

# Football Diplomacy of Pakistan.

## Football – Pakistan’s Most Promising Connection to the Global Community



Be it Italy’s 3-1 win over West Germany in 1982 or Götze’s unexpected goal in the 113<sup>th</sup> minute of the match that sealed Germany’s tournament victory in the FIFA World Cup 2014, Pakistan celebrated a well-deserved win. Even today, amid the frenzy and uncertainty that grips the football fraternity at the moment, one thing is absolutely certain – regardless of who takes the FIFA World Cup 2018 title home, it’s Pakistan that ultimately wins, just like it did in 1982 and 2014.

In an interview with Emerging Pakistan, Jean-François Cautain, the EU Ambassador to Pakistan said:

*“Billions of people around the world are watching the FIFA (World Cup) 2018, and I would like to congratulate Pakistan for being present in each match; each football match with the Telstar 18 football. Congratulations Pakistan!”*

Pakistan remains the reigning champion in supplying the match balls for FIFA World Cup, twice in a row. The Telstar 18 and the Telstar Mechta, just like the Brazuca (FIFA 2014) and the Tango (FIFA 1982), are made in Pakistan. The country has never backed down from its legacy of producing world class footballs year round, exporting more than 40 million footballs a year. Supplying the FIFA World Cup 2018 match ball this year, has opened greater prospects of globally promoting Pakistan’s sports goods industry that has evolved into an innovative, competitive and future-oriented economic driver for the country.

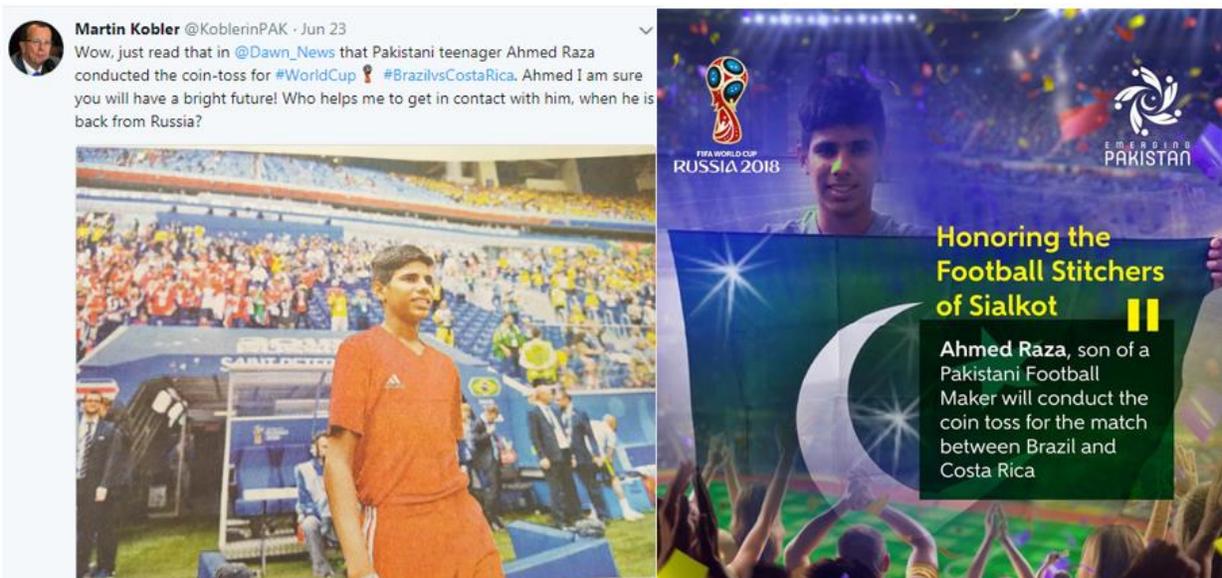
The British High Commission Islamabad recently tweeted:

*“Congratulations to Pakistan for keeping alive its tradition of making the FIFA World Cup footballs. The latest, Telstar 18, is beautiful and is made in Sialkot”*

The Telstar 18 is special. Made in the Pakistani city of Sialkot, the thermally bonded Telstar 18 provides a personalised experience using state-of-the-art sensory chip that fortifies its Near Field Communication (NFC) technology connecting the balls with predetermined smartphones. The technology has proved to be a monumental tool in tracking the on-field player synchronization and ball movement – making it an important part of the tournament.

*“The Telstar18 has been tested on every continent, in every climate and with over 600 professional players and more than 30 leading clubs and federations...We’re extremely confident in the ball and look forward to seeing it at the center of the action throughout the tournament.” – FIFA Official Statement*

This year FIFA took measures to honour Pakistan and its skilled football stitchers hailing from Sialkot. Ahmed Raza, a Pakistani teenager and the son of a football stitcher from Sialkot, was called upon to conduct the coin toss for the FIFA World Cup football match between Costa Rica and Brazil. This was also the first time Pakistan’s flag was waved in the opening ceremony of the mega-event, along with the flags of other competing nations.



The game of football has always had the innate charm that brings people together in good spirits. The international recognition received from producing the Telstar 18 is only the first step towards stamping Pakistan’s presence in the football fraternity. The Ministry of Commerce hopes to use the game as a means of strengthening the country’s diplomatic ties with other nations.

There has been an elaborate campaign launched under the Emerging Pakistan initiative to create awareness and enthusiasm for football among the masses. The campaign covered four different cities:

Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Sialkot decked with specific branding and setups for LIVE telecast of the games at various locations. The ministry hopes this campaign would encourage the people of Pakistan into celebrating and participating in the sport more enthusiastically. This was the first of its kind activity carried out free of cost by the government, with the aim to provide hassle-free entertainment for the people. The measure was widely appreciated by the public, which hopes such initiatives would continue to take place more frequently in the country.



*Figure 1 Secretary Commerce Presenting Telstar 18 to the renowned global traveler Cynthia Ritchie*



*Figure 2: Secretary Commerce Presenting Telstar 18 to the Kenyan Ambassador*

There have been steps taken to enhance the football diplomacy in the country, like the arrival of the FIFA trophy in Pakistan and the team of international football sensations including Brazil's Ronaldinho and England's Ryan Giggs visiting Pakistan last year for a series of friendly matches. In February this year, former football player Kashif Siddiqi of Pakistani origin showed keenness to promote the sport through his organization "Football For Peace" as a bridge to mend the diplomatic ties between India and Pakistan.

The organization, with a strong backing from United Nations Office on Sports for Development of Peace (UNOSDP) hopes to conduct friendly matches between the two countries to promote peace, harmony, and friendship.

On Monday, July 9, 2018, the US Consulate in Karachi arranged sports diplomacy event that would end on Wednesday, July 11, 2018. The event was attended by former US football players Lorrie Fair and Anthony Sanneh, who took the opportunity to coach the young players of the Marta Women Football Club in Karachi. Both Fair and Sanneh expressed their joy over the experience and lauded the talent and potential of the players they coached. Pakistan continues to strive towards celebrating and promoting the game on both local and international levels, with the support of the international community.

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It is a pleasure for us to welcome and receive "Telstar 18", the Official Match Ball for @FIFAWorldCup 2018 in #Russia, proudly produced in #Pakistan #Telstar has been directly delivered from Pakistani Embassy in Italy to @DBattaggia, as an emblem of our strong collaboration



The Telstar 18 has become a symbol of pride for the country and was presented to be placed in the 164-member WTO (World Trade Organization) headquarters in Geneva. The idea is to promote the Pakistan sports goods industry to the global fraternity. The Director-General (WTO), Roberto Azevêdo's message in @WTO June 2018 issue features Pakistan and the Telstar 18 as he lauded the important role of FIFA World Cup in promoting world harmony and trade prospects.

In addition, another Telstar 18 was presented to Diana Battaggia – the director of UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) as a souvenir and celebration of Pakistan's excellence in sports goods. In return, the director has offered the soccer ball sector of Sialkot, Pakistan a "spot on" on the 3<sup>rd</sup> "BRIDGE for Cities" event to be held in Trieste, Italy between 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2018. The event may prove to be a positive step towards furthering the efforts of Pakistan in seeking out international markets and possible partnerships to boost trade.

Earlier in February 2018, during an official announcement Alexey Dedov, the Russian Ambassador to Pakistan said:

*"Pakistan is one of the most renowned countries in the world in the manufacture of sport equipment... We want to enhance our cooperation with Pakistan to other sectors as well"*

The Telstar 18 has proved to be a game changer for Pakistan in the global arena. It is one of the most talked about product in the world today and it is made entirely in Pakistan. The export of Telstar 18 has already contributed to a 10.46% increase in the country's exports and it is changing Pakistan's narrative on the global front.

Pakistan may have a long way to go before it qualifies for the FIFA World Cup 2018, but as far as its position in the world of football is concerned – the country is here to stay!