatic outreach in Pakistan signals intent to gradually broaden cooperation beyond ceremonial goodwill into structured economic and educational partnerships.



UAE Strengthens Institutional Facilitation and Sports Diplomacy Engagement in Pakistan

Sports Reporter

The United Arab Emirates has strengthened its engagement with Pakistan through both institutional facilitation and community diplomacy initiatives, reflecting the depth of bilateral ties.

A major development was the inauguration of a new document attestation facility in Islamabad. Operated by BLS International Services, the center is designed to streamline documentation processes for Pakistani citizens traveling to the UAE for employment, education, business, and other purposes. The initiative aims to reduce processing times, enhance transparency, and provide improved public service delivery.

Given the significant Pakistani diaspora in the UAE and high volume of labor mobility between the two countries, efficient consular services are critical. The new facility is expected to simplify procedures and curb exploitation by unauthorized intermediaries.

In parallel, the UAE hosted the 14th Ambassador's Cup Ramadan Football Tournament in Islamabad. Featuring ten teams and twenty two matches, the annual tournament brought together diplomats, officials, and community representatives. The event culminated in a competitive final and prize distribution ceremony attended by senior political and diplomatic figures.

The tournament underscores sports diplomacy as a platform for fostering goodwill and strengthening people to people connectivity. By combining institutional facilitation with cultural engagement, the UAE continues to reinforce its longstanding partnership with Pakistan.



Saudi Arabia Launches Major Ramadan Food Security Initiative Across Pakistan



PEN Report

Saudi Arabia has reaffirmed its humanitarian commitment to Pakistan through the launch of Phase Five of the Food Security Support Project, targeting vulnerable communities during the holy month of Ramadan.

Under the initiative, 192,500 individuals across 30 districts are receiving structured food assistance packages designed to meet household nutritional needs for the entire month. Each 97 kilogram basket contains wheat flour, cooking oil, sugar, dates, and gram pulse, carefully calculated to sustain an average family.

The distribution process is being implemented in coordination with national and provincial disaster management authorities to ensure transparency, accountability, and efficient outreach. Local implementing partners have been engaged to facilitate organized delivery and minimize logistical disruptions.

The program reflects the broader humanitarian mandate of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, which has consistently supported food security and emergency relief initiatives in Pakistan. Saudi Arabia's assistance extends beyond immediate relief, contributing to resilience building and social stability during economically challenging periods.

Officials noted that food insecurity remains a pressing concern in several regions, particularly in rural and climate affected areas. Structured international support during Ramadan carries both humanitarian and symbolic significance, reinforcing bonds between the two nations.

Saudi Arabia's approach demonstrates sustained engagement that combines institutional coordination with targeted community support. As food security challenges intensify globally, such humanitarian partnerships play a critical role in stabilizing vulnerable populations.





Bangladesh Celebrates 55 Years of Independence with a Diplomatic Flourish in Islamabad

ADIL GILL

The High Commission of Bangladesh in Islamabad hosted a reception at Serena Hotel to mark the country's 55th Independence and National Day, bringing together policymakers, diplomats, and members of civil society. High Commissioner Md. Iqbal Hossain Khan, along with senior officials, welcomed guests including chief guest Rana Tanveer Hussain and other prominent dignitaries.

In their remarks, both sides underscored the importance of strengthening Pakistan Bangladesh relations, highlighting opportunities for cooperation in key areas such as trade, connectivity, education, healthcare, tourism, and energy. The High Commissioner pointed to shared challenges and stressed the need for joint efforts to achieve sustainable growth and regional stability, while also seeking Pakistan's support for Bangladesh's bid for the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly.

The ceremony began with the national anthems of both countries, symbolizing mutual respect and a shared history, followed by discussions reflecting growing trust and recent high level engagements between the two nations. Speakers noted that continued dialogue and collaboration could unlock new avenues of partnership in the years ahead.

The evening also celebrated Bangladesh's rich cultural heritage, with participation from members of the Bangladeshi community, including students and entrepreneurs, adding a vibrant and personal touch to the occasion. Overall, the event highlighted a renewed commitment to deeper cooperation and an evolving bilateral relationship.





European Diplomats Reaffirm Solidarity with Ukraine on Fourth Anniversary of War



Islamabad witnessed a solemn diplomatic gathering as the European Union Delegation, Team Europe, and the Embassy of Ukraine jointly commemorated the fourth anniversary of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine. The event, hosted at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland,

With bilateral trade crossing 2.5 billion dollars and a target of 5 billion ahead, enhanced border markets, port linkages between Gwadar, Karachi, and Chabahar, and improved connectivity are shaping a new phase of economic cooperation between Pakistan and Iran.

brought together members of the diplomatic community, policymakers, journalists, think tank representatives, civil society activists, and humanitarian organizations to reflect on the devastating human and economic consequences of the ongoing conflict.

The ceremony featured a documentary screening and a photographic exhibition that documented the profound suffering endured by Ukrainian civilians since the beginning of the war. Images depicting destroyed infrastructure, displaced families, and communities struggling to survive in wartime conditions served as a stark reminder of the immense human cost of the conflict. The exhibition also sought to draw international attention to the continuing humanitarian crisis while reinforcing the international community's commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In a joint statement issued during the event, the EU Delegation, Team Europe, and the Ukrainian Embassy strongly condemned Russia's ongoing

military aggression. Particular concern was expressed over repeated attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure during the harsh winter months, which have left millions of civilians without electricity, heating, and essential services. The statement described such actions as unacceptable and in clear violation of international humanitarian law. It also called upon Russia to cease hostilities, withdraw its forces from Ukrainian territory, and engage in meaningful peace negotiations aimed at ending the conflict. European representatives further highlighted that the European Union had already committed an additional ninety billion euros in support of Ukraine and would continue enforcing economic sanctions designed to hold Russia accountable.

Speaking at the gathering, Ukrainian Ambassador H.E. Mr. Markiian Chuchuk delivered remarks titled "Four Years of Ukraine's Struggle for Freedom." He described the immense human toll of the war, noting that the conflict had resulted in more than one million Russian casualties and tens of thousands of Ukrainian deaths. He also referred to the abduction of Ukrainian children and the displacement of millions of civilians who have been forced to seek refuge either within the country or abroad. Ambassador Chuchuk strongly criticized what he described as Russia's imperial ambitions and reiterated Ukraine's commitment to achieving peace. However, he stressed that a sustainable settlement would require genuine political will from both sides, something he argued remained absent from the Russian side. He also expressed appreciation for Pakistan's principled stance on the issue and encouraged Islamabad to play a constructive role in advancing a just peace through its presence on the United Nations Security Council.

EU Ambassador H.E. Mr. Raimundas Karoblis, speaking on behalf of Team Europe, praised Ukraine's resilience and reaffirmed the European Union's unwavering support for the country. He condemned Russia's repeated attacks on civilian infrastructure, particularly energy and transportation networks, which have severely disrupted daily life across Ukraine. These

strikes, he noted, have left millions of Ukrainians struggling to cope without electricity and heating during winter. Ambassador Karoblis also highlighted Europe's broader efforts to exert economic pressure on Moscow, including reducing energy imports from Russia and banning refined petroleum products. In addition to conventional military and economic measures, he emphasized that Europe continues to confront hybrid threats, including cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns linked to the conflict. He underscored the importance of international cooperation and recognized

The reception reflected the strength and resilience of Pakistan Iran relations, demonstrating how timely diplomatic engagement can overcome tensions and reinforce cooperation rooted in shared history, geography, and cultural bonds.

Pakistan's potential role in multilateral diplomatic initiatives aimed at encouraging credible peace negotiations.

German Ambassador H.E. Mrs. Ina Lepel echoed similar sentiments, reaffirming Europe's continued political, humanitarian, and economic support for Ukraine. She highlighted the European Union's ninety billion euro assistance package and condemned what she described as Russian war crimes committed during the course of the conflict. Ambassador Lepel

also drew attention to the humanitarian consequences of repeated attacks on energy infrastructure, which have exacerbated suffering among civilians during the winter months. While emphasizing that Ukraine remains open to serious negotiations, she observed that Russia's continued maximalist demands have hindered meaningful dialogue. She stressed that sustained international pressure on Moscow would remain essential in pushing toward a diplomatic resolution.

Polish Ambassador H.E. Mr. Maciej Pisarski also addressed the gathering, condemning recent Russian strikes on residential neighborhoods and critical infrastructure as part of what he described as a deliberate strategy to inflict suffering on civilians. He particularly highlighted the devastating impact of such attacks during winter conditions. Ambassador Pisarski reiterated Poland's full solidarity with Ukraine and called on Russia to immediately end the war. A statement issued by the Embassy of Poland further emphasized that Russia's aggression poses a serious threat not only to regional stability but also to global security. The statement warned that the conflict has already disrupted global energy markets and food supplies while undermining international peace and stability. It called for continued international assistance to Ukraine, both in terms of military aid and broader humanitarian and economic support.

Collectively, the speakers stressed that achieving a just and durable peace would require sustained international engagement and solidarity with Ukraine. They underscored the need for accountability regarding alleged war crimes, continued diplomatic pressure on Russia, and coordinated global efforts to prevent further destabilization. The event served not only as a moment of reflection on four years of conflict but also as a reaffirmation of Europe's commitment to supporting Ukraine until a peaceful resolution is achieved.



Continued from P/9

reflected in the works of both thinkers, representing a shared human heritage that transcends borders.

The ambassadors of Azerbaijan and Morocco also attended the event, highlighting the international significance of the dialogue. Speakers emphasized that literary and intellectual discourse is essential for strengthening people-to-people relations and for promoting a culture of peace, tolerance, and dialogue among the younger generation. According to the organizers, the event was not merely a literary gathering but a serious scholarly initiative aimed at expanding



Pakistan's relations with other countries through the philosophy of Iqbal. They expressed hope that the discussion would open new avenues for joint research projects, academic exchanges, and cultural cooperation between

Pakistan and Hungary. The event concluded with a question-and-answer session, during which participants and speakers engaged in an in-depth exchange of views.

Türkiye Pakistan Friendship Iftar Hosted by **TİKA** in Islamabad

Special Report

Islamabad: The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, TİKA, hosted the Türkiye Pakistan Friendship Iftar in Islamabad during Ramadan 2026, reaffirming the deep rooted friendship and humanitarian cooperation between the two countries.

The event brought together senior government officials, diplomats, development partners, representatives of charitable organizations, and members of the business and media community. The gathering reflected the enduring spirit of solidarity between Türkiye and Pakistan and emphasized the humanitarian dimension of bilateral cooperation.

A special feature of the evening was the participation of orphan children supported by welfare organizations including Pakistan Bait ul Mal and Al Khidmat Foundation. The children took part in interactive activities before joining the Iftar gathering and were presented with gift packages, adding a deeply humanitarian element to the event.

Senior officials from both countries addressed the gathering and highlighted the importance of compassion, social welfare, and institutional cooperation in supporting vulnerable communities. They emphasized that such initiatives reflect the values shared by both nations and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood between their peoples.

The Iftar dinner served not only as a moment of spiritual reflection during the holy month but also as a reminder of the people centered partnership between Pakistan and Türkiye, which continues to expand through humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, and cultural exchange.



Pakistan and Italy Prioritize Legal Labor Mobility and Economic Diversification

Pakistan and Italy are entering a renewed phase of structured cooperation centered on economic partnership, youth development, education, and regulated labor mobility. Recent high level engagements between Pakistan's leadership and the Italian diplomatic mission in Islamabad have highlighted a shared determination to transform longstanding goodwill into measurable institutional outcomes.

Discussions focused extensively on strengthening bilateral trade and investment, with particular attention to sectors such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, engineering, and small and medium enterprise collaboration. Italy remains one of Pakistan's important European trading partners, and both sides acknowledged that trade volumes can expand significantly through diversification and structured business facilitation mechanisms.

A central theme of the dialogue was legal and transparent labor mobility. Italy is home to a sizeable Pakistani community that serves as a vital bridge between the two nations. Officials emphasized the importance of implementing structured labor mobility frameworks that ensure merit based recruitment, transparent visa processes, and protection against exploitation by unauthorized intermediaries. The conversation underscored that Pakistan's young and skilled workforce represents a strategic asset for European economies facing demographic transitions.

Education and research collaboration were also identified as priority areas. Italy's universities and technical institutions continue to attract Pakistani students, including participants in European scholarship programs. Both sides discussed expanding academic exchanges, joint research initiatives, and institutional partnerships to strengthen long term intellectual cooperation.

Skills development under technical and vocational education frameworks was highlighted as essential to aligning Pakistani youth competencies with international labor market standards. Institutional collaboration in training and certification could facilitate ethical migration pathways while supporting domestic capacity building.

The dialogue reflects a forward looking approach that recognizes labor mobility, education, and economic cooperation as interconnected pillars of a modern bilateral relationship. Italy and Pakistan appear poised to deepen engagement through practical mechanisms that enhance transparency, opportunity, and shared economic growth.



Tajikistan Cultural Festival Strengthens Pakistan Ties

The cultural festival in Islamabad reflected the depth of Pakistan and Tajikistan's shared heritage and reaffirmed the value of cultural diplomacy in strengthening bilateral understanding.

Special Report

Pakistan and Tajikistan reinforced their historical and cultural affinity through a two day cultural festival held at Lok Virsa in Islamabad. The event highlighted the shared artistic traditions, historical connections, and regional cultural heritage that link Central and South Asia.

Artists, musicians, cultural experts, and diplomats from both countries participated in the festival, which transformed the heritage complex into a vibrant space celebrating traditional arts and craftsmanship. Exhibitions featured calligraphy, embroidery, handmade textiles, pottery, and musical instruments, allowing visitors to experience centuries old artistic traditions.

Cultural performances formed the central attraction of the festival. Tajik musicians introduced audiences to Central Asian melodic traditions while Pakistani artists presented folk and classical dance performances reflecting the country's diverse cultural heritage. Poetry recitations and storytelling sessions further illustrated the literary and linguistic connections that have historically linked the peoples of the two regions.

The festival also emphasized culinary heritage. Guests sampled traditional Tajik dishes alongside Pakistani cuisine, creating a cultural experience that extended beyond performances and exhibitions.

Seminars and film screenings organized during the festival examined historical linkages and prospects for future cultural cooperation. Experts highlighted that cultural diplomacy remains an effective instrument for strengthening regional harmony and fostering people to people relations.

The event demonstrated that shared heritage continues to provide a strong foundation for Pakistan Tajikistan relations, reinforcing mutual understanding beyond formal diplomatic channels.



Algeria Mourns Former **President Liamine Zeroual** Architect of National Reconciliation



The Embassy of Algeria in Pakistan witnessed a steady flow of visitors throughout the day as prominent Pakistani figures from diverse sectors arrived to offer their condolences on the passing of former Algerian President, H.E. Liamine Zeroual. Representatives from government institutions, parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the diplomatic community, media, and other segments of society visited the embassy to express their sympathies and solidarity.

Former President Liamine Zeroual passed away on March 29, 2026, at the age of 84 after a prolonged illness. He served as Algeria's head of state from 1994 to 1999, a period marked by significant internal challenges. During his tenure, he

played a key role in navigating the country through the turbulent years of the civil conflict known as the "Black Decade" and introduced the landmark "Civil Concord" initiative aimed at restoring peace and national reconciliation.

The condolence interactions at the embassy reflected the depth of goodwill between Pakistan and Algeria, with visitors paying tribute to President Zeroual's leadership, resilience, and commitment to national unity. Many acknowledged his efforts in steering Algeria toward stability during one of its most difficult periods, while also emphasizing the importance of continued cooperation and mutual respect between the two nations in the years ahead.



Serena Hotels Hosts Prestigious Corporate Iftar in Islamabad

Islamabad: Serena Hotels hosted its prestigious annual Corporate Iftar in Islamabad during Ramadan 2026, welcoming a distinguished gathering of diplomats, government officials, senior members of the armed forces, corporate leaders, and prominent media personalities.

Hosted by Serena Hotels Chief Executive Officer Aziz Boolani and Mrs. Wiqar Boolani, the event continued a long standing tradition that has become a notable fixture on the capital's diplomatic and corporate calendar.

The gathering brought together a diverse group of participants representing diplomatic missions, international organizations, government institutions, and the private sector. The evening provided an opportunity for guests to engage in informal dialogue and strengthen professional and social relationships within the capital's influential circles.

Guests were served an elaborate Iftar spread that included traditional cuisine from across Pakistan's provinces along with Middle Eastern, Asian, and continental specialties. The carefully curated menu reflected Serena's reputation for blending local culinary traditions with international hospitality standards.

Adding to the atmosphere was a live cultural performance featuring traditional music, which complemented the serene ambiance of the hotel's venue. The evening highlighted Serena Hotels' role as a central hub for diplomatic and corporate engagement in Islamabad, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan when gatherings emphasize both reflection and community connection.



Isphanyar Bhandara

A Dynamic Force in Business, Philanthropy and Public Service



Special report

Isphanyar M. Bhandara stands as one of the prominent figures in Pakistan's contemporary political and business landscape, representing a rare blend of entrepreneurship, public service, and philanthropy. Currently serving as a Member of the National Assembly on a minority seat, he has played an active role in advocating for inclusivity, interfaith harmony, and minority rights in Pakistan's political discourse. His political journey, which includes previous tenure in parliament as well, reflects continuity in leadership and a commitment to representing marginalized communities. Coming from a distinguished Parsi family with a legacy of national service, he has inherited a tradition of public engagement while carving his own identity as a modern, progressive parliamentarian.

Equally noteworthy is his role as a philanthropist and social contributor. Isphanyar Bhandara has consistently been involved in welfare activities, supporting minority communities, promoting interfaith harmony, and contributing to social uplift initiatives. He has been associated with community organizations such as the Rawalpindi Parsi Anjuman and has extended support to various underprivileged segments of society, including initiatives in education and healthcare. His philanthropic outreach, combined with his inclusive political vision, has earned him respect across religious and social divides, reinforcing his image as a unifying figure in Pakistani society.



Beyond politics, Isphanyar Bhandara has made a significant mark as a leading entrepreneur and businessman. As the Chief Executive Officer of Murree Brewery, one of the oldest and most prominent companies in the subcontinent, he has successfully navigated a highly regulated industry and expanded the company's operations into diversified sectors including beverages and exports. Under his leadership, the organization has not only sustained its historic legacy but has also contributed to Pakistan's economy through employment generation, industrial growth, and export potential. His business acumen, backed by formal education in business administration and hands-on operational experience, has positioned him among the respected figures in Pakistan's corporate sector.

Over the years, Isphanyar Bhandara has also played a subtle yet important role in bridging Pakistan with the international and diplomatic community. Through his business engagements, political interactions, and social initiatives, he has contributed to strengthening Pakistan's image as a diverse and inclusive country. His

engagements reflect a broader vision of Pakistan that is economically progressive, socially cohesive, and diplomatically connected. In essence, his multifaceted contributions as a parliamentarian, businessman, and philanthropist underline his importance as a key stakeholder in Pakistan's development narrative.





Murtaza Hashwani
Deputy Chairman, Hashoo Group
| Entrepreneur | Innovation enthusiast |



Marriott Islamabad: Strengthening Business and Diplomatic

MARRIOTT Engagements

Islamabad: Islamabad Marriott Hotel hosted a corporate Ramadan Iftar gathering during Ramadan 2026, welcoming distinguished guests from the diplomatic community, corporate sector, and media fraternity in an elegant evening celebrating the spirit of the holy month.

The event was hosted by the hotel's senior management and served as an opportunity for professionals from diverse sectors to come together in a relaxed setting for networking and engagement.

Guests were treated to an elaborate Ramadan buffet featuring a blend of international and regional cuisine. The culinary experience included traditional Pakistani dishes alongside Middle Eastern and continental specialties, reflecting the hotel's commitment to offering a diverse dining experience.

The hotel's Ramadan themed ambiance and carefully arranged décor added to the evening's atmosphere, creating a warm and welcoming environment for guests observing the holy month.

Corporate Iftar gatherings at leading hotels in the capital have increasingly become platforms for professional networking and informal dialogue among diplomats, business executives, and members of Islamabad's social and media community. The Marriott's Ramadan event once again reinforced its reputation as one of the capital's premier hospitality venues for such engagements.

THE MONAL GROUP

How **Luqman Ali Afzal** Redefined Pakistan's Hospitality Landscape

Over the past two decades, Pakistan's hospitality industry has witnessed a remarkable transformation. Among the most prominent contributors to this evolution is the Monal Group, a name that has become synonymous with premium dining experiences, scenic destinations, and modern service standards. At the heart of this success story is Luqman Ali Afzal, an entrepreneur whose vision and leadership have given a new dimension to Pakistan's restaurant and tourism industry.

The story of the Monal Group goes far beyond the creation of a successful restaurant brand. It reflects a broader shift in how hospitality is perceived in Pakistan, moving from conventional dining spaces to immersive experiences that combine cuisine, atmosphere, and tourism. When Monal opened its flagship restaurant at Pir Sohawa in the Margalla Hills overlooking Islamabad, it introduced a concept that was both bold and innovative. The idea of a restaurant that offered not only high quality food but also panoramic views and a destination experience quickly captured public imagination.

Luqman Ali Afzal's journey into entrepreneurship began early in life. A graduate of the Lahore University of Management Sciences, he demonstrated strong business instincts during his student years. While studying at LUMS, he invested in and operated a small campus café. This venture allowed him to gain first hand experience in managing operations, understanding consumer behavior, and building a sustainable business model. The lessons learned during this period would later shape his approach to larger ventures in the hospitality sector.

After completing his education, Luqman Ali Afzal explored several entrepreneurial opportunities before embarking on what would become his most significant project. Securing a lease for a location in the Margalla Hills, he envisioned a restaurant that would redefine the dining experience in Pakistan. At a time when the country's restaurant industry was largely centered around traditional urban eateries, the concept of a destination restaurant set in a scenic natural environment represented a fresh and ambitious idea.

The success of Monal at Pir Sohawa soon turned it into one of the most iconic landmarks of Islamabad. It became a favored destination not only for local residents but also for tourists, diplomats, and international visitors seeking to experience Pakistani cuisine in an exceptional setting. The restaurant's success laid the foundation for the expansion of the Monal brand into a broader hospitality group.

Over time, the Monal Group diversified its operations, establishing multiple restaurants, catering services, and event management facilities across different cities. Through these initiatives, the group has created thousands of employment opportunities and has contributed to raising professional standards in Pakistan's hospitality industry. The emphasis on staff training, service quality, and customer experience has set benchmarks that many other businesses in the sector now seek to emulate.



Another important aspect of Luqman Ali Afzal's vision has been the connection between hospitality and tourism. By establishing restaurants in scenic and culturally significant locations, the Monal Group has played a role in promoting Pakistan's natural beauty and attracting visitors to its urban and recreational spaces. In this way, Monal has contributed not only to the food industry but also to the broader tourism narrative of the country.

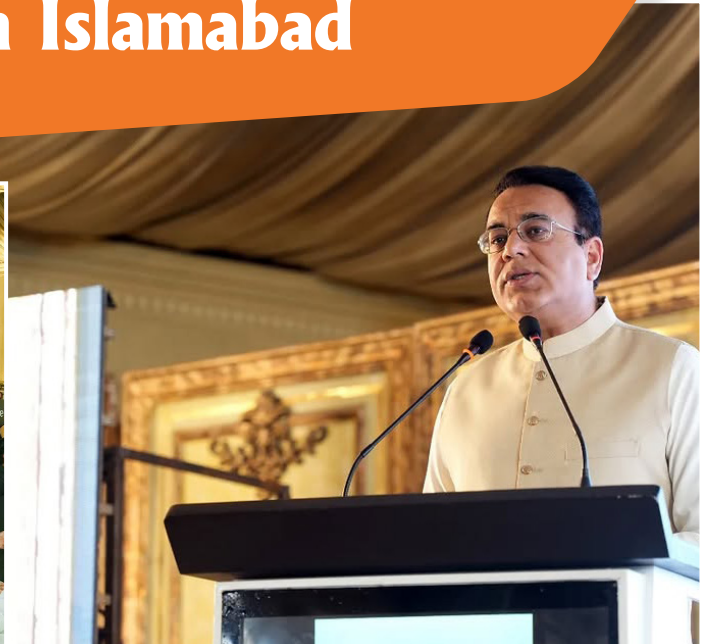
The impact of Luqman Ali Afzal's work has also been recognized at the national level. In acknowledgment of his contributions to entrepreneurship and the hospitality sector, he was awarded the Pride of Performance, one of the highest civilian honors conferred by the Government of Pakistan. This recognition highlighted the significance of his role in modernizing Pakistan's restaurant industry and promoting tourism through innovative hospitality concepts.

Today, the Monal Group stands as a symbol of how entrepreneurial vision and determination can reshape an entire industry. Through innovative dining experiences, strategic expansion, and a commitment to quality, Luqman Ali Afzal has helped redefine hospitality standards in Pakistan.

The Monal story ultimately represents more than the rise of a successful business enterprise. It reflects the emergence of a modern hospitality culture in Pakistan, one that values creativity, professionalism, and the ability to transform ordinary spaces into memorable experiences. Under the leadership of Luqman Ali Afzal, the Monal Group continues to set new benchmarks, demonstrating that Pakistani entrepreneurship has the capacity to create world class hospitality experiences while celebrating the country's unique cultural identity.

THE MONAL GROUP

Hosts Grand Iftar Gathering in Islamabad



Islamabad: The Monal Group hosted a grand Iftar dinner in Islamabad during Ramadan 2026, bringing together senior political figures, diplomats, business leaders, and members of the media community in a warm and vibrant gathering that reflected the spirit of Ramadan and Islamabad's growing hospitality culture.

The event was hosted by Monal Group Chairman Luqman Ali Afzal at

the group's newly introduced rooftop venue at IMARAT Downtown. The evening served both as a Ramadan gathering and as a platform to introduce the new location to distinguished guests from across Pakistan's political, diplomatic, and corporate circles.

Among those present were senior political leaders, federal ministers, diplomats from various missions, prominent business personalities, and



representatives from civil society and media organizations. The gathering created an atmosphere of reflection and social engagement as guests shared the traditional Ramadan meal together.

The rooftop venue provided a scenic setting overlooking the capital, while guests were served a diverse menu featuring traditional Pakistani dishes alongside continental cuisine. The ambiance combined Islamabad's modern hospitality with the spiritual and communal

essence of Ramadan.

The evening also highlighted Mona's continued presence in Pakistan's hospitality sector and its efforts to expand its brand identity through new venues and innovative dining experiences. By bringing together leaders from multiple sectors of society, the event reflected how Ramadan gatherings in the capital often evolve into important spaces for dialogue, networking, and community connection.



MASOOD AHMAD QAZI

A Driving Force Behind Peshawar's Diplomatic and Cultural Revival

Sajjad Hussain

Mr. Masood Ahmad Qazi, CEO of Peshawar Barracks and Honorary Consul General of Romania in Peshawar, has emerged as a dynamic figure contributing significantly to the city's growing engagement with the diplomatic community in Pakistan. His dual role reflects a rare blend of business leadership and diplomatic outreach, positioning him as an important bridge between Peshawar and the international sphere.

As the Honorary Consul General of Romania, Mr. Qazi was formally appointed in 2025 with a clear mandate to strengthen bilateral ties between Pakistan and Romania, particularly within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. His role involves facilitating diplomatic engagement, promoting trade and investment opportunities, and enhancing cultural and educational exchanges between the two countries. The establishment of the honorary consulate itself is a testament to the increasing importance of Peshawar in regional diplomacy, with Mr. Qazi at the forefront of this transformation.

Beyond his diplomatic responsibilities, Mr. Qazi's leadership as CEO of Peshawar Barracks has played a pivotal role in redefining the city's image. Under his guidance, Peshawar Barracks has evolved into more than just a hospitality or heritage venue, it has become a hub for high level interactions, cultural exchanges, and diplomatic engagements. His efforts have consistently brought ambassadors, international delegates, and dignitaries to Peshawar, creating meaningful opportunities for dialogue and collaboration.

One of the most notable examples of his work

includes facilitating visits of European ambassadors and delegations to Peshawar in collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority. These visits showcased the city's rich heritage, including historic landmarks such as Gor Khatri, Sethi House, and the Peshawar Museum. Such initiatives not only highlighted the cultural depth of the city but also strengthened people to people connections and diplomatic goodwill.

Mr. Qazi's contributions have been instrumental in bridging Peshawar with the diplomatic core of Pakistan. Through carefully curated engagements, international events, and cultural initiatives, he has successfully positioned Peshawar as a city of opportunity, heritage, and hospitality. His work has helped reshape perceptions, presenting Peshawar not merely as a historic city but as an emerging center for diplomacy and international collaboration.

Over the past few years, his extraordinary performance has significantly enhanced the image of Peshawar in a positive manner. By consistently bringing global attention to the region and fostering meaningful partnerships, he has contributed to a broader narrative of connectivity and engagement. The initiatives led by him reflect vision, commitment, and a deep understanding of the importance of diplomacy at the regional level.

The work being carried out by Mr. Masood Ahmad Qazi is nothing short of extraordinary. His continued efforts are not only strengthening international ties but are also playing a vital role in elevating Peshawar's standing on both national and global platforms.





Peshawar Barracks Hosts Global Ambassadors in Landmark Cultural Retreat

Peshawar Barracks emerged as the centerpiece of an exceptional diplomatic engagement, proudly hosting ambassadors from 12 countries in an exclusive retreat that highlighted the essence of Pakistan's cultural richness and hospitality. The event, organized by Masood Ahmad Qazi, Honorary Consul General of Romania and CEO, along with his management team, transformed the venue into a vibrant hub of international dialogue and cultural exchange.

A Landmark Venue for Diplomacy

More than just a host, Peshawar Barracks played a defining role in shaping the entire experience. Its ambiance, blending tradition with elegance, provided the perfect backdrop for a gathering of global representatives. The venue stood as a symbol of how thoughtfully curated spaces can elevate diplomatic engagements, offering not only comfort but a sense of cultural immersion.

From the very beginning, the setting at



Peshawar Barracks set the tone for the day, one that was welcoming, refined, and deeply rooted in the traditions of the region.

Exploring the Soul of Peshawar

The retreat extended beyond the venue, offering ambassadors a curated journey through Peshawar's historic landmarks. The exploration of Gor Khatri, Sethi House, the Peshawar Museum, and Qila Bala Hisar provided a deeper understanding of the city's layered history and cultural depth.

Each site added a new dimension to the experience, connecting the past with the present and showcasing Peshawar as a city of enduring significance.

Building Bridges Through Experience

At its core, the retreat was a celebration of connection. The warm hospitality extended at Peshawar Barracks, combined with the shared experiences throughout the day, fostered meaningful interactions among the ambassadors.

The event reflected a broader vision, where diplomacy is not confined to formal meetings but enriched through cultural understanding and personal engagement. Conversations flowed naturally, relationships were strengthened, and a collective appreciation for Pakistan's heritage took center stage.

A Powerful Reflection of Pakistan's Soft Image

By hosting such a distinguished gathering, Peshawar Barracks positioned itself not only as a venue, but as a platform for projecting Pakistan's soft image to the world. It demonstrated how cultural diplomacy, when executed with authenticity and attention to detail, can leave a lasting impact.

The retreat stands as a reminder that places like Peshawar Barracks are more than locations, they are storytellers, shaping perceptions and building bridges between nations through shared experiences and genuine hospitality.



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Mission

To inform, engage, and empower audiences through impactful storytelling focused on Pakistan's economic development, regional connectivity, and political landscape. Pakistan Economic Network is committed to fostering a deeper understanding of national and regional economic issues by producing credible journalism, high-quality explainer videos, and engaging podcasts. We aim to create a media ecosystem where business activity, economic policies, and public narratives converge to drive inclusive growth and informed decision-making.



Vision

To become Pakistan's leading digital media platform that shapes national discourse around economic progress, regional cooperation, political awareness, and business innovation. We envision a future where media not only reports change but becomes a catalyst for it by elevating voices, simplifying complex economic issues, and connecting communities with opportunities for development.



Objectives

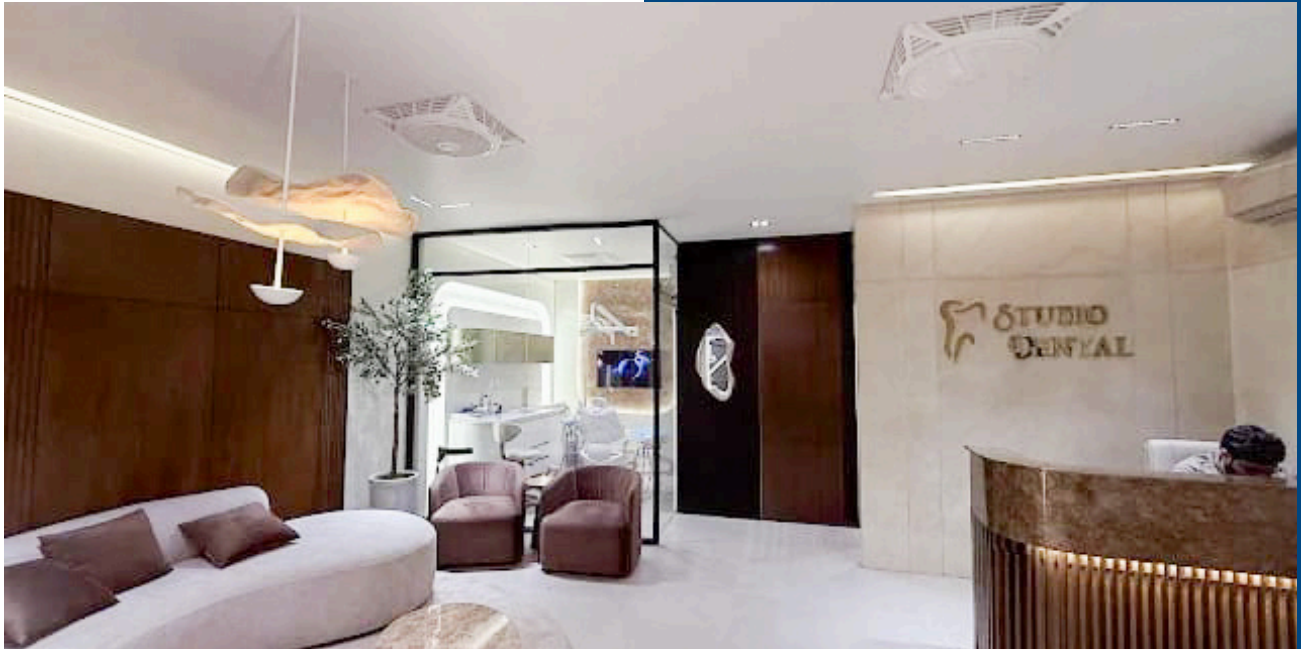
- Pakistan Economic Network strives to deliver purposeful content through the following goals. We aim to offer fact-based insights into Pakistan's economic direction, bringing clarity to the public on key indicators such as trade performance, inflation trends, investment flows, and development programs. A core objective is to amplify Pakistan's regional importance by highlighting strategic connectivity projects like CPEC, transnational trade corridors, and bilateral agreements with neighboring countries.
- We intend to promote a business-friendly narrative by covering local entrepreneurship, SME success stories, export innovations, and government policies that impact the private sector. Our content prioritizes inclusivity by giving voice to underrepresented regions and communities, especially those impacted by economic transitions. Through dedicated coverage of local politics, we seek to unpack how governance decisions shape the broader economic and social fabric of the country.
- Pakistan Economic Network also emphasizes the importance of media literacy in the digital age. We produce clear, accessible explainer videos that break down complex economic, political, and developmental issues for young and diverse audiences. Our podcast series features leading voices from politics, economics, business, and civil society, creating a space for thought-provoking dialogue and problem-solving.
- We aim to act as a bridge between policymakers, citizens, and the business community by regularly analyzing public policy and regulatory shifts. As a forward-looking platform, we are committed to tracking global trends that affect Pakistan, from shifts in international trade policy to digital transformation and sustainability.
- Finally, we believe that journalism must be both accountable and creative. Our focus on digital innovation allows us to deliver timely, relevant, and compelling content across platforms—ensuring that Pakistan Economic Network remains a trusted source for news, analysis, and strategic communication in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

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