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## *Report- Book Launch*

# **Islamabad Travel Guide**

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### Pictures of the Event



## Islamabad Travel Guide

The Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI), organised launch of the book '*Islamabad Travel Guide*' by Syed Sharfuddin, a former diplomat and civil servant. The chief guest at the occasion was the Honourable Minister for Information, Broadcasting and National Heritage, Pervaiz Rasheed. Other distinguished speakers on the occasion were Lt. General Talat Masood, a senior defense analyst, Mr. Imtiaz Inayat Elahi, former Chairman, Capital Development Authority and Chaudhry Kabir Ahmed Khan, Managing Director, Pakistan Tourism Development Authority.

Mr. Pervaiz Rasheed in his inaugural address said that the purpose of a travel guide is to help travelers in making informed decisions about where to go, stay, shop and how to spend quality travel time in the new place and setting. He said that the most interesting thing about '*Islamabad Travel Guide*' is that it is a book with not just an annotated map of places of interest, hotels and restaurants, but also an easily understood and user friendly account of the history, culture and heritage of Islamabad in simple English, covering subjects often not discussed in travel books. He said that the Capital city of Islamabad, in many ways, is a microcosm of Pakistan, which evolved over the years from a newly planned city, to becoming a living example of how a vision of a great city can be turned into reality using local resources and the ingenuity of its people. '*Islamabad Travel Guide*', he said, is a combination of both public information and experienced diplomatic advice about Islamabad which aims to educate foreign diplomats, international visitors and overseas Pakistanis, including local Pakistanis not familiar with the capital city, about what our beautiful city of Islamabad offers to visitors in terms of historical background, lifestyle and facilities which are at par with those available in some of the most advanced capitals of the world.

Dwelling on the importance of the travel guide, the minister stated that travelling in distant lands and observing the cultures and social practices of local people has always been a part of the classical Muslim heritage. This tradition was well established in Muslim societies long before Lonely Planet Guides were written for the modern traveller. The greatest Muslim traveller of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Ibn Battuta, to whom this book is aptly dedicated, spent more than thirty years wandering in the towns of North Africa, Egypt, East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, Persia, Afghanistan, the Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent and China before returning to his home country, Morocco. His travel accounts are as fresh today as they were six centuries ago and are a part of the archaeological history of mankind.

After Ibn Battuta, a Chinese Muslim navigator, Zhen He, became renowned in the 15<sup>th</sup> century as the most authoritative navigator of the high seas. Another famous Arab sailor, Ahmed Ibn Majid followed Zhen He's footsteps. He prepared a map of the world which was then unknown to European sailors in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Ahmed Ibn Majid's map was later used by Vasco De Gama in reaching India via the Cape of Good Hope. Unfortunately, with the decline of Muslim renaissance, the art of writing travel guides and travelogues passed from the hands of Muslims to other nations which made advancements in education, science and technology. It was a natural consequence, because learning and travel go together. He said that we have an Urdu saying *safar, waseela e zafar* which means travel is a source of knowledge. Although Google has made desktop knowledge easily accessible, it is not an alternative to real story or facts. Being

physically present on the spot to observe people and comment matters, and as diplomatic and media colleagues know, it matters more in the professions of diplomacy and journalism. Even economic migration results in enhancement of knowledge and broadens the horizon of free thinking.

The author, Syed Sharfuddin, while speaking on the occasion stated that the object of his book was not only to provide a practical tour-guide to visitors who come to Islamabad, but also to generate a conversation about how to attract tourists to Islamabad both from within the country and overseas. While defining the context which prompted him to write this travel guide, Mr. Sharfuddin was of the view that Tourism is an essential part of the global sustainable development agenda and that developing the indigenous tourism industry takes many forms like active marketing, road shows, publication of domestic tourist guides about cities and countryside attractions and printing tourist literature in various local languages encourage domestic tourism. He further said that the Secretary General of the WTO, in his report to the twenty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation held in Madrid in 2015 said: *“International tourism has continued to progress strongly in the last two years (2014-2015) despite a lingering economic recovery, increased geopolitical challenges, health scares and natural disasters affecting many parts of the world.”*

Furthermore, Mr. Sharfuddin also shed light on the importance of tourism and said that it is an essential part of the global sustainable development agenda. It is included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Nos. 8, 12 and 14 relating to sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, sustainable consumption and production patterns and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

The author also said that ‘*Islamabad Travel Guide*’ is a tourist-friendly travel book for anyone new in Islamabad. It contains photographs of Islamabad’s famous monuments and less known ordinary places. It has a bit of nostalgia for things which are gradually fading into history. It asks questions about the ordinary things we see and observe but do not necessarily explore. It contains notes and tips about driving, shopping and entertainment. It is the only book so far to have a metro bus map and provides information about the history, culture, local practices, hotels, restaurants, shopping places, sights and sounds, and things to do in Islamabad. It also has some interesting stories about Islamabad’s nocturnal world. It tells you how to spot foreign spies, get to see someone in an office if you do not have an appointment, and attend official meetings. It is a valuable travel guide for diplomats, aid workers, international consultants, foreign expatriates and overseas Pakistanis, as well as Pakistanis and local residents of Islamabad who have yet to discover this city fully.

Mr. Imtiaz Inayat Elahi, former Chairman CDA, in his remarks paid tribute to President Ayub Khan and the senior bureaucrats of that time for their relentless efforts in planning the city of Islamabad, and also appreciated the efforts of the author in bringing out a travel guide when it is most needed. Chaudhry Kabir Ahmad Khan, MD PTDC shed light on the importance of tourism and the strong link between tourism and peace. Lt. General Talat Masood also appreciated the efforts of the author in bringing out a concise and much needed travel guide of Islamabad which opens windows to several aspects of the city.

Earlier, in his welcome remarks, Ambassador Masood Khan, Director General ISSI noted that the author has made an excellent effort by writing a very concise travel guide, which covers every aspect of the beautiful city of Islamabad. He also said that Islamabad is an international city, in fact a city on a learning curve, with a beautiful architecture and mesmerising beauty.