

Cultural similarities between Pakistan and Italy

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
SILVIA MARRARA,
FIRST SECRETARY EMBASSY OF ITALY

By Dure Najar Zaidi

Daily Times: For how long have you been in Pakistan and how is your experience in this region?

Silvia Marrara: I came to Pakistan first time on 8th December 2005, exactly two months after the terrible earthquake that struck Pakistan soil. Having been posted to Pakistan as a First Secretary, I was then looking for a residence. Afterwards, I officially landed in Pakistan, "the land of the pure", in January 2006 along with my husband. So it is four years that I have been living in this country.

It has been a really fruitful and particularly interesting experience for many reasons, but especially because I had a great chance to live four years of my life's course plunged in the atmosphere of a fermenting country, witnessing many changes in this country's history, from Musharraf time till the present, from the earthquake emergency till the present IDPs' crisis. At the end of the day,



SILVIA MARRARA



Being not a big Embassy, I had the possibility to follow in every single development taking place in the wide range of our bilateral relations. There is no event here, during my tenure, I was not informed of, involved in etc. The privileged contact with my ambassador and with the governmental structure of the country offered me a tremendous chance to be an active part of the events that I have already partially described

DT: How has the culture of Pakistan appealed you? Would

challenges do not represent for me more than a new challenge that I have to win.

in the same valley. As you know that it is more than 50 years that Italy is focus-

DT: Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT) in collaboration with Italian Development Council (IDC) will arrange an exhibition

people with much more easiness than the usual commercial formal channels. In these years the Embassy, especially under the guidance of the present Ambassador, has made a tremendous effort to balance the negative wave of fears discouraging the investors to create solid and reliable instruments to strengthen the bilateral commercial relations. It is not the first occasion we had to focus on sectors of common interest ranging from precious stones, to marble to furniture, leather, fashion, agro food, etc. ICE in Karachi, branch of the Italian Institute for Commerce and Trade has organised many business trip to Italy and visit of Italian entrepreneurs to Pakistan. Despite these channels, the Embassy is trying to develop a more structured net of business association, first step to be promoted after three years of productive activity International Chamber of commerce according to Italian laws. We are now thinking to organise an event on energy in Karachi (due to the presence of few but consistent Italian enterprises there), another in the health sector (developing a deeper cooperation in the health and pharmaceutical industry), especially vaccine production and val-

DT: Italy has agreed to an immigration quota for Pakistanis at 2000 per year. Are there many immigrants from Pakistan to Italy?

SM: Being also in charge of the Consular and visa section, I have experienced a tremendous increase in the migration flow of Pakistani citizens to Italy. One figure is quite evident. From the approximately 6000 visas issued and 2006 we have already reached more than 20,000 cases, most of them family reunion and work permit cases, clear signal of an expanding community, very well established in Italy, and mostly concentrated in Lombardy, Toscana, Veneto, Bolzano, Emilia, Lazio, and some part of the south. This is a further way to strengthen our bilateral relations through integration of culture, traditions and reciprocal understanding. Italy has become a country of immigration although we have been for a long period of time a country of emigrants all over the world. Nowadays Pakistani people have developed their own activities in Italy and some Italian trade union are now opening offices in Pakistan to promote vocational training and activities to link up the two communities.

about having enjoyed and various moments (as also the birth of my lovely child Sabrina one year ago) as well as difficult times (deteriorating security situation). For sure, I have learnt a lot. Pakistan changed me in a certain sense and has gifted me with a new part of myself. With which I now observe the region from within. I travelled a lot in these 4 years and for many reasons I have been feeling at home. For my little daughter home is Pakistan. For my family Pakistan will have a special place in our memories.

activities and contributions in recent years?
SM: As I mentioned earlier, I feel here as if I am at home. There are many cultural similarities that make Italy, especially my hometown, Reggio Calabria, so close to Pakistan. The sense of hospitality, the sense of honor, the strong family links, the chaotic and at the same time phlegmatic way of facing life, etc. all resemble to rituals of my hometown. I am a courageous woman from the South of Italy, therefore difficulties and

confrontations to Swat and neighbouring areas, from the earliest traces of human settlement to our time. I have seen the excavation sites, I have climbed up the mountains walking through the fields of many farmers who were stopping me offering "chamari" and water to refresh accompanied by children who were taking their sheep to the grazing ground. We have been fishing on Swat river and I have been fishing by a post that speaks by itself. But it is not only the Italian mission that is working on the cultural and archaeological side. In close cooperation with

Italy's early next year, understanding the potential of textile, gem, semi-precious stone and marble industry. Do you think it would play a part in further strengthening of Trade relations between the two countries?
SM: Of course. We do believe that such activities and initiatives carried out by private business association of Italian and Pakistani entrepreneurs will build a deeper net of links between the two countries, reaching sectors and involving

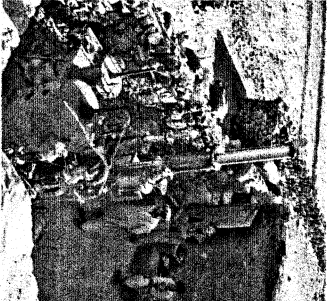
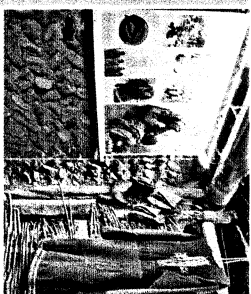
DT: Pakistan's relations with Italy have multiple dimensions, ranging from economic ties to cultural exchanges. How do you perceive your role in these bilateral relations?
SM: Being not a big Embassy, I had the

traumatic starting with the Earthquake in 2005. What was been Italy's role and approach to the various crises?
SM: I remember very well the earthquake aftermath and as soon as I arrived the Italian Government had already sent some humanitarian flights to address the immediate needs of the affected population. In addition to the funding to the UN agencies involved.

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EV-K2-CNR Committee activities in Pakistan



In 1987 Professor Ardito Desio and mountaineer Agostino Da Polenza, in collaboration with the Italian National Research Council, launched an initiative for the scientific re-measurement of Mount Everest and K2. After two years of activities, in 1989, the Ev-K2-CNR Committee, an autonomous non-profit association, was founded in accordance with Italian Republic Law.

Ev-K2-CNR conducts and promotes scientific research in the fields of Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Medicine and Physiology, and

Anthropology, and is involved in the development of new technologies in these fields. Ev-K2-CNR focuses its work in mountainous regions with a particular interest in the Hindu Kush - Karakoram - Himalaya (HKH) extending across parts of Nepal, Pakistan, China (Tibet Autonomous Region), India and Bhutan. Ev-K2-CNR is best known for its Pyramid Laboratory/Observatory located at 5,050 meters a.s.l. in Nepal at the base of Mount Everest.

Currently, Ev-K2-CNR's work is organized via broad-scale integrated multi-disciplinary programs aimed at supporting the resolution of urgent environmental and development issues by identifying solutions that involve technologies and mechanisms well adapted to mountain ecosystems and livelihoods. Its primary mission is the provision of specialized scientific support for sustainable development in high altitude areas, promoting environmental conservation and better quality of life for local populations. The stimulus for cooperation with Pakistan was put into practice after a long history of friendship between Italy and Gilgit and Baltistan Region. Dozens of scientific-mountaining missions to these mountains were organized and culminated in 1991, in the formulation of a proposal for ecosystem conservation by Prof. Desio.

The preparations for the first Ev-K2-CNR integrated project in Pakistan, Karakoram Trust were made during 2002-2003, the International Year of Mountains, an important catalyst for most of the current development cooperation projects valuing and safeguarding mountain ecosystems. In 2004 Pakistan and Italy jointly celebrated the K2 Jubilee, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the ascent of K2. Italy organized a mountaineering and scientific expedition, "K2 2004", coordinated by Ev-K2-CNR. Numerous institutional meetings have followed, involving members of the Italian Parliament and their Pakistani counterparts, culminating in a meeting between President Musharraf and the Italian Minister of Agriculture. Actually the Ev-K2-CNR Committee has been carrying out in Pakistan several research activities with the framework of different integrated projects like Karakoram TRUST - phases II, HKH Partnership, SHARE and the last one SEED Project.

These projects aim to guarantee a social economical and environmental development to the Northern Areas of Pakistan. Starting from the analysis of the local community real needs as well of the potential of the environmental resources and through the scientific research, the Ev-K2-CNR projects want to realize a real sustainable development and a long term stabilization of these territories.

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Italy and archaeology in Pakistan

More than 50 years of continuous presence in the Swat Valley, tracing the origin of a culture

Recently the valley of Swat was brought to public attention because of the presence of an organized insurgency, because of the military operation, and of a huge humanitarian emergency. But it is not always so. An Italian cultural presence has been active there, in a peaceful and friendly environment, for over 50 years mainly in the field of archaeological studies, history and anthropology.

Swat, or Udyutana as it is called in the Sanskrit sources, is a valley in the mountainous region to the north of the Peshawar Plain, at the foot of the mountain range connecting the Hindu Kush with Karakoram. The valley, conquered by Alexander the Great in 327 B.C., and over the following centuries by the Indo-Greek, Saka, Parthian, Kushan, Sassanid and Hephthalite kings, was a prosperous region. It constituted a trading area between the plains of Gandhara and the mountains of the Northern Areas looking towards Central Asia, and at the same time a great centre of Buddhist culture with an ample scattering of Buddhist monasteries, representing an important support on the way to the holy places of Buddhism, traversed by numerous Chinese pilgrims, thus becoming a place of transit not only for goods but also ideas. It was in fact from this region that Pashanabhadra, the moving force of Tibetan Buddhism, set out in the 8th century, and it was indeed the suggestive accounts of this, fully intact of Buddhism contained in the Tibetan texts that brought Giuseppe Tucci in the Swat Valley in 1953.

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The Italian cultural and archaeological activity in Pakistan dates back to more than 50 years ago. A mission of the Italian Institute of research ISIAO (former IAIIEO), in close cooperation with the Pakistani Department of Archaeology, is working on some projects: excavations and conservation at Birkot (fortified urban settlement 2nd BC-5th CE and Turk/Finian Shahi top hill structures 7th-11th CE), Udegam

mosque (11th-12th CE), documentation of rock art (painted shelters and carved sites 13th BC-10th CE), Archaeological Map of the Swat Valley project, ethnographic studies/documentation of the wood- and Buddhist architecture, documentation/excavation of the prehistoric-protohistoric phases, documentation/excavation of the Turk/Hindu Shahi phases.

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The Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan has been continuously active in Swat since 1956, under the successive guidance of Domenico Faccenna (1956-1993), Maurizio Taddei (1993-2000), Ferraruccio Calletti (2000) and Luca M. Olivetti (joint director from 2009).

Mission's work is focussed on the reconstruction of the life and environment of Swat and the neighbouring areas. From the earliest traces of human settlement to our own times. With a first-fiduciousness that anticipated what was to become common practice only in the last twenty years: the perspective of the research given by the great archaeologist D. Faccenna (2008) was not only historical and archaeological, but also anthropological and environmental, paying attention to every aspect, including conservation of the monuments. In fact, collaboration between archaeologists, anthropologists, archaeozoologists, philologists, geologists, geophysicists, palaeontologists, historians and restorers has effectively characterized the work of the Mission from the very outset as an essential aspect of investigating methodology, ensuring a degree of excellence recognized by the entire scientific community and marked by about 400 publications. The work carried out has been made possible thanks to whole-hearted and deeply attentive collaboration with the Department of Archaeology and Museums. Government of Pakistan, which has accorded the Italian Mission its unwavering confidence and support.

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You wouldn't tell that Agostino da Polenza reached the top of K2, he is the only man who also slept there one night, is a short man and if you observe him carefully, you can recognize that he has a stout physical structure even now that he is beyond the age of 50. We are both from the same part of Italy. He is from Bergamo and I am from Brescia. The two towns are very close to Milano but not too far from the Alps. Everybody in Bergamo and Brescia has some memory of a vacation on the Alps. There is complicity between those who know the pleasure of silence and walking among the trees. Then of course you have the majority, and I am among them who wouldn't dare going beyond the easy roads. But you have also the few, like Agostino da Polenza, who are tougher and go far the peaks. This is something I always admired. This is frankly beyond my capability and of the majority of us. The few who want to reach the top of the mountains, know that they can risk their lives but develop special excitement by doing so. These few supermen were not happy only with the peaks of the Alps which are at most 4000 meters high but are willing to confront themselves with the peaks of Himalayas which are even more than 8000 meters high. This year we celebrate one century of adventure. In 1909 we had the expedition of an Italian team to the K2. The team was guided by a member of the Italian Royal Family, II Duca degli Abruzzi. What makes the adventure even more important is the fact that in the team of Duca degli Abruzzi, there was a great photographer, Vittorio Sella. Very soon, on the initiative of Agostino da Polenza and of the Italian Embassy in Islamabad, there will be an exhibition of marvelous photos of the K2 taken by Vittorio Sella. They are black & white but still have the flavor of a great challenge that is undertaken with joy and surprise. The mountains of the K2 are really one of the big wonders in the world and a pride for Pakistan, but also a matter of affection for those foreigners who love mountains. I always thought that the special affection of Italians for K2 is one of the strong foundations of the friendship between Italy and Pakistan because it goes deeper than political considerations and economic advantages. Even if friendship is made basically of intangibles like our affection for K2, to be honest, the relationship between Italy and Pakistan developed in many fields and involved political evaluations and economic considerations. I am very happy that Silvia Marzari can speak in another article about some of our main projects of cooperation. Silvia has been in Pakistan for four years with her husband Fabrizio and they got their daughter, Sabrina, here, who is one and half years old now. I consider myself lucky, as an Ambassador, to have had in Pakistan such a good close collaborator. Silvia has the solar beauty of a woman from the South of Italy and has a sense of duty of a very good diplomat. She has been an important part of the success of our projects in last few years, but apart from the sense of duty and professional competence, also in her case the friendship for Pakistan stems from a deeper source. Silvia is from Reggio Calabria and likes to say that she is a Pakistan from Italy. In Italy and particularly in some regions of the South like Reggio Calabria, we deeply share the same family values and sense of honor that we associate with the Pakistan people and generally with Pakistanis. Now Silvia is posted to Damascus, so we tell her on behalf of many Pakistani friends,

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Buongiorno Silvia!

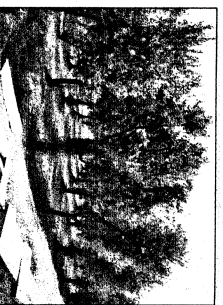
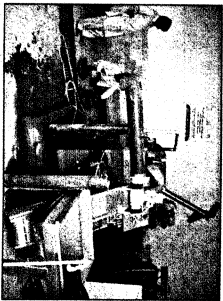
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Olive oil in Pakistan

The possibility of a sustainable olive oil business in Pakistan is nowadays a reality. The Italian funded initiative "Production and commercialization of olive oil in Pakistan" jointly implemented by IAO (Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare) and PODB (Pakistan Oilseed Development Board), has paved the road for future large investments in this sector, aimed at satisfying the growing home demand for this product.

An area as large as 800,000 hectares was found perfectly suitable for this crop, as shown by a comprehensive land suitability



study, mainly in NWFP and Balochistan. A wide range of training courses was also provided to students and farmers as well as a new two-phase continuous oil extraction unit together with storage, bottling and labeling facilities established in Tarnab at AKI (Agriculture Research Institute) and recently handed over to PODB.

The Italian government will further support the promotion of the cultivation and production of olive oil in Pakistan also through new initiatives such as a regional project, aimed at further supporting the main stakeholder involved in various initiatives or in technical assistance in three countries: Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan.

More details are made available through the dedicated website www.oliveoilpakistan.com

A century-long friendship in the shadow of K2

From Duke of Abruzzi to Ev-K2 Cnr Committee Photo exhibition and a Mountain Film festival to celebrate 100 years of collaboration between Pakistan and Italy



Minister Fratini, a man who knows his mountains, is right: Italy and Pakistan have a special relationship, one extending beyond frontiers and identified by a symbol: K2, the mountains of the Italians. Since Ardito Desio led his mountaineering expedition to scale the world's second highest and, certainly, most dangerous summit, the friendship with Italy has been continually strengthened.

The commencement as scientific collaboration, has now extended to socio-economic and, from now on, even the work of mountaineers in the valley floors.

It was an adventurous, daring challenge he faced. And K2 respected him. However, the Duke's men did go on to break the mountaineering height record of the time, when they scaled Chogolisa. To celebrate those times and the hundred years of friendship between the two countries, the Ev-K2Cnr Committee and the Pakistan government have organized a series of special events to be held on 14, 15 and 16 December 2009. On those days, in Islamabad, at the National Art Gallery will be given sample space in the first part of the newspaper. A hundred years on, in the Duke's footsteps on the Karakoram expedition, is the title of a collection that captures the epic feats and details of Italian exploration in the early 1900s. The exhibition will be inaugurated at 5.15 pm by Pakistani and Italian dignitaries. Afterwards, they will move to an Auditorium open to the public, where they will be presenting the two countries' joint cooperation initiatives, in particular, the Seed project for sustainable development in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. The schedule includes speeches by Austrian, Pakistani and

Cultural similarities between Pakistan and Italy

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Moreover, we have always tried to implement initiatives which not only focus on the relief aspect of the crises but also target the resuscitation of the socio-economic activities in the hit areas to provide the population with new tools to go back to the ordinary life. We have therefore approved an emergency initiative in 2006 (we have signed the MoU in November 2006 and the renewal this July 2009) still ongoing in its second phase, which on one hand results in close cooperation with BRRA, some schools and libraries, on the other it provided some training in very remote areas of NWFP, relying on the experience and cooperation of our Italian NGOs, like ISCOS, ALISEI, INTERSONS, CESVI. Some of them have a long history in this country, being here since 1999. They enjoy a great support from the local communities and this is one of the reasons why we were able to go to places of difficult accessibility with certain easiness. They have helped us in establishing fully equipped camp hospitals we donated to the local authorities and have also cooperated with the UN agencies receiving Italian funds for these emergencies. Nowadays the initiative which was started in 2006 has shifted from NWFP (Mandera, Balakot, Ghazni) to AJK and Bawal district, where three NGOs are now working implementing some more projects in the area.

amounting at more than 80 million Euros is also addressing poverty with a similar focus in terms of stabilisation effects. Other activities are currently under implementation in the rural development, private sector support and environment protection sectors.

DI: What is the general approach of the Italian development cooperation in Pakistan?

SM: As it has been underlined in the Blue Book, "Italy has been devoting increasing attention to Pakistan for the last 2-3 years. Italian Development Cooperation strategy in the Country has been therefore reviewed to address poverty reduction and development efforts as necessary step to reinforce the Pakistani democratic process and improve security conditions in the Country with positive regional implications. Such a comprehensive strategy aims to better integrate and support the efforts of the International Community for the economic development and the political stabilisation of the South Asia Region. Being socio-economic development and security strictly interconnected, particularly in Pakistan and Afghanistan, it has also been agreed that intervention strategies shall better consider broader regional issues, which require specific attention. In this perspective, as G8

Presidency, Italy dedicated the Ministerial outreach session in Trieste last June to specific issues and areas of cooperation (border management/countering illicit trafficking, economic and social development, rural development and enhancement of human capital) that are all inter-related and are somehow part of a comprehensive strategy that seems now to be widely shared and more readily than in the past to be implemented. Considering the above Italy moved from its traditional single-Country approach towards a broader framework that includes the regional dimension. Therefore, in addition to the large intervention Programme in Afghanistan and Pakistan, new interventions have been recently identified and existing initiatives have been reoriented according to the new regional dimension of the Italian approach to South Asia."

DI: Any specific message would you like to give to the people of Pakistan?

SM: I feel double hearted. I am happy to start a new journey and a new adventure somewhere else, but at the same time I am sad because I feel like I am leaving a family, a place which has for sure a special place in my life. I came here surrounded by some clouds but I will leave with an image of a very warm and sunny day. There is always the dawn after the sunset. ■

Ev-K2-CNR Committee activities in Pakistan

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represented by the collaboration that Ev-K2-CNR has

The Italian debt for development swap initiative

An innovative way of developing bilateral ties consisting of swapping the debt owed by Pakistan to Italy into development projects in social sec-

Desai's legacy. But to tell the truth, cooperation between Italy and Pakistan, while evolving over time, has even earlier origins, dating back to the early 1900s, when the Duke of Abruzzi arrived in the area to explore the mysterious valleys of Karakorum, and was literally

by the official inauguration of the Pakistan Alpine Club, there will be a showing of the first three films of the Pakistan Mountain Film Festival: Nazir Sabir's "To the Ends of Himalayas", Donagh Coleman's "Stone pastures", and Manzoor Hussain's "Meeting the Pajju Challenge". ■

series of exhibitions, festivals and much else, will be sealing the bond between the two countries, one which has endured for a century. The first day of events will see the inauguration of the photograph-ic exhibition devoted to the Duke of Abruzzi, to whom we have

the official inauguration of the Pakistan Alpine Club, there will be a showing of the first three films of the Pakistan Mountain Film Festival: Nazir Sabir's "To the Ends of Himalayas", Donagh Coleman's "Stone pastures", and Manzoor Hussain's "Meeting the Pajju Challenge". ■

so far include:

- Direct involvement in CNRP implementation by local authorities
- Cleanup, training and awareness raising on eco-sustainable tourism in the Baloro Valley
- Publication of a baseline socio-economic survey report for the Upper Baloro Valley
- Training courses on health and hygiene, gender sensitization, forest and fruit management, live-stock management and adult literacy
- 40,000 forest and fruit saplings planted in the Baloro Valley
- Irrigation channels and link roads created
- Plans to preserve historical architecture and cultural heritage (Askole House Museum)
- Creation of a center for analyzing processing and distributing local gemstones and training of Pakistani gemologists in Italy (GARNET project)
- Improvement of the Italian K2 Museum in Sardinia (donation of materials and creation of public internet point)
- Waste management ("eco-island" and EARTH ecological increment)
- Thematic map of CNRP
- Training course for trekking guides and for high altitude crew

The programmes are clearly ambitious and Ev-K2-CNR fully realized the need to achieve the expected results through activation of a synergistic process involving all forces working in the region. More than 50 local and international stakeholders and institutions such as the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of KANA, the Pakistan Forest Department, the Pakistan Meteorological Department, WWF Pakistan, Pakistan Alpine Club, Aga Khan Foundation, UNEP, IUCN, CIMOD etc. have been involved in implementing partners. One of the greatest examples of such synergies is

thus the source of the next entrepreneurial, cultural and political establishment. These future generations will be the heirs of the current cooperation programmes and will need to take full responsibility for local management.

In the framework of this collaboration, is born the new project called SEED (Social, Economic and Environmental Development in the CNRP Region) for which more than 90 people will be employed among researchers, technicians, local operators, entrepreneurs and 20 PhDs will be started. SEED concerns more than 200,000 people living in the Gilgit and Baltistan region.

The SEED Project, realized in the framework of Pakistan-Italian debt for development SWAP agreement, for years to come, will be the most important and holistic project supporting socio-economic development of Gilgit-Baltistan Region of Pakistan.

With new nerve, SEED will take forward conservation efforts initiated by different organizations and governmental departments during the past two decades, and realize the Central Karakorum National Park, encompassing K2, Rakaposhi, the Baltoro, Hispar and Biafo Glaciers. The SEED project allows Ev-K2-CNR to realize a great vision. For the past 20 years, Ev-K2-CNR has been supporting Gilgit-Baltistan with scientific expertise, through community development, improvement of the tourism sector, conservation of cultural heritage and facilitation of small businesses in collaboration with many partner organizations and departments from Italy, Pakistan and Gilgit-Baltistan itself. Finally, Ev-K2-CNR has been given the opportunity to catalyze these experiences in different sectors and extensive networks in a holistic large-scale project that will make a real difference on the ground, for local people, visitors to the area, the economy, but also for the areas' wildlife and the conservation of its unique beauty of global relevance. ■

initiated in 2000. Six projects are already being implemented in different parts of the country. The overall package worth about US\$ 100 million will enable public sectors and NGOs to provide a substantial impact on the less developed areas, including an immediate recovery of the livelihood in Mahabud division. The planning and implementation mechanism privileges readiness, flexibility and a co-sharing decision process that may pave the way for future adoption of the debt-for-development swap by the international donor community at large.

Given the importance of the endeavour, Italy has selected to entrust the direction of the programme, shared with a Pakistani national, to a sympathizer of the Country, Dr Marco Marzetti, who is back on his third term. In the eighties, he was the founder of the renowned crop maximization programme along with FAO, and in the nineties pushed the environmental rehabilitation in NWFP and Punjab to achieve impressive and sustainable results. Therefore, it is expected that his longstanding professional experience, enriched by his knowledge of Pakistan reality and people, will represent an additional asset that could greatly contribute to the success of the debt-for-development swap initiative. ■



The Ev-K2-CNR Committee and the Italian Embassy Present

The Joint Pakistani-Italian celebration for the 100 Years of the Expedition of Prince Luigi Amedeo of Savoia to Karakorum

14-15-16 DECEMBER, 2009 – Islamabad

Three days of events celebrating the long and historical collaboration and friendship between Pakistan and Italy

National Art Gallery F-5/1, Islamabad

Monday, December 14, 2009

5.00 pm Formal inauguration of the photo exhibit: "Valleys of Memory. 100 years after the route of Duke of Abruzzi expedition to Karakorum"

5.45 pm - AUDITORIUM: Official opening of "PAKISTAN MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL" and SEED Project Presentation" by Ev-K2-CNR Committee and Karakorum International University

6.30 pm Showing of the documentary film "Q2: A Journey to K2 - The Italian mountain. Ev-K2-CNR activities in the Northern Areas of Pakistan" produced by the Ev-K2-CNR Committee in collaboration with The Ev-K2-CNR Committee

Tuesday, December 15, 2009

5.00 pm Formal inauguration of the exhibit: "Valleys of Memory. Ancient people sites and images from Swat" by IIAO - Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente in collaboration with Department of Archaeology & Museums, Ministry of Culture, Government of Pakistan

5.30 pm "PAKISTAN MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL" in collaboration with Cervino Film Festival and Alpine Club of Pakistan

Movie shows:
"To the Ends of Himalayas" by Nazir Sabir
"Stone pastures" by Donagh Coleman
"Meeting the Pajju Challenge" by Manzoor Hussain

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

5.30 pm "PAKISTAN MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL" in collaboration with Cervino Film Festival and Alpine Club of Pakistan

Movie shows:
"Quiet moment coal intens" by Carlo Rossi
"Everest When Against Nature" by Asad Qureshi
"Ten, a cameraman's tale" by Guido Perrelli

The exhibitions will remain open from December 15th 2009 to January 31st 2010



A well deserved award

Brig (R) Muhammad Akram Khan has recently and deservedly been awarded a Knighthood by the Republic of Italy.

Brig (R) Muhammad Akram Khan was born in 1941 and commissioned in the Punjab Regiment of the Pakistan Army in 1963. During his training, he specialised in mountain and snow warfare. He was a combat young infantry officer in the wars of 1965 and 1971. In the latter conflict, he was fatally wounded in the abdomen by machine gun fire and treated at Indian military hospitals for almost a year. Upon his return to Pakistan, he was awarded a golden ribbon for his severe injury. He also received the Tamgha-e-Basalat and Sitara-e-Basalat - both gallantry awards for act of bravery and outstanding performance in 1987 and 1990 respectively. After his retirement from the Army, in 1993, he served in Fauji Fertilizer Limited as Company Secretary until 2002. He has been a Resident Representative for the Dawood Group since then and lives in his home in Rawalpindi with his wife and youngest daughter. His eldest daughter is married while his middle daughter passed away in a tragic car

accident in 2002.

In spite of personal and national upheavals that he has experienced in his 50-year civil and military career, Brig Akram Khan remained steadfast and has lived a full, exciting and meaningful life. This is particularly true because throughout his life his motives have been nothing but altruistic. It is difficult to describe, or even list, every detail of his military and civil achievements, particularly in the field of emergency rescue, search, and recovery. He has been a benefactor to a wide variety of institutions and individuals - from the highest ranking officials and privileged people to the lowest ranking servicemen and ordinary citizens.

While in the military, for example, he led a rescue operation in the winter of 1985 to the village of Phunin in the Western Himalayas. The entire village had been buried in an avalanche. In July 1987, he led another team to recover the bodies of two climbers who were lost at 22,500 ft while attempting Gasherbrum I. In April 1988, he led the rescue and recovery operations when an ammunition dump exploded in Rawalpindi. With the help of a dog, whom he had trained himself, he was able to recover several bottles buried deep under the debris. In

1988, he facilitated the establishment of an outpost in the Shachan area. In addition, he was a major resource for the most demanding trekking and mountaineering expeditions throughout the 1980s. He led winter crossings of Babusar Pass (1981) and Deosai Plains by dog sledges (1987) as well as led successful expeditions to Broad Peak (8047m), Gasherbrum II (8035m), and Nanga Parbat (8126m) in 1985, 1986, and 1989 respectively. In 1990-91, he accompanied some scientists to Antarctica and supervised all logistics including construction of facilities for accommodation, laboratories and weather station.

His zest for the outdoors, and for making life easier for others who love the outdoors, did not abate upon his retirement. He is currently the president of adventure foundation, a non-profit organisation committed to developing the spirit of the outdoors among children and youth of the country. In 1994-97, he assisted the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in its save the brown bear project in the northern areas of Pakistan. After the earthquake of 2005, he was intimately involved in the delivery of relief goods to inaccessible areas for a period of two years. He also supervised the reconstruction of a collapsed high school building on

the Neelum river in Muzaffargarh. In 2008 and 2009, he organised a two-weeks Mountain Conservation Children's Meet in the forests of Hazara and Kaghan. During 2009, he has been actively involved in relief efforts for the Internally Displaced Persons from Swat and Buner.

As representative of Honorary Consulate of Italy at Lahore, Brig Akram has performed superbly well in all assignments given to him by the Consulate. It was due to his untiring logistic efforts and support that the Italian mobile children hospital was established within 72 hours of its arrival in Pakistan after occurrence of 2005 devastating earthquake. He was also instrumental in locating body of Alberto Bonatti who had been buried on the collapsing of Margalla Tower. He played a very vital role in the expeditious construction of Bagh College by the Italian Cooperation Programme. His efforts are remarkable in reaching out to the Italian climbers wherever there is an accident on the high mountains. His efficient handling of the situations and retrieval of the severely injured has managed to save the lives of a number of injured persons. The best part is that he does everything unassumingly and without a fanfare. The ambassador and all the embassy staff have found him to be highly dependable and extremely trustworthy. In short, Brig Akram has lived a life of great variety and excitement and yet has managed to live it for others. ■