

MARCH 23, 2022

Pakistan

RESOLUTION DAY



FUTURE-READY

Firm economic reforms, upbeat policies and booming tourism are creating headways for the nation

MESSAGES



Dr. Arif Alvi
President
Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Pakistan Day is a landmark day in the history of the sub-continent on many counts. On this day in 1940, the Muslims changed their demand from 'separate electorates' to a 'separate state' and made it clear to the British that partitioning of the subcontinent could not be delayed any further. On this historic day, therefore, it becomes our duty to pay homage to the founding fathers of this nation for taking timely and prudent political decisions.

Achieving national freedom is considered as half work done in such struggles. The remaining half, being crucial for a state's security and stability, is equally important. This includes blending of various ethnic and minority groups into a single nation, ensuring the supremacy of law, curbing differences on the basis of social and class status, eliminating terrorism and internal disturbances, achieving economic growth, promoting good relations with the world, especially with the neighbouring countries, and above all, protecting human rights of all the citizens of the state.

These tasks are achievable. The way the Pakistani nation has overcome polio and Covid-19, there remains no doubt that the challenges which Pakistan is facing now can be addressed by the collective efforts of all. The day will not be far away when Pakistan becomes an economically strong and prosperous country. We need to stand united and collectively work for the unity and socio-economic development of the country to materialize the dream of our forefathers. May Allah be with us all. Ameen!



Imran Khan
Prime Minister
Islamic Republic of Pakistan

March 23rd is the day to renew our commitment to adhere to the principles of justice and equity; the real objectives of the creation of Pakistan. Today, we pay tribute to the 'Father of the Nation' and all the leaders of the freedom movement who struggled for uniting the nation through their unparalleled sacrifices. It is important for our youth to note that Pakistan came into being through a long democratic struggle and now the key to its stability and development also lies in hard work, honesty and morality.

While commemorating this day, we need to adhere to the principles of Unity, Faith and Discipline laid down by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and re-dedicate ourselves to developing Pakistan as a truly democratic welfare state on the model of *Riyasat-e-Madina*.

On this day, it is pertinent to reflect upon the challenges confronting us as a nation. Our Government has brought in long-term reforms and initiatives to alleviate poverty and promote justice. Our focus remains on the marginalised segments of the society and to provide them equal opportunities. Kamyab Pakistan Programme offers huge economic benefits for the youth, farmers, small scale business and the low cost housing sector. Our flagship initiative of Qaumi Sehat Card will provide universal health coverage to all citizens, that is unprecedented in the history of our country.

We are now on the path to regain our past glory. The struggle to eliminate corruption and improve moral standards would require the same persistence as our founding fathers persevered during the freedom movement.

I pray to Almighty Allah to bless us with the strength to follow in the footsteps of our great forefathers.
Pakistan Paindabad.

Potential, Prospect and Will

UAE-Pakistan economies complementary

The investor-ready country has created huge opportunities for the UAE as well as the world

■ Rhonita Patnaik

The bond between the UAE and Pakistan has developed strongly over the years and it continues to prosper, according to Afzaal Mahmood, Pakistan Ambassador to the UAE.

According to the Ambassador, "The UAE and Pakistan are complementary economies. We have wonderful bilateral ties between both the nations. What Pakistan produces, the UAE purchases and vice-versa. The potential is there, the prospects are there and the will is there. We see the efforts put in by the top leadership at government levels to ensure regular contacts, including His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, President Dr. Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan."

Apart from the leadership, he also stated that there are high-level ministerial visits between the two nations, including Pakistan Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi who visited the UAE in April 2021 and in February this year, that help build better trade and investment ties, including in the tourism area.

Investors' haven

Mahmood reiterated the fact that Pakistan is open for investment, adding that both the nation and foreign investors, including the UAE, have a lot to gain by helping each other. Right now, Pakistan is looking for investors in its energy and tourism sectors because there is a huge potential and benefit for both the parties.

"Right now, there are a few sectors that we have identified and prioritised when it comes to investment in Pakistan. We are looking at investors in the UAE, based on their experience and the strong expertise they have. Energy takes the top spot; next comes tourism. Coming to tourism, Pakistan government wants to develop this sector as fast as possible. I would say that there is a huge potential for investment in star-rated hotels, motels, food chains — basically the whole hospitality sector."

Speaking about infrastructure benefits, he spoke highly about the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The highly anticipated corridor will help create a commercial hub within the country. "That is where we are inviting investors. On the sidelines of CPEC, we are developing Special Economic Zones (SEZs) with incentives for investors, wherein they can establish their industries and tap the Central

Asian market. The Islamabad-Istanbul rail services via Iran to Europe is now operational and will not only connect countries, but continents as well. Pakistan is very ambitious about connecting Central Asia to the Middle East and then the West. This will create a huge economic interaction."

Another key CPEC project is the Gwadar Deep Sea Port, referred to as the 'Gateway of Asia'. The Ambassador said that the port will facilitate regional trade connection that will be beneficial to Pakistan. He also revealed that soon Gwadar Port and Dubai Ports will be complimenting each other through trade and transit shared between the Central Asia and Middle East regions.

Next, the Ambassador sees great opportunity for investment in the area of food security. He said: "Pakistan is an agriculture-based economy. We amply grow every type of produce, from grains, to vegetables, fruits and even meat. The food processing industry can be an ideal sector for investment. We are a country with 240 million people and a readily available market. We are rich in natural resources, precious and semi-precious stones, minerals, etc. complemented by affordable manpower and connectivity. All these make Pakistan an effective place to invest in the industrial sector. You just need to bring your capital and get going."

Expo in Focus

Mahmood said that the Pakistan Pavilion has been a great success. The theme, 'Pakistan - The hidden Treasure', showcases Pakistan as a package.

"Blessed with a 9,000+ years of history, diverse cultures, and topography, we

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Afzaal Mahmood
Pakistan Ambassador
to the UAE

can turn these into a potential for trade, investment and tourism. Our pavilion showcases our strength to the world."

He added that the government has put in every bit of an effort to make the pavilion a hit and in the end, they were able to achieve more than what they anticipated. About the pavilion showcase, the Ambassador said that Pakistan dedicated each month of the Expo to one region in Pakistan. "Pakistan has six regions in total and we dedicated one month to one region to showcase its potential. As a result of this, the regional governments were able to sign a total of 120 MoUs not only with the companies in the UAE, but global firms as well here at the Expo 2020 Dubai. We also held many trade investment conferences on the sidelines in many venues across Dubai. This was an achievement."

He also said that the Expo provided the ideal networking platform for tourists who want to visit Pakistan. "We have an interactive platform at the Expo, which identifies potential tourists and provides tips to them on how to plan a trip to Pakistan. The six visual displays at the pavilion, as you walk through, have been wisely chosen by our team to not overwhelm the viewers and yet capture their attention at the same time. These displays showcase the diversities in our culture, landscape and ethnicity."

The Pakistan Pavilion achieved another feather in its cap by crossing a benchmark of one million visitors as of March 6, 2022. According to Mahmood, this is a phenomenal landmark. "When we began our journey at Expo 2020 Dubai, we estimated to hold 138 events in six months. However, a month later, we revised the number to 180 and mid-way through December 2021, we crossed 200 events at the pavilion. The latest figures with me show that we have

crossed 300 events in the first week of March. The Pakistan Pavilion is a magnet." He went on to say how the Embassy still gets requests to hold events and many cannot be accommodated due to paucity of availability of dates.

Another feature that has drawn people from many nations to the pavilion has been the richly varied and delicious food. The Ambassador also attributes the success of the pavilion to the two restaurants — Daawat and Dhaaba. He said: "They serve authentic Pakistani cuisine from every corner of the country. While contracting the hospitality company, we were very clear to hire a chef who knew every cuisine in Pakistan. We were happy to get a great chef who has included dishes from every corner — from Sindh to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — in the menu. We are so happy that people are eating and enjoying the food at the pavilion."

Emerging Pakistan

Among the many initiatives that Pakistan is encouraging investments for, tourism and export of manpower are some of the vital ones, asserts Mahmood. The concept 'Emerging Pakistan' seeks to promote tourism, art and culture and industries to the world. "The concept of 'Emerging Pakistan' was created to attract tourists and businesses. As we emerged from the shadows of terrorism, people started to see our nation as a virgin economy once again. With peace and stability in the country, people are coming back. There is no such thing as 'This is not the right time to visit Pakistan' because of the geographical diversity — the northern highlands, beaches and the plains. So, tourists can plan a trip to the country any

We have an interactive platform at the Expo, which identifies potential tourists and provides tips to them on how to plan a trip to Pakistan. The six visual displays at the pavilion, as you walk through, have been wisely chosen by our team to not overwhelm the viewers and yet capture their attention at the same time.

time of the year. We are developing the coastlines and the beaches in Sindh and Balochistan. However, before the tourists come, investments are vital for hospitality facilities. We are a very welcoming nation," he said.

To promote and fast track tourism, the Ambassador also lays down the various initiatives by the Pakistan government, some of which include visa on arrival for many countries, visa-free arrivals. "We have very liberal policies for international airlines to be operating in and out of Pakistan. All Covid-19 related restrictions have already been removed. If you are vaccinated, you are welcome. We were fortunate to manage Covid through smart lockdowns and good planning that prevented us from being badly hit."

He also said that Pakistani nationals and expats outside the country play a huge role as the 'Brand Ambassadors' of the nation. "With the colleges and universities on a break in many Western countries in the coming months, we are looking forward to the visit of Pakistani families living abroad with their children. They are the lifeline of tourism in Pakistan and they are the ambassadors of Pakistan because they introduce our nation to their friends abroad."

Message on Pakistan Resolution Day

Extending his deepest and warmest greeting to all Pakistani expats in the UAE, he said: "They make us proud with their responsible behaviour and work ethics. They work with pride and they bring pride to our nation. We consider them as true ambassadors of Pakistan and they are an effective bridge between Pakistan and the UAE. I would like to invite them for the National Day celebrations and flag hoisting ceremony at Expo 2020 Dubai Al Wasl Plaza at 4 pm. The more they show in numbers, the more it would make us proud."

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Facilitating The Need of Every Pakistani

Bilateral ties between the UAE and Pakistan continue to grow strong as both nations look to strengthen their bonds through areas of mutual interest, asserts CG

■ **Muhammad Ali Bandial**

To Hassan Afzal Khan, the Consul General of Pakistan in Dubai and the Northern Emirates, the UAE has always been a second home for the Pakistani community. Although the CG took charge six months ago, he said that during his time, the Consulate has been focused on providing timely and efficient service to overseas. He added that the Consulate is available to facilitate the needs of the Pakistani community at every corner.

Trade fairs and exhibitions

On the question of identifying specific trade markets for Pakistani exporters, Khan said: "The government in general, has a very limited role to play when it comes to guiding the business, but they are always at hand to supply whatever support is needed. All the trade fairs and exhibitions that take place in the UAE are very high on the list of priorities of our Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), which is responsible for coordinating and reaching out to the Pakistani exporters and trade associations and making sure that they are able to attend these trade fairs and exhibitions all across the world. In doing so, they have to pick and choose and decide

on those events which are more closely aligned with the sectors of interest to Pakistani exporters. Thus, for Pakistan, the UAE market is very important and that is why the Pakistani businessmen and exporters set up their offices here as it is a gateway to the Middle East and the GCC region." Continuing on the topic, Khan said that for the current year, eight trade fairs had been identified by the Government of Pakistan through TDAP to facilitate and help the Pakistani exporters in participating in these events.

Bilateral Trade Ties Between the UAE and Pakistan

Khan said that with regard to 2021, the numbers were still coming, and it was too early to speculate. But, he added: "for 2020, the figure for bilateral trade between the two countries was more than \$8.5 billion dollars. The major items of import from the UAE were petroleum and petroleum related products, which also tilts the trade balance heavily in favour of the UAE. From Pakistan's side, the export items are predominantly related to cotton products and rice, vegetables and fruits which have a huge market in the UAE due to the large Pakistani and Indian diaspora in the country."

Serving the Pakistani community

On the question of initiatives launched by the Consulate to serve the Pakistani community, the Consul General said: "The present Consulate was built in 1982 when the Pakistani community numbered 120,000 in the UAE. Fast forward to the present and that number has grown to 1.6 million legal residents who are still being served within the same building. In meeting the needs of such a large number, the core focus has always been to ensure that consular services are available to every Pakistani. Through outsourcing of IT and e-services to third parties, the Consulate has lived up to the expectations of its 1.6 million fellow country-



Hassan Afzal Khan
Consul General of Pakistan
in Dubai and the Northern Emirates

men." Khan added: "The priority remains to provide efficient and timely consular services and for that, the Consulate has built makeshift air-conditioned halls with water and toilet facilities to keep people out of the sun while they wait their turn. That has been one of the major initiatives taken by the Consulate. Linked with that, the Consulate has also streamlined its services. One such area where the Consulate is working on is transforming the machine-readable passport services from a six to seven step process to a single-window operation. The same has been operationalised for NADRA services as

well. With this, the 1,000 to 1,200 visitors to the Consulate are entertained in a smooth and efficient manner."

People to people connections

When asked about the people to people connections, the Consul General said: "As we emerge from the pandemic enforced restrictions, there has been a significant increase in the movement of Pakistani nationals to the UAE, including celebrities as well. In this regard, the Consulate plays an important role as it facilitates not just individuals but organisations and associations as well. Then

there are regional organisations as well which are being facilitated by us with all their logistic and operational needs." He added: "There have been a lot of artists who have been performing in the UAE and the numbers are going up. Just as an example, in the last week, there have been three artist exhibitions that had been arranged. So that overall, there has been an uptick in the activity that the Consulate has been actively involved in. And with the ongoing Expo 2020 Dubai related activities, the people-to-people connections have only strengthened further with more concerts, exhibitions and events." The Consul General said that he remained fairly optimistic that they were finally seeing the beginning of a positive growth spurt in business and activities after the pandemic induced downturn of the last two years.

Pakistan Resolution Day events

The Consul General said that as has been the practice every year, there is a flag hoisting ceremony that is held at the Consulate. He also said: "With the Expo 2020 Dubai going on, the UAE Government has been very supportive in arranging for a number of activities celebrating Pakistan's Resolution Day that will be held all over the Expo venue and not just the Pakistan pavilion."

Message on Pakistan Resolution Day

The Consul General said: "For Pakistan, the UAE holds a special place and the bilateral relations between the two are very deep. This has been also acknowledged by the UAE government and they have always supported the Pakistan government. I would like to thank the leadership of the UAE and the people of this great nation for continuing to support their Pakistani brethren and for providing them with a region where Pakistani people could come and make it their second home."

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Economy On Right Growth Path

Pakistan likely to achieve six per cent sustainable economic growth in next fiscal year

■ **Muzaffar Rizvi**

Pakistan's economy has sustained an upward growth momentum that had begun during the financial year 2020-21. It is on the right track to post six per cent gross domestic product in the next fiscal year starting in July, according to top government officials.

Pakistan Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin, who steers tough economic reforms, said Pakistan's economy is expected to post 'an inclusive and sustainable growth of up to five per cent during the financial year 2021-22, ending June 30.

"The sustainable growth of five to six per cent is the only way to reduce dependence on IMF and other multinational donors, and we are confident of achieving this target under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan," the Finance Minister told Khaleej Times during his recent visit to Dubai.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who recently visited Expo 2020 Dubai, also expressed similar views and said the country's economy is moving forward and will deliver higher growth in coming years.

"Today, our economy is growing at the rate of 5.37 per cent despite the pandemic and slowdown in global economy. When we assumed powers in 2018, all economic indicators were negative, but now we are moving in the right direction," Qureshi said while addressing the Pakistani community in Dubai.

Positive trend continues

The latest first-quarter report released by the State Bank of Pakistan indicated that both the supply and demand sides contributed to this momentum. Broad-based expansion in large-scale manufacturing (LSM) and improved Kharif crop outcomes reflected favourable supply-side dynamics. In contrast, strong sales of fast-moving consumer goods and cars, import volumes, energy consumption and consumer financing indicated buoyancy on the demand side.

"Higher economic activity contributed to improved tax revenues and a lower fiscal deficit. However, the substantial increase in global commodity prices contributed to a build-up in inflationary pressures and a widening current account deficit," the report said.

The current account deficit widened

The latest data showed that Pakistan's current account deficit widened to above \$12 billion during July-February 2021-22 due to an extraordinary gap in national trade. The trade deficit widened by 82 per cent to \$31.95 billion during the first eight months of the current fiscal year, compared with the debt of \$17.53 billion in the corresponding months of the last fiscal year.

Pakistan's import bill registered an increase of 55 per cent to \$52.5 billion during the period under review, compared with \$33.86 billion in the same period of the last fiscal year. The exports also grew by 26 per cent to \$20.56 billion in the first eight months of the current fiscal year compared with \$16.32 billion in the same period of the last fiscal year.



“The sustainable growth of five to six per cent is the only way to reduce dependence on IMF and other multinational donors, and we are confident of achieving this target under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan.”

Shaukat Tarin
Pakistan Finance Minister

Foreign investment up

The Central Bank data also indicated that the total inflows of foreign investment into Pakistan have increased by 131 per cent to \$1.85 billion during the first eight months of 2021-22. Total foreign direct investment (FDI) into Pakistan rose 6.1 per cent to \$1.26 billion during the July-February 2021-22 compared to \$1.19 billion in the corresponding period of the last fiscal year.

"The portfolio investment recorded a 24 per cent increase in outflows to \$315

million during first eight months of the current fiscal year as compared with the outflow of \$254 million in the corresponding period of the last fiscal year," according to the Central Bank data.

Remittances surge

Pakistan continued to sustain an upward trend in remittance inflows as non-resident workers remitted record money in recent months.

The Central Bank data indicated that workers' remittances rose to \$21 billion during July-February 2021-22 compared to \$18.7 billion in the same period of the last fiscal year.

Pakistan is likely to receive a record \$32 billion remittance inflows in fiscal 2021-22 as its over nine million overseas workers repose trust in the government policies. The country received record \$29.4 billion remittances during 2020-21 compared to the \$23 billion it received during 2019-20.

Foreign exchange reserves

Overall liquid foreign currency reserves held by the country, including net funds held by commercial banks, stood at \$22.28 billion on March 11. The SBP, or the Central Bank, has \$15.83 billion foreign exchange reserves which are enough for more than four months of the country's imports. Commercial banks also held \$6.45 billion forex reserves.

The foreign exchange reserves held by the Central Bank soared to an all-time high of \$20.15 billion after Pakistan received a general allocation of Special

“Today, our economy is growing at the rate of 5.37 per cent despite the pandemic and slowdown in global economy. When we assumed powers in 2018, all economic indicators were negative, but now we are moving in the right direction.”

Shah Mahmood Qureshi
Pakistan Foreign Minister

Drawing Rights (SDRs) worth \$2.75 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in August 24.

Policies paying dividends

The Central Bank's first-quarter report notes that the continuation of the accommodative policy stance during the July-September 2021 period, SBP's longstanding refinance schemes for exporting firms, and a growth-oriented budget for 2021-22 contributed to LSM growth rising to 5.1 per cent from 4.5 per cent last year. Industries that bene-

fited directly from the financial support – automobiles and construction-allied sectors – also increased growth. In agriculture, preliminary estimates for rice, sugarcane and cotton pointed to encouraging output levels.

On the monetary side, the availability of affordable credit played a significant role in propping up industrial activity, especially in the wake of rising input costs. Commercial banks' lending to private sector businesses rose by Rs177.4 billion during the first quarter of 2021-22, compared to a net retirement of Rs101.4 billion last year.

"Textiles, edible oil companies and oil refineries borrowed heavily for working capital, partly due to higher imported input costs. For export-oriented industries like textiles, the Export Financing Scheme and the Long-Term Financing Facility, along with continued disbursements under the Temporary Economic Refinance Facility, allowed them to borrow at concessional rates for working capital and fixed investment purposes, respectively," according to the Central Bank.

The government and the SBP's efforts to encourage housing finance – including via subsidised financing under the Mera Pakistan Mera Ghar scheme – began to yield desirable results as well, the report said.

"Banks approved Rs72 billion in financing under the scheme by end-September 2021, out of which Rs16.97 billion were disbursed. As a result, the outstanding stock of banks' housing and construction finance had increased to Rs305 billion by quarter-end, from Rs166 billion a year earlier," the SBP said.

Higher revenues, inflation

The report points out that this increased economic activity – coupled with rising imports, withdrawal of corporate income tax exemptions, increase in domestic prices, tax administration efforts and some budgetary measures – contributed to the sizable 38.3 per cent growth in FBR taxes during the first quarter of the financial year 2021-22.

The higher revenues allowed for a substantial rise in non-interest expenditures, stemming from increased development spending, purchase of Covid-19 vaccines, and power sector subsidies. As a result, the primary balance continued to remain in surplus. The fiscal position also materially benefited from reducing interest payments on both domestic and external debt. As a result, the fiscal deficit reduced to 0.8 per cent of GDP from one per cent last year," the report said.

The SBP report notes that the significant upswing tested these macroeconomic gains in global commodity prices and shipping costs.

"Despite some deceleration from last year, CPI inflation remained at an elevated level of 8.6 per cent during the first quarter of 2021-22. The food group was the top contributor to headline inflation, amidst rising prices of edible oil, poultry, wheat and sugar," the report said.

Meanwhile, the sharp rise in global oil prices contributed to higher energy inflation, despite the government's decision to partially absorb the price hike by lowering taxes during July-September 2021.

— muzaffarrizvi@khaleejtimes.com

The UAE and Pakistan Committed to Strengthening Economic Ties

The UAE is Pakistan's largest trading partner in the Middle East and a major source of investments and remittances with the trade volume between the two countries amounting to more than \$8.5 billion

■ **Muhammad Ali Bandial**

The time-tested friendship and strong relations between the UAE and Pakistan are based on a number of factors including their complementary economies. In 2019, the UAE exported \$5.93 billion worth of products to Pakistan. The main products that UAE exported to Pakistan are refined petroleum (\$2.55 billion), crude petroleum (\$2.04 billion), and scrap iron (\$246 million). During the last 16 years the exports of the UAE to Pakistan have increased at an annualized rate of 9.56 per cent, from \$1.38 billion in 2003 to \$5.93 billion in 2019.

From Pakistan's side, the major exports comprise of rice and textile goods along with the services sector. There are approximately 1.6 million Pakistanis currently living and working in the UAE. The Emirates is home to the second-largest diaspora of Pakistanis after Saudi Arabia and remit billions of dollars every year.

The governments of both countries enjoy close and cordial relations which have helped in boosting and nourishing the ties over the years. While speaking at a recent visit of the Pakistan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said the UAE and Pakistan have developed strong relationships over a period of time and it will further strengthen in future. He further added that the UAE is a time-tested friend and Pakistan is committed to support its sovereignty and safety.

"We are strategic partners and will remain strategic partners on all fronts. Whether it is economy or diplomacy or politics or defence, we stand with the



Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi along with Pakistan Embassy and consulate officials at Pakistan Pavilion in Expo 2020 Dubai. — KT photo M. Sajjad

“While speaking at his recent visit of the Pakistan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said the UAE and Pakistan have developed strong relationships over a period of time and it will further strengthen in the future.

UAE and will protect its interests on all fronts," Qureshi told Khaleej Times. The

Foreign Minister also paid rich tribute to the UAE leadership for hosting a successful Expo despite the challenges in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic. He went on to say that he was impressed to see the first Expo in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia and that all the credit went to the UAE leadership for hosting such a huge show with a success.

In a bid to further strengthen the economic ties, Pakistan and the UAE have agreed to start negotiations for greater economic cooperation to achieve Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the coming years. This was discussed in a meeting between the Ambassador of UAE to Pakistan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim and the Federal Minister for Energy Hammad Azhar in Islamabad.

The Minister furthermore welcomed the interest of the UAE government to reach a comprehensive economic agreement with Pakistan on the lines of FTA and ensured his full support for this posi-

itive development in the historic UAE-Pakistan bilateral relations. He was of the view that such an agreement would not only pave way for government-to-government (G2G) initiatives, but also help to create a conducive environment for the business community.

In recent years, Pakistan and the UAE have expressed the commitment to further enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields including trade, investment and tourism. The two sides have expressed contentment over the prevailing stronger relations with an aim to build and further diversify the avenues of economic activity. There have been several rounds of government level talks in which the various dimensions of bilateral relations and shared interests have been highlighted.

Beyond the government level, there have been efforts to strengthen ties as well. One such shining example is the Pakistan Business Forum, which aims to improve manpower in the UAE as well as

“Continuing this forward, the UAE and Pakistan are looking to strengthen their economic ties, with a key focus on investment opportunities in the Sindh province, especially in the area of technology and sustainability.

boost trade and investment between the two nations. The forum will meet every month to strategise and take inputs of the members on how to improve trade, investment and manpower to the UAE. In each meeting, three to five members will get a chance to speak and share their suggestions on improving trade development and connecting the business community of the two countries. All Pakistanis are welcome to contribute in whatever way they can to promote economic and trade ties between UAE and Pakistan. It is due to such efforts that over the course of last year, Pakistan's exports to the UAE have increased by more than eight per cent.

Continuing this forward, the UAE and Pakistan are looking to strengthen their economic ties, with a key focus on investment opportunities in the Sindh province, especially in the area of technology and sustainability. At the Sindh Investment Conference, which was held in Dubai, officials from both countries explored how the Sindh province, with a deep-sea port linking it to the Arabian Sea, has a massive investment potential for the UAE and GCC countries. The province also has the potential to boost bilateral trade, investment, and tourism between the UAE and Pakistan.

During the event, six MoUs were also signed that included both Pakistan's public and private sectors, and were aimed at boosting business activities, collaborations, and support the startup ecosystem in Pakistan. The MoUs included funding the startups between Sindh Enterprise Development Fund and Pakistan Business Council Dubai; as well as investment facilitation between Sindh Investment Department and Pakistan Business Council.

ITI: Linking The Globe via Iran and Türkiye

The resumed cargo train service promises to open up the region to trade and economic development

On August 14, 2009, the first train from Islamabad to Istanbul was inaugurated, linking the region through rails. From then on, eight more trains were dispatched from Pakistan to Türkiye and six trains were dispatched to Pakistan. However, in the aftermath of the 2009 floods, the train service was disrupted. After more than ten years, there was good news as the rail operations were resumed with the first Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) train carrying goods from Pakistan to Türkiye via Iran rolling into the capital Ankara on December 21, 2021. After starting its journey from the picturesque Margalla station in Islamabad, the ITI cargo train covered its 981-kilometer (3,666-mile) route in 12 days and 21 hours, arriving in Türkiye with much fanfare. Standing to receive the historic train were the Turkish Transport and Infrastructure Minister Adil Karaismailoğlu, Pakistani Member National Assembly Makhdoom Zain Hussain Qureshi and Iranian Ambassador to Türkiye, Mohammad Farazmand who were there to attend a ceremony held to mark the arrival of the train. The cargo train aims to boost trade between Pakistan, Iran and Türkiye.

Speaking about the momentous occasion, Karaismailoğlu in his speech said the new railway will offer another option to industrialists and businesspeople on the Pakistan-Iran-Türkiye route. "It will save time and cost compared to sea transportation between Pakistan and Turkey, which takes 35 days, and will lead to the development of trade between the two countries," he said.

"Thus, with the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul train, a new railway corridor will be provided to our exporters in the south of Asia



— which has the highest population density globally — reaching Pakistan, neighbouring India, China, Afghanistan and Iran. In this way, our country will be one step closer to its goals of becoming a bridge and logistics base between Asia and Europe," Karaismailoğlu further added.

From Pakistan's viewpoint, Qureshi highlighted that the ITI train would play an important role in enhancing regional connectivity and promoting economic and commercial activities in the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) region. The organisation has been established by Iran, Pakistan and Türkiye in 1964 and had initially been named as the Regional Cooperation for Development, which later got renamed as ECO in 1985. Qureshi also said that the train would offer Pakistan an opportunity to further increase its exports and strengthen its connectivity with international markets, including in Europe.

"The current government in

Pakistan believes in regional connectivity and we feel that to play a role at the national stage we need to be economically reliable. In order to do that, we need to not only have peace in our region but also

increase the trade within our neighborhood and this ITI project will become a friendship project. We get access to the European markets and Türkiye gets access to the central Asian states so it is a

mutually beneficial arrangement and I hope it will be sustainable and we can grow from it further," he further added.

Ambassador Farazmand in his speech was of the view that the ITI railway project was first launched in 2009 under the ECO but remained suspended due to technical issues, restarting a decade later. He said that the three countries also plan to launch a passenger train along the same route in the near future.

Azam Swati, another Member of National Assembly from Pakistan praised the resumption of cargo services and said: that the "ITI train service will open the doors for business and connectivity in the region." The project is feasible for a number of reasons as it offers the shortest and most affordable route for transportation of goods between Asia and Europe, benefiting regional countries. Addressing the business community of Pakistan, Swati urged them to make the most of



“After more than ten years, there was good news as the rail operations were resumed with the first Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) train carrying goods from Pakistan to Türkiye via Iran rolling into the capital Ankara on December 21, 2021.

the opportunities offered by the rail corridor.

Foreign Minister Qureshi echoed the views of his fellow countryman and said that the rail corridor "will play an important role in regional connectivity and will promote economic activity in the region." He further said that he hoped that passenger trains will also begin on the same route following the smooth operations of the freight train. Abdul Razak Dawood, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Commerce and Investment termed it a historic day which "will be long remembered" as the beginning of regional connectivity and prosperity. Turkish Ambassador Mustafa Yurdakul expressed hope that the train service will not stop at Istanbul but go all the way to Europe, benefiting all regional countries as the economies recover from the effects of the Covid-19 era.

The first cargo train comprised 13 containers that transported rice, dates and pink salt via two freight forwarders, Maxtelz Logistics and Haroon Brothers. "The train service will greatly reduce the cost of transit of goods from Pakistan to Turkey which usually takes at least 30 days via the sea," said Gohar Zia, Director of Maxtelz Logistics.

— ali@khaleejtimes.com



Hamdard Pakistan in 21st Century

Aafiyat Sey Jeetay Raho!

Over the years Hamdard has continued to live up to its own lofty standards of excellence through its products

History

Hamdard started its journey from a small shop in an area of old Delhi, in 1906. Founded by an accomplished physician, Hakim Hafiz Abdul Majeed, Hamdard quickly gained renown as a distinguished eastern medicine manufacturer. Then, in Karachi, after the creation of Pakistan, his younger son and a visionary physician, Hakim Mohammed Said, migrated to the newly-formed country and started Hamdard Pakistan in a two-room rented clinic of Tibb-i-Unani in 1948. Under his leadership, Hamdard soon became a success story with its respected and well-liked products, especially Rooh Afza syrup and effective herbal medicines. Hamdard has evolved through time and every year, the organisation adds new products to its range. In 2020, Hamdard introduced three new products. Doodh Rooh Afza: A punch of nutrition; Hamdard Honey: 100 per cent natural product; and Sualin Lozenges - Herbal relief for throat pain, inflammation and cough.

Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said's legacy

Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said was martyred on October 17 1998 at the doorstep of his Karachi Clinic— the very same place from where he started his journey of 'Hamdard Pakistan' in June 1948. Quran-e-Kareem teaches us to not speak of a Shaheed as dead, as they are alive. Hence, a martyr is immortal. With Allah's help, Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said's legacy of national services goes on in the shape of Hamdard Laboratories,

Madinat al-Hikmah (City of Education, Science and Culture) and Hamdard Foundation Pakistan, under the guidance and leadership of his daughter, Mrs. Sadia Rashid, Chief Mutawallia, Hamdard Laboratories Pakistan, and President, Hamdard Foundation Pakistan.

Hamdard Laboratories operations

The central structure of Hamdard Laboratories is based in Pakistan's industrial hub and the port city of Karachi. It comprises the headquarters and two manufacturing units, including a new large unit —Hamdard Industrial Complex (HIC) at the newly named Hakim Mohammed Said Road. Besides Karachi, two other Hamdard manufacturing units are working in Lahore and Peshawar. Apart from the Karachi headquarters, there are zonal offices in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Peshawar. Hamdard Pakistan manufactures a wide range of herbal products and medicines of high quality.

R&D initiatives

Hamdard Pakistan strongly values the significance of research and development in the field of traditional medicine. Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said revitalised the field by having WHO recognise alternate medicine. He continued to research various herbs and their compositions throughout his life. His legacy continues after his martyrdom and Hamdard remains steadfast in playing a defining role in research and development. Hamdard Pakistan's research department is operated by a team of professional researchers and hakims.

Countrywide network of herbal clinics

Hamdard Pakistan efficiently manages a comprehensive network of free Hamdard herbal clinics across the country. Recently, Hamdard initiated a drive to digitise all herbal clinics and the first-ever digital herbal clinic has started its operations in Karachi. Moreover, Hamdard offers first-of-its-kind free mobile dispensaries to



Sadia Rashid
President

Hamdard Group, Pakistan

provide health facilities at patients' doorsteps, and has set up various hospitals of both Eastern and Western systems of medicine all over the country.

Hamdard and gender-equality

For Hamdard, the terms of 'women empowerment' and 'gender equality' are not new because behind Hamdard's stellar success is the struggle and determination of empowered women. Today, Hamdard is among the few organisations where women are given equal opportunities to assume leadership roles. A number of women lead their own respective departments at Hamdard.

Hamdard and social work

Hakim Mohammed Said, in addition to being a physician par excellence, was also a philanthropist, an educationist and a visionary reformer, who took it upon himself to develop the health and education sectors of Pakistan. Hamdard Pakistan is now not only the leading manufacturer of herbal products and medicines, but also plays an important role in the develop-

ment and promotion of general health, education and social welfare.

Hamdard Pakistan also operates schools, colleges and the largest private sector university in the country - Hamdard University (HU), built in Madinat al-Hikmah (City of Education, Science and Culture) — one of the most iconic accomplishments of its founder, Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said. Hamdard Pakistan strongly believes in serving the people.

Hamdard Foundation Pakistan

Hamdard Foundation Pakistan was established by Hakim Mohammed Said in 1964 in order to judiciously use the funds being handed over to it by Hamdard Laboratories. These are used for the promotion of health, education and social uplift, in line with his vision and mission — service to the nation and humanity.

Quality Policy Statement

Hamdard Pakistan ensures the quality and standard of its products, adheres to the international standards and laws prescribed by ISO and WHO. All of Hamdard's products are duly registered with authorities such as DRAP. Hamdard follows zero-tolerance towards quality compromise. To maintain quality and a high standard, the organization takes the following measures:

1. Procurement of the best quality of raw material.
2. Following Good Manufacturing Practices.
3. Conducting regular checks on raw material: in-process/intermediate material and finished products, in order to maintain quality control
4. Giving importance to the training of all personnel/employees, involved in production processes, under the policy of quality control (TQC).

Rooh Afza

A drink for all seasons, Rooh Afza is the scarlet-hued syrup served all over the world. It is the star product of Hamdard



Pakistan. It is the foremost national brand, having the major share in local markets. At international level too, it enjoys a high reputation because of its quality, taste and unique blend of traditional flavours and aromas.

New corporate theme Aafiyat Sey Jeetay Raho!

Hamdard has a deep relationship with the society because of its founder — philanthropist, educationist and a social reformer, Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said. It spurs the management of Hamdard Pakistan to keep on nurturing and flourishing this trust as per modern times. Hamdard is not just a corporate entity. It represents a positive mindset, and has been a champion of well-being since its inception. The message of the well-being of society is embedded in the core values of Hamdard.

Hamdard has a clear vision, strong will, efficient strategy and an effective administrative system to execute initiatives for the betterment of society. In order to spread the message of Hamdard to the far corners of the country, a need for a new corporate theme representing the essence of Hamdard's objective, was felt. Therefore in 2021 Hamdard Pakistan adopted a new Corporate Theme: Aafiyat Sey Jeetay Raho!

Certificates, Licence and Awards

Having Halal ingredients, Rooh Afza is certified by a committee of food experts and the most authentic religious scholars or 'ulema' of the country. It enjoys certifications of ISO 9001: 2008 and ISO 22000: 2005. It has been winning awards aplenty and on a regular basis, including FPCCI Award, Brands Icon of Pakistan Award, Brands of the Year Award, and Consumer's Choice Award. US food magazine 'Saveur' in its publication of Feb 2007, issue # 99 — placed Rooh Afza at the 10th position in the world's 100 most popular brands' list. Apart from Rooh Afza, Hamdard's Naumehal Gripe Water has also been a recipient of many prestigious awards.



Hamdard University in Madinat al-Hikmah



Bait al-Hikmah in Madinat al-Hikmah

Hamdard

Pakistan

عافیت سے جیتے رہو!

23RD MARCH

PAKISTAN RESOLUTION DAY

The unusual aerial view* of looking down at the iconic Minar-e-Pakistan, makes it look like the star and the crescent in our national flag! This monument reminds Pakistanis around the globe of the right decisions taken by our forebears at the right time.

Resolution Day celebrates the momentous occasion in history when Pakistan came into being. Let's take a moment to celebrate this historical day with the nation's favourite beverage Rooh Afza. With closely intertwining legacies, Rooh Afza has become synonymous with Pakistan. Here's to peace, to prosperity, to Pakistan!

*This aerial view of the iconic Minar-e-Pakistan is an artistic rendition



Rooh Afza

Zindagi
Mubarak



Fauji Foundation – A Model Welfare Enterprise

Khaleej Times interviewed **Waqar Ahmed Malik** **Managing Director and CEO at Fauji Foundation**. Qualified as a Chartered Accountant, he has 35 years' plus experience with major institutions in Pakistan and Europe including 10 years as Chairman and CEO of ICI Pakistan. He has also served as President, Overseas Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

■ Staff Report

Please give us an overview of Fauji Foundation?

Fauji Foundation (FF or 'The Foundation') is a charitable trust founded in 1954 and incorporated under The Charitable Endowment Act 1890. The raison d'être of Foundation is 'Earn to Serve'. The Foundation operates as a **Hybrid Social Enterprise**, where its social mission of provision of welfare services to veterans and its dependents is entirely financed through commercial investments. The post war repatriation fund of \$0.2 million (PKR 18.2 million), left by the British government for the Pakistan veterans, was utilised to set up the Foundation over one off distribution. Thus, it was the start of an incredible journey of socially driven organisation, fully self-sustained by its commercial investments that also supplements Pakistan's national economic development.

The core purpose of the Foundation is to support the veterans and their families, including widows and Shuhadas for their rehabilitation. Fauji Foundation proudly spearheads this mantle entirely on self-sustaining basis and today, FF is one of the largest social hybrid enterprise.

Our journey and growth from 50-bedded hospital in 1959 to nationwide 1,830 beds across 74 medical facilities which include 11 hospitals and 63 clinics and 126 educational institutes comprising a university, medical, dental and nursing colleges, tertiary colleges and school and vocational training institutions demonstrate our commitment and devotion towards the core purpose. FF provides these welfare and social services with annual spending of about \$63 million (PKR 11 billion), which saves public funds, otherwise the government would have to fund these activities. FF is now serving 9.7 million people as beneficiaries, contributing five per cent of the population.

The endowment fund is prudently in-

vested in the sectors of agriculture, infrastructure, food chain, energy and financial services. Most commercial investments are listed on the Pakistan Stock Exchange and run with the highest level of corporate governance and integrity. The Foundation contributes about \$ 900 million (Rs 160 billion) per annum in the form of duties and taxes to the national exchequer and ranks as one of the largest tax payers in Pakistan.

Fauji Foundation's social mission is self-sustaining and does not rely on any external support but its commercial ventures play pivotal role in ensuring country's food self-sufficiency, nutritional needs, energy security, infrastructure development and financial inclusivity of the population.

What is your vision for the Foundation?

Our vision is: "As a role model welfare enterprise, maintain sustained excellence in health care, education and industry in order to serve our beneficiaries and public."

Some of your group companies are in agriculture sector and food, do you have plans to grow this to a level to export value added finished food products?

Fauji Foundation group companies play a key role in the national economic development of Pakistan, solving pressing needs of our time. We feel that it is our responsibility to contribute to the economic development of Pakistan. In fact, the success of FF is linked with the success of Pakistan.

Pakistan, being an agrarian economy, is primarily dependent on the performance of agriculture sector. FF's fertilizer and E&P businesses are the backbone in ensuring food security of the country. Our fertilizer business meets around 50 per cent of fertilizer requirement of the country while E&P business provides raw material (i.e. natural gas) to majority of the fertilizer players. In order to develop and modernise agriculture sector, we are actively providing farm advisory services to the farming community throughout Pakistan since 1981, for increasing the agriculture production in general and the farmers' income in particular. Our organisation, in pursuit of its national commitment and moral obligation, maintains regular contact with farmers and agricultural institutions to ensure efficient transfer of modern agricultural technology in an effective way.

Pakistan is facing an acute shortage of gas, which is the biggest threat to the agriculture sector. Fauji group is evaluating options to meet the gas requirement of the fertilizer industry through coal gasifi-



Waqar Ahmed Malik

Managing Director and CEO
Fauji Foundation

cation of reserves at Thar, Sind. This undoubtedly will open further opportunities and would be a big step toward self-reliance of Pakistan in food and energy.

After Sui, Pakistan has not been able to find any major gas discovery, which could at least stop/reduce the fast depletion rate of gas reserves. Our E&P business is undertaking aggressive exploration drive with an annual expenditure of around \$ 350 - 400 million targeting Baluchistan and KPK province.

Through our marine terminal businesses located at Karachi, we have been handling 40-45 per cent of total oil imports of Pakistan (80 per cent of petroleum products), thus playing a critical role in the energy supply chain of the country. In terms

The Foundation contributes about \$900 million per annum in the form of duties and taxes to the national exchequer, and ranks as one of the largest tax payers in Pakistan.

of grain and fertilizer cargo import, we are handling around 40-48 per cent of the import volume which demonstrate our commitment and contribution to the national development.

In terms of contribution towards infrastructure development, our cement business ranks amongst the top four cement players of the country, providing cement of highest quality to the major infrastructure and energy projects including Dasu, Mohmand and Diamer Bhasha Dams and private hydro power projects.

What is your view on the macro economic scenario of Pakistan?

Despite the challenges, Pakistan's economy is moving progressively on higher and sustainable growth path. Pakistan was implementing stabilisation policy post 2017-18 and the economy was recovering from macroeconomic imbalances, but Covid-19 slowed down the pace. However, Pakistan did much better in coping up with the pandemic compared to many countries.

The economy has witnessed a V-shaped recovery through improved Covid-19 containment strategies, incentives offered to the industry to minimize the impact of an industrial shutdown on labour livelihoods, continued accommodative fiscal and monetary policies that accelerated the recovery

across all sectors. The performance in agriculture, large scale manufacturing (LSM), construction and exports sectors are the key success factors in this recovery. Looking ahead, the non-oil current account deficit is expected to decline, and exports and remittances continue to remain resilient. With current year performance, it is expected that the economy will grow by around five per cent in 2022.

Tell us about the quality of human capital in Pakistan and Fauji Foundation.

The workforce in Pakistan is relatively efficient, reliable, cost-effective, and easily adaptable to various working conditions and cultures. This is the reason that our skilled workers are providing their services around the globe. Our government is working relentlessly towards the development of manpower through numerous skill development initiatives. These initiatives are aimed at meeting skill requirements of both the national and international labour market standards.

Fauji Foundation is also contributing towards the cause by sharing a reasonable portion of the job market in Pakistan, employing 27,000 employees with a blend of civilians, ex-servicemen, and beneficiaries. We are committed to fostering a diverse workforce by creating an equitable and inclusive space for all, having 45 per cent female employees, and maintaining a 3.5 per cent share for disabled persons, which is amongst the best in Pakistan. With a firm emphasis on this unique HR model, Fauji Foundations has transformed through the adoption of modern HR practices, automated processes, market competitive remunerations, training, creating a performance-based culture leading towards strategic HR with increased efficiency and productivity. Fauji Foundation is not only providing employment opportunities but also contributing towards the development of national manpower through healthcare facilities, subsidised education, and vocational and technical training.

Which sectors do you support under your CSR umbrella?

Besides our social mission, our commercial investments are responsive towards their Corporate Social Responsibility and some of the most recent examples of our CSR activities include:

- Reducing carbon footprints - Green Days (Plantation Drives)
- Covid-19 vaccinations drive
- Health / Medical Camps
- Clean water Project
- Micro Finance Loans
- Local Employment
- Skill Development Course

Digital Pakistan triggering Economic Boom

Pakistan's IT sector has an immense potential to grow, setting an ambitious target of \$50 billion IT exports in the next five years

■ Muzaffar Rizvi

Pakistan's economy has been struggling to enter into a high growth era in the past decade but now it has emerged from the pandemic crisis and is set to take off in coming years due to the revival of traditional sectors as well as the emergence of startups and information technology. The government's effective policies have not only managed to control damage from rising inflation, supply chain shocks and high energy prices, but also put the economy on right track to achieve up to six per cent sustainable economic growth in the years to come.

The PTI government, led by Prime Minister Imran Khan, and the State Bank of Pakistan have introduced various policy measures to revive traditional economic sectors such as agriculture, textiles and other industries in the past three years. At the same time, the cricketer-turned-politician laid a solid foundation for 'Digital Pakistan' that will trigger an economic boom in the country by revolutionising the information technology (IT) sector through startups, which are turning out to be a silver lining for the country.

Govt officials upbeat

Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin said Pakistan's IT sector has an immense potential to grow, and the government is keen to revolutionise this sector to boost exports in the coming years.

"We can double our traditional exports in the next four to five years and lift IT exports by providing incentives to the sector and building a strong ecosystem for startups in the country," the Finance Minister told Khaleej Times in an interview during his recent visit to Dubai.

He further said the government has taken out-of-the-box measures to revive IT sectors by resolving their problems and bottlenecks as well as offering them tax holidays and incentives to put the country on the investment radar of international investors in general and tech leaders in particulars.

"In the next five years, our traditional exports will touch \$60 billion-plus while IT exports could be at \$50 billion, push-



ing the tally to over \$100 billion annually. In addition, \$30 billion remittances per annum will help ensure a sustainable current account surplus," Tarin said.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi echoed similar views and said the IT industry will lead to an economic boom in the coming years as the government is keen to utilise the true potential of the sector.

"Thanks to the Gulf region's economic resurgence in the 1970s, Pakistan's labour class revolutionise the economy by availing job opportunities in the region. Today, we have laid a solid foundation for the IT sector and it will bring another economic revolution in coming years," Qureshi recently said while addressing the media at the Pakistan pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai.

Startups power the IT sector

Pakistan is one of the few untapped markets for startups and investors to offer internet-based services similar to those in other parts of the world. These services

including ride-hailing, e-commerce, logistics, fintech, food and grocery delivery, among others, have set the stage to bring an IT revolution in the country.

More than 250 startups since 2015, are going to provide impetus to Pakistan's IT sector and are expected to boost IT services and exports to record \$50 billion in the next five years.

About 83 Pakistani startups, which raised approximately \$350 million last year compared to \$65 million in 2020, are expected to post exponential growth in the next five years due to the conducive environment and incentives provided by the government.

Airlift (\$85 million), Bazaar (\$30 million), Tajir (\$17 million), Qisfpay (\$15 million), and TAG (\$12 million) were the top five largest disclosed startup funding rounds last year.

The sector, which has already raised \$136 million this year so far, is expected to grow 10 times by 2030 and will lead to an economic boom in the country. Indus-

try leaders estimate that Pakistani startups will be worth \$50 billion by 2030 compared to the present value ranging between \$3 billion to \$4 billion today.

ICT exports surge

ICT exports have been rising consistently since the Covid-19 outbreak, as Pakistani firms and freelancers capture the growing global demand for tech-related services in the wake of remote working and e-learning arrangements. The latest data released by the State Bank of Pakistan indicated that the information and communications technology (ICT) exports surged 30 per cent to \$1.69 billion from July 2021 to February 2022. The Central Bank data pointed out that ICT has become the top among the services sector in terms of its contribution to the economy. It is an encouraging sign that within the ICT sector, exports increased across almost all segments, including software consultancy, call centres, and telecom services, during the July-February 2022 period.

5-YEAR ROADMAP

\$30 bn
Annual remittances

\$50 bn
IT exports

\$60 bn
Traditional exports

\$110 bn
Overall annual exports

"Due to higher inflows in this sector, the overall exports of the services sector also registered 18 per cent year-on-year growth at \$4.49 billion during the first eight months of the current financial year of 2021-22," according to an industry executive.

He said the government, as well as the centre, are actively working to promote this rapidly growing services segment, including facilitating receipt of export earnings, tax rebates and incentives.

Govt efforts yielding results

Industry leaders acknowledged that the present government has been efficiently working to promote the IT sector through its program of Digital Pakistan.

Referring to the latest central bank data, they said the government efforts reflected in the growth of the IT industry and its exports during the last couple of years in the country.

They were of the view that the government's ambitious target of \$50 billion in IT exports could only be achieved if incentives like tax holidays and local potential of the industry were realised in letter and spirit.

"The removal of taxes on IT services will not only encourage freelancing but it will also attract skilled professionals to take a leap of faith toward entrepreneurship and expansion of their businesses at local and global levels," they said.

— muzaffarrizvi@khaleejtimes.com



Bringing Primary Healthcare To Your Doorsteps

IHHN believes that access to the best healthcare facilities is the basic right of every human being

The right to health is the economic, social, and cultural right to which all individuals are entitled. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the key towards achieving universal healthcare for all is to provide primary healthcare facilities across the region. Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world, but more than 50 per cent of the population does not have access to basic healthcare services. This means that more than 110 million families do not have the luxury to visit a healthcare facility, even in desperate times of need. Due to the lack of accessibility and affordability, 57 out of 1,000 newborns die at birth, and 186 out of 100,000 mothers die during childbirth. These numbers call for an immediate provision of preventive, curative, and rehabilitative services for all its citizens.

Indus Hospital and Health Network (IHHN) plays a pivotal role in improving Pakistan's healthcare scenario through its vast network. IHHN started functioning in 2007 with the emergence of the Indus Hospital (TIH) in Korangi, Karachi, which soon became a model hospital. During the first decade of its existence, the hospital transformed into a health network of

multiple hospitals across the country. Most of these hospitals were tertiary care facilities based in urban cities. This meant that the rural population had no option but to travel all the way from their villages to reach a decent healthcare facility. Therefore, following international recommendations, the network soon shifted its focus from tertiary care hospitals to primary care. This is the only solution to provide healthcare at the community level and lessen the burden on more prominent hospitals.

Pakistan is a resource-limited country plagued with the prevalence of malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, amongst many other diseases. Indus Hospital and Health Network has a dedicated directorate to combat community-health issues, mostly pertaining to the rural areas of Pakistan, known as the Community Health Directorate (CHD). The objective of CHD is to administer preventive and curative measures, by improving access to health related information and healthcare services for the rural / migratory population of Pakistan. It aims to provide specialised primary healthcare facilities to communities dispersed across the impoverished districts of Pakistan.

The directorate currently manages several public health programmes in collaboration with different national and international donor agencies. These include infectious diseases, maternal and neonatal child health, non-communicable diseases, global surgery, mental health, and primary care programme. CHD is currently working across Pakistan and has impacted millions of lives of the people



living in vulnerable communities.

The Primary Care Programme (PCP) is the key initiative of CHD and was initiated in 2017. It directly addresses the growing need for providing free-of-cost and high-quality care at first contact for our population. The programme integrates family medicine with public health interventions and focuses on preventive care through community-based teams linked to each centre. Services in each facility are customised based on an assessment of the surrounding community to match the healthcare needs of the population and to improve the overall health indicators of Pakistan. Currently, there are 26 independent sites run under PCP across Pakistan; however, IHHN plans to scale the

programme to 50 independent sites across Pakistan.

The PCP seeks to improve patients' first point of entry by introducing continuous, personalised, and quality primary care countrywide, tailored to the needs of the facility's catchment population. Each PCP offers integrated health delivery: At any site, patients can avail nutrition counseling and immunisation, receive treatment for infectious diseases (such as TB and Hepatitis C), and confidential counseling for anxiety and depression. Community engagement centres engage residents by empowering dialogue and partners with local schools to train Kiran Sitara girls — young volunteers who spread health awareness in their locality and help iden-



IHHN started functioning in 2007 with the emergence of the Indus Hospital (TIH) in Korangi, Karachi, which soon became a model hospital.

tify presumptive patients. In remote areas such as Bhong in Punjab, site staff regularly run free medical camps. By engaging communities around the clinic, primary care can assess healthcare needs, adjust services, and expand for maximum impact and benefit.

Some of the achievements of the primary care program are the following; inauguration of the Martin Dow — IHHN's community health centre at Baba Island in Sindh, Pakistan's first-ever mobile boat clinic in Punjab, mobile medical buses deployed in Badin and Tharparkar in Sindh, and numerous training and workshops at the community level. During 2020-21, more than 1,500,000 patients have benefited through 26 PCP sites in Pakistan.

IHHN believes that these facilities are a solution to address the healthcare needs of local populations. Primary Healthcare facilities are pivotal for the flourishing of rural districts and their surrounding areas, where inaccessibility to healthcare leads to individuals to forgoing primary healthcare needs.



STRIVING TO BECOME THE LARGEST

FREE OF COST

Healthcare provider in Pakistan by providing quality treatment to the most vulnerable communities in Pakistan.

INDUS HOSPITAL & HEALTH NETWORK IS NOW A NETWORK OF:



13
HOSPITALS



4 PHYSICAL
REHAB CENTERS



4 REGIONAL
BLOOD CENTERS



CONTAINER-BASED CLINICS



MOBILE BOAT CLINIC



PRIMARY CARE CLINIC





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GCTP Offers Global Buyers to Buy Commodities from Pakistan Digitally

A wholly-owned subsidiary of PMEX, the platform is the first to globally combine a trading platform with logistics

Pakistan produces a rich variety of high-quality agriculture and non-agriculture commodities.

Today, international buyers are purchasing a wide array of these commodities from Pakistan. However, to make the process seamless for international buyers, Global Commodity Trading Platform (GCTP) has combined a trading platform with complete logistics to deliver the commodity to the buyer's port of choice. This is not only the first platform in Pakistan, but also the first platform globally to combine a trading platform with complete logistics for bulk commodities.

GCTP is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Pakistan Mercantile Exchange Limited (PMEX), a national level institution and the only multi-commodity futures exchange in Pakistan. GCTP is an e-commerce platform for trading commodities. This digital platform connects international buyers with verified agriculture and non-agriculture commodities sellers in Pakistan. Also, it takes care of the entire trade process such as buyers/sellers trading agreements, quality inspections, customs and narcotics inspections, marine insurances and end-to-end delivery of the commodities to the buyers at the designated ports anywhere in the world.

GCTP has partnered with HashMove to provide an advanced logistics platform. This platform brings shipping lines, freight forwarders, customs agents, insurance companies, internally accepted assayers and bonded warehouses to complete the entire ecosystem of the logistics.

The global buyers will have the advantage to reach a wide variety of verified sellers selling commodities certified by internationally accepted assayers at GCTP. They will not only have the opportunity to purchase commodities with quality certification as per the international standards, but also

at competitive prices and get the delivery of purchased goods at the port of their choice through the click of a few buttons. GCTP provides the buyers with the security of their money until the trade is successfully executed and the goods are dispatched from Pakistani port to their respected destination.

For the first time in Pakistan, GCTP will offer an opportunity to the sellers to sell their commodities globally and get prompt payment without being registered as exporters. Also, the sellers will not have to prepare export-related documents, which will be handled by GCTP on their behalf. Moreover, by listing

commodities at GCTP, the sellers will be able to showcase their products in new markets and attract buyers from all over the world.

GCTP will revolutionise the way commodities are being traded and delivered to international buyers from Pakistan. It will develop a new community of commodity sellers and buyers and enable them to go online, interact with GCTP, harness the power of online commodity trading and connect globally with a few clicks of a button from the comfort of their homes.

GCTP will go live in Q2 2022.

Resilient Remittance Market

Better market post-pandemic and rise in digital services has raised the inflow to Pakistan

Expats' remittances to Pakistan in February stood at around \$2.2 billion, showing a growth of two per cent month-on-month. However, the inflow witnessed a year-on-year growth of 7.6 per cent during the first eight months (July-February) of 2021-22.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) in March 2022 issued the latest data of remittances showing a two per cent growth in February on a month-on-month basis. However, it fell by 2.7 per cent in February when compared with the same month last year.

Pakistan economy has received much-needed support and relief through a consistent upward remittances trend since June 2020. The country received record \$29.4 billion remittances during 2020-21 compared to the \$23 bil-

lion received during 2019-20.

The country received \$20.141 billion in remittances during the first eight months of the current fiscal year compared to \$18.7 billion during the same period last fiscal, showing a growth of 7.6 per cent.

Pakistan expects to receive around \$31 billion in the current fiscal year. The amount is higher than the export proceeds. However, the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has already led to an exorbitant increase in the prices of oil and other commodities in international markets, could be more painful for oil-importing countries like Pakistan and more foreign exchange would be needed.

The biggest source of remittances for Pakistan is Saudi Arabia, followed by the UAE, UK, EU, and the US. Pakistan is not the only beneficiary; overall these countries are dominant with billions of dollars sent outward.

The UAE is the world's second highest outward remittance corridor (after the US) with \$48 billion remitted to different countries in 2020. Saudi Arabia follows UAE as the third largest outward remittance source with \$35 billion. These remittances were sent in a Covid year as the global econ-



omy took a nosedive. Given the size of the market, innovation is only natural.

With the UAE's expat constituting 90 per cent of the population, social media penetration of 99 per cent and 92 per cent smartphone penetration, and similar statistics for the KSA, these markets are highly conducive and lucrative for a technology intervention.

The country received the highest amount of \$5.132 billion from

Saudi Arabia, with a growth of 2.6 per cent during eight months of FY22. The growth was 19.3 per cent during the same period last fiscal year.

Though the remittances from the UAE declined by four per cent to \$3.768 billion, it was still the second biggest inflow for Pakistan. Last year's inflow from the UAE was six per cent higher. An inflow of \$2.322 billion was received from other GCC countries,

with a growth of 8.5 per cent. The growth last year was 5.7 per cent.

The government has taken several initiatives to decrease its reliance on imports and attract foreign inflow of money. In addition to the RDA, the government also launched Sohni Dharti Remittance Programme (SDRP), which awards points to overseas Pakistanis for sending remittances through legal channels. Pakistan is also trying to move towards digital transactions. According to the State Bank of Pakistan, digital transactions in Pakistan spiked 31.1 per cent, amounting to Rs. 88 trillion or \$500 billion, far exceeding the country's GDP.

A number of remittance-focused financial technology (fintech) start-ups are gaining traction in emerging markets. In doing so, they are making inroads on market share that was formerly the preserve of established providers. Remittances have grown in importance in recent decades, to the point where they now constitute the largest source of foreign income for many developing economies. Remittance flows tend to be more stable than broader capital flows. They also tend to be countercyclical, increasing during



A number of remittance-focused (fintech) start-ups are gaining traction in emerging markets. In doing so, they are making inroads on market share that was formerly the preserve of established providers.

downturns or catastrophes, when other capital flows generally dwindle. This is an effect that was felt during the early stages of Covid-19, when remittance flows actually increased in many cases.

This growth has only gathered pace, with remittances set to further increase in importance as a source of income for emerging economies and financial service providers alike.

— rthonita@khaleejtimes.com



Building a Better Future for Gwadar

Imtiaz Rafi Butt Chairman at Rafi Group talks about the organisation's contribution towards Gwadar's prosperity and development

■ Staff Report

Please brief us about the Rafi Group?

Rafi Group is the most respectable construction, engineering and project management company of Pakistan. Since 1978, Rafi Group has not only gained reverence and confidence of its customers through sheer professionalism, but has also led the most innovative projects across Pakistan that not only aim to design and deliver projects for profit but also promote long term progress and economic prosperity. Rafi Group gained the challenging first mover advantage in Gwadar and has now become the leading company targeting the uplift of livelihood of the people of Gwadar, improving access to energy and resources as well as connecting citizen to vital services, making Gwadar a cleaner and safer place. Our Green Palms Project in Gwadar is the first of its kind and we stand proud of its achievements and its commitment to integrity, excellence and service to the nation.

What is your view on the macro economic situation in Pakistan?

Pakistan as a country is in the phase of a massive transformation. Gwadar and CPEC are going to boost the socio-economic conditions like never before. Gwadar is fast becoming the hub of investment and economic activity in the region,



Gwadar is fast becoming the hub of investment and economic activity in the region, and parallel to it, CPEC is paving the way for a revolution in Pakistan through industrialisation, connectivity, energy production and social exchange.

and parallel to it, CPEC is paving the way for a revolution in Pakistan through industrialisation, connectivity, energy production and social exchange. The Government of Pakistan has successfully completed phase-I of CPEC and is on its way towards achievement of major milestones that aim at industrial cooperation, agricultural development and trade promotion. The tourism sector is also expected to expand during this phase. It is a momentous time for the people of Pakistan and a time when challenges and opportunities are expanding in every sector.

CPEC is a game changer for Pakistan. Rafi Group's views on this mega collaboration.

We, at Rafi Group, believe in the vision laid down by the late Muhammad Rafi Butt who was a key figure in the struggle for Pakistan alongside Quaid-e-Azam, and from this, we derive our commitment to the economic revival of Pakistan. CPEC is the phenomena that will revive the ancient silk route that made the subcontinent the richest region in the world. CPEC is modern yet it derives its strength from history, culture and the value system of the region. Pakistan is going to become a transit trade giant, there will be railways that will directly link Afghanistan, China and Central Asia to Pakistan in a single route. The fruits of such a collaboration are unimaginable. It will bring economic, social as well as technical progress across the region, spreading peace and harmony in the process. CPEC is a major part of the One Belt-One Road project, which is the core initiative of growth for China in the future. CPEC is a project like no other and Rafi Group is committed in playing its part for Gwadar and CPEC to be the agents of change for the whole nation.

You are one of the largest developers in Gwadar. What is the update on Gwadar from a developer's point of view?

The Government of Pakistan, under the able leadership of Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, has done a tremendous job in streamlining and prioritising Gwadar. The Green Palms Housing Project is the first-of-its-kind initiative by Rafi Group that ensures sustainable infrastructural development, opportunities for investment and quality housing for professionals and the needs of the local people. More than 50 countries have shown their key interest in becoming a part of the CPEC and Gwadar project. Even the Covid-19 pandemic could not halt the development and progress of Gwadar. The creation of CPEC authority, the launching of 300MW coal power plant and setting



Imtiaz Rafi Butt

Chairman
Rafi Group

up of 19 state-of-the-art factories in Gwadar are a few of the projects that exhibit the potential of Gwadar, which is now ripe for attracting investors from around the world. The Rafi Group has already conducted a number of open houses and also conducted ballots receiving tremendous response from the customers. Pledging the universal principles of loyalty, transparency and quality relationships, Rafi Group ensures that all timelines are met proficiently. The opportunities in Gwadar will grow exponentially and the possibilities are endless.

Please tell us about the Jinnah Rafi Foundation. How did this come about?

The Jinnah Rafi Foundation came into being in 1989 with the same vision that is the legacy of late Muhammad Rafi Butt and his commitment to the idea of Pakistan as a modern Islamic welfare state.

The Jinnah Rafi Foundation is a hallmark of the reinvigoration of the Pakistan movement, its ideologies and character, and bringing that message to the masses and the youth in particular. A vast number of research works have been published along with books on the acknowledgement of the Pakistan movement and current issues of the nation. The Jinnah Rafi Foundation is also contributing through non-profit schools that are educating hundreds of deserving children. The Jinnah Rafi Foundation is a key part of Rafi Group that upholds values of social responsibility, patriotism and staying true to the ideological basis of Pakistan.

Any other point you may want to highlight

Identity, individuality and distinctiveness of nations and citizens are shaped by their history. History itself is carved by visionary leaders. It holds secrets of statecraft as



Rafi Group gained the challenging first mover advantage in Gwadar and has now become the leading company targeting the uplift of livelihood of the people of Gwadar, improving access to energy and resources as well as connecting citizen to vital services, making Gwadar a cleaner and safer place.

it unravels the principles of governing a nation by identifying its priorities, values as well as moral and political precedence. Without history, there is no culture, without culture there is no civilisation, without civilisation there is no society and with no society there is no future. Thus, prudence demands that we honour our heroes, follow their footsteps and pursue their vision as our own.

Jinnah Rafi Foundation was created to bring to light the sacrifices and contributions of unsung heroes of our freedom struggle such as Rafi Butt, the young vibrant industrialist, who not only established a very successful surgical instruments factory, laid the foundation of first Muslim bank in India, but also helped Quaid-e-Azam in establishing an English Daily. He was selected as a member of the six-member Muslim League Planning Committee and elected to the Lahore Municipal Corporation from the trade and commerce constituency. He provided valuable insight to Quaid-e-Azam through his letters, which have now been published by the JR Foundation. He conducted many foreign tours to Europe and the USA to bring state of the art technology to Pakistan. Rafi Butt died in a tragic air crash on November 26, 1948, rendering an irreparable loss to Pakistan.

The Jinnah Rafi Foundation wishes to keep the legacy of all such unsung heroes alive as inspiration and role models for the youth of Pakistan.

Real Estate Enjoys Robust Rise

As a result of the government's interest in the sector, many citizens and overseas Pakistani's are also investing in real estate, making it one of the more successful sectors of the country

■ Muhammad Ali Bandial

In the rapidly fluctuating and volatile markets of the modern world, finding avenues of investment that are stable and provide long-term growth becomes paramount. One such sector that has shown relatively consistent growth for longer periods, is real estate. In Pakistan, the real estate market has always enjoyed robust growth and has become a reliable investment option for people looking to grow their assets. More and more competent and renowned real estate companies have introduced projects in the country which have proved to be successful.

For the current year, the Pakistan real estate forecast seems to be promising and is definitely better than many other investment opportunities. As per the latest forecasts, the Pakistan real estate market is headed for a year of boom much like the previous year due to many reasons such as unstable gold prices, inflation and unstable stock market etc.

The government of Pakistan has lowered the interest rate and announced incentives for the investors and businessmen to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic last year, which resulted in the development of many budget friendly real estate projects in which investors had invested a lot due to many reasons. One shining example of this is Ravi River Urban Development Project (RRUDP) — a 41,308-hectare (102,074-acre) planned city, which would make it Pakistan's second planned city after the country's capital, Islamabad. The project has been envisioned by the current ruling government, as an innovative and efficient solution to the country's exponentially growing population in Lahore — one of its major urban centres.

With the market booming, there myriad opportunities to choose from for investors. In such cases, choosing the right



One shining example of this is Ravi River Urban Development Project (RRUDP) — a 41,308-hectare (102,074-acre) planned city, which would make it Pakistan's second planned city after the country's capital, Islamabad.

real estate property is also important to make your investment successful. The right choice can depend on a number of different factors such as the property's location, purpose of investment (residential or commercial), and the most important factor, the budget to invest in the property, which should be evaluated before the actual investment. This can save the investors from a lot of hassles after investing in the wrong project or investing the wrong amount.

The real estate market within Pakistan can further be broken down according to the market for real estate in each city. Different cities in Pakistan have different investment potential and different return on investment. In such a scenario, it is better to evaluate every option before making an investment decision. To make things easier, below are the investment potential of some of the big real estate markets in two of its biggest cities; Lahore and Karachi:

Lahore Real Estate

Known as the city of gardens, Lahore is the second biggest city in Pakistan. With many opportunities to choose from, the forecast for 2022 for Lahore real estate is going to be quite profitable as many multi-purpose/high-rise projects are launched in Lahore, where you can invest in commercial shops, offices, penthouses and apartments etc. Lahore also has a number of societies like Bahria Town, Bahria Orchard, DHA, Al Noor Orchard,



Emaar Oceanfront project, Karachi.

Al Kabir Town and many similar societies where the commercial and residential sectors are separate and independent so that residents can live in a serene and peaceful environment.

In light of the rising population in the city and decreasing residential space, there is an increasing trend towards apartments and penthouses in high-rising buildings. This demand is being catered to by many new projects. Over the last three years, data shows that apartments

are being preferred over residential plots due to their lower costs, thus making them also more investment friendly assets. People want a luxurious but affordable place of residence and apartments can fulfill their needs and wants.

For example, in societies like Bahria Town Lahore or DHA Lahore, investing in a plot or house is more expensive than the apartments. A well-developed house of five or 10 marla in a good area generally will cost two to three crore, depending

upon the materials used and their quality. But the two-bed or three-bedroom apartments in the same area will cost you much less. There are many different options of apartments in Bahria Town Lahore with on gong booking such as AR 14, ABS Mall and Residency, Pearl One Tower etc.

Therefore, by investing in apartments, investors not only will have a residential space but also much of their saving left with them and they will be closer to the work too, due to the building being a multipurpose and high-rise project.

Karachi Real Estate

The city of Karachi is called the city of lights. It is the largest and one of the major cities of Pakistan, known for its different investment opportunities and big real estate projects. The city has many societies and areas that investors can consider for real estate investment in Pakistan. Although Bahria Town and KHA Karachi comprise the two most well-known real estate markets in the city, Karachi has many other societies such as the Emaar Oceanfront properties which have both residential and commercial sectors in which one can find residential and commercial plots, shops, apartments, villas, homes etc. for different types of investment. There is no restriction of the nationality to invest in these two societies. In fact, the management of these societies encourages overseas Pakistani's to invest in here.



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Spray Rate
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Haven of Natural Wonders



Pavilion with a Soul

Thoughtful, beautifully illustrated, brilliantly executed and well-received by millions of visitors. Bravo Pakistan Pavilion, Bravo Dubai!

■ Ghazala Tikki Zaman and Tabassum Vally

An impressive coming together of 192 countries at Expo 2020 Dubai has been an outstanding achievement. In the beginning of 2020, when the world came to a standstill, many doubts were raised about the participating countries, but Dubai, in its characteristic resilience, put up one of the most visited Expo.

As 192 countries opened their doors to millions of visitors, some pavilions attracted more than the usual footfall. Pakistan pavilion was surely one of them with almost 1.2 million visitors till the mid of March.

From far, the pavilion looked like enormous structures of fluid colours and moving images. As one got drawn to the changing kaleidoscope, it did not take long to get totally enchanted by a wealth of colours, exhibits and information. The theme of the pavilion was very carefully chosen and was centered around the soul of a nation that has seen many struggles, hardships and dark days as the pandemic struck in 2020. In the words of Rizwan Tariq - Pavilion Director, there were many trying times given the situation in the world since March 2020.

At the beginning of 2020, the pavilion seemed like a far-fetched dream as most of the country was in lockdown. However, in spite of all the hurdles and turmoil, Pakistan has always maintained its unbeaten soul and this is very visible in the pavilion.

Determined not to miss the opportunity of bringing Pakistan to a platform where millions would visit and get a sense of country's soul, the team of organisers artists, architects and well known philanthropists did not leave any stone unturned. The pavilion was meant to take its visitors through a mesmerising journey of the subcontinent's past history as it is commonly believed that future is only a product of what has gone before. The pavilion not only succeeded in doing this, but also drew over a million visitors who expressed interest in the country's history and its rich heritage.

"The Pakistan Pavilion is amazing. Pakistan is absolutely the best one (unbiased and objective view), I say this because the exterior is so beautifully done in a futuristic design and the different areas inside the pavilion bring out the history, culture and beauty of the country so well, while making such good use of technology," said Sukaina Sheriff, a banker at a local bank.

The pavilion has been cleverly divided into eight spaces with the first depicting life in subcontinent 9,000 years ago. As one walks along the beautifully painted walls, one gets to see and read about life in the Indus valley, which then progresses to 712 AD when Mohammad bin Qasim invaded the subcontinent and this era is followed by a narration of various dynasties such as the Tughlaqs and the Mughals. The narration illustrated alongside walls of the corridors is delightful and, as one moves along the corridors, it almost seems that time is moving with them, bringing them to different chapters in history.

The historical narration gradually transcends into the next space, which leaves the visitors awe-struck. The beautifully curated replica of the Sheesh Mahal, which is a palace adorned with glass and mirrors reflecting light and images of the visitors, recreates the grandeur of Mughal architecture. An integral part of the Lahore fort, beautifully replicated, the Sheesh Mahal was undoubtedly a favorite of the visitors.

As the visitors proceed to next space, their souls are stirred by the sound of traditional Sufi music—a reminder that Pakistan has its roots embedded in spiritualism. The theme here is based on tolerance and respect for all religions practiced in Pakistan. The message here is very clear, Pakistan is open for all religious practices and the very essence of its existence is to rise above ideological and religious differences. A message very wisely delivered to the world through the beautiful poetry and photos of different places of worship. The sounds of the Darvish and haunting music of the traditional Qawwali create a trance around the four walls.

As visitors proceed to the next space, they are given a glimpse of the captivating flora and fauna of Pakistan. The hues of country's natural beauty captures the at-



Ghazala Tikki Zaman



Tabassum Vally

tention and film projections of the sights and sounds of picturesque Pakistan speaks volumes for the recent influx of tourists to the country. Nasir Malik, a well-known and much acclaimed photographer and a true artist at heart, created enthralling projections of scenic beauty and one almost feels transported to the fields and mountains of Pakistan.

The captivating information on the flora and fauna came as a surprise to even some Pakistanis, who had forgotten the beautiful landscape of their homeland. A wonderful reminder of home for some, almost moved to tears. The blue skies, the flower-laden picturesque mountains and array of coloured birds were enough to move the soul for those looking to experience the abundance of natural beauty.

A walk through a virtual forest created by green laser beams makes one forget that one is not in a forest. The enchanted sounds of the birds as one passes the virtual trees transports one to a world of tranquility and a peaceful sanctuary of exotic birds indigenous to Pakistan. It gives you goosebumps when walking through this section, you seem to feel as if you are truly walking through a rain forest with the accompanying droplets and sounds.

As one walks into the land of opportunity they are introduced to the exports of Pakistan. The beautifully handcrafted items are elegantly displayed. The vivid colors of truck art and the healing pink salt are all intriguing and stir a lot of curiosity in the products. And of course, Pakistan is known for its hospitality and hence it's no surprise that it had a little 'Dhaaba' for tea and snacks along with a restaurant namely 'Dawat'.

But behind the glory of the much sought-after pavilion are tales of relentless hard work of a team of people who, for the love of their country, did not leave any stone unturned. "Even with the Covid-19 situation, the Expo has been extremely successful, as evidenced by the long queues and some of the top pavilions are Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Japan, Pakistan, Hungary, Portugal, Morocco and Thailand," said Carmelina from Australia, working at the Expo 2020 Dubai. Though the Pakistan pavilion boasts among one of the best of 192 countries, the story of the pavilion is fascinating, impressive and not void of its trying times. There were many challenges to be faced, the biggest being the pandemic which made it hard to raise funds, plan and execute the project. All eyes would be at the Expo and millions of visitors would be viewing the pavilion and Pakistan wanted to put up a show that would be memorable.

Looking back, Rizwan Tariq talks about the trial and tribulations of a tough start in 2020. Since March 2020, the world

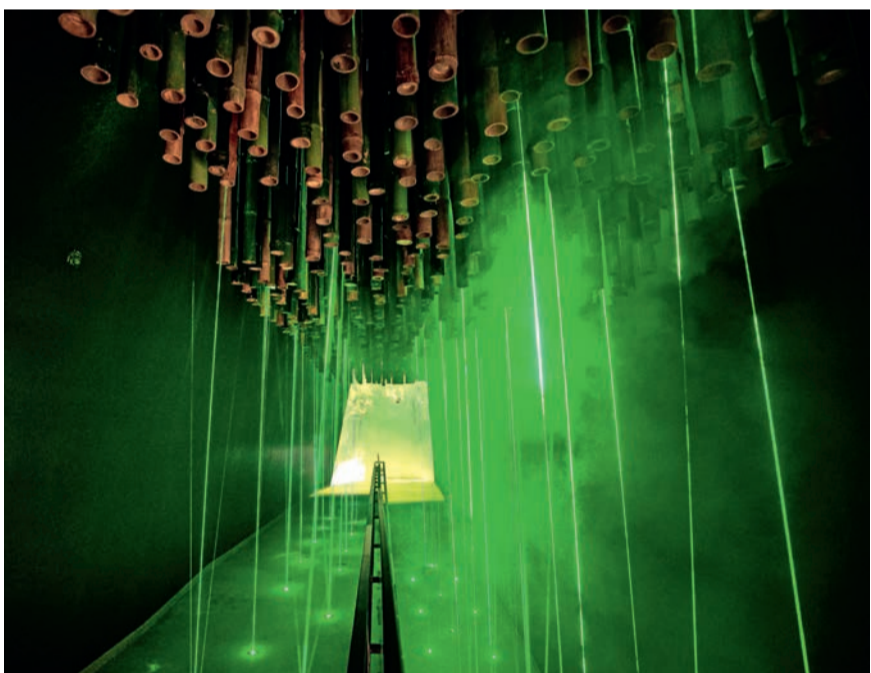
had changed and there were lockdowns and dismal days ahead. Given the situation, a lot of doubts arose and the question was, if Pakistan could deliver. Frantic meetings between ministries, architects, planners and organisers were being arranged. A special mention to Abdul Razak Dawood, Advisor for Commerce and Investment to the PM for spearheading the project, a seven member trust — Patrons of Expo 2020 Pakistan comprising Mushtaq Chhapra, Riaz Chinoy, Yunus Bengali, Aslam Khaliq, Shahid Abdulla, Yawar Jilani and Ms. Mahboob Khan here is much needed as they were instrumental in raising funds and laying the foundation for a mammoth project. The beautiful inner journey curated by Noor Johan Bilgrami with a team of artists deserves every credit for creating a world of magic at the pavilion. The genius of Shahid Abdulla is clearly visible as one walks through the pavilion. There were many moments of despair when the lockdowns hindered their work but the team continued to work in a troubled world.

As the structure was built Rashid Ranas genius in panels added a unique dimension to the pavilion. The changing hues of the structure can be seen from miles away and has attracted more than a million visitors. As many as twenty four thousand pieces that are seemingly identical, but all in fact unique pieces, fractionally different from each other were used to create a fluid rhapsody of colors with the different phases of the sun during day. A beautiful piece of largest artwork that became a centerpiece of Expo 2020 Dubai.

For Pakistanis living abroad who had forgotten how the country had changed over the years it was almost reinventing their homeland. Nasir Malik's enthralling production of the landscapes made every Pakistani proud of their country's flora and fauna. Those not familiar with Pakistan got glimpses of what to expect if they visited a country with a glorious past, a fast paced present and a bright future ahead. The multitude of nationalities that visited the pavilion went back understanding a little more about a country that had been in news for many years for different reasons. The pavilion brilliantly succeeded in reinventing the image not only in the minds of those not familiar with Pakistan but also for Pakistanis living away from their country. The teams that worked relentlessly during lockdowns and in moments of despair created something wonderful for the world to see and delivered the message **Pakistan is open to the world**. The success of the pavilion is a proud moment for all the team members that made it all happen, no job is too small or too big when something beautiful is created.



Sacred Space



Mangroves at Korangi Creek



Sheesh Mahal Pathway of Mirrors



The Dawn of Civilization



Craft Traditions



Service with a Smile

The *Dawat* and *Dhaaba* restaurants at Pakistan Pavilion bring authentic regional cuisine to the UAE to give a glimpse into the rich culture of the land



■ Ghazala Tikki Zaman and Tabassum Vally

Pakistan is known for its hospitality and hence it's no surprise that its pavilion has two restaurants — 'Dhaaba' and 'Dawat'.

Dhaaba is a colloquial word for a shack where one can relax and sip on karak chai and have some snacks. However, the 'Dhaaba' at the Pakistan Pavilion offers so much more.

The initial anticipation was that there would be around 100 to 120 visitors a day. However, on the first day itself there were about 900 visitors after which there was no turning back. Ever since it opened, the restaurant entertains on an average about 800 to 900 visitors on weekdays and 1,000 to 1,200 visitors on weekends. That keeps the team of 50 odd people at the two restaurants on their toes, recruited from both the UAE and Pakistan, mentioned Jamal Malik while being interviewed.

The idea for the Dhaaba restaurant was to bring the street food of Pakistan like chicken boti roll, chicken tikka club sandwich, bun kabab tikki burger, chappli kabab burger etc, to the food lovers visiting the Pakistan Pavilion, and these items became a super hit. The other hot favourite amongst the visitors was the samosa chaat.

Both the restaurants were designed by Naheed Mashooqallah and Neha Kajani. Naheed is well-known for her work in Pakistan and abroad, and needs no introduction. Talking about the design, Naheed said: "The murals celebrate the many native and frequent birds of Pakistan. The idea is drawn from Pakistani flora and fauna and recognisable landscapes and symbols, as painted in local truck art, with a particular emphasis on the birds. You will find them in their element: in flight, about to take off, up close, at a distance, a boastful stare, a quiet perch."

The large-scale bird portraits, the soaring silhouettes, the text within, the continuous specks and the concentric circles are composed, and recomposed, to pay homage to the role of birds as companions for travellers on their looped journeys. Therefore, repetition, movement and fluidity are important elements of design here, within each of the individual artworks and even between them, within the Dhaaba space.

While traditionally truck drivers would paint their trucks with flowers and birds of their regions, these murals aspire to do the same. The murals were done by Aarj Hashmi. A modern take on the truck art theme was used for the Dhaaba. A more muted colour palette was used.

Another name that has contributed to making the restaurants come alive is Kamran Sheikh. Chef Amir Abbasi helped finalise the menu along with the team.

The vibe at the Dhaaba was great as it was completely packed most of the time with queues of people lined up, waiting to be seated. There were people from all nationalities and ages. There were so many stories of people who were reminded of Pakistan from the food. A family living in Dubai from Islamabad missed the authentic Pakistani taste and were delighted with the food at the Dhaaba they had. "The bun kabab and the authenticity of the taste was amazing," mentioned Ambardeen, working at a local bank, amongst the other things they enjoyed.

Sara, a UAE national, who really enjoyed the samosa chaat, said: "The hospitality is amazing, the service is with a smile." She found the décor and design of the Dhaaba very elegantly done.

Kudos to the team of Jamal, he believes that service with a smile is at the core of hospitality and yes at 10 pm, a little tough but the job needs to be done.

"A warm welcome and great farewell is all about great service. Also the aim was to give a beautiful experience and great memories of Pakistani hospitality to our valuable guests."

It also had a fair share of celebrities who visited the place. Some of the names included Wasim Akram, Shahid Afridi, Ali Zafar to name a few. Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, the UAE's Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, and Commissioner General of Expo 2020 Dubai, is also a regular visitor at the restaurant.

A family from Hyderabad, India, visiting the Expo enjoyed the Dhaaba experience a lot and came to visit the the Dawat restaurant in the evening. The Dawat restaurant opens in the evening from 6 pm and closes at 10 pm. The idea behind this was inspired by nature as it was an open area. The use of floral and fauna, the marble and stones from Pakistan, the wood work all created a natural feel that allowed the guests to enjoy the natural settings. It wasn't easy to manage such a large operation and ensure that the standards were met. Thanks to Erth Hospitality and Armed forces Officers Club Abu Dhabi the operations went on extremely smooth across all the areas. There have been a myriad of people and things like the furniture, the lighting etc that have gone into making both the restaurants, so thanks are in order to everyone involved in making us feel proud as Pakistanis.



Jamal Malik
Operations Manager F&B



Amir Abbasi
Head Chef at Pakistan Pavilion



Saifullah Hussain
Host at Dawat & Dhaaba



The staff at Dhaaba (left) and Dawat.



The team of chefs at Dhaaba (left) and Dawat.



Biryani and chicken karahi at Dawat.



Chapli kabab burger and chicken boti roll at Dhaaba.



BOULEVARD ONE

Rhapsody of Colours, Elegance and Refinement



Sadaf M. Khan
CEO
Boulevard One

The Pakistan's fashion industry has been well-represented on the world stage for 75 years through various exhibitions and events

■ Ghazala Tikki Zaman and Tabassum Vally

Amongst the many exhibitions held in the elegant venues of Dubai, perhaps none stands taller than Boulevard One. Boasting an impressive number of exhibitions, Boulevard One has made its mark in Dubai's world of fashion over a period of ten years.

In 2012, Sadaf M. Khan had recently moved from Pakistan to Dubai and it was her own interest in fashion that made her realise the potential of entering a vibrant fashion world, full of very fashion conscious women in ever expanding, multicultural Dubai.

Sadaf brought in a new concept of introducing the very finest designers not only from Pakistan, but also from India as a gesture to establish that art and fashion transcends all borders. The concept was appreciated and very well received by the fashion enthusiasts of both the countries.

Crowded corridors and buzzing sounds of elegant ladies are ever so common at Boulevard One. Hosting some sixty to seventy designers under one roof at the exhibition makes Boulevard One very unique and pleasing to its ever-growing clientele.

In February 2020, Boulevard One hosted its first fashion show, which met with great success. Unfortunately, the world then came to a standstill with the pandemic and much of the fashion world went quiet. However, Boulevard One



continued to provide some joy in the dark days by offering online sale. This brought much joy to the depressed world.

Though during the pandemic, it was not easy to continue with the supply, Sadaf made every effort to somehow continue to bring women's wear from Pakistan to her clients.

When asked if more fashion shows will be hosted she wittingly said: "Yes if the pandemic doesn't strike again."

As Boulevard One completes its 10 years in 2022, Sadaf has plans of expanding the realms of the brand by taking it to other countries in the Middle East.

At the heart of Boulevard One is Sadaf's love for her country and her passion to bring to the world the beautiful creations of Pakistani designers. It is with this dedication that Sadaf runs Boulevard One and has continued to mesmerise the world of fashion in Dubai.



Bringing out NATURAL BEAUTY

Sonya Battla through her designs has been instrumental in promoting nature's beauty

■ Ghazala Tikki Zaman and Tabassum Vally

The curious thing about fashion is that it's always evolving. There is no stagnation, nor is there a standstill moment in the world of art and creativity.

Sonya Battla's work is proof that fashion can be integrated into any society, keeping its social and environmental challenges. Battla's approach to life is beautifully woven in her works as a fashion designer. Her love for nature, art and literature is pleasantly displayed in her creation.

"I base my collection on what I experience as a Pakistani," she said.

Battla's first curated release is the famous Snow Leopard Markhor tunic. This basically depicts the relationship they bear with each other as they exhibit the same terrain.

An ardent nature lover, Battla expressed that it is imperative to preserve the natural heritage of Pakistan. Her much loved collection is a symbol of her way of thanking nature for its vast beauty.

Since 1999, she has been adorning women in classic and elegant outfits.

Her passion for creating and depicting beauty is not just limited to nature, but she has gone on to celebrate Pakistani literature and poetry in her works. Her famous Faiz's kurta won the hearts of many Urdu enthusiasts. Battla brought in a unique concept of weaving Faiz's work in her beautifully colourful kurta. It is no surprise that it was reviewed as a part of celebrating the best in 75 years of Pakistan.

"The future has to be sustainable and responsible," she said.

Battla stresses the importance of preserving nature and she strongly feels and believes that the flora and fauna, the environment and social beliefs should not be compromised in the name of fashion.

Anything that is environmentally damaging is mindless and tragic. She embarked upon creating awareness amongst the producer and buyers.

Though Sonya has created many pieces which are exquisite and beautifully curated, the one closest to her heart is her work celebrating seventy five years of Pakistan where she has intertwined the Snow Leopard and Markhor, each depicting the flora and fauna of her beloved country.





Spreading Inspirational Light

Roshni Baji aims to empower women and encourage them to become more self-reliant

K-Electric's pioneering Roshni Baji safety ambassador initiative electrified the Pakistan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai in February 2022 with two women from the first batch sharing their inspirational journey at the 'Women of Pakistan: Leading a Change' event, which was organised by the Employers' Federation of Pakistan (EFP).

These Roshni Bajis are breaking ground in Pakistan, where female labour force participation (FLFP) has remained the lowest in the past two decades as per the World Bank. According to the reports, FLFP in Pakistan's power sector hovers around four per cent.

The programme was conceived in line with the UN's 5th Sustainability Development Goal (SDG 5) that aims to achieve gender equality and women empowerment by the year 2030 and it is also in aligned with the vision of NEPRA's 'Power with Prosperity' programme which focuses on uplifting the society at large. The programme is co-powered by Guarantco and is launched in collaboration with Children for Concern (CFC).

Abeera Almas and Zara Afshan, women electricians and

speakers at the event, were part of the first cohort of 40 women inducted from across Karachi in February 2021. Over the next six months, these women collectively reached out to over 100,000 households in Karachi's most vulnerable communities, creating awareness on safety hazards within premises which posed a risk to residents and were easily preventable. Furthermore, the Roshni Baji programme provided KE access to a key demographic of its female customer base which was previously hindered due to societal barriers.

Almas said: "We are proud to be representing Pakistan on such a prestigious platform and share our stories with the audience. Programmes like Roshni Baji prove that if women are given the right support and opportunities, they can excel and create a space for themselves even in technical fields. We hope that other organisations also create similar programmes and empower more women to enter the workforce. We look forward to playing our part in driving Pakistan's prosperity and reshaping its perception on the global stage." During this time, KE also equipped the Roshni Bajis with various skill-sets such as teaching them how to ride and maintain a bike, training them in martial arts and self-defense and making them Pakistan's first certified female electricians capable of completing the internal wiring of a house, office, or warehouse on single-phase supply.

Expressing her excitement during the event, Afshan said: "It

gives us tremendous joy that through this Roshni Baji Programme, we have become the source of national pride. The journey towards becoming safety ambassadors was not easy, but we showed everyone that with determination and passion, it is possible. I feel proud to be a Roshni Baji; not only have I been able to create a change in my community, but I am empowered enough to financially support my family."

Zaki Ahmed Khan - Vice President EFP, commended the initiative, stating: "Pakistan is progressing quickly to become a major player in the region, and we recognise that women can play an integral role in driving this transformation. We are proud to showcase some of these inspiring initiatives today, and we look forward to collaborating with global leaders and experts to help Pakistan catalyse its efforts to the next level."

Having won S&P Global Platts Energy Awards recently, K-Electric's Roshni Baji Women Ambassador Programme continues to gain popularity and global traction for its simple yet powerful objective to provide women, economic independence by making them ambassadors in their residential areas to spread awareness about safety, power theft hazards, and energy conservation. Building on the resounding success of the first Roshni Baji Women Ambassador Program, K-Electric also officially announced the launch of its second cohort in November comprising 60 women from different parts of Karachi.

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Sneaker Art A La Mode

Haider Ali, a mural artist, has revolutionised the international art scene by painting the famed truck art on shoes, cars and even planes



They say that art speaks a universal language that knows no boundaries or rules. Over the years, Pakistan has redefined the concept of murals with its own brand of art which has come to be known as 'Truck art'. Depicting garish colours and caricatures of famous personalities, be it famous politicians, sports personalities, singers, actors and even animals, the art became popular on trucks carrying cargo all over Pakistan.

Regarding the origin of this now famous genre of painting, some say the practice of adorning trucks began in the 1940s when hauliers commissioned vibrant logos, communicating their brand identity to a largely illiterate public. Another point of view attributes the origins of truck art to an increasing game of one-upmanship amongst the bus drivers as they competed to lure passengers or receive praise from their fellow contemporaries. Whatever the case may be, there can be no denying the person responsible for taking this niche and little-known art and bringing it to a wider audience. The fact that he did it by restricting his art to the smaller confines of a sneaker makes the story all the more remarkable.

Hailing from a family of truck artists who earned a meager living through their art at roadside yards, Haider Ali, a 41-year-old Karachi based artist, always dreamed of taking the vibrant art to a bigger audience. As he continued to work his distinctive style of truck art on any and everything, including murals, structures, benches, and vehicles, people began to sit up and take notice. Soon, his work was being displayed both domestically and

internationally, notably in the United States, the United Kingdom, and India. However, when his work was exhibited at the US Smithsonian Museum in 2002, it elevated him to the role of an international ambassador for truck art. Today, if truck art trade is considered one of Pakistan's most famous cultural exports, cutting against the country's more austere reputation for social conservatism, the lion's share of the credit must go to Ali, which is why when he strolls through the Yusuf Goth truck yard—where he once used to work on low wages—wearing his tinted glasses and a slight swagger, he has earned the right to act like a celebrity.

When asked about the inspiration behind the ideas that he puts on sneakers, he Ali said: "I get in the zone when I feel a connection to the art," he added: "If I pause, the ideas stop flowing." He said that while truck art is a unique style of art that his admirers respect, he is continually attempting to innovate in his work. Speaking about his art, he said "I have tried my hands on practically every element, from painting roundabouts, canvas, walls, to shrines and temples," said Ali while talking about his extensive work. When he first showed his work to an international audience, nobody knew how to categorise it. It

was a form of art that they had never seen before and it astonished them said Ali. He said that as his popularity grew, he was asked to paint on all kinds of surfaces including a plane, a Volkswagen Beetle and sneakers, which he is most famous for. Speaking about the origin of the idea for painting on sneakers, he said that he had quoted an exorbitant fee to the client with the aim of dissuading him. But as luck would have it, the client persisted and the rest, as they say, is history.

Ali explained that while he works for a living, painting is also his passion, and he puts his heart and soul into every piece he creates. And while he has travelled the world representing Pakistan, giving workshops, and painting in museums, he has always preferred to stay in Pakistan since Pakistan has given him this 'identity (Pehchaan) and the art is pure Pakistani. Recently, he even trended worldwide after he painted a mural in honour of George Floyd. Under the mural, he wrote 'Hum Kaaley hain tou kia hua, dil waley hain,' which translates to 'So what if we're dark-skinned, we've got big hearts.' The mural and the wordings resonated with people from all over the world and they praised his unique tribute.

— ali@khaleejtimes.com

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Fostering Local Creativity



The Saffron Souk is a haven for those who love shopping for local products

■ Ghazala Tikki Zaman and Tabassum Vally

The Saffron Souk is an online marketplace for sharing the love of local products. It's home to an array of special, one-of-a-kind products, from handcrafted pieces to vintage treasures. All these products are curated to provide a digital version of the souk experience using an innovative, technology-based platform that is centered around supporting local brands.

Just like The Saffron Souk, saffron has its origins in the Middle East, and it is such a precious and powerful spice that a small pinch of it makes a huge difference. This makes The Saffron Souk a perfect name for the platform that started as just an idea to bring independent businesses together. Now, it has grown into a curated marketplace that showcases the latest, most beautiful must-haves from local designers.

The local brands have filled the marketplace with a wide variety of unique collections of everything from handmade jewelry to fashion, arts, prints, customised gifts, and unique keepsakes. So, whether it's a quirky handmade necklace or a handmade dish stand, the sellers behind these products are passionate about what they do and have put their souls into providing customers with beautiful products.

The marketplace currently has over 8,000 unique products, with 100 per cent of them being manufactured in small batches by independent businesses. This makes The Saffron Souk among the largest small business aggregators in the region. And they are currently empowering over 800 independent brands and micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) by allowing them to focus on their craft and passion while the platform handles all the transactional and digital marketing details. Over 95 per cent of these local brands registered in The Saffron Souk are

led by women entrepreneurs. These women are given the opportunity to sell local products in global markets.

The Saffron Souk offers worldwide shipping to everyone who enjoys shopping from local independent brands. As of today, there are over 25,000 registered members on The Saffron Souk, who trust the platform to handpick the best of local products. Recently, the online platform decided to visit Dubai in February for The Saffron Souk Pop Up which took place over two consecutive weekends at The Majlis, Jumeirah Mosque in collaboration with Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Centre for Cultural Understanding. The Saffron Souk Pop Up was an event that celebrated independent brands and allowed them to share their amazing local products with customers in person.

The event witnessed hundreds of locals and tourists visiting to show their support for small businesses and independent local brands. And it wasn't just shopping that the visitors enjoyed, but there was a handful of activities, including falcon entertainment and mouth-watering local luqaimat in an event that was all about the love of local.

That was The Saffron Souk's first-ever event away from the screens, but it will not be their last. The marketplace is committed to providing shoppers with unique products, while also supporting local independent brands and small businesses in the process.

Founded by Fatima Qasim, a Pakistani origin, long-term resident of the UAE, and firm believer in the power of small businesses, The Saffron Souk's responsibility has been designed to maintain a human connection in the e-commerce world by allowing real, local people to thrive in it.

Fatima built a place where creativity is fostered above everything else. They help ambitious entrepreneurs turn their passion into a successful business and connect them with buyers looking for the hard-to-find that breaks the monotony of commercial and conventional products.

If you enjoy shopping local just as much as we do, visit saffronsouk.com to see the beautiful designs of local products. You can also keep up to date with the latest news and updates on social media @thesaffronsouk.



Stories of the Soil

Showcasing the rich side of Pakistan through engaging stories

■ Ghazala Tikki Zaman and Tabassum Vally

We all love stories, but sometimes the narrator has a different form of storytelling. Ayesha Imtiaz in her 'Stories of the soil' has brought flamboyant tales in her collection of art and crafts from Pakistan, where each piece holds its own tale. Story of the soil was introduced in October 2021 as the world was recovering from trying times.

Everyone needed colour and everyone needed some cheering in a grey and dark time and 'Stories of the soil' surely alleviated the spirits.

'Stories of the soil' showcases ethnic creations from Pakistan, most of which are hand crafted by small artisans. Be it 'Multani Mitti' or beautifully painted truck art or the famous Hala pottery, 'Stories of the soil' continues to bring them to the multicultural market of the UAE. Recently exhibited at Boulevard One, it was no surprise that 'Stories of

the soil' had sold almost all of its wonderful collection. The products were not only appreciated, but they also raised interest in Pakistani craft. The spellbinding pieces indeed narrated their own stories through colours and ethnic patterns.

The team behind 'Stories of soil' continue to support the artisans of Pakistan. The project aims to capture international markets and to promote the handcrafted products waiting to be discovered in culturally rich countries like the UAE and beyond.



The Artistic Horizon

Admiring the journey of modernism and brushstrokes of creative Pakistan



Pakistan has a rich history in all the visual arts—painting, architecture, textiles and decorative arts, and sculptures.

Evolving beyond its traditional mediums of miniaturists and calligraphers, the Pakistani contemporary art scene now boasts a multitude of established and upcoming artists whose fresh, innovative work has attracted a great deal of international interest.

Learn about Pakistan's burgeoning art scene and explore the work of contemporary artists with our curated list.

Rashid Rana

When it comes to art and representing Pakistan these days, there's little on everyone's lips other than the Pakistan Pavilion at the Dubai Expo 2020. And that pavilion is represented quite exclusively on social media by one thing — the spectacular facade created by artist Rashid Rana. Widely considered to be the leading Pakistani artist of his generation, Rana first came to prominence in South Asia, before gaining wider, international exposure after the millennium. In his photography, sculpture and digital printmaking, Rana transposes imagery from one time and place to another, through manipulation, repetition and rearrangement.

Aamir Habib

Karachi-based artist Aamir Habib references sources from popular culture alongside individual concerns in his works. Though interpreting the world as an oppressive place, where survival is possible only at the expense of others, the cycle of life, however brutal and inimical, is natural. In his featured work Vision is Scary, Habib uses a wolf's carcass in his installation, completing this sequence, challenging viewers to review their part in the whole.

Adeela Suleman

Living and working in Karachi, her work reflects an engagement with contemporary socio-political concerns, primarily gender in Pakistani society. Often incorporating organic elements such as birds and flowers, her work reflects the fragile nature of the human condition in the face of the disruption and violence of contemporary society.

Huma Mulji

Hailing from Karachi and presently based in the UK, Huma Mulji works

across diverse media, moving between sculptural installation, photography, painting, collage and drawing. Observing every day within intimate urban geographies, her works echo a nebulous combination of the dysfunctional, the heroic, sorrowful and the resilient; deliberately awkward, they mine out failure, the futile, and the funny. Her recent (2011) show in Mumbai at Project 88, 'called Twilight', is a mix of painting and sculpture.

Pakistan's art scene is still developing and evolving. Every day has a recreation of contemporary and traditional art. Here are the few galleries that stand still holding the pride of the country.



Mohatta Palace

The Mohatta Palace was built in 1927 as the summer residence of a wealthy businessman who named the palace after himself. The unique design of the building was inspired by the majestic residences of the Rajput clan's princes and utilises yellow stones from Gizri, one of Karachi's neighbourhoods, as well as pink stones from Jaipur, India's Pink City. The palace was then acquired by the Government of Sindh, the region where Karachi is located, in 1995; and it was then established that it would have become a place to celebrate the traditional, decorative arts of Pakistan.

Canvas Gallery

Canvas Gallery is one of Pakistan's leading art galleries dedicated to supporting emerging artists from across the country. The gallery deals in modern, miniature and contemporary art, and possesses a collection of over 1,000 objects by 100 different Pakistani artists, making it an excellent destination for those looking to discover more about the current state of Pakistani art.

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Indus Youth Ambassadors SERVING WITH THEIR PASSION

The programme recruits and guides passionate youngsters looking to lead the way towards a promising and healthy tomorrow

Youth is not just a word; it symbolises a dream, idealistic hope, a promise, and an ideal for a prosperous humanity-centric tomorrow. It is a time when children are ready to spread their wings and mark their identity in the world. The youth are agents of change; their inclusion in social matters is pivotal for establishing an empathetic altruistic global society. They have the audacity to dream, the courage to engage, and the conviction to fight for a community free of poverty, inequity, and human suffering. To unleash the power within these untapped champions of change, The Indus Hospital, UAE branch, launched its 'Indus Youth Ambassador Programme (IYAP)'.

Indus Youth Ambassador Programme is a platform for the zealous young generation to change the destiny of millions in Pakistan and become compassionate, empathetic, and grateful human beings. This inclusive programme is directed by the youth and is driven by their ambitions to create a long-lasting impact in vulnerable lives. IYAP is a holistic programme designed to propel youth engagement in philanthropic endeavors through different means. It acts as a funnel to help our next generation channel their idealism, effusive energy, and creativity in selfless activities into improving the lives of those less fortunate, from even across borders.

Unfortunately, in a developing country like Pakistan, more than 50 per cent of the population does not have access to basic healthcare facilities. The healthcare system of Pakistan is precariously inadequate to meet the healthcare needs of the general population, with only 0.6 beds available for every 1,000 expected patients and only 11.7 doctors available per 10,000 people. This means that more than 110 million people of a 220 million-strong population of Pakistan are being deprived of basic medical care, signifying



the need for the overall development of the healthcare system in the country.

Indus Hospital and Health Network (IHNN) aspires to curtail the health disparity that persists in the country through its countrywide network of 13 hospitals, four rehabilitation centres, four regional blood centres, public health initiatives, and primary care clinics across Pakistan. Supported by this extensive network of primary, secondary, and tertiary hospitals and health care facilities, IHNN dispenses free quality medical care to over 5.4 million people every year. The Indus Hospital, UAE branch has been established to support and create awareness about the efforts of IHNN in providing quality healthcare to every patient that sets foot in the facility.

The Indus Hospital UAE branch launched the 'Indus Youth Ambassador Programme' in 2021 to raise awareness about the current healthcare scenario in Pakistan and raise funds for the treatment of millions of patients suffering from various healthcare problems (IAC-

AD authorisation No 3754 and 4493). Through a concerted collaboration of ideas, skills, knowledge base, and utilisation of their social media platforms, these young volunteers save innocent lives in Pakistan and inspire other young members of the society to do the same. Our Youth Ambassadors are building capacity to transform into leaders, influencers, and conscientious citizens within their communities by developing critical communication, fundraising, and network-building skills through marketing activities on social media.

Volunteering out of sheer goodwill and selflessness is the backbone of every civil society. It is a collective pursuit towards a community that embodies the aspirations of peace, freedom, equality, justice, and social alleviation.

Indus Youth Ambassadors continue to revolutionise the health landscape of Pakistan despite being thousands of miles away. The programme prides itself in recruiting passionate young volunteers living in different parts of the UAE and pro-

vides them with a canvas for engaging in philanthropic activities for the benefit of others. Our dedicated volunteers from Dubai College (Aadiya Nair, Alize Shahbaz Zobairi, Anoushey Saquib, Areesha Ali Fehmi, Ayan Shariff, Eman Ansari, Faris Ahmad, Feeras Ahmed, Mikail Kidwai, Rayan Hassan, Reza Tabba, Sabeen Shariff, Zaina Akram and Zara Ansari), Gems Jumeirah College (Amaan Raza, Anaya Khan, Arhum Kamrani, Danyal Shahbaz Zobairi, Halimah Anwar, Rayyan Ali Khan Lodhi and Zain Raza), Gems Jumeirah Primary School (Aiza Tumbi, Mohammad Daniyal Khan, Nile Gondal and Ziyad Akram), Gems Wellington International School (Ashar Iqbal Awan, Maya Idris and Zoya Lakhani), Nord Anglia International School (Jibrán Hayat and Musa Pervez), Dubai Gem Private School (Muhammad Omer Baig and Muhammad Talal Baig), Dubai International Academy (Muhammad Irtiza Rafique Rana and Muhammad Talha Rafique Rana), Dubai American Academy (Saif Shariff), Kings Dubai Jumeirah (Samiya Saadaat) and JSS International (Riddhi Amit Khandewal) are the true embodiment of the former statement.

Indus Youth Ambassadors of 2021 transitioned as Youth Ambassador Mentors for the new volunteers and are guiding them to their best abilities. These mentors from Dubai College (Ayaan Ehsan, Amani Tumbi, Azlan Shah, Haya Kashan, Faris Saadaat and Zahraa Muhammad) Gems Jumeirah College (Pareysa Ahmad), Jebel Ali School (Saniya Hasan and Samar Hasan), Gems Wellington International School (Sophia Mashkoor) and Jumeirah English Speaking School (Taha Siddiqi) are mere examples of the zeal that drives our volunteers to overcome physical limitations and prove that kindness goes beyond borders by ensuring the provision of quality healthcare for the underserved. The impact of the work of these mentors has established a legacy and is serving as a blueprint and inspiration for others to follow.

The young do not know enough to be prudent, and therefore they attempt the impossible and achieve greatness in the process. The Indus Youth Ambassador Programme works on the same principle and provides young students the opportunity to let their creativity flow without barriers and develop core values of empathy, collective growth, introspection, and gratitude, thereby ensuring a robust social fabric for the future through different online means.

Indus Youth ambassadors continue to revolutionise the health landscape of Pakistan despite being thousands of miles away. The programme prides itself in recruiting passionate young volunteers living in different parts of the UAE and provides them with a canvas for engaging in philanthropic activities for the benefit of others.

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Welcome to the Land of Breathtaking Vistas

In recent years Pakistan has emerged as one of the leading tourist destinations for travellers from all over the world

■ **Mudassir Tipu**

Pakistan, a culturally and socially diverse country, is a land with magical and mystical beauty. Boasting a civilisation going back to millennia, the country is a bastion of cultural relics, inherited from knowledge and experience of communities, historians, artists, archeologists, and anthropologist. The country's spiritual heritage is epitomised by the mosques, shrines, temples, churches, gurdwaras, and mandirs that it has preserved over time immemorial. The US magazine *Condé Nast Traveler* ranked Pakistan as No.1 travel destination for tourism in 2020.

Taxila, an ancient city, is a trove of treasures with Buddhist Stupas and archeological remains and the tales of history tell us that Thomas the Apostle came to present day Taxila in the first century AD. Deep in the Kalasha valleys of Chitral, you can meet the indigenous tribe who are believed to be descendants of Alexander the Great. Due to its cultural power, the World Economic Forum has placed Pakistan among the top 25 per cent of global destinations for its UNESCO 'World Heritage Sites'.

Pakistan's landscape is unique and varied, with high altitude mountain ranges in the north; a series of low mountain ranges from north to southwest; plains and deserts to east; and warm and captivating beaches of the Arabian Sea to the south. With 7,253 known glaciers, Pakistan has more glacial ice than any other country on earth outside the polar regions.

The northern areas of Pakistan meet the three spectacular mountain ranges, Karakoram, Hindukush, and the Himalayas. Pakistan has five of the 14 highest independent peaks in the world (the eight thousands), including K2, Nanga Parbat, Gasherbrum I and II, and Broad Peak. Home to 108 peaks above 7,000 meters and over four thousand peaks above 6,000 meters, an entire series can be devoted to the mountains of Pakistan. Other than the lofty mountains, the north offers cultural heritage, beautiful valleys, natural lakes, glaciers and an array of rare fauna and flora. The polo festival at Shandur top in Gilgit Baltistan is an out of world experience with the backdrop of snowy mountains, alpine flowers, and sparkling lakes.

Pakistan's four provinces have rich cultural diversity with differences in food, art, traditions, and way of life. Karachi, the port city has landmarks such as Empress Market, the Bristol Hotel, Frere Hall, and the founding father Quid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's mausoleum. Peshawar, known as the 'City on the Frontier', is located on the crossroads of central and south Asia with historic sites, and Qissa Kahwani bazaar's inescapable beauty. Baluchistan has breathtaking attractions such as Quetta, nicknamed the 'fruit garden of Pakistan', and the Urak Valley, Quaid-e-Azam's residency Ziarat, and Pishin valley among many others.

A serene abode to nature lovers, the lush green Kashmir, bestowed with nature's bounties, is ideal for sporting activities like skiing, paragliding and river rafting. In the north, you can live at the Khaplu Palace's mid-19th century imperial building like Baltistani royalty. To experience mughal architecture, a visit to Lahore with sights of Lahore Fort, Shalimar Gardens, and the Badshahi Mosque is a must. New York Times picked Lahore as one of the top places to visit in 2021.

The British backpacker society ranked Pakistan as the number one adventure travel destination for 2018. Will Hatton, author of *The Broke Backpacker*, wrote that Pakistani people are "hospitable, kind and welcoming people." Locals are generous and will gladly invite you to their homes without prior meeting, shopkeepers will ask you to have chai while you are window shopping and its rich cultural power embraces you with open arms. Pakistani street food and chai (tea) at makeshift cafes are a world of their own, bustling with resilient and



Polo Festival, Shandur

joyful youth. Fragrant, spicy and delectable — many local dishes carry cultural heritage rooted in history and geography of the country.

In recent year, Pakistan has witnessed an incredible improvement in its security situation. *The Gallup Law and Order Report of 2021* ranks Pakistan, Italy, Sri Lanka and Israel at the same score of 84, keeping it above many developed countries. The Serbian-based Numbeo Crime Index that ranks 452 cities has improved Karachi's rank from 13th in 2013, to 127th in 2021 while Islamabad and Lahore are ranked at 396 and 274 respectively showing that the cities of Pakistan are safer when compared to other major cosmopolitan cities. Pakistan also fares far better in comparison with many advanced economies in the Numbeo's Crime Index 2022.

Hospitality and tourism industries are thriving in Pakistan. Imran Khan, the Prime Minister, has made promotion of tourism a priority and his determination is yielding positive results. Pakistan's tourism future is full of hope as government is aiming to initiate new projects and produce jobs through ongoing efforts and future initiatives to promote tourism.

Pakistan is offering visas on arrival to visitors from over 50 countries and electronic visas to 175 nationalities. In 2017, an estimated 1.7 million foreigners visited Pakistan. The numbers further grew in following years. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) forecasted that the country's tourism sector would grow to over \$40 billion within a decade. According to WTTC, one in four jobs was created by the travel and tourism sector during 2014-2019 in Pakistan. Tourism contribution to GDP was 10.4 per cent in 2019. Multiple digital resources provide the consumers all the information to plan their trip by aggregating companies and travel agents from across Pakistan onto one platform.

Football lovers will be happy to know that coaches from the UK are coming to Karachi this month to train Pakistan's young and rambunctious football fans. And the crazy cricket fans are absolutely thrilled that the top cricketers from all over the world are pouring in Pakistan to play in Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches.

Pakistan is emerging on the world map for being the best travel destination. The jovial and vibrant South Asian nation is a great destination to enjoy natural beauty and hospitality of its people. In 2017, Cassie De Pesciol, the first person to travel to all 196 countries on the planet, after her groundbreaking journey put Pakistan as her fifth favourite country, citing that it was one of her most educational and enriching experiences.

The writer is Director General (Americas) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the views expressed are his personal opinion.



Quetta



Frere Hall at Karachi



Shalimar Gardens, Lahore



Lahore Fort



Revival of International Sports

Hosting of Pakistan Super League has played a vital role in paving the way for international cricket in Pakistan

■ Staff Report

The wait is over as international sports events return to Pakistan after a gap of more than one decade. The country went through a torrid time as international teams refused to tour Pakistan after the attack on the touring Sri Lanka cricket team in 2009, but now the situation is changing fast in the wake of effective measures taken by the government in recent years.

The lack of international sport has hurt Pakistan in many ways. It left the grounds empty and sports bodies suffered financially.

The youngsters could not see their heroes perform in home grounds as several

players debuted and ended their careers without playing a single match in their homeland.

Misbah-ul-Haq was made captain of the cricket team in 2010, and he helped Pakistan team to become the number one Test side in the world without playing a match at home as Pakistan played their home series in the UAE and some of the games in England.

The players were always on tour, and it may have affected their performance because they were unable to enjoy home conditions. It has been an uphill task to convince top teams to tour Pakistan. Pakistan was able to organise some matches by inviting Zimbabwe, World XI, West Indies and Sri Lanka but faced difficulty convincing top teams.

Continuous efforts yield results

Several international wrestlers travelled to Pakistan recently. Some of the top international footballers, including Brazilian legend Ronaldinho, visited Pakistan, which gave fans in Pakistan a chance to interact with former number one players. Karachi Open Squash Championship is being held in Paki-

stan. Several international stars are taking part in the tournament.

PSL's key role

Hosting of Pakistan Super League in Pakistan has played a vital role in paving the way for international cricket in Pakistan. Since many international stars take part in the PSL and their feedback to their respective boards could have played a big part.

It was not a smooth affair as the New Zealand cricket team landed in Pakistan to play a series in 2021 but they left the country without playing a single ball on security reasons, although they were given foolproof security as they practised for three days in Rawalpindi.

Pakistan Cricket Board and the Pakistan government tried their best to convince them to carry on the tour. Even Prime Minister Imran Khan called his New Zealand counterpart Jacinda Arden to tell her that there was no security issue in the country, but they stuck to their plans and flew back. This tour was followed by England's men and women cricket teams, who also decided to withdraw. Both the teams have promised to tour Pakistan shortly to fulfil their commitments.

Australian tour

It was great news for Pakistan cricket when Cricket Australia promised to fulfil its commitment to touring the country. They have played two Tests (Rawalpindi and Karachi) which have been drawn and now the third Test is being played in Lahore.

Pakistan hopes Australia completes the tour without any incident. Australians are happy with the security arrangement.

Australian captain Pat Cummins while talking to media, said: "We don't know what to expect. Subcontinent Tests can be played quickly or slowly, but think for a lot of this group, we haven't played a lot of cricket overseas, so if we want to be No. 1 in the world, we have to have an excellent showing. On this subcontinent tours."

The series has failed to create excitement so far because both (Rawalpindi and Karachi) Tests could not produce a result. Rawalpindi Test was a dull draw, but the Karachi game has all the ingredients of a good match. It could have gone anyway, but captain Babar Azam, Abdullah Shafique, and Mohammad Rizwan batted brilliantly to keep mighty Australia at bay.

Babar led from the front to play a his-

toric inning of 196 to earn a draw for Pakistan. Australians must feel unlucky as they almost won the match to go one-up in the series.

The third Test is being played in Lahore, and cricket enthusiasts in the world hope there will be a result.

Australian players' social media accounts and their media interactions prove that they are enjoying the tour, and it is a significant victory for the PCB and Pakistan.

Australian cricket fan Luke Gillian who last visited Pakistan in 1998 with the team, has become a celebrity in Pakistan on this tour.

While talking to media, the super fan said: "I reckon, in Rawalpindi, 500 photographs were taken of me every day, quickly."

"I have been given I don't know how many cups of tea, how many pieces of cake, bottles of Pepsi, water and just little incidents people have given us as a 'thank you' — free haircuts, free laundry."

Big thanks to Australia, and Pakistan hopes to host many teams in future for the growth and improvement of the sports in the country.



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