

**Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, says US-Iran peace deal could boost prospects for peace in Yemen** **Liaquat Ali**  
Islamabad: Pakistan this week welcomed the recent peace agreement between the United States and Iran, describing it as an important diplomatic development that could contribute to greater stability in the Middle East and create new opportunities for advancing peace efforts in Yemen.

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June 21 - 27, 2026

**UK announces additional £8 million to strengthen cooperation with Pakistan against crime and illegal migration** **Celina Ali**

Islamabad: United Kingdom Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Hamish Falconer, this week announced an additional £8 million in funding to enhance joint UK-Pakistan efforts aimed at combating crime, disrupting human-smuggling networks and curbing illegal migration.

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# China to host 2026 World AI Conference in Shanghai in July

**China Economic Net**  
Beijing: China will host the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence (AI) Conference and High-

Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai this July, a Chinese official said this week.

"China looks forward to taking the conference as an opportunity to further strengthen international cooperation on AI with all parties," said Zhou



Haibing, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission, at a press conference. AI governance bears on the future of humanity and is a common issue facing all countries, Zhou said. China upholds multilateralism and the principles of openness and inclusiveness, and has actively promoted global governance and international cooperation on AI, contributing Chinese solutions to global development in the intelligent era.

Going forward, China will coordinate development and security efforts, actively practice multilateralism, and uphold the principle of being people-centered and of developing AI for good. China will also fulfill its responsibilities as a major country, manage risks, strengthen prevention, explore cooperation on AI regulation, and work with other parties to guard against AI safety risks, he added.

## Canada asks some new citizens to return citizenship certificates amid document verification review

**Covert Report**  
Ottawa: Canadian authorities have asked certain recently approved citizens to surrender their citizenship certificates as part of an ongoing review of applications processed under expanded citizenship-by-descent rules, according to reports. The move comes after amendments to Canada's Citizenship Act led to a surge in applications for citizenship through descent, some of which are now being re-examined by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). On June 13, the citizenship department reportedly contacted a number of recent certificate holders, including individuals residing in the United States, informing them that their citizenship files were now under review despite prior approval. The letters, according to the reports, require recipients to return their citizenship certificates while their eligibility is reassessed. In some cases, applicants already held supporting documents such as passports and Social Insurance Numbers in anticipation of relocating to Canada. Officials have clarified that the measure does not amount to immediate revocation of citizenship. Instead, it represents an administrative review process under which the validity of supporting documentation is re-examined. If entitlement is confirmed, the certificates are expected to be reissued. The action is being carried out under provisions of Canada's Citizenship Regulations, which allow authorities to request the surrender of citizenship documentation where there is reason to believe eligibility may not be fully established. The review process has raised concerns among some affected individuals, particularly those who believe their applications were properly approved. Legal experts cited in reports suggest that while citizenship itself is not automatically revoked through this step, the temporary suspension of certificates can create uncertainty for those affected. According to available information, the scrutiny appears to be focused on documentation standards used to establish lineage in citizenship-by-descent cases. Authorities have reportedly flagged two recurring issues: submission of records not obtained directly from official source authorities such as civil registries or provincial vital statistics offices, and failure to provide explanations or evidence when required documents could not be obtained.



These concerns relate to whether applicants can sufficiently demonstrate an unbroken chain of descent linking them to a Canadian citizen ancestor, as required under citizenship law. Reports also indicate that affected applicants fall into several categories, including those who relied on genealogy databases as primary evidence, those who submitted archival records instead of official vital statistics documents, and those unable to provide documentation for historical gaps in family records. Immigration guidance notes that applicants are generally expected to provide certified records issued by competent government authorities. Where records are unavailable, applicants are typically required to submit written explanations along with official confirmation of non-existence of records. Under the current review process, individuals who receive surrender requests are being asked to provide additional documentation to support their claims. The letters also allow applicants to respond with further evidence before a final determination is made. Processing timelines for such reviews have not been specified and may extend over several months, depending on the complexity of individual cases. The development reflects broader efforts by Canadian authorities to ensure consistency and verification in citizenship-by-descent applications following legislative changes that expanded eligibility. Officials have not indicated that citizenship is being revoked automatically in these cases, but rather that documentation standards are being reassessed to confirm eligibility under existing rules.

## Natasha vows to strengthen people's rights, praises Bilawal Bhutto's leadership

**Liaquat Ali**  
Islamabad: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) central leader and Member of the National Assembly Natasha Daultana this week said that the PPP remains the true representative voice of the people, committed to democratic stability, national progress and public welfare. In a media interaction here, Daultana reaffirmed her commitment to serving the public, stating that the party has consistently prioritised the rights and welfare of ordinary citizens, particularly marginalised communities, farmers and workers. She said the PPP's political philosophy is rooted in inclusive development and strengthening democratic institutions. Highlighting the role of party leadership, she praised PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, lauding his leadership qualities and diplomatic engagement as erstwhile Foreign Minister. She said his efforts had contributed to improving Pakistan's global image and expanding the country's relations with international partners. Daultana stressed that party workers form the backbone of the PPP and are central to its organisational strength and political outreach across the country. She added that the party would continue to stand with underprivileged communities and work for their rights at every level.



# Pakistan reaffirms commitment to SCO, cites China's role in regional cooperation

**Gwadar Pro**

Islamabad: Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation this week, saying the regional grouping remained an important platform for security cooperation, economic connectivity and political dialogue. In a message marking the 25th anniversary of the SCO, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said Pakistan would continue to support the principles of the SCO Charter and the "Shanghai Spirit", including mutual trust, equality, respect for diversity and shared development.

SCO was founded in 2001 after evolving from the Shanghai Five mechanism. Pakistan joined as a full member in 2017 after previously holding observer status. Dar said China had played a central role in

shaping the SCO's development and promoting regional connectivity. He cited the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as an example of cooperation that could help expand trade, investment and infrastructure links across the SCO region. Pakistan's location, he said, gave it the potential to serve as a gateway between South Asia, Central Asia and the wider Eurasian region. Pakistan is due to assume the rotational chair of the SCO Council of Heads of State and Council of Foreign Ministers for 2026-27 and host the SCO summit in 2027, according to Pakistan's Foreign Ministry. Dar said Islamabad would pursue an agenda focused on economic cooperation, regional connectivity and people-to-people exchanges.

Pakistan hosted the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting in October 2024. It also chairs the SCO Council of Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure for 2025-26. Dar said Pakistan valued SCO's role in combating terrorism, separatism and extremism, adding that intelligence-sharing and collective action were important for regional stability. The statement also said Pakistan would support cooperation within the SCO on digital transformation, energy security, trade facilitation, food security, climate resilience, public health, education and sustainable development. Dar also highlighted Pakistan's role in SCO poverty alleviation cooperation, saying Islamabad would work with member states to improve living standards and



expand economic opportunities. He said continued cooperation under the SCO framework could strengthen the

organisation's role in promoting peace, stability and development across the region.

# Pakistan, China deepen cooperation on vocational training, NEV skills and youth development

**Gwadar Pro**

Islamabad: Pakistan and China this week further expanded cooperation in vocational education, technical training and youth development as a high-level delegation led by Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, paid an official visit to China.

During the visit, the delegation held talks with representatives from Guangdong Open University (Guangdong Polytechnic Institute), where senior university leadership, including President

Liu Wenqing and Vice President Song Bo, held detailed discussions on ongoing Pakistan-China education cooperation projects. The talks reviewed progress made under commitments announced during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China and focused on accelerating the implementation of skills development initiatives.

A key development during the visit was the announcement of the establishment of the China Secretariat of the PMYP at the Beijing headquarters of Tangfeng International Education

Group, aimed at strengthening coordination between institutions in both countries. The chairman reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to expanding structured pathways for youth employment through enhanced educational collaboration.

A major milestone of the trip was the joint unveiling of the Pakistan National Vocational Education Teachers Training Base plaque, marking a formal step toward institutionalizing teacher training cooperation. The initiative is designed to improve technical education standards, strengthen faculty development and expand employability opportunities for Pakistani youth. In a separate engagement, the delegation visited Beijing Guanda Boye Technology Development Co., Ltd., where discussions focused on emerging technologies, particularly new energy vehicle (NEV) training systems. Company officials briefed the delegation on advanced manufacturing processes and applied training models.

Both sides explored cooperation in industry-academia integration, curriculum development and workforce training aligned with Pakistan's emerging industrial needs. Emphasis was placed on electric vehicle maintenance, battery systems, intelligent manufacturing and short-term technical certification programmes.



# Chinese consortium plans wider role in Pakistan's capital market infrastructure

**Gwadar Pro**

Islamabad: Chinese strategic shareholders of the Pakistan Stock Exchange this week said they plan to expand their investment in Pakistan's capital market infrastructure after receiving regulatory approvals from the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan.

The plan was conveyed during a meeting between SECP Chairman Dr Kabir Ahmed Sidhu and a delegation representing the

Chinese consortium, which includes the China Financial Futures Exchange, Shanghai Stock Exchange and Shenzhen Stock Exchange. Officials said the approvals would allow the consortium to increase its shareholding in the Central Depository Company and the National Clearing Company of Pakistan Limited, two key institutions in Pakistan's post-trade market infrastructure.

The meeting also covered cooperation on new financial products, including proposed cross-border exchange-traded funds that would give investors in Pakistan and China

access to each other's markets. Officials said a joint task force comprising representatives from stock exchanges in both countries had been formed to work on the initiative. Discussions also covered trading and settlement technology, market surveillance, liquidity improvement, investor awareness and capacity-building. The Chinese consortium acquired a 40 percent strategic stake in PSX in 2016-17. The consortium comprises CFFEX, Shanghai Stock Exchange, Shenzhen Stock Exchange, Pak China Investment Company and Habib Bank Limited.



# PM appreciates outgoing Italian ambassador's role in strengthening Pakistan-Italy ties



**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif this week commended outgoing Italian Ambassador Marilina Armellin for her valuable contributions to strengthening relations between Pakistan and Italy during her diplomatic tenure and extended his best wishes for her future assignments.

The prime minister expressed these views during a farewell meeting with Ambassador Armellin at the Prime Minister's Office, where the two sides reviewed various aspects of bilateral cooperation and the progress achieved in Pakistan-Italy relations.

Shehbaz Sharif acknowledged the ambassador's efforts in promoting closer engagement between the two countries across multiple sectors and appreciated her role in enhancing mutual understanding and collaboration during her time in Pakistan.

The prime minister also conveyed his gratitude for Italy's continued friendship and cooperation with Pakistan, expressing confidence that the positive momentum in bilateral relations would continue to grow in the years ahead.

Ambassador Armellin thanked the prime minister and the people of Pakistan for the support and hospitality extended to her throughout her tenure and reaffirmed Italy's commitment to further strengthening its longstanding partnership with Pakistan.



# Be united, and take action

**Global Times**

On Wednesday, the Chinese government released the white paper titled "More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals and Actions." Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, the white paper systematically presents China's ideas, initiatives and practical actions regarding global governance. Its aim is to reform and improve the global governance system, effectively address global challenges, and build broader international consensus and joint efforts.

Since the concept of "global governance" was first proposed in Europe in the 1990s, the international community had never reached consensus on the core questions of who should govern, how to govern, and for whom.

The main reason lies in the Western-dominated discourse system, which has not yet addressed the peace deficit, development deficit, security deficit, and trust deficit facing today's world, nor has it corrected historical injustices. The vast majority of Global South countries remain marginalized. In some cases, under the hegemonic mindset of certain major powers, "global governance" has been distorted into "governing the globe." The authority of the UN has been greatly weakened, and the international system established after World War II has come under severe shocks from multiple crises.

In 2025, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the Global Governance Initiative (GGI),

offering a Chinese solution to the era's question of "what kind of global governance system to build and how to reform and improve global governance."

This initiative upholds five core principles: staying committed to sovereign equality, international rule of law, multilateralism, people-centered approach and real results. It transcends the outdated "center-periphery" order of traditional international relations theory and rejects the "law of the jungle" whereby "might makes right." It has not only opened a new horizon in international political civilization but also responded strongly to the international community's calls for justice over hegemony, rule of law over disorder, cooperation over confrontation, and action over empty talk. It has received widespread welcome and positive response from the international community.

Countries around the world - more than 190 in total - have different social systems, development paths, and national conditions, yet they all share the simple aspiration to participate equally, make decisions equally, and benefit equally in the building and improvement of the global governance system. The GGI has been able to build broad consensus because consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits represent the common aspiration of all people; equitable and orderly multipolarity and inclusive economic globalization represent the trend of the times; genuine multilateralism is the right path; and the common values of humanity are the universal principle. The proposal of this initiative means



that global governance is no longer a matter of some countries governing others, but a process in which all countries participate, contribute, and benefit together. It is not about starting over or building a new system from scratch, but about making the existing international system better adapted to changed realities and more responsive to the urgent needs of people of all countries.

Whether global governance works depends on whether it can solve real problems. The international community is highly attentive to whether the Chinese proposal can be implemented and how it will be implemented. Any plan must take root to bear fruit - this is precisely why the GGI emphasizes results-oriented action.

In advancing global governance, China has accumulated a wealth of "practical experience." Whether through its proactive exploration of distinctively Chinese approaches to resolving global hotspot issues, its efforts to promote the Belt and Road Initiative, speaking up for Global South countries, or advancing the improvement of governance rules in new domains, China's efforts are evident to the international community. Innovative mechanisms such as the Interna-

tional Organization for Mediation are particularly refreshing and impressive.

Looking ahead, China has proposed nine major directions for reform. In less than a year, nearly 160 countries and international organizations have welcomed and supported the GGI, and more than 60 countries have actively joined the Group of Friends of Global Governance. The GGI has already transformed from a Chinese proposal into international practice, demonstrating strong vitality.

Global governance seeks the common well-being of the international community and relies on the joint efforts of all countries. After all, it is "everyone's business." It requires sustained and persistent work, supported by all parties to discuss and manage it together, and the broadest possible strength gathered around the greatest common denominator. In this process, the Global South has the will, the right, and the capability to become a key force in the reform of global governance. The reform of the UN Security Council should increase the representation and voice of developing countries, with special arrangements made to prioritize African concerns. However, this does not mean drawing a divide between the Global South and the Global

North. Improving the global governance system cannot be achieved without South-North cooperation. Developed countries must earnestly fulfill their responsibilities by providing more resources and public goods, while developing countries should also unite and strengthen themselves and make contributions within their capabilities.

China is ready to advance hand in hand with all parties, holding high the torch of multilateralism, fully implementing the GGI, and promoting the building of a more just and equitable global governance system, while steadily moving toward the grand goal of building a community with a shared future for mankind. This is a long process that requires patience, wisdom, and courage. Yet the direction is clear and the path is well-defined. As the white paper calls for, all parties must persevere in the face of challenges, rise above disputes, and work together to build a more just and equitable global governance system. It is hoped the international community will unite and take action.

**Global Times**



# China's human rights practice inspires Global South

**Zamir Ahmed Awan**  
- Global Times

Recently, I attended the 2026 Forum on Global Human Rights Governance held in Beijing, and was deeply impressed by China's approach to human rights protection. One of the most distinctive characteristics of China's human rights philosophy is its emphasis on practical implementation: transforming human rights from abstract ideals into concrete realities that people can experience in their daily lives.

For China, human rights are not merely political slogans or theoretical concepts discussed in conference rooms. They are reflected in whether people have access to jobs, education, healthcare, social security, a clean environment and opportunities for personal development. They are closely linked with national development and social progress.

China has continuously formulated and implemented consecutive action plans for human rights protection. These plans establish clear objectives, assign responsibilities and evaluate outcomes across various sectors, with a long-term commitment to improving human rights through governance and policy implementation.

The achievements associated with this approach are significant. China has established the world's largest social security system, covering pensions, medical insurance, unemployment insurance and other forms of social protection for its citizens. Similarly, China's basic medical insurance now reaches the overwhelming majority of the population, while continuous investment in healthcare infrastructure has strengthened service delivery in both urban and rural areas.

Education provides another compelling example. China has developed the world's largest education system. Access to compulsory education has become universal, and millions of students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds have gained opportunities for social mobility through expanded educational access.

China's human rights philosophy also continues to evolve alongside societal transformation. As new technologies reshape economies and daily life, emerging issues such as digital rights have entered policy discussions. Ensuring equitable access to digital infrastructure, protecting personal information, narrowing the digital divide and enabling citizens to benefit from technological advancement are increasingly viewed as important dimensions of human rights protection.

Likewise, ecological civilization has become an essential component of China's vision for human rights development. The idea that people should enjoy the right to live and work in a healthy environment reflects the country's growing emphasis on sustainable development. Continuous improvements in air quality, ecological restoration initiatives, renewable energy expansion and environmental governance illustrate efforts to reconcile economic growth with environmental protection.

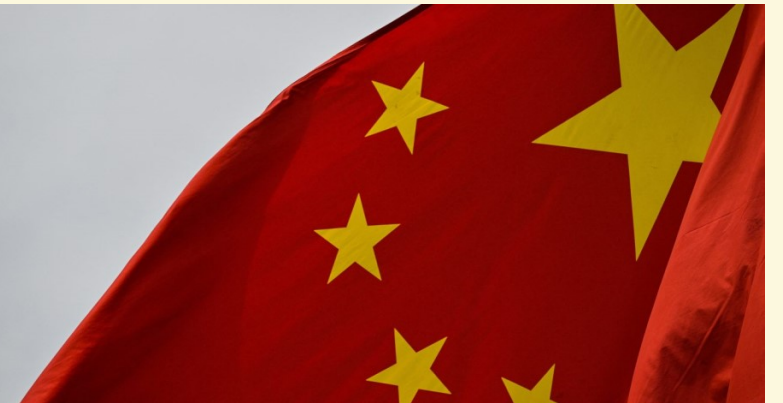
Naturally, China's approach differs in important ways from certain Western human rights frameworks. Western discourse has traditionally placed considerable emphasis on civil and political rights, individual autonomy, and procedural safeguards. These dimensions undoubtedly constitute important aspects of human rights. However, China argues that rights to subsistence

and development form the foundation upon which other rights can be meaningfully exercised. After all, without adequate food, healthcare, education, employment opportunities and social security, many formal rights may remain inaccessible in practice. China's experience suggests that development itself can serve as a powerful instrument for advancing human dignity and expanding human freedom. Rather than viewing economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights as mutually exclusive, the Chinese approach advocates their coordinated and balanced advancement in accordance with national conditions.

This perspective resonates strongly across many countries in the Global South. Developing nations often face complex challenges, including poverty, inequality, limited institutional capacity and competing development priorities. For these countries, the central question is not whether human rights matter, but how they can be progressively realized under existing circumstances.

China's experience does not offer a universal template to be copied mechanically. Instead, it provides practical lessons. These include the importance of strong policy continuity, long-term planning, development-oriented governance, targeted interventions for vulnerable populations and the adaptation of international human rights principles to local realities. Equally important is the recognition that each country has the right to explore a human rights path suited to its own history, culture and stage of development.

Ultimately, the legitimacy of any human rights model should be judged not solely by rhetoric but by outcomes. Are people's lives improving? Are opportunities becoming more accessible? Are dignity, security and hope expanding across



society? China's practice-oriented approach seeks to answer these questions through concrete action.

offers not a final answer, but a valuable source of inspiration and practical reflection.

Human rights are most meaningful when they move beyond abstract declarations and become realities embedded in everyday life. China's experience demonstrates that through sustained commitment, institutional innovation and people-centered development, abstract principles can indeed be transformed into tangible and measurable rights. As countries across the Global South continue their own development journeys, this experience

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# Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, says US-Iran peace deal could boost prospects for peace in Yemen

**Liaquat Ali**  
Islamabad: Pakistan this week welcomed the recent peace agreement between the United States and Iran, describing it as an important diplomatic development that could contribute to greater stability in the Middle East and create new opportunities for advancing peace efforts in Yemen. Addressing a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, Pakistani envoy said the agreement underscored the value of diplomacy in resolving complex regional disputes and could help generate momentum for political

reconciliation in Yemen, which has been devastated by years of conflict, economic hardship and humanitarian crises. Speaking at the session, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, said recent developments in the region highlighted both the dangers of escalating tensions and the benefits of sustained diplomatic engagement. He noted that the US-Iran agreement represented a positive step toward reducing regional instability and fostering conditions more conducive to conflict resolution across the Middle East. According to the ambassador, the agreement comes at a critical time for Yemen, where a period of relative calm has raised hopes for a comprehensive political settlement

after years of warfare. While acknowledging that significant political, economic and humanitarian challenges remain, he said recent developments demonstrate that dialogue and negotiations can produce meaningful results. Ambassador Ahmad pointed to the absence of major hostilities across key conflict zones in Yemen and the relative security of commercial shipping routes in recent months as encouraging signs of successful de-escalation efforts. He said these developments illustrate that peaceful solutions remain achievable despite the complexity of the conflict. Pakistan called on the international community to seize the current opportunity and intensify efforts to support a negotiated political settlement in Yemen before renewed tensions or emerging crises undermine the progress achieved so far.



Emphasising the importance of an inclusive peace process, the Pakistani envoy said any durable resolution to the conflict must emerge through a United Nations-led framework that is both Yemeni-owned and Yemeni-led. He stressed that all relevant stakeholders should be included in negotiations to ensure broad-based support and long-term sustainability. Pakistan also welcomed a recent agreement between Yemen's internationally recognised government and the Houthi movement to exchange around 1,600 detainees and prisoners. Ambassador Ahmad described the arrangement as an important confidence-building measure that demonstrates the potential of diplomacy to deliver practical outcomes even after years of conflict. He said humanitarian initiatives such as prisoner exchanges help build trust between opposing sides and can pave the way for wider political engagement and reconciliation efforts. Looking beyond Yemen, Pakistan expressed

hope that the positive momentum generated by the US-Iran agreement would contribute to broader regional stability. Ambassador Ahmad said reduced tensions across the Middle East could create a more favourable environment for peacebuilding, reconstruction and economic recovery in Yemen. He stressed that the Yemeni people, after enduring years of conflict and hardship, deserve an opportunity to benefit from peace, stability and improved living conditions. The Pakistani envoy urged members of the United Nations Security Council to maintain a unified and constructive approach toward Yemen, while continuing to support diplomatic initiatives and increasing humanitarian and economic assistance to help address the country's ongoing challenges.



# Pakistan, UK discuss economic cooperation, reforms and regional stability



**Abdullah Jan**  
Islamabad: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb this week held talks with United Kingdom Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East,

Afghanistan and Pakistan Hamish Falconer, focusing on Pakistan's economic reform agenda, regional developments and opportunities to strengthen bilateral economic cooperation. Falconer called on the finance minister at the

Finance Division during his visit to Islamabad. He was accompanied by British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, while senior officials from both sides also attended the meeting. The discussions covered a wide range of issues, including Pakistan's macroeconomic outlook, fiscal priorities, ongoing structural reforms, institutional modernisation and avenues for expanding economic collaboration between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. During the meeting, Senator Aurangzeb briefed the British delegation on the government's economic reform programme and outlined key priorities incorporated in the federal budget for 2026-27. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to maintaining macroeconomic stability, sustaining economic recovery and implementing structural reforms aimed at promoting inclusive and long-term growth. The finance minister also shared Pakistan's perspective on recent regional developments, including the easing of tensions following the understanding reached between the United States and Iran. He reiterated Pakistan's con-

sistent support for dialogue, de-escalation and the peaceful resolution of disputes, noting that Islamabad had advocated for reducing regional tensions from the outset. Aurangzeb observed that prolonged instability in the region can negatively affect economic confidence, energy markets, supply chains and growth prospects, particularly for emerging economies. He said the government's economic planning and fiscal projections had taken into account potential geopolitical risks and the indirect economic consequences of prolonged regional uncertainty. At the same time, he noted that improved regional stability would create more favourable conditions for investment, trade and economic activity, benefiting countries across the region. The finance minister also highlighted Pakistan's ongoing fiscal and institutional reform efforts, including measures to improve revenue collection, strengthen compliance, reduce leakages and modernise tax administration. He said the government is increasingly relying on technology, data integration, centralised processing systems and digital invoicing to enhance efficiency and transparency. According to Aurangzeb, the reforms are de-

signed not only to improve revenue performance but also to strengthen public trust by reducing discretionary interventions and promoting greater transparency in governance and public administration. The two sides also discussed broader structural reforms, including the privatisation and rightsizing of public-sector entities, improving public expenditure efficiency, expanding digital governance and strengthening targeted social protection programmes. The minister highlighted progress being made in technology-driven service delivery and efforts to ensure more effective allocation of public resources. Falconer appreciated the government's commitment to economic reform and acknowledged the scope and seriousness of Pakistan's ongoing transformation agenda. He reaffirmed the United Kingdom's interest in maintaining close cooperation with Pakistan and supporting initiatives that contribute to economic stability, institutional development and sustainable growth. The meeting concluded with both sides expressing their commitment to further strengthening bilateral engagement and expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

# Kazakhstan emerges as one of SCO's leading contributor

**Newswire**  
Astana: Kazakhstan ranks third among contributors to the budget of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), according to data published as the organization marked its 25th anniversary. From L to R: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and

SCO Secretary-General Nurlan Yermekbayev. Photo credit: SCO According to the published data, China and Russia each contribute 17.6% of the organization's budget. Kazakhstan ranks third with a contribution of 15.2%. Uzbekistan contributes 12.6%, followed by the Kyrgyz Republic with 7.6%, Tajikistan with 6%, India and Pakistan with 5.9% each, and Belarus and

Iran with 5.8% each. The combined territory of the SCO member states covers approximately 36 million square kilometers, or about two-thirds of Eurasia. The countries account for nearly half of the world's population and around one-quarter of global gross domestic product. According to the report, Kazakhstan has traditionally been one of the most active participants in integration processes across Eurasia and has consistently supported the development of multilateral cooperation formats. In recent years, the country has promoted initiatives related to transit development, the digital economy, energy cooperation and logistics corridors. The report also notes that Kazakhstan has consistently supported cooperation mechanisms within the SCO aimed at combating terrorism, extremism, transnational crime and other challenges. On this occasion, the organization's 25th anniversary was marked with a reception in Beijing, Kazinform reported. Speaking at the event, SCO Secretary-General Nurlan Yermekbayev said the anniversary symbolizes decades of work by member states and their commitment to the future. He noted



that the organization had evolved from the Shanghai Five into a major transregional association. Yermekbayev said the SCO continues to be guided by the principles of the Shanghai Spirit, which enables member states to build consensus through mutual trust and respect.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi congratulated the SCO representatives on the anniversary and thanked international partners for their support. "China is ready to share opportunities with SCO countries in the spirit of cooperation and mutual benefit," Wang said.



# Britain needs a new social contract to restore young people's faith in the future, says Ali Rehman Malik

**Abdullah Jan**  
Islamabad: Ali Rehman Malik, Chair of the Institute of Research and Reforms (IRR) International and a philanthropist, has called for a new social contract between Britain and its younger generations, warning that millions of young people no longer believe the traditional pathways to stability and prosperity remain attainable. In an opinion piece, Malik said the longstanding promise that hard work, education and social contribution would lead to a secure future had weakened

opportunity, and home ownership has become increasingly difficult to achieve. As a result, key milestones of adulthood, including financial independence, starting a family and long-term security, are moving further out of reach. Citing concerns among younger generations, Malik said anxiety about employment, personal finances and housing had become widespread, creating a sense of uncertainty about the future. "A society cannot expect long-term cohesion when large numbers of young people



costs. He argued that young people are increasingly being asked to shoulder greater financial, social and psychological pressures while lacking the stability and support systems that previous generations often enjoyed.

He also advocated reforms to the higher education system, arguing that universities should place greater emphasis on practical skills, employability and adaptability to better prepare students for modern working life. Malik said many young people feel disconnected from institutions and policy-making processes, often believing their concerns are overlooked despite being directly affected by decisions shaping the country's future. "A healthy society is one where young people feel they have a stake in the future they are helping to build," he said. Warning of the consequences of inaction, Malik said frustration, alienation and social fragmentation could continue to grow if policymakers fail to address the concerns of younger generations. He urged decision-makers to move beyond debate and focus on implementing meaningful reforms, saying the key challenge facing Britain is whether it can rebuild trust and opportunity before an entire generation loses faith in the prospect of shared progress.

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significantly, leaving many young people struggling with economic uncertainty and limited opportunities. He noted that for a growing number of young Britons, employment no longer guarantees financial stability, higher education does not necessarily translate into

feel permanently trapped between adolescence and survival," he said, adding that social and economic stability depend on younger generations believing they have a meaningful stake in the future. According to Malik, the challenge extends beyond low wages and rising housing



He welcomed recent political discussions surrounding greater support for young people, including proposals aimed at improving opportunities for those under 30, but stressed that policy discussions must now be followed by concrete action. "What Britain needs is a realistic and long-term strategy that restores dignity, stability and opportunity for younger generations," he said. Drawing on the work of IRR International, Malik highlighted the importance of community-based initiatives that provide mentorship, discipline and practical support for young people. He pointed to projects undertaken in partnership with local stakeholders, saying such programmes demonstrate the positive impact of investing directly in youth development. Malik argued that a renewed social contract should begin by creating more credi-



## Germany awards Order of Merit to Sister Annette Dimigen for decades of service at Rawalpindi Leprosy Hospital

**Liaquat Ali**  
Islamabad: Germany this week conferred its prestigious Order of Merit on Sister Annette Dimigen in recognition of her nearly three decades of dedicated humanitarian service at the Rawalpindi Leprosy Hospital, acknowledging her longstanding contributions to healthcare and social welfare in Pakistan. The award, officially known as the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany or the Federal Cross of Merit, is Germany's highest civilian honour and is bestowed for exceptional achievements in political, economic, social, intellectual and humanitarian fields.

The honour was awarded by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on April 29, while the medal was formally presented to Sister Annette by German Ambassador Ina Lepel during a ceremony held at the ambassador's residence in Islamabad. According to the German Embassy, Sister Annette has been serving in Rawalpindi since 1997, carrying out a wide range of administrative and organisational responsibilities at the Rawalpindi Leprosy Hospital, commonly known as the German Leprosy Hospital. Her work has played an important role in supporting the institution's mission of providing healthcare services to some of the country's most vulnerable communities. A member of the Protestant Christian community known as the



Sisterhood of the Christ Bearers, Sister Annette also serves as Secretary-General of the Aid to Leprosy Patients Association. The religious congregation is devoted to charitable service and community welfare. Born in Hannover, Germany, in 1964, Sister Annette studied agricultural engineering and initially worked as an agricultural inspector in the German state of Baden-Württemberg. She later joined the Sisterhood of the Christ Bearers and dedicated her life to humanitarian and social service. In 1997, she volunteered to move to Pakistan alongside fellow members of her congregation and was assigned responsibilities at the Rawalpindi Leprosy Hospital, where she has continued to serve ever since. The hospital is one of Pakistan's leading specialised healthcare institutions and provides treatment for leprosy, tuberculosis, multidrug-resistant tuberculosis and cutaneous leishmaniasis. It

serves hundreds of thousands of patients annually through both inpatient and outpatient services and remains the only facility of its kind in northern Pakistan dedicated to treating these diseases. The German Embassy praised Sister Annette's unwavering commitment, describing her service as an example of compassion, charity and dedication to helping those most in need. It noted that her efforts have contributed significantly to improving the lives of countless patients and their families over the years. The embassy also highlighted her role in strengthening the bonds of friendship between Germany and Pakistan, stating that her humanitarian work reflects the values of solidarity and service. The award ceremony was attended by colleagues from the Rawalpindi Leprosy Hospital, recipients of Germany's Order of Merit residing in Pakistan, diplomats and representatives of the media. Through the recognition, Germany has honoured Sister Annette's exceptional commitment to public service and her enduring contribution to healthcare and humanitarian work in Pakistan.

## Bulgaria opposes parts of proposed EU sanctions package against Russia, says foreign minister

**Abdullah Jan**  
Sofia: Bulgaria has expressed reservations about several measures included in the European Union's proposed 21st package of sanctions against Russia, with Foreign Minister Velislava Petrova stating that Sofia supports only those restrictions that have a tangible economic impact and contribute to efforts aimed at ending the war in Ukraine.

Speaking to reporters this week, Petrova said Bulgaria does not support certain provisions currently under discussion at the EU level, particularly some energy-related measures and proposals targeting Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill.

She described the proposed sanctions against Patriarch Kirill as largely symbolic and warned that such measures could prove counterproductive rather than advancing broader diplomatic objectives.

"Our primary goal is to help create conditions that allow effective negotiations to take place," Petrova said, stressing that sanctions should serve as a tool to encourage a return to dialogue and reduce the incentives for continuing the conflict. According to the Bulgarian foreign minister, discussions on the proposed sanctions package are ongoing

among EU member states and a final agreement has yet to be reached. She noted that several countries have raised concerns about aspects of the package and that negotiations remain under way.

Petrova reiterated Bulgaria's position that sanctions should be carefully calibrated to ensure they place meaningful economic pressure on Russia without causing disproportionate harm to EU member states.

"Bulgaria supports measures that have a real economic effect, but not those that inflict greater costs on European countries than on the country against which they are directed," she said. The proposed sanctions package, unveiled by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen earlier this month, is part of the EU's continuing effort to increase pressure on Moscow following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The package includes a range of economic and political measures aimed at limiting Russia's ability to sustain its war effort.

One of the most debated elements is the proposal to sanction Patriarch Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, over his perceived support for the Kremlin's policies. Previous attempts to include Kirill on the EU sanctions list had faced resistance from some member states.

Bulgaria has historically taken a cautious ap-



proach to matters involving the Russian Orthodox Church and its leadership. During earlier discussions on sanctions targeting Patriarch Kirill, Sofia expressed concerns about the implications such measures could have for religious freedom and the treatment of religious figures. The latest comments from Petrova underscore Bulgaria's preference for sanctions that deliver measurable economic consequences rather than

symbolic political actions. The debate over the new sanctions package comes as the European Union continues efforts to maintain unity among member states on its policy toward Russia, while balancing differing national interests and economic considerations. The proposed measures will continue to be discussed among EU governments before a final version of the sanctions package is approved.



# Portugal, Pakistan share commitment to dialogue and peace, says Ambassador Paulo Miguel Guedes Domingues



**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan, Paulo Miguel Guedes Domingues, said this week that Portugal and Pakistan share a strong commitment to dialogue, diplomacy, and peaceful cooperation, emphasizing that dialogue is always more effective than confrontation in addressing global challenges. He made these remarks at a reception hosted by the Embassy of Portugal to celebrate Portugal's National Day. The event was attended by Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain as the chief guest, along with federal ministers, diplomats, senior government officials, members of the armed forces, business leaders, academics, and representatives of civil society. The ambassador noted that Portugal and Pakistan have maintained 76 years of friendship based on mutual respect and constructive engagement. Despite being geographically distant, he said the two countries are developing closer ties and



Ambassador Domingues highlighted upcoming bilateral engagements, including political consultations in Islamabad and a planned visit by Portugal's foreign minister later this year, as evidence of both governments' commitment to deepening relations. He also acknowledged the contribution of around 50,000 Pakistanis living in Portu-

gal, noting that they play an important role in Portuguese society and help strengthen ties between the two nations. The ambassador further highlighted Portugal's longstanding association with the Ismaili community and its role as host of the seat of the Ismaili Imam in Lisbon. He said the legacy of Prince Aga Khan IV continues to inspire efforts in dialogue, education, and development. Expressing appreciation for Pakistan's support of Portugal's candidacy for a United Nations Security Council seat for the 2027-2028 term, he said the gesture reflected the trust and friendship between the two countries. Addressing global conflicts and geopoliti-

cal tensions, Ambassador Domingues stressed the importance of diplomacy, bridge-building, and peaceful engagement. He also commended Pakistan's constructive efforts in promoting dialogue and supporting peace initiatives in complex regional environments. The ambassador concluded by thanking the people and government of Pakistan for the warm welcome extended to him and his wife since their arrival in Islamabad, saying they have felt at home from the moment they arrived. Earlier, he also paid tribute to the embassy staff, honorary consuls, sponsors, and partners who helped organize the National Day celebrations.

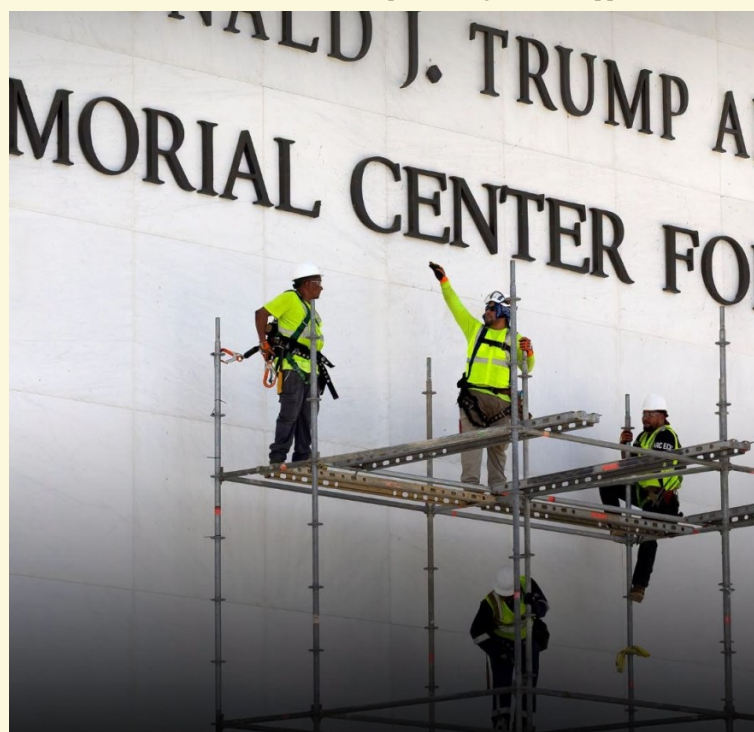


# Trump's name removed from Kennedy Center after court ruling

**Covert Report**

Washington: The name of former US President Donald Trump has been removed from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts after a federal court ordered that it be taken down, the venue confirmed in a court filing. The performing arts institution stated that it has fully complied with the ruling and that Trump's name no longer appears on the building, official website, or related materials. The dispute arose after a federal judge found that the addition of Trump's name to the landmark cultural venue had been carried out unlawfully. The court subsequently ordered its removal by June 12 and rejected a last-minute attempt by the Trump administration to suspend the

directive. Following the ruling, crews were seen erecting scaffolding around the building as preparations began to remove the signage. Work was briefly delayed due to severe weather, but removal efforts resumed shortly afterwards. The final update confirmed that the court order has now been implemented in full. The legal case is part of a broader dispute concerning the governance and naming rights of the Kennedy Center, which is federally designated as a memorial to President John F. Kennedy. The court earlier ruled that any renaming of the institution requires congressional approval.



Public reaction outside the venue included a small gathering of demonstrators who welcomed the court's decision. Some attendees expressed support for preserving the institution's original identity and keeping it free from political influence. US District Judge Christopher Cooper had earlier ruled in late May that the centre could not be renamed without authorisation from Congress and also blocked separate plans related to its temporary closure during proposed renovation work. The case continues to draw attention in the United States amid wider debates over cultural institutions, political symbolism and government authority.

# Japan exports post strongest growth in over three years on chip and auto demand



**Covert Report**

Tokyo: Japan's exports recorded their fastest growth in more than three years in May, driven by robust global demand for semiconductors and automobiles, according to government data released this week. Overall exports rose 17% year-on-year, accelerating from a 14.8% increase in April and surpassing market expectations of 16.2%. The latest figure marks the strongest export expansion since November 2022, the Finance Ministry data showed.

The surge was largely fueled by a sharp increase in semiconductor shipments, which jumped 61.2% in value terms compared to the same period last year. The growth reflects sustained global demand linked to artificial intelligence and advanced technology supply chains. Automobile exports also remained strong, rising 16.4% year-on-year, contributing significantly to Japan's overall export performance. By destination, exports to China—Japan's largest trading partner—increased 17.9%,

while shipments to the United States rose 12.5%. However, exports to the Middle East declined 32%, reflecting disruptions in regional trade flows linked to ongoing geopolitical tensions. Despite the strong headline growth in value terms, export volumes rose only 0.5%, suggesting that much of the increase was driven by higher prices and the impact of a weaker yen, which improves export competitiveness but raises import costs and inflationary pressures domestically. Imports increased 12.5% year-on-year in May, marking the fastest growth since January 2025, though slightly below expectations of 12.8%. Petroleum imports fell 28.5%, affected by disruptions associated with instability in the Middle East. The trade data was released shortly after the Bank of Japan raised its policy interest rate by 25 basis points to

1%, the highest level in over three decades, as policymakers moved to address persistent inflation and continued weakness in the yen. Japan's economy expanded by 0.5% quarter-on-quarter in the first quarter of the year and grew

1.8% on an annual basis, with exports remaining a key driver of economic performance. Following the release of the data, Japan's Nikkei 225 index rose 0.72%, while the yen remained broadly stable at around 160.4 against the US dollar.



# EU Parliament approves sweeping migration reforms aimed at accelerating deportations



Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan H.E. Raimundas Karoblis

**Celina Ali**

Islamabad: The European Parliament this week approved a far-reaching migration law designed to speed up the deportation of individuals who do not have the legal right to remain in European Union member states, marking one of the most significant shifts in the bloc's migration policy in recent decades.

The legislation was adopted with 418 votes in favour, 218 against and 30 abstentions, reflecting growing support within the parliament for stricter migration controls and return procedures.

A central feature of the new law is the introduction of so-called "return hubs" outside the European Union. Under the proposed framework, member states would be permitted to establish deportation centres in non-EU countries through bilateral agreements. These facilities could be used to accommodate migrants awaiting return to their countries of origin or, in some cases, house them for extended periods while their deportation arrangements are processed.

The legislation exempts unaccompanied minors from transfer to such centres. However, families travelling with children could still be relocated to these facilities under the new rules. The vote highlighted an increasingly influential right-leaning bloc within the European Parliament, with centre-right and conservative groups joining forces to secure the legislation's passage. Supporters argued that the reforms are necessary to strengthen migration management, improve enforcement of return decisions and address irregular migration more effectively across the EU.

The law introduces several measures intended to enhance the ability of authorities to identify, locate and remove individuals residing in the bloc without legal status. Among the most debated provisions is a clause allowing authorities to search residences and other premises linked to irregular migrants as part of



**EU lawmakers approve new tougher migrant policy**

enforcement operations. Additional measures include tougher restrictions on re-entry, expanded powers for law-enforcement agencies and significantly longer detention periods for migrants awaiting deportation. Under the new framework, the maximum detention period for individuals subject to return orders would increase from six months to up to two years. Authorities would also be able to extend detention by an additional six months in certain circumstances. For individuals considered a security threat, detention could be prolonged for an indefinite period under specific legal conditions. The legislation also strengthens entry bans imposed on deported individuals. While current rules generally limit such bans to five years, the new law would extend them to ten years in most cases, with the possibility of lifetime bans for persons deemed to pose security risks. Another major change concerns the appeals process for deportation orders. Existing regulations automatically suspend deportations while legal appeals are being considered by courts. Under the new rules, that automatic suspension would no longer apply, and judges would instead determine on a case-by-case basis whether a deportation should be halted pending the outcome of legal proceedings. Supporters of the legislation contend that the reforms will create a more effective and credible migration system by ensuring that return decisions are implemented more efficiently. They argue that the measures will help reduce irregular migration and strengthen public confidence in the EU's border and migration policies. However, critics have raised concerns about the potential impact on migrants' rights and legal protections. Opponents argue that some provisions could weaken existing safeguards and increase the risk of prolonged detention and other practices they consider incompatible with the EU's traditional human rights standards. The legislation now moves into the next stages of the EU's legislative process before implementation across member states.

# UK announces additional £8 million to strengthen cooperation with Pakistan against crime and illegal migration

**Celina Ali**  
 Islamabad: United Kingdom Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan, Hamish Falconer, this week announced an additional £8 million in funding to enhance joint UK-Pakistan efforts aimed at combating crime, disrupting human-smuggling networks and curbing illegal migration. He also expressed appreciation for Pakistan's role in supporting diplomatic initiatives that contributed to the recent agreement between the United States and Iran. During his visit to Islamabad, Falconer met with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and personally conveyed the UK's gratitude for Pakistan's constructive contribution to the diplomatic process that helped facilitate the breakthrough between Washington and Tehran. According to the British High Commission, the new funding package is designed to deepen cooperation between the two countries in addressing illegal migration and tackling the underlying factors that drive individuals to undertake dangerous and irregular journeys. The initiative will support improvements in border management and visa systems, while providing technical assistance and expertise to Pakistani law-enforcement agencies to strengthen their capacity to dismantle human-smuggling and trafficking networks. The funding will also be used to improve identity verification systems, enhance information-sharing mechanisms, and bolster investigative capabilities targeting organised criminal groups involved in migration-related offences. In addition, it will finance community-based pro-

grammes in areas considered vulnerable to irregular migration, focusing on prevention, awareness and reducing the risk of exploitation. A key component of the package includes support for the return of individuals who do not have a legal right to remain in the United Kingdom, alongside measures aimed at promoting safe and lawful migration pathways. During discussions with Pakistan's senior leadership, both sides reviewed a broad range of issues, including regional developments, Pakistan's economic outlook, ongoing structural reforms, fiscal priorities, institutional modernisation and opportunities to further expand economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. Hamish Falconer noted that the UK-Pakistan partnership remains vital in addressing shared security challenges, including terrorism, visa fraud and organised crime, adding that the newly announced funding reflects both countries' determination to strengthen cooperation in these areas. Falconer further praised Pakistan's role in encouraging dialogue and supporting regional peace efforts, stating that the UK and its international partners would continue working together to promote stability and safeguard freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. As part of his engagements, the British minister observed a live demonstration of joint law-enforcement operations supported by the UK. The initiative assists Pakistani authorities in identifying and preventing non-genuine visa holders from travelling,



helping ensure that only legitimate travellers and students proceed to the United Kingdom.

Separately, Falconer met with Federal Minister for Finance Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb at the Finance Division, where both sides discussed key areas of bilateral

cooperation and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the longstanding partnership between Pakistan and the United Kingdom.



“Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending.” - Carl Bard

“Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you have power over instead of craving control over what you don't.”

- Steve Maraboli

# Italy approves Leonardo-Baykar joint venture to develop next-generation drones



**Liaquat Ali**

Rome: Italy this week approved the establishment of a joint venture between defence giant Leonardo and Turkish drone manufacturer Baykar to develop and produce advanced unmanned aerial systems, according to Italian media reports. The decision was cleared by Italy's Council of Ministers under the country's "Golden Power" regulations, which allow the government to review and impose conditions on foreign and strategic investments in sensitive sectors, including defence and national security.



The approval paves the way for a 50-50 partnership between Leonardo and Baykar focused on the design and production of next-generation remotely piloted aerial systems. The move was reportedly backed by Defence Minister Guido Crosetto and finalised ahead of a regulatory deadline.

However, the agreement has been subject to strict conditions aimed at safeguarding Italy's strategic interests. These include requirements that international business activities of the joint venture be conducted only with countries aligned with European Union and NATO policies, ensuring compliance with broader security and foreign policy frameworks. Italian authorities have also requested safeguards to protect classified information and sensitive technologies involved in the project, reflecting concerns over industrial security and the preservation of national technological capabilities.

The joint venture is expected to benefit both companies significantly. For Leonardo, the partnership opens access to an expanding global drone market estimated to be worth more than \$115 billion over the next decade. For Baykar, one of the world's leading unmanned aerial systems manufacturers, the collaboration is expected to enhance its access to European defence markets through Italy's established industrial base. The cooperation will involve multiple Italian facilities, including sites in Ronchi dei Legionari, Turin, Grottaglie and Rome Tiburtina, according to reports. Leonardo and Baykar had previously signed a memorandum of understanding in March last year, with the joint venture formally launched in June 2025 under the name LBA Systems.

With the latest government approval, the partnership is now operational and expected to advance into its implementation phase under the agreed regulatory framework.



Leonardo's chairman H.E. Stefano Pontecorvo

# French Ambassador Nicolas Galey, presents Francophonie Talents award in Islamabad



**Abida Shaheen**

Islamabad: The Ambassador of France to Pakistan, Nicolas Galey, this week presented the Francophonie Talents award to the winner of a cultural and linguistic competition held in the capital, in a ceremony celebrating French language and Francophone cultural diversity. The award was presented during a ceremony attended by members of the diplomatic community, cultural enthusiasts and representatives of Francophone countries. Ambassadors of Romania and Belgium were also present at the event, joining the French envoy in recognising the winner. Their participation highlighted shared diplomatic efforts to promote the French language and strengthen cultural ties among Francophone nations in Pakistan. The event brought together participants and guests in an atmosphere focused on cultural exchange and appreciation of linguistic diversity. Following the ceremony, attendees were hosted at a Francophonie-

themed buffet, adding a culinary element to the evening's programme. The occasion underscored the role of cultural diplomacy in fostering closer international engagement and strengthening people-to-people connections through shared linguistic and artistic traditions.

