

Pakistan pushes for easier China visa regime to boost people-to-people exchanges, strengthen CPEC partnership

Celina Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan this week called for a more facilitative visa regime with China to accelerate people-to-people exchanges, underscoring that closer human connectivity is essential to unlocking the full potential of the countries’ expanding strategic and economic partnership anchored by the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The proposal was raised by Pakistan’s Interior Minister, Mohsin Naqvi, during a meeting with Ling Zhifeng on the sidelines of meetings at the United Nations headquarters, where both sides reaffirmed their com-

mitment to deepening bilateral cooperation across security, economic and people-centric sectors. According to state media, Naqvi emphasized that stronger people-to-people contacts remain one of the most important pillars of Pakistan-China relations and stressed the need for an easier and more efficient visa regime to facilitate tourism, business travel, educational exchanges and cultural interaction between the two neighboring countries. The initiative comes as Islamabad and Beijing continue to broaden cooperation beyond infrastructure and energy under CPEC, the flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative. Over the past decade, CPEC has transformed Pakistan’s infrastructure landscape through investments in highways, power

generation, logistics networks and the development of the strategically important Gwadar Port, making China Pakistan’s largest trading partner and one of its biggest foreign investors. Pakistan has already introduced visa-free entry for Chinese business travelers to facilitate investment and commercial activity, reflecting Islamabad’s efforts to create a more business-friendly environment for Chinese enterprises operating in the country. China has also simplified visa application procedures for Pakistani citizens, although regular passport holders continue to require visas for travel. During the meeting, the two sides reiterated their shared resolve to further elevate the Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership by expanding collaboration on counterterrorism, internal security, border management, combating illegal immigration and counter-narcotics initiatives. Security of Chinese nationals working on CPEC and other development projects also featured prominently in the discussions. Pakistan reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety of Chinese personnel amid persistent security threats posed by militant groups targeting Chinese interests, particularly in Balochistan. Naqvi informed the Chinese delegation that Pakistan has established a dedicated Special Protection Police Force tasked with safeguarding Chinese nationals and strategic development projects, describing enhanced security cooperation as vital for the continued success of CPEC and broader bilateral collaboration. Officials from both countries expressed confidence that stronger institutional coordination, combined with greater ease of travel, would further reinforce economic integration, encourage investment, expand educational partnerships and bring the peoples of Pakistan and China closer together.



Canada unveils major defence investments, NATO commitments at Ankara summit

Abida Shaheen
Islamabad: Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney this week announced a sweeping package of defence investments, industrial partnerships and security initiatives at the 2026 North Atlantic Treaty Organization Summit, reaffirming Canada’s commitment to strengthening the Alliance and increasing defence spending to 5% of GDP by 2035. Concluding his participation at the summit in Ankara, Carney said Canada was undertaking a generational transformation of its defence posture through historic investments, military modernization and expanded cooperation with NATO allies in response to an increasingly complex global security environment. The Canadian prime minister said the country was accelerating investments in a new submarine fleet, the world’s second-largest fleet of icebreakers, advanced fighter aircraft, long-range missile systems and cyber defence capabilities, while placing particular emphasis on strengthening Arctic security and protecting North America. As part of the new initiatives, Canada reached an agreement in principle with Telesat to provide sovereign military satellite communications across the Arctic through the Telesat Lightspeed network, a project expected to generate multi-billion-dollar investment in Canada’s defence sector. Carney also announced an approximately \$800 million contract with Kongsberg Defence and Aerospace to procure Joint Strike Missiles for integration into the Royal Canadian Air Force’s future fighter aircraft fleet. In support of Canada’s domestic defence industry, the government unveiled an updated procurement strategy for its Light Utility Vehicle programme, limiting the tender process to two Canadian defence suppliers to deliver between 1,600 and 2,100 military vehicles and up to 500 utility trailers for the Canadian Armed Forces. To strengthen NATO’s technological edge, Carney confirmed that Canada would begin technical negotiations to join the NATO Innovation Sub-Fund, aimed at supporting emerging defence technologies while providing Canadian innovators with greater access to investment, strategic partnerships and international markets. Canada will also host the 2027 NATO Industry Forum, bringing together governments and industry leaders to advance defence innovation, industrial cooperation and supply chain resilience across the Alliance. Highlighting efforts to deepen economic ties with allies, Carney announced the launch of negotiations with Germany on a comprehensive Canada-Germany Strategic Partnership Agreement, covering defence, security, technology, investment, energy, supply chains, critical minerals and space cooperation. He also confirmed the start of negotiations with Türkiye on a comprehensive bilateral free trade agreement, noting that two-way trade between the two countries reached \$4.3 billion in 2025. On collective defence, Carney announced the extension of Operation REASSURANCE, Canada’s largest overseas military mission, until 2031, with plans to increase Canada’s permanently deployed personnel to as many as 2,600 troops to reinforce NATO’s eastern flank. He further confirmed that Canada would join Latvia and Denmark as the third Framework Nation of Multinational Division North, expanding its leadership role in strengthening NATO’s deterrence and defence posture in



Eastern Europe. The prime minister also highlighted international support for the proposed Defence, Security and Resilience Bank (DSRB), a Canada-led multilateral financial institution designed to mobilise private investment for defence, security and resilience projects across allied countries. Canada will host the institution’s headquarters, which is expected to provide long-term financing for defence industries, emerging technologies and supply chain resilience. Reaffirming Canada’s support for Ukraine, Carney announced that part of the country’s previously pledged approximately \$2 billion military assistance package would fund \$475 million worth of ammunition, nearly \$400 million for 35 Canadian-manufactured armoured combat support vehicles, and \$50 million for information technology and engineering equipment. Canadian officials said the country has committed more than \$25.5 billion in overall assistance to Ukraine since 2022, including over \$8.5 billion in military support. During the summit, Carney also held bilateral meetings with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and leaders from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, North Macedonia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and Ukraine to discuss strengthening allied capabilities, continued support for Ukraine and enhancing maritime security, including efforts to ensure safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Canada said the initiatives announced at the summit reinforce its commitment to collective defence, strengthen NATO’s industrial and military capabilities and position the country to play a larger role in safeguarding transatlantic security and Arctic stability.

July 5 remains darkest chapter in Pakistan’s democratic history: Natasha

Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) leader and Member of the National Assembly Natasha Daultana this week described July 5, 1977 as the darkest day in Pakistan’s democratic history, saying the coup launched an assault on the Constitution, democracy and the people’s mandate. In a message issued to mark Black Day, Daultana said the events of July 5 represented a defining moment that undermined constitutional rule and democratic institutions, leaving lasting consequences for Pakistan’s political development. She paid tribute to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, saying he made an eternal sacrifice in defence of the people’s right to rule and remained an enduring symbol of democratic resistance. Daultana said the PPP had consistently stood against dictatorship throughout the country’s history and continued to uphold democratic values and constitutional governance. She described the political struggle and sacrifices of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto as a shining example of the commitment to democracy, constitutional supremacy and the rights of the people. The PPP lawmaker stressed that safeguarding democracy, protecting the Constitution and defending the people’s right to choose their representatives remained a collective national responsibility. She reiterated that the party had unwavering faith in the strength of the people, constitutional supremacy and democratic institutions, adding that respect for the public mandate was essential for building a strong, stable and prosperous Pakistan. According to Daultana, the sanctity of the vote remains the foundation of democratic governance and the guarantee of national stability. She said Black Day serves as a reminder to renew the nation’s commitment to protecting democracy, upholding the Constitution and strengthening democratic traditions. Daultana added that promoting constitutional supremacy and democratic values was the most meaningful way to honour the sacrifices of those who struggled for democratic rule, reaffirming that the Pakistan Peoples Party would continue its efforts for democracy, constitutional governance and the protection of the people’s rights.



Pakistan, China deepen cotton cooperation as experts advocate Xinjiang technology, joint seed development

Gwadar Pro

Lahore: Pakistan and China are poised to significantly deepen cooperation in cotton research, seed development and agricultural technology transfer, with industry experts describing bilateral collaboration as a crucial pathway for revitalising Pakistan's cotton sector and strengthening the country's textile-driven economy. Speaking during a meeting at the Secretariat of the Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry this week, PCJCCI Commercial Ambassador Adeel Munawar said Pakistan possesses all the essential ingredients to remain a global cotton producer, including strong genetic resources, extensive cultivation areas, experienced farmers and one of the world's largest textile industries that depends heavily on locally produced cotton. Despite these inherent strengths, he observed that Pakistan harvested only 5.6 million bales during the previous season, the country's lowest production level in nearly three decades, highlighting the urgent need for science-based farming practices and greater technological inter-

vention.

Munawar stressed that Pakistan's cotton challenges are not rooted in a lack of agricultural potential but rather in inconsistent crop management. According to the commercial ambassador, cotton production is fundamentally driven by scientific management and precision agriculture rather than random chance, making technology transfer and farmer education increasingly important for Pakistan's agricultural future. Highlighting the expanding China-Pakistan partnership in agricultural innovation, Munawar said Pakistan's heat-resistant cotton varieties complement China's strengths in producing high-yield and premium-quality cotton. The combination of the two countries' germplasm resources provides significant opportunities to develop improved cotton varieties capable of delivering better productivity under Pakistan's climatic conditions. He explained that Chinese cotton seeds can be introduced into Pakistan for adaptability trials before selecting the most suitable varieties for commercial cultiva-

tion. The joint development of new cotton strains, he added, represents a practical example of the growing agricultural collaboration between the two countries. Munawar further revealed that Xinjiang Agricultural University has been collaborating with Pakistani universities for several years on cotton cultivation research. Experimental fields have already been established in Faisalabad, while future plans include testing mechanised cotton harvesting in Pakistan using Chinese expertise. Drawing attention to China's achievements in agricultural modernisation, he noted that mechanisation rates in North Xinjiang, one of China's largest cotton-producing regions, have reached approximately 90 percent, with machine harvesting becoming the industry standard. He said Xinjiang's internationally recognised innovations in drought-resistant farming, drip irrigation systems, water-



saving technologies and plastic mulching techniques could play a transformative role in improving Pakistan's cotton productivity while addressing increasing water scarcity. Speaking on the occasion, PCJCCI Secre-

tary General Salahuddin Hanif announced that a modern biotechnology Centre of Excellence laboratory is expected to be established at the Central Cotton Research Institute to accelerate scientific research and innovation in Pakistan's cotton sector.

Pakistan envoy lauds NLC's logistics expansion in China, underscores growing role in CPEC, regional connectivity

Gwadar Pro

Islamabad: Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi visited the National Logistics Corporation (NLC) logistics centre in Kashgar, where he reviewed its expanding cross-border logistics operations and highlighted China's role in strengthening regional trade, connectivity and economic integration through closer Pakistan-

China cooperation.

During the visit, Hashmi received a briefing on NLC's logistics infrastructure, transport network and operational capabilities supporting the movement of goods between Pakistan, China and Central Asia. Officials said the corporation has expand-

ed its logistics network to support rising bilateral trade and improve regional supply chain efficiency, according to an official statement issued this week.

The briefing covered NLC's cargo handling, warehousing, customs facilitation, freight forwarding and multimodal transport services. The Kashgar logistics centre serves as a key gateway linking Pakistan with western China and Central Asia, enabling faster and more efficient cargo movement. Hashmi praised NLC's contribution to Pakistan-China economic cooperation, describing the organisation as a key driver of bilateral trade and regional connectivity. He said its expanding logistics infrastructure supports the long-term economic partnership between Islamabad and Beijing.



Punjab proposes EV incentives, sees scope for Chinese investment

Gwadar Pro

Lahore: Punjab this week proposed policy measures to accelerate electric vehicle adoption, expand charging infrastructure and attract private investment, with officials saying Chinese technology could support the province's shift towards cleaner transport. Officials said the Punjab Public Private Partnership Authority had submitted recommendations for developing an EV charging network and encouraging local and foreign investors to enter the sector. The proposals come as Pakistan seeks to modernise transport, reduce dependence on imported fuels and promote low-emission mobility. China, a major global producer of electric vehicles and charging technologies, is seen by officials as a potential partner in Punjab's EV transition. According to officials, the recommendations call

for opening the EV charging sector to greater private participation through a clearer regulatory and financial framework for companies setting up charging stations across Punjab. Special incentives have also been proposed for investors willing to build charging infrastructure in rural and underserved areas, where commercial returns may be lower but connectivity is needed to support wider EV adoption. The proposals call for the use of public and private land to develop an integrated charging network across the province. Officials said they also include possible financial support for companies investing in charging stations to reduce early-stage risks. The authority has proposed a dedicated financing mechanism for electric mobility projects, including green finance instruments and support from international financial institutions focused on climate resilience, clean energy and sustaina-

ble transport.

Officials said such financing could complement investment from Chinese companies with expertise in battery manufacturing, charging systems and electric mobility technologies. Under the proposed framework, EV charging stations, battery-swapping facilities and related infrastructure could be developed through public-private partnership models combining government support with private-sector investment. The policy also calls for a dedicated institutional mechanism to promote investment in Punjab's EV sector, improve coordination among government departments and speed up decisions on strategic EV projects. Officials said the proposals would support Punjab's environmental goals by helping reduce transport-related emissions, improve urban air quality and promote cleaner mobility.



Luxury retreat in Italy's Barolo region showcases heritage, gastronomy, countryside charm



Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan
Ugo Ciarlatani

Liaquat Ali Barolo: Nestled among the rolling hills of Italy's famed Langhe region, the Scarpa Villas estate offers visitors an immersive experience in one of the country's most picturesque destinations, combining luxury accommodation, renowned gastronomy, rich cultural heritage and breathtaking countryside just a few hours from Monaco. Located near the picturesque village of Verduno in the Piedmont region, the restored farmhouse villas sit within the scenic Monvigliero area. The surrounding Langhe, Roero and Monferrato landscape, recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is renowned for its vineyard-covered hills, medieval villages and centuries-old castles that reflect Italy's rich agricultural and cultural traditions. Dating back to 1900, the Scarpa estate has preserved its historic character while

transforming its restored farmhouses into elegant countryside retreats. The estate comprises four beautifully renovated villas that blend traditional architecture with modern comforts, featuring exposed wooden beams, terracotta interiors and panoramic views across the surrounding hills. Guests also have access to a heated swimming pool overlooking the valley, providing a peaceful escape in the heart of the Italian countryside. Beyond luxury accommodation, the estate offers a range of curated experiences that highlight the region's celebrated culinary and cultural traditions. Visitors can participate in hands-on cooking classes to learn classic Piedmontese dishes, enjoy private

chef-prepared meals featuring locally sourced ingredients and savour authentic Italian hospitality in a tranquil rural setting. The surrounding countryside also offers opportunities for authentic regional experiences, including truffle hunting with local experts and specially trained dogs in nearby woodlands. Freshly harvested truffles are often incorporated into private dining experiences, allowing guests to enjoy one of Piedmont's most prized culinary specialties. Guests seeking outdoor activities can explore the rolling countryside by electric bicycle or Vespa, take sunrise hot-air balloon flights over the Langhe hills, enjoy yoga sessions overlooking the landscape or embark on day excursions to nearby Turin. Among the region's standout attractions is

the medieval Castello di Grinzane Cavour, a historic hilltop fortress closely associated with Italian statesman Camillo Cavour. Today, the castle houses museums dedicated to local history and culture and hosts the internationally renowned World Alba White Truffle Auction, which attracts visitors from around the globe. The nearby town of Alba, widely recognised as Italy's truffle capital, further en-



hances the region's appeal with its celebrated white truffle season, vibrant culinary scene and long-standing association with premium chocolate and hazelnut products. The Barolo region remains an attractive destination throughout the year. Spring and summer offer lush countryside, pleasant weather and long evenings ideal for outdoor relaxation, while autumn brings the internationally acclaimed white truffle season and harvest festivities that celebrate the area's rich gastronomic heritage. Combining exceptional hospitality, outstanding cuisine, fascinating history and spectacular scenery, the Barolo countryside continues to rank among Italy's premier luxury travel destinations, offering visitors an authentic escape into one of Europe's most enchanting rural landscapes.



China's demographic dividend carries new connotation in AI era

Wang Penggang

In recent years, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has not only transformed economic and social operation models but has also triggered new reflections in demographic research. The impact of AI on employment, household decision-making and population development has become an important topic worthy of close attention. The most intuitive impact of AI on de-

mographics is manifested at the employment level. A new generation of AI technologies is diverting labor demand away from basic clerical positions, such as data organization. While AI replaces certain positions, it also creates new employment demands and occupational forms. However, this process is not a simple one-to-one replacement of jobs. On one hand, emerging positions require high digital literacy and rapid learning capabilities; on the other hand, the displaced positions are mostly concentrated in

basic, repetitive tasks, resulting in a structural skill mismatch between the two cohorts. Furthermore, the substitution effect of technology tends to manifest before its creation effect, as the formation of new industries and business formats requires a certain gestation cycle. This dual mismatch in both skills and timelines means that employment trends influenced by AI will exhibit transitional "growing pains." The key to navigating this transition period lies in enhancing the adaptability of the workforce.

As the requirements for new positions regarding digital and composite skills continue to rise, increasing the importance of vocational training, continuing education, and job transition mechanisms. Refining the lifelong learning system so that workers can continuously adapt to industrial shifts has become an imperative direction. Meanwhile, the service sector will remain a critical buffer for absorbing employment over the medium to long term. As population aging deepens, demand in fields such as elderly care and domestic services continues to grow. These industries not only require a significant amount of human labor, but are also difficult to fully replace with AI in the short term. The growth of industries like domestic service and elderly care nursing has created new employment opportunities for many middle-aged workers. The service sector serves as both a crucial reservoir for expanding employment and a foundational pillar for safeguarding public livelihoods. Relevant institutional and policy support can be further optimized to unleash the service sector's potential to stabilize employment. In the AI era, the importance of educational reform has become even more prominent. The AI era demands the cultivation of innovation, comprehensive capabilities and lifelong learning skills. While well-rounded education has been steadily promoted in recent years, it still runs parallel to traditional exam-oriented education in practice. China should further deepen the re-

form of educational evaluation and accelerate the transformation of the education system, shifting the focus of talent cultivation toward the capabilities required for future social development. Concurrently, tangible efforts must be made to create a more supportive and nurturing environment for youth growth and family development. In the AI era, China's demographic dividend has taken on a new connotation. At present, the market space, diverse application scenarios and abundant data resources brought by China's massive population remain vital advantages for developing new quality productive forces. As the caliber of talent continues to improve, the quality dividend is becoming a more critical pillar for development. Looking to the long-term future, China must adhere to the tight integration of investing in physical assets and investing in human capital, continuously amplifying its population quality advantages and translating them into a sustainable engine for high-quality development. Overall, demographic issues in the AI era require a fine balance between technological progress and social adaptation. We must objectively view the structural adjustments brought about by technological transformation and, through institutional optimization and policy synergy, convert these adjustments into a driving force for high-quality population development, achieving a mutually reinforcing and healthy interaction between technological advancement and long-term balanced population growth.

The writer is director of the Population Research Institute at the School of Economics, Hebei University



Trump calls out Gordon Chang by name, sending a clear signal

Global Times

The general direction of China-US relations has become increasingly clear. It is an inevitable outcome that opportunists who make a living by talking down China will eventually find their business unprofitable and themselves effectively out of work. Gordon Chang, who has long made a living peddling the "China collapse theory" and "China threat theory," has been dealt a heavy blow. On July 6 local time, US

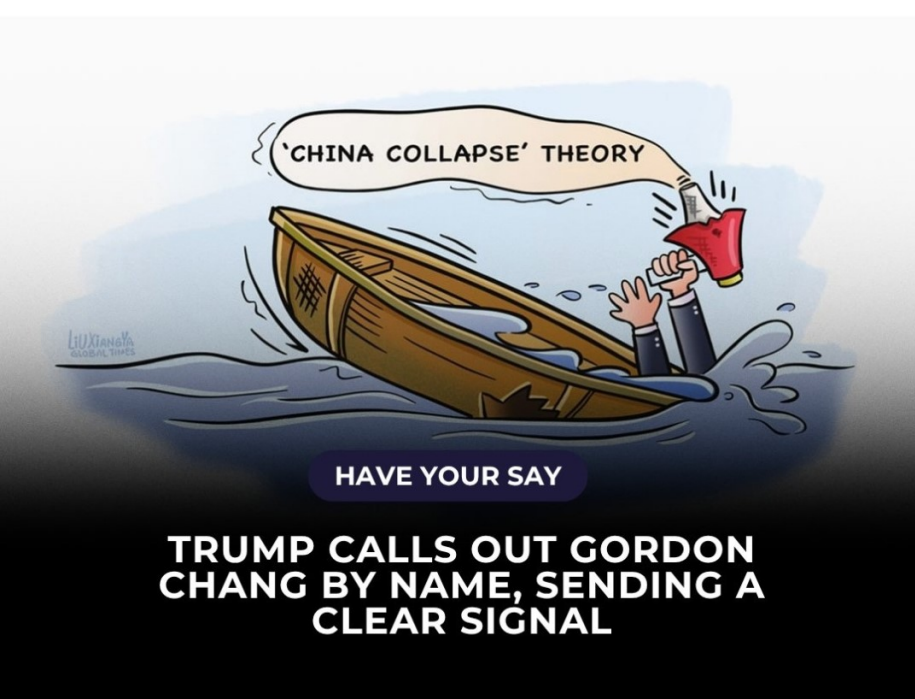
President Donald Trump publicly singled out so-called "China expert" Gordon Chang by name, criticizing his remarks on China as "always so negative," likening them to alarmist claims that "the world is falling down," which are "not true." This marks the second time in nearly three months that Trump has publicly singled out Chang by name for criticism. In April this year, during a Fox News interview on China-related topics, Trump also specifically named and criticized him, stating: "I listen to Gordon Chang. He has no idea what he is talking about."

A so-called "anti-China expert" who has spent over 20 years in Western media circles repeatedly peddling the "China collapse theory," and has in recent years switched to loudly hawking the "China threat theory" everywhere - only to be repeatedly proven wrong by facts - has now been openly rebuked by the US president as alarmist. This is not merely a personal rebuke of Chang; it is a bucket of cold water poured on the entire business model. When the US president finds such rhetoric "so negative" and "not true," it shows that extreme anti-China narratives are facing a backlash from reality. In recent years, certain forces in the US have gained self-interest by hyping the inevitability of China-US conflict and demonizing China to secure budgets, positions, media exposure, and discourse power. This approach may bring benefits for a period of time, but it is increasingly revealing its high costs, low returns, and highly misleading characteristics when China-US ties are moving toward strategic stability. Trump's two public criticisms of Chang in quick succession, bluntly calling out his nonsense, have pierced through a layer of pretense in Washington's political circles. After years of bumps and frictions in China-US relations, the US policy community has come to recognize a basic reality: China and the US must avoid strategic collision, or the latter will suffer greatly. The general direction of China-US relations has become increasingly clear. Cooperation benefits both sides, while conflict harms everyone. This has become a consensus for both sides after years of friction and clashes. What Trump stated is simply a fact that many in Washington

know in their hearts but have been unwilling to admit publicly. This also sends a clear signal: Anyone who deliberately provokes confrontation or even collision between China and the US is creating trouble for Washington. The narrative that oscillates between "China threat on odd days, China collapse on even days" has long underpinned the "political correctness" of US discourse on China. The absurd premise has been that the more dangerous, fragile, and threatening China is portrayed to be, the more necessary certain policies appear. Chang and his like have been faithful executors of this very logic. However, when everything associated with China is labeled a "threat" and any engagement is equated with "appeasement" - it increasingly collides with America's own interests. Figures like Chang may continue to find a platform on Capitol Hill or in conservative media for a few more years, but their audience is steadily shrinking. It is an inevitable outcome that opportunists who make a living by talking down China will eventually find their business unprofitable and themselves effectively out of work. China's continued development is prompting American society to reassess the country with greater objectivity. Francis Fukuyama, once best known for proclaiming the "end of history," has publicly acknowledged the effectiveness of "China's model" on at least two recent occasions. The latest Pew Research Center survey shows that the share of Americans holding a favorable view of China has nearly doubled since 2023, suggesting that American society is turning its back on the likes of Chang. Meanwhile, President Trump's public dismissal of Chang indicates that the "China collapse" "China threat" storylines have also lost traction at the highest levels of US decision-making. Even those most reluctant to face reality must now think twice about

whether they still want to keep playing along with Gordon Chang's farcical performance. At their meeting in Beijing in May this year, the Chinese and US presidents reached a series of important understandings, including the commitment to building a constructive relationship of strategic stability between the two countries. Advancing such a relationship reflects the aspirations of both peoples, meets the expectations of the international community, and serves the fundamental interests of China and the US. The US side should take concrete steps to implement the leaders' consensus, maintain a distance - in both words and actions - from those politicians and opportunists who seek to boost their own influence by engaging in "anti-China" rhetoric. American society will eventually come to realize that fear-based narratives cannot solve problems of industrial competitiveness, ideological rhetoric cannot compensate for weaknesses in governance, and containing China will not automatically make the US stronger. US businesses, local governments, ordinary consumers, and even American politicians themselves cannot afford the costs of endlessly militarizing and antagonizing China-related issues.

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Editor-in-Chief: S. Ali
Associate Editor: Afzal Butt
Email: editor@covert.com.pk
Phone/Fax : +92-51-2723419
690. Street 17 Block E Bahria Town phase 8, Islamabad, Pakistan

Pakistan urges consistent implementation of UN doctrine to prevent genocide, mass atrocities



Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan this week called on the United Nations to uphold its Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine without “selectivity,” urging the international community to apply the principle consistently to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Addressing the annual debate of the United Nations General Assembly on the Responsibility

to Protect doctrine, Pakistan’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, said the international community’s collective commitment to preventing mass atrocities had been weakened by inconsistent implementation, inaction and a lack of accountability. He noted that with conflicts increasing across the world, the credibility of the Responsibility to Protect framework was under growing strain. “Our shared objective to protect fundamental human rights, and to prevent the recurrence of mass atrocities is often obfuscated by inaction, denial, selectivity and paralysis,” Ahmad told the General Assembly. The Pakistani envoy said the shortcomings of the doctrine were particularly evident in situations involving prolonged conflicts and foreign

occupation, where atrocities had continued with impunity despite sustained international attention. “Nowhere is this void more evident than in situations of prolonged conflict and foreign occupation, where atrocities have been committed with impunity, in full glare of international attention,” he said, adding that the international community’s promise of “Never Again” remained unfulfilled in the absence of responsibility, protection and accountability. Calling for renewed global commitment to the doctrine, Ahmad urged member states to place greater emphasis on conflict prevention, mediation and diplomacy rather than responding only after atrocities had occurred. He also stressed the need for the peaceful resolution of protracted disputes in accordance with international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, while emphasizing the importance of strengthening accountability mechanisms to protect vulnerable populations. The ambassador further called on the interna-



tional community to confront hate speech, xenophobia, Islamophobia and other forms of intolerance that contribute to discrimination, violence and the risk of atrocity crimes. He said investing in prevention, peacebuilding, effective peacekeeping and accountability remained the most practical way to honour victims of mass atrocities, protect future generations and restore confidence in multilateral cooperation and the interna-

tional rules-based system. The Responsibility to Protect doctrine, endorsed by world leaders at the 2005 UN World Summit, affirms that every state has the primary responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, while the international community has a collective responsibility to act through the United Nations when states fail to fulfil that obligation.

Pakistan reaffirms commitment to expanding strategic partnership with ASEAN, says Ambassador Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri



Celina Ali
Jakarta: Pakistan this week reaffirmed its strong commitment to deepening cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) across a broad spectrum of strategic sectors, underscoring its resolve to build a more robust and mutually beneficial partnership with the regional bloc. Pakistan’s Ambassador to Indonesia and Permanent Representative to ASEAN, Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, made the remarks while co-chairing the ASEAN–Pakistan Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee (APJSCC) meeting, where officials reviewed the progress of bilateral engagement and explored new avenues to further strengthen collaboration. Ambassador Chaudhri said Pakistan remains firmly committed to expanding its engagement with ASEAN through practical cooperation in areas of shared interest, reflecting Islamabad’s broader vision of enhancing regional connectivity, economic integration and sustainable development. He reaffirmed Pakistan’s determination to further strengthen

its partnership with ASEAN across a wide range of sectors, including energy, food security, maritime cooperation, the digital economy, socio-cultural exchanges and political cooperation. The envoy highlighted the importance of sustained dialogue and institutional engagement in advancing Pakistan-ASEAN relations, noting that closer cooperation would contribute to regional peace, economic resilience and shared prosperity. He emphasized that expanding collaboration in emerging sectors such as the digital economy and maritime affairs offers significant opportunities for innovation, trade, investment and knowledge sharing, while stronger cooperation on food and energy security can help address common regional challenges. Ambassador Chaudhri also underscored the importance of enhancing people-to-people contacts and socio-cultural exchanges to foster greater mutual understanding and strengthen the longstanding ties between Pakistan and ASEAN member states. The Joint Sectoral Cooperation Committee reviewed ongoing initiatives under the ASEAN-Pakistan partnership and discussed ways to accelerate the implementation of collaborative projects aimed at delivering tangible benefits for both sides. Pakistan has steadily expanded its engagement with ASEAN in recent years through increased political dialogue, trade and investment cooperation, connectivity initiatives and collaboration in education, science, technology and sustainable development. Reaffirming Islamabad’s long-term commitment to the partnership, Ambassador Chaudhri said Pakistan looks forward to working closely with ASEAN member states to further broaden cooperation, promote regional stability and unlock new opportunities for inclusive economic growth and development across the region.



Pakistan, Kazakhstan deepen strategic partnership through education, youth development cooperation



Abida Shaheen
Islamabad: Pakistan and Kazakhstan this week reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties through expanded cooperation in education, human capital development and youth empowerment, with both countries highlighting the importance of investing in future generations as a cornerstone of their growing strategic partnership. Speaking at a ceremony hosted by the Pakistan Education Endowment Fund (PAK-EEF) to acknowledge US\$1 million in humanitarian assistance provided by the Government of Kazakhstan, Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training Wajiha Qamar said the two countries were entering a new phase of collaboration following the elevation of their bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership. The event was attended by Kazakhstan’s Ambassador to Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin, PAK-EEF Chief Executive Officer Hajra Suhail, representatives of Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and senior officials from the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. Expressing gratitude to the government and people of Kazakhstan, Wajiha Qamar described the humanitarian contribution as a reflection of the enduring friendship, mutual trust and steadily expanding strategic partnership between Islamabad and Astana. She said the assistance complemented Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif’s Education Emergency initiative, which seeks to ensure that every child in Pakistan has access to quality education and market-oriented skills required for future employment and national development. The minister noted that the recently upgraded Pakistan-Kazakhstan Strategic Partnership had opened new opportunities for collaboration in education, scholarships, technical and vocational training, academic exchanges and human capital development. She said partnerships with friendly countries such as Kazakhstan would reinforce Pakistan’s efforts to modernise its education sector, strengthen skills development and equip young people with the knowledge needed to contribute to sustainable economic growth. PAK-EEF Chief Executive Officer Hajra Suhail said Kazakhstan’s humanitarian assistance reflected the deep friendship and mutual confidence shared by the two countries, reaffirming the fund’s commitment to implementing educational programmes with transparency, merit and accountability. She added that the partnership would create meaningful educational opportunities for deserving



ing students while further enhancing bilateral cooperation in the education sector. Addressing the ceremony, Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin reaffirmed Kazakhstan’s commitment to expanding collaboration with Pakistan in education, scholarship programmes and people-to-people exchanges, describing investment in education as an investment in a peaceful, prosperous and shared future for both nations.

Disputed sporting decisions reflect deeper questions of institutional trust, writes Ali Rehman Malik



According to Malik, modern societies function through shared systems of trust. Institutions such as courts, governments, financial systems and sporting bodies derive their authority not from force alone but from widespread public acceptance that established rules are applied fairly and consistently. He maintained that these systems originated as practical solutions to specific problems but gradually evolved into accepted realities, with many people forgetting the original purpose behind the rules. When those frameworks appear inconsistent or open to external influence, confidence in the institutions themselves begins to weaken, he observed. Malik stressed that such moments do not alter objective reality but instead affect public confidence in the symbolic structures used to understand

society, but cautioned against confusing those symbolic frameworks with reality itself. He said the solution is neither to dismiss institutional failures nor to defend existing systems solely because they are longstanding, but rather to ensure that institutions continue to reflect the realities they were created to organise. Concluding his analysis, Malik suggested that the intense public reaction to a disputed football decision reflected wider anxieties about the durability of modern institutions, arguing that distinguishing between



reality and the symbolic frameworks through which societies understand it is essential to any meaningful debate about institutional legitimacy and reform.

Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: Philanthropist and Chairman of the Institute of Research and Reforms (IRR), Ali Rehman Malik, this week argued that recent controversy surrounding football officiating extends far beyond sport, reflecting a broader erosion of public confidence in institutions and the symbolic systems that underpin modern societies. In an article titled “The Map Was Never the Ground: On symbols, legitimacy, and mistaking the collapse of one for the collapse of the other,” Malik said public outrage over a disputed disciplinary decision should not be viewed merely as a reaction to a football match, but as a manifestation of growing concerns about institutional legitimacy. He argued that while controversial refereeing decisions are not uncommon, certain incidents resonate more deeply because they expose vulnerabilities in the frameworks people rely upon to interpret fairness, authority and justice.

AN ESSAY ON LEGITIMACY AND SYMBOLIC COLLAPSE

The Map Was Never the Ground

Institutions don't collapse. The account they give of reality stops matching it.

Ali Rehman Malik



and organise that reality. Expanding the argument beyond sport, he said many democracies have witnessed declining trust in governments, media organisations, universities, corporations and international institutions, with individual controversies increasingly interpreted as evidence of wider institutional shortcomings. He noted that institutions rarely lose public confidence because of a single error. Instead, trust gradually erodes when official narratives repeatedly fail to align with people’s lived experiences and meaningful corrective action is absent. According to Malik, once institutions lose the benefit of public trust, routine administrative or procedural mistakes are increasingly viewed as signs of systemic failure rather than isolated incidents. He argued that this represents not a collapse of reality itself, but a weakening of symbolic legitimacy, making it increasingly difficult for institutions to command public confidence. Malik emphasised that symbols, including laws, constitutions, currencies, public offices and sporting regulations, remain essential for enabling cooperation within



GERMANY AND BULGARIA

Bulgaria ranks among EU's top performers in annual retail sales growth



Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Bulgaria ranked among the European Union's strongest-performing economies for retail sales growth in May 2026, recording a 7.9% year-on-year increase, according to the data released by Eurostat this week. The figures placed Bulgaria second among EU member states, behind only Cyprus, which registered an annual increase of 8.4%, while Luxembourg followed closely with 7.8% growth. Across the European Union, the calendar-adjusted retail sales index rose by 1.9% in May compared with the same month last year, while the euro area recorded an annual increase of 1.6%.

Eurostat data showed that sales of food, beverages and tobacco increased by 1.9% across the EU and by 2.4% in the euro area. Sales of non-food products, excluding automotive fuel, rose 2.8% in the EU and 2.3% in the euro area. Meanwhile, automotive fuel sales declined by 2.9% across the bloc and 4.6% within the euro area. Among member states, the weakest annual performances were recorded in Romania, where retail sales fell 4.0%, followed by Estonia (-0.5%) and Belgium (-0.4%). On a monthly basis, Bulgaria also recorded positive momentum, with retail trade volume increasing 0.8% in May

compared with April 2026, exceeding the EU average monthly growth of 0.5% and the euro area's 0.2% increase. Across the EU, monthly sales of food, beverages and tobacco rose 0.6%, while non-food products, excluding automotive fuel, increased 0.5%. Sales of automotive fuel declined 0.4% during the month. The strongest month-on-month retail sales growth was registered in Cyprus (3.7%), Luxembourg (3.6%) and Poland (2.4%). The sharpest monthly declines were recorded in Estonia (-2.2%), Croatia (-2.0%), and Belgium and Lithuania (both -0.7%).



Ukraine, Germany launch joint drone production project to strengthen defence cooperation

Abdullah Jan
Islamabad: Ukraine and Germany this week launched a new joint drone manufacturing initiative after signing an implementation agreement for the co-production of BARS drones, marking a significant step in expanding bilateral defence-industrial cooperation. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha announced that the agreement was signed alongside German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius under the Build with Ukraine initiative. Sybiha said the agreement was the result of close collaboration between Ukraine's Ministry of Defence and Germany's Federal Ministry of Defence, aimed at strengthening Ukraine's domestic defence manufacturing capabilities while deepening strategic cooperation between the two countries. Under the first phase of the project, Germany will finance the production of BARS drones, with all units manufactured under the programme to be delivered to the Ukrainian Defence Forces.

The initiative forms part of broader efforts by Kyiv and Berlin to expand joint defence production and enhance Ukraine's military capabilities through industrial partnerships. The announcement follows the delivery of the first batch of Linza 3.0 drones to Ukraine by the Ukrainian-German joint defence company Quantum Frontline Robotics (QFR). Future production under the partnership is expected to continue in Germany before being supplied to Ukraine's armed forces. Separately, Ukrainian defence company Roboneers is partnering with German firm ARX Robotics to establish a joint venture that will manufacture Lynx Pro ground robotic systems at production facilities in both Germany and Ukraine for deployment by the Ukrainian Defence Forces. The latest agreements underscore the growing defence cooperation between Kyiv and Berlin as both countries seek to expand joint production of advanced military technologies and strengthen Ukraine's defence industry amid the ongoing conflict.



Ambassador of Portugal Paulo Miguel Guedes Domingues proposes business forum to unlock investment, trade opportunities with Pakistan

Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan Paulo Miguel Guedes Domingues this week proposed the establishment of a Portugal-Pakistan Business Forum during the planned visit of Portugal’s foreign minister to Pakistan later this year, saying the initiative could usher in a new era of economic cooperation by connecting businesses, investors and public institutions from both countries. Addressing the business community during a visit to the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Ambassador Domingues said the proposed forum should be jointly organized by the Embassy of Portugal, the Lahore Chamber, the Honorary Consulate of Portugal and other relevant stakeholders. He said the platform would bring together companies, investors, financial institutions and government representatives to transform emerging business opportunities into concrete commercial partnerships. The ambassador stressed that after more than 76 years of diplomatic relations built on mutual respect, friendship and trust, the time had come for economic diplomacy to take centre stage in bilateral ties. He said the rapidly evolving global economy, shifting supply chains and the increasing search for dependable business partners had created an ideal opportunity for Portugal and Pakistan to strengthen cooperation as complementary economies rather than competitors. Highlighting Portugal’s economic strengths, Ambassador Domingues described his country as a modern, innovative and export-oriented economy that ships products to more than 200

international markets. He said Portugal has developed globally competitive industries in textiles, footwear, renewable energy, engineering, information technology, pharmaceuticals, agribusiness, food processing, tourism, automotive components, furniture, design and cork products. The envoy said Portugal offers investors political stability, legal certainty, a highly skilled workforce and world-class infrastructure while providing privileged access to the European Union’s market of approximately 450 million

but also a strategic hub for Pakistani businesses seeking expansion into European, African and Latin American markets. Describing Pakistan as a country with enormous economic promise, he pointed to its youthful population, vibrant entrepreneurial culture, strong industrial base and rapidly expanding digital economy. He said Lahore exemplifies these strengths and expressed confidence that Portuguese innovation, technology and investment could be effectively combined with Pakistan’s manufacturing capabilities and entrepre-



consumers. Beyond Europe, he said, Portugal’s longstanding historical and economic ties with Portuguese-speaking countries also make it an important gateway to Africa and Latin America. Ambassador Domingues said Portugal could become not only Pakistan’s gateway to Europe

neural talent to generate mutual economic benefits. Reaffirming the embassy’s commitment to promoting economic diplomacy, the ambassador said it would continue facilitating business contacts, identifying investment opportunities,



connecting companies and supporting practical cooperation between the private sectors of both countries. He also urged Portuguese businesses to look beyond outdated perceptions and recognize Pakistan’s growing investment potential, while encouraging Pakistani entrepreneurs to view Portugal as an attractive destination for investment and a strategic platform for international expansion. During the event, Ambassador Domingues paid tribute to Portugal’s Honorary Consul in Lahore, Iftikhar Firoz, acknowledging his more than three decades of service in strengthening bilateral relations and fostering business and people-to-people connections. Earlier, LCCI President Faheem Ur Rehman Saigol welcomed the ambassador and described his visit as an important milestone in advancing Pakistan-Portugal economic relations. Saigol said Pakistan and Portugal have maintained cordial diplomatic relations since 1949 but still possess substantial untapped potential in trade, investment and industrial cooperation. Referring to central bank data, he said bilateral trade reached approximately \$226 million dur-

ing 2024-25, with Pakistan exporting around \$206 million worth of goods while importing nearly \$20 million, leaving the trade balance firmly in Pakistan’s favour. He called for raising bilateral trade to at least \$2 billion, saying cooperation should expand beyond traditional exports such as textiles, apparel, leather goods, agricultural products and surgical instruments to include information technology, pharmaceuticals, engineering products, processed foods, sports goods, home appliances, halal products and value-added agriculture. The LCCI president also emphasized the importance of stronger business-to-business engagement through reciprocal trade delegations, participation in international exhibitions and joint investment forums. He sought the embassy’s support in linking the Lahore Chamber with Portuguese chambers of commerce, trade associations and investors to facilitate greater commercial collaboration. Saigol also noted that Pakistan’s commitment to responsible diplomacy and regional peace had further strengthened its international standing, creating a conducive environment for greater foreign investment and economic cooperation.



US resumes regular consular services at Lahore, Karachi missions

Abida Shaheen

Islamabad: The United States this week resumed regular consular operations at its consulates in Lahore and Karachi, restoring visa processing and services for American citizens following a temporary suspension. In a statement, the US Mission in Pakistan announced that the US Consulate General in Lahore has reopened for US Citizen Services, while the US Consulate General in Karachi has resumed both US Citizen Services and non-immigrant visa processing. The mission described the move as a

restoration of normal consular operations and advised applicants seeking visas or consular assistance to schedule appointments through the official US Embassy website for further information on available services. The reopening follows a temporary disruption to services at the two consulates due to heightened security concerns earlier this year. The resumption of regular operations is expected to ease access to routine consular assistance for American citizens in Pakistan while enabling visa applicants to resume non-immigrant visa processing at the Karachi consulate.



Record-breaking ocean drilling uncovers hidden cause of Japan's devastating 2011 tsunami

Newswire

Tokyo: Scientists have identified a hidden layer of soft, slippery clay beneath the Pacific Ocean that they say played a crucial role in amplifying the devastating 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, a discovery that could significantly improve the prediction of future megaquakes and tsunamis. The findings, published in the journal Science, are based on a record-breaking deep-sea drilling

expedition that reached farther beneath the ocean floor than any previous scientific mission. Researchers say the discovery provides new insights into why the magnitude 9.1 earthquake generated an exceptionally powerful tsunami that claimed nearly 20,000 lives and caused more than \$200 billion in damage. Led by researchers from Northern Arizona University and an international team of scientists, the study found that a thin, clay-rich sediment layer beneath the Japan Trench acted as an unusually weak surface, allowing the earthquake rupture to travel all the way to the seabed.

According to the researchers, this enabled the ocean floor to shift by an estimated 130 to 200 feet within minutes, dramatically increasing the displacement of seawater that generated the catastrophic tsunami. The breakthrough followed a scientific expedition aboard the research vessel Chikyu, which drilled approximately 26,000 feet beneath the ocean floor. The mission was recognised by Guinness World Records as the deepest scientific ocean drilling project ever completed.

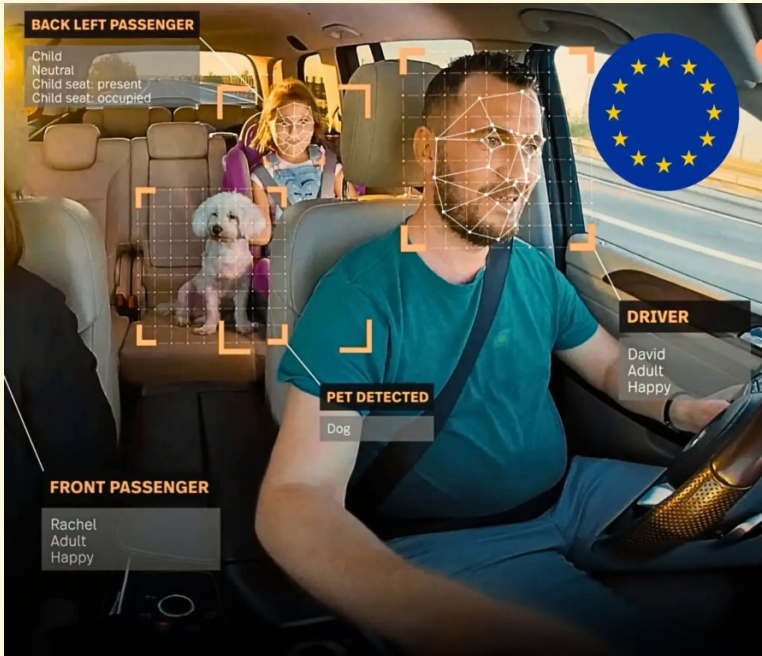


Analysis of recovered samples revealed a nearly 100-foot-thick layer of ancient pelagic clay formed over millions of years from microscopic marine sediments. Sandwiched between much stronger rock formations, the weak clay layer created a natural pathway that concentrated the earthquake rupture and allowed it to propagate rapidly toward the seafloor. Researchers said the discovery challenges previous assumptions about how major subduction-zone earthquakes behave and helps explain why the 2011 event produced such extraordinary seafloor movement. The team believes similar weak sediment layers could exist in other earthquake-prone regions,

making the findings relevant far beyond Japan. Mapping these geological features, they said, could help scientists identify areas at greater risk of generating powerful tsunamis. The researchers also noted that tsunami hazards extend well beyond the regions where earthquakes originate, affecting coastlines across entire ocean basins, including areas such as Hawaii and other Pacific nations. Scientists hope the findings will contribute to more accurate earthquake and tsunami hazard assessments, improved building standards, stronger disaster preparedness strategies and more effective evacuation planning for vulnerable coastal communities. They said a better understanding of the geological conditions beneath the seafloor could ultimately help reduce the human and economic toll of future large-scale seismic disasters.



EU introduces tougher vehicle safety rules to reduce road deaths



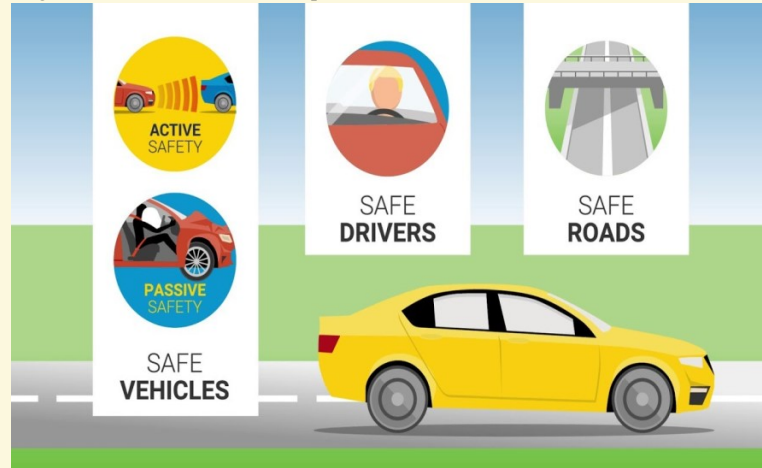
Covert Report
Islamabad: The European Union this week introduced a new set of advanced vehicle safety requirements for all newly registered passenger cars and vans, marking another step towards its long-term goal of eliminating road fatalities by 2050 under its Vision Zero strategy.

to feature advanced emergency braking systems capable of detecting pedestrians and cyclists, enhanced driver distraction warning systems to help motorists remain focused, improved forward visibility, stricter safety testing for worn tyres and expanded safety glass areas aimed at reducing injuries to pedestrians dur-



Effective from July 7, 2026, all new cars and vans sold across the EU must be equipped with additional safety technologies designed to better protect drivers, passengers, pedestrians and cyclists, while reducing accidents caused by human error and driver distraction. Under the latest regulations, newly registered vehicles are now required

ing collisions. The new measures build upon the EU's General Safety Regulation, under which several vehicle safety technologies became mandatory for new cars and vans in 2024. European authorities said the latest requirements were introduced in phases to provide manufacturers sufficient time to develop and integrate the more

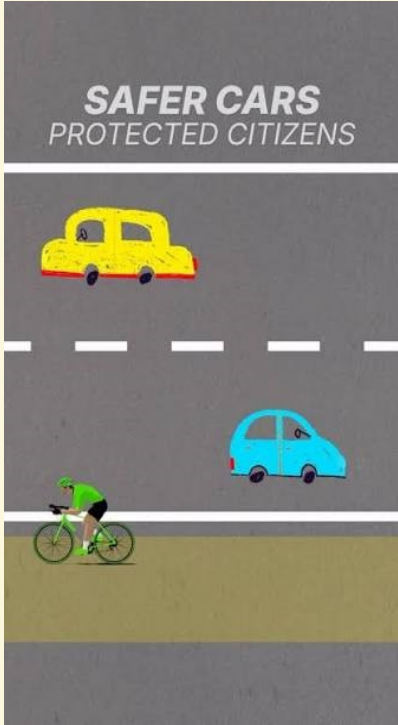


Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan H. E. Mr Raimundas Karoblis

technically advanced features. The European Union said the enhanced standards are expected to significantly improve road safety by encouraging wider adoption of advanced driver-assistance systems, strengthening protection for vulnera-

ble road users and helping reduce crashes linked to distracted driving. Despite having some of the safest roads globally, the EU continues to record thousands of deaths and serious injuries from road accidents each year. Officials said the strengthened

safety regulations form part of a broader strategy to move as close as possible to zero road fatalities by 2050, reinforcing the bloc's commitment to safer and more sustainable transport.



British High Commissioner Jane Marriott welcomes \$50m climate finance partnership

Says investment will strengthen Pakistan's green transition

Celina Ali

Islamabad: British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott this week welcomed the signing of a \$50 million climate finance facility between British International Investment (BII) and Bank Alfalah, describing the agreement as a significant milestone in UK-Pakistan cooperation to combat climate change while accelerating sustainable economic growth.

Speaking after the agreement was signed during London Climate Action Week at BII's headquarters, Marriott said the partnership reflects the United Kingdom's continued commitment to supporting Pakistan's transition towards a greener, more climate-resilient economy through sustainable investment and long-term financial cooperation.

The \$50 million senior term loan facility was signed by Bank Alfalah President and Chief Executive Officer Atif Bajwa and BII Chief Executive Officer Leslie Maasdorp in the presence of the British high commissioner.

Highlighting the importance of the initia-

tive, Marriott said Pakistan is among the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, making investments in climate resilience and environmental sustainability increasingly critical. At the same time, she noted that the country possesses considerable potential to attract green investment capable of driving economic growth while strengthening resilience against climate-related challenges.

The British envoy said the financing agreement serves as a strong example of how the United Kingdom and Pakistan can work together to address the global climate crisis through practical partnerships that mobilise private capital for sustainable development.

Under the agreement, Bank Alfalah will utilise the facility to expand financing for eligible climate-focused projects across Pakistan, enabling businesses to invest in cleaner technologies, low-carbon solutions and environmentally sustainable infrastructure. The funding is expected to support initiatives including climate-smart agriculture, efficient water irrigation systems and other projects aimed at reducing emissions, improving resource efficiency and strengthening climate resilience.

Marriott said such partnerships underscore the growing collaboration between the UK and Pakistan in advancing climate action, promoting green finance and encouraging investment that delivers both environmental and economic benefits, while supporting Pakistan's broader sustainable development objectives.



Deputy high commissioner of UK to Pakistan H.E. Matt Cannell



“You’ve gotta dance like there’s nobody watching, Love like you’ll never be hurt, Sing like there’s nobody listening, And live like it’s heaven on earth.”
William W. Purkey

“In three words I can sum up everything I’ve learned about life: it goes on.” Robert Frost

Leonardo Chairman Stefano Pontecorvo says Europe has capability to build stronger independent defence

Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Chairman of Leonardo and former Italian ambassador Stefano Pontecorvo said this week that Europe possesses the technological expertise and industrial capabilities needed to build a stronger and more independent defence system, arguing that greater political commitment and increased investment are now essential to meeting evolving global security challenges. Speaking during an interview on the Zenit programme, Ambassador Pontecorvo said

Europe, beginning with Italy, has technologies and industrial capabilities that are comparable to those of the United States, but continues to lag behind in defence spending. He said Europe still has an opportunity to strengthen its strategic autonomy, provided governments are willing to make the necessary investments to enhance defence capabilities and industrial capacity. According to Ambassador Pontecorvo, the principal obstacle is not a lack of technology or expertise but insufficient political will to allocate greater financial resources to defence. He argued that many in Europe have yet to

fully appreciate the scale of geopolitical transformation taking place, describing the current international environment as “not simply an era of change, but a change of era.” The Leonardo chairman said Europe’s future security would depend on leaders recognising the need to adapt to the evolving strategic landscape and invest accordingly. Commenting on tensions involving the United States and Iran, Ambassador Pontecorvo said both countries have compelling reasons to avoid a prolonged conflict and are likely to seek ways to limit further escalation. He suggested that domestic political considerations, including upcoming US mid-term elections, could influence Washington’s decision-making, while Iran also faces constraints in sustaining extended hostilities. Ambassador Pontecorvo cautioned against viewing the situation as settled, saying the regional security environment remains highly fluid and subject to changing political and diplomatic dynamics. Discussing the broader Middle East, he said Türkiye could assume a more prominent strategic role in regional security, particularly in Syria and Iraq, arguing that Ankara possesses both the operational capabilities and the willingness to undertake responsibilities that the United States may increasingly prefer to delegate.



France delivers 44 tonnes of humanitarian aid to earthquake-hit Venezuela

NewsWire
Paris: France this week delivered 44 tonnes of humanitarian assistance to Venezuela following the devastating earthquakes that struck the country on June 24, reaffirming its solidarity with the Venezuelan people and its commitment to supporting ongoing relief efforts. In a statement, France’s Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs said the assistance was dispatched at the request of the Venezuelan authorities and coordinated by the ministry’s Crisis and Support Centre. The shipment included 38 tonnes of emergency relief supplies transported from Guadeloupe, comprising temporary shelters, solar-powered lamps and hygiene kits provided by the French government and the French Red Cross. The humanitarian cargo arrived in Venezuela this week and will be distributed to affected communities through the Venezuelan Red Cross with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red

Crescent Societies. An additional six tonnes of food and non-food relief items, donated by residents of Martinique, will be delivered to communities in need through the humanitarian organisation Caritas Venezuela. French authorities said the aid mission was carried out with logistical support from French Armed Forces units stationed in the French West Indies and in partnership with the French Red Cross. The humanitarian operation follows the deployment of 85 French rescue personnel to Venezuela at the request of French President Emmanuel Macron. Working alongside Venezuelan emergency services, the team conducted search-and-rescue and debris-clearing operations until July 4 to assist communities affected by the earthquakes. France said the relief efforts were undertaken within the framework of the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism, which facilitates coordinated emergency assistance among participating countries during major



disasters. Reaffirming its support for Venezuela, the French government expressed

its deepest sympathy to the victims of the earthquakes, their families and all those impacted by the disaster, pledg-

ing to continue assisting the Venezuelan people during the recovery process.