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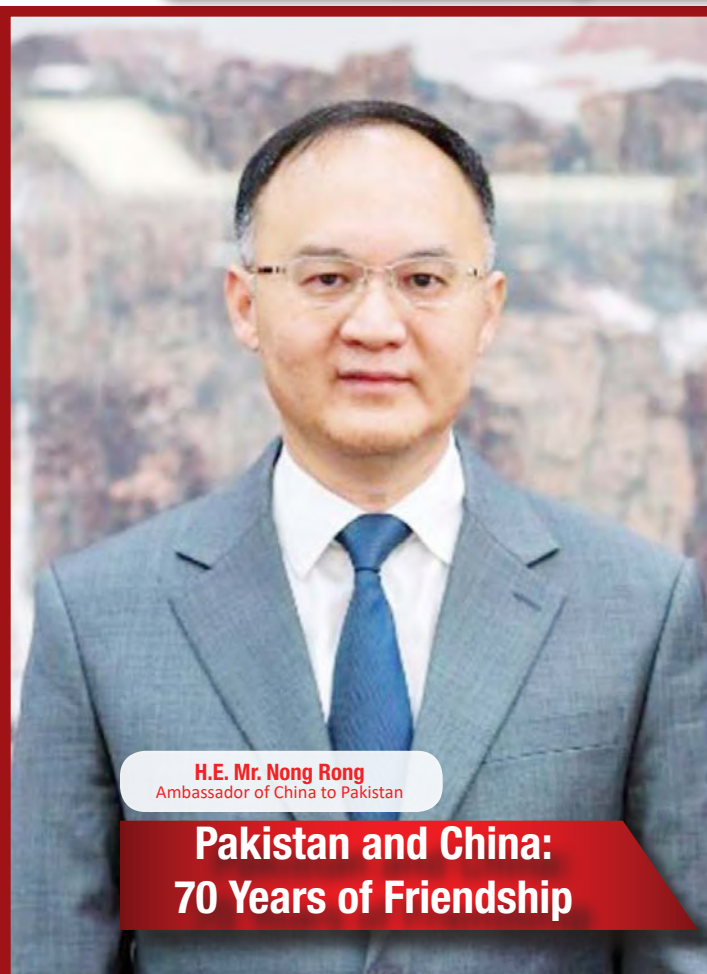
H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon
President of Tajikistan

H.E. Mr. Imran Khan
Prime Minister of Pakistan

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President Dr. Arif Alvi conferring the award of Hilal-e-Pakistan upon President UN National Assembly



H.E. Mr. Nong Rong
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10 Visit of the President of Republic of Tajikistan to Pakistan

President Dr Arif Alvi has said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Tajikistan based on strong historic, religious and cultural links. He stated that Pakistan and Tajikistan had considerable scope of cooperation in the areas of trade, economy, culture, education and defence which needed to be further strengthened.

22 TRADE, CONNECTIVITY AMONG ECO STATES PIVOTAL FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY: PRESIDENT

President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday stressed greater trade and connectivity among the countries of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to attain the goals of cohesive regional development and prosperity. Addressing here at the inaugural session of Second Conference of Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) countries, the president said economic integration among regional states could act as an effective driver to foster sustainable peace and security. The conference gathered speakers and representatives of the national parliaments of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

45 Letter of President Xi Jinping to President Arif Alvi on the 70th years of Establishment of Diplomatic Relation between China and Pakistan

Honorable Mr. President,
On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on behalf of the Government and people of China, and in my own name, I would like to extend warm congratulations and best wishes to Your Excellency, and through you to the Government and people of Pakistan. China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners that stand firmly by each other on issues of core interests and major concerns.

68 H.E. Andreas Ferrarese Ambassador of Republic of Italy sends his greetings on the National Day.

Today is the 2nd June, and Italians all over the world are celebrating "Festa Della Repubblica". On this day, back in 1946, a referendum was held in Italy where Italian people were asked to choose between monarchy or republic for their state. 54.3% of the voters opted for republic and thus Italy became a republic on the second of June 1946. Every year we celebrate this day as the republic day or our national day. Following the covid-19 Sops, we are not able to celebrate national day this year with our friends as we used to do, but we very much look forward to return to normalcy after vaccination completes.

76 Pakistan and Italy have enjoyed long-standing excellent relations

Pakistanis are similar to Italians in many ways. We both have a long history and share many traditional values, deeply rooted in our cultures such as importance of family life, respect for foreigners and hospitality as well as resourcefulness and appreciation for private initiative entrepreneurship

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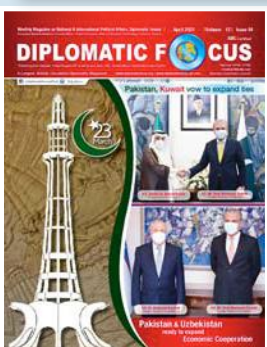
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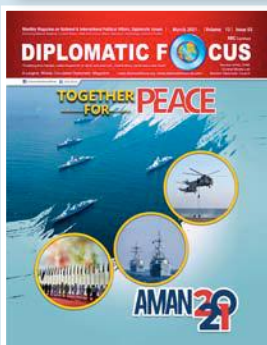
May 2021



April 2021



March 2021



February 2021



Mian Fazal Elahi

The success of Palestinian activism in Jerusalem angered the Israeli authorities, who launched a violent campaign to suppress it. We are witnessing a new dawn for the Palestinian national movement. Today, we are the most optimistic and hopeful we have ever been in the past two decades. With Jerusalem at the centre of this resurgent national spirit, the Palestinian movement once again stands united in resisting the Israeli occupation, apartheid, political persecution and colonial violence. On May 18, Palestinians across historic Palestine closed their businesses and lifted the Palestinian flag, joining an historic general strike against Israeli colonialism.

Palestinians were not deterred by the barbaric bombing of civilians in Gaza, nor by the Israeli lynch mobs which attacked Palestinian citizens of Israel, nor by Israel's increasingly violent policies targeting Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The raids on Al-Aqsa Mosque, which triggered the escalation in the first place, did not cease either. Less than three days after announcing a ceasefire with the Palestinian factions in Gaza, Israeli forces stormed the premises of the mosque again, attacking worshippers, forcing many out while arresting youth who protested. Their aim was to clear the way for extremist Jewish activists to enter Al-Aqsa, in a move of showing Israeli dominance over the Muslim holy site.

Despite the continuing Israeli repression of the Palestinian protests and activism, the spirit of the Palestinian national movement is alive, well and thriving, with Jerusalem at its heart. The youth of this city and all of historic Palestine radiate courage and their energy is contagious. They are capturing the hearts and minds of people around the world, opening their eyes to the Israeli crimes and apartheid, and delivering one moral defeat after another to the Israeli regime.

The articles, columns, Opinions are published in Magazine in good faith. However, the contents of these writings may not necessarily match the views of the Editor/Publisher/Organization.

Important Announcement



It has been announced for the general information that Mr. Mian Assad Ullah has been appointed as Editor In Chief of the Monthly "Diplomatic Focus" for the UK/EU Edition. He is entitled to participate official /non-officials diplomatic engagements, events, national days, social evenings/gatherings, press conferences/interviews and can be contacted for all kinds of stuff including articles, supplements and advertisements etc). It is requested to all Diplomatic missions and government high officials of UK, please contact with Mr. Mian Assad Ullah on His mailing address, 4 Ipswich Road, SW17 9RH, London. Cell number:+44-7961005954/ 2087694850, Email: uk.diplomaticfocus@gmail.com, assadmian1@gmail.com

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DAILY PAKISTAN JOURNAL



The World should take benefit of business-friendly environment by investing in different sectors of economy in Pakistan: President Alvi

By Mian Fazal Elahi

President Dr Arif Alvi has called for increasing cooperation with all friendly countries in the areas of trade, economy, culture and defence. He emphasized the need for enhanced engagements with the friendly countries at political, economic and cultural levels to further expand cooperation with them for the mutual benefits.

The President made these remarks while talking to the Residents Ambassadors-designates of Republic of Uzbekistan, Republic of Cuba, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Republic of Bulgaria and Argentina, who made separate calls on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Earlier, the Ambassador-designate of Uzbekistan to Pakistan Mr. Oybek Uzmanov, Ambassador-designate of Cuba to Pakistan Mr. Javier Caro González, Ambassador-designate of Vietnam to Pakistan Mr. Nguyen Tien Phong, Am-

bassador-designate of Bulgaria to Pakistan Ms. Irena Genadieva Gancheva, and Ambassador-designate of Argentina to Pakistan Mr. Leopoldo Francisco Sahores presented their credentials to President Dr Arif Alvi at a ceremony.

Congratulating the newly-appointed Ambassadors, the President expressed the hope that they would play their role in further strengthening political, commercial and cultural relations with Pakistan.

While talking to the envoys separately, President Dr Arif Alvi said that Pakistan wanted to work closely with the friendly countries to address various challenges being faced by the world.

He briefed the envoys about the successful economic policies of the government, saying that Pakistan's economy is performing well despite the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The President apprised the envoys that Pakistan offered investment op-

portunities and the world should take benefit of business-friendly environment by investing in different sectors of economy.

He underscored that Pakistan's main emphasis had shifted from geo-political to geo-economics and was focusing on improving regional connectivity and economic integration.

The President also highlighted the brutalities committed by Indian security forces against innocent people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

He urged the international community to play active role to stop India from committing human rights violations and grant the right of self-determination to the people of IIOJK in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions.



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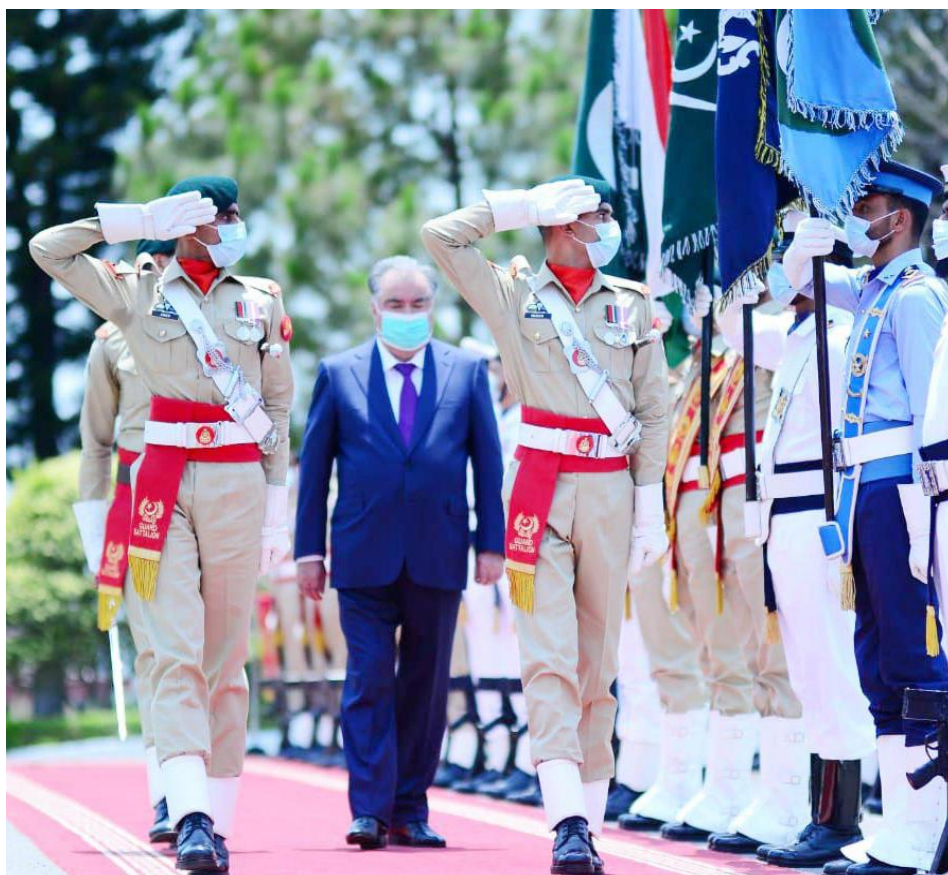
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Visit of the President of Republic of Tajikistan to Pakistan

By Mian Fazal Elahi

President Dr Arif Alvi has said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Tajikistan based on strong historic, religious and cultural links. He stated that Pakistan and Tajikistan had considerable scope of cooperation in the areas of trade, economy, culture, education and defence which needed to be further strengthened. He made these remarks while talking to the President of Tajikistan, Mr Emomali Rahmon, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Talking to the visiting dignitary, the President highlighted Pakistan's "Vision Central Asia", which laid strong emphasis on forging deeper links with Central Asian states in trade, investment, energy, security and defence, and people-to-people exchanges. The President underlined that Pakistan's main emphasis had shifted from geo-politics to geo-economics and was focusing on optimally utilizing its location in this context. He underscored that the trade authorities and business communities of the two countries needed to collaborate effectively to enhance the volume of existing bilateral trade. He also emphasised the importance of the early completion of flagship CASA-1000 Transmission Line Project. The President stressed that Central Asia was



an area of special focus for Pakistan, especially for regional connectivity and integration. In this context, the President stressed the importance of peace and stability in Afghanistan achieved through a negotiated political solution. The President also briefed the Tajik President about the COVID-19 situation in Pakistan, saying that the successful policy of the Government led to containing the disease. The President expressed the hope that this visit would further strengthen the excellent bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.

He added that it was heartening that both sides adopted a Joint Declaration and had signed a number of Agreements/MoUs today, after the delegation-level talks. President Arif Alvi congratulated the Tajik President on successfully organizing the 9th Ministerial Conference of Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process in Dushanbe in March 2021. He also appreciated that a high level parliamentary delegation from Tajikistan was participating in the 2nd General Conference of the Parliamentary Assembly of Economic Cooperation Organization in Islamabad from 31 May to 03 June 2021. The President of Tajikistan said that both countries had huge potential for increasing cooperation in the areas of trade, economy and culture.

He emphasised the need for improving connectivity between the two countries which would greatly help to improve economic relations between the two countries. Both sides reaffirmed the resolve to make coordinated efforts to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan as a stable and peaceful Afghanistan was essential for the materialization of energy and economic projects between the two countries. The Pres-





ident of Tajikistan thanked the government of Pakistan for extending a warm welcome and hospitality to him and the members of his delegation. He also invited his Pakistani counterpart to visit Tajikistan.

On the invitation of Prime Minister of Pakistan H.E. Imran Khan, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Emomali Rahmon paid an official visit to Pakistan on 2-3 June 2021. His Excellency President Rahmon was accompanied by a high-level delegation. During bilateral meetings, the two leaders held in-depth and wide-ranging discussions covering all aspects of bilateral cooperation and regional and international issues of mutual interest. Both leaders reaffirmed the fraternal ties existing between the two countries marked by shared faith, history, culture and geography.

While expressing satisfaction at the steadily growing relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan, the two leaders expressed their resolve to elevate bilateral ties to a new level of strategic cooperation for the mutual benefit of the two countries and peoples. The leaders extended felicitations to each other on the 30th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two brotherly countries. Pakistan was among the first countries to recognize independence of the Republic of Tajikistan in 1991. The Prime Minister also congratulated the President on assuming the current Chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The two leaders expressed satisfaction over the excellent bilateral cooperation at the multilateral fora, including the UN, OIC, ECO and SCO.

They reiterated their commitment to further strengthen multilateral cooperation in the future for the global and regional peace and development. The leaders expressed serious concern at the outbreak of third wave of Covid-19 pandemic around the world that has resulted in the loss of many precious lives and caused huge economic losses, especially for developing countries. To effectively combat the pandemic, they emphasized the importance of international solidarity and cooperation as well as joint efforts for affordable and equitable supply and

distribution of vaccine to all countries in coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO). Recalling the signing of two Joint Declarations entitled (i) Joint Declaration on "Road to Strategic Partnership for Regional Solidarity"; and (ii) Joint Declaration on "Strengthening the Road to Strategic Partnership for Regional Integration", adopted at leadership level in 2017 and 2018, respectively, the two leaders agreed to initiate steps towards formalizing the strategic partnership agreement between the two countries for the peace, progress and prosperity at the earliest.

The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the existing inter-parliamentary cooperation and agreed to have regular exchanges of parliamentary delegations for further deepening bilateral ties. During high-level talks, the two sides accorded particular focus to bolstering bilateral economic and trade ties by exploring new opportunities and avenues, particularly in the backdrop of Tajikistan's National Development Strategy (NDS) - 2030 and Pakistan's development priorities shifting from geo-politics to geo-economics. The two leaders underscored the importance of regularly convening the meetings of Pakistan-Tajikistan Joint Commis-

sion on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation to further strengthen bilateral trade and economic ties. They emphasized the need for full implementation and regular follow-up to its decisions. It was agreed to hold the next session of the Inter-Governmental Commission later this year.

The two leaders noted with satisfaction the activities of multiple Joint Working Groups (JWGs) constituted to further boost the already growing bilateral cooperation in various fields, particularly trade, investment, transport, energy, culture and tourism. They highlighted the role of the Joint Business Council (JBC) constituted between the two countries in building direct business linkages and urged to hold its meetings regularly by the Chambers of Commerce and private sectors. They also agreed to organize trade exhibitions and business forums on regular basis with a view to boosting bilateral trade. The leaders also recognized the need for creating more investor-friendly environment in the two countries in particular to encourage and facilitate joint investments.

The two leaders noted with appreciation the progress achieved in the implementation of the flagship power project of CASA-1000 and reiter-



ated their resolve to complete the project at the earliest. They agreed that the materialization of the project will establish energy connectivity leading to prosperity for all. They emphasized the need to tap the vast potential that remains unexplored, particularly in the areas of trade, energy, connectivity, agriculture and industry for the mutual benefit. The two leaders emphasized enhanced cooperation in education, culture and tourism through mutual development and joint ventures and highlighted the need to facilitate people-to-people contacts.

They underscored the importance of road, rail and air links between the two countries for promotion of bilateral as well as regional connectivity and resolved to improve the existing facilities and explore new options for improving rail, road and air connectivity. The Prime Minister reiterated Pakistan's support to Tajikistan's membership in the Quadrilateral Traffic-in-Transit Agreement (QTTA). The Prime Minister informed the President about operationalization of Gwadar Seaport and offered Tajikistan to avail the facility of Pakistani seaports and CPEC. The Prime Minister highlighted that Pakistani seaports offer the most efficient and economic route to Central Asian countries including Tajikistan. In these regards the President of Tajikistan offered to convene Joint working group to address issues of transit trade at earliest and invite Afghanistan to participate in its meeting to boost trade and commerce with the view to engage broader region in this process. The two leaders noted with pleasure the growing bilateral cooperation in the field of defence & security and reiterated their resolve to further boost the same in order to overcome the common security challenges faced by the two countries and the region as a whole.

They emphasized the need to enhance cooperation in counter-terrorism, combating cross-border organized crime and human and drug trafficking and agreed to hold the next meeting of Joint Working Group on Countering International Terrorism at an early date. The Tajik side appreciated Pakistan's immense contribution to the global efforts against terrorism. Both leaders vowed to further deepen mutual cooperation in the common fight against terrorism and extremism. The Tajik side appreciated Pakistan's continued humanitarian, material and technical support for Tajikistan's development and progress. The President also appreciated the excellence and expertise of Pakistani institutions in the field of learning and training of professionals in various fields.

The two leaders exchanged views on regional and global issues and urged the international community to play its active role and help peacefully resolve all the outstanding disputes around the world in line with the UN Security Council resolutions and the principles of international law. 22. The two leaders also discussed the adverse effects of climate change, and environmental challenges in the region and



agreed to step-up efforts and adopt joint measures. The Prime Minister recognized the role of Tajikistan in the field of Water Diplomacy by hosting international moots in recent years to draw the attention of the international community towards better management of water resources. The two leaders exchanged views on the rise of Islamophobia world-wide and expressed support for the joint initiatives and collective efforts of the OIC to combat this scourge including through the designation of 15 March as International Day to combat Islamophobia by the UN General Assembly. Both leaders had an in-depth discussion on security situation in Afghanistan and ongoing peace process. The President appreciated Pakistan's role in facilitating the Afghan peace process.

The two sides emphasized on an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led resolution of the conflict through an inclusive negotiated political settlement. The Prime Minister of Pakistan extended his best wishes for successful organization of the 20th Anniversary of SCO Council of Heads of State meeting scheduled to be held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on 16-17 September 2021. In order to further deepen and diversify the bilateral relations, the following legal instruments were signed:

- i. Cooperation Programme between Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan and Tajikistan
- ii. Agreement on International Road Transport
- iii. Agreement between the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in the field of Art and Culture
- iv. Memorandum of Understanding between Tajik Institute of Languages, Dushanbe, Tajikistan and National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad, Pakistan
- v. Memorandum of Understanding between

Technological University of Tajikistan and COM-SATS University Islamabad

vi. Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Government of the Islamic Republic of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for Cooperation in the field of Prevention and Liquidation of Emergency Situations

vii. Memorandum of Understanding Between Agency for State Financial Control and Struggle Against Corruption of the Republic of Tajikistan and National Accountability Bureau of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

viii. Memorandum of Understanding between Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Tajikistan

ix. Agreement on Cooperation between the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

x. Agreement on Cooperation between the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Quetta Balochistan of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

xi. Academic Cooperation Agreement between Tajik Technical University named after academician M.S. Osimi and Indus University of Pakistan The two leaders appreciated each other about the outcomes of the current bilateral visit. They expressed confidence that the understanding reached during the talks would further deepen cooperation between the two countries. The President of Tajikistan thanked Prime Minister Imran Khan for warm and gracious hospitality and once again invited him to take part in the Jubilee SCO Summit in Dushanbe and to pay an official visit to Tajikistan.



President of the United Nations General Assembly visited Pakistan

By Mian Fazal Elahi

President Dr. Arif Alvi received the President of the United Nations General Assembly (PGA), Mr. Volkan Bozkir. Views were exchanged on a wide range of issues. The President expressed Pakistan's strong commitment to the central role of the UN in upholding multilateralism to foster peace, prosperity and harmony around the globe. The President also called for the implementation of the UN resolutions that affirmed the inalienable right to self-determination of the peoples of Palestine and Jammu & Kashmir. To mitigate the social and economic impacts of Covid-19 on the developing countries, the President underscored the importance of ensuring universal and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccine. He commended the role of PGA in convening a special meeting of the General Assembly on 21 May 2021 to discuss the situation in Palestine. He underlined the need to promote morality, tolerance, justice and righteousness in international relations and all platforms of United Nations in order to address contemporary forms of racism such as Islamophobia.

PGA Mr. Bozkir briefed the President on the various initiatives undertaken during his Presidency of the UN General Assembly to address key international political and socio-economic issues. Later, at a Special Investiture Ceremony, the President conferred the Award of 'Hilal-e-Pakistan' on Mr. Bozkir. The ceremony was attended by Federal Ministers, senior officials of the Government of Pakistan, and members of Diplomatic Corps. The award was conferred in recognition of Mr. Bozkir's outstanding services for the promotion of international peace, security and sustainable development, in his capacity as the President of the United Nations General Assembly. Mr. Bozkir is on an official





visit to Pakistan from 26 to 28 May 2021 on the invitation of Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi. Mr. Bozkir – the first Turkish national to preside over the UN General Assembly – is a former diplomat and a senior politician.

The President of the United Nations General Assembly (PGA), Mr. Volkan Bozkir, called on Prime Minister Imran Khan. A wide range of issues were discussed during the meeting pertaining to regional and international peace and security, sustainable development and economic recovery efforts in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. Views were exchanged on key items on the UN agenda such as Palestine, the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, Afghan peace process, and illicit financial flows from proceeds of crime, corruption and bribery. The Prime Minister lauded the role of PGA in convening the special meeting of the General Assembly on Palestine, stressing that following the announcement of ceasefire steps should be taken

to revive the peace process and ensure a just and lasting solution in line with relevant UN resolutions and two-state vision.

The Prime Minister underscored Pakistan's strong commitment to multilateralism with the UN playing a central role. He highlighted the need for enhanced international cooperation, under the UN auspices, to address climate change and environmental degradation, as well as debt relief to support the developing countries' economic recovery efforts and attainment of Sustainable Development Goals by the target date of 2030.

Mr. Bozkir briefed the Prime Minister on the various initiatives undertaken during his Presidency of the UN General Assembly to address key international political and socio-economic issues. Mr. Bozkir is on an official visit to Pakistan from 26 to 28 May 2021, on the invitation of Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi. Mr. Bozkir – the first Turkish national to preside over the UN General Assembly – is

a former diplomat and a senior politician. He earlier visited Pakistan in August 2020 and also met the Prime Minister on that occasion.

Mr. Volkan Bozkir, the President of the United Nations General Assembly (PGA), met Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi. The interaction included a tête-à-tête, followed by delegation level talks and a Joint Press Stake-out.

The Foreign Minister also hosted a lunch in the honour of the visiting dignitary which was attended by Ministers and members of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee. The Foreign Minister discussed a wide range of political and socio-economic issues on the UN agenda with the PGA, including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, situation in Palestine, Afghan peace process, reform of the UN Security Council, equitable access to COVID-19 Vaccines, and Financing for Sustainable Development.

The Foreign Minister apprised Mr. Bozkir about the grave human rights and humanitarian sit-



uation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The Foreign Minister stressed that India's systematic efforts to change the demographic structure of the occupied territory were in contravention of international law, including the 4th Geneva Convention. The Foreign Minister called for a just and peaceful solution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute in line with UN Security Council resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people. Condemning the Israeli atrocities in Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Foreign Minister commended the role of Mr. Bozkir in organizing a special meeting of the UN General Assembly last week. He emphasized that the international community must fulfil its responsibility in protecting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and take steps to facilitate a just, comprehensive and lasting solution in line with the UN resolutions envisaging the establishment of a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian state, with pre-1967 borders, and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Focusing on the importance of the UN reforms, the Foreign Minister underscored the need to transform the Organization into a more effective, transparent, democratic, accountable and efficient body. Appreciating the role of the PGA in that regard, he reiterated Pakistan's support for a comprehensive and consensus-based reform of the UN Security Council. The Foreign Minister highlighted Pakistan's positive contribution in facilitating the Afghan peace process and reiterated Pakistan's support for a negotiated political settlement for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process. Welcoming the PGA's initiative of "Vaccine 4 All", the Foreign Minister re-emphasized Pakistan's call for universal access to affordable vaccines for COVID-19. He stressed the importance of removing export restrictions on vaccines and essential materials for the benefit of humanity.

The Foreign Minister further stressed the need for enhanced international cooperation, under UN auspices, to end illicit financial flows



and enhance investments in sustainable infrastructure in order to meet the sustainable development and climate goals. PGA Volkan Bozkir is on an official visit to Pakistan from 26 to 28 May 2021. Mr. Bozkir – the first Turkish national to preside over the UN General Assembly – is a former diplomat and a senior politician. He earlier visited Pakistan in August 2020. The PGA's second visit to Islamabad in less than a year is reflective of Pakistan's support for multilateralism and the central role of the UN in international affairs. It signifies Pakistan's commitment to promoting the UN's mission of peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights for all.





Pakistan reveres its ever green friendship with China: Speaker National Assembly

Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser has said that the early completion of CPEC related projects would bring unprecedented socio-economic progress in the country. He remarked that incumbent government is resolved to strengthen its ties with China on the basis of mutual cooperation and progress. He expressed these views while meeting with Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong who called on him today in Islamabad.

Speaker Asad Qaiser also remarked that Pak-China Friendship is ever lasting and is based on mutual trust and cooperation in every socio-economic

field. He also stressed on increasing parliamentary diplomacy between both countries. He also invited Chairman National People Congress of China to attend a Seminar to highlight the benefits of CPEC which would be organized in Lahore. He said that such seminars would be organized all across the country including four provinces, AJ&K and GB.

While commenting upon the efficacy of CPEC, he remarked that CPEC would ensure socio-economic development not only of Pakistan but of the whole region. He also mentioned that proj-

ect of Rashakai Economic zone and ML One project would bring new economic opportunities and these would also open new avenues of employment. He said that Parliament of Pakistan is supervising the progress of all ongoing projects of CPEC.

Chinese Ambassador Mr.Nong Rong remarked that successful completion of CPEC would strengthen already strong bond between both nations. He also remarked that in the Second Phase of CPEC, the cooperation in the field of Agriculture, Science and Technical areas would be enhanced.





Letter of President, Dr. Arif Alvi to His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President, State of Palestine

Excellency,
I convey to you our deep sadness and concern over the series of violent attacks perpetrated by Israeli occupying forces against innocent worshipers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan. Your Pakistani brothers and sisters, including myself, share your pain and distress caused by Israel's indiscriminate killing of innocent Palestinians, including children, in Gaza. We express our profound sympathies and condolences for the victims of these attacks and pray

for speedy recovery of the injured. Pakistan strongly condemns Israel's violence and illegal actions against Palestinians that are against humanitarian norms, human rights and international law. I reassure you of our efforts in mobilizing the international community for the Palestinian cause and to continue raising voice for the Palestinian people. I avail myself of this opportunity to reaffirm Pakistan's abiding support for a just settlement of the Palestine issue in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and for

establishment of an independent, viable, and contiguous Palestinian State, with pre-1967 borders, with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital. I pray for the blessings of Allah Almighty for you and the people of Palestine. Please accept, Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sd/-

(Dr. Arif Alvi)

His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas
President
State of Palestine

Prime Minister's Statement Nikkei's 26th Conference on "Future of Asia"

Theme: "Shaping the Post-Covid Era: Asia's Role in the Global Recovery"

Bismillah-er-Rahman-er-Rahim,
Chairman Nikkei Corporation,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,
I am honored to speak to you at this 26th Conference on the Future of Asia. Asia is home to half of the world's population. Asia's future is the world's future. This is where the most dynamic economic growth, social change, technological advances, and human development have taken place during the last 50 years. This is where the course of history will be decided in the 21st Century.

Today, Asia – and the world – are at an important juncture. We confront unprecedented challenges; but we also have exciting opportunities to advance progress and prosperity. Our first priority, at present, is to confront and conquer the Covid-19 pandemic. This virus has created the worst global health, economic and social crisis in the past 100 years. It has infected hundreds of millions, killed over 3 million people, reversed economic growth, enlarged poverty, and worst of all created huge unemployment. Unless fully contained, it could create social chaos and threaten peace and security in Asia and elsewhere in the world.

No one will be safe unfortunately until everyone is safe. We must act collectively to ensure that the Covid vaccines are made available to everyone, everywhere, as soon as possible. The vaccine's supply and distribution must be immediately expanded; patent rights waived; production ramped up, including in the developing world; and the COVAX facility fully extended and funded. The virus has had the most severe impact on the poorest countries, but not just the poorest countries- the poor and all the countries. It is essential to provide low income countries, and others in financial distress, with the fiscal space and liquidity to respond to the impact of the pandemic, and revive growth and preserve social stability. I had proposed a 5-point agenda for debt relief, SDR creation and re-allocation, larger concessional finance, fulfillment of climate finance commitments, and an end to illicit financial flows from developing countries. I am gratified that consensus is evolving on these essential actions. I welcome the extension of the G-20's debt suspension initiative; the agreement to create \$650 billion in new SDRs; to expand IDA funding; and expand the emergency support programmes of the Multilateral Development Banks. The recommendations of the FACTI Panel on illicit financial flows must also be implemented. To ensure rapid recovery, we in Asia, and elsewhere, must keep economies open, revive disrupted supply chains, and resist protectionist temptations.

If Asian and other economies are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, and net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, we will need to invest massively in new and sustainable infrastructure – energy, transportation,



housing, agriculture and industry. Both public and private investment should be mobilized to this end. The less developed countries must be helped to prepare a pipeline of sustainable infrastructure projects. To attract private investment, such projects will need to be "de-risked" through blended finance and investment guarantees and incentives.

We must also continue to mobilize science and technology to accelerate sustainable growth through targeted research on innovations and applications required to advance the sustainable development and environmental goals.

The rapid digitalization of economies is essential to ensure dynamic growth. The digital divide between advanced economies, where 87% of people are online, and the poorest countries, where only 19% have Internet access, must be bridged. Otherwise, the divergence in the growth trajectory of the advanced and developing economies will widen further. This will require expanded investment in digital hardware and software. Resilient and dynamic economic growth, particularly in Asia, depends significantly on greater integration and physical connectivity. China's Belt and Road Initiative provides the important pathway to such regional integration across the Asia-Pacific Region and beyond. We welcome proposals from Japan and others to support and finance "quality" infrastructure in Asia and elsewhere. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative. It has generated economic activity, employment and will enhance bilateral and regional trade. Pakistan has invited all friendly countries to join in investing in the several economic and industrial zones being established under the CPEC umbrella. Pakistan looks toward serving as a geo-economic hub connecting the economies of Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia and beyond. These sub-regions are the areas which possess greater potential for dynamic new growth in Asia.

This potential cannot be fully unleashed until we resolve the outstanding conflicts and disputes in

the region. Pakistan has actively supported the peace process in Afghanistan. As foreign forces withdraw from Afghanistan, it is imperative to redouble efforts to promote the peace process between the Afghan parties. As I have said over the years, there is no military solution to the conflict. Pakistan hopes that violence will be sharply reduced, and the Afghan parties will engage constructively to secure an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive political settlement.

Pakistan desires peaceful, cooperative relations with all its neighbours, including India. But India must stop the human rights violations in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and revisit the unilateral measures it took on 5 August 2019. It is essential that an enabling environment is created for dialogue to peacefully resolve the Jammu & Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UNSC resolutions and the wishes of the people of Kashmir. We hope that other threats to peace and security in Asia will also be resolved. The situation in Palestine remains a matter of deep concern for everyone. The international community must take urgent actions to stop the Israeli attacks against Palestinians, prevent the desecration of holy places especially Al-Aqsa Mosque, and facilitate a just and lasting solution in line with relevant UN resolutions and the two-state vision.

Finally, we consider it vital to avoid great-power rivalry and tensions in the Asia-Pacific. There is ample room in Asia for the economic, trade and investment participation of all States. Yet, Asia must not become the theatre of tensions induced from without or within. The differences and disputes in Asia require Asian solutions on the basis of Asian values and interests. The Asia-Pacific, including the Indian Ocean, should become a Zone of Peace, an area of expanding cooperation and prosperity, through strict adherence to the principles of the UN Charter and the Bandung Principles of Peaceful Co-existence.

I thank you.



Statement by the Foreign Minister of Pakistan: Meeting of the UN General Assembly on Palestine

Mr. President,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen

There are times in history when the decisions of nations are remembered by posterity. This is one such moment.

What we do today, or cannot do, will be recorded in history. Driven by arrogance and emboldened by impunity, Israel has mounted a relentless onslaught on the occupied and beleaguered people of Palestine.

As we speak, children, women and men in Palestine are being killed with impunity. In one week of Israeli attacks, over 250 Palestinians have been killed and thousands injured. One-third are women and children. Death echoes in every home in Gaza. The Israeli air strikes are responsible for the taking of every single life of the Abu Hatab family. Two were women and eight children.

Let that sink in for just a moment.

Hundreds of such tragedies are being enacted every hour in Gaza and other parts of the Palestinian territories. So far, over 50,000 Palestinians have fled their homes in Gaza. There is limited access to water, food, hygiene, and health services. Hospitals and access to water and sanitation services depend on electricity. Fuel for the power plants has almost run out.

Gaza is plunged in darkness: literally and metaphorically. The only light is that of Israeli explosions.

This is Palestine, where – in full view of the world – the Israeli air strikes bring down entire buildings to kill and terrorize innocent Palestinians and even silence the media.

It is time to say “Enough”!

The voice of the Palestinian people cannot and will not be silenced. We, the representatives of the Islamic world, are here to speak with them and for them.

Mr. President,

It is appalling that the Security Council has been unable to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council has failed even to demand a cessation of hostilities. Those preventing the Council from doing so bear a heavy responsibility. In these circumstances, the General Assembly must assume its own responsibility. We must not fail the Palestinian people at this critical juncture.

Mr. President,

Our first priority must be to halt the Israeli aggression. I hope that, even at this eleventh hour, the Security Council will call for a cessation of Israel’s attacks. If it fails to do so, the General Assembly must make this demand on behalf of the entire international community. Let us be clear. There is no moral or military equivalence between the beleaguered and occupied Palestinian people – who have no army, no navy, no air force – and the Israeli war – machine – one of the most powerful in the world. This is a war between a military occupier and an occupied people. It is a conflict between illegal occupation and a legitimate struggle for self-determination.

In this context, it is worth recalling General Assembly resolution 2649 of November 1970 which affirms the “legitimacy of the struggle of peoples under colonial and alien

domination recognized as being entitled to the right to self-determination to restore to themselves that right by any means at their disposal.”

Second, we should mobilize all possible humanitarian help for the devastated Palestinian population in Gaza and other parts of the occupied territories. In addition to the UN-RWA emergency appeal, the Secretary-General should launch a comprehensive humanitarian assistance plan to provide succor and sustenance to the Palestinians. We need to send medical teams, medicines and other supplies, food and other necessities to Gaza and other parts of the occupied Palestinian territories. We welcome the access being provided by Egypt to Gaza. Israel must open all the access points to Gaza to ensure the timely and urgent delivery of international assistance.

Third, the General Assembly should call for concrete steps to protect the Palestinians. We should deploy an international protection force, as was called for in General Assembly Resolution ES-10/20 and as demanded by the Islamic Summit Conference on 18 May 2018. If the Security Council cannot agree to send the protection force, a “coalition of the willing” can be formed to provide at least civilian observers to monitor a cessation of the hostilities and supervise the provision of humanitarian help to the Palestinians. We also call on the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to offer protection to the Israel’s Arab citizens who are being lynched and murdered by fascist Israeli gangs at the present time. Fourth, the Gener-

al Assembly should condemn: Israel's forcible and illegal eviction of Palestinians, including in Al-Jarrah district of Jerusalem and continued construction of Jewish settlements; the onslaught against Palestinians worshipers in Haram Al Sharif and Al-Aqsa mosque, the first Qibla of Islam, during the month of Ramadan; and Israel's brutal and indiscriminate aerial and land bombardment of Gaza.

Israel's crimes against humanity should not escape accountability. There should be no impunity for violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and other human rights Conventions. The Human Rights Council, the ICC, the ICJ and other avenues should be activated to ensure Israeli accountability for its war crimes.

Fifth, we must revive concrete efforts to end Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and to dismantle the illegal settlements and the apartheid-like regime Israel has imposed in the occupied territories. The Gener-

al Assembly should secure unconditional implementation of resolution 242 of November 1967 in which the Security Council declared the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war" and demanded that Israel withdraw its armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 war. It is, therefore, imperative to initiate bold steps to secure the implementation of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions calling for the establishment of a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al Sharif as its capital. Pakistan endorses President Abbas call for an International Conference to secure a peaceful settlement.

Mr. President,

The Palestine tragedy is at the heart of the turmoil and conflicts in the Middle East. It is also the principal root cause of the humiliation and anger in the Muslim and Arab world – anger which breeds extremism and often spawns acts of violence. A just solution for

Palestine is imperative for the maintenance of regional and global peace and security. Clearly, the onus for restoring peace rests on Israel. It must end its occupation. It must implement the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

This General Assembly session must send a clear message to the Palestinian people and to Israel.

It is only through determined and decisive action that this Assembly can restore the credibility of the United Nations and demonstrate its effective role in preserving world peace and global order based on equity and justice.

I end with a verse from a great resistance poet of Pakistan:

Ae Arz e Falstin!

Main Bhi Hazir Hun!

O Land of Palestine! I too, am there for you.

I thank you.

Foreign Minister holds meeting with the UN Secretary General

Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi met with the UN Secretary General António Guterres at the United Nations headquarters.

During the meeting, the Foreign Minister expressed deep concern over the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories caused by Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, resulting in over 250 deaths including dozens of women and children. The Foreign Minister underscored that his visit to New York to attend the General Assembly session on Palestine was an expression of Pakistan's firm and unwavering support to the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people for their right to self-determination.

Welcoming the recent ceasefire announcement, the Secretary General expressed the hope that this could help revive efforts for a negotiated settlement of the Palestinian issue.

The Foreign Minister also briefed the UN Secretary General on the serious human rights and humanitarian situation in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) including continued illegal incarceration of the Kashmiri political leaders and extra-judicial killings. The Foreign Minister said that the re-initiation of the 2003 ceasefire understanding between Pakistan and India along the Line of Control (LOC) was a welcome step. Pakistan desired normal relations with India. However, the onus was on India to take steps to create an enabling environment for a meaningful engagement.



He urged the UN Secretary General to use his good offices to resolve the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in line with the UN Charter and the relevant Security Council Resolutions.

Foreign Minister Qureshi highlighted Pakistan's constructive efforts to facilitate the Afghan peace process, and expressed the hope that the Afghan parties would seize the opportunity and reach an inclusive, politically-negotiated settlement, resulting in lasting peace and security in Afghanistan. Expressing deep concern at the rising tide

of intolerance, discrimination, violence and Islamophobia against Muslims, he urged the need for the relevant UN bodies to address this challenge, as well as take effective measures against the threat posed by violent nationalist, supremacist, far right and extreme-right wing terrorist groups and ideologies.

The Foreign Minister is visiting New York to attend the UN General Assembly Session on Palestine as part of Pakistan's extensive diplomatic outreach to mobilize international support for the Palestinians.

2nd CONFERENCE OF PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (PAECO) COUNTRIES

31st May - 3rd June, 2021, Islamabad - Pakistan



TRADE, CONNECTIVITY AMONG ECO STATES PIVOTAL FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY: PRESIDENT

President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday stressed greater trade and connectivity among the countries of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to attain the goals of cohesive regional development and prosperity. Addressing here at the inaugural session of Second Conference of Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) countries, the president said economic integration among regional states could act as an effective driver to foster sustainable peace and security. The conference gathered speakers and representatives of the national parliaments of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The president emphasized proper tapping of the region's immense resources by ECO countries to nurture alliances for a win-win economic stability. "Your voice will be only heard at global platform if you are economically strong and stable," he said, stressing upon the need for a viable regional integration through open trade market for sustainable development and poverty alleviation. Dr Alvi said the ECO region, with its eight million square kilometre land mass and 500 million people, comprised six percent of the world population and had the potential to become economic power



through institutionalized trade policy reforms. In today's world, he said, where morality was becoming irrelevant next to the oppressor's own whims and wishes, a strong leadership and approach promoting the ethos of humanity was direly needed. He mentioned the West's double standards and hypocrisy in the name of "freedom of expression" where the incidents of blasphemy of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) were on rise compared with the intolerance against a slight discussion on Holocaust. He also pointed that labeling the freedom movement of Palestinians and Kashmiris as terrorism by Israel and India was another approach of seeing them through the prism of prejudice. The president, however, categorically said that Pakistan's stance on Israel's violations of human rights was "not anti-Semitic, but anti-Zionist". "We are against genocide. We are not against Jews or Christians, but against all oppressors of humanity," he said. "Anyone who resorts to oppression, we will raise voice against them," he added. The president expressed confidence that the Muslim world would join hands in giving the world a strong message on Islamophobia. Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser said Pakistan believed in the parliamentary partnership among ECO states to ensure socio-economic development. Bound by the bonds of religion, culture and history, he said, it was imperative upon the ECO countries to play a positive role in the comity of nations. He said economic connectivity in the region was significant to deal with the challenges of terrorism, amidst the risk posed by the non-state actors as enemy of prosperity. He proposed ECO investment agency, establishment of inter-regional linkages and promotion of knowledge-based economies. The speakers of the ECO member countries, present on the occasion and also virtually, highlighted different aspects of their mutual cooperation by overcoming regional issues, promoting harmony, safeguarding political liberties and strengthening parliamentary linkages.

REGIONAL COOPERATION AMONG ECO MEMBER STATES IMPERATIVE FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: NA SPEAKER

Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser has said that multilateral cooperation is imperative for regional development and economic prosperity. He remarked that ECO region with an area 8 million Square



kilometer and vast population of 460 million has immense potential of mutual cooperation in the spheres of trade and economy. He expressed these views during his welcome address in inaugural Session of 2nd General Conference of Parliamentary Assembly of the Economic Cooperation Organization (PAECO) in Islamabad.

Speaker Asad Qaiser said that 10 members of ECO can capitalize their potential by Parliamentary cooperation especially in the context of the negatives of COVID-19 Pandemic. He said that Parliament of Pakistan successfully organized a seminar to explore the opportunities to promote trade between Pak-Afghan in 2020 and multiple initiatives has been taken under the Executive committee Pak-Afghan parliamentary Friendship Group.

While mentioning the plight of innocent Kashmiris and Palestinians, he remarked that world should take stock of the gross violations of basic human rights in Indian Occupied Jammu&Kashmir and in Palestine. He said that without resolution of contentious issues like Kashmir and Palestine the sustainable peace cannot be achieved.

Meanwhile, Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser expressed his gratitude for unanimously electing him as Chairperson of Executive Assembly of PAECO. He said that PAECO would provide a platform for strengthening the inter parliamentary cooperation. He expressed the hope that PAECO would continue to open new avenues of cooperation among ECO member States. He congratulated to Afghanistan being unanimously chosen to be host of 3rd PAECO by the Executive Council of PAECO. He hoped that unanimous decisions of Executive Council

would further strengthen PAECO.

Mir Rehman Rahmani, Speaker of the Wolsi Jirga of Afghanistan, Ms. Sahiba Gafarova, Speaker of the Mili Majlis of Azerbaijan, Mr. Talant Mamytov, Speaker of the Supreme Council of Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. Zokirzoda Mahmudthohir, Chairman of the Majlisi Namoyandagon of the Majlisi Oli, Republic of Tajikistan, Mr. Mustafa Sentop, Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Mr. Ismoilov Nurdinjoin, Speaker of the Majlis Oli of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Mr. Mynbay Darkhan as Heads of the delegation of the House of Representatives of Kazakhstan also address the inaugural ceremony of the conference. Whereas, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran, Ms. Gulshat Mammedova Chairperson of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan and Dr. Hadi Soleimanpour Secretary General of ECO would virtually address the conference.

In their addresses the guest Speakers appreciated the Pakistan's effort to bring ECO member Parliament on the platform of PAECO. They also mentioned about vast opportunities in the field of economy and trade. They mentioned of the need of close cooperation and connectivity among ECO member states. The Guest Speakers mentioned that PAECO is not only a platform for regional parliamentary diplomacy through dialogue, consensus, synergy and alignment of national member Parliaments of the member states.

The guest speakers also mentioned that peace and tranquility without eliminating the threats to solidarity and cooperation on a global scale, and especially without international consensus and cooperation on issues such as war, violence and the countering against terrorism is not possible.



President Dr. Arif Alvi was visited by Speaker of Grand National Assembly of Turkey

He said that Pakistan highly values its ties with Turkey as both countries enjoy excellent relations based on religious & cultural linkages, besides unanimity of views on regional & international issues.

The President stated that bilateral relations between the two countries had transformed into a strong strategic partnership over the years and would continue to grow further.

He underscored the need for enhanced pol. & economic cooperation b/w Pakistan & Turkey for mutual benefits. Welcoming the speaker, the President said that Pak-Turkey relations had been institutionalized in the form of the High-Level Strategic Coopera-

The President stated that bilateral relations between the two countries had transformed into a strong strategic partnership over the years and would continue to grow further

tion Council (HLSCC) which had been instrumental in upgrading bilateral relations between the two brotherly nations. He also highlighted that the visit of the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to Islamabad in February 2020, was a manifestation of a joint desire to transform bilateral relations into a strategic partnership.

He expressed his gratitude to Turkey for its steadfast support of Pakistan's stance over the Kashmir cause at all international fora. He also acknowledged Turkey's leading role to fight the COVID-19 pandemic by providing support and assistance to countries including Pakistan.



PAKISTAN AND TURKEY AGREE TO STRENGTHEN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS THROUGH ENHANCED COOPERATION

The Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Mr Mustafa Sentop met Speaker Asad Qaiser on side-lines of the PAECO Conference held in Islamabad today.

While talking to his Turkish counterpart, Speaker Asad Qaiser termed the visit of Mr Mustafa Sentop and his delegation as a step forward in furtherance of the pursuit of friendship and cooperation between two brotherly countries. The Speaker said that religious cultural and historic affinities have bound both the countries in eternal bonds. He was confident that PAECO conference would help explore avenue for furthering the collaboration and connectivity between all the states in the region.

Speaker Turkish Grand National Assembly Mr Mustafa Sentop expressed his gratitude to the Speaker Asad Qaiser for the arousing welcome accorded to him and his delegation at Islamabad. He said that he always feel at home when he is visiting Pakistan. He also mentioned that exploring possibilities of mutual cooperation amongst the regional states was imperative for progress and prosperity. He said that



issues of Kashmir, Palestine and Cyprus were close to Turkey and would always extend its diplomatic and moral support for their peaceful resolution.

Later on, a Protocol on Inter-parliamentary co-operation was signed between National Assembly of Pakistan and Grand National Assembly of Turkey. The National Assembly of Pakistan and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey agreed in principal to exchange information and views on matters related to the bilateral relations as well as on regional and international matters. It was further agreed that both

parliaments would also support and encourage reciprocal visits and contacts between delegations composed of the members of the Parliaments and also urge enhanced contacts between Standing Committees of both Parliaments. Strengthening Inter-parliamentary Friendship Groups of Pakistan and Turkey has also been made part of the protocol. This Protocol shall come into effect on the date of its signature and remain in force for an indefinite period of time unless terminated by either Parliament.



Bilateral Meeting between Foreign Minister of Pakistan & Turkey on Israeli aggression against the Palestinians

By Mian Fazal Elahi

Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi met with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu on 18 May 2021 in Ankara. The Foreign Minister is visiting Turkey to exchange views on the worsening situation in the Israeli Occupied Palestinian Territories. During the meeting, the two Foreign Ministers discussed ways to mobilize the international community to help stop Israeli aggression against the Palestinians.

It was reaffirmed that the international community had a collective responsibility in ensuring necessary steps to help address the dire situation, restore peace, and facilitate a just solution. The Foreign Minister apprised his Turkish counterpart of the sentiment prevailing in Pakistan in support of the people of Palestine including the resolution unanimously adopted by the National Assembly of Pakistan.

While taking stock of the excellent bilateral relations between the two countries, the two sides discussed the ongoing preparations for the 7th Session of the High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) that will be held in Turkey this year. Foreign Minister Qureshi also reiterated appreciation for Turkey's principled and steadfast support on the issue of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

Underscoring Pakistan's abiding interest in



a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Qureshi illustrated Pakistan's consistent efforts to facilitate the Afghan peace process. He expressed the hope that the Afghan parties would seize the opportunity and workout an inclusive politically-negotiated settlement. The Foreign Minister also lauded Turkey's valuable efforts to re-energize the Afghan peace process.

The Foreign Minister and the Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Palestine and other countries, will be traveling to New York to participate

The two Foreign Ministers discussed ways to mobilize the international community to help stop Israeli aggression against the Palestinians

in-person in a meeting of the UN General Assembly on the Palestine issue. Earlier, the Saudi Foreign Minister had convened a meeting of the OIC Executive Committee to discuss the situation in Palestine. The Foreign Minister, as a member of the Executive Committee, had also addressed the meeting.

As part of Pakistan's diplomatic endeavours, Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Qureshi have reached out to a number of countries including Palestine, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Indonesia and others.



Resolution Adopted by OIC Executive Committee at the Level of Foreign Ministers

By Muhammad Bilal Zafar

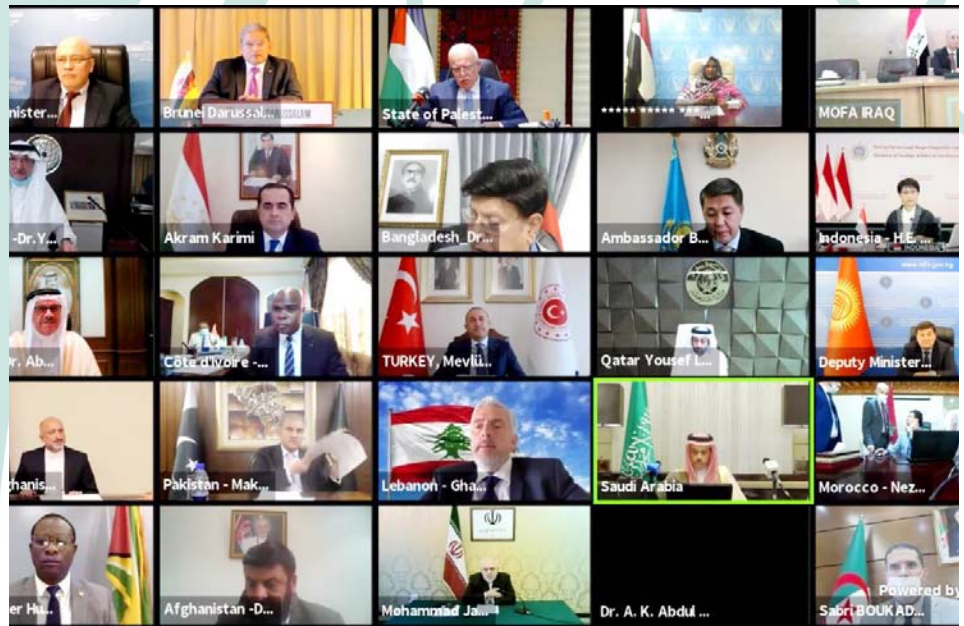
The virtual open-ended extraordinary meeting of the OIC Executive Committee at the level of foreign minister held on Sunday 4 Shawwal 1442AH, corresponding to 16th May 2021, upon the request of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the Islamic Summit, to discuss the aggression by Israel, the occupying Power in the Palestinian territories, particularly, Al-Quds Al-Shareef.

Proceeding from the principles and objectives of the charter of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Pursuant to the resolutions adopted by the ordinary and extraordinary sessions of the Islamic Summit and the Council of Foreign Ministers,

Recalling all relevant United Nations resolutions, including resolutions No. 242 (1967); 252 (1968); 338 (1973); 465, 476, 478 (1980); 1073 (1996), and 2334 (2016), and the conferences of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) and its additional protocols, on applicability of the provisions of the Convention to the land of the State of Palestine and the protection of civilians in times of war,

Driven by the historical, moral and legal responsibility of the Islamic ummah towards the cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Shareef, Having reviewed the latest developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, in particular the escalating aggression by the occupation forces and the extremist Israeli settlers in the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Shareef, the forced eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem, the killing and maiming of civilians, the growing barbaric attack on the Gaza Strip, giving free rein to all means of lethal military aggression against defenceless Palestinian civilians, which has killed and injured hundreds and caused widespread destruction of civilian properties and extensive suffering, constituting direct threat to international peace and security,

- Condemns in the strongest terms the barbaric attacks launched by Israel, the occupying authority, against the Palestinian people and their land and holy sites; demands complete and immediate stop of these attacks that have affected innocent civilians and their properties, in gross violation of international law and United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine; and warns that the continuation of and incitement to these attacks and provocations, the threat on the lives of innocent civilians, causing severe suffering to them increase the risks of instability, with serious implications for security in and outside of the region;
- Warns, in particular, against the dangerous effects of Israel's continued and deliberate inflammation and provocation of the religious



sensibilities and feelings of the Palestinian people and the entire Islamic ummah with its heightened attacks on worshippers, especially starting from the beginning of Ramadan, blocking worshippers' access to the holy sites to perform their religious rites, including Muslims' access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Christians' access to the Church of Holy Sepulchre during the Easter celebrations, violent storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Shareef by the occupation forces, terrorising and attacking peaceful worshippers, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law;

- Demands a stop to all violations being carried out by Israel, the occupying authority, including disrespect for the holy sites, in particular, the sacredness of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Shareef, and not to undermine their historical and legal status; reiterates that Israel is an occupation force and does not possess any legitimate right whatsoever on occupied Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Shareef, and that all measures undermining its status are null and void and of no legal effect;

- Reaffirms the importance of the historical Hashemite custodianship of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Al-Quds and its role in preserving them and the existing legal and historical status there, and in preserving the Arab, Islamic and Christian identity of the sanctuaries; and affirms that the Hashemite management of Al-Quds and Al-Aqsa Mosque waqfs is the only body authorized to manage all affairs of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Al-Quds Haram Al-Shareef;

- Reiterates its rejection and condemnation of the ongoing Israeli settlement colonisation of occupied Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem and the establishment of racial segre-

gation system there, in particular through the building of settlements, destruction of Palestinian properties and building of an expansion wall, confiscation of lands, homes and properties, forceful expulsion and eviction of Palestinians from their homes and land; and affirms that all these acts constitute gross violation of international law, attaining the level of war crimes and crimes against humanity for which the occupation must be held accountable and the colonial system boycotted and sanctioned;

- Expresses particular concern at the rapid pace of the Israeli policy of colonisation of Palestinian lands, especially the threat to forcefully evict hundreds of Palestinian families from their homes in the occupied East Jerusalem, including families in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods which face imminent evictions from extremist colonialist groups with the support and backing of the Israeli occupation authorities, in cooperation with the racial courts; demands immediate cessation of those illegal policies and practices that are at variance with the occupation's obligations under the United Nations Charter, the Fourth Geneva Convention, international human rights law and United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 2334 (2016); and calls for these illegal measures to be challenged at all levels and for urgent international measures to be taken to confront them;

- Holds Israel, the occupying authority, fully responsible for the deterioration of the situation caused by its systematic crimes against the Palestinian people across the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular, the extensive barbaric military attack on the besieged Gaza Strip, with rising number of victims and large scale destruction of properties and basic infrastructure; calls for the impor-



tance of protecting medical and first-aid crews and of allowing them to do their work without hindrance, in line with the provisions of international law in this regard; and stresses the need to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, in conformity with international humanitarian law standards as has been repeatedly advocated by the United Nations General Assembly, including in resolution ES-10/20 of 13 June 2018 and in line with the Final Communique of the 7th Extraordinary Islamic Summit, by dispatching an international protection force to save innocent lives from ongoing attacks and terrorism by the occupation forces and the extremist colonialist militias;

- Underscores the responsibility of the Security Council to act swiftly to end the Israeli occupation's barbaric attacks on the Palestinian people, in line with its Charter mandate to preserve international peace and security; expresses its denouncement of the Security Council's inertia in dealing with the Palestinian question, the oldest on its agenda; and invites it to assume its responsibility towards the Palestinian people and to respond to the calls of states and peoples around the world to rise to its responsibilities to stop these violations, save innocent lives, act without delay to stop the deterioration on the ground and the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Palestinian people, implement its own resolutions and ensure that they are fully respected, being the foundation and key to a just and lasting solution supported by the prevailing international consensus;

- Reiterates that failure of the Security Council to assume its responsibility to deal with this crisis will necessitate approaching the United Nations General Assembly to assume its responsibility, including resumption of the proceedings of the Tenth Emergency Special Session to stop Israeli aggression in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Al-Quds Al-Shareef, to ensure provision of international protection for the Palestinian people, to take measures to hold Israel, the occupying power, accountable for its crimes and gross violations of the rules of international law and human rights, and to blockade its colonial system;

- Calls upon the international community as a whole, including the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to abide by its collective commitments and take measures

and steps to compel Israel, the occupying authority, to fulfil its obligation as occupying authority, including ensuring protection for the Palestinian population; and affirms that the time has come to take serious measures to hold Israel accountable for its gross violations and to stop exempting it from the same rule that are binding on the rest of the world;

- Reiterates its readiness for engagement in all efforts to support the just Palestinian cause and guarantee the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and subsequent just and comprehensive solution on the basis of the two-state solution, in accordance with the internationally agreed principles on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative leading to the establishment of the independent State of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Shareef as its capital, and to continue to work with the international community to achieve that end;

- Notes that the extensive Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people coincides with the 73rd anniversary of the catastrophe, the 1948 tragedy during which widespread ethnic cleansing operation was conducted leading to the forceful removal of 800,000 from their homes and land, after the barbaric massacre carried out in more than 400 Palestinian towns and images by Zionist terrorist groups in Palestine; recalls the historical responsibility of the British mandate authority for the catastrophe and the permanent responsibility of the United Nations for the Palestinian question until all its aspects are resolved; and reiterates on this painful anniversary the right of the Palestinians to return as a fundamental collective and individual right, in conformity with international law and United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 194 (III), which cannot be diminished with the passage of time, and that respecting it is essential for a just and lasting solution;

- Reiterates that Al-Quds Al-Shareef and the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's first qibla and third holiest sanctuary, is a red line for the Islamic ummah, that only with its full liberation from occupation and its return to the Palestinian people and the Islamic ummah will there be security and stability; invites Member States to make concerted and individual efforts, to rally round and defend Al-Quds and its holy sites, face up to Israel's crimes, provide

the Palestinian people with support and the wherewithal for steadfastness to confront the Israeli barbaric attacks; and requests them to respect the OIC resolutions on the Palestinian cause and work to implement them as the central issue of the Islamic ummah and the *raison d'être* of the OIC;

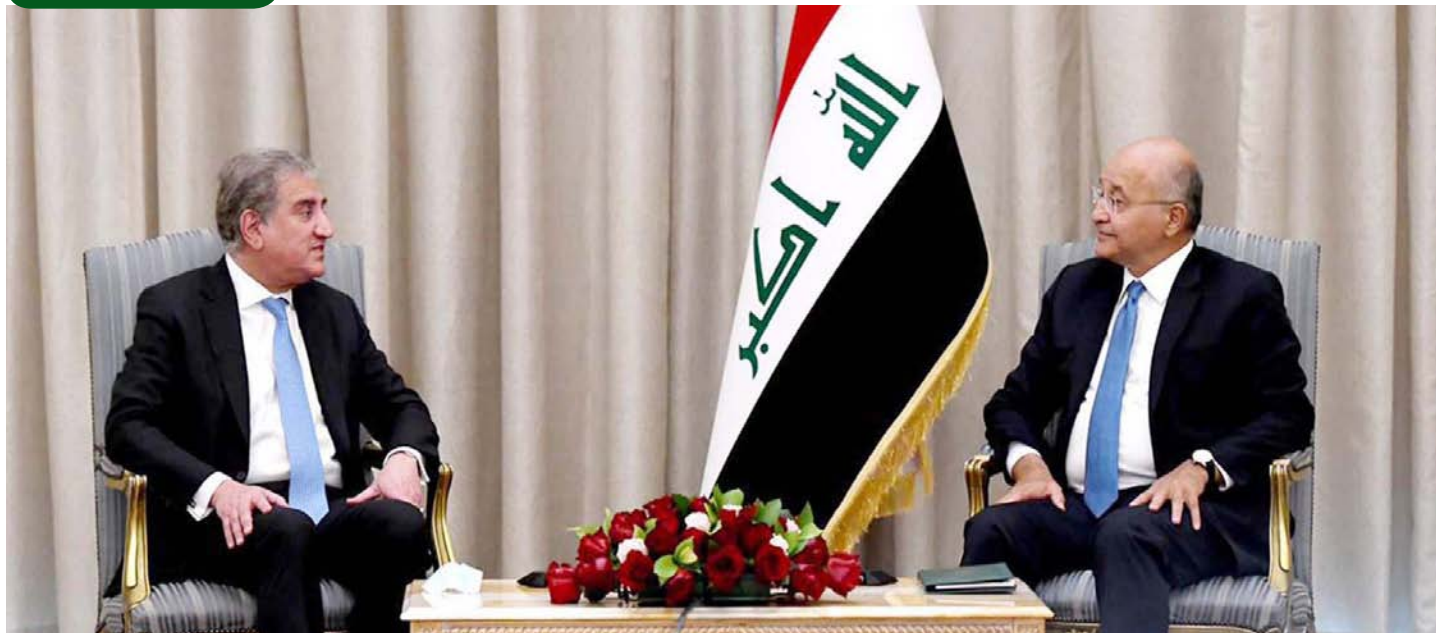
- Appreciates the role played by the Chair of the Al-Quds Committee in protecting the sanctuaries in Al-Quds Al-Shareef and standing up to the measures taken by the Israeli occupation authorities to Judaize the holy city;

- Salutes the steadfastness of the Palestinian people on their land and for their historic stand in the face of aggression and occupation, and epic defence of their legitimate rights, standing up to the obliteration, eviction and revocation attempts by the Israeli racist, colonial regime; and reiterates its support and backing for the Palestinian leadership;

- Invites Member States to provide all forms of support and backing for the Palestinian people to strengthen their resilience on their land and to stress the importance of activating the financial safety network, in accordance with the resolution of the 14th Islamic Summit, particularly for the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure, properties and homes sheltering hundreds of Palestinian families who have been rendered homeless because of the heavy destruction carried out by the Israeli occupation forces;

- Calls for international legal action through specialized international courts and various United Nations agencies to compel Israel, the occupying power, to pay the necessary material and moral reparations for the damages done to the Palestinian infrastructure as well as public and private properties;

- Decides to move urgently and carry out the necessary contacts to implement this resolution and convey its contents to all relevant bodies, to mandate the Secretary General to contact the President of the European Commission, the United Nations Secretary General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other representatives of relevant international organizations and groups to convey the contents of this resolution, and to invite the councils of ambassadors of the OIC group in countries of the world and at international organizations to act urgently to convey the contents of this resolution to the states and organizations of their accreditation.



Pakistani FM meets Iraqi leaders in Baghdad to boost bilateral ties

By Mian Fazal Elahi

Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi called on the President of the Republic of Iraq, His Excellency Dr. Barham Salih, in Baghdad. The Foreign Minister conveyed warm wishes to President Salih from Pakistan's leadership. He affirmed Pakistan's support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. Acknowledging the unyielding efforts and sacrifices of Iraq, and its people, in the fight against terrorism, the Foreign Minister wished peace, progress and prosperity for the brotherly people of Iraq. President Salih warmly welcomed the Foreign Minister and reciprocated the feelings expressed on behalf of Pakistan's leadership. He thanked the Foreign Minister for Pakistan's understanding and support. Foreign Minister Qureshi briefed the President on Pakistan's transformed vision centered around economic security, shifting focus from geo-politics to geo-economics. He outlined Pakistan's desire to offer itself as an economic hub through peace, development partnerships and connectivity. Reaffirming Pakistan's long-standing and friendly ties with Iraq, Foreign Minister Qureshi expressed Pakistan's desire to further enhance existing bilateral ties in all spheres of cooperation. He offered Pakistan's support and cooperation for Iraq's efforts toward rebuilding and strengthening the country. The President agreed that the two countries needed to strengthen bilateral

cooperation in mutually beneficial areas. Appreciating Prime Minister Imran Khan's environmental initiatives, he hoped for greater cooperation in this field. The Foreign Minister and the President also discussed regional and global issues of mutual interest. Foreign Minister Qureshi briefed the President on the situation in South Asia, in particular Pakistan's approach towards the issues and disputes with India, Pakistan's consistent support for the Afghan Peace Process, and Pakistan's

steadfast diplomatic support for the just cause of Palestine. He also highlighted Pakistan's efforts to promote solidarity among the Muslim Ummah. Foreign Minister Qureshi is undertaking a three-day bilateral visit to Iraq, at the invitation of his Iraqi counterpart. During the visit, he will hold extensive discussions with important dignitaries in Iraq, on bilateral cooperation and important regional and global issues.

Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah



Mahmood Qureshi was warmly received by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, in Baghdad. The Foreign Minister conveyed sincere and warm greetings from Prime Minister Imran Khan to the Iraqi Prime Minister, and expressed Pakistan's full support for a secure and prosperous Iraq. Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi reciprocated the gesture and thanked Pakistan for its support. Foreign Minister Qureshi appreciated the resilience of the Iraqi people in facing serious challenges to peace and security.

Paying tribute to the sacrifices rendered by Iraqi people in the fight against terrorism, he said the two countries could benefit from sharing experience and expertise in this area. Foreign Minister Qureshi expressed confidence that, with able leadership, unyielding efforts and sincere friends, Iraq will overcome any challenge to emerge stronger and more prosperous in future. The Foreign Minister stressed that the purpose of his visit was to translate Pakistan's existing friendly relationship with Iraq into a collaborative and mutually beneficial partnership across diverse fields.

In this regard, he briefed the Prime Minister on Pakistan's focus on building connectivity and economic diplomacy. The Foreign Minister identified areas, such as tourism, manpower export, infrastructure development, investment and food security, in which the two countries could significantly benefit from enhanced cooperation. He also expressed Pakistan's desire to meet its energy requirements with oil from Iraq.

He laid special emphasis on the need to further strengthen people to people linkages, in particular facilitating thousands of Pakistani Zaireen who visit Iraq every year. Agreeing to the potential of cooperation between the two countries, Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi expressed Iraq's interest in cooperation in health sector, as well as the possibility of utilizing Pakistan's health facilities for Iraqi people. He urged the Foreign Ministers of both countries to explore tangible collaboration in this field. The Foreign Minister stressed the importance of high-level visits between the two countries to build and carry forward the positive momentum in the relationship.

He proposed that the two countries should develop an overarching framework of political consultations and bilateral cooperation at the Foreign Ministers level to provide impetus to deepening



and strengthening mutually beneficial partnership. The Prime Minister welcomed the idea, in principle. Discussing regional and global issues of mutual interest, the Foreign Minister apprised the Prime Minister of the deteriorating situation in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and stressed the need to resolve the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

He also briefed Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi on Pakistan's efforts to support peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, in particular the Afghan Peace Process, as well as Pakistan's principled position on the issue of Palestine. The Foreign Minister thanked the Prime Minister for accepting the invitation by Prime Minister Imran Khan to visit Pakistan. He hoped that the visit will take place at the earliest convenience

Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi was accorded a warm welcome by the Foreign Minister of Iraq, Dr Fuad Hussein, as they met in Baghdad.

The two Foreign Ministers held delegation-level talks, and later continued their conversation over the lunch hosted by the Iraqi Foreign Minister. The Foreign Ministers also delivered statements to the press after the delegation-level talks.

Foreign Minister Qureshi thanked Dr. Fuad Hussein for the invitation and warm hospitality extended during the visit.

During the meeting, the two Foreign Ministers reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations. They reaffirmed the long-standing and friendly ties between the two countries, rooted in shared faith, values and culture, and expressed desire to further augment bilateral relations. Foreign Minister Qureshi reiterated Pakistan's support for territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq, acknowledged the successes of Iraq and its people in the fight against terrorism and appreciated the resilience of Iraqi people in their efforts to overcome myriad of challenges.

The two Foreign Ministers also discussed how the global pandemic compounded various challenges faced by the developing countries. Stressing that no single country could overcome the COVID-19 pandemic alone, Foreign Minister Qureshi stressed the importance of international cooperation to save lives and livelihoods. He outlined Pakistan's strategy to manage the pandemic, which included assisting friendly countries such as Iraq, where Pakistan dispatched three planes load of



COVID-related assistance in March 2021.

Foreign Minister Qureshi stressed the importance of maintaining momentum in the high-level and Ministerial visits between the two countries and early convening of the 9th Session of the Pakistan – Iraq Joint Ministerial Commission. The idea of establishing an overarching framework of consultations at the Foreign Ministers' level also came under discussion. Foreign Minister Qureshi also highlighted the importance of concluding agreements and MoUs in diverse fields already being negotiated by respective departments of the two sides.

Foreign Minister Qureshi underscored the importance of expanding bilateral trade and economic relationship through enhanced connectivity, and strengthening people-to-people linkages. He identified

significant prospects in promoting bilateral tourism, including facilitation of Zaireen from Pakistan, promoting scientific and educational cooperation, cooperation in food security and oil sector.

The two Foreign Ministers also discussed bilateral cooperation in multilateral organizations, in particular the United Nations, its subsidiary organizations, Human Rights Council and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Expressing satisfaction at the existing collaboration, Foreign Minister Qureshi expressed Pakistan's desire to forge closer partnership in key multilateral organizations for strengthening mutual support, and to effectively promote the perspectives shared by both countries.

The two Foreign Ministers exchanged views on the regional situation and issues of

mutual interest. Foreign Minister Qureshi briefed his counterpart on the situation in South Asia, in particular the situation in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and Pakistan's efforts to promote peace despite the vitiated environment created by India. He stressed that peace in the region was contingent on resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, in accordance with the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

The Foreign Minister also apprised the Iraqi Foreign Minister of Pakistan's consistent support for the Afghan Peace Process. The two Foreign Ministers also discussed the Palestine issue and the regional situation resulting from the crisis. The two Foreign Ministers agreed to continue exchanging views on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Foreign Minister Qureshi extended a cordial invitation to Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein to visit Pakistan, which was accepted graciously.

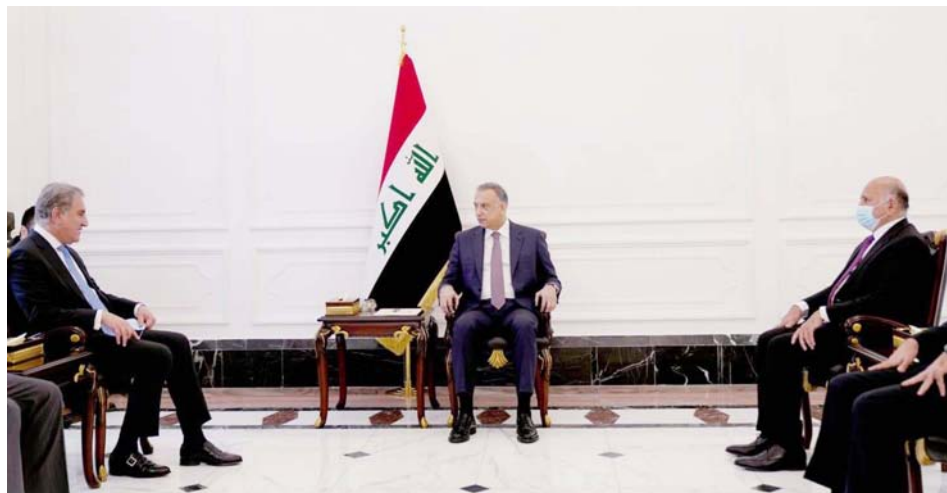
Foreign Minister Qureshi is visiting Iraq for a three-day visit at the invitation of his Iraqi counterpart. In addition to meeting the Iraqi leadership, the Foreign Minister will also meet key Ministers to discuss issues relevant to their respective fields.

Foreign Minister Qureshi meets the Minister of Defence of Iraq, Jumaa Inad Saadoun Khattab. Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi met His Excellency Jumaa Inad Saadoun Khattab, Iraq's Minister of Defence, who warmly welcomed him at the Ministry of Defence in Baghdad.

Foreign Minister Qureshi rejoiced the opportunity of meeting the Iraqi Defence Minister twice within three months. Recalling the visit of Pakistan's Minister for Defence Production to Iraq in January 2021, he expressed satisfaction at frequent interactions at the Ministerial level, which augured well for future bilateral defence ties of Pakistan and Iraq.

The two Ministers noted with contentment the steady growth in bilateral defence relations. Foreign Minister Qureshi said that this was reflected aptly by the participation of Iraqi Special Forces Paratroopers in the Pakistan National Day Parade on 23 March 2021.

The two Ministers reviewed the progress made on various aspects of defence collaboration between the two countries. The Defence Minister fondly recalled his visit to Islamabad in February 2021



and appreciated the professionalism of Pakistan's Armed Forces and the technical advancements made by the country in Defence Production. Foreign Minister Qureshi reiterated Pakistan's resolve to further deepen and diversify bilateral cooperation in the fields of defence and defence production.

The two Ministers agreed to continue

exchanging senior level delegations to sustain the positive momentum in the growing defence relationship between the two countries.

The Foreign Minister will be concluding his three-day visit to Iraq today. The visit (28-30 May 2021) is being undertaken at the invitation of his Iraqi counterpart, Dr Fuad Hussein.

The embassy of the Republic of Iraq in Islamabad organizes a stand of solidarity with the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause



H.E. Mr. Hamid Abbas Lafta, the Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq to Pakistan visited the headquarter of the Palestinian Embassy in Islamabad on 12/5/2021 accompanied by the number of the embassy staff to standup to solidarity with the brotherly Government and the people of Palestine in the wake of the blatant attacks and brutal violations committed by the Israeli occupation forces against the defenseless Palestinian people. The Ambassador expressed the Iraqi Government condemnation of such attacks and expressed by the Iraq Government's demands to stop and these aggressive attacks and renewed Iraq's firm and principled position on the Palestinian issue.





Groundbreaking Ceremony of Technology Park, Islamabad



The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, H.E. Mr. Suh Sangpyo accompanied by the Honourable Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications, H.E. Mr. Syed Amin ul Haque inaugurated the Islamabad Technology Park here on Wednesday the 26th of May, 2021.

On the occasion, H.E. Mr. Suh Sangpyo commented that IT Park constructions are key projects of the Economic Development Cooperation Fund EDCF. In 2019, Korea signed the framework agreement with Pakistan to provide 500 million dollars of EDCF loans that give financial space for the construction of infrastructure in Pakistan. Today we witness together a tangible outcome of EDCF projects. Islamabad IT Park will be a landmark in strong ties between Korea and Pakistan.

Korea is ready to support Pakistan's own IT capacity reinforcement with a long-term perspective, such as capacity building, infrastructure and technology development. H.E. Mr. Suh Sangpyo remarked that the construction of this Islamabad IT Park will provide a business-friendly environment for Pakistani small and medium IT companies.

H.E. Mr. Syed Amin ul Haque conveyed gratitude to the Korean Government and the Korean Ambassador to Islamabad for their full support in the construction of the IT Park. H.E. Mr. Syed Amin ul Haque further shared that the state-of-the-art IT Park project will be completed in 30 months and stated that the inauguration of this Park is another positive step towards the achievement of the Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision of a Digital Pakistan. Islamabad.





Israel is waging a war on truth in Gaza

Why did Israel target buildings housing media organizations in Gaza?

By Sultan Barakat

Israeli air strikes levelled the al-Jalaa tower, an 11-storey building that housed the offices of Al Jazeera and the Associated Press in the Gaza Strip. Just a few days earlier, the Israeli military had also bombed the al-Henday, al-Jawhara and al-Shorouk towers, which together housed more than a dozen local and international news agencies.

The towers targeted by Israel were among a handful of high rises that were built in the Gaza strip in the last 20 years to meet the local population's commercial, social and educational needs.

Before the attacks, these towers were some of the very few locations in the blockaded enclave that enjoyed relatively uninterrupted services, in particular, electricity sourced by their own generators. As a result, they attracted hundreds of families as residents, and were hosting not only numerous media offices but also several local businesses, law firms, medical labs and civil society organizations. Also serving as a cultural and social hub, they were central to the daily lives of many Gazan youths.

As a result of the bombings, Gaza lost a key piece of its social and, perhaps most crucially, media infrastructure. Israel gave the journalists working at the al-Jalaa tower just one hour to evacuate their offices, forcing them to abandon

much of their archives and equipment to be destroyed alongside the building.

The bombing of the al-Jalaa tower drew criticism from international organizations, rights groups and several governments, including those of Israel's allies.

The Israeli military claimed that the tower housed Hamas military intelligence assets, and therefore constituted a legitimate target. However, as recently admitted by United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who routinely defends Israel's actions, Tel Aviv has so far released no evidence to support these allegations. The Associated Press strongly denied that Hamas was active in the building.

However, whether or not Hamas had offices in the building, the targeting with missiles of high-rise buildings located in a dense urban centre and populated by hundreds of civilians is an indefensible violation of international law. By striking these vibrant towers, Israel once again made clear that it is determined to inflict maximum psychological damage on the strip's besieged population.

Moreover, by targeting the offices of local and international media organizations in Gaza, it announced to the world that it is now willing to do everything necessary, including using the full force of its military, to stop journalists from reporting on its crimes against the Palestinian people.

And Israel has much reason to try and silence free media.

In recent decades, the media has become an indispensable instrument for winning wars. Victory in modern conflict is as much dependent on controlling domestic and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield.

Indeed, fact-based, on-the-ground reporting that scrutinizes narratives put forward by militaries and states has been decisive in the progression and conclusion of many recent conflicts.

During the 2004 battle for Fallujah between the US military and Iraqi insurgents, for example, media reports from the field proved crucial in exposing the devastation inflicted by US air strikes and ground operations on the civilian population of the city and ultimately caused the US military to withdraw.

"The [US] Marines in Fallujah weren't beaten by the terrorists and insurgents, who were being eliminated effectively and accurately. They were beaten by Al Jazeera," wrote retired American Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters in the battle's aftermath. Rather than admitting the media has the ability to hold powerful militaries to account, Peters claimed that Al Jazeera and others "lied" about the situation on the ground to prevent a US victory. "The media is often referred to off-handedly as a strategic fac-



tor,” he wrote, “but we still don’t fully appreciate its fatal power.”

As the US did then, Israel today is struggling to combat the growing spread of accurate news about its assaults on civilians and violations of international law.

Thanks to the efforts of journalists in Palestine and beyond, as well as millions of Palestinians speaking their truth on social media, the real story of Palestine is finally being heard across the world. As a result, not only is global public opinion shifting in favour of Palestinians, many international institutions and organizations that had long allowed Israel to control the narratives about the conflict are feeling obligated to speak up for Palestine.

On May 17, leading rights group Amnesty International condemned Israel’s continuing assault on Gaza, saying that the Israeli military has “displayed a shocking disregard for the lives of Palestinian civilians by carrying out a number of airstrikes targeting residential buildings in some cases killing entire families – including children – and causing wanton destruction to civilian property, in attacks that may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity”.

Amnesty’s damning statement came on the back of a report published by Human Rights Watch in April which asserted that Israel is perpetrating “crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution” in its treatment of Palestinians and the international community must therefore re-evaluate diplomatic relations with the state.

Today, Israel is not only trying to stop the spread of accurate information during its assault on Gaza by bombing press offices, but also through a campaign of disinformation.

For example, last week, a spokesperson for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu shared a video on Twitter which he claimed showed Hamas firing rockets at Israel “from populated areas”. As the BBC stated, the clip was actually filmed in Syria in 2018 and had

nothing to do with Gaza. Twitter later labelled the tweet as “manipulated media”.

Beyond sharing demonstrably “fake news”, the Israeli government is also trying to manipulate the international and domestic public opinion by persistently peddling the false narrative that Hamas is the aggressor in the conflict, that its military is doing everything it can to avoid civilian “casualties”, that it is merely defending itself against “a terrorist organization”, and that the current escalation is not a direct result of its illegal occupation.

The fake videos and information disseminated by the Israeli government have already resulted in many Palestinians and Palestinian citizens of Israel being attacked by far-right Israeli mobs. These false narratives are also being used by pro-Israel governments across the world to avoid condemning the demonstrably illegal actions of their ally.

The international community must take immediate action to protect journalists in the occupied Palestinian Territories and Gaza. The important and perilous work journalists do in these conflict zones is the only way of expos-

ing the brutality of Israel’s ongoing assault on Gaza and its decades-old illegal occupation of Palestine.

But, at the same time, Israel’s ability to bomb Gaza’s “towers of truth” with impunity should not leave those who want justice for Palestine feeling hopeless. The growing pluralisation and democratization of sources of information mean that Israel cannot win the battle it is waging on truth. At the end of the day, it can’t silence all of us, all the time.

Sultan Barakat is Director of the Centre for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies at the Doha Institute



In Pictures: Palestinian solidarity rallies around the world

Large demonstrations around the world in support of Palestine



People participate in a pro-Palestinian rally calling for an end to the Israeli occupation in the Queens borough of New York City, US, after the recent ceasefire between Israelis and Palestinians.



Libyans gather to show solidarity with the people of Palestine after Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire agreement, in Tripoli, Libya.



Somali students chant slogans at the Banadir Gardens during a protest in support of Palestinians in the Hodan district of Mogadishu, Somalia.



Members of Islamic organisations and trade unions demand that the unloading of goods from Israel be halted in the port of Durban, South Africa.



Demonstrators take part in a pro-Palestine protest in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Supporters of Palestine attend a demonstration in central London, UK



People gather to show solidarity with the people of Palestine at Dell'unita Square in Bologna, Italy.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's meeting with the Foreign Minister of Kuwait

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi met with the Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs of Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah on the sidelines of the Special Meeting of the General Assembly on Palestine.

The two Foreign Ministers expressed deep concern over the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories caused by the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, resulting in the deaths of more than 250 civilians including over 60 children.

Underscoring Pakistan's position, Foreign Minister Qureshi stated that peace in the Middle East can only be achieved through a just settlement of the Palestinian issue based on a viable, independent, and contiguous Palestinian state with pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Discussing the bilateral relationship, Foreign Minister Qureshi stressed the need for enhanced collaboration on issues of mutual interest at regional and international forums and further cooperation in



diverse fields including food security, agriculture, poultry, livestock, and tourism and oil exploration.

Pakistan accords high priority to its fraternal ties with Kuwait, which are firmly root-

ed in shared values and commonality of interests in multiple areas.

Regular leadership level exchanges provide further impetus to the excellent bilateral relations and deepen mutual cooperation.

Meeting Foreign Minister Qureshi with the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia



Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, on the side-lines of the special meeting of the UN General Assembly being held at the UN headquarters to discuss the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Foreign Minister Qureshi expressed deep gratitude of the people and the Government of Pakistan for the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Palestine issue and for convening an Emergency Meeting of the OIC's Execu-

tive Committee at Foreign Ministers level on 16 May 2021. He recalled that the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Joint Statement issued during the visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on 8 May 2021, reaffirmed shared perspectives of the two brotherly countries on the Palestinian issue.

Foreign Minister Qureshi strongly condemned Israeli provocations; forcible and illegal evictions of Palestinians from their homes; the onslaught against Palestinian worshippers in the Holy Al-Aqsa mosque in the month of Ramadan; and the indiscriminate aerial bombard-

ment against the Palestinians.

Foreign Minister also reaffirmed Pakistan's full support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, especially their right to self-determination and establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian state with pre-1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with relevant UN and OIC resolutions.

Matters pertaining to various bilateral aspects of the relations between the two brotherly countries also came under discussion during the meeting.



Message of H.E. Mr. Ali Alizada, Ambassador of Azerbaijan on the occasion of the National Day of Azerbaijan

This year Azerbaijan celebrates the 103rd anniversary of the establishment of Azerbaijani Democratic Republic (ADR), the first democratic republic in the Muslim world, with double and special significance, after the liberation of the internationally recognized territories from almost 30 years of illegal Armenian occupation. The ADR left an indelible mark and entered forever into the history of Azerbaijani nation with its rich state building experience and prepared a good basis for the future independence of Azerbaijan. As the successor of ADR, Azerbaijan regained its independence in 1991 and after coming to power of Heydar Aliyev, the National Leader of Azerbaijan in 1993, Azerbaijan has overcome through the hard and strict tests of history and embarked on the

path of development, ensuring stability and confidently moving forward. Relying solely on the support of the Azerbaijani people, H. Aliyev put an end to all negativity in the country, disbanded all illegal armed groups, established safety and order, and began building the state institutions and a regular army of Azerbaijan. All these years Azerbaijani nation lived with one dream, to liberate the illegally occupied territories of Azerbaijan and restore peace and justice in the region, which Azerbaijan has sought almost 30 years through all platforms. If the creation of ADR, on May 28, 1918 was a historic event for Azerbaijani nation, the restoration of the territorial integrity of the modern independent Azerbaijan in 2020 became another glorious historic victory and achievement for Azerbaijan and its nation. For

all 30 years of the conflict, Azerbaijan has suffered a lot from Armenian aggression and Azerbaijan has been delivering the truth about this issue at all international events and forums. More than 30 thousands of Azerbaijanis have been martyred, all cities, residential buildings, schools, hospitals, public buildings, historical sites and mosques in occupied territories of Azerbaijan have been destroyed. Armenia insulted the entire Muslim world, kept cows and pigs in our mosques, destroyed all cultural monuments and even plowed up all graves. Despite that all leading international organizations recognized and supported the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and demanded withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territories, Armenia has always showed unconstructive approach to the res-

olution of the conflict and at the end the provocative steps, statements and aggressive actions of Armenia have put an end to all negotiations and made war inevitable. Under the resolute command of the Supreme Commander-in-chief, Azerbaijan has fulfilled its historic mission and defeated Armenia due to professionalism and heroism of victorious Azerbaijan Army, and of course due to high national spirit and strength. Glory to Allah, thanks to the dedication of our martyrs, Azerbaijan has again secured its territorial integrity.

May Allah grant all our martyrs the highest rank in Jannah!

We have achieved our goal. The 44-day Patriotic war has demonstrated Azerbaijan's power, resolve and unity. It showed that the Azerbaijani people will never put up with injustice.

We must also mention that Azerbaijan has liberated its lands through development, because development is also the backbone of our victory, and today, Azerbaijan is one of the rapidly developing countries of the world, and under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev continues its dynamic progress and economic growth.

And soon the liberated territories of Azerbaijan will also become one of the developed regions of Azerbaijan and a real paradise.

We are thankful to our brotherly country Pakistan and its nation which constantly stood shoulder to shoulder with Azerbaijan and supported its right of self-defence during Patriotic War of

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Azerbaijan. Pakistan even didn't recognize Armenia due to occupation of Azerbaijani lands and always put its principal position in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

During the years of the occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia, the Senate and National Assembly of Pakistan adopted several resolutions, Foreign Office and Armed Forces of Pakistan issued many statements condemning the illegal actions and war crimes of Armenia against Azerbaijan. This is a true demonstration of brotherhood.

Azerbaijan has also always stood and supported Pakistan in all matters, including the Kashmir issue which also waits implementation of UN SC resolutions for several decades. I am sure our brotherhood and mutual support to each other will be continued and strengthened in the years ahead as well.

Pakistan and Azerbaijan have time tested relations which based on strategic partnership, confidence, mutual respect and trust.

In the last one year Covid-19 pandemic has caused worldwide slowdown, but even in pandemic time Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations, the political, military, defence, economy, security, and energy ties have continued to grow in upward trajectory.

The leadership of two countries had a regular constructive meetings and telephone conversations where they hailed the importance of further strengthening the efforts to boost co-operation between our countries.

Despite the restrictions caused by pandemic we were able to hold bilateral political consultations, the meeting of Joint Working Group on Trade, online business forum, B2B meetings and as well as the trilateral meeting of FMs of Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Turkey.

During the last year, we were also able to conduct several high level visits of government and military officials, including an official bilateral visit of FM of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, the bilateral official visits of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of Pakistan and the Chief of Air Staff of Pakistan to Azerbaijan, etc.

In the last one year Covid-19 pandemic has caused worldwide slowdown, but even in pandemic time Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations, the political, military, defence, economy, security, and energy ties have continued to grow in upward trajectory

Soon an official visit of Speaker of Milli Majlis (Parliament) of Azerbaijan to Pakistan will be conducted, the meeting of the Joint Working Group on Agriculture, the meeting of Intergovernmental Joint Commission will be arranged, the visits of Chief of Naval Staff of Azerbaijan to Pakistan and the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan to Azerbaijan, as well as Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Turkey joint military exercise will be held during this year.

The efforts for strengthening people to people contacts, cultural, media, science, education ties have also increased and the humanitarian-social projects of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation of Azerbaijan were also continued in Pakistan during this pandemic time. The establishment of direct flights remains also one of our main aims and the agreement have already reached to start operations of direct flights as soon as Covid -19 situation will be settled down.

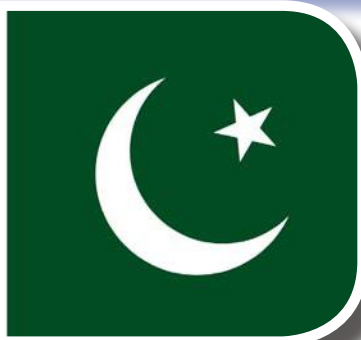
All these developments show the commitment of our fraternal nations and Governments to further deepen and strengthen our relations.

I thank the Government, Army and people of brotherly Pakistan for continued cooperation, support and commitment to further deepen our relations. Taking this opportunity, I congratulate Azerbaijani community in Pakistan and all my countrymen on the occasion of National Day, "May 28- Republic Day of Azerbaijan".

Pakistan-Azerbaijan Dosti Zindabad!



Pakistan desires good relations with all its neighbors and willing to reciprocate any peace overture



By Muhammad Bilal Zafar

EU Ambassador H.E Ms. Androulla Kaminara in a meeting with Chaudhary Fawad Hussain, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting said that HRVP Borell has called a meeting of Foreign Ministers of EU member states for May 18, 2021 (Tuesday) to discuss the situation. She added the meeting was convened to coordinate and discuss how the EU can best contribute to end the current violence. Information Minister apprised the Ambassador of Pakistan's deep concern and anguish on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ghaza and said that international Community had an obligation to help resolve the situation and facilitate a just solution. He said that Pakistan has declared Friday as a day

of solidarity with the people of Palestine who are suffering from continuous violence at the hands of Israeli forces. Both dignitaries also exchanged views on the COVID-19 situation in the country. The Minister said that Pakistan Government was undertaking all possible steps to contain the pandemic through timely decisions and effective preventive measures.

He said NCOC is spearheading the drive against the Covid-19 Pandemic. He said when COVID-19 surfaced in Pakistan early last year, the country was not producing any protective gear against the viral pandemic. But, within 4 to 6 months, he said, it not only started manufacturing protective masks, Kits and quality Ventilators but also went on to export these products. H.E Ms. Androulla Kaminara, appreciated the steps taken by the Government of Pakistan to protect its people from the pandemic. She also appreciated the rise in Pakistan's exports in spite of COVID-19 pandemic.

Information Minister also apprised the Ambassador about the approval of two long awaited bills for protection of Journalists and media professionals and the Forced Disappearance (Criminal Law Amendment Bill) and reiterated Government's resolve to continue to facilitate the growth of free and responsible media in Pakistan. He said that



media enjoys unprecedented independence in Pakistan as Government firmly believes in fundamental, democratic and constitutional right of freedom of expression.

Talking about peace and development in the region, Chaudhry Fawad said Pakistan desires good relations with all its neighbors and willing to reciprocate any peace overture. "One cannot move ahead if the other side is not ready to act responsibly", he said. He added we cannot move forward by ignoring the situation in Kashmir. EU Ambassador also showed keen interest in Pakistan's initiatives in the realm of climate change, the billion tree tsunami and the drive for Clean and Green Pakistan. The Minister welcomed EUs interest in these initiatives.



AMBASSADORS OF AZERBAIJAN AND NEPAL CALL ON THE MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS TO DISCUSS THE ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan H.E. Ali Alizada called on the Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Mr. Omar Ayub Khan in his office today. The Azerbaijani Ambassador congratulated him on assumption of the new portfolio of Ministry of Economic Affairs. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the bilateral economic cooperation.

H.E. Ali Alizada, Azerbaijani Ambassador emphasized to enhance business to business contacts between the both countries to boost trade and investment opportunities.

He highlighted that Pakistani exporters can benefit from exports of goods, especially textile and rice to Azerbaijani market. He also showed the interest of Azerbaijani side to export oil products to Pakistan on deferred payment basis and construction of LNG terminal. The Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. Omar Ayub Khan highlighted that both the countries has huge potential in the areas of trade, investment and tourism.

He expressed that Pakistan has vast opportunities for investment in petrochemical industries, light engineering, agriculture & food processing.

Both the sides also highlighted the importance of Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) and



agreed to further enhance the mutual cooperation on bilateral basis as well as CAREC platform which will ultimately benefit the entire region to unleash their economic potential. H.E. Tapas Adhikari, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal to Pakistan also met with Mr. Omar Ayub Khan, Minister for Economic Affairs. Both the sides discussed the issues of mutual interest and COVID-19 situation in the region.

The Secretary, EAD highlighted that Pakistan offers various scholarships to Nepalese students in the field of medical

including MBBS & Dentistry. He stressed that Nepalese-side should fully utilized the scholarship programs and Pakistan may consider to enhance the admissions for Nepalese students. Mr. Omar Ayub Khan, Minister for Economic Affairs assured the Nepalese Ambassador of the Government of Pakistan's all possible support to Nepalese people in this difficult time and fighting against COVID-19 pandemic.

He also emphasized on further strengthening bilateral economic relations and enhancing trade & investment opportunities between the two countries.



By Naveed Mushtaq

This year's World Environment Day is being celebrated under the theme of "Ecosystem Restoration". The ecosystem restoration is based on various contours: Growing trees, greening cities, rewilding gardens, changing diets or cleaning up rivers and coasts. It means assisting in the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded or destroyed, as well as protecting the ecosystems that are still intact. Healthier ecosystems, with comfortable biodiversity, produces greater benefits such as more fertile lands, more timber and fish production or natural food stocks, further paving the way of green revolution.

Launching hallmark initiatives to promote the restoration of ecosystem on real grounds, Pakistan is hosting the World Environment Day of this year, given its huge focus on restoring the natural ecosystem, the one conducive to human life. The Pakistan's Government also envisions to restore and augment the country's forests through 10 Billion Tree Tsunami spread project will be completed over five years. It covers restoring mangroves in marine environment and forests in the heartland in general, as well as planting trees in urban settings; schools, colleges, public parks and other green belts in particular. As the UN has announced this decade for 'ecosystem restoration', nations are assuring to bring 350 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration. This time frame also corresponds with the deadline of attaining the UN-led Sustainable Development Goals.

To visualize the high value and the critical manifestation the Environment Day entails, Pakistan Navy conducts a range of activities, highlighting environment as the basic underpinning of elements of national power, awakening common public along with other major agencies, departments, and main stake-holders. In particular, the littoral areas of Pakistan are core focus of Pakistan Navy to make them more resistant to the environment degradation. Pakistan Navy being a major stakeholder has already taken commendable initiatives and yet again this year



Pakistan Navy is determined to celebrate the day with full zeal and fervor. Pakistan Navy has launched various initiatives, such as trees and mangroves plantation campaign, banned use of polythene bags in naval premises, collection of solid waste in harbors and installation of reed bed reverse osmosis plants for sewerage water treatment in residential areas. In addition, relevant government and non-government organizations are also sensitized and their co-operation solicited in undertaking these environment protection measures. Furthermore, taking a lead from Federal Government's Green initiatives (GI), Pakistan Navy annual tree plantation campaign has been a leap forward in preserving environment. Annual tree Plantation campaign includes mangrove plantation campaign in coastal and creeks areas, reviving of forests in Margallah hills and nourishment of green belts under various seasonal drives and 'Sur Subz' initiatives.

Notwithstanding, the sheer richness of biodiversity also has human benefits. Many new medicines are harvested from nature, such as a fungi that grows on the fur of sloths and can fight cancer. Wild varieties of domesticated animals and crops are also crucial as some will have already solved the challenge of, for example, coping with drought or salty soils. Likewise, if money is a measure, the services provided by ecosystems are estimated to be worth trillions of dollars, double the world's GDP. The reality would always remain that the air we breathe to the food we eat all rely on ecosystems. If undamaged, this produces a finely balanced,



healthy system which contributes to a healthy sustainable planet. In a nutshell, moreover, the emergence of COVID-19, impacting severely the South Asian region, have underscored the fact that when we destroy ecosystem we destroy the system that supports human life. Given these circumstances, it is pertinent to highlight and address the issue of ecosystem degradation and its impact on our lives.



Letter of President Xi Jinping to President Arif Alvi on the 70th years of Establishment of Diplomatic Relation between China and Pakistan

Honorable Mr. President,
On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on behalf of the Government and people of China, and in my own name, I would like to extend warm congratulations and best wishes to Your Excellency, and through you to the Government and people of Pakistan.

China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners that stand firmly by each other on issues of core interests and major concerns.

The mutual trust and friendship between the two countries have gone through the test of 70 years of

international changes and remain rock-solid, and have become the most valuable strategic asset of the two peoples.

In recent years, with the joint efforts of both sides, the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has achieved remarkable results, bringing tangible benefits to the people of both countries and adding strong impetus to the regional prosperity.

In the Face of the COVID-19 pandemic, China and Pakistan have shared weal and woe and Sincerely helped each other, and the ironclad friendship between the two countries has been further sublimated. I attach great importance to the development of China-Pakistan rela-

tions. I am ready to work with Your Excellency to deepen strategic communication and pragmatic cooperation between the two countries, promote the high-quality development of the CPEC, and work together to build a closer China-Pakistan Community of Shared Future in the new era, for the benefit of the two countries and the two peoples.

May I wish Pakistan prosperity and her people happiness.

May the friendship between China and Pakistan last forever.

Xi Jinping
President
The People's Republic of China



Letter of President Arif Alvi to President Xi Jinping on the 70th years of establishment of diplomatic relation between Pakistan and China

Excellency,
On behalf of the government of Pakistan, and on my own behalf. I wish to felicitate Your Excellency on the momentous occasion marking 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China.

Our seven-decade journey has been one of greater solidarity, deeper confidence, mutual respect, and mutual support. We have been friends in weal and woe. Collectively we have rendered incredible sacrifices to preserve and promote our goals and values despite formidable challenges. Our “All-Weather Strategic Co-operative Partnership” has become an anchor for peace and stability in the re-

gion.

Our two governments are closely coordinating to celebrate this year in a befitting manner enabling our people to truly understand the depth, the breadth and the vitality of Pakistan-China ties.

Excellency, I wish to acknowledge that, under your leadership, Pakistan-China relationship has become even stronger, vibrant, and secure.

We greatly appreciate the invaluable support that China extended to us to fight COVID_19. Despite constraints, China gifted and commercially delivered vaccine to us that saved countless precious human lives in Pakistan.

Pakistan remains firmly committed to making China-Pakistan Economic corridor (CPEC) a High-Quality Demonstration Project of the belt and road initiative (BRI).

On this historic occasion, we reaffirm our commitment to further elevate Pakistan-China friendship to new heights and build closer China-Pakistan community of shared future in the new era. I avail myself of this opportunity to convey my best wishes for your Excellency's good health and happiness and continued progress and prosperity of the people of China.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



The Prime Minister congratulated on the special occasion as it marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China

Prime Minister Imran Khan had a telephone conversation with the Chinese Premier Mr. Li Keqiang. During the call, 70th anniversary of establishment of Pakistan-China diplomatic ties, bilateral relations and vaccine cooperation were discussed.

The Prime Minister congratulated Premier Li Keqiang and the Chinese leadership for successful landing of Chinese spacecraft on Mars, which showed rising technological prowess of China.

Prime Minister Imran Khan emphasized that with collective and tireless efforts over the years, Pakistan and China had transformed their relationship into an "All-Weather Strategic Co-operative Partnership".

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative and has generated economic activity, employment and will further enhance bilateral and regional trade.

The year 2021 is a special occasion as it marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China.

The Prime Minister congratulated the Chinese Premier at the special occasion, which will be celebrated by both sides in a befitting manner.

The Prime Minister highlighted Pakistan-China cooperation in fighting COVID-19 and deeply appreciated China's continued support to Pakistan in supply of

COVID vaccine.

He thanked China for providing assistance to National Institute of Health (NIH) for establishing vaccine manufacturing facility in Pakistan which will further solidify Pakistan's efforts to combat COVID-19.

Prime Minister also stressed the need to continue with the momentum of high-level exchanges to further diversify and deepen strategic cooperation between the two countries.

Both leaders reaffirmed their resolve to further solidify Pakistan-China bilateral relations.

Remarks at the Reception in Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations By Ambassador Nong Rong



By Mian Fazal Elahi

H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi, President of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, Chairman of Senate, H.E. General Nadeem Raza, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Asalam o Aleekum!

On this special day, first of all, please allow me to read the congratulatory message sent by President Xi Jinping to President Dr. Arif Alvi for the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan.

"Honorable Mr. President,

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on behalf of the Government and people of

China, and in my own name, I would like to extend warm congratulations and best wishes to Your Excellency, and through you to the Government and people of Pakistan.

China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners that stand firmly by each other on issues of core interests and major concerns.

The mutual trust and friendship between the two countries have gone through the test of 70 -year of international changes and remain rock-solid, and have become the most valuable strategic asset of the two peoples.

In recent years, with the joint efforts of both sides, the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has achieved remarkable results, bringing tangible benefits to the people of both countries and adding strong ' impetus to the regional prosperity. I

n the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, China and Pakistan have shared weal and woe and sincerely helped each other, and the ironclad friendship between the two countries has been further sublimated .

I attach great importance to the development of China-Pakistan relations. I am ready to work with Your Excellency to deepen strategic communication and pragmatic cooperation between the two countries, promote the high-quality development of the CPEC, and work together to build a closer China-Pakistan Community of Shared Future in the new era, for the benefit of the two countries and the two peoples.

May I wish Pakistan prosperity and her people happiness.

May the friendship between China and Pakistan last forever.

Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China"

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The message from President Xi Jinping carries warmth and strength. And this morning, Prime Minister Imran Khan also spoke highly of China-Pakistan relations and expressed his respect for President Xi Jinping. Friendly words from both sides fully demonstrate the great importance attached by the two leaderships to the bilateral relations and point out the way forward! Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are unable to meet physically, but we are filled with the same joy and best wishes for our common cause. On behalf of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and high respect to the Honorable President, the parliaments, government, military of Pakistan and friends from all walks of life for your long-time contributions to this unique friendship!

As China's late Premier Zhou Enlai said, the friendly exchanges between the people of China and Pakistan could be traced back to the dawn of history. The Silk Road has brought us together for over 2,000 years. On 21 May, 1951, the newly founded People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan put aside ideological differences, broke through the "iron curtain" of the Cold War, and formally established diplomatic relations. Since then, the friendship between China and Pakistan has remained rock-solid, regardless how the regional and international landscapes have evolved. It has grown steadily under the care of our leaders, becoming the role model of state to state relations, with different social systems, histories and cultures.

In 2015, President Xi Jinping paid a historic visit to Pakistan, during which the bilateral relations was elevated to All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership. The close contact between the leaders of our two countries is incomparable. We can clearly remember that in March 2020, at the critical time when China was fighting against COVID-19, H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi, President of Pakistan visited China to render his firm support, which is highly appreciated by 1.4 billion Chinese people. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan has visited China three times since taking office, and held four meetings with President Xi Jinping. It is fair to say that China and Pakistan always make each other

the priority in developing foreign relations.

Thanks to the strategic planning and guidance of the leaders of the two countries, the friendly and pragmatic cooperation between China and Pakistan has made fruitful achievements in recent years. As the pilot project of the "Belt and Road" Initiative, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has become an important platform for all-round cooperation between the two countries. The CPEC has expanded to key areas of Gwadar Port, energy, transportation infrastructure, agriculture, industry, science and technology, and social livelihood, covering almost all aspects of Pakistan's development. Meanwhile, the two countries have continuously deepened and expanded cooperation in fields of military, security, culture, education, and so on, which further enhanced the foundation of the bilateral relations.

The past seven decades has also been the journey of mutual assistance in addressing various challenges. After the outbreak of COVID-19, the Chinese and Pakistani governments, armies and peoples helped each other by every mean. We are proud that Pakistan is the first country to receive the vaccine aided by the Chinese government and military, and are thankful to the assistance provided by Pakistan in conducting phase three clinical trials of vaccines. This kind of cooperation sets an example of international cooperation in addressing the pandemic, and will continue until we win the battle.

As President Xi Jinping points out, China-Pakistan relations should become a model of good-neighborly friendship, a pillar to safeguard regional peace and stability, and a benchmark for "Belt and Road" international cooperation. It has been proved that China-Pakistan friendship and cooperation are not only in the fundamental interests of the two countries and peoples, but also conducive to regional and global peace, stability and development. China and Pakistan are committed to building a more just, democratic, and reasonable multi-polar international order. The two countries hold the same position to maintain the authority of the multilateral system, safeguard the fairness of the international relations,

maintain peace and strategic stability, promote the development of human civilization, and ensure that all countries enjoy equal development environment.

For China, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The CPC has evolved from a small party with around 50 members to the largest ruling party, with more than 91 million members. The CPC has led the Chinese people on a great path of rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the progress of human civilization. We have scored a historic victory in the fight against extreme poverty and lifted 770 million people out of poverty. We have embarked on a new journey toward a modernized socialist country and realizing the second centenary goal. Pakistan is progressing under the vision of "Naya Pakistan". We are willing, together with Pakistani brothers, to deepen exchanges on governance, match with development strategies, and realize our own visions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the context of unseen changes in the world in a century, President Xi Jinping proposed the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, to build a world of lasting peace, common security, shared prosperity, inclusiveness and greenness. This vision is China's answer to the challenges and problems facing the world. The recent outbreak of COVID-19, further shows President Xi's vision's importance and foresight. On the way to build a community of shared future for mankind, the significance of China-Pakistan relations is becoming more prominent. We are committed to working with Pakistan to effectively implement the consensus of the leaders of the two countries, carry forward the good traditions of China-Pakistan relations, deepen strategic mutual trust and pragmatic cooperation, and jointly work for a high quality development of the CPEC. We are confident that our joint efforts will inject new impetus into China-Pakistan friendship and make new demonstration to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Chin-Pak Dosti Zindabad!



China and Pakistan are good brothers and true friends



Interview of

H.E. Mr. Nong Rong Ambassador of People's Republic of China to Pakistan

Q: US President Joe Biden has suggested launching an initiative by the so-called 'democratic' countries to counter China's Belt and Road initiative. How do you see this proposal at a time when Western nations are ganging up against China while fearing its unprecedented growth on the economic front and growing influence in the international affairs?

China sticks to develop relations with other countries based on mutual respect and equality, win-win cooperation, and is committed to building of a new type of international relations and a community with a shared future for mankind. CPEC being the pilot project under the BRI, has made remarkable progress in recent years, contributing significantly to Pakistan's economy, social development, and connectivity, with great benefit made to the country and the region. The suggestion made by the U.S. to band together democratic countries to fund infrastructure is by no means comparable to the BRI. It is in essence to pursue confrontation between blocs and targeting to the third country. This initiative is driven by "America First" mentality, which is significantly different with BRI serving as public good to benefit the local people. The U.S. pursuit of Cold War mentality and confrontation between blocs

are bound to be rejected as they run counter to the trend of the times and the common aspiration of regional countries.

Q: China-US relations are facing severe tests as President Joe Biden has taken an extraordinarily tough line with China. How do you see China's relation developing with the US under Biden?

Interaction between China and the US concerns global peace, stability, development and prosperity. With challenges in the era of globalization and the post-pandemic era, China and the US should have more dialogue and cooperation rather than game and confrontation. Both countries should fulfill obligations and responsibilities as major countries. China is willing to respond to the expectations of all parties and continue to make its own efforts to this end.

Regarding the arguments of competition, cooperation and confrontation repeatedly put forward by the U.S. on its relations with China, China's position is consistent and clear. China welcomes dialogue on the basis of equality and mutual respect. China does not approve of one-upmanship in the world, and does not accept that one country has the final say in world affairs. China welcomes cooperation if there is the need, but cooperation needs to take into account each other's

concerns and mutual benefit. It cannot go in the fashion of one side unilaterally raising conditions and making lists. China will not evade competition if it is needed, but competition should be fair and just and abide by market rules, and refrain from setting obstacles, abusing power, and depriving others of their legitimate right to development. If there is still confrontation, China will deal with it calmly and face it fearlessly. We resolutely resist gross interference in China's internal affairs, and oppose unlawful unilateral sanctions imposed on the basis of lies and false information. China will not compromise or retreat, as it sticks to the basic norms of international relations and stands for the interests of many developing, small and medium-sized countries. China definitely has the right to fight back since every country must defend national sovereignty and dignity. Dialogue is better than confrontation, and cooperation is better than confrontation. As President Xi Jinping put it, China will work with the U.S. to uphold the spirit of non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation, and advance a China-US relationship featuring coordination, cooperation and stability. We urge the U.S. to truly respect China's core interests and take a correct view of China's development, active-



ly respond to the expectations of regional countries and the international community, work with China to show what a major power should be like, and jointly maintain regional and world peace, stability and development.

Q: Unfortunately, Pakistan has been facing a tense situation on its eastern border for decades due to jingoistic attitude of India, especially under Narendra Modi. India has border disputes with China as well. Do you think India's irresponsible attitude is a major stumbling block in the way of peace and development in South Asia region?

It is the legitimate right for every country to safeguard its own sovereignty and territorial integrity. Since the founding of PRC, China has firmly safeguarded its national sovereignty, security and development interests. In the meanwhile, China has demarcated boundary with 12 of its 14 land neighbors through friendly negotiations, turning land borders into bonds of friendly cooperation. The merits of what happened on China-India border are very clear. None of the responsibility for tension and confrontation lies with China. We are against any provocations, and hope the other side can take real actions to restore peace and stability in the border areas. To resolve border differences peacefully through dialogue is a prerequisite for a country to win the trust of its neighbors and stand with dignity in the region. This principle applies to all countries.

Q: On March 30, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress deliberated on and adopted the amendments to Annex I and II to the Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR. Some countries including the UK and US have accused this move as a breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, under-

mining Hong Kong's democracy and the freedoms of the Hong Kong residents, and breaking China's international obligations. What is your comment?

Hong Kong is China's Hong Kong. The well-known "one country, two systems", "one country" is the prerequisite. Hong Kong affairs are entirely China's internal affairs. In recent times, in order to achieve the lasting prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, China has made positive progress in laws and systems in terms of safeguarding national security and ensuring that patriots govern Hong Kong. The improvement of the electoral system is to better reflect the broad and balanced political participation of Hong Kong residents, and to better take into account the interests of all classes, sectors, and aspects of society, which is conducive to improving the governance efficiency of the Hong Kong, and is conducive to improving Hong Kong's political, social and business environment as well as rule of law.

We firmly oppose foreign interference in China's internal affairs, and oppose the distorted interpretation and malicious discredit to the efforts made by the Central Government of China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. During the 150-plus years of British colonial rule, Hong Kong residents had suffered much suppression. There was no human rights or democracy at all. May I ask, during that period, why did Britain and the United States does not propose the issue of human rights and democracy in Hong Kong? Obviously, what they care about is not Hong Kong people. They merely use the Hong Kong issue as a card, trying to hinder the rapid development of China and Hong Kong. The relevant parties should

Career Profile

Mr. Nong Rong was born in September 1967 in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. He obtained degrees of MBA and EMBA, and owns a certificate of International Business Engineer.

1991-1996:

Staff member, Foreign Economic Relations and Trade Commission, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

1996-2004:

Senior Staff Member, Principal Staff Member, Deputy Director and Director, Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Bureau, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

2004-2005:

Director, Department of Commerce, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

2005-2007:

Member of CPC Leading Group and Director of General Office, Guangxi International Expo Affairs Bureau. Assistant to Secretary-General of China-Asean Expo Secretariat

2007-2013:

Deputy Director General, Guangxi International Expo Affairs Bureau

2013-2015:

Member of Standing Committee, Deputy Mayor and Deputy Secretary of CPC Fangchenggang Municipal Committee, the city of Fangchenggang, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

2015-2019:

Deputy Secretary of CPC Guigang Municipal Committee, Mayor, the city of Guigang, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

2019-2020:

Secretary of the CPC Group, Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Deputy Head of the United Front Work Department of CPC Committee, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region

Mr. Nong Rong is married with a son.



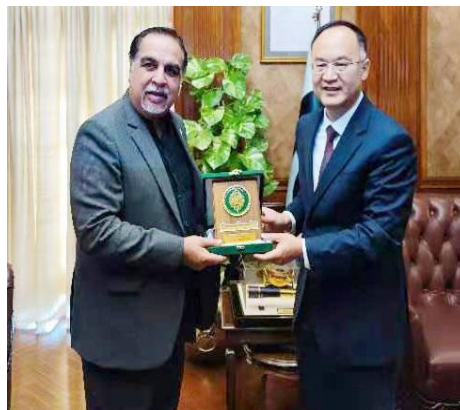
stop playing double standards, stop looking with colored glasses, and stop politicizing the Hong Kong issue. We firmly believe that Hong Kong will usher in a brighter future.

Q: The United States and some Western countries claim that China's actions in Xinjiang constitute what they call "genocide". This has angered the Chinese people. What's your comment on this? Please introduce the social and economic development of Xinjiang in recent years.

Allegations of "genocide" and "forced labor" are lies of the century. They were ugly farces directed by a handful of colluding individuals in the political, media and academic fields. These people have never been to Xinjiang. They have no idea what a beautiful place it is and how residents are enjoying their lives. Xinjiang's Uyghur population more than doubled in the past 40 years. Have they ever seen this kind of genocide? Xinjiang's development and progress over the years is all-round, supported by facts and data. No country should use this accusation as a political label for rumor-mongering and malicious manipulation.

In recent years, Xinjiang has made unprecedented achievements in economic and social development and improvement of people's livelihood . From 2014 to 2019, the GDP of Xinjiang increased from 919.59 billion yuan to 1.36 trillion yuan, with an average annual growth rate of 7.2 percent. The per capita disposable income in Xinjiang increased by an average annual rate of 9.1 percent. People in Xinjiang are living and working in peace and contentment. Today the region has not seen a single violent terrorist case for more than four consecutive years. The legitimate rights and interests of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang have been protected. All ethnic groups have the same legal status and enjoy various rights in accordance with the law, including participation in the management of state affairs, freedom of religious belief, receiving education, using their own languages, and preserving their traditional





culture.

The Pakistani Ambassador to China Moin ul Haque recently paid a visit to Xinjiang. He spoke highly of the all-round development of Xinjiang and was particularly impressed by the development of transportation and agriculture. He visited mosques and got briefing from the Imam. He told the reporting, saying that “the notable and important thing is that there is freedom of religion in China, and it is enshrined in the Constitution of China. He criticized the propaganda made by the outsiders against Xinjiang. We sincerely welcome people from various sectors in foreign countries to visit Xinjiang and see the beautiful scenery, people’s happy life and the region’s economic development. Rumors cannot spread when people are truly well-informed. Justice will always prevail.

Q: The third wave of the pandemic in Pakistan keep spreading, and vaccines play a key role in helping Pakistan fight the epidemic. What kind of vaccine cooperation has China and Pakistan carried out? How do you evaluate the significance of the vaccine cooperation between the two parties?

China and Pakistan are good brothers and true friends. In the face of the sudden outbreak of the COVID, China and Pakistan have been helping each other by every mean. China has always regarded Pakistan as priority for anti-pandemic cooperation and has provided Pakistan with a large amount of material and financial assistance. China will continue to provide support within its capacity for Pakistan’s fight against the COVID. Pakistan is the first country to receive vaccine aid from Chinese government and military. China has provided 2 million doses of vaccine to Pakistan, and the Chinese military will provide an additional 250,000 doses of Cansino vaccine. At the same time, we will also start vaccine production cooperation with Pakistan and set up a plant to subpackage stoste of the vaccine in Pakistan. This will effectively help Pakistan improve its vaccine self-supply capacity and further reduce its price.

China will continue to regard Pakistan as its top priority for vaccine cooperation. In the



next step, China will provide assistance within its capacity for Pakistan’s vaccination plan, continue to deepen cooperation in vaccine supply and phase III clinical trials, to help Pakistan overcome the pandemic at an early date and build a China-Pakistan health community.

Q: At present, there are less than 300 days left before the Beijing Winter Olympics. What is the current progress of preparations? Is it affected by the new crown epidemic? Please tell us more details.

The 2008 Beijing Olympics was a complete success, which received strong support and active participation from Pakistan. Today, the Beijing 2022 Olympic Winter Games has entered the sprint phase, and all preparations are progressing smoothly, especially the deployment of COVID-19 pandemic prevention

and control, which was termed as “a miracle” from the praise made by the International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach. China is well-known for its ability to host big events. The international community has great expectation and good confidence in the success of the Beijing Winter Olympics, which is of special significance for strengthening cultural exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

We firmly oppose the attempts to politicize the Olympic Games out of political motivations. We are willing to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with Pakistan and warmly welcome Pakistani athletes to participate in the Beijing Olympics.

Courtesy by Daily times, Source: pk.chinese-embassy.org



High Level Exchanges



**Special Feature Report by Mian Fazal Elahi
on the occasion of Celebrating 70th Anniversary
of Pakistan-China Diplomatic Relations**

During the mid of March, Pakistani President Dr. Arif Alvi paid his first state visit of China. Given the intensity of the strength of Pakistan and China relationship and their finest tradition of standing by each other through thick and thin, especially during tough times, President Dr. Arif Alvi's first visit to Beijing was clearly an example of Pakistan's solidarity with its "iron brother".

The visit was undertaken at the time when China was trapped in a grievous crisis of battling with COVID-19. During this visit, Dr. Arif Alvi met with the China's President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang and Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, Li Zhanshu. The two sides agreed to further strengthen China-Pakistan All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership aimed at building a Community of Shared Future in the New Era. Both sides reaffirmed their support on problems concerning each other's core national interests. A joint statement was issued post visit. Both Presidents signed multiple agreements/MoUs,

including the one on the establishment of working groups of science and technology, agriculture under the CPEC framework. Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, President Xi had a telephonic conversation with the PM Imran Khan on February 20th to discuss about the bilateral cooperation to uniformly address

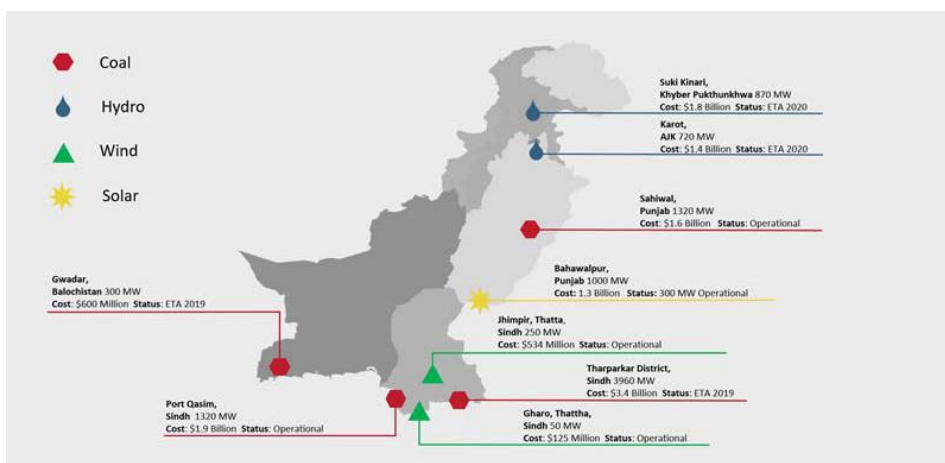
the challenge of the epidemic. State Council and the Foreign Minister Wang Yi called the Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on April 15th. Both Foreign Ministers attended a video conference of foreign ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on May 13th.





Promoting High-Quality Development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

The CPEC is a major project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It has succeeded in the development of Gwadar Port, energy sector, infrastructure, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) over the past six years. Since the beginning of this year, both of the countries have worked hand in hand to combat the challenge of the COVID-19 for the sustainable development of the CPEC. There is ZERO infection in CPEC projects due to strict measures taken by both of the sides. Joint working groups on energy, agriculture, social and economic cooperation, science and technology, have each progressed via video conferencing to review the progress. Phase 2 of KaraKorum Highway is almost ready to allow the traffic surge. The integrated test and commissioning inspection for Lahore Orange Line Project have been successfully completed and passed. The construction of a new airport in Gwadar approaches Phase 2 as well. The construction of Karot Hydra power station is readily under progress. The two countries continued to have a discussion on ML-1. Pakistan government has allow permitted transit trade of bulk Afghan cargo which includes wheat, sugar, and fertilizer via Gwadar Port. The construction and operation of CPEC projects will give a fresh start to Pakistan's economy and help to stabilize Pakistan's economy amid the COVID-19 outbreak.





China-Pakistan: A journey of friendship (1950-2020)

By Zamir Ahmed Awan

Pakistan and China established diplomatic relations on May 21, 1951.

The first high-level official delegation visited China just after three months of liberation, on January 4, 1950. But the bonds of friendship have gone back to centuries-old trade relations, when Chinese traders travel through Pakistan on their business trips to the Middle-East, Europe, and the rest of the world through ancient Silk Route. Over 2,000 years ago famous figures such as the monks Fa Xian and Xuan Zang traveled through areas which are today known as Pakistan.

This relationship was built on the strength of successive achievements and becomes formidable with each passing day and year. The leadership of both countries is committed to taking this relationship forward.

To understand the depth of this unique relationship, here is a glimpse of the milestones reached over the years:

- 1950 - Pakistan becomes the third non-communist country, and the first Muslim one, to recognize the People's Republic of China and dispatched a high level delegation to China on January 4, 1950.
- 1951 The two countries established formal diplomatic relations on May 21, 1951.
- 1955 Visit of Vice President Madam Song Ching Ling to Pakistan marked the first high level visit from Chinese side.
- 1956 Visit of Prime Minister H.S. Suhrawardy to China, was the first high level visit from Pakistan.
- 1963 Historic Visit of Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to China
- 1963 Pakistan and China conclude boundary agreement through peaceful negotiations. Pakistan is the only and most friendly country in the neighborhood who has never had any difference of opinion or border dispute with China.
- 1964 Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) started its flights to Beijing, becoming the

first non-communist country airline to fly from Beijing, entering into a new era of linkages between the two countries. Pakistan was the window for China to interact with the rest of world.

- 1965 Agreement on Cultural Cooperation signed, promoting understanding and harmony.
- 1970 Pakistan facilitates first visit by US President Nixon to China, paving way for the first-ever US-China official contact, leading toward the normalization of Sino-American relations.
- 1976 Agreement on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation signed, opening huge opportunities for Pakistani scientists and students.
- 1978 The Karakoram Highway, a construction miracle, linking mountainous Northern Pakistan with Western China officially opened, linking China to the Arabian Ocean.
- 1983 Pakistan and China sign MoU on Educational Exchanges, which led 32,000 Pakistani student studying in China today.
- 1989 The two countries sign an agreement on Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investments. China is the largest investor in Pakistan.
- 1995 Agreement for Traffic in Transit is signed between the Governments of Pakistan, China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, opening avenues of transit trade with other central Asian states and whole of Eurasia.
- 1995 Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visits China as a special guest to attend the 4th Women's Conference in Beijing, bring the women of the two friendly nations close to each other.
- 1999 The contract to jointly develop and produce the JF-17 was signed, a landmark event for Pakistan's defense industry.
- 2001 Premier Zhu Rongji visits Pakistan on the occasion of 50 years of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations.

• 2001 China and Pakistan sign agreement on Tourism Cooperation, opening unlimited opportunities in the development of the tourism industry.

• 2003 Preferential Trade Agreement is signed between the two countries, providing market access to Pakistani exports.

• 2005 Bilateral MoU on Cooperation in Information Technology is concluded, with China leading and providing Pakistan with a huge opportunity to learn from Chinese achievements.

• 2005 Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visits Pakistan.

• 2005 "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Good Neighborly Relations" is signed between the two countries, further cementing ties of friendship.

• 2006 Chinese President Hu Jintao pays an official visit to Pakistan.

• 2006 China and Pakistan sign Free Trade Agreement, leading toward enhanced exports to China.

• 2008 Pakistan welcomes the Chinese Olympic Torch in Islamabad

• 2010 Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visits Pakistan.

• 2010 JF-17 inducted in Pakistan Air Force as backbone of our Air Force and already exporting to other countries.

• 2013 Premier Li Keqiang visits Pakistan in May and both sides issue a Joint Statement on Deepening Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation, which became the basis of CPEC.

• 2013 Pakistan and China sign the landmark Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation for the Long-term Plan on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship project of Chinese mega initiative in the BRI.

• 2013 Pakistan awards a contract for the construction and operation of the Gwadar Port to China. Gwadar will become the economic hub of world trade and economic



activities after its completion in 2030.

- 2013 Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif visits China and both sides agree to the Common Vision for Deepening China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperative Partnership in the New Era

- 2013 Both countries sign Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation of Developing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Long-term Plan and Actions, opening the flow of Chinese FDI and investment into Pakistan.

- 2014 The governments of Pakistan and China agree on the construction of the 27 km Orange Line metro train project in Punjab.

- 2015 The two countries celebrate 2015 as the Year of Friendly Exchanges 2015 - Trade between the two countries reaches US \$16 billion.

- 2015 Chinese President Xi Jinping undertakes a landmark visit to Pakistan, both countries signed over 50 documents including the agreement on CPEC outlining projects worth USD 46 billion. The pledged investment already raised USD 62 billion.

- 2016 The two countries celebrate the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

- 2016 China-Pakistan unveils the Long-term Plan of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), paving the ways for further cooperation and collaboration.

- 2017 Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif attends the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing.

- 2018 Prime Minister Imran Khan pays a historic visit to China and both sides agree to further strengthen the All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership and jointly build Closer China-Pakistan Community of a Shared Future in the New Era.

- 2018 CPEC enters in its Second Phase, focused on social-economic development of Pakistan on a faster pace.

- 2018 Phase-II of the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement was signed, facilitating Pakistani exports.

- 2018 Prime Minister Imran Khan attends



the First China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai. A leading initiative of China for opening its markets to Pakistani products.

- 2018 Groundbreaking of Rashakai Special Economic Zone.

- 2018 Pakistan launches Remote Sensing Satellite-1 (PRSS-1) from China's Jiuquan Satellite Centre, enabling Pakistan to the membership of prestigious Space Club.

- 2019 Groundbreaking of Allama Iqbal Industrial City (M3), Faisalabad Special Economic Zone.

- 2019 Prime Minister Imran Khan visits China to attend the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

- 2019 JWG 2 Joint Working Group 2 on International Coordination and Cooperation launched.

- 2019 Visit of Chinese Vice President to Pakistan in May.

- 2019 The two sides celebrate 2019 as the year of sister-city / province, China-Pakistan shares several MoUs signed as sister cities or provinces.

- 2019 Pakistan hosts the Third China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Foreign Ministers Dialogue in Islamabad, a breakthrough in diplomacy toward resolving the Afghan crisis.

- 2019 Visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to China in October.

- 2019 CPEC Authority has been set-up to coordinate and monitor progress on CPEC Projects

- 2019 A CPEC Cell was also established in the Prime Minister's Office.

- 2019 9th JCC took place in Islamabad in November.

- 2020 CPFTA-II became operational from 1st January, whereas Pakistan may enjoy better access to the Chinese market.

- 2020 Extensive bilateral coordination in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic; China is the major contributor who extended the largest amount of assistance to Pakistan in fighting the outbreak.



- 2020 Visit of the President Alvi to China in March 2020. MOUs signed including MOU to established JWGs on Science & Technology and Agricultural Cooperation

Pakistan and China have enjoyed close and friendly relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations on May 21, 1951. Over the years, the relationship has blossomed into an "All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership", with the CPEC at its core. Pakistan considers China as one of its closest friends and partners and China considers Pakistan as its "Iron Brother".



Wang Yi Attends the Launch Ceremony in Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations

State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi attended the launch ceremony in celebration of the 70th anniversary of China-Pakistan diplomatic relations with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi via video link in Beijing and delivered a speech.

Wang Yi said that China and Pakistan enjoy a lasting bond of friendship. In the past 70 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, thanks to the commitment of generations of our leaders, China and Pakistan shared weal and woe and sincerely helped each other, and thus built all-round cooperation and all-weather friendship. Great strides are being made in the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the concept of a China-Pakistan community with a shared future is deeply rooted. The “iron brotherhood” between China and Pakistan has become a vivid reflection of genuine friendship between the two peoples.

Wang Yi said that China and Pakistan should take this 70th anniversary as an opportunity to initiate higher-quality, more extensive, and deeper cooperation. The two sides should



deepen political mutual trust and continue to firmly support each other on issues of respective core interests and major concerns, enhance communication and coordination on issues of strategic importance, and stand shoulder to shoulder in response to international and regional changes as well as various risks and challenges.

Wang Yi said that the two sides should remain

committed to mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, steadily push forward the CPEC and forge new cooperation highlights, so as to make China-Pakistan cooperation deliver greater benefits to the two peoples. The two sides should pass our friendship onto future generations and encourage the two peoples, especially the younger generation, to participate more actively in the friendly exchanges between the two countries, in a bid to increase mutual understanding and affinity between our two peoples and strengthen the new forces to carry forward China-Pakistan friendship. The two sides should practice multilateralism and make new contributions to the settlement of regional hot spot issues, to international cooperation against terrorism, and to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi spoke highly of China’s development achievements and the fruitful cooperation between Pakistan and China. He said that China has created a miracle of economic and social development by lifting over 800 million people out of poverty, which is an unprecedented and extraordinary achievement in human history. The past



70 years have witnessed closer strategic and political collaboration and deepening practical cooperation and cultural exchanges between the two countries. The Pakistan-China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership has become the cornerstone of regional peace, stability and development. Pakistan firmly adheres to the one-China principle, resolutely supports the Belt and Road Initiative, and strongly believes that the CPEC will become an exemplary project of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

After the speech, the two foreign ministers jointly unveiled the logo of the celebration of the 70th anniversary of China-Pakistan diplomatic relations. Before the launch ceremony, Wang Yi and Pakistani Ambassador to China Moin ul Haque visited the photo exhibition commemorating the 70th anniversary of China-Pakistan diplomatic ties.

Relevant government and local officials and business heads from both sides also attended the launch ceremony.





Pakistan and China: 70 Years of Friendship

There is a popular Chinese saying that “A journey of 1000 miles begin with the first step”. The first step in Pakistan-China relations was taken with the establishment of diplomatic relations on May 21, 1951, 70 years ago. Since that period, this has been a journey of a unique relationship which has developed into a brotherly bond of all-weather friendship between “Iron Brothers” reinforced by mutuality of interests and common values. Pakistan and China have stood by each other since the past five decades, and both countries protect and promote each other’s ‘core interests’.

What are China’s core interests? These can be summed up as:

- Unity and territorial integrity of China (unlike India, Pakistan had already signed a bordering agreement with China in March 1963, and currently, there is no border issue between the two countries);
- Primacy of the Communist Party of China, given its pivotal role in providing continuity and stability within the country;
- The peaceful rise and development of China, which Pakistan sees as a source of strength for small and medium Asian countries, given China’s track record of standing by the Third World countries;
- Issues like Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong and South China Sea where Pakistan stands by China in all respects, as well as the common interest in the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI).

What are Pakistan’s core interests which China has always helped protect? These can be summed up as:

- Territorial integrity, dignity and national independence of Pakistan;
- Pakistan’s successful role in the inland war against terrorism and extremism, where China accepts Pakistan’s narrative as the biggest victim of terrorism;
- Pakistan’s right to develop an indigenous defence capability, including nuclear weapons;
- Protecting Pakistan against threats of bullying, hegemonism and isolation, from India and others in the West;
- Pakistan’s quest to seek a peaceful and prosperous future for its people via regional connectivity under the framework of BRI, with CPEC as its main pillar. China always supports Pakistan in the UN Security Council, G-20, FATF and the Nuclear





Suppliers Group (NSG);

- Support for the Kashmir cause and Afghanistan peace process.

Today, CPEC is also an important pillar of the resilient and robust Pakistan-China relationship that is rightly considered unique as an “all-weather friendship” between the two neighbours. Mutuality of interests, absence of friction and a congruent worldview have influenced what is truly a unique relationship in the annals of international relations. However, CPEC is not just brick and mortar, it is also, as the Pakistan-China Institute gave the 3C vision for CPEC six years ago about “Corridors, Culture and Connectivity”. Today, 25,000 Pakistanis are learning Chinese language and 28,000 Pakistanis students are now studying in China. Contrary to the propaganda peddled by Western interests, the number of Chinese working on different projects in Pakistan is still quite modest. There are about 15000 Chinese experts, engineers and technicians working on CPEC projects in Pakistan. So far, \$25 billion have been pumped in by China as investment in various CPEC projects in Pakistan, with about 75000 Pakistanis gainfully employed in these projects.

As CPEC enters its second phase in 2021, what are the major challenges it faces? First, the systematic disinformation against CPEC, particularly the ‘debt trap’ theory, seeks to malign the BRI and undermine Pakistan-China relations. The United States has joined India in publicly opposing CPEC because of its broader geopolitical tussle with China. A recent article in the US magazine, ‘The Atlantic’, written by 2 American professors effectively demolished the arguments peddled by American officialdom. The article “The Chinese ‘Debt Trap’ is a Myth” written by Prof. Deborah Brautigam and Prof. Meg Rithmire, dated Feb-

ruary 6, 2021, aptly put it that “the debt trap narrative is just that: a lie, and a powerful one.”

Secondly, there are concerns regarding security of CPEC projects and personnel given the volatile situation existing in certain parts of Pakistan like Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, due to the fall out of the Afghan conflict next door. A Special Security Division (SSD) of the Pakistan Army has been established which monitors the security of CPEC projects from Gwadar to Gilgit, ensuring these are fully protected and potential threats thwarted. In the wake of the exposure by the EU DisinfoLab of India’s sustained propaganda campaign against Pakistan, which is part of India’s hybrid war as documented in the Dossier on India’s state terrorism, issued by the Foreign Office last November. India is not just pumping in millions of dollars to malign CPEC and Pakistan-China Relations, but 87 RAW-organised training camps now exist, 66 in Afghanistan and 21 in India, to foment cross-border-terrorism to destabilise Pakistan.

Finally, there are challenges at the Pakistani end on how to take CPEC forward given bureaucratic red tape, a sluggish absence of coordination among government departments. An organised and sustained government media strategy and a comprehensive approach of promoting CPEC through political ownership in a transparent manner, is still missing.

The geopolitical scenario is rapidly changing. Despite the change of administration in the United States, there is no letup in the propaganda campaign against China and the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). In fact, a special anti-China bill has been tabled in the American Congress on April 15, 2021, which is being termed as “The Strategic Competition Act”. Under terms of this bill,

which is still being discussed and debated, an annual allocation of \$570 million will be made, basically for propaganda against China and to malign the BRI. In other words, this new law, if passed by the American Congress, would be a recipe for a new Cold War.

Hence, the centrality of Pakistan-China relations in the changing regional and global context, where mutual ties need to be reinforced. These ties are strengthened by the bond between the people of Pakistan and China. At the core of CPEC lies its centrality to the Pakistan-China strategic partnership which remains a unique and resilient friction-free relationship that has remained robust and strong for nearly 60 years. After the Indian annexation of Occupied Kashmir, and the ensuing India-China conflict, China is now a de facto party to the Kashmir dispute. US efforts to build up India as a counterweight to China have brought Pakistan-China closer together, given their mutuality of interests. In fact, the ‘China factor’ is the principal motivation in India’s U-turn on talking to Pakistan, which came after a military thrashing given by the People’s Liberation Army to the Indian Army in May 2020 and January 2021. Apart from CPEC, whether it is the Coronavirus pandemic, Pulwama Crisis, Modi’s annexation of Kashmir, FATF or taking Kashmir to the UN Security Council, it is China that has stood firm like a rock with Pakistan during these difficult moments. With CPEC as its core, this strong relationship was aptly summed up by the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi: “No matter how things change in the world and the region, China will firmly support Pakistan in upholding its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and dignity”.



In early 1956, Geng Biao was appointed as the ambassador to Pakistan



A strong and visionary man behind Pakistan-China friendship

Pakistan and China are the closest of friends. They are strategic partners, in war and peace alike. Sino-Pakistan friendship is globally seen as a role model for nations to learn from. China and Pakistan are now involved in the construction of a multi-billion dollar project known as the “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor” (CPEC). The aim is to harmonize the development and further strengthen the existing ties. This story of robust cooperation and trust however goes back to the 1950s.

It is widely observed Sino-Pakistan relationships owes to men and women in both countries, who worked selflessly to nurture this relationship. Some of them will always remain unknown while a few can be identified easily. Among these great personalities, General Geng Biao is a record of history.

Geng Biao the fiery general from the army was summoned by Chairman Mao. He was asked to relinquish his diplomatic assignment at Sweden and reach Pakistan as new Chinese ambassador to Pakistan. He although very unfamiliar with his new appointment readily accepted and promised to fulfill his new tasks in his new capacity as a challenge. Geng Biao is the chief architect of Pakistan-China relations. He was born on August 26, 1909 in Liling a small county in Hunan Province. He started from very humble beginnings, he used to work in a lead-zinc mine in Shuishikou, and later on he joined the Communist Party of China (CPC). Before being posted to Pakistan in 1956, he served as the Chinese ambassador to Sweden. But the visionary decision of Chairman Mao to assign him to Pakistan proved right and just in-time when General Ayub Khan was ruling Pakistan. Geng Biao was indeed the right choice to be posted to Pakistan. He had a long military career, a trait very well respected among Pakistan's military leaders and due to this and his new found diplomatic skills, and he got a very close working relation with President Ayub Khan and the Pakistan Army.

This served well as the basis of relationship

between the two countries and continues till date. Both armies developed soon a strategic understanding and frequent exchanges at various levels further cemented the two nations closer.

After the meeting Chairman Mao asked Ambassador Geng to stay and discussed about a possibility of opening a new route to from Chinese western borders into Pakistan. He told Geng “This is your new task”. The Idea was very well perceived in Pakistan and eventually led to the construction of the Karakoram Highway (KKH). We can say that CPEC is a modern day re-incarnation of the decades old idea. Chinese President Xi Jinping was the staff-officer of Geng Biao. While on his first trip to Pakistan, President Xi said: “Although this is my first trip to Pakistan but I already know a lot about Pakistan from my former boss-mentor Geng Biao.” So it is very likely that Geng Biao's work regarding opening up road linkages between the two countries had also influenced President Xi's One Belt, One Road policy.

While President Xi was staff officer to General Geng, he learned a lot about Pakistan and developed his vision about the strategic importance of Pakistan-China friendship. He was very good officer and excellent student and learner too.

He was also looked after the Mrs Geng Biao and enjoyed a family like working environment. He was emotionally attached to General Geng and his family. At the death time of General Geng, President Xi was serving in Fujian province as governor. He was shocked with this news and travelled to Beijing to complete all rituals of his funeral.

Ambassador Geng Biao after returning from his diplomatic duties abroad, was made in charge of the CPC's Central Foreign Communication Department. Geng Biao with his exceptional talents and vast experience in military and diplomatic affairs proved to be a man of great promise in Beijing.

In 1978, he was appointed as vice-premier of

the State Council, in charge of foreign relations, military industry, civil airlines and tourism. In January 1979, he became the Secretary-general and member of Standing Committee of CPC's Central Military Commission. In 1981, he became the Minister of National Defence, and became State Councilor the following year.

In 1983, he became Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and Chairman of Foreign Relation Committee in PNC. Geng Biao was a military genius, a great diplomat, a strategist and above all a kind father too. He left two sons and two daughters. Unfortunately one of his son died and the other one is doing business now a days. His eldest daughter Geng Ying is heading an NGO and actively working in Pak-China Friendship Association, while the younger one Geng Yan is a prominent researcher and head of “The Silk Route Fund”. She has keen interest in the well-being of Pakistan and pro-actively supports CPEC.

In 1950s, the US and allies imposed sanctions on China and placed economic blockade on China. Pakistan was only country providing linkage between China and rest of the world. Pakistan was termed “Window” for China to interact with the rest of world.

It was the vision of Chairman Mao and General Geng Biao to connect China with Pakistan with Karakoram Highway to access the Arabian Ocean, as alternative route for China in case of tension in Pacific Ocean. CPEC is an alternate to Pacific Ocean in case of emergencies. It is time to speed up CPEC and full-fill the dream of great leader Chairman Mao and General Geng.

Today, when we see tension in Pacific Ocean, we concludes, his visionary approach was absolutely right. Long Lives China-Pakistan Friendship.

The author is Prof. Engr. Zamir Ahmed Awan, Sinologist (ex-Diplomat), Editor, Analyst, Non-Resident Fellow of CCG (Center for China and Globalization), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad, Pakistan.



70th Years of friendship, & counting

By H.E. Nong Rong,
Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi attended a virtual ceremony on March 2 to formally commence the anniversary celebrations.

China-Pakistan ties have developed into an outstanding model of relations between countries with different social systems, histories and cultures over the past seven decades.

Since diplomatic relations were officially established in 1951, the friendship between the two countries has remained rock-solid no matter how the regional and international landscapes have evolved. They have always supported each other on issues involving their respective core interests and major concerns, and forged an ironclad bond.

It is under the careful cultivation of the leaders of the two countries that the friendship between China and Pakistan has grown into a towering tree with vitality and deep roots. President Xi Jinping made a historic visit to Pakistan in 2015, promoting bilateral relations to the level of All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan has visited China three times since taking office, and has held four meetings with President Xi, fully demonstrates that the Pakistani government has put China at its foremost and central position in developing foreign relations.

During China's fight against the COVID-19 at the beginning of 2020, Pakistan immediately donated medical materials to China, and all walks of life in the country voiced their support for China and opposed politicizing the pandemic and stigmatizing China.

When COVID-19 cases surged in Pakistan, groups of Chinese medical experts as well as batches of medical supplies have been sent to assist the country. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is proceeding uninterrupted, with no jobs cut and no staffs withdrawn, which has helped stabilize Pakistan's economy and promoted people's livelihoods.

In order to support Pakistan's fight against

the second wave of the pandemic, the Chinese government and the Chinese military each donated 500,000 vaccine doses to Pakistan. Pakistan was the first country to receive COVID-19 vaccines donations from both the Chinese government and military.

The past 70 years has proved that China-Pakistan friendship and cooperation are not only in the fundamental interests of the two countries and peoples, but also conducive to maintaining regional and world peace, stability and development.

The two sides should continue to firmly support each other.

China will continue to develop its relations with Pakistan from a strategic and long-term perspective, and give Pakistan priority in diplomacy. China will never forget Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China, and was among the countries backing China's efforts in restoring its lawful seat in the United Nations, and provide valuable assistance in China's reform and opening-up.

The Chinese side will maintain high-level exchanges with Pakistan, always support Pakistan in safeguarding its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and help it play a more constructive role in international and regional affairs.

Since the CPEC was launched, China has become Pakistan's largest trading partner for six consecutive years and its largest source of investment for seven consecutive years. The CPEC has brought \$25.4 billion in direct investment to Pakistan and created 75,000 jobs for the country at its peak. It is a demonstration of high quality development under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

China will continue to further develop the economic corridor linking the two countries, vigorously support Pakistan's industrialization, help increase employment and expand exports, and accelerate its integration into the international industrial chain.

As the protocol of the second phase of the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement has come into effect, the trade liberalization between the two countries has been greatly improved, and China stands ready to deepen economic and trade cooperation with Pakistan.

China will provide greater convenience

for Pakistan's exports to China, strive to narrow the trade deficit, and seek balanced development of bilateral trade.

Both sides should join hands to address security risks. The security interests of China and Pakistan are closely related. The two countries have continuously deepened cooperation in fields such as defense, security and anti-terrorism, making great contributions to regional and international peace and stability.

China will continue to support Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts by helping the country improve its anti-terrorism and security capabilities and ability to better address non-traditional security threats. China will also provide reliable security guarantees for economic cooperation and mutual development between the two countries.

China will build a bridge of friendship and partnership between the two peoples. The cooperation in the fields of art, broadcasting, film and television, publishing and sports is progressing well. A series of activities, such as the Year of Friendly Exchanges between Pakistan and China in 2015, and the Year of Sister-City Exchanges in 2019, have all contributed to people-to-people exchanges.

More and more Pakistani students are studying in China, and many of them have become the backbone of China-Pakistan friendship. Both countries will host more wonderful and various cultural exchanges, strengthen ties at the levels of provinces and cities, continue to support cooperation in higher education, and boost cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

This year is a milestone for both sides. For China, it marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China and is the first year of China's 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25). For Pakistan, the country is making every effort to develop its economy and realize Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision of "Naya Pakistan", which provides the two countries with new opportunities to promote their cooperation.

It is believed that with the joint efforts of the two sides, the China-Pakistan All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership will surely reach a new height, and forge ahead in building a China-Pakistan community with a shared future.

The author is the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily.



SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND CHINA



By H.E. Mr. Salman Bashir,
Former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador

I wish to thank the Diplomatic Focus for publishing a special supplement to commemorate the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China.

It is a privilege and an honor to contribute my thoughts on this momentous occasion. I had the good fortune to work for the consolidation of Pakistan-China relations during my long years at the Pakistan Foreign Ministry and particularly as Ambassador to China from 2005 to 2008 and as Foreign Secretary 2008 to 2012.

I and my family fondly remember the years we spent in Beijing. This was the time when China was preparing for holding the Beijing Olympics. It was a rare treat to see the whole country on the march. The pace on which China was transforming into a beautiful developed nation was remarkable.

Never in the history of mankind has a country achieved so much in such a short time. It was a privilege to be in the midst of renaissance of the ancient Chinese civilization and to witness first-hand the great transformation.

We celebrated then in Beijing in 2006, the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. With the help of my friend Ambassador Yao Jing, who was then our boss in the Beijing Foreign Office, we compiled a coffee table picture book on those 55 years of Pakistan-China

relations.

On this occasion, we pay a rich tribute to the leadership of our two countries and many distinguished diplomats on both sides for their exceptional commitment to shaping over these years a model relationship, which has grown in strength every passing day.

Friendship between Pakistan and China is unique with no parallels. Sincerity, mutual trust, and genuine care and affection are its hall marks. No theory of international relations could quantify or explain this relationship.

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 was a momentous event. Soon thereafter, Pakistan recognized the People's Republic and was among the first few to establish diplomatic relations.

In a sense this was a continuation of the historical processes. Our geographical proximity and centuries of civilizational interaction between our peoples, provided the depth and a firm foundation for carrying forward this truly remarkable friendship in all spheres. Rich folk lore and legendary tales attest to the love and affection between our two peoples.

We have stood by each other at all times. Today we stand together again, tall and steadfast, as ever, further expanding and deepening the horizons of our mutually beneficial cooperation for the welfare of our peoples and for regional peace and prosperity.

Pakistan will continue to be steadfast in its friendship with China. The current uncertainty

in global and regional situation beckons us to further deepen our consultations and coordination in all domains with a view to meeting any and all challenges together.

The legendary wisdom of the Chinese people and their precious civilizational heritage holds immense promise of solutions to contemporary problems confronting mankind. Chinese diplomacy is a sterling example of graceful conduct. China's contribution to promoting peaceful cooperation and building a community of shared destiny is not only valuable but offers a sign post for mankind's endeavors in the present troubled times.

The people of Pakistan rejoice on the stellar national accomplishments of our Chinese friends. They owe these accomplishments to their wise leadership and hard work.

We are indeed most grateful for the closest possible support of China for Pakistan's national development and security.

New challenges and new opportunities have opened new vistas for our cooperation. I am confident that this deep people centered relationship between our countries will continue to prosper and break new grounds.

I and my friends and colleagues in the Foreign Service both serving and retired take pride in our humble contribution to promoting this friendship. We will continue to defend, promote and enrich Pakistan-China relations with fervor, enthusiasm and deep commitment.

Reminiscences of China

By H.E. Mr. Riaz Muhammad Khan,
Former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador

My diplomatic career of almost four decades focused on China in two phases: first, as a junior officer from 1970 to 1979 and then my last foreign assignment as Pakistan's ambassador to China from 2002 to early 2005. On joining the Pakistan Foreign Service in 1969, I requested selection for learning the Chinese language, and in 1970 was posted to Beijing where I stayed for three years both serving as third secretary and for language training.

Immediately after arriving in Beijing, I witnessed President Yahya Khan's visit in November when Pakistan had played an intermediary in the historic Sino-US rapprochement leading to Dr Henry Kissinger's visit to Beijing next June. During this visit, China also offered Pakistan an interest-free credit of Yuan 500 million to finance important heavy industrial projects and the Karakoram Highway. 1971 was a difficult year for Pakistan and affected everyone as tragic events unfolded with the separation of the Eastern Wing of the country.

1972 began with the visit of President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, his first ever as head of state to a foreign country. Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai recommitted China's friendship and solidarity with Pakistan which President Bhutto appreciated in glowing terms. But he did not heed the Chinese Premier's advice not to proceed with nationalization of Pakistani industrial sector. "In 1950s we made that mistake and had to plead with our industrialists to return and run our industries," recalled Premier Zhou.

In mid-June, before the Simla Accords, President Bhutto made another gesture by sending all his four children on a two week visit to China. Premier Zhou and his wife Madam Deng Yingchao received the Bhutto children. In a casual conversation, Premier Zhou asked Benazir Bhutto who was then studying at Radcliff in Boston (USA) about the 1972 American Presidential elections. Her response that all the campuses favoured candidate McGovern, triggered something in Zhou Enlai and he spoke for one hour citing Gallop Poll



results at various stages and changes in McGovern's own statements during the campaign and wrapping up with the conclusion that he had no chance. We listened in awe and with rapt attention a masterly and elaborate analysis by an extraordinary world leader who carried on his head the burden of ensuring the welfare of 800 million Chinese citizens.

Soon after, Agha Shahi arrived in Beijing as Pakistan's ambassador; his reputation as a legend preceded him. I had the opportunity to accompany him on a few of his meetings with Premier Zhou which always took place late night, perhaps because by then he felt relaxed and free after having attended to his many responsibilities during the day. Besides bilateral matters, Premier Zhou appeared interested in discussing with the accomplished Pakistani ambassador the global situation and the workings of the United Nations where People's Republic was about to take up its rightful seat for the first time.

In one such past-mid night meetings in late 1972, Ambassador Shahi explained to Premier Zhou how it was important to link Bangladesh admission to the United Nations with the freedom of Pakistani POWs, and how China could play a critical

role now that it was to assume permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Premier Zhou readily committed China's support to Pakistan and asked Ambassador Shahi to proceed to New York to guide the Chinese delegation in the matter. China ended up using its first Veto in favour of Pakistan. It was not an easy decision for China as it had long detested Veto powers the US had used to bar China's entry into the United Nations.

Early 1973 saw the inaugural PIA flight over the Karakorams, one of the most scenic air-routes anywhere in the world. A grand reception to celebrate the occasion was held in the Great Hall of the Peoples. At the last minute I was told that Maulana Kausar Niazi, who was part of the delegation led by Begum Nusrat Bhutto, would make the speech in Urdu and I was to interpret. I thought that perhaps I could manage even though my Chinese was rudimentary, until Maulana began to speak with a flourish, reciting Persian couplets and continuing in ornate Urdu. Before he paused, I knew it was impossible for me to interpret. But assuming that those present knew either Chinese or Urdu, I decided to make my own speech I had learnt by heart about Pakistan-China friendship with alter-



ations to suit the occasion. All went well, and there was applause following every pause in the speech and its “translation.” Before proceeding to China in 1970, I sought the advice of Zahid Chaudry, a scholar on China who had served with Radio Beijing. He recommended, “Read Daily Xinhua, it will be tedious, but in six months’ time you will start getting the sense of China’s political debates and jargon.” These were the Cultural Revolution days with a theology of continuing revolution to create a classless society with a new moral man. I was young and impressed by the Maoist experiment. I did a study on Chinese Communes. Only later did I realize that the human condition was far too complex to be circumscribed by the ethics of a straightjacket ideology, however pristine. My readings of Xinhua and the Hong Kong press as well as my interest in China’s revolutionary and old history and literature helped my understanding of China and write reports on China’s political struggles.

In late 1973, Agha Shahi became foreign secretary and asked me to come to Islamabad to handle China desk which I did for the next six years. My first assignment was to look into the Chinese aided projects on the civilian side. I prepared a detailed report with the HMC and the proposed Chilghazi Mini Steel Plant as two case studies. The report was considered at an inter-ministerial meeting and its recommendations adopted to streamline the implementation of several Chinese aided projects including the Heavy Mechanical Complex and the Heavy Forge and Foundry at Taxila. China had provided the best of equipment for these projects and her top engineers to help setting them up. Jiang Zemin who later became president and I presented my credentials as ambassador to him in 2002, spent four months in Taxila to supervise HFF in mid 1970s. However the Chinese approach then and even later to such mega projects was in the mode of a cooperative venture expecting the other side to do what it was capable of doing. This was often at the root of difficulties as our culture preferred turn-key projects. Such difficulties were absent when it came to projects in the defence and strategic sectors such as cooperation in the nuclear power generation where project implementation was largely trouble free.

The Karakoram Highway has been one of the most remarkable joint endeavours which covers a stretch of 500 miles from Thakot to Khunjerab Pass winding through high and difficult mountain terrains. Over ten thousand Chinese work force was de-

ployed for over four years and nearly five hundred of them, along with an almost equal number of Pakistanis workers, lost their lives. Their sacrifices must never be forgotten for the construction of this monumental symbol of Pakistan-China friendship which links the two countries and has opened up new avenues of development for our Northern Areas.

China Desk was a good learning experience exposing me to summits, meetings and negotiations at all levels on wide-ranging bilateral subjects. I was part of Prime Minister Bhutto’s delegation when he visited China in 1974 and then in 1976. He was the last foreign leader to meet Chairman Mao who was frail, ailing and could barely speak. But he asked, “Tell me, how are the Pakistani people.”

I found China of 1970s rustic and largely underdeveloped, but it was homely and infused with revolutionary zeal. Post-Mao, China progressed at a miraculous pace led by Deng Xiaoping’s direction for modernization and opening to the West and seizing all opportunities offered by globalization. Paradoxically, Mao’s revolution had prepared the ground; it had transformed the popular mind-set investing it with confidence that people could change their condition, in addition to achieving universal education and organized work ethics. Deng’s new direction built on this foundation unleashed China’s organised potential to bring about the greatest transformation of a human society in modern times.

I returned to China as Pakistan’s ambassador in 2002 after a gap of 24 years. It took me a couple of weeks to absorb the enormity of the change. The new China was modern, vibrant and open to the world. Never in human history have a people accomplished so much as the Chinese have done within the span of one generation. We could not claim the special and exclusive status we enjoyed in the 1970s, but politically bilateral relations retained vigour and closeness. China’s peaceful rise and exponentially expanding economic and technological capacities augur well for Pakistan. Arguably, this was my most rewarding diplomatic assignment.

During thirty months of my ambassadorial tenure, there were summit level visits by President Musharraf, Prime Ministers Zafarullah Khan Jamali and Shaukat Aziz and from the Chinese side by President Hu Jindao. In addition there was a stream of visits at ministerial level, by parliamentarians, senior officials and from private sector, signifying the robust bilateral relationship.

Many important ongoing projects includ-

ing the Gwadar Port, JF-17 fighter jet and Chashma-I nuclear power plant were completed during my tenure, while several new projects were initiated including the up-gradation of the KKH, Chashma-II nuclear power plant, raising of Mangla, naval frigates with provision of joint production and space satellites.

Among others, agreements were concluded in higher education especially scientific and technological fields, tourism, preferential trade and economic cooperation and phytosanitary certification for export of our citrus and mango. We proposed to China to commit funds for long term investments for projects and joint ventures in designated sectors. The idea was pursued over the subsequent years and finally matured with CPEC which is part of China’s mega One Belt One Road vision for integrating China’s economy with the economies of Euro-Asian landmass.

I had participated and pushed for finalizing negotiations for Chashma II nuclear power plant in 2003. At that time we learnt that the Chinese were thinking of joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group. This gave me the idea of securing long term cooperation with China in the nuclear power generation field. I initiated and pushed for an agreement for this purpose which was signed in 2003. It is a source of deep gratification for me that we have built Chashma III and Chashma IV and have plans to construct more nuclear power plants under the aegis of this overarching arrangement. Cooperation in the education and tourism sectors required special attention.

The two countries entered into long term arrangements for placement of our students in China’s hi-tech universities and colleges for PhD programmes. A beginning was made and from a mere few hundred in 2003, today (2019) more than 25000 Pakistani students are benefiting from China’s institution of higher learning. Similarly, in 2003, China signed an agreement for organised tourism to Pakistan. Seven Chinese tourist companies had planned to send delegations which were put on hold because of a terrorist incident in Gwadar in early 2004 targeting Chinese personnel. The tourist activity revived later as there is great deal of interest in China in the historical Buddhist sites of northern Pakistan. Celebrated Buddhist monks Fa Xien and Huan Hsiang had studied in Taxila and spread Buddhist inspiration to China. Today those historical links are finding a new life in the shape of CPEC and the Karakoram Highway.



CHINESE AMBASSADOR CALLS ON FARRUKH HABIB, MINISTER OF STATE FOR INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Nong Rong called on Farrukh Habib, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting in his office today. They exchanged felicitations on the successful completion of 70 years of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. Minister of State told the Ambassador that China is iron brother and all weather friend of Pakistan which always stood by Pakistan in difficult times. Karakoram Highway is a testament of our strong friendly relations. People of Pakistan have very favorable sentiments for China and keep Pakistan, China friendship in high regards. Farrukh Habib also congratulated H.E. Nong Rong on the completion of 100 years of the establishment of Communist Party of China (CPC). He also thanked the ambassador for the Chinese help to Pakistan in wake of Covid Pandemic and on the provision of vaccine. Farrukh

People of Pakistan have very favorable sentiments for China and keep Pakistan, China friendship in high regards

Habib praised Chinese quick response to Covid which saved many precious lives. He further said that Pakistan's response to Covid, under the leadership of Imran Khan, was effective and was also praised by WHO.



The State Minister said that BRI is a great initiative of regional connectivity of which CPEC is a flagship project. Farrukh Habib apprised H.E. Nong Rong about the Allama Iqbal Special Economic Zones in Faisalabad and said that the special economic zone has great potential for Chinese investment. Necessary infrastructure in Allama Iqbal Special economic zone has already been developed, he told further. The minister of State also called for the need for Pakistani and Chinese companies to undertake Joint Ventures in textile sector. Farrukh Habib also highlighted the need for city to city cooperation, research and cooperation on social protection programs between China and Pakistan. The world in large and Pakistan in particular can learn a great deal from China on how it successfully brought 700 million people out of poverty. The Minister of State expressed pleasure over the extension of CPEC beyond infrastructure development to so-

cial and agriculture cooperation.

The Minister of State emphasized the need for cooperation and close coordination between Pakistan and Chinese Media Industries. There are already MoUs signed between PTV and CCTV, APP and Xinhua. Both countries need to extend the cooperation to film industry, the State Minister further said. The Chinese Ambassador said that Pakistani media has played an important role to disseminate information regarding CPEC, dispelling propaganda from countries hostile to CPEC. Chinese ambassador also emphasized on strengthening B2B cooperation and said that trade is a good beginning for all kinds of cooperation.

Minister of State Farrukh Habib appreciated and praised the vision of President Xi Jinping for regional connectivity and promotion of trade. He also extended an invitation to H.E. Nong Rong to visit Faisalabad



Message

H.E. Andreas Ferrarese Ambassador of Republic of Italy sends his greetings on the National Day.

Today is the 2nd June, and Italians all over the world are celebrating “Festa Della Repubblica”. On this day, back in 1946, a referendum was held in Italy where Italian people were asked to choose between monarchy or republic for their state. 54.3% of the voters opted for republic and thus Italy became a republic on the second of June 1946. Every year we celebrate this day as the republic day or our national day. Following the covid-19 Sops, we are not able to celebrate national day this year with our friends as we used to do, but we very much look forward to return to normalcy after vaccination completes.

I would like to thank all Pakistani friends who sent messages of warmth and solidarity on our national day. Pakistan has stood by Italy since the very beginning of pandemic. People and government of Italy sincerely appreciate all the support and sympathy offered by the government and people of Pakistan. Let us all play our role to curb the contagion and celebrate all our festivities responsibly. From everyone at the Italian Embassy in Islamabad, I wish you all “Buona Festa”.

National Day of Italy celebrated in Islamabad

H.E. Andreas Ferrarese Ambassador of Republic of Italy hosted dinner reception to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the National Day of Italy at his residence.

Italy is an active investor in Pakistan. Italy provided Pakistan financial assistance under the Pakistan Italian Debt for Development Swap Agreement to social development projects in health, education and sanitation, in Pakistan. Italian government

has agreed to provide a credit line equivalent to \$10 billion for Italian investors willing to invest in Pakistan. Italy has also supported Pakistan bid for free trade agreement between Pakistan and EU.

There are over 100,000 Pakistanis living in Italy, mainly living in the cities of Milan and Brescia, of whom a vast majority belong to the Punjab province of Pakistan. Italy remains major textile trading partner of the Pakistan; most of the

Pakistani exports to Italy consist of textiles and clothing and leather apparel.

Italy is one of the top eight trading partners of Pakistan. Over the years of friendly ties, trade and other economic activities have grown between the two countries. Italy remains major textile trading partner of the Pakistan; most of the Pakistani exports to Italy consist of textiles and clothing and leather apparel.





Exclusive Interview

by Mian Fazal Elahi

One of my goals is to enhance Italian cultural presence in Pakistan through various mediums

H.E. Mr Andreas Ferrarese

Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the Italian Republic to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Your Excellency! First of all, I, on behalf of 'Diplomatic Focus' appreciate your efforts for enhancing the bilateral relations and praise your role as the Ambassador of Republic of Italy to Pakistan. I am also thankful to you for giving us time out of your busy schedule.

DF: The spread of coronavirus is immoderate in Italy as compared to many other countries but the Government and the People of Italy overcome the situation and the graph of Covid-19 patients goes down. What has been the line of action of the Italian Government in this regard?

Our Government - despite being amongst the first ones to face this huge challenge - took effective measures since the outbreak of Covid-19 in Italy. Large numbers of tests were performed on public and extensive lockdown was imposed to curtail the spread of the virus. Spread during the month of March 2020 was at extraordinary pace and our health system was severely under pressure. Thanks to tenacious fight put up by our health professionals, situation has greatly improved. Italy is reporting a daily-low of new cases and fatality rate has gone significantly low. Restrictions are being gradually eased and Italy now looks forward to the normalization. In this difficult period we felt our Pakistani friends particularly close and supporting. Political contacts have been intense, since there were important conversations between our two Prime Ministers, Giuseppe Conte and Imran Khan, and our Foreign Ministers, Di Maio and Qureshi. In the same way, we are brotherly close to Pakistan in this days, and to all those affected and their families.

DF: Your Excellency! How has the pandemic treated you? What was your routine and how has your personality evolved during this lockdown?

The pandemic has taught us a lot. Our vulnerabilities and limitations have been revealed and many of us have discovered a different perspective of life. I learned, along my career - which was full of challenges - to make of every crisis an opportunity. I spent the last months finalizing the projects for the new Italian Embassy in Islamabad, studying deeply the history and traditions of Pakistan, building an excellent team, and reorganizing the work in the Embassy. I have been blessed by finding an excellent staff in the Embassy, which is facing the ongoing crisis with commitment and sense of duty. I thank all of them, and in particular my Consul in Karachi, Danilo, my Deputy in Islamabad, Francesco, Military Attache', Giuseppe, and Cooperation Agency Chief, Emanuela.

DF: Your Excellency! Italy's educational system is considered one of the best education systems. I would like to know how many Pakistani students are enrolled in the universities of Italy. Would you further increase the number of students under scholarship programs?

Italian universities have become favorite

Profile



Andreas Ferrarese was born in Tübingen (Germany) on January 17, 1968, the father being a Professor of History and his mother a Professor of Economy, both from ancient families from the city of Venice.

He graduated in Oriental Languages and Literature at the "Cà Foscari" University of Venice in 1992. He had studying experiences in Tunisia, Egypt, France (Sorbonne INALCO), Spain, Georgia. He made a Thesis on the Arabic dialects of Spain, and attended a doctorate in Middle Ages Philosophy, about Arab philosopher Ibn Rushd.

After an intensive preparation in Law and Economy in the University of Padua, and a stage in the prestigious Ecole National d'Administration ENA in Paris, he entered the Diplomatic Career in 1994 and, following a period of training in the Diplomatic Academy, he began his professional career at the Directorate General for Economic Affairs, where he dealt with commercial relations with Asia. In 1996 he left abroad, serving at the Italian Embassy in Manila - where he assisted Italian companies to obtain contracts for a total comprehensive amount of 2 Billion Euros - and then in Tel Aviv, since 2001, as Chief of Press Office.

Returning to the Ministry in 2004, he served as Deputy Head of the Crisis Unit. He co-managed, in that position, the Tsunami crisis and a high number of emergencies such as 3 evacuations of Italian citizens from war scenarios and 96 cases of kidnappings (of criminal and terrorist nature) in many different countries (Iraq, Afghanistan, Venezuela etc.). He gained a wide experience related to terrorism and political analysis to prevent crisis.

In 2008 he left again for abroad, as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Italy in Beirut, where he coordinated the rapports with UNIFIL II Mission - thus successfully headed by Italian General Claudio Graziano - then in Brasilia, as Deputy Chief of Mission, since 2011. In Brazil he coordinated a network of 4 General Consulates, 2 Career Consulates and almost 100 honorary Consuls, one of the biggest consular networks in the world, assisting 400.000 Italian citizens and 30 million Brazilians with Italian origin. In that period Italian investments in Brazil reached 18 Billion Euros, mostly in the sectors of telecommunications, automotive and defense.

In 2013 he was appointed Ambassador of Italy to Pristina. In that position he was confronted with relevant political activities since, in that period, Italian Military and Officials were heading both the NATO Mission KFOR and the biggest EU Mission abroad, EULEX. He was also active in hindering - in coordination with local Authorities - relevant cases of corruption, international terrorism and human smuggling.

In 2016 he returned to Rome, where he served outside the role at the Prime Minister's Office. In that position, he headed a structure for strategic analysis to be submitted to the Prime Minister. Since 10 February 2020 he has been Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan. He transmitted Credential Letters on June 11th, thus assuming full functions as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

In 2016 he was appointed Official Knight of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic.

He is fluent in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Georgian.

He is married with Albana, and they live in Pakistan with their daughter Chiara.

As a hobby, he practiced different martial arts, especially Karate and Judo, and to relax he cooks Italian food, being specialized in traditional Venetian cuisine.



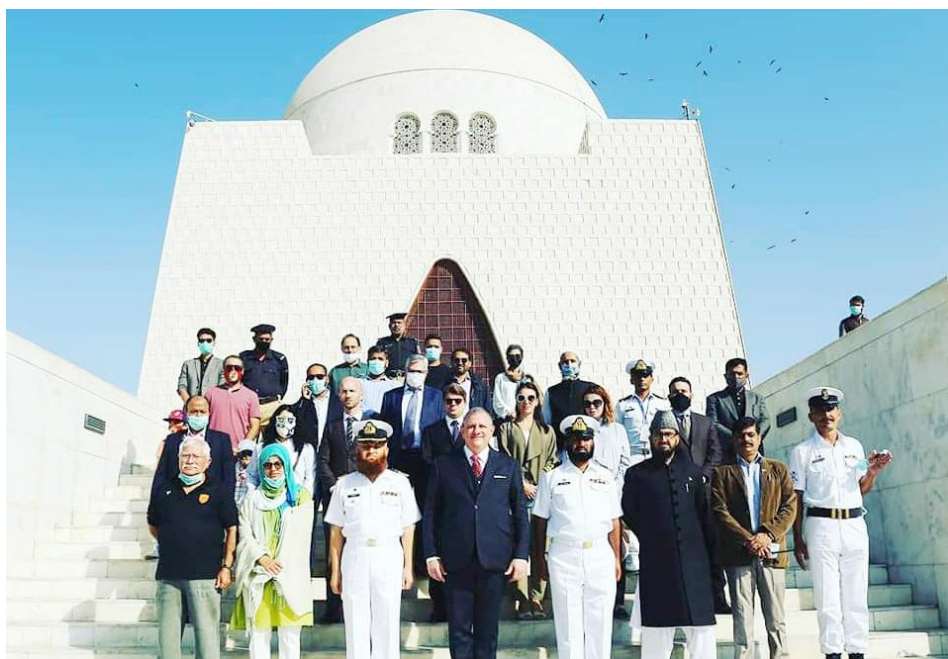
educational destinations for Pakistani students over past few years. More and more of them are getting enrolled at prestigious Italian institutes such as Politecnico di Milano, Politecnico di Torino and La Sapienza, to name a few. Economics, Architecture, Engineering, Computer Sciences and Communication Sciences are among the most sought field of studies for Pakistani students. The Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) - an international research institute for physical and mathematical sciences that operates under a tripartite agreement between the Italian Government, UNESCO, and International Atomic Energy Agency - provides numerous placements to Pakistani students and scientists every year. As a feedback, I can confirm that Italian professors share with me feelings of admiration for the high intellectual qualities of students from Pakistan, most of whom excel in their performances.

DF: Your Excellency! Italy is one of the important countries of the European Union in terms of bilateral and trade relations with Pakistan. Would you like to share the information on volume for trade and the products which are import/export between the two countries? What would be the impact of Covid-19 on the trade between the two countries?

Our bilateral trade is relevant, amounting about 1.5 billion Euros in 2019, but I consider it far below existing potential. I am confident that we can reach a yearly of 4 billion after the ongoing crisis. We are the second partner of Pakistan in Europe. Businessmen of the two countries work particularly well together. We can further improve. I hope to considerably reinforce our commercial office soon and to increase the network of honorary Consuls around Pakistan.

DF: Your Excellency! Italy is a part of the European Union and a very friendly neighborhood, what is the role of the Italian Government in the European Union? In addition to this question, I would like to ask what is the trade of Italy with European Union countries?

Italy is one of the 6 founding members of the



European Union and attaches great importance to the Institution. Several landmark agreements, with lasting impacts on Europe, were achieved during meetings hosted by Italy. Our Capital, Rome, has a tremendous symbolic value for all Europeans. In addition, our membership in the EU is part of our national interests, having an economy relying on trade. In 2019, according to UN data, the value of our export was of 530 billions of US dollars, and our import 488,74 billions of US dollars, out of a GDP of about 2000 billions of dollars. Our main partners are the other EU Member States, which cover more than one third of our overall trade. Actually, a relevant part of our trade is directed towards Germany (65.1 billions of dollars in 2019, as 12.2% of our export) and France (55.8 billions of dollars in 2019, as 10.5%) alone. On the other hand, the US are our third partner, with a trade of 51 billions of dollars.

DF: Your Excellency! Italy is rich in cultural and tourist places large numbers of tourists visit every year in your country and tourism sport GDP of Italy as well. But after the pandemic situation most of the people are not willing to travel anywhere what would be its impact on tourist industry?

This, indeed, is a major concern for Italy, both for the government and for private sector tourism industry, which contributes about 13% to our GDP. Authorities are chalking out plans that would ensure the safety of people and re-opening of tourism simultaneously. This involves a number of measure, such as having a reduced number of occupants at hotels instead of a full-house, elevated level of hygiene at hotel/restaurant premises, access to attractions though prior online bookings to maintain a safe number of visitors and many such measures. Let's not forget that Italy has numerous tourist destinations and with proper planning and guidance programs for tourists, we can distribute tourists to various regions, all of them





of great quality. This will also give limelight to the less-frequently visited tourist destinations in Italy, with marvelous spots to discover.

DF: Your Excellency! Overseas who are leaving in Italy and they got nationality of the Republic of Italy did they have the right to participate in politics on the national level?

AF: Absolutely! People from so many countries of the world have chosen to make Italy their home, are welcome to actively participate in politics of the country. Italian legislation does not foresee any difference due to someone's origins. Once you own an Italian passport, you have the same rights and duties of all the other Italians.

There is a community of some 150,000 Pakistanis living in Italy. Most of them moved to Italy several years ago and many of them are Italian citizens now.

DF: Your Excellency! You are a very senior diplomat for many years what do you think about Pakistan? Is it a good country from an investment point of view and do you want to give any message to the Pakistan investors as well as international business community?

During my very first posting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I worked on strengthening the economic ties between Italy and Pakistan. So I have been aware of this subject for as long as

26 years. The two countries have seen a steady rise in trade on both sides, yet there is a lot of room for enhancing our economic cooperation and we shall strive hard for that in coming months. Italian companies have shown keen interest to invest in various sectors in Pakistan and we look forward to see it happening in future. Bureaucracy should be a facilitator, in the interest of the country, employment of the citizens and progress of the country. On the other side, foreign investors must make an effort to understand local mentality, procedures, and respect Pakistani traditions and style of life.

DF: Your Excellency! Italy and Pakistan have cultural agreements to promote the culture between the countries and the Italian embassy brings their cultural groups which are a very good activity to promote cultural diplomacy? I would like to know is Pakistan end have the same thing doing over there in Italy and what is your policy to promote cultural diplomacy between the two countries?

Cultural Diplomacy is one fine aspect of a broad-based relationship among countries. One of my goals during my posting in Islamabad is to enhance Italian cultural presence in Pakistan through various mediums. We would like to improve Italian language teaching facilities here. Exchange of cultural

groups is another effective way and we shall try to invite more people (artists) than before to share our culture with our Pakistani friends. We are also planning to show Italian cinema with collaboration of local cultural and academic institutions. I believe Pakistani Diplomatic Missions have been equally active in promoting the rich Pakistani culture in Italy that brings our two communities together. Further to that, COVID crisis has accelerated a trend that confirms modern technologies and social media as primary vehicles to promote culture. I believe in the great potential of this trend. I will work simultaneously in traditional and futuristic way.



DF: Your Excellency! Italy is an active investor in Pakistan. How has Embassy of Pakistan helped Pakistan during the pandemic?

The Government and people of Pakistan have shown exemplary solidarity with the Government and people of Italy during the hardest times of Covid-19 crisis, with concrete proofs of friendship and support. On March 24th last year, H.E. Shah Mehmood Qureshi, visited our Embassy to express solidarity and convey condolences over the loss of lives in Italy due to pandemic as well as Pakistan's support for government and people of Italy for valiantly combating the pandemic. I was deeply touched by countless messages of sympathies, solidarity and prayers from our Pakistani friends from all walks-of-life. Italy will always remember this gestures of goodwill and kindness.

Italy has worked in coordination with other bilateral and multilateral donors, to which it

People from so many countries of the world have chosen to make Italy their home, are welcome to actively participate in politics of the country.

provides relevant budget contributions, in order to ensure all possible assistance. We also rescheduled our bilateral support to be better functional to current developments.

DF: Your Excellency! Italy has supported Pakistan bid for free trade agreement between EU and Pakistan. Can the trade between the two countries be affected by the coronavirus outbreak? If yes then does Embassy have any plans to overcome that?

COVID negatively affected and is likely to further negatively affect bilateral trade, in line with a general trend which has very few exceptions in the world. I am convinced that this is a temporary phenomenon. The ongoing crisis is painful but I am sure that we will recover fast.

DF: Your Excellency! Italy also provided millions of dollars to social development projects including health, education, and sanitation. Does Italy have any other investment plans for Pakistan in near future?

Italy has been contributing, for decades, to the socio-economic development of Pakistan. We have been partners in progress and I would briefly share with your readers some of the landmark projects that manifest the magnitude of development cooperation between the two countries. ERALP (Early Recovery of Agriculture and Livelihood Program) has been a success in war-affected Swat valley that helped restore agriculture in general and fruits orchards in particular. Italian Archaeological Mission in Swat has helped restoring tourism in the valley

through their ACT (Archaeology Community Tourism) field school. Italian-funded olive program has been yet another success. Through this program, a comprehensive feasibility study was conducted and later olive orchards were established in various districts which today are producing olives (who reduce Pakistan's import bill for edible oils). In health sector, Italy helped establish a much-needed burn treatment center at Nishtar hospital Multan. A bone marrow transplant center has also been established at children hospital PIMS with cooperation of Italian Cure2Children Foundation Italy. Restoration of walled city Multan and restoration work in the walled city Lahore were successfully carried out with Italian support. HEC and their Italian counterparts are engaged to establish cooperation in the fields of higher education and research. This will provide vital support for higher education sector in Pakistan, particularly in the field of scientific research. That's what has been done and we shall continue to cooperate with Pakistan for development of social sector by sharing our knowledge, expertise and other possible forms of support.

DF: Your Excellency! What kind of role has Pakistani community played in Italy? What challenges have been faced by Pakistanis over there and how are they being helped?

There is a community of some 150,000 Pakistanis living in Italy. Most of them moved to Italy several years ago and many of them are Italian citizens now. Majority of Pakistanis in Italy are living in the North. Pakistani community in Italy has been an important part of services sector and they have been contributing to the economy of the country. Speaking of challenges, the most common challenge they would face, is not speaking Italian language. This poses some limits to their interaction with locals and to the process of integration. Italian authorities encourage people arriving in Italy to learn Italian language and the government provides this facility at public institutes. That is, for me,

another reason to strengthen teaching of Italian in Pakistan.

DF: Your Excellency! Do you want to give any message or a piece of advice to the people of Pakistan?

It is a matter of pride and pleasure for me to represent the Italian Republic in this beautiful and very friendly country that has a long history of cordial relationship with Italy. I very much look forward to work closely with the government of Pakistan, engage with business communities in a more productive way, as well as with the people from all components of Pakistani society, academia, cultural side, health, media, and other walks of life to bring the two countries closer than we are, and to achieve new milestones that would actually reflect the true friendship between the two nations. I will work with all my energies. I had concrete results and

I believe Pakistani Diplomatic Missions have been equally active in promoting the rich Pakistani culture in Italy that brings our two communities together.

satisfaction in all my previous posting. I hope it will be the same here after my turn of duty in Islamabad.

Pakistan Zindabad.

At the end I am thankful to you and give my finest regards and best wishes to the people of Republic of Italy. May God bless Italy with progress and prosperity!





Exclusive Interview

by Mian Fazal Elahi

***Pakistan
and Italy
have
enjoyed
long-
standing
excellent
relations***

***H.E. Danilo Giurdanella,
Consul General of Republic of Italy to Islamic
Republic of Pakistan***



Your Excellency! First of all, I, on behalf of 'Diplomatic Focus' appreciate your efforts for enhancing the bilateral relations and praise your role as the Consul General of Republic of Italy in Karachi. I am also thankful to you for giving us time out of your busy schedule.

DF: Your Excellency! Pakistani people are not familiar about your past life so I would like to know about your childhood memories, family background, education and how you started your diplomatic career?

Well, I have a different background from many diplomats, having been trained and worked as a corporate lawyer before deciding to embark on this career. I did not think about becoming a diplomat very early in my life, at the same time I realize now how soundly I was suited by my upbringing and early life experiences for this profession, having had the opportunity to experience a multicultural environment and to deal with international affairs. On the other hand, these diversified experiences and my provenance have given me an edge in understanding many realities and in seeing things from another point of view.

DF: Your Excellency! You are appointed as a Consul General in Pakistan recently. How do you find people conduct in Pakistan and what was your opinion about Pakistan before moving here ?In addition to this question Can you please tell me what would be your main focal point to further enhance relationship between Pakistan and Italy?

I decided to come to Pakistan with my family fully knowing and having already experienced the exquisite hospitality of the people of Pakistan. Pakistanis are similar to Italians in many ways. We both have a long history and share many traditional values, deeply rooted in our cultures such as importance of family life, respect for foreigners and hospitality as well as resourcefulness and appreciation for private initiative entrepreneurship. I personally believe these values to be very important and overriding in life. This is one of the reasons why my family and I are very happy in Karachi.

In addition, there is a lot to promote. Pakistanis not only can boast of these values but they live in a country that is extremely beautiful, geographically diverse and rich in natural resources. Focal point? We have many strategic objectives such as improve trade and economic relationships between the two countries, but also improve cultural links and promote Pakistan's millennia-old



cultural heritage.

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DF: Your Excellency! You have been serving Italy as a Consul General here in Pakistan. My question is how would you like to rank Pakistan in terms of tourism?

As I was saying, Pakistan really is a beautifully breath-taking country that also sports a unique-in-the -word cultural heritage. My aim would be to increase Italy-Pakistan cooperation in the field of preservation and valorization of Pakistan's cultural goods and geographic magnificence. This of course goes hand-in-hand with promoting a sustainable touristic model for Pakistan that might be as well able to better protect Pakistan's history and culture. Tourism must be channeled in a certain and sustainable way and in this scenario can be very economically profitable. Another point is to promote internationally more Pakistan's richness. In Italy for instance Pakistan is well-known for its mountains but there is so much more! Just a few days ago I was participating in a video conference about Pakistan and many Italians were surprised by the beauty of



some photos from Pakistan. They were literally swept off their feet and had little idea that Pakistan could be so beautiful and rich in history.

DF: Your Excellency! Pakistan and Italy are enjoying close cordial relations. How do you see the bilateral ties between the two nations? What are the incentives you would like to take in your ongoing tenure for the further betterment of bilateral relation?

Pakistan and Italy have enjoyed long-standing excellent relations. Italy is an important export market for Pakistan, currently its 9th export market, and also Pakistan is an important destination for Italian machines. There is also a significant people-to-people interaction. For instance, we have an important number of Pakistani students that every year choose Italy as their study destination. Culture and archeology is also a key aspect in our relations.

One of my main aim is to improve economic and trade ties. Especially now we are planning to do more in the field of green and circular economy. Furthermore, we think that promotion of culture is very important for the friendship between the two Nations. Currently, we're looking at different options also with the help of the Italian International Cooperation Agency and the Italian Trade Commission. We'll be able to deliver some results as soon as the pandemic should abide.

DF: Your Excellency! What would be the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the



international Relation globally?

This is a very interesting question. I've read a lot about it and considered the existing data analysis. My very own personal opinion is that, as in other fields, the pandemic has radically changed also the arena of international relations and I mean forever impacting it. I know some scholars would disagree, but consider for instance the impact in terms of trade and people mobility! On the other hand we have seen, in the general misery, also positive enhancement such as the United Nations Security Council resolution demanding a global ceasefire. We have also witnessed the birth of a so-called vaccine diplomacy. Now the question to solve will be how to ensure people's international mobility also in relation to vaccines, etc...

DF: Your Excellency! If you could give one piece of advice to students interested in becoming a Diplomat, what would it be?

Beyond the usual stereotypes, a diplomat needs to be patient, to listen, to understand the meaning of international events. He refers to his Government and he's a kind of interpreter. His work is to strengthen international friendships and to mend fractures. He works for peace and must be a voice for moderation and reason also in stormy times. He tries to meet as many people as possible. I would advise to



read a lot, in many fields, to learn foreign languages and to travel internationally in order to understand if this life is really for you. There are also many difficulties in this profession and many sacrifices but I can't hide there are also important cultural rewards that I have reaped: if I could redo all my life I would choose again to embark in this career.

DF: Your Excellency! Would you like to give any message for the people of Pakistan and the readers of Diplomatic focus magazine?

Well, I would like to thank the readers of your magazine, and yourself for this

splendid interview of course! My message is the following: I hope you can read me again soon on this magazine and I can update you in the progress our projects are making! I also hope to have provided an inspirational message to Pakistanis who could be interested in opportunities in Italy and vice-versa to Italians who might be interested in Pakistan! The Consulate of Italy is ready to assist you! Thank you and see you soon!

At the end I am thankful to you and give my finest regards and best wishes to the people of Republic of Italy. May God bless Italy with progress and prosperity!





G20 Italy

People, Planet, Prosperity: The Italian G20 Finance track

By Monitoring Desk

The G20 is the international forum that brings together the world's major economies. The forum has met every year since 1999 and includes, since 2008, a yearly Summit, with the participation of the respective Heads of State and Government.

Economic growth, productivity, climate, infrastructure, international taxation to financial inclusion, financial stability and support to the most fragile economies are the main priorities of G20.

The G20 groups the G7 countries plus: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea and the European Union. They are joined by some international organizations, namely: the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Financial Stability Board and the United Nations. Each year, a selected number of guest members is invited to take part to guarantee a broader geographical participation.

The Italian G20 Presidency

On 1 December 2020, Italy took over the Italian G20 Presidency from Saudi Arabia. It is the first time our Country is called upon to lead this in-

ternational forum bringing together the world's most prominent economies. This represents a formidable challenge, in particular in a year where the global economy needs to recover after the devastating impact brought about by the Covid-19 crisis.

In 2021, in spite of persisting uncertainties on the evolution of the pandemic, the global economy is expected to bounce back from the deepest recession since World War II. Still, the legacy of the crisis will weigh on our economies and societies for the years to come.

It is against this backdrop that the Italian Presidency will steer and encourage global policy makers to continue their efforts to overcome the pandemic, foster a sustainable, balanced and inclusive recovery and ensure that the world is better prepared to cope with unforeseen shocks.

At the same time, we should not settle for a return to normal. The aim of the Italian Presidency is to contribute to developing a shared vision to shape a brighter future for all.

The vision proposed by the Italian Presidency will be structured on three pillars:

- **People:** All policy actions will be centred on people, so that no one is left behind. This means tackling inequalities and promoting equal opportunities in health, education, em-

ployment and human development, starting by the most vulnerable groups.

- **Planet:** To build more resilient societies, we cannot underestimate the risks our planet is facing. Developing a safer and more sustainable world requires restoring the balance between people and nature. Our commitments to the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals can no longer be postponed.

- **Prosperity:** Global growth should be seen as a tool to ensure prosperity for all. New technologies and the digital transformation are formidable drivers of prosperity and better quality of life. The international community should strive to make digitalisation an opportunity for all.

The Finance Track

The Finance Track gathers G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to discuss global economic, fiscal and monetary issues. They work closely with the International Monetary Fund in relation to international economic cooperation and with the Financial Stability Board on global financial stability and risk mitigation via information exchanges. Main issues cover global economy, sustainable and inclusive growth and financial regulation.

Within this framework, in connection with the 3Ps priorities of the Italian G20 Presidency, the Finance Track will aim to bridge the efforts to sustain the recovery with the development of long-term strategies to promote and accompany the transformation towards greener, more digital and inclusive societies. Yet, reaching this ambitious goal requires global economies to join forces. This is why Italy looks at a revamped multilateralism and at the wide engagement of all actors as the guiding principles of international cooperation.

Ensure health as a global common good and strengthen pandemic preparedness

Ensure health as a global common good and



strengthen pandemic preparedness

The international community should renew efforts until the pandemic is eradicated. In our interconnected planet, public health should be seen as a global common good. The Italian Presidency will pursue this principle and promote adequate investment and universal access to health. The Finance Ministers will continue to cooperate closely with Health Ministers, with a view to strengthening the resilience, inclusiveness and response capacity of health systems. Going beyond the fight to this pandemic, we shall make sure that future generations are better prepared against similar shocks. The Italian Presidency will strive to take collective actions to improve pandemic preparedness and response.

Promote an international environment conducive to investment and growth

Promote an international environment conducive to investment and growth

Delivering a coordinated global response is crucial for a prompt and balanced recovery. Adequate investment in health systems that can provide universal access to health services is crucial to overcome the current crisis and strengthen economic resilience and growth in the long term.

Looking forward, we should bear in mind that the crisis broke out in a context of declining global growth and productivity. Technological change also brings about new challenges for social inclusion, regional cohesion and equality. Making sure that nobody is left behind along the path to more digital and innovative societies will be a key priority. Investment in digital and green innovations should be seen as mutually reinforcing tools, with the potential of triggering a virtuous process of stimulating the global economy, creating jobs and generating long-term savings.

Investment in quality infrastructures plays a critical role to spur economic recovery and set the ground for a sustainable and inclusive growth. This crisis has shown to what extent reliable and high-quality infrastructure systems are critical to respond to unexpected external shocks and to deliver quality services to the entire population. This applies to the health sector (including access to water and sanitation), as well as to telecommunications, digital connectivity and logistics.

The Italian Presidency aims to promote infrastructures — including digital ones — as a way to foster social inclusion, reduce geographical disparities and improve environmental sustainability. Investment in infrastructure should not be limited to new large-scale projects. Good practices at local level should be encouraged. Similarly, maintaining and optimising existing assets should be given high priority.

Maintain global financial stability

A strong recovery critically relies on the ability of the global financial system to provide financing to the real economy while managing



heightened risks to financial stability. The Italian Presidency will build on the coordinated response enacted in 2020 to promote a smooth transition towards the post-Covid-19 world and develop a shared understanding on how to ensure growth and financial stability in the longer term.

In particular, we will prioritize initiatives aimed at reviewing the lessons learned from the pandemic shock, with a view to possibly adapting the global financial rules and standards, coordinating the preparations for the exit from the emergency support measures and enhancing the resilience of non-bank financial intermediation. Beyond the pandemic, we will give priority to other important initiatives including renewed efforts to fight money laundering and terrorist financing, building more efficient and secure cross-border payment infrastructures and arrangements, strengthening cybersecurity in the financial sector and further analysing the regulatory, supervisory and oversight challenges raised by global stablecoins arrangements and remaining financial stability concerns.

The financial sector also plays a key role in accompanying the transition towards sustainable growth. The Italian Presidency will step up initiatives to enhance the resilience of the overall financial system, in particular against climate-related financial stability risks, including by ensuring better quality data and more comparable climate-related financial disclosure.

The Covid-19 has also contributed to shedding light on the opportunities and challenges linked to the spread of digitalised financial services. The growing role of digitalization, accelerated by the pandemic, has the potential to improve financial access for underserved and vulnerable groups and small and medium enterprises, but might be a source of exclusion for some categories, due to the lack of digital infrastructure and/or digital skills. Under the Italian Presidency, the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion has identified two main areas of intervention. The first one deals with digital and financial “awareness”, to be enhanced to narrow down the gaps in the weakest sections of the popu-

lation and vulnerable firms. The second one concerns the establishment of an “inclusive” regulatory and supervisory framework, which looks at financial inclusion as an objective and ensures that customer are better protected against the risks posed by an increased use of digital means.

Protecting our planet while improving living conditions for all

An ambitious Green Agenda will be at the core of the Italian G20 Presidency. Italy believes that the international commitments to address climate change and environmental degradation can no longer be postponed. Our Presidency will promote the fair transition towards modern, resource-efficient and competitive economies, also in line with the path set at the European level with its new Green Deal. This will be a cross-cutting priority across all the Finance Track activities, ranging from the inclusion of environmental risks in macroeconomic risks analyses, to the impact of green investment on productivity, to the potential of nature-based solutions applied to infrastructures. The Italian Presidency will also endeavour to open a debate and make progress on a number of sensitive yet crucial topics, such as sustainable finance and environmental taxation.





Italian cuisine



Italian cuisine has influenced food culture around the world and is viewed as a form of art by many. Wine, cheese and pasta are important part of Italian meals. Pasta comes in a wide range of shapes, widths and lengths, including penne, spaghetti, linguine, fusilli and lasagna.

For Italians, food isn't just nourishment, it is life. "Family gatherings are frequent and often centered around food and the extended networks of families," said Wagner.

No one area of Italy eats the same things as the next. Each region has its own spin

on "Italian food," according to CNN. For example, most of the foods that Americans view as Italian, such as spaghetti and pizza, come from central Italy. In the North of Italy, fish, potatoes, rice, sausages, pork and different types of cheeses are the most common ingredients.

Pasta dishes with tomatoes are popular, as are many kinds of stuffed pasta, polenta and risotto. In the South, tomatoes dominate dishes, and they are either served fresh or cooked into sauce. Southern cuisine also includes capers, peppers, olives and olive oil, garlic, artichokes, eggplant and ricotta cheese.

Wine is also a big part of Italian culture, and the country is home to some of the world's most famous vineyards. The oldest traces of Italian wine were recently discovered in a cave near Sicily's southwest coast.

"The archaeological implications of this new data are enormous, especially considering that the identification of wine [is] the first and earliest-attested presence of such product in an archaeological context in Sicily," researchers wrote in the study, published online August 2017 in the *Microchemical Journal*.





ITALY around the WORLD

The main event is the 21st Triennale di Milano (2nd April-12th September). Design is also the subject of the International Italian Language Week in October. The Directorate General will also be coordinating the activities of a design working group involving trade associations, universities and research centres.

1. ARCHAEOLOGY AND PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Italy is a main player in protecting cultural heritage in crisis areas: on 16 February, a MoU was signed with UNESCO to set up an Italian task force of "cultural blue helmets". In addition the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is funding more than 170 Italian archaeological missions around the world.

2. ITALIAN MUSEUMS AROUND THE WORLD

Working with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is supporting the internationalisation of Italian museums with exhibitions and tours of works of art overseas. In July, the International Council of Museums in Milan will provide an opportunity to set up international partnerships. Prestigious exhibitions are planned this year, including Raffaello in Moscow, Botticelli in Tokyo and Titian in Prague.

3. CONTEMPORARY ART AROUND THE WORLD

Promotion is boosted by the works held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Collection.

4. ITALIAN LANGUAGE

Working with the Ministry of Education, University and Research, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is reviewing rules on the teaching of Italian, in order to achieve a more widespread inclusion of our language in the educational curriculum of overseas schools. In October, the

"Italian Language in the World States General" in Florence will provide an opportunity to present a new Portal for Italian Language Abroad.

5. INVEST YOUR TALENT IN ITALY

Foreign talent to assist with the internationalisation of Italian businesses: this is the challenge of the Invest Your Talent in Italy 2.0 programme to increase the competitiveness of the country's economy, strengthening the internationalisation of businesses and universities, teaming up institutions with the private sector. The 2016-17 programme has involved 600 students from ten focus countries considered to be priorities for the internationalisation of our country. The best talents will attend specialisation courses in Italy, followed by business traineeships.

6. FINE ITALIAN COOKERY AROUND THE WORLD

EXPO 2015 confirmed the value of Italian fine cookery as a showcase for our food and agriculture sector. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education and Agriculture are undertaking promotional initiatives in priority countries (United States, Russia, China, Japan, United Arab Emirates), in the context of the United Nations and with specific initiatives during the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. In November, the diplomatic and consular network will be organising an "Italian Cookery Week".

7. CULTURAL TOURISM

Working with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism and ENIT, integrated cultural trails are being created that make the most of landscapes, wine and food circuits and Italian UNESCO heritage sites.

8. CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: CINEMA, AUDIOVISUALS AND PUBLISHING

This year, Italy will be attending the Abu Dhabi Book Fair. In 2017, we shall be the first Western country to attend the Tehran Book Fair as a guest of honour. In the cinema sector, we are intensifying the promotion of our work in international festivals, working with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, ANICA, ICE and RAI.

9. MEDITERRANEAN

A three-year programme is planned in the academic, scientific and artistic sectors and partnerships with companies in the area, in accordance with the 2015 Mediterranean Dialogue Conference Agenda.

10. PROMOTION OF ITALIAN SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Activities revolve around the "Tavoli Paese" [country round tables] model, which makes the most of the research and business component. The model is already operational in China and will be extended to South Korea, Japan, United States and Israel. Promotion measures focus on innovation in particular. In this framework, the diplomatic and consular network is promoting the interactive exhibition "Italy of the Future", created and coordinated by CNR with the Italian Institute of Technology, the National Institute of Nuclear Physics and a number of leading Italian research organisations.

11. INTEGRATED SYSTEM MISSIONS

Organisation of politically-led missions in priority countries for internationalising businesses, attracting investments and tourists, strengthening scientific and university cooperation and promoting Italian language and culture.



REASONS *to* STUDY ABROAD *in* ITALY

You should be an international student to Italy because Italy speaks many languages: beyond the renowned expertise in the language of the Architecture, Arts, Design and Fashion, Italy is very fluent in the language of Research and Science.

Since the first modern University in Europe was founded in Bologna in 1088, Italy has generated a vast expertise in applied sciences thanks to extraordinary scientists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo Galilei, fathers of the scientific method. Later, when the modern world was learning the language of industrialization, Guglielmo Marconi was setting the roots for what years later would become wireless communication. And today, while the whole world speaks the digital language, Italy developed the first commercial desktop computer, known as P101, and soon after the Italian physicist Federico Faggin was inventing the first commercial microprocessor.

Italy reveals its fluency also in the language of physics, thanks to extraordinary personalities such as Fabiola Giannotti who led the project which brought to the discovery of the Higgs Boson, as well as in the language of neuroscience, through the discovery of mirror neurons by the outstanding neurophysiologist Giacomo Rizzolatti.

Such incredible achievements are the result of an exceptional educational system based on solid notions, rigorous scientific method and creative approach which together foster critical thinking, flexibility and the ability to solve complex problems. The Maria Montessori method and the Reggio Children approach are landmarks of a child-centered education methodology that have been implemented in 20,000 schools all over the world.

It all started under the arcades of Italian Universities that have always been driven by its passion for Research and Innovation. Italy proudly holds the highest rate record of academic publications on research magazines of excellence in Europe, with a focus on biology, natural sciences, physics, pharmacy, medicine, and mathematics and computer science. Italian researchers and professors are highly appreciated and hired in the most renowned International Universities.

With 61 vibrant public universities, 30 private universities and 11 public research organizations, groundbreaking university programs, AFAM (Centers for higher artistic education) and 339 courses held in English, Italy will teach you more than Italian. Study in Italy and you will speak many languages!

1. Plenty of top universities with an impressive international environment

Italy is a popular international study location not just due to its high multicultural ambience, but the country also has several top public and private universities.

The University of Bologna is a prestigious institution that marks the origin of the current Western higher education system as the oldest university in Europe. In addition, Bologna is on the list of top European cities that welcome the largest number of Erasmus students.

Italy is an affordable destination for international students

Italy is one of the most affordable countries in Europe where you can study abroad and that goes for tuition fees and living costs as well.

Average tuition for all degree types: 850 to 1,000 EUR/year

Average living expenses: 700 to 1,000 EUR/month for housing, food, transportation and fun

Most expensive cities: Rome, Milan and Bologna

Cheaper cities: Pisa, Padua, or Turin

3. Easy ways to travel the country

Italy allows you to 'jump' a bus or train for just a few Euros to escape from the cold and foggy Milano, or from the chaotic Bologna, to some of the most beautiful beaches in the world.

Almost every big city is also perfectly connected to European and non-European countries with 87 airports. You can easily travel by train, all the bigger Italian cities are interconnected with 77 (main-) railway stations. That makes life easier for many students that do not like travelling by car or by plane.

4. A country full of wonders

While you're enjoying the international student status in Italy, it would really be a shame not to take advantage of the privilege of living close to numerous UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Yes, Italy beats any country at this, counting 51 heritage sites that speak about the cultural and historical past of Italy.

Imagine first-hand how the gladiators fought in the Colosseum, take a picture holding the Leaning Tower of Pisa, get lost on the streets and canals of Venice, and explore the centre of the Catholic faith in Vatican City. Learn a little Italian history and geography and visit Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius.

5. No pineapple on your pizza!

Italians are famous for their pizza; sure, you can eat pizza anywhere in this world but you can only find "the real pizza" in Italy. I'm not sure anyone discovered the secret ingredient but the truth is you'll have to taste it to convince



yourself that it is unique. Pizza in Italy is also more refined so don't expect to see tons of toppings over it and don't even think you'll find pineapple on it, either!

As for pasta, you can enjoy them in all sizes and forms, cavatelli, ravioli, orecchiette, tagliatelle and most restaurants will serve homemade pasta.

Italians take great pride in their coffee and as for beer, leave it to the truck drivers. Start enjoying good Italian wines instead. A good bottle can start for as little as three Euros.

6. Late nights are a given in Italy

Compared to other countries in the southern part of Europe, life in Italy starts and ends late in the evening. At 8 p.m. the streets are full of life, and sometimes this is the time when life just begins. In many other European cities, at 6 p.m., the city looks like it switched off all of a sudden. There are no people around anymore and the ambient was really driving us to depression. This is definitely not going to happen in Italy!

In an Italian university city, going for a walk at 9 or 10 p.m., especially in spring-summer-fall, makes you feel 'in good company', always surrounded by people. In the southern part, most shops have the closing time at 8:30 p.m. and that makes life easier for students who always forget to get food before closing time.

7. So many English-taught degrees you won't know what to choose

In Italy, you can find a suitable study programme in any field you can imagine, from Arts to Computer Science, many of which are English-taught. See which are the most popular study programmes taught in English. Here are a few options you can consider, depending on your chosen university:



You would have to pass around 20 exams to successfully complete a degree (around eight exams in each academic year) and most of them are oral exams. In some specialised fields, such as medicine or engineering, you will be required to pass 40 or 50 exams.

Oral examinations make life easier for a lot of students, but if you're shy you might feel a bit uncomfortable with this kind of examination. But adjusting to this type of exams is a good exercise for developing your communication abilities.

8. The ridiculous graduation ritual



In Italy, graduate students have to go through a ridiculously funny ritual. After the official ceremony, students dress up in goofy costumes (usually a giant diaper, a hula skirt, or a funny hat), sit on a bench and wait for their peers and family to clutter them with either ketchup, eggs or other food substances. Students also hang around posters representing caricatures with an embarrassing anecdote of their colleagues.

9. Surrounded by arts, architecture and fashion

Particularly students who chose Italy to study a degree in fields like art, architecture or fashion will never regret their decision. Even if you came to Italy to study anything else, you will surely appreciate these emblematic features of the Italian culture.

Italy is the birthplace of Renaissance art, every-



girls easier than in other countries, using their charms to complement them.

The specialists can be found in the biggest cities frequented by tourists. And let's not forget how romantic the Italian language sounds! There are plenty of language courses to help you master the language of Latin romance.

Apart from that, Italy is filled with wonderful and charming attractions that will make you dream with your eyes open and even if you won't find your soul mate, you'll certainly fall in love with Italy.

where you go in Italy, you'll see nothing but architectural wonders that stood the test of time and as for fashion, what else is there to say? It's a well-known fact that Italians are elegant and sharp dressers and they owe it to several famous fashion brands and houses.

10. Great place to meet your soulmate

Italy is one of the most romantic places on earth. After all, Shakespeare's most famous work 'Romeo and Juliet' talks about a love story that happened in Verona, Italy. Leaving the tragic part aside, finding your true 'amore' in Italy is quite possible. Italian guys chase after





A cultural Grand Tour through the most

Ranked in first place in the world for number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Italy is an unparalleled destination when it comes to history and culture. Upper-class young European men knew it very well, when, between late 1600s and 1800s, devoted themselves to the “Grand Tour” of Europe’s most beautiful cities: the highlight of their journey of cultural growth and amusement was indeed the Bel Paese. If we should retrace a cultural Grand Tour today, our must-do stops would be many. Let’s start from northern and central Italy, then we will move to the south.

Milan

It’s a modern, cosmopolitan city, at the same time rich in historical evidence and places of art: its amazing Cathedral, the symbol of the city, the Basilica of Sant’Ambrogio, the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie that contains The Last Supper, the well-known masterpiece by Leonardo Da Vinci, and its museums, among which stand out the Brera Art Gallery, the Museum of the XX Century and the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana. Just one hour by car from downtown Milan, well worth a visit are Pavia, with the Visconti Castle, the Cathedral, the Ponte Coperto and the Certosa, and Bergamo, with its medieval center lying on the hills and embraced by the Venetian walls (also a UNESCO World Heritage Site).

Turin

Capital of the ancient Duchy of Savoy, today as then, Turin attracts visitors for its elegant squares and buildings, like the Royal Palace, Palazzo del Governo and Palazzo Madama, the major Residences of the Royal House of Savoy declared UNESCO World Heritage sites (together with, among others, the Castle of Valentino and Villa della Regina), the Cathedral dating to the XV century keeping the Holy Shroud, and the museums, like the eminent Egyptian Museum (second only to the Cairo museum) and the National Museum of Cinema, housed inside the Mole Antonelliana.

Aosta and its castles

In the heart of the Aosta valley, framed by the mountains, Aosta encloses many places of cultural and historical interest dating to the Roman period (not by chance it is nicknamed the “Rome of the Alps”), like the Roman Theatre and the Arch of Augustus. The region is also scattered with fascinating castles (more than 130) with interesting museum collections: like the Castle of Saint-Pierre, the Castle of Verrès and the Savoy Castle in Gressoney-Saint-Jean. Without leaving out the Fort Bard, housing ancient and modern art displays and temporary



exhibitions.

Genoa

With its eminent past of Maritime Republic, Genoa boasts one of the largest historical centers in Europe, spread on a maze of squares and narrow alleys (the caruggi). Old churches, like the Cathedral of San Lorenzo and the Basilica of San Siro, and XVI century buildings, dominate the center of the city. The so called “Strade Nuove” together with the “Palazzi dei Rolli” – a set of noble buildings dating to the late Renaissance and Baroque era that housed illustrious Grand Tour travelers – enjoy the recognition of UNESCO Heritage site.

Verona

It is the quintessential “city of love”, but offers much more than the myth of Romeo and Juliet: starting from its city center overflowing with art and archaeological sites, such as the Arena, the unmistakable symbol of the city, the Roman theatre and the walls, the Scaliger-dynasty squares and palaces. A cultural tour of Verona cannot

but have a stop in Vicenza, UNESCO Heritage site thanks to the valued works by Palladio, in Padua, among medieval towers, noble squares and museums (first of all the Scrovegni Chapel frescoed by Giotto), and Mantua, art city linked to the legacy of the Gonzaga family, one of the best examples of Italian Renaissance.

Venice

Millennial capital of the Republic of Venice, unanimously recognized as one of the most romantic cities in the world, the “Serenissima” boasts an extraordinary historical center, UNESCO World Heritage site together with its lagoon. Many are the opportunities to feed your hunger for culture, starting from St Mark’s Square with the St Mark’s Basilica, the Bell Tower and the Doge’s Palace, without neglecting the churches of Santa Maria della Salute, Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, the synagogues of the Jewish ghetto, the many beautiful palaces overlooking canals, campi (the local squares) and calli (the streets) and the extensive network of



evocative places in northern and central Italy



the Civic Museums (among which, in addition to the Doge's Palace, also the Museo Correr, Ca' Rezzonico, Ca' Pesaro and Palazzo Mocenigo).

Trieste

A border town with a Habsburg past, Trieste is a crossroads of cultures with a strong Middle-European identity. Very elegant its squares – first of which Piazza Unità d'Italia – and refined its buildings, as well as its interesting mixture of catholic, orthodox and Hebraic religious architecture. At the gates of the city are majestic castles, like the well-known Miramare Castle. Just a few kilometers away from the city center, you reach Aquileia, with its Roman ruins, UNESCO Heritage site together with Palmanova, enclosed by walls and with an odd star-shaped plant, and Udine, with its castle and medieval architecture examples.

Bologna

Bologna is an important city of art and culture: UNESCO's city of music since 2006, it houses the oldest university in the western world and shows off a historical center made up of squares, towers (the symbol of the city) and long covered walkways. The heart of the city is Piazza Maggiore, overlooked by the Basilica of San Petronio and elegant historical buildings. From Bologna, our cultural tour can continue to Parma, Italian capital of culture for



2020, and go discovering other extraordinary cultural places, UNESCO World heritage sites, in the area: nearby Modena, with its amazing Cathedral, the Ghirlandina Bell Tower and Piazza Grande, Ravenna, with its early Christian and Byzantine masterpieces, and Ferrara, a renaissance city with its renowned castle and the "Delizie estensi".

Florence

The cradle of the Renaissance, a city of art and history with a priceless heritage, Florence has an unparalleled beauty, and you can't but fall in love with its majestic historical center, recognized UNESCO heritage site – Piazza della Signoria, Ponte Vecchio, Piazza del Duomo, Santa Maria Novella – with the wonderful treasures of the Uffizi Galleries and Galleria dell'Accademia. A cultural tour in the surroundings should also include Siena, whose historical center is UNESCO World heritage site too, Pisa with the well-known Piazza dei Miracoli, Arezzo, a real open air museum, and San Gimignano, the "city of one hundred towers".

Assisi

The city that gave birth to Saint Francis and Saint Clare, Assisi is one of the most evocative medieval hamlets in Umbria, with a spiritual atmosphere and a timeless charm: the village is dominated by the Rocca Maggiore with its mighty walls, the Basilica of Saint Francis (inside is the Saint Francis cycle by Giotto), the Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo and the Torre del Popolo. In the Umbria region, we recommend continuing your cultural grand tour to Perugia, a small artistic and monumental jewel, then a little further north, in Gubbio, another picturesque hamlet among the best kept in the region, and a little further south, in Spoleto, "the most beautiful discovery in Italy" according to Herman Hesse, and Orvieto, well-known for its extraordinary gothic cathedral and the underground city.





ITALY'S BEST ART CITIES TO EXPLORE



In flat cities, the bicycle has always been the most common means of transport and it is still so today, thanks to cycling lanes, bike-sharing systems and an increasingly green approach. Cycling is the best way to move around in the city but also to enjoy the city as a tourist: what about feeling the breeze in your hair and the sense of freedom? There's no comparison! What's more, by bike you can cover long distances quickly and with little effort, it is cheap and you don't have to worry about parking. If you like cycling, these eight Italian art cities are just perfect for exploration on two wheels.

Ferrara, the city of the Este family, boasts an amazing historical center that is Unesco World heritage site, rich in Renaissance squares and buildings – the Castello Estense, the Town Hall, the Diamond Palace, the Cathedral – and has had a bike friendly character for a long time: the first cycling lane was accomplished in 1908. One third of its inhabitants move by bicycle and there are many events and itineraries for cyclists anywhere in the area. If you want to

cycle in the middle of nature, you just have to go a little south of Ferrara, in the Po Delta Park: there are plenty of easy itineraries between land and water, where you can enjoy a real safari by bicycle among cormorants, deers and wild horses.

Mantua

The bicycle is perfect to visit downtown Mantua, the jewel of the Gonzaga family: you can easily move around from the Ducal Palace to Palazzo Te, Piazza delle Erbe and the Basilica. Exploring the surroundings of the city on the two wheels is also convenient and full of interesting itineraries: the lakefronts, Bosco Fontana and Bosco della Carpaneta, the Mincio River Nature Reserve, the Forcello Archeological Park, or the Unesco Cycleway from Mantua to Sabbioneta, UNESCO World Heritage site together with Mantua, and the Mincio Cycling Lane, from downtown Mantua to Peschiera, on Lake Garda (43,5 km long).

Lucca

The historical center of Lucca is a huge cycling

and pedestrian area away from cars. The bicycle is the best way to visit Piazza dell'Anfiteatro, the Ducal Palace, the Clock Tower, Piazza San Michele and the Cathedral and especially to have the full tour of the old city walls: the walls itinerary is about 4,5 km long with several points where you can rent a bike. The route offers many convenient slopes to access the city center. By bicycle, you can also get to the villas and churches in the surroundings, like Villa Oliva and Villa Grabau.

Vicenza

With riding a bike, you can easily visit the city center of Vicenza – from the Basilica Palladiana to the Palazzo del Capitano, from the Olympic Theatre to the Cathedral – and the wonderful Renaissance buildings that earned the city the Unesco world heritage title: the Palladian Villas, a masterpiece by architect Palladio. Along routes at the foot of the Berici Hills and cycling lanes like the Riviera Berica Cycling Lane (36 km), a former railway line, you leave Vicenza flanking Villa La Rotonda by Palladio until Noventa Vicentina, where a must-do stop





is Villa Barbarigo-Loredan-Rezzonico, or along the Bacchiglione Ceresone Cycleway (31 km) connecting Vicenza to Padua.

Parma

A small bike-friendly town, Italian capital of culture in 2020, Parma is ideal for exploration on two wheels: unmissable stopovers are the Ducal Palace and the Ducal Park, the museum complex of Palazzo della Pilotta, and the heart of the city, Piazza Duomo with the Cathedral and the Baptistery. An easy, quiet excursion by bike from Parma is to the Torrechiara Castle, of the late medieval period, consisting of a 36 km-long flat path. Along the way, the hamlet of Vigatto, with the Church of St Peter and Villa Meli Lupi, is also worth a visit. An interesting tour is the loop in the lands of Giuseppe Verdi through cycling lanes in the districts of Soragna, San Secondo, Roccabianca, Zibello and Busseto, where famous composer Giuseppe Verdi was born.

Pesaro and the “Bicipolitana”

Eco-sustainable mobility is a special feature of Pesaro that conceived an odd project: the Bicipolitana, a network of cycling lanes divided in different lines organized as a metro network. The blue line connects the Port to Fosso Sejore, on the seaside, the green line Baia Flaminia to Borgo Santa Maria along the Foglia River, the yellow line the city center to Pantano, for a total of twelve lines with new ones under construction. Line 1, instead, crosses the heart of the historical center, passing through Piazza del Popolo, the birth house of well-known composer Gioacchino Rossini and the Miralfiore Park.



The Spoleto-Norcia-Assisi Cycleway

In Umbria, you can have an amazing journey on two wheels along the cycling lane between Spoleto, Norcia and Assisi, among the region's major historical and artistic beauties. Mainly flat, this route unwinds in a scenic setting dotted with mild hills, often along waterways. The leg from Spoleto to Assisi is about 50 km long to which you can add the 50 km-long itinerary of the former railway line Spoleto – Norcia, with gentle slopes and a bumpy track. Impressive stopovers along the cycle-way include Trevi, enlisted in the association of Italy's most beautiful villages, Bevagna, an old town with a lovely medieval square, and the Pissignano Castle.

Trento and Rovereto

Trento has a millenary historical center that can be easily visited by bike: starting from Piazza Duomo, with the Cathedral and the frescoed buildings, Palazzo Pretorio and the Civic Tower, and then shifting to the Buonconsiglio Castle and MUSE, the science museum. The beautiful Vallagarina Cycling lane heads south flanking the shores of the Adige River arrives at Rovereto (30 km), with its downtown with a Venetian atmosphere, seat of the unmissable MART, the contemporary and modern art museum of Trento and Rovereto. The cycling lane continues to the south for more 20 kilometers, among vineyards and panoramic views, until Avio, where is the Sabbionara Castle; alternatively, in Rovereto you can take the Adige-Garda cycling lane, from the beautiful village of Mori to Torbole, from where you pedal along the lake until Riva del Garda.

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