March was a momentous time for Pakistan.

We joined in celebrating women worldwide for their economic, political and social achievements on International Women's Day.

For the first time in our national history, on March 16th, our elected civilian government completed a full five-year term and initiated the process for a peaceful transition of power.

We also celebrated Pakistan Day on March 23rd, to mark the 73rd anniversary of the adoption of the Lahore Resolution which led to the creation of Pakistan. On this day we commemorate the ideals upon which our country was founded – democracy, federalism, and constitutionalism.

The national history of Pakistan, often defined by its political change, has opened a new chapter. For this, we honor the heroes and martyrs who sacrificed greatly since the first Pakistan Day. We thank our friends overseas, for their support now and in the future, and we look forward to the growing ranks of women and girls who will take us farther still.

May peace be upon you,

Sherry Rehman

IN THIS ISSUE

2-3 Pakistan Day
4 Pakistan–U.S. Relations
5 Trade & Economy
5 Also Pakistan
6 Embassy Events & News
7 More From Pakistan Day

President Asif Ali Zardari and Former Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf shared their thoughts on Pakistan Day

Pakistan Day this year will go down in the history of the country as a memorable day when the democratically elected Parliament and the government completed, for the first time, its constitutionally mandated term. The nation is poised for a democratic transition. We will not permit anyone to trample on the democratic aspirations of the people as we work in the spirit of tolerance, mutual accommodation and respect for dissent. May Allah bless us in our efforts to prove ourselves worthy inheritors of the homeland and heritage bequeathed to us by our forefathers.

With the blessings of Allah the Almighty, today we are living in an independent, sovereign and democratic country. It is now our duty to put the country on the trajectory of development and prosperity. This is what the Father of the Nation envisaged. He wanted democracy to flourish in Pakistan and its fruits delivered to the people. We need to adhere to the Quaid’s message that he delivered to the nation on March 23, 1944: “Let us move forward in such a manner by equipping ourselves with hope that there is firm faith in our hearts, unity in ranks and discipline in our work. If it so happened, I am fully convinced of success to come our way.”

Election Commission Preparing for May Polls

The Election Commission, under chief commissioner Fakhruddin G. Ibrahim, is working diligently to ensure free and fair national elections. More than 10,000 candidates will have their financial and legal records vetted before being permitted to contest for the nearly 1,000 national and provincial positions. On May 11th, Pakistan’s 85 million registered voters will cast their ballots at one of the 80,000 polling stations being established.
EMBASSY CELEBRATES PAKISTAN DAY WITH FLAG HOISTING CEREMONY AND RECEPTION

DCM Dr. Asad Khan led a morning ceremony at the Embassy to commemorate the 73rd Pakistan Day. He hoisted the national flag and read aloud messages from President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf.
PRESIDENT ZARDARI HONORS AMBASSADOR REHMAN’S DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS WITH AWARD

President Asif Ali Zardari conferred Nishan-e-Imtiaz, the highest civilian honor, to Ambassador Rehman for her excellent and outstanding service to the country. Ambassador Rehman played a central role in restoring and improving the Pakistan-U.S. relationship since her appointment in early 2012.

AMBASSADOR SHERRY REHMAN ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

Too frequently the dialogue about women in Pakistan focuses exclusively on women as victims of social oppression. While women in Pakistan, and around the world, still have a long road to travel to achieve equality and the fundamental freedoms that should be bestowed on all people, we must not overlook the remarkable achievements that are happening around us. Over the last five years, our Parliament, of which a fifth were women, a proportion comparable to the U.S. Congress, was the most pro-women Pakistani Parliament since Independence. The government adopted landmark legislation on women’s rights, including addressing harassment at work, domestic violence, combating acid attacks and the establishment of an autonomous National Commission on the Status of Women.
U.S. TAKES PART IN JOINT MILITARY GAMES IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan hosted a four-day multinational exercise and seminar aimed at promoting peace and stability and countering terrorism and piracy in the Indian Ocean. The Aman-13/Peace-13 naval exercises off the coast of Karachi included ships from over 13 countries as well as the United States. These exercises offered a platform for information sharing and an opportunity to develop tactics against asymmetrical and traditional threats to boost interoperability between all navies working in the region.

NEW DATA RELEASED:

USG: PAKISTANIS A MAJOR IMMIGRANT GROUP

New data released by the U.S. Government indicates that Pakistanis formed one of the largest U.S. immigrant groups in 2012. Regularly ranking among the top 20 nations of origin, 11,150 Pakistani emigrants constituted 1.5 percent of the nearly one million people to become naturalized U.S. citizens. Nearly 15,000 other Pakistanis also became legal permanent residents in 2012.

U.S. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE DAVID PEARCE VISITS PAKISTAN

Acting U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan David D. Pearce visited Foreign Secretary Jalil Abbas Jilani and Pakistani Senators Mushahid Hussain and Afrasiab Khattak. Ambassador Pearce noted the importance of Pakistan’s support for the Afghan reconciliation process, including through the U.S.-Afghanistan-Pakistan Core Group. He confirmed the desire of the U.S. to continue this coordination in support of peace in Afghanistan to ensure a secure, stable, and prosperous region.
AMERICAN AND PAKISTANI SCIENTISTS COLLABORATE TO INCREASE PAKISTAN’S WHEAT HARVEST

Ongoing collaboration between American scientists and Pakistani wheat experts aims to increase Pakistan’s wheat harvest and farmers’ income. Through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Wheat Productivity Enhancement Project, a bi-national team of experts evaluated 60 wheat varieties planted in 115 wheat trials for disease-resistance in Pakistan’s unique ecosystem. The potential for significant economic and social impact is promising.

ALSO PAKISTAN

While the mainstream media often focuses on the problems Pakistan faces and the challenges confronted by our government and our society, there is a substantial amount of good news coming out of Pakistan.

The Embassy is pleased to share these stories of achievement with you as we redefine a narrative for Pakistan based on the values of equitable democratic and social entitlements, pluralism, rule of law and transparent governance.

FATA’S FIRST WOMAN FILES HER NOMINATION FOR PAKISTAN POLLS

Badam Zari submitted her nomination form and became the first female candidate from Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas to participate in national elections. The 2011 extension of Pakistan’s Political Parties Order of 2002 permitted her the right to contest. Zari said protecting women’s rights and providing basic civic facilities to them would be her priorities.

PAKISTANIS MAKE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM’S 2013 YOUNG GLOBAL LEADERS LIST

The 2013 Young Global Leaders list features 199 men and women under the age of 40 from 70 countries who have been recognized for their inspiring leadership, professional accomplishments, commitment to society and potential to contribute to shaping the future of the world. This year’s Pakistani honorees are Maryam Nawaz Sharif, a political figure of the Pakistan Muslim League - (Nawaz), Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, a film director who last year won an Oscar for her short documentary “Saving Face”, Athar Osama, the founder and chief executive officer of muslim-science.com and the Pakistan Innovation Foundation, and Shehrbano Taseer, a Newsweek journalist based in Pakistan.

PAKISTANIS HOLD SIX NEW GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

Pakistan’s talented youth continued the country’s recent rewrite of the Guinness World Records by setting six new marks at the Punjab Youth Festival in Lahore. An 11-member field hockey team broke the world record for passes in one minute. Mohammad Rashed of Karachi opened 40 bottle caps with his head in 60 seconds, and a team of badminton players more than tripled the previous record for passes, among others. In December last year, Pakistani youth set 11 new Guinness World Records.
VALI NASR PARTICIPATES IN EMBASSY “IDEAS FORUM”

Mr. Vali Nasr, Dean of the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, spoke with Embassy officers as part of the “Ideas Forum” – a series of exchanges with key foreign policy academics and think-tank personalities based in Washington. Mr. Nasr’s discussion, “The Arab Spring – Developments in the Middle East”, addressed structures of governance, economy, the lack of opportunities and the advent of youth and technology. Mr. Nasr noted how Pakistan’s democracy and open economy differed from countries in the Middle East but highlighted also Pakistan’s societal and economic challenges. He said the continuation of democracy was the best way to resolve Pakistan’s problems. Ambassador Rehman extended her gratitude for a candid and informative discussion and expressed her hope to continue cooperation between the Embassy and Johns Hopkins University.

DCM DR. ASAD KHAN ADDRESSED STUDENTS AT THE SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

DISTANCE LEARNING INITIATIVE MOVES FORWARD AT THE EMBASSY

At follow-up meetings to the Embassy’s roundtable discussion on distance learning in February, DCM Dr. Asad Khan met delegations from SocialMPresa, led by Ms. Nabeela Khattak, and Convergence Policy Group, led by Mr. Aakif Ahmed. The delegations discussed various proposals to advance Pakistan’s distance learning initiatives.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS VISITED THE EMBASSY

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE DELEGATION VISITS EMBASSY

A three member delegation from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) led by Asia Director Peter Manikas met with DCM Dr. Asad Khan to discuss NDI’s program for electoral assistance in Pakistan, including support for the Election Commission and capacity building of political parties. NDI will be sending a 50 member election observer mission to Pakistan to monitor the May 11 elections. Dr. Khan assured NDI of the Government’s full support in facilitating the observer mission. NDI appreciated the Government’s steps and stated that the 2013 elections are expected to be the most fair and most credible elections in Pakistan’s electoral history.

EMBASSY BRIEFS PAKISTANI JOURNALISTS DURING THEIR VISIT TO THE U.S.

Pakistani journalists participating in an East-West Center exchange program visited the Embassy. They met with DCM Dr. Asad Khan and discussed Pakistan-U.S. relations followed by a question and answer session.
In the evening, the Embassy welcomed guests from Washington, D.C. and the international community to celebrate Pakistan Day.
The Embassy of Pakistan welcomes your feedback. Please send your comments to newsletter@embassyofpakistanusa.org or visit www.embassyofpakistanusa.org