



AKDN

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

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Special Edition

Prince Rahim Aga Khan awarded Pakistan's highest civilian honour



The President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mr. Asif Ali Zardari conferred the highest civilian award, Nishan-e-Pakistan on Prince Rahim Aga Khan.

6 June 2024: In early June, Prince Rahim visited Pakistan on a five-day visit to review the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) projects in renewable energy, microfinance, tourism, and information technology. As the Chair of the Executive Committee of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) and Chair of the AKDN Environment and Climate Committee, he met with AKDN leaders, communities and the government officials, including President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, the Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan, Syed Mehdi Shah, the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, and the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, Gulbar Khan, to discuss matters of mutual interest and the work of AKDN in the country. AKDN through its integrated long-term development has been a major civil society organisation in Pakistan, significantly impacting the country's economic and social development. On June 6th, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Asif Ali Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, conferred the highest civilian award, Nishan-e-Pakistan, on Prince Rahim for his exemplary services to the country. The award recognises individuals who have rendered services of the highest distinction to Pakistan.

Noting Prince Rahim's role as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development and Chair of the Aga Khan

Development Network's Environment and Climate Committee, the award citation stated: "Prince Rahim Aga Khan, through his many leadership roles within the Aga Khan Development Network, has, for more than a quarter century, dedicated his untiring efforts to improving the quality of life of peoples in resource-constrained regions of Asia and Africa...His personal engagement in assuring that initiatives impacting the economic, health, educational and cultural well-being of poor and marginalised communities respond to evolving and contemporary needs, upholds a multigenerational legacy that traces its origins, in Pakistan, to the founding of the nation."

Upon receiving the Nishan-e-Pakistan, Prince Rahim said: "I am honoured to accept such a distinguished award on behalf of the Aga Khan Development Network, my colleagues, our staff, and the many volunteers who work tirelessly to improve the lives of the people of Pakistan. I express my warmest gratitude to the President and Government of Pakistan for this immense recognition." His Highness the Aga Khan, founder and Chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network, received this award in 1983 for his social and economic welfare activities in Pakistan, in the Muslim Ummah as a whole, and in the developing world. Past recipients include other world leaders, such as Nelson Mandela and Queen Elizabeth II.

Prince Rahim Aga Khan inaugurated new Software Technology Park, Nasirabad, Hunza



8 June 2024: Through a partnership between the Special Communications Organization (SCO) and the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (AKF, P), the new Software Technology Park in Nasirabad, Hunza will support the sustainable development of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) by providing uninterrupted power supply, high-speed internet, and a co-working space for small and growing start-ups, freelancers, and chambers of commerce. The Software Technology Park will act as the central resource for a hub and spokes model linking other IT facilities in more remote areas of the region. This will enhance access to distance learning, entrepreneurship and career counselling, and digital skills development, while catalysing freelance business opportunities. Present on the occasion were the Director General of the Special Communications Organization, Major General Umar Ahmad Shah; the Director of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development and Chairman of Habib Bank Limited, Mr Sultan Ali Allana; the President of the Ismaili Council for Pakistan, Mr Nizar Mewawalla; and the Chief Executive Officer of AKF, P, Mr Akhtar Iqbal. Chairman Sultan Ali Allana expressed his optimism that the new Software Technology Park will strengthen the economy of the region: “The users of this new facility will be reliably connected to businesses in Pakistan and around the world.

This will provide a range of opportunities nationally and internationally, foster innovation, facilitate the creation of new business networks, and drive economic growth in the region.” Major General Umar Ahmad Shah thanked the Aga Khan Development Network and remarked, “SCO Vision 2025 focuses on youth empowerment through the provision of a sustained IT environment. We are committed to rapidly expanding IT and Free-Lancing Hubs (FLHs) across Azad Jammu and Kashmir as well as Gilgit Baltistan. The initiative harnesses the potential of our youth, creates job opportunities, and brings in foreign remittances. The transformed IT landscape is helping the socio-economic uplift of the region as youth are actively contributing to the overall development and prosperity of these areas.”

Speaking about the importance of the initiative, the CEO of AKF Pakistan noted, “Gilgit Baltistan has great potential to become a hub for software companies in Pakistan. With access to high-speed internet, 24-hour electricity supply, co-working spaces, and an attractive geographical location, it will attract national and international tech companies and digital nomads who can have a significant beneficial impact on the economy of the country.”

Launch of the development of Duiker Phase II and Nasirabad Solar Power Plants in Hunza, Gilgit-Baltistan



Prince Rahim Aga Khan unveils the plaque commemorating the start of the development of Duiker Phase II and Nasirabad Solar Energy Plants.

8 June 2024: Prince Rahim Aga Khan visited Hunza district in Gilgit-Baltistan to launch the development of Duiker Phase II and Nasirabad Solar Power Plants with a total capacity of 3.6 MWp. Phase I of Duiker Solar Power Plant, which has a generation capacity of 1MWp and 0.6MWh battery storage, commenced operations in November 2023, increasing the daily power availability for more than 11,000 people, from 10 to 17 hours in summer and from 4 to 9 hours in winter. When commissioned in November 2024, Duiker Phase II will expand generation capacity from 1MWp to 1.6MWp, and battery storage from 0.6MWh to 1MWh, providing increased electricity to an additional 8,760 people. Crucially, Duiker replaces diesel power generation, leading to an annual reduction of 1,100 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent. A 2MWp Solar Power Plant with 1MWh battery storage will also be constructed in Nasirabad in lower Hunza. This will supply power to an additional 23,400 people. The Nasirabad Solar Power

Plant is expected to be commissioned in June 2025. NPAK Energy Limited, a subsidiary of Industrial Promotion Services (IPS), the industrial and infrastructure development arm of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED), is investing \$6m in these projects. An additional \$14m has been secured from development partners for the enhancement of the region's energy infrastructure. Over the next five years, NPAK Energy will mobilise additional investments in clean, sustainable sources of electricity across Hunza and surrounding areas, addressing the region's acute energy deficit while contributing to global efforts to mitigate climate change. The company is committed to improving public service delivery by creating a sustainable, self-reliant utility operation that catalyses economic opportunities and job creation, and models an innovative and efficient public-private partnership that contributes to sustainable development.

Prince Rahim Aga Khan inaugurated HBL MfB's RHQ Gilgit-Baltistan: A Commitment to Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship



Prince Rahim Aga Khan inaugurating the HBL-MfB Regional Headquarters for Gilgit-Baltistan.

9 June 2024: Prince Rahim Aga Khan attended the inauguration ceremony of the HBL Microfinance Bank (HBL MfB) new Regional Headquarters for Gilgit Baltistan. The ceremony held in Gilgit was attended by Chair of the Executive Committee of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED); Mr. Sultan Ali Allana, Chairman, HBL; Mr. Muhammad Nassir Salim, President & CEO, HBL; Mr. Rayomond Kotwal, Chairman, HBL MfB; and Mr. Amir Khan, President & CEO, HBL MfB. The building underlines the Bank's commitment to sustainability, innovation, and local community development. A blend of modern architecture and local cultural elements, the building meets some of the highest international standards of green construction. It has earned the LEED Gold certification and EDGE advanced certification, one of the first buildings in the country to achieve this. The building is well equipped to produce 40 percent of the overall electricity required for its day-to-day functions. "The inauguration of HBL Microfinance Bank's Regional Headquarters Gilgit-Baltistan is a remarkable milestone for both the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the Bank," said Prince Rahim Aga Khan. "It is a major step towards AKDN's goal of achieving Net-Zero by 2030. As we continue our journey to a better and more sustainable future, this building serves as a symbol of continued progress, sustainability, and prosperity for the people

of Gilgit-Baltistan." Mr. Rayomond Kotwal, Chairman HBL MfB, remarked, "The inauguration of our Regional Headquarters, Gilgit Baltistan is a testament to our commitment to sustainable development and the well-being of the communities we serve. Gilgit holds a special place in the journey of HBL Microfinance Bank, as we started here more than two decades ago. This building is a symbol of our dedication to fostering economic growth while preserving the region's environment. By integrating sustainable practices with local culture, HBL Microfinance Bank has set a new benchmark in environmental stewardship and corporate responsibility. We take pride in contributing to the development of the Gilgit Baltistan region and look forward to continuing our support for all Pakistanis." Mr. Amir Khan, President & CEO HBL MfB, added, "The flagship Regional Headquarters Gilgit Baltistan exemplifies the strength, stability, and resilience of Pakistan's best microfinance bank. The Regional Headquarters not only boosts our operational capabilities but also represents progress and hope for the Gilgit Baltistan region. Throughout the project, particular attention was paid towards the area, which is why 27 percent of the total project cost was allocated to boost the local economy, through the onboarding of regional suppliers and the creation of employment opportunities."

Prince Rahim Aga Khan meets with the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif



Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif along with Ministers meeting with Prince Rahim Aga Khan and senior AKDN leaders.

10 June 2024: On the final day of his visit to Pakistan, Prince Rahim Aga Khan met with the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, at his official residence in Islamabad. Welcoming him, the Prime Minister thanked Prince Rahim for the work that AKDN is doing for the wellbeing of the people of Pakistan. He also expressed his deep appreciation for the role that Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah, Aga Khan III, played in the creation of Pakistan. Prince Rahim was accompanied by Mr Sultan Ali Allana, Director of AKFED, and Shafik Sachedina, who heads the Department of Diplomatic Affairs of His Highness the Aga Khan.



Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif greeting Prince Rahim Aga Khan at his official residence.

Princess Zahra Aga Khan's inspiring journey to Pakistan



Princess Zahra Aga Khan and her son Iliyan unveils a plaque to commemorate the official opening of the Aga Khan Health Centre in Aliabad.

In May 2024, Princess Zahra Aga Khan embarked on a six-day visit to Pakistan to review various projects under the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). Accompanied by her son, Iliyan, Princess Zahra's visit included a diverse array of engagements and inaugurations that underscored AKDN's commitment to health and education in the region.

The journey commenced in Gilgit, where Princess Zahra met with regional dignitaries, including the Governor and Chief Minister of Gilgit Baltistan, before visiting the upgraded Aga Khan Medical Centre and the Aga Khan Higher Secondary School. Celebrating its 25th anniversary, the school was originally established to provide boys with quality education and has recently transitioned to a co-educational institution. She also

visited the Shah Karim Hostel adjacent to the school, which houses nearly 200 students from surrounding municipalities to facilitate access to secondary school. Princess Zahra interacted with students at the hostel to gain insights into their experiences. Continuing her itinerary, Princess Zahra visited the Aga Khan School in Aliabad, established through the merger of two primary schools and now accommodating over 400 students.

She also attended the opening ceremony of the Aga Khan Comprehensive Health Centre, a vital healthcare provider for Aliabad and neighbouring Nagar. Originally established as a 10-bed facility in 1983, the comprehensive health centre underwent expansion in 2023, doubling its in-patient capacity to 30 beds.



Princess Zahra Aga Khan, her son, and guests unveil a plaque to commemorate the official opening of the Aga Khan Hostel in Sherqilla.

Returning to Gilgit, Princess Zahra visited the Aga Khan University's Professional Development Centre, North, inaugurated by His Highness in 2000. The centre serves as a pioneering hub for professional development, catering to teachers, educator-trainers, education administrators, and managers in the region. The visit continued to the picturesque Immit Valley in Ghizer, nestled in the Hindu Kush and Karakoram Mountains. Here, Princess Zahra toured a health centre, visited the Diamond Jubilee School, and observed emergency simulations conducted by the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat's teams.

In Gakhukch, Princess Zahra visited the renowned Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, known for its high university placement rates among graduates. She inaugurated the Sherqilla Girls Hostel in the serene Sherqilla Valley, enhancing educational access

for female students from remote villages. Established in 1986 as a Silver Jubilee project by Mawlana Hazar Imam, the school provides facilities for sports, prayers, and recreation, contributing significantly to local education. The journey concluded with a visit to the Aga Khan Medical Centre in Booni, a pivotal healthcare facility in Upper Chitral, offering essential obstetric, neonatal, and child healthcare to approximately 250,000 residents. On the same day, Princess Zahra also visited the Chitral Diagnostic Centre, the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat's Emergency Operation Centre, and Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Seenlasht in Lower Chitral.

At the Aga Khan Higher Secondary School in Seenlasht, she met with students and planted a symbolic tree marking the commencement of a new school project in nearby Garam Chashma.



Princess Zahra Aga Khan and guests toured the Aga Khan Medical Centre in Booni, Chitral.

Returning to Islamabad, she attended a dinner in her and her son Iliyan's honour. The Institutional Dinner featured captivating performances by local artists from Gilgit, Hunza, and Chitral, including a notable performance by Coke Studio artist Natasha Baig. Princess Zahra expressed gratitude to community leaders and acknowledged the pivotal role of AKDN institutions in Pakistan. She remarked, "Very small institutions are making a huge difference in the communities where they work.

And, it is thanks to every single person in this system. Officially, unofficially, employed, volunteer, donor and friend. Every single person makes this network of agencies and institutions what it is. So, I just stand here as a representative of an ongoing vision. The vision that we are all following - His Highness' vision that has had such a huge impact since I still wore my hair down. And, I just want to say thank you." At the farewell dinner, Nizar Mewawalla, President of the

Ismaili Council for Pakistan, expressed gratitude to Princess Zahra for her impactful visit, highlighting its inspiration for the community and AKDN's ongoing mission under His Highness the Aga Khan's visionary leadership and requested her to return soon with her son Iliyan. In her closing remarks, she mentioned, "We have to be there. We have to provide access, be relevant and have a huge impact. And, we have our path ahead of us that's been traced for us. We have a vision to follow. We have very many miles to go in these footsteps. We will have to follow. And, I know that we are all committed to doing so."

Princess Zahra's visit was significant for the communities in Pakistan, showcasing AKDN's dedication to enhancing healthcare and education for tens of thousands in the region. Her journey underscored AKDN's commitment to sustainable development, aligning closely with His Highness's vision for a prosperous future.

Dear All,

We are happy to bring the special volume of the summer edition 2024 to our readers. In May and June 2024, we had the privilege to host Princess Zahra Aga Khan and Prince Rahim Aga Khan in Pakistan. They visited, reviewed and inaugurated several AKDN projects that included programmes in health, education, renewable energy, microfinance, tourism, and information technology. During the visits, important meetings were held with the senior Government dignitaries including the Prime Minister and President of Pakistan.

We want to thank the Government of Pakistan for the strong support and all our partners who have been supporting our development work in the country for many decades. Thank you for your encouragement and messages we have received about our work.

If you have any questions about the articles, please contact the editor Laila Naz Taj, Director, AKDN Pakistan Communications, at laila.taj@akdn.org.

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First solar project in Hunza district of Gilgit Baltistan at Duiker, utilizing renewable energy for rural electrification with a capacity of 1MWp and 0.6MWh Battery Energy Storage. Prince Rahim Aga Khan, during his recent visit, launched the development of Duiker Phase II and Nasirabad Solar Power Plants with a total capacity of 3.6 MWp improving power provision to an additional 18% of population in Hunza.

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