

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad urges UN action against weaponisation of natural resources, raises India's suspension of Indus Waters Treaty Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan this week called on the United Nations Security Council to strengthen international action against the exploitation and weaponisation of natural resources, warning that weak governance, illegal extraction and unilateral actions over

(Page-5)

UK backs Pakistan's tariff, sectoral reform agenda Celina Ali
Islamabad: The United Kingdom this week reaffirmed its support for Pakistan's economic reform agenda, with senior officials from both countries discussing tariff restructuring, sector-specific policy changes, and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening eco

(Page-11)

Pakistan-China business conference secures \$1.4 billion investment commitments

Celina Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan and China this week concluded their landmark two-day Pakistan-China Business Conference with investment and commercial agreements worth approximately US \$1.4 billion, underscoring growing Chinese investor confidence in Pakistan and reinforcing the strategic economic partnership between the two countries. The April 17-18 conference, which attracted more than 250 Chinese companies alongside hundreds of Pakistani enterprises, generated extensive business-to-business engagements covering pharmaceuticals, healthcare, vaccine manufacturing, advanced industrial production, medical devices and technology-driven manu-

facturing. The final day alone witnessed the signing of 42 agreements valued at nearly US \$850 million, bringing the total value of investment commitments reached during the conference to approximately US \$1.4 billion, officials said on Sunday afternoon. The event marked one of the largest recent platforms for private-sector cooperation between Pakistan and China, with companies from both countries exploring joint ventures, technology partnerships, manufacturing projects and long-term industrial investments. Among the conference's most significant achievements were agreements for establishing local manufacturing facilities for pharmaceutical products, vaccines and sophisticated medical

equipment in Pakistan. The projects are expected to reduce Pakistan's dependence on imported medicines and healthcare products while strengthening domestic manufacturing capabilities through Chinese technological expertise and industrial investment. Officials said the investments would facilitate technology transfer, create thousands of employment opportunities, improve industrial productivity and expand Pakistan's export potential in pharmaceutical and healthcare products. Participants also discussed strengthening industrial supply chains, encouraging research collaboration and enhancing local production capacity to improve Pakistan's competitiveness in regional and international markets.

Business leaders described the conference as another milestone in Pakistan-China economic relations, emphasizing that stronger private-sector engagement complements the broader strategic partnership between Islamabad and Beijing.

President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Atif Ikram Sheikh termed the US \$1.4 billion agreements a major breakthrough for bilateral economic cooperation. He said investments across pharmaceuticals, vaccine manufacturing and industrial sectors would encourage foreign direct investment, accelerate technology transfer and create substantial employment opportunities while supporting Pakistan's industrialization agenda.



According to Sheikh, the scale of Chinese participation demonstrated growing confidence in Pakistan's economic potential and reflected increasing interest among Chinese companies in establishing long-term commercial partnerships in the country. President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Usman Shaukat, also welcomed the outcome of the conference, describing it as a significant step toward expanding bilateral trade, industrial collaboration and investment. He noted that Chinese investment in advanced manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and healthcare

technologies would strengthen Pakistan's industrial base, improve productivity and create new export opportunities. Industry experts believe the investment commitments will boost Pakistan's manufacturing output, attract additional foreign direct investment, generate skilled employment and further integrate Pakistan into regional industrial supply chains supported by China. The conference also demonstrated the expanding role of private enterprises in deepening Pakistan-China economic relations beyond traditional infrastructure cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Canada announces \$47 million support package for Pakistan, backs Islamabad's diplomacy on Iran



Abdullah Jan
Islamabad: Canada this week announced more than \$47 million in new development and security assistance for Pakistan while commending Islamabad's diplomatic efforts to promote dialogue between the United States and Iran, underscoring a renewed momentum in bilateral relations during the first visit by a Canadian foreign minister to Pakistan in nearly two decades. Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand, who arrived in Islamabad on Monday, held talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar and later met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss trade, investment, regional security and cooperation in key sectors, including energy, mining, agriculture and information technology. Her visit came against the backdrop of renewed conflict in the Middle East, with military tensions escalating between Washington and Tehran despite earlier diplomatic efforts. Speaking alongside Dar, Anand acknowledged Pakistan's contribution to regional diplomacy, particularly its efforts to facilitate dialogue between the United States and Iran. "I would like to acknowledge Pakistan's efforts in supporting dialogue aimed at achieving a sustainable and peaceful resolution to regional tensions in the Middle East, including involving Iran," she said, while reiterating Canada's concern over the continuing escalation across the Middle East and the Gulf region. Pakistan has played an active diplomatic role since the onset of the US-Iran conflict, hosting peace talks between the two sides and facilitating negotiations that resulted in the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding earlier this year before hostilities resumed. Highlighting Canada's commitment to expanding bilateral engagement, Anand described Pakistan as an important partner in Ottawa's strategy to diversify international trade and strengthen economic partnerships.

She announced more than \$2.2 million for three new security cooperation initiatives to be implemented in collaboration with Interpol, the United Nations and other international partners. The programmes will support Pakistan's efforts to strengthen border management, counter terrorism, combat financial crime and enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies through specialized training. In addition, Canada unveiled three new development initiatives worth approximately \$45 million, aimed at supporting climate resilience, disaster recovery and education in Pakistan. The funding will assist communities affected by recurring floods, strengthen climate adaptation measures and expand access to education, particularly for girls, reflecting Canada's continued focus on sustainable development and social inclusion. For his part, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar welcomed Canada's continued engagement with Pakistan and invited greater Canadian investment in priority sectors, including education, renewable energy, mining and critical minerals, agriculture, infrastructure and information technology. He said both sides explored ways to expand bilateral trade and investment through stronger business-to-business engagement and enhanced cooperation in areas of shared economic interest. During Anand's meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Canadian foreign minister expressed Ottawa's interest in exploring new avenues of economic cooperation, particularly in agriculture, mining, energy and automotive manufacturing. She also emphasized the importance of concluding a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPPA) to strengthen investor confidence and encourage greater Canadian investment in Pakistan. Following the meeting, Prime Minister Sharif witnessed the signing of a Protocol on Phytosanitary Regulations governing the import of Canadian canola into Pakistan. Signed by Foreign Minister Anand and Deputy Prime Minister Dar, the protocol establishes regulatory requirements for Canadian genetically modified canola intended for food, feed and processing purposes. The visit also featured discussions on law enforcement cooperation. During talks with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Anand reviewed collaboration on preventing illegal migration, combating human trafficking and cybercrime, and expanding training and exchange programmes for law enforcement personnel. Both sides agreed to move forward with the signing of a memorandum of understanding to institutionalize cooperation in these areas. Pakistan and Canada have maintained diplomatic relations since 1947 and continue to enjoy growing commercial and people-to-people ties. Bilateral merchandise trade exceeded \$1.2 billion in 2025, while Canada is home to a vibrant Pakistani diaspora of more than 300,000 people. Economic cooperation between the two countries has also expanded through major investment projects such as the Reko Diq copper and gold mine in Balochistan, being developed by Canadian mining company Barrick Gold in partnership with Pakistan's federal and provincial governments. Anand's visit signals a renewed phase in Pakistan-Canada relations, with both countries seeking to deepen cooperation across diplomacy, trade, investment, climate resilience and regional security while reaffirming their shared commitment to promoting stability and sustainable economic development.

Natasha calls for Pakistan-Belarus stronger parliamentary engagement

Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Convener of the Pakistan-Belarus Parliamentary Friendship Group and Member of the National Assembly Natasha Daultana thus week called for enhanced parliamentary engagement between Pakistan and Belarus, saying stronger institutional contacts between lawmakers can play a vital role in expanding bilateral cooperation and deepening ties between the two friendly countries. In a statement, Daultana said Parliamentary Friendship Groups have emerged as an important platform for parliamentary diplomacy, helping legislatures foster mutual understanding, strengthen political dialogue and promote cooperation in areas of shared interest. She emphasized that sustained interaction between parliamentarians would complement government-level engagement and create new opportunities to advance bilateral relations through regular exchanges of ideas, legislative experiences and policy cooperation. Daultana said Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Belarus and believes there is considerable scope to further broaden cooperation through closer collaboration between the two countries' parliamentary institutions. She stressed that direct interaction among legislators could facilitate dialogue on economic cooperation, trade, investment, education and other mutually beneficial sectors while strengthening people-to-people contacts. The PPP lawmaker also underscored the importance of establishing regular communication between the Pakistan-Belarus Parliamentary Friendship Group and its counterpart in the Belarusian Parliament, saying virtual meetings and institutional exchanges could provide an effective mechanism for maintaining continuous engagement. Referring to the growing momentum in bilateral relations, Daultana said recent high-level exchanges between Pakistan and



Belarus have laid a solid foundation for expanding cooperation across multiple sectors and should now be complemented by stronger parliamentary collaboration. She reiterated her commitment to promoting parliamentary diplomacy as an important pillar of Pakistan's foreign relations, expressing confidence that enhanced engagement between lawmakers would contribute to further strengthening the longstanding friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and Belarus.

Pakistan's diplomacy, China's global vision take centre stage at World Peace Forum



Celina Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan's role in promoting regional peace and China's growing influence in shaping an emerging global order came into sharp focus at the World Peace Forum in Beijing, where Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said the post-World War II Western-led international system was steadily losing credibility because of what

he described as persistent double standards. Delivering the keynote address at the prestigious World Peace Forum, organised by Tsinghua University this week, Mushahid argued that the international community was witnessing a historic geopolitical transition in which countries of the Global South were assuming a greater role in global governance. He maintained that the existing Western-led rules-based order had failed to ensure

either genuine international order or the consistent application of universally accepted rules, creating space for the emergence of a more inclusive and balanced international system. The forum brought together nearly 100 policymakers, diplomats, academics and strategic experts from around 30 countries. Chinese Vice President Han Zheng inaugurated the conference, while former foreign ministers, senior diplomats and international scholars discussed evolving security challenges and prospects for global peace. Participants praised Pakistan's diplomatic engagement in South Asia and the Middle East, describing Islamabad's proactive regional outreach as an important contributor to peace, stability and dialogue at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions. Highlighting the significance of 2026 as the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, Mushahid described bilateral ties as a unique model of strategic cooperation that had evolved from traditional neighbourly relations into an enduring partnership between "Iron Brothers." He said the recently adopted Pakistan-China Strategic Work Plan for 2026-2030 would provide a comprehensive roadmap for broadening cooperation in political, economic, technological, security and people-to-people sectors over the next five years. The senator praised China's peaceful rise on the global stage, attributing Beijing's growing influence to what he described as the wisdom of a civilisation spanning more than five millennia. He said China's development had been achieved without pursuing aggression, military occupation or colonial expansion, enabling it to emerge as one of the world's foremost powers. Referring to changing global power dynamics, Mushahid noted that China's expanding international stature had been increasingly acknowledged worldwide, reflecting its central role in international diplomacy and economic development.

He further argued that China's technological advancement and diplomatic engagement had significantly enhanced its international standing during recent regional crises. According to Mushahid, Beijing's growing credibility stemmed from its ability to maintain dialogue with all sides while avoiding military confrontation and positioning itself as a trusted partner in conflict resolution. Drawing comparisons between regional organisations, Mushahid contrasted the success of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with the limited effectiveness of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). He attributed ASEAN's success to Indonesia's inclusive and consensus-driven leadership, while arguing that unequal regional dynamics had constrained SAARC's ability to realise its full potential. Concluding his speech, Mushahid recalled his first visit to China as a student during the early 1970s and quoted Chairman Mao Zedong's famous words, "Nothing is hard in this world if you dare to scale the heights," a remark that received warm applause from the international audience. During his visit to China, Mushahid also participated in a high-level international conference in Ningxia on "Xi Jinping Thought and Poverty Alleviation," organised by the International Department of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC). Chairing a dialogue involving scholars and political representatives from China, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Cambodia, he praised China's internationally recognised poverty reduction programme, noting that approximately 800 million people had been lifted out of poverty over four decades, resulting in the elimination of absolute poverty across the country. The conference attracted around 150 political leaders, academics, media representatives and think tank experts from Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and North America, highlighting China's growing role in promoting development cooperation and govern-



ance exchanges with the Global South. During his stay, Mushahid also met Chinese Vice President Han Zheng and IDCPC Minister Liu Haixing to discuss bilateral relations and regional cooperation, reaffirming the momentum in Pakistan-China strategic engagement as both countries celebrate 75 years of diplomatic ties.

Punjab explores Huawei AI technologies as Pakistan deepens digital cooperation with China

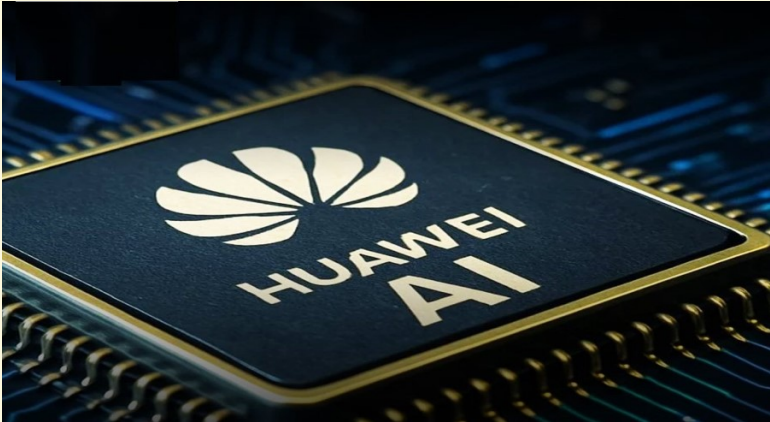


Gwadar Pro

Islamabad: Pakistan's Punjab government has intensified its engagement with Chinese technology giant Huawei by exploring advanced arti-

ficial intelligence and digital governance solutions aimed at modernising public administration and positioning the province as a regional hub for AI-driven innovation. Advisor to Punjab Chief Minister on Artificial

Intelligence and Special Initiatives Ali Dar visited Huawei's Lianqihu Research and Development Center in Shanghai on Monday afternoon, where senior company executives showcased cutting-edge AI applications designed for government services, digital governance and smart public administration. Huawei Vice President and Chief Solution Architect for Government Public Services and Digitalisation Jianfeng Shen, along with senior executive Peng Wang, briefed the Pakistani delegation on the company's latest technological innovations and discussed their potential application across Punjab's governance framework. The discussions focused on utilising artificial intelligence to improve efficiency, transparency and citizen-centric governance while introducing global best practices that could accelerate Punjab's digital transformation programme. Officials from both sides explored opportunities for deeper cooperation in digital governance, data-driven public administration, smart service delivery and AI-enabled decision-making, reflecting growing technological collaboration between Pakistan and China.



Ali Dar said the Punjab government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, was pursuing an ambitious strategy to transform the province into South Asia's leading artificial intelligence hub by integrating emerging technologies into gov-

ernance, education and economic development. He said artificial intelligence had the potential to revolutionise public administration by making government services faster, more transparent, accountable and responsive to citizens' needs.

Pakistan-China education partnership key to skilled workforce, agricultural transformation: PCJCCI



Newswire

Lahore: Deepening educational cooperation between Pakistan and China will play a pivotal role in building a highly skilled workforce, modernizing agriculture and strengthening Pakistan's position in the global knowledge economy, Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) Commercial Ambassador Adeel Munawar said this week. He said investment in education, vocational training, scientific research and innovation has become the foundation of sustainable economic growth, adding that closer academic collaboration with China would enable Pakistan to harness its demographic potential while

accelerating technological advancement across key sectors. Highlighting Pakistan's youthful population, Adeel Munawar said more than 60 percent of the country's citizens are under the age of 30, making investment in higher education, technical training and professional skills one of Pakistan's greatest economic opportunities. He stressed that equipping young people with modern knowledge and industry-oriented expertise would strengthen national productivity and support long-term economic development. He said agriculture, which contributes around 22 percent to Pakistan's gross domestic product and employs nearly one-third of the national workforce, stands to benefit significantly from expanded cooperation with China. According to him, technology transfer, scientific research and modern agricultural education are essential for improving productivity, ensuring food security, boosting exports and raising rural incomes. Referring to the growing agricultural partnership between Islamabad and Beijing, Adeel Munawar noted that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent engagements with the Chinese leadership resulted in several important agreements aimed at expanding bilateral cooperation in

the sector. These include protocols on inspection, quarantine and sanitary requirements for dried fruits and nuts, phytosanitary requirements for maize exports, a memorandum of understanding on strengthening agricultural development cooperation, and a letter of exchange on animal vaccines. He said these agreements reflect both countries' shared commitment to modernizing Pakistan's agricultural sector through scientific collaboration, improved standards and enhanced market access. The PCJCCI official further highlighted that Pakistan and China have already begun translating these commitments into practical initiatives. Under the Prime Minister's capacity-building programme, 1,000 young Pakistani agricultural graduates are receiving specialized training at leading Chinese universities and research institutions. He said the programme covers cutting-edge disciplines including biotechnology, agricultural mechanization, climate-smart farming, artificial intelligence, precision irrigation systems and seed development. The graduates are expected to bring advanced expertise back to Pakistan, helping introduce modern farming techniques,

innovative research practices and technology-driven agricultural solutions across the country. Adeel Munawar said broader academic cooperation between Pakistan and China would also promote joint scientific research, faculty exchanges, technology commercialization, digital education platforms and innovation-led entrepreneurship. Aligning university curricula with evolving industry requirements, he added, would equip graduates with market-driven skills, narrow the gap between education and employment and strengthen Pakistan's industrial competitiveness and export potential. He also emphasized the importance of digital transformation in the education sector, saying the integration of artificial intelligence, smart classrooms, precision agriculture technologies and advanced vocational training into academic institutions would prepare Pakistani youth for emerging industries while increasing productivity in agriculture, manufacturing and technology. Adeel Munawar described Pakistan-China educational cooperation as a strategic investment in human capital rather than merely an academic partnership.



He said expanding collaboration in education, research and technological innovation would enhance workforce productivity, accelerate sustainable agricultural development and further reinforce the enduring Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, creating new opportunities for long-term economic growth and shared prosperity.

Italy expands soilless berry cultivation with 70 hectares of new greenhouse projects

Abida Shaheen
Rome: Italy's fruit and vegetable sector is accelerating the adoption of advanced soilless cultivation technologies, with approximately 70 hectares of new greenhouse installations completed in 2026 to support the production of strawberries and

reflects growing investment in protected agriculture as producers seek higher productivity, improved sustainability and greater resilience against changing climatic conditions. The new greenhouse projects were developed across several Italian regions, including Basilicata, Calabria,



His Excellency Ugo Ciarlatani, Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan, and Mrs. Ciarlatani

other berries. The expansion, led by Italian greenhouse manufacturer Combimetal Carrera, re-

Apulia and Emilia-Romagna, while similar large-scale installations were also completed in Lebanon.



The facilities are primarily designed for the soilless cultivation of strawberries and a range of berry crops, enabling growers to optimize land use while improving crop quality and resource efficiency. In some orchards, the company also installed hail-protection structures to safeguard tree crops from increasingly unpredictable weather. The greenhouse systems are tailored to meet the technical and agronomic requirements of individual farms. A commonly adopted design features double rows of eaves with carefully spaced gutters, allowing growers to maximize cultivation space and improve operational efficiency. One recently completed three-hectare project in Basilicata demonstrates the potential of the technology. By using a multi-level vertical cultivation system, the project nearly doubled the effective growing area compared with conventional open-field farming, making it possible to transplant around one million berry seedlings within the same footprint. According to the company, double-gutter systems can increase planting density by up to 15 percent compared with traditional cultivation methods. Higher planting densities, combined with controlled growing conditions, also facilitate integrated pest management practices, reducing reliance on synthetic pesticides and supporting more environmentally sustainable production. Combimetal Carrera attributes much of its

success to innovative engineering and installation techniques. Rather than transporting fully assembled components, the company manufactures key structural elements directly at customer sites. This approach reduces transportation costs, shortens installation time and enables the production of continuous steel profiles measuring nearly 28 metres in length, minimizing structural joints and improving overall durability. Company representatives say the technology addresses one of agriculture's growing challenges—improving working conditions while maintaining profitability. The elevated cultivation systems reduce the physical demands placed on workers during planting, maintenance and harvesting operations. They also create cleaner production environments, simplify crop management, improve fruit uniformity and ripening, and enable more precise control of irrigation, plant nutrition and pest man-

agement. These operational improvements have translated into measurable productivity gains. In several recently completed commercial installations, growers were able to achieve an additional harvest early in the production season, increasing overall output and improving returns on investment. The greenhouse systems also support research and varietal development through partnerships with leading industry organizations. Combimetal Carrera collaborates with commercial producer Nicofruit and breeding specialist Nova Siri Genetics to evaluate and propagate new berry varieties under controlled conditions before they are introduced to international markets. Industry experts note that protected soilless cultivation is becoming an increasingly important component of modern horticulture as growers face mounting pressures from climate change, labour shortages and the need to produce high-quality fruit with fewer natural resources. The expansion of greenhouse infrastructure highlights Italy's commitment to modernizing its horticultural sector through precision agriculture, innovative engineering and sustainable production practices, positioning the country as a leading adopter of advanced berry cultivation technologies in Europe.

The World Cup party is over, but the war is not

Ding Gang

The confetti from World Cup final hadn't even been swept up before American newsrooms turned the page.

By Monday evening, the lead story on CNN and NPR was no longer Spain's extra-time win over Argentina; it was a grim bulletin from northern Iraq: Another US service member killed while disposing of a downed Iranian drone.

He was the third American to die in recent days, bringing the US death toll to 17, with more than 420 wounded since the conflict began. On Monday night, both sides resumed their exchange of fire.



The handoff was seamless: The sports pages celebrated while the front pages mourned.

None of this should shock anyone who's spent time in a newsroom. A World Cup final, however thrilling, is a finished product. The trophy is lifted, the confetti has fallen, and all that's left is the highlight reel and the hangover.

A war is the opposite - an open-ended story with no final whistle. A soldier's death isn't the end of a news cycle; it's the latest tick mark on a casualty curve that hasn't peaked. Editors will pick the story still unfolding over the one already wrapped every single time. It's not cynicism. It's physics.

And let's be fair: Americans actually watched this World Cup. The final drew record US audiences, with viewership up more than 150 percent over the last tournament's quarter-finals. That's exactly what makes the sudden shift so jarring - millions of people were still excited about the match while the Pentagon was already notifying families of fallen soldiers, and Capitol Hill was limbering up for the next round of partisan cage-fighting.

Democrats have seized on the mounting toll to argue that Congress must reclaim its constitutional authority over war - that quaint little clause in Article I that's been gathering dust.

In June, the House passed a war powers resolution, with four Republicans crossing the aisle to demand that the president obtain authorization before further military action. The Senate fol-

lowed suit. It was a rare bipartisan rebuke, roughly as common in Washington these days as a humble press conference. However, the resolution is nonbinding, and the White House has treated it with the respect usually reserved for expired parking tickets.

Each new death is now fresh ammunition for those arguing that the executive branch is waging a war nobody voted on.

President Donald Trump responded to the defectors by calling them "unpatriotic," which in his vocabulary ranks somewhere between a misdeed and a personality disorder. More revealing was what came next: He framed the latest strikes on Iran as retribution "in honor" of the fallen. That's a telling choice of words.

Wars fought in the name of honor have a way of generating more honor to defend - and more casualties to avenge. It's the geopolitical version of a bar tab that never closes.

The boos that greeted the president at the medal ceremony made for a great clip and a viral meme, but they'll be forgotten by the weekend. However, a growing stack of folded flags is the kind of news that moves legislation, tests executive power and - not coincidentally - shapes midterm elections. Stadium cheers don't echo in congressional hearing rooms. Casualty reports do.

This isn't a story about the media ignoring sports for politics. It's about a country running two parallel narratives: the entertainment economy that unites the people for ninety minutes, and the war machine that quietly pulls them apart. Both are loud. Only one is still writing new chapters.

When the World Cup tide recedes, people remember the champion. When a war recedes, it



leaves behind things the country has to carry: the costs, the explanations, the accountability.

A victory can make a divided nation forget its divisions for a while. A lengthening list of the dead makes forgetting impossible. America has always been world-class at moving on, but the scoreboard and the casualty report are not the same thing. Only one of them still matters after

the final whistle.

The party is over. The war is not.

The writer is a senior editor with the People's Daily and currently a senior fellow with the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China

‘Nuclear energy’ or ‘nuclear weapons’? What is China and the US’ AI competition really about?

Global Times

The divide between "nuclear energy" and "nuclear weapons" reflects the different paths China and the US have taken in AI development, which ultimately stem from fundamentally different ways of thinking. History shows that an exclusive, zero-sum mind-set is ultimately unsustainable. The US' technology restrictions have failed to contain China's progress, while leaving Washington caught in a dilemma: easing restrictions risks strengthening a competitor, yet closing itself off risks international isolation.

Recently, discussions surrounding the China-US artificial intelligence (AI) competition have been heating up around the world. A commentary article recently published by The New York Times said the US views cutting-edge AI as "nuclear weapons" - a force with "an immensely destructive form of power that requires a careful and jealous watch" - while China treats AI more like "nuclear energy," a "lower-risk technology" that can be "shared and commercialized." This is an interesting analogy. Although it may not be entirely precise, it still captures the differences between China and the US in their approaches to AI in terms of security, development, governance and their broader visions of the world.

Viewing AI as "nuclear weapons" essentially places



technology entirely within the framework of geopolitical confrontation. Some people in the US and other Western countries believe that advanced AI will give those who control it overwhelming advantages in military, economic and intelligence capabilities. Therefore, they argue that the US must maintain its lead at all costs, strictly prevent the outflow of technology, and treat any potential competitor seeking to catch up as a threat to be contained. This technological Cold War mentality has driven Washington's export controls on advanced chips, repeated tightening of access to frontier AI models, and growing suspicion - or even hostility - toward open-source ecosystems.

However, the most dangerous aspect of the "nuclear weapons" analogy lies in its exclusivity. It assumes that security can only be achieved through technological monopoly, that another country's advancement necessarily means one's own loss, and that the ultimate form of technological competition is for one side to completely defeat the other. Such zero-sum logic once maintained a balance of terror during the nuclear age, but in the AI era, the speed of technological diffusion far exceeds that of nuclear technology. AI models can be replicated and retrained at relatively low cost. Trying to manage AI with Cold War-era thinking will only push the world toward greater division and confrontation.

By contrast, viewing AI as "nuclear energy" represents a different vision of development. Nuclear energy carries enormous risks, but humanity has not abandoned it; instead, it has chosen to manage those risks through international standards, technological cooperation and safety regulation, turning it into a usable source of clean energy. China's understanding of AI is similar: technology itself is neutral, and risks depend on how it is used. The most effective way to manage risks is not to build an "iron curtain" around technology, but to encourage broader participation in governance, make technologies more transparent and subject to scrutiny, and allow rules to evolve through wider application and practice.

For this reason, China has consistently sought to serve as a provider of international public goods in the field of AI, emphasizing that AI development should not be a solo performance by any single country, but rather a symphony of global cooperation. Behind this position lies a clear understanding of how technological progress works: monopolies may preserve a short-term advantage, but only openness can sustain long-term innovation. The decision by Chinese models such as Kimi K3 to embrace open source is not because China fails to recognize the strategic value of technology. On the contrary, it is precisely because China understands that the true power of technology lies in being used and improved by more people, while enabling more people to benefit from it.

At its core, the divergence between these two approaches stems from fundamentally different ways of thinking. One side views AI as a strategic asset to be monopolized and a tool for geopolitical competition. The other sees it as a public good that should be shared and used for the benefit of all humanity, advocating shared security through cooperation, openness in development, and multilateral governance. It is this fundamental difference in perspective that has led China and the US down sharply different paths on AI. History shows that an exclusive, zero-sum mind-set is ultimately unsustainable. The US' technology restrictions have failed to contain China's progress, while leaving Washington caught in a dilemma: easing restrictions risks strengthening a competitor, yet closing itself off risks international isolation. Meanwhile, China's open-source AI models have quietly become part of the forefront of global AI research and industrial development. This reflects the inherent ecological advantage that open systems enjoy



over closed ones.

This contrast has also prompted a growing number of Western elites to reflect on whether they had misjudged China. They once dismissed China's embrace of open source as merely a tactical expedient. Yet DeepSeek, Kimi, and a growing lineup of Chinese foundation models continue to be released as open source for the global community. They also assumed China was incapable of producing genuine innovation. Yet a growing number of AI talents trained in China are making their mark at the world's leading universities, research institutions, and technology companies. Faced with this reality, it is no surprise that media outlets such as Switzerland's Neue Zürcher Zeitung have called on the West to wake up and take China seriously.

So how should China and the US, as the world's two leading powers, approach AI in a way that truly benefits humanity? China does not deny that AI poses risks. On the contrary, it stresses the importance of strengthening risk awareness and ensuring AI remains safe and controllable. But managing risk does not mean setting up a new "Iron Curtain." A truly

responsible approach is to uphold a people-centered vision that ensures AI is developed for the common good, making it a powerful engine for shared prosperity and common security. China has already demonstrated this commitment through concrete actions. It hopes the US can also move beyond its "nuclear weapons" mentality and join the rest of the world in embracing openness and cooperation.

Global Times

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

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad urges UN action against weaponisation of natural resources, raises India's suspension of Indus Waters Treaty

Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan this week called on the United Nations Security Council to strengthen international action against the exploitation and weaponisation of natural resources, warning that weak governance, illegal extraction and unilateral actions over shared resources continue to fuel conflicts and threaten global peace and security. Addressing the Security Council's High-Level Open Debate on "Natural Resource Governance: The Foundation of Peace, Security

and Prosperity", Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, said natural resources should serve as drivers of sustainable development and shared prosperity rather than becoming instruments of coercion, instability and geopolitical rivalry. He noted that throughout history, natural resources have shaped civilizations, economic development and technological progress, adding that their strategic importance has grown further as the world transitions toward clean energy, artificial intelligence, advanced

manufacturing and digital technologies.

"The global competition for critical minerals is becoming one of the defining geopolitical realities of our time," he observed, stressing that this growing demand must not come at the expense of international law, national sovereignty or equitable development. The Pakistani envoy argued that while natural resources have the potential to transform economies, weak governance, illicit extraction, unequal distribution of benefits and external interference continue to fuel humanitarian crises and armed conflicts, particularly in developing countries. Referring to Africa, Ambassador Ahmad reaffirmed Pakistan's longstanding support for African nations in safeguarding sovereign control over their natural wealth. He cited the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as a prominent example where the illicit exploitation and trafficking of mineral resources have financed armed groups and deprived local populations of the benefits of their country's abundant natural wealth. He emphasized the need for stronger traceability mechanisms, responsible supply chains and enhanced regional cooperation to disrupt conflict financing and ensure that natural resources contribute to sustainable development rather than violence. The ambassador also called for resource-rich developing countries to become equal partners in global value chains instead of remaining exporters of raw materials. He urged greater emphasis on responsible investment, local processing industries, technology transfer, skills development and equitable revenue-sharing arrangements. "Sustainable peace cannot be achieved where immense natural wealth coexists with persistent poverty and underdevelopment," he said, warning that such disparities create conditions conducive to instability and conflict. Highlighting the importance of international law, Ambassador Ahmad said the governance of natural resources must remain firmly anchored in the United Nations Charter and the principle of permanent sovereignty over natural wealth as enshrined in UN General Assembly Resolution 1803. International cooperation, he

said, should strengthen national capacities while fully respecting national ownership and policy priorities.

Turning to transboundary resources, the Pakistani envoy stressed that cooperative and lawful management of shared water resources is indispensable for preventing disputes, promoting peaceful relations among neighbouring states and ensuring regional stability. In this context, he sharply criticized India over its decision to place the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, describing the move as unlawful and contrary to both the treaty's provisions and established principles of international law. Ambassador Ahmad said Pakistan categorically rejects India's unilateral action, arguing that it directly threatens the livelihoods and well-being of more than 240 million Pakistanis who depend on the Indus river system for agriculture, drinking water and economic activity. He maintained that the Indus Waters Treaty remains valid, legally binding and fully in force, referring to the August 2025 Award of the Court of Arbitration, which reaffirmed the treaty's continued applicability. "No state should be permitted to weaponize shared water resources as an instrument of coercion or political pressure," he said, adding that such actions become even more concerning in the context of the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute, which he described as a longstanding flashpoint in South Asia with serious implications for international peace and security. Calling for a more proactive role by the Security Council, Ambassa-



dor Ahmad said the Council bears a special responsibility whenever the exploitation or weaponisation of natural resources threatens international peace. He urged the Council to fully utilize available mechanisms, including preventive diplomacy, peaceful dispute resolution, sanctions regimes and monitoring frameworks, to address emerging threats linked to natural resource conflicts. The Pakistani envoy emphasized that natural resources should unite nations through cooperation rather than divide them through competition and conflict. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to working with the international community to ensure that the world's natural wealth is managed responsibly, contributes to sustainable development and serves the collective interests of humanity while strengthening peace, stability and equitable global prosperity.



Pakistan, Indonesia seek to expand trade and investment partnership

Newsire

Karachi: Pakistan and Indonesia this week reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral trade, investment and economic cooperation, with both sides emphasizing the need to translate their longstanding friendly relations into a more robust commercial partnership.

The understanding emerged during a meeting between Indonesian Ambassador Chandra Warsenanto Sukotjo and Sindh Governor Syed Muhammad Nihal Hashmi at the Governor House in Karachi, where the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and explored new avenues for enhancing economic engagement. The meeting, attended by Indonesian Consul General in Karachi M.D. Zakir and senior officials, focused on expanding trade, promoting investment, strengthening industrial cooperation and encouraging greater interaction between the business communities of the two countries.

Governor Nihal Hashmi highlighted Pakistan's export potential, noting that products such as rice, mangoes, pharmaceuticals, surgical equipment and sports goods enjoy strong international demand and could secure a larger share of the Indonesian market through enhanced commercial cooperation.

He stressed the importance of promoting Pakistani rice more effectively in Indonesia and other international markets, describing it as one of the country's most competitive agricultural exports.

The governor also pointed to significant opportunities for collaboration in agriculture, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and the sports goods industry. He said closer engagement between private-sector enterprises, increased joint ventures and regular exchanges of trade delegations could substantially boost bilateral trade and investment.

Emphasizing the strong historical, religious and cultural bonds between Pakistan and Indonesia, Nihal Hashmi said the time had come to transform these traditional ties into a dynamic economic partnership capable of delivering mutual prosperity.

Ambassador Sukotjo acknowledged the popularity of Pakistani products in Indonesia, particularly rice, mangoes, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments and footballs, and expressed confidence that bilateral trade could be expanded through closer cooperation. He noted that Pakistan imports nearly 90 percent of its palm oil requirements from Indonesia, underscoring the importance of existing commercial ties while pointing to considerable untapped potential for greater collaboration in trade, investment and industrial development.

The ambassador reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to further strengthening economic relations with Pakistan and expanding cooperation across mutually beneficial sectors.

Both sides agreed that sustained engagement between governments and the private sector would be essential to unlocking the full potential of Pakistan-Indonesia economic relations, creating new business opportunities and fostering long-term commercial partnerships.



H.E. Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, Ambassador of Pakistan to Indonesia

At the conclusion of the meeting, Ambassador Sukotjo recorded his remarks in the guest book at the Governor House, marking his visit and reaffirming Indonesia's commitment to deepening bilateral ties with Pakistan.



D-8 nations adopt Istanbul Declaration to strengthen climate cooperation ahead of COP31

Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: Environment ministers and senior representatives from the nine member states of the Developing Eight (D-8) Organization for Economic Cooperation this week unanimously adopted the Istanbul Declaration, committing to deepen collaboration on climate action and sustainable development ahead of the 31st United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31), scheduled to be held in Antalya, Türkiye, from November 9 to 20.

The declaration was adopted during the first-ever D-8 Ministerial Meeting on Environment, hosted in Istanbul under the theme "Preparing for COP31: Advancing Climate Implementation through International Cooperation." The landmark gathering marked the first ministerial-level platform in the history of the D-8 dedicated exclusively to environmental protection and climate change. According to an official statement, the ministers

agreed to begin work on a D-8 Adaptation Action Framework for 2026-2030, aimed at strengthening collective efforts to address the growing impacts of climate change across member states. The framework is expected to guide cooperation in climate adaptation, resilience-building and sustainable development over the coming years. The participating countries also pledged to deepen collaboration on climate resilience, climate finance, technology transfer, capacity building and the implementation of practical measures to help developing economies respond more effectively to environmental challenges. The meeting was chaired by Türkiye's Minister of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, Murat Kurum, who also serves as the President-designate of COP31. Addressing the ministerial session, Kurum emphasized the strategic importance of the D-8 grouping in advancing global climate action, noting that its member countries represent a significant share

of the world's population, economic potential and geographical diversity. He outlined the priorities of the forthcoming COP31 presidency, stressing that stronger cooperation among D-8 nations would help accelerate climate implementation while ensuring that the perspectives and priorities of developing countries are more effectively represented in international climate negotiations. Participants underscored that closer coordination among D-8 member states would enhance their collective ability to mobilize financial resources, promote environmentally sustainable technologies and exchange expertise in climate adaptation and mitigation. The adoption of the Istanbul Declaration reflects the growing recognition among D-8 countries that coordinated regional and international cooperation will be essential to addressing the escalating impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events, food and water insecurity, biodiversity loss and rising development

challenges. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to translate the declaration into concrete actions ahead of COP31, reinforcing the D-8's

role as a platform for promoting sustainable development, environmental stewardship and stronger South-South cooperation in global climate governance.



Ali Rehman Malik argues symbols compress generations of human experience, shaping public understanding



To illustrate the argument, Malik turns to the example of a candelabra. While it can be described in purely functional terms as a metal object designed to hold candles, its symbolic significance varies widely depending on cultural, historical and personal contexts. For some, it evokes religious rituals and remembrance; for others, it recalls Gothic architecture, family traditions, craftsmanship or romantic settings. These meanings, the essay notes, do not reside in the object itself but have developed through generations of interaction between people, culture and circumstance. The author contends that reducing such objects to their simplest physical descriptions may make agreement easier but strips away much of their deeper significance. Instead of discarding symbols or remaining confined by inherited interpretations, he proposes a process of “decompression” —



Abdullah Jan
Islamabad: A thought-provoking essay by writer Ali Rehman Malik this week explores the role of symbols in shaping human understanding, arguing that many of society’s most enduring disagreements arise because people mistake symbolic concepts for straightforward factual propositions rather than recognizing them as compressed repositories of history, culture and lived experience. Published on July 22, the essay, A Symbol Is a Compression: Differentiation Before

Re-coherence, examines how symbols function as cognitive shortcuts that condense complex networks of relationships, memories, institutions and traditions into a single word, image or object. According to the author, modern debates frequently become polarized because concepts such as freedom, democracy, nation, justice, religion, love and truth are treated as simple claims that can be declared either true or false. In reality, he argues, these ideas represent centuries of accumulated human experience that cannot be fully understood without first unpacking the layers of meaning embedded within them.

carefully separating the multiple relationships and meanings that have been folded into a symbol before attempting to reconstruct a coherent understanding. This process, which the essay describes as “differentiation before re-coherence,” is presented as a necessary step toward more productive dialogue. Rather than immediately defending or attacking symbolic concepts, readers are

encouraged to examine the historical experiences, institutions, values and assumptions that have contributed to their present meanings. The essay further argues that symbolic compression is not inherently problematic. On the contrary, it is portrayed as essential to the functioning of civilization itself. Language, memory and institutions all depend upon compression to make communication and collective organization possible. Without such mechanisms, conveying complex ideas would become nearly impossible. However, Malik warns that symbols can become increasingly detached from reality when societies forget that compression has occurred. Over time, some symbols remain responsive to changing circumstances, while others become rigid and ceremonial, losing the capacity to adapt even when confronted with contradictory evidence. He distinguishes between maintaining contact with reality and possessing the ability to learn from it, suggesting that some intellectual or institutional frame-

works continue to encounter new information without developing mechanisms to revise their underlying assumptions. In such cases, disagreement persists not because reality is absent, but because existing symbolic structures cannot register or accommodate contradiction. The essay concludes by suggesting that many of the world’s deepest social, political and cultural disputes originate not from fundamentally different perceptions of reality but from competing symbolic compressions that are mistakenly treated as simple factual assertions. Before asking whether an idea is true or false, Malik argues, a more productive question may be what historical relationships, experiences and meanings have been compressed within it. By reframing symbols as dynamic repositories of collective human experience rather than static propositions, the essay offers a philosophical perspective on why public discourse often becomes polarized and why genuine understanding may require first unfolding the layers of meaning concealed beneath the words people use most frequently.

DIFFERENTIATION BEFORE RE-COHERENCE

A Symbol Is a Compression

A candelabra, and what we forget once a symbol works.

Ali Rehman Malik

GERMANY AND BULGARIA

COVERT 7

July 26 - August 1, 2026

Germany rejects Russian allegations of secret nuclear weapons research

Covert Report Berlin: Germany this week firmly rejected Russian allegations that it is secretly conducting research on nuclear weapons, describing the claims as part of a broader disinformation campaign designed to sow division among Western allies and influence domestic political developments. Speaking at a government press briefing on Wednesday, Deputy Government Spokesman Steffen Meyer dismissed the accusations, saying Berlin viewed them as “part of the usual Russian propaganda.” The allegations reportedly emerged through Russian intelligence-linked channels on messaging platforms, claiming



that Germany was engaged in covert nuclear weapons research. Meyer categorically denied the accusations, emphasizing that Germany has no intention of developing a national nuclear weapons programme. He argued that Moscow was seeking to exploit public concerns surrounding nuclear security through misinformation, despite having itself contributed to heightened tensions through repeated nuclear rhetoric during the ongoing confrontation with the West. According to the German government, the campaign serves several strategic objectives. Meyer said Russia was attempting



to create divisions within NATO and the European Union, undermine Germany’s position as one of Ukraine’s strongest supporters, and fuel public fears about a renewed nuclear arms race in Europe. He also suggested that the timing of the allegations was significant, linking the disinformation campaign to Germany’s domestic political landscape ahead of important regional elections. “The fact that Germany is being specifically targeted by this type of misinformation is likely connected to the current political situation in the country before the

elections,” Meyer said. German officials have repeatedly warned of growing foreign disinformation campaigns aimed at influencing public opinion, eroding trust in democratic institutions and weakening support for Berlin’s policies on European security and assistance to Ukraine. The latest exchange comes amid continued tensions between Russia and Western governments over the war in Ukraine, NATO’s expanding defence posture and broader geopolitical competition across Europe.

Germany remains a non-nuclear-weapon state under international agreements and has consistently maintained that it does not seek to develop an independent nuclear arsenal, reaffirming its longstanding commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and collective security within the NATO alliance. Berlin’s latest response underscores its determination to counter what it describes as coordinated misinformation efforts while reaffirming its support for Ukraine and its commitment to existing international arms control and non-proliferation frameworks.

Bulgaria, Greece agree to establish joint police cooperation centre

Covert Report Sofia: Bulgaria and Greece this week agreed to deepen security cooperation by establishing a joint police and customs cooperation centre at their shared border, marking a significant step toward strengthening efforts to combat illegal migration, organised crime and cross-border trafficking. The agreement was reached during talks in Sofia between Bulgarian Interior Minister Ivan Demerdzhiev and Greek Minister for Citizen Protection Michalis Chrysochoidis, who reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation in law enforcement and border security. The two ministers discussed a broad range of shared security challenges, including illegal migration, drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms smuggling, contraband and corruption, emphasizing the importance of closer operational coordination between the neighboring European Union member states. As part of the meeting, the ministers signed an agreement establishing a Joint Police and Customs Cooperation Centre at

the Kulata–Promachonas border crossing. The facility is expected to serve as a hub for information sharing, intelligence coordination and joint operational planning aimed at improving the detection and prevention of cross-border criminal activities. The two sides also signed a protocol on conducting joint police patrols along their internal European Union border, reflecting efforts to strengthen surveillance and improve coordinated responses to security threats despite the absence of routine border controls within the Schengen framework. In addition, Bulgaria and Greece adopted a joint declaration outlining common procedures for cross-border hot pursuit, enabling law enforcement authorities from both countries to coordinate more effectively when pursuing criminal suspects across national boundaries in accordance with European legal frameworks. Speaking after the meeting, Interior Minister Demerdzhiev described Greece as one of Bulgaria’s key strategic partners in safeguarding regional security. He high-

lighted the close cooperation between the two countries in tackling organised crime networks involved in narcotics trafficking, human smuggling, illegal arms trading and other forms of transnational crime. Demerdzhiev also disclosed that Bulgarian authorities had sought Greece’s assistance in tracing assets linked to individuals suspected of corruption and organised criminal activity, underscoring the growing emphasis on financial investigations as part of broader anti-corruption efforts. The latest agreements reflect the two countries’ shared determination to strengthen border management and enhance law enforcement cooperation in

response to increasingly complex regional security challenges. Officials from both governments said the expanded partnership would improve intelligence sharing, facilitate faster oper-

ational coordination and reinforce efforts to combat transnational criminal networks while contributing to greater security along one of the European Union’s southeastern frontiers.



Portugal becomes first EU country to join global AI healthcare oversight network



Portugal ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Paulo Miguel Guedes Domingues

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Portugal this week became the first European Union (EU) member state to join HealthAI's Global Regulatory Network (GRN), marking a significant step in strengthening international cooperation on the safe and responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare. The move comes as the European Union prepares to fully implement its landmark AI Act, ushering in a new era of regulation for AI technologies across the bloc. The agreement, signed between Portugal's national medicines and healthcare regulator, Infarmed, and Geneva-based non-profit organisation HealthAI, is expected to enhance the



country's ability to monitor, evaluate and regulate AI-powered medical technologies. By joining the network, Portugal gains access to a global platform that enables regulators to exchange expertise, review AI health applications and respond more effectively to emerging safety concerns. A key feature of the partnership is access to a comprehensive directory of regulator-reviewed AI healthcare tools, providing authorities with information on technologies that have undergone regulatory assessment. Portugal will also participate in a real-time international alert system designed to share reports of harmful incidents involving AI-based medical products, helping regulators identify potential risks more quickly and coordinate responses across borders. The development reflects the growing recognition that artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming healthcare, with applications ranging from disease diagnosis and medical imaging to patient monitoring, drug discovery and hospital management. As health systems increasingly integrate AI into clinical practice, regulators face the challenge of ensuring that these technologies remain safe, transparent, effective and ethically deployed. Portugal's decision places it alongside a diverse group of countries already

participating in the HealthAI Global Regulatory Network, including the United Kingdom, India,



Brazil, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Zambia and Peru. The expanding network aims to foster international collaboration among health authorities as AI technologies continue to evolve at a rapid pace.



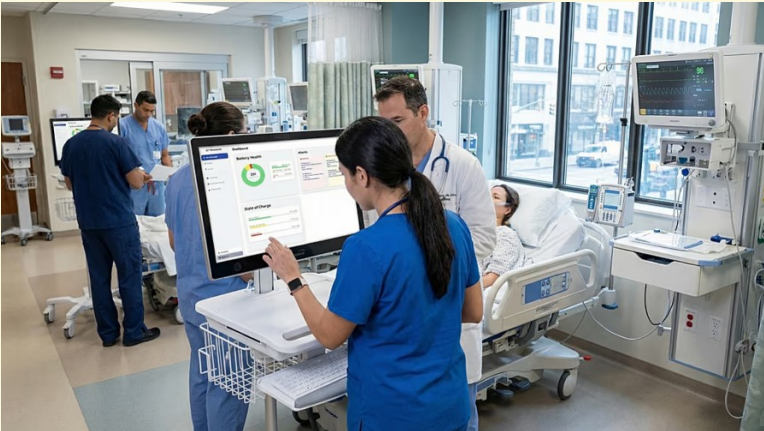
Infarmed President Santos Ivo emphasized that effective regulation of artificial intelligence cannot be achieved in isolation. He noted that international cooperation and the sharing of regulatory experience have become essential as governments work to address common challenges associated with AI-driven healthcare innovations. The timing of Portugal's accession is particularly significant as the European Union moves ahead with implementing the AI Act, regarded



as the world's first comprehensive legal framework governing artificial intelligence. The legislation introduces a risk-based approach, placing stricter requirements on AI systems considered high-risk, including many healthcare applications. Developers and users of such systems will be required to meet rigorous standards relating to safety, transparency, human oversight and accountability. HealthAI was established to support governments and regulatory agencies in developing common standards and governance frameworks for AI in healthcare. The organisation receives financial support primarily from governments, including Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway and Singapore, and works with regulators worldwide to promote consistent oversight of emerging AI technologies. HealthAI Chief Executive Baptista Leite has indicated that discussions are underway with several other European Union member states regarding possible participation in the network. He believes Europe's regulatory approach will have implications far beyond the continent, influencing how AI governance evolves in other regions of the world. Analysts say the EU's regulatory decisions are

knowledge, coordinated monitoring of adverse incidents and common technical standards can help ensure that innovation in healthcare is accompanied by robust safeguards for patient

than a national regulatory milestone. It signals a broader commitment to collaborative governance at a time when artificial intelligence is reshaping healthcare worldwide, reinforcing the



safety and public trust. Portugal's participation in the HealthAI Global Regulatory Network is therefore viewed as more

importance of international partnerships in balancing technological innovation with patient protection and regulatory accountability.



Pakistan, Japan deepen cooperation on skilled workforce and labour mobility

Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan and Japan thus week agreed to deepen cooperation in skilled workforce development and labour mobility, with both countries stepping up efforts to create greater employment opportunities for Pakistani professionals in the Japanese market. The understanding was reached during a meeting between Pakistan's Ambassador to Japan, Abdul Hameed, and Japan's Minister of Justice, Hiroshi Hiraguchi, in Tokyo, where the two sides reviewed avenues for strengthening bilateral collaboration in skills development, capacity building and the movement of skilled workers. According to an official statement, the discussions focused on expanding institutional cooperation to equip Pakistani workers with skills aligned with Japan's labour market requirements, while facilitating smoother pathways for employment and professional exchanges. A key area of discussion was progress on

a proposed Memorandum of Cooperation on Employment for Skill Development, which is expected to establish a stronger institutional framework for the placement of skilled Pakistani workers in Japan. The agreement is also intended to support broader economic cooperation by addressing workforce needs in sectors facing labour shortages. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening people-to-people ties, describing them as a cornerstone of the longstanding relationship between Pakistan and Japan. They agreed to enhance practical cooperation through initiatives that generate tangible economic and social benefits for both countries. The meeting also reflected the growing momentum in bilateral relations, with Islamabad and Tokyo increasingly focusing on human resource development, technical training and labour mobility as important areas of partnership. Officials believe that closer collaboration in vocational training and employment will not only expand overseas job oppor-



tunities for Pakistan's skilled workforce but also contribute to knowledge transfer, higher remittances and stronger economic engagement between the two countries.

The latest discussions underscore the shared commitment of Pakistan and Japan to broadening cooperation in mutually beneficial sectors while fos-

tering stronger institutional linkages and sustainable people-to-people connectivity.

US senators challenge Hegseth as Iran war widens, \$95 billion military package sparks debate

Newswire
Washington: The United States' expanding military campaign against Iran came under renewed scrutiny on Capitol Hill this week as lawmakers questioned Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth over the trajectory of the conflict, while the White House pressed Congress to approve a \$95 billion budget package to finance military operations and other domestic priorities. Appearing before the Senate Appropriations Committee alongside Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine and Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, Hegseth faced pointed questions from senators over the escalating conflict, mounting casualties and the administration's strategy in the Middle East. The hearing took place days after the Pentagon confirmed that three additional American service members had been killed, raising the U.S. military death toll in the conflict to 17, with more than 100 personnel wounded since early July. Leading Democrats warned that the United States risked becoming trapped in another prolonged military engagement. Senator Patty Murray, the committee's ranking Democrat, argued that the conflict was "spiraling out of control" and cautioned that it could evolve into "another forever war." Murray questioned the administration's repeated assurances that a diplomatic breakthrough was imminent, noting that President Donald Trump had repeatedly suggested a negotiated settlement

was close while simultaneously requesting tens of billions of dollars in additional war funding. The White House has asked Congress to approve \$87.6 billion in emergency spending, largely to finance military operations connected with the conflict with Iran. The request forms the centerpiece of a broader Republican-backed \$95 billion package that also includes agricultural assistance and election-related measures before lawmakers leave Washington ahead of November's congressional elections. In a policy statement issued before the hearing, the administration urged lawmakers to approve the budget package without amendments, describing the funding as necessary to meet urgent national security requirements. Republican leaders defended the request, arguing that continued military operations were essential to counter Iranian capabilities and protect U.S. forces and regional allies. House Speaker Mike Johnson said the administration and the Pentagon were working toward resolving the conflict but acknowledged uncertainty over how that objective would ultimately be achieved. The congressional hearing unfolded as fighting intensified across the Middle East, further raising concerns about regional stability and global energy security. Two oil tankers carrying Saudi crude destined for China and India reversed course in the Red Sea after Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi movement announced a naval blockade targeting Saudi Arabia, raising fresh concerns over the



security of one of the world's most important maritime trade corridors. The diversions came as U.S. forces launched another night of strikes against military targets inside Iran while Tehran intensified retaliatory attacks across the Gulf. Iran reportedly targeted U.S. military facilities in Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan while also claiming responsibility for attacks on vessels in the Strait of Hormuz. Regional governments reported missile and drone attacks against critical infrastructure, including power generation and desalination facilities in Kuwait, prompting authorities to introduce electricity conservation measures during peak summer demand. The attacks have heightened fears over the security of global energy supplies. Although oil prices rose about two percent following the latest escalation, expectations that diplomatic contacts between Washington and Tehran could eventually resume helped limit sharper market volatility. The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said American forces had conducted a tenth consecutive night of strikes targeting Iranian military

command centers, missile and drone launch sites, maritime capabilities and air defense systems. The military said the operations were intended to reduce Iran's ability to threaten commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. Despite the sustained bombing campaign, reports citing newly assessed U.S. intelligence suggested that continued military pressure was unlikely to significantly alter Iran's negotiating position regarding its nuclear programme and the future of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. President Trump maintained that military operations would continue, warning that additional strikes could target Iran's deeply buried Pickaxe Mountain nuclear facility near Natanz, which Western intelligence agencies suspect is linked to uranium enrichment activities. Addressing reporters at the White House, Trump asserted that Iran would require decades to recover from the damage already inflicted and indicated that Washington had no immediate plans to halt military operations.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia strongly condemned the Houthi movement's allegations against the Kingdom, rejecting what it described as baseless accusations while reaffirming its commitment to protecting maritime navigation and supporting Yemen's internationally recognised government. The Saudi Cabinet also expressed solidarity with Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan following Iranian attacks, calling for an immediate halt to military escalation in order to preserve regional stability. The Gulf Cooperation Council, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and the Muslim World League likewise condemned the Houthi statements and reiterated support for Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding international shipping routes amid growing instability across the Middle East. As the conflict enters a more dangerous phase, lawmakers in Washington continue to debate both the financial costs and strategic objectives of the campaign, while military developments across the Gulf underscore the widening regional and global implications of the crisis.



Pakistan, EU call for sustained diplomacy to resolve Middle East conflict



Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pakistan and the European Union (EU) this week underscored the importance of sustained diplomacy and continued dialogue as the only viable path to ending the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, while reaffirming their commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation under the Pakistan-EU Strategic Engagement Plan. The understanding emerged during a meeting between Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar and the European Union's

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, Kaja Kallas, on the sidelines of the 33rd ASEAN Regional Forum in Manila. According to Pakistan's Foreign Office, the two leaders held wide-ranging discussions on the evolving regional situation, with particular focus on the security challenges arising from tensions involving the United States and Iran. They agreed that sustained diplomatic engagement and continued dialogue remain essential

for achieving lasting peace and stability in the region. The meeting took place against the backdrop of renewed tensions between Washington and Tehran despite the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding last month, highlighting the need for continued international efforts to prevent further escalation and preserve regional stability. Dar and Kallas also exchanged views on the wider implications of the Middle East situation for regional and global security. They discussed its potential impact on international

energy markets, maritime security, global trade routes and supply chains, stressing that adherence to international law and diplomatic engagement is critical to addressing these interconnected challenges. Reaffirming their shared commitment to the Pakistan-EU Strategic Engagement Plan, the two sides agreed to continue close cooperation across political, economic and development sectors, reflecting the importance both attach to their longstanding part-

ner ship. During the meeting, Dar reiterated Pakistan's commitment to the effective implementation of all interna-
preferential trade arrangement remains a cornerstone of Pakistan's economic relationship with the European Union and contributes significantly to the country's exports, industrial growth and employment. The discussion also reflected the broader convergence between Pakistan and the European Union on supporting multilateralism, peaceful conflict resolution and rules-based international cooperation amid growing geopolitical uncertainties.



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



tional conventions underpinning the European Union's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) framework. He emphasized that the

peace, economic cooperation and shared global challenges through sustained dialogue and strategic partnership.

UK backs Pakistan's tariff, sectoral reform agenda

Celina Ali
Islamabad: The United Kingdom this week reaffirmed its support for Pakistan's economic reform agenda, with senior officials from both countries discussing tariff restructuring, sector-specific policy changes, and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening economic competitive-

ment priorities through continued collaboration in areas of mutual interest. Ahad Cheema also acknowledged the FCDO's support for the Strategic Initiatives Unit (SIU), which is helping strengthen policy implementation through embedded delivery mechanisms, and for the Governance Reforms Unit (GRU),

mechanism had helped curb hoarding and improve market stability, contributing to greater transparency and efficiency in the market. He further stated that the government was committed to following the approved development roadmap in coordination with the Planning Commission and other relevant departments. All new development projects, he added, would undergo predictive analysis to improve planning, enhance efficiency, and ensure better utilization of public resources. Waldoock commended the government's reform measures in the power and petroleum sectors, noting that efforts to improve



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

efficiency, transparency, and sustainability were important for strengthening overall economic performance. Concluding the meeting, the FCDO offi-



cial expressed confidence that Pakistan and the United Kingdom would continue to work closely in advancing shared development objectives. Minister Ahad Cheema thanked the United Kingdom for its longstanding partnership and continued support for Pakistan's development and reform agenda.



High Commissioner of United Kingdom to Pakistan Jane Marriott

which is assisting efforts to advance institutional reforms. The minister said economic stability remained the government's foremost priority and highlighted the leadership's close oversight of fiscal and development matters. According to him, the Prime Minister personally chairs weekly meetings to review the performance of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and monitor major development initiatives and financial projects to ensure effective implementation. Discussing energy-sector reforms, Cheema said the current petroleum pricing



ness and promoting sustainable growth. Sam Waldoock, Development Director at the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), called on Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema in Islamabad to review bilateral cooperation and ongoing development initiatives. During the meeting, the minister briefed the visiting official on the government's efforts to reform the tariff policy framework and implement targeted reforms across key sectors, including the mobile phone industry and broader industrial policy. He said these measures were intended to enhance productivity, attract investment, and support long-term economic development. Waldoock welcomed the government's reform initiatives and appreciated the focus on sector-specific policies designed to improve the business environment. He reiterated the United Kingdom's commitment to supporting Pakistan's develop-



“Patience is the strength of the weak, impatience is the weakness of the strong.”
— Immanuel Kant

“Weak is he who permits his thoughts to control his actions; strong is he who forces his actions to control his thoughts.”— Og Mandino

Italy's Leonardo secures Indonesia's order for 12 M-346 combat aircraft

Abida Shaheen
Islamabad: Indonesia this week ordered 12 M-346 F “Block 20” light combat aircraft from Italian aerospace and defence company Leonardo, marking another major step in the country’s ongoing military modernisation and efforts to strengthen its air defence capabilities. The procurement was announced jointly by Leonardo and its Indonesian partner, PT ESistem Solutions Indonesia, reflecting Jakarta’s continued investment in modern military platforms as it upgrades its armed forces. The acquisition follows Indonesia’s landmark agreement with French defence manufacturer Dassault Aviation in 2022 to purchase 42 Rafale fighter aircraft under a contract valued at ap-

proximately \$8.1 billion, underscoring the country’s broader strategy to diversify and modernise its air combat fleet. According to Leonardo, the M-346 F “Block 20” aircraft will perform a dual role by providing advanced multi-role combat capabilities while also serving as a state-of-the-art training platform for Indonesian Air Force pilots. The aircraft is designed to bridge the gap between basic flight instruction and front-line fighter operations, enabling pilots to transition more effectively to advanced combat aircraft. The first deliveries are scheduled to begin in 2030 as part of a phased induction programme. While the financial value of Indonesia’s latest order has not been officially disclosed, industry

estimates suggest it could be comparable to Austria’s purchase of 12 M-346 aircraft in late 2025, a deal widely reported to be worth around €1.5 billion (approximately \$1.7 billion). The M-346 has become one of Leonardo’s most successful military aircraft programmes, with more than 170 units ordered worldwide. Indonesia will become the 23rd country to operate the aircraft, further expanding its global customer base. In addition to the combat aircraft order, Indonesia has signed a letter of intent to acquire AW149 multi-role helicopters from Leonardo for the Indonesian Navy. The helicopters are expected to enhance

maritime capabilities by supporting search and rescue operations, disaster response and civil protection missions, while also providing greater operational flexibility across Indonesia’s vast archipelagic territory. The twin procurement decisions reflect Indonesia’s emphasis on developing a more capable and versatile defence force amid evolving regional security dynamics and growing operational demands. By combining advanced fighter training, combat capability and expanded naval aviation assets, Jakarta aims to strengthen both national defence preparedness and humanitarian response capabilities. The latest agreements also deepen defence-industrial cooperation between Indonesia and Italy, adding to Jakarta’s growing network of international defence partnerships as it continues to modernise its military across land, air and maritime domains.



Leonardo's chairman H.E. Stefano Pontecorvo

Bastille Day celebrations: French amb hails stronger Pakistan-France ties



Celina Ali
Islamabad: French Ambassador to Pakistan Nicolas Galey this week reaffirmed France’s commitment to further strength-

ening its longstanding partnership with Pakistan, highlighting the progress achieved in bilateral relations over the past four and a half years while commending Islamabad’s efforts to promote regional peace and stability.

Speaking at the celebrations marking France’s National Day, popularly known as Bastille Day, Ambassador Galey said Pakistan and France have continued to deepen cooperation across a wide range of sectors, reflecting the strength of their longstanding diplomatic relationship and shared commitment to international peace, dialogue and development. Reflecting on his diplomatic tenure in Pakistan, the ambassador expressed satisfaction over the expansion of bilateral engagement and thanked Pakistani authorities for their cooperation in advancing ties between the two countries. He said France highly values Pakistan’s constructive role in encouraging peace and stability in the region and acknowledged Islamabad’s efforts to promote dialogue amid evolving regional challenges. Ambassador Galey also addressed major international issues, condemning Russia’s military actions in Ukraine and expressing concern over the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, particularly the loss of civilian lives. He further voiced France’s strong support for the Palestinian people, calling for renewed international efforts to address the humanitarian situation and achieve a just and lasting resolution to the Palestinian issue. The ceremony was attended by Finance Minister

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb as the chief guest, along with senior diplomats, government officials and members of the diplomatic corps, including United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher. Addressing the gathering, Aurangzeb reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to strengthening its historic partnership with France while emphasizing the importance of expanding cooperation in trade, investment and economic development. He said Pakistan would continue playing a constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, adding that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir would continue diplomatic efforts aimed at encouraging dialogue and reducing regional tensions. The finance minister described France as an important partner of Pakistan and stressed that both countries enjoy broad-based cooperation spanning economic engagement, education, culture and development initiatives. He said Islamabad remains committed to further enhancing bilateral collaboration for the mutual benefit of both nations. Aurangzeb also highlighted the significance of the European Union’s Generalized System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) framework, noting that the preferential trade arrangement has substantially benefited Pakistan’s export sector, supported industrial expansion and generated employment opportunities. He said France, as a key member of the European Union, has played an important role in strengthening Pakistan’s economic engagement with Europe. The Bastille Day celebrations reflected the warm and growing relationship between Pakistan and France, with both sides expressing confidence that bilateral cooperation would continue to expand in areas including



trade, investment, education, culture, defence and people-to-people exchanges. France’s National Day commemorates the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, a defining event of the French Revolution that came to symbolize the republican ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity.