

Iran-Pakistan connectivity drive complements regional trade vision

Chabahar-Gwadar cooperation gains momentum alongside China's BRI

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Efforts by Pakistan and Iran to deepen economic integration through enhanced cooperation between the ports of Gwadar and Chabahar, new border infrastructure and expanded regional connectivity are expected to reinforce broader trade networks across the region, complementing ongoing infrastructure development under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The renewed momentum emerged during a meeting in Tehran between Mohammad Saïd Arbabi, Chief Executive Officer of the Chabahar Free Zone Organization, and Pakistan's newly appointed Ambassador to Iran Inran Ahmed Siddiqui, where both sides explored mechanisms for expanding bilateral trade, investment, logistics and transit cooperation, said an official statement.

Discussions centred on strengthening economic collaboration through the strategic capacities of the Chabahar-Gwadar corridor and accelerating the establishment of the proposed Rimdan-Gabd Joint Free Zone, which is expected to facilitate cross-border investment and commercial activity.

Both sides stressed that Pakistan and Iran should fully utilise the potential of their ports, free zones and border crossings to expand bilateral trade and strengthen regional economic integration among member states of



the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Arbabi described Chabahar as Iran's only oceanic free zone with a strategic location on international transport corridors, adding that closer cooperation with Pakistan's Gwadar Port could significantly enhance logistics efficiency, attract joint investment and strengthen regional supply chains.

He said Chabahar and Gwadar should be viewed as complementary ports capable of creating mutually beneficial opportunities in transport, transit and international trade through coordinated development rather than competition.

The Iranian official also proposed accelerating the

establishment of an independent joint border crossing connecting Rimdan and Gabd to facilitate the movement of import, export and transit cargo.

According to Arbabi, the new crossing would reduce transportation time, increase cargo handling capacity and help both countries pursue their shared objective of expanding bilateral trade to US\$10 billion.

He further emphasised the importance of creating the Rimdan-Gabd Joint Free Zone, saying the initiative could attract investment, stimulate industrial production, create employment opportunities and promote balanced development in border regions.

Ambassador Siddiqui welcomed proposals to strengthen

economic cooperation and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to expanding trade through the strategic capacities of Gwadar, Chabahar and the Rimdan-Gabd border region.

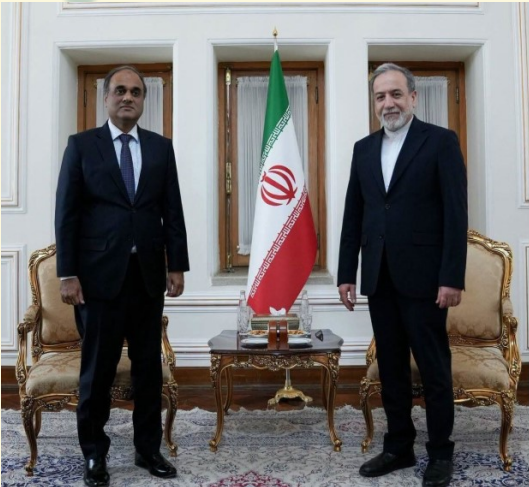
He noted that enhanced border cooperation and improved connectivity would contribute to greater prosperity for communities living on both sides of the border while reinforcing the longstanding friendly relations between Pakistan and Iran.

The discussions also highlighted the importance of free zones and modern transport infrastructure in advancing regional economic diplomacy and improving trade connectivity across South and Central Asia.

Separately, Sistan-Baluchestan Governor Mansour Bijar disclosed that recent discussions with Pakistani authorities produced positive outcomes, including support for introducing barter trade arrangements designed to facilitate commerce despite financial restrictions.

He said both sides also discussed removing obstacles to rail transport, upgrading road infrastructure, improving air connectivity, extending border crossing operations and facilitating cargo movement.

Among the key understandings reached were proposals to launch a maritime shipping link between Chabahar and Pakistani ports, resume suspended passenger flights, strengthen rail connectivity and establish joint mechanisms to ensure the timely implementation of bilateral



agreements.

The Iranian governor said officials from both countries had agreed that expert-level negotiations would begin within days to accelerate implementation of border and economic cooperation initiatives.

The evolving Pakistan-Iran connectivity agenda comes at a time when regional infrastructure networks are increasingly interconnected through China's Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), positioning Gwadar as a major gateway linking Pakistan with neighbouring markets and wider Eurasian trade corridors.



Canada, Pakistan deepen ties with focus on trade, investment, clean energy and development cooperation



Abida Shaheen

Islamabad: Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand this week concluded a landmark visit to Pakistan aimed at strengthening bilateral relations, expanding trade and investment cooperation, and advancing collaboration in key areas including agriculture, clean energy, security and development.

The visit marked the first trip by a Canadian foreign minister to Pakistan in nearly two decades, reflecting renewed momentum in relations between the two countries.

During her visit, Minister Anand held meetings with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi to discuss shared priorities and explore avenues for deeper cooperation.

The two sides highlighted the importance of predictable market access and reliable agricultural trade to support food security and economic stability. Minister Anand welcomed progress in negotiations on a Canada-Pakistan Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA), expressing hope that talks would be concluded at the earliest opportunity.

A key outcome of the visit was the signing of an agreement allowing Canada to export canola seeds to Pakistan for food, animal feed and processing purposes. The agreement was signed by Minister Anand on behalf of Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

The arrangement follows a negotiated phytosanitary protocol between Pakistan's Ministry of National Food Security and Research and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, providing greater clarity and predictability regarding import requirements and facilitating trade opportunities for Canadian canola producers.

Canada and Pakistan also agreed to enhance cooperation in the clean energy sector, particularly in renewable energy solutions, power generation and technologies including solar, wind and battery storage.

Minister Anand welcomed the upcoming development of the 240-megawatt Dhabaji hybrid wind-solar project by Canadian company JCM Power in partnership with Karachi Electric, describing it as an example of growing

private-sector collaboration between the two countries.

The project is expected to contribute to Pakistan's renewable energy ambitions while strengthening cooperation between Canadian investors and Pakistan's energy sector.

The two countries agreed to continue expanding security cooperation, including efforts to counter terrorism and combat transnational organised crime.

During the visit, Canada announced more than \$2.2 million in additional funding to support Pakistan's security-related initiatives through partnerships involving INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, in collaboration with the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation.

The support aims to strengthen institutional capacity and enhance coordination in addressing cross-border criminal activities.

Recognising the challenges posed by climate change and poverty, Canada also announced \$45 million in funding for three development assistance projects in Pakistan.

The package includes \$10 million to help restore access to education for children affected by floods through a partnership with the United Nations Development Programme.

Another \$15 million will support climate resilience initiatives in collaboration with Aga Khan Foundation Canada, aimed at helping communities better respond to the impacts of climate change.

A further \$20 million has been allocated to expand access to reproductive health services, including family planning programmes, through cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund.

Minister Anand expressed appreciation for Pakistan's warm welcome and hospitality, reaffirming Canada's commitment to building a stronger and more comprehensive partnership with Pakistan.

The visit underscored both countries' shared interest in expanding economic links, encouraging investment, strengthening people-to-people connections and working together on global challenges including climate change, food security and regional stability.

Natasha highlights PPP's pro-people agenda

Calls for greater support for women



Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) South Punjab General Secretary and Member of the National Assembly Natasha Daultana this week reaffirmed her commitment to advancing pro-people policies, women's empowerment and social welfare initiatives, stressing the need to expand support for vulnerable communities across South Punjab.

Natasha Daultana expressed these views during a meeting with

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Rubina Khalid, where the two sides discussed the progress of ongoing BISP initiatives in South Punjab, measures for improving women's welfare and matters related to strengthening party organisation.

During the meeting, Rubina Khalid briefed Natasha Daultana on BISP's efforts to provide financial assistance to deserving families through a transparent and technology-driven mechanism. She said the programme continues to focus on economic empowerment of underprivileged households, particularly women, by ensuring timely and efficient delivery of support.

She added that beneficiaries across Pakistan, including those in South Punjab, are receiving payments through modern digital systems, while efforts are underway to further enhance the programme's outreach and accessibility.

Highlighting the significance of BISP as a major social protection initiative, Natasha Daultana said the programme reflects the Pakistan Peoples Party's longstanding commitment to people-centred policies aimed at improving the lives of disadvantaged segments of society.

She noted that millions of families have benefited from welfare initiatives linked to the programme and emphasised that empowering women remains central to achieving inclusive economic and social development.

The PPP leader drew attention to the challenges faced by women in South Punjab, particularly in the areas of education, healthcare and economic opportunities. She said women in the region continue to face multiple barriers and require stronger institutional support, greater access to resources and expanded development opportunities.

Natasha Daultana reaffirmed that she would continue advocating for women's rights and welfare at every available platform, ensuring that the concerns of vulnerable communities remain part of the national policy discourse.

She further said that, in line with the vision and guidance of PPP leadership Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Asif Ali Zardari, efforts are being made to strengthen public welfare programmes and further improve the party's organisational structure.

Chinese firm seeks Pakistani partners in pharmaceuticals, healthcare

Celina Ali

Islamabad: A delegation from China's Yuzhonghe (Hubei) Supply Chain Co., Ltd. has held talks with Pakistani business representatives on potential cooperation in pharmaceuticals, healthcare products, medical technology and supply chain services. The delegation, led by company chief executive Vince Ma, visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry this week to identify potential local partners, according to a report by the Associated Press of Pakistan. Ma said the company was interested in exploring pharmaceutical manufacturing, healthcare products, integrated supply

chain services, technology transfer and possible joint ventures in Pakistan. He described Pakistan as a market with growth potential but announced no investment value, agreement, project or implementation timetable. ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood said the chamber would help the delegation connect with local companies and provide support to Chinese businesses seeking partners in Pakistan. He said Islamabad and surrounding areas offered opportunities for cooperation in pharmaceutical manufacturing, healthcare services and technology partnerships. ICCI Senior Vice President Tahir Ayub said Chinese expertise in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and supply chain management could complement Pakistan's market and industrial capabilities.



Chinese hospital partners with Gomal Medical College to boost advanced neurosurgical care

Gwadar Pro

Dera Ismail Khan: Pakistan and China have taken another significant step towards expanding bilateral cooperation in the healthcare sector as Gomal Medical College (GMC), Dera Ismail Khan, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Third People's Hospital of Henan Province to establish long-term academic, clinical and research collaboration in minimally invasive spinal surgery, further reinforcing growing medical ties between the two countries. The agreement reflects the increasing momentum of Pakistan-China cooperation beyond traditional areas such as infrastructure, trade and investment, extending into medical education, specialized healthcare, clinical innovation and capacity building. The partnership is expected to facilitate the transfer of advanced Chinese medical expertise to Pakistan while creating opportunities for collaborative research, professional exchanges and improved patient care. According to officials this week, the MoU provides a comprehensive framework for cooperation in minimally invasive spinal surgery, with both institutions agreeing to work closely on academic exchanges, faculty development, joint research initiatives, advanced surgical training and the adoption of modern clinical practices.

The collaboration is also aimed at strengthening institutional linkages between the two medical establishments and promoting knowledge-sharing in one of the most rapidly evolving fields of neurosurgery. Medical experts believe the partnership has the potential to significantly improve Pakistan's capacity in minimally invasive spinal surgery, an area that has witnessed remarkable technological advancement in China over the past decade. Chinese hospitals have emerged among the world's leading centres for advanced neurosurgical procedures, robotics-assisted operations and minimally invasive techniques, making such collaborations increasingly valuable for developing countries seeking to modernize healthcare services. Officials said the collaboration is expected to provide Pakistani neurosurgeons with exposure to cutting-edge surgical technologies, advanced operating protocols and modern treatment methodologies that have been successfully implemented in China's leading medical institutions. The partnership is also likely to facilitate reciprocal academic visits, specialized workshops, training programmes and collaborative publications in internationally recognized medical journals.



Pakistan, China move towards local vaccine production through expanded health partnership

Gwadar Pro

Islamabad: Pakistan is seeking to leverage its growing health partnership with China to establish indigenous vaccine manufacturing and strengthen pharmaceutical self-reliance, with the government unveiling plans for local vaccine production alongside major Chinese investment commitments in the country's healthcare sector. Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Syed Mustafa Kamal said this week that cooperation with Chinese pharmaceutical companies would play a pivotal role in transforming Pakistan's healthcare industry by facilitating technology transfer, investment and advanced manufacturing capabilities. Speaking at a news conference, the minister said the recently concluded Pakistan-China B2B Investment Conference 2026 marked a significant breakthrough in bilateral cooperation, particularly in pharmaceutical manufacturing, biotechnology and vaccine production. He said six priority pharmaceutical sub-sectors were identified during the conference to attract Chinese investment and expertise, reflecting both countries' commitment to expanding strategic cooperation in the healthcare industry.

Mustafa Kamal disclosed that Pakistan currently imports all 13 vaccines used under its national immunisation programme, making domestic production an urgent national priority. To address this challenge, he said the government had finalised Pakistan's first National Vaccine Policy, which would provide a roadmap for establishing local vaccine manufacturing facilities through partnerships with international companies, particularly from China. He said China's globally recognised capabilities in pharmaceutical research, biotechnology and vaccine manufacturing could help Pakistan build a sustainable domestic production base, reducing reliance on imported vaccines while improving health security. "The objective is to create local manufacturing capacity so Pakistan can gradually become self-sufficient in vaccine production through international cooperation and technology transfer," he said. The minister noted that the Pakistan-China B2B Investment Conference generated strong interest from Chinese pharmaceutical firms, attracting 140 Chinese companies and 240 business delegations during the two-day event.

More than 340 business-to-business meetings were held between Pakistani and Chinese enterprises to explore joint ventures, manufacturing partnerships and investment opportunities. He revealed that 22 companies signed commercial agreements worth US \$629.5 million, while additional Memoranda of Understanding valued at \$800 million were concluded, taking total announced commitments to more than US \$1.4 billion. Mustafa Kamal said the Ministry of Health had successfully facilitated business matchmaking between Pakistani and Chinese companies, enabling productive discussions on pharmaceutical manufacturing, technology transfer and industrial collaboration. He added that the government had already begun maintaining regular contact with participating companies to ensure that the agreements moved beyond documentation and resulted in operational projects, production facilities and long-term investments. Highlighting Pakistan's existing pharmaceutical capacity, the minister said the country currently produces nearly 85 per cent of the medicines consumed domestically and exports pharmaceutical products to approximately 52 countries, demonstrating the industry's

growing international potential. However, he acknowledged that around 95 per cent of pharmaceutical raw materials continue to be imported, underlining the importance of closer cooperation with China to localise supply chains, improve industrial resilience and enhance export competitiveness. The minister also outlined reforms aimed at making Pakistan's regulatory environment more attractive for foreign investors. He said the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) had introduced an online regulatory system to streamline the registration of medicines, medical devices and related products, reducing delays and improving transparency. He expressed confidence that DRAP would be fully digitised within the next year, creating a more efficient and investor-friendly regulatory framework for both Pakistani and Chinese pharmaceutical companies.



Italy's highest court strengthens citizenship rights for descendants of emigrants



ITALY'S HIGHEST COURT STRENGTHENS SOME CITIZENSHIP CLAIMS FOR DESCENDANTS OF ITALIAN EMIGRANTS

News wire

Rome: Italy's highest court this week delivered a landmark ruling reinforcing the citizenship rights of descendants of Italian emigrants, holding that children born with both Italian citizenship and another nationality do not automatically lose their Italian citizenship when a parent later acquires foreign nationality. The decision by the Court of Cassation's United Sections is expected to strengthen citizenship-by-descent claims for thousands of families worldwide, particularly in North and South America, where large Italian diaspora communities have ancestral ties to Italy. The ruling resolves the long-standing legal dispute known as the "Minor Issue," which has complicated ancestry-based citizenship applications involving families who emigrated from Italy during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The central question before the court was whether children who were already Italian citizens by birth automatically lost that citizenship when an Italian parent later became a naturalized citizen of another country while the children were still minors. In its judgment, the court ruled that under Italy's historical citizenship laws, children who ac-

quired Italian citizenship at birth through the principle of iure sanguinis (citizenship by bloodline) retained their Italian nationality even after a parent's subsequent naturalization abroad. The court further clarified that children born in countries that automatically grant citizenship at birth, including the United States, remained Italian citizens despite their parents later obtaining foreign nationality. As a result, they retained the right to pass Italian citizenship on to future generations. The ruling marks a significant reversal of the restrictive interpretation adopted in a series of court decisions beginning in 2023, under which many citizenship-by-descent applications were rejected because authorities considered the chain of citizenship transmission to have been broken. Lawyer Marco Mellone, who represented the applicants, said the judgment restores citizenship rights to Italian-American families and others in countries where similar circumstances existed. He said the Supreme Court had reversed its earlier restrictive interpretation and reaffirmed that families affected by the "Minor Issue" were once again entitled to claim Italian citizenship by descent. Mellone estimated that several hundred thousand families may have been impacted by the previous interpretation. Legal experts believe the decision will strengthen the position of applicants whose claims were rejected solely because of the "Minor Issue" and provide authoritative guidance to judges handling pending cases. The judgment is also ex-



Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Ugo Ciarlatani

pected to influence how Italian administrative authorities and consulates evaluate future citizenship applications. Although it remains unclear whether Italy's Interior Ministry and diplomatic missions will immediately revise their procedures, decisions issued by the Court of Cassation's United Sections are regarded as the country's most authoritative interpretation of the law and are intended to resolve conflicting judicial opinions. The ruling comes as Italy experiences growing demand for citizenship by descent and continues to face legal challenges over the scope of ancestry-based citizenship rights.

Separately, legislation promoted by Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani that would restrict citizenship transmission through more distant generations has been referred to the Court of Justice of the European Union, with proceedings expected to begin next year.



Clinging to each other for assurance via photo only highlights AIT, DPP's deep anxiety

Global Times

The American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) posted on social media on Tuesday a photo of unknown origin - one with no clear time or location. The photo shows a US Coast Guard vessel and a coast guard vessel of Taiwan island sailing "side by side" at sea, accompanied by a caption saying that the two maritime authorities are "busy coordinating on shared maritime objectives."

Similar actions have long been conducted quietly and covertly between the US and Taiwan island. This time, AIT chose to bring such behind-the-scenes coordination into the open to assert its relevance.

Behind this performance, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authorities in Taiwan are mired in the "toxic oil" scandal. More than 200,000 people in the Taiwan region took to

Taipei's Ketagalan Boulevard in what has become the largest protest in recent years under the slogan "I am human, I oppose poisoning Taiwan." At the same time, skepticism toward the US is growing on the island. Against this backdrop, AIT's high-profile move serves at least two purposes: first, to embolden "Taiwan independence" separatist forces; second, to reinforce AIT's own presence through frequent gestures.

For the DPP, AIT may appear as a "supreme authority," but in Washington's decision-making circles, AIT is increasingly marginalized.

In May this year, US President Donald Trump publicly said he did not want to see "somebody go independence" and did not want US troops traveling "9,500 miles to fight a war." The China Coast Guard's routine law enforcement patrols in the waters east of the Taiwan region have also delivered a tangible deterrent effect on "Taiwan

independence" separatist forces.

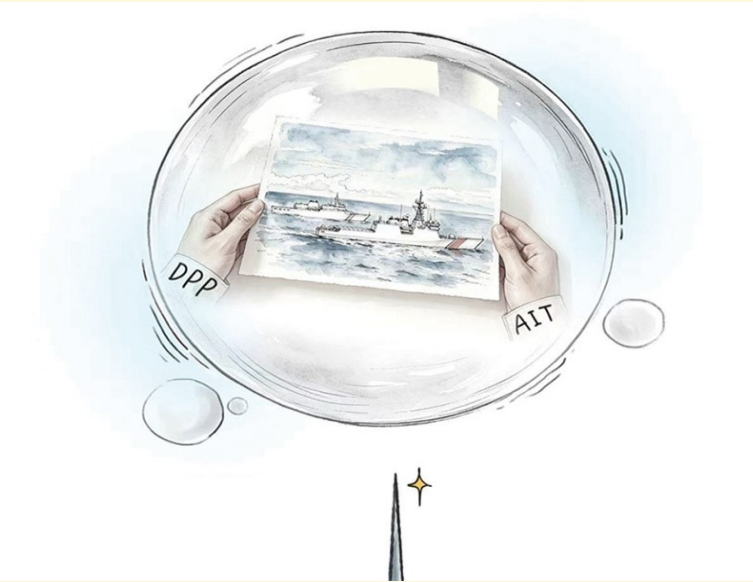
AIT is clearly feeling the pressure, seemingly afraid that it might no longer have a role to play. Taking a closer look at AIT's social media posts shows that it is packaging its actions under the guise of "livelihood issues." While attempting to stir up tensions, AIT is also trying to tone down the provocative nature of its political message. "It deliberately ties the cooperation to search and rescue, preparing for tropical storms, disaster relief and other livelihood-oriented issues, creating the impression of 'non-military, purely law enforcement, and people-centered' cooperation, while in reality cloaking its involvement in a more concealed form," said Sun Xihui, an associate research fellow with the National Institute of International Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

What effect does AIT's posting of a photo of unknown origin on social media actually have? Aside from allowing some pro-DPP camp figures to indulge in self-congratulation, its greater significance may lie in further exposing the failure and isolation of "Taiwan independence." Otherwise, why would AIT need to step in and deliberately showcase that it is "standing with Taiwan"?

Such outdated tactics are unlikely to convince the Taiwan residents. After all, AIT has been among the most active in urging TSMC to relocate to the US and pushing Taiwan to purchase more weapons. Compared with these actions, the photo is little more than an empty gesture.

The real issue is not what AIT has done, but what it is becoming - a variable that may disrupt the stability of China-US relations.

"While Trump's remarks carried strategic calculations, they also represented a high-level effort



to contain risks and prevent escalation," Sun said.

Yet at a time when decision-makers are trying to control risks, AIT appears to be acting as a risk-taker. AIT's performative actions cannot alter the broader picture, but may create unnecessary friction.

At this point, AIT resembles less a "mediator" and more a persistent "troublemaker." US policymakers need to recognize this risk and impose constraints on their Taiwan region-based institution.

In recent years, some political forces in Taiwan have increasingly sought external intervention.

If the US authorities continue to tacitly allow relevant institutions to create an atmosphere of "official interaction" in sensitive areas, it will only reinforce misperceptions and encourage some to misjudge US support for a more radical course.

The only thing AIT's performance demonstrates is that AIT and the DPP authorities have become so anxious that they must cling to each other for reassurance over a single photo.

Global Times

A single report 'brings down' ASML's stock: Whose anxiety does it expose?

Global Times

The evaporation of massive market value due to an industrial report shows that Western investors' blind faith in the effectiveness of "blockades" has been shaken, and the US-led "decoupling" strategy has lost much of its momentum. One day, the technologies once used to constrain China's development will simply become ordinary components of its independent industrial system.

An industrial report by US tech media regarding a breakthrough in China's domestic lithography development sent shockwaves through global stock markets between Monday and Tuesday. From Europe and the US to Japan and South Korea, companies tied to the global chip equipment supply chain saw their stock prices drop, with Dutch lithography giant ASML taking a "hit" of roughly 7 percent on Monday. That an unconfirmed report could trigger such violent market volatility illustrates current paranoia of some forces in the West regarding China's technological rise.



The evaporation of massive market value shows that Western investors' blind faith in the effectiveness of "blockades" has been shaken, and the US-led "decoupling" strategy has lost much of its momentum. Though they may not admit it openly, they know in their hearts that a Chinese breakthrough in "chokepoint" technologies is merely a matter of time.

In recent years, the US has strengthened the implementation of the Wassenaar Arrangement, which imposes technology controls on other countries, to repeatedly impose restrictions and sanctions on China's high-tech sectors while pressuring its allies into a "chip alliance," all aimed at severing China's access to advanced technologies. However, they have overlooked a fundamental truth: Technological blockades are always mutually destructive. By locking others out, one also forfeits the market and space for cooperation. China boasts the world's largest semiconductor consumption market, backed by a complete industrial system and a vast pool of engineers - conditions that guarantee Western blockades will not succeed in the long run. Even Western tech companies like ASML understand that once China achieves a genuine breakthrough, their market share will face a direct hit. Therefore, the stock price fluctuations triggered by this unconfirmed report were not merely emotional knee-jerk reactions, but also a realistic risk assessment by the industry.

While the West talks about fair competition, it has increasingly relied on administrative power, industrial coercion, and media smear campaigns to impose ever-tightening restrictions on China's key technology sectors, seeking to keep China locked into the lower end of the industrial chain. Every step China takes in advancing its R&D is met with another round of export

controls. At its core, this approach reflects insecurity and anxiety. If they were truly secure in their technological lead, there would be no need to suppress competitors through executive orders, let alone become rattled by an unverified rumor. Their unease suggests they are far less certain about preserving their technological lead than they would like to admit. Deep down, they may already recognize - and have even begun to accept - that the era of Western technological monopoly is unlikely to last much longer.

Every advance China has made in science and technology has been earned through decades of sustained investment, perseverance, and accumulated expertise - not through anyone else's generosity. Of course, we hope others will sell us the most advanced equipment, but we're not afraid if they don't. Critical technologies are fundamentally scientific and engineering issues. With a clear direction and steady progress forward, solutions can always be found. By contrast, attempts to undermine the progress of other countries through technological blockades may buy the West some time, but they cannot alter the long-term trajectory. Time and again, experience has shown that the tighter the restrictions, the stronger China's resolve to break through; the greater the containment, the steadier the pace of Chinese innovation.

Looking back at the West's reactions to China's technological progress over the years reveals a telling shift - from ridicule and dismissal, including calls to "send China back to the Stone Age," to growing anxiety and suppression, and now to seeing threats in every shadow. This evolution speaks for itself. It is not that they fail to recognize China's rise; rather, they are unwilling to accept it. Within the Western narrative, cutting-edge technologies can only be exclusively held in Western hands. Any breakthrough China achieves in a strategic field is viewed as a challenge to Western hegemonic order.

In reality, the semiconductor industry is one of the clearest examples of the global division of labor. No country should hope to preserve an absolute advantage through isolationist policies over the long term. Whatever details of the reported development remain to be verified are ultimately secondary. Given China's vast industrial base, formidable capacity to learn, and growing innovation capabilities, achieving breakthroughs in key technologies will be the inevitable result of market



forces and technological evolution.

The sense of alarm surrounding such reports reflects a broader reality: Attempts to contain China through technological hegemony are increasingly out of step with the direction of history.

Barriers built on export controls and technological monopolies cannot stop China's determination to achieve greater self-reliance and strength in science and technology. One day, the technologies once used to constrain China's development will simply become ordinary components of its independent industrial system. For China, the task now is simply to stay focused, keep doing the work, and not be distracted by the external buzz.

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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

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad urges UNSC to fully implement Gaza peace plan



Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan this week called on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to ensure the full implementation of the Gaza ceasefire and the internationally endorsed peace framework, warning that any further delays could jeopardise hopes for a just and lasting peace and undermine the prospects of an independent Palestinian state. Speaking during the UN Security Council’s open debate on the Middle East, Pakistan’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, said the current moment presents a critical opportunity to alleviate humanitarian suffering in Gaza

while advancing a credible path towards Palestinian self-determination and statehood. He described the latest United Nations assessment of the Occupied Palestinian Territory as deeply alarming, saying the humanitarian situation remained severe despite the ceasefire and the broader peace initiative endorsed by the Security Council. According to the ambassador, the framework provides an opportunity to move beyond the cycle of conflict, but only if all parties honour their commitments without delay. “It is imperative to uphold the commitments reflected in the peace plan and Security Council Resolution 2803 that endorsed it,” Ambassador Asim Iftikhar said, cautioning that failure to implement the agreed measures

risks irreparably damaging the prospects for lasting peace. The Pakistani envoy devoted significant attention to developments in the occupied West Bank, expressing concern over continued Israeli settlement expansion, the establishment of new settlement outposts and escalating settler violence. He argued that these developments are steadily altering the demographic and geographic character of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, making the establishment of a viable Palestinian state increasingly difficult. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar also highlighted concerns regarding the proposed “Crimson Thread” project, a reported network of walls and military roads extending across the Jordan Valley. He warned that such infrastructure would isolate Palestinian communities, sever the Jordan Valley from the rest of the West Bank and undermine the territorial continuity essential for a future Palestinian state. Pakistan also aligned itself with the collective position of Arab and Islamic countries in condemning recent developments at Al Aqsa Mosque, including what it described as repeated incursions by Israeli settlers. According to the ambassador, such actions violate international law, relevant UN resolutions and the longstanding historical and legal status of the holy site. Despite the ceasefire, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar said conditions inside Gaza remain extremely fragile. He noted that nearly 59 per cent of Gaza’s population continues to face crisis-level food insecurity, while more than 1,100 Palestinians have reportedly been killed since the ceasefire came into effect. Nearly two million people remain confined to only a fraction of Gaza’s territory, where humanitarian conditions continue to deteriorate.

The ambassador also referred to reports of a large earthen barrier being constructed across Gaza, expressing concern that it could further entrench Israeli control over significant portions of the territory and complicate future peace efforts. Calling for a unified international response, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar outlined four priorities that Pakistan believes the Security Council should urgently pursue. First, he urged full implementation of the comprehensive peace plan and Security Council Resolution 2803, describing both as essential to sustaining the ceasefire and advancing negotiations. Second, he called for an immediate halt to Israeli settlement activities, rejecting any attempts at annexation, forced displacement or demographic changes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, consistent with existing Security Council resolutions. Third, Pakistan renewed its call for international protection for the Palestinian people while urging accountability for those responsible for violations against civilians. Finally, the ambassador stressed the need for the immediate release of Palestinian tax revenues withheld from the Palestinian Authority, arguing that these funds are critical for maintaining essential public services and governance. Reaffirming Pakistan’s longstanding policy, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar said the only sustainable solution to the conflict remains the establishment of an independent, sovereign, contiguous and viable State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. He maintained that only a negotiated two-state solution, consistent with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions, could provide lasting peace and security for both Palestinians and Israelis. Beyond the Palestinian issue, the ambassador expressed concern over broader regional tensions across the Middle East. He reiterated Pakistan’s support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries throughout the region and called on all parties to exercise restraint, pursue dialogue and honour their commitments under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding.

On Lebanon, he emphasised the importance of fully implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and welcomed diplomatic efforts aimed at consolidating the cessation of hostilities and advancing a durable peace. Regarding Syria, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar reaffirmed Pakistan’s support for the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity while calling for respect for existing UN resolutions and the withdrawal from occupied Arab territories. Addressing Yemen, he reiterated Pakistan’s support for a Yemeni-led political process to achieve lasting peace. He condemned attacks targeting Saudi Arabia and commercial shipping routes, warning that such incidents threaten regional stability and global trade. The ambassador also reaffirmed Pakistan’s continued support for the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia. Concluding his address, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar argued that lasting peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved while occupation continues and the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination remains unrealised. He reaffirmed Pakistan’s unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people and pledged continued support for all genuine diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on international law and United Nations resolutions. The Security Council debate also heard a stark assessment from the United Nations’ Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, who warned that violence in the occupied West Bank continues to escalate. He highlighted growing attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinian communities, resulting in civilian casualties, displacement and widespread damage to homes and infrastructure, underscoring the urgent need for international action to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

Saudi medical team performs free pediatric heart surgeries in Indonesia

Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: Saudi Arabia’s aid agency, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief), this week launched a pediatric cardiac surgery mission in Indonesia, bringing a team of volunteer specialists to perform life-saving operations for children while strengthening the country’s cardiac care capacity through medical training and knowledge exchange.

A 16-member team of Saudi doctors arrived at M. Djamil Central General Hospital in Padang, West Sumatra, where they are conducting free pediatric heart surgeries until July 31 as part of a humanitarian initiative implemented in partnership with the Muslim World League. The programme aims to address Indonesia’s growing burden of congenital heart disease. According to the Indonesian Pediatric Society, nearly 50,000 children are born with heart defects each year, but only around 15 per cent receive the treatment they need because of a shortage of specialist cardiac facilities and trained personnel. Dovy Djanas, President Director of M. Djamil Central General Hospital, described the initiative as an important humanitarian collaboration that provides children in West Sumatra with access to free, high-quality cardiac care delivered by experienced specialists. He said the project also supports the hospital’s long-term goal of expanding advanced cardiac services across Sumatra, reducing the need for patients to travel to Jakarta, more than 1,200 kilometres away, for complex heart surgery. Beyond performing surgeries, the Saudi medical team is working closely

with Indonesian healthcare professionals to strengthen local expertise. The programme includes guest lectures and specialised training on post-operative care, modern cardiology practices and advanced pediatric cardiac procedures. The initiative supports Indonesia’s broader healthcare transformation strategy, which seeks to equip regional government hospitals with the capability to perform both open-heart and pediatric cardiac surgeries, making specialised treatment more accessible across the country. KSrelief has previously implemented similar medical missions in Medan, North Sumatra, and Makassar, South Sulawesi. In addition to pediatric heart surgery, the Saudi aid agency has supported training and treatment programmes in adult cardiac surgery, oral and maxillofacial surgery, and thyroid surgery. Doctors involved in the programme said the collaboration has already enabled hundreds of Indonesian children to receive life-saving heart operations that were previously beyond their reach. Medical professionals at M. Djamil Hospital expressed hope that continued cooperation between Indonesian healthcare teams and specialists from KSrelief and the Muslim World

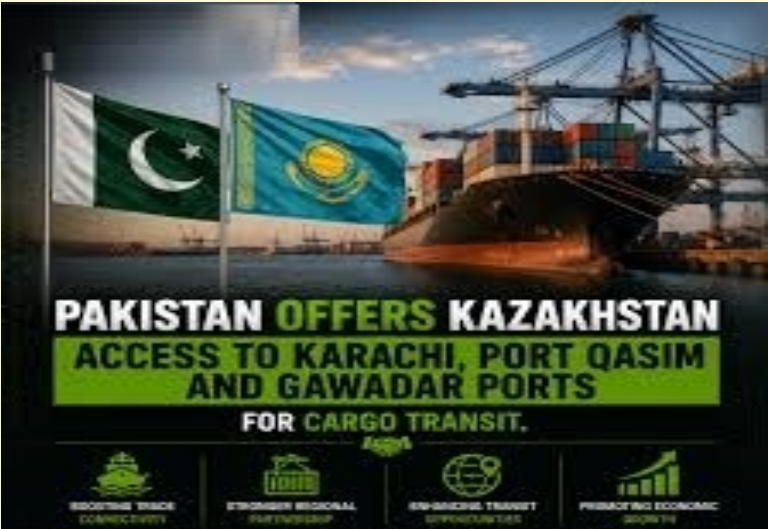


H.E. Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, Ambassador of Pakistan to Indonesia

League would strengthen local capacity, ensuring sustainable improvements in pediatric cardiac surgery services and expanding access to quality cardiac care for children across Indonesia.

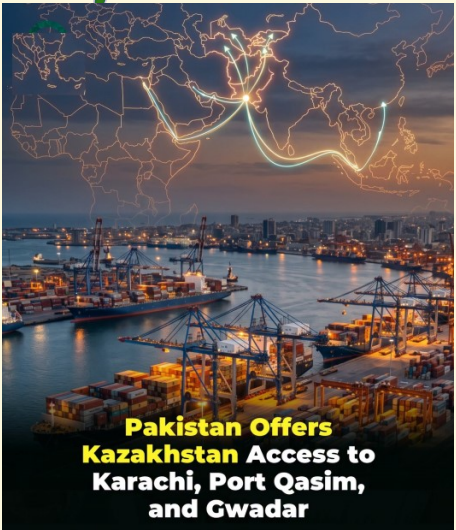
Pakistan offers port infrastructure to facilitate Kazakhstan’s trade through Karachi, Gwadar

Abida Shaheen



Islamabad: Pakistan this week offered to provide port infrastructure and logistical support for Kazakh cargo through Karachi Port, Port Qasim and Gwadar Port, as the two countries explored ways to deepen maritime cooperation and strengthen regional connectivity. The offer was made by Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry during a farewell meeting with Kazakhstan’s Ambassador to Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin, in Islamabad. The meeting focused on expanding bilateral trade through Pakistani seaports, enhancing regional transport links and promoting greater cooperation in the maritime sector. Welcoming the ambassador, the minister appreciated Kistafin’s role in strengthening Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations during his tenure and expressed confidence that maritime collaboration between the two countries would continue to expand. He said Pakistan was keen to deepen engagement with Kazakhstan in ports, shipping, trade facilitation and regional connectivity, adding that stronger maritime links could unlock new commercial opportunities for businesses in both countries.

The minister highlighted Pakistan’s strategic location, noting that Karachi Port, Port Qasim and Gwadar Port could serve as key transit gateways for Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states, providing efficient access to markets in the Persian Gulf, Africa and Southeast Asia. He also conveyed Pakistan’s readiness to facilitate Kazakh cargo through its port infrastructure and expressed willingness to explore potential joint ventures in free zones to promote trade, investment and logistics cooperation. Ambassador Kistafin welcomed the growing momentum in bilateral relations and underscored the significant potential for expanding trade between the two countries. He said closer cooperation in the maritime and port sectors could create new avenues for commerce and strengthen economic connectivity between Kazakhstan and Pakistan. The two sides also discussed enhancing institutional linkages and identifying practical measures to facilitate the movement of Kazakh goods through Pakistani ports, reaffirming their commitment to strengthening regional trade and connectivity through sustained bilateral cooperation.



Ali Rehman Malik says confusion between description and explanation fuels division

Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: Writer and philanthropist Ali Rehman Malik has argued that many of society’s deepest disagreements stem from confusing explanations with descriptions, urging people to distinguish between observing reality and interpreting it. In an essay titled “Every Explanation Begins as a Description,” Malik contends that public discourse increasingly blurs the line between describing events and explaining why they occur, leading to misplaced certainty and deepening divisions. Reflecting on recent debates dominating social media and

language enables communication and shared understanding, it can also create the illusion that naming something amounts to fully understanding it. Malik warned that once people become attached to labels, they often mistake symbolic representations for reality itself. As a result, explanations grow increasingly confident even as direct engagement with reality weakens. He said the pattern extends beyond politics into religion, psychology, science, personal relationships and everyday thought. Individuals often experience an emotion, immediately assign it a label and construct an explanation, without reconsidering whether that explanation accurately reflects the experience. Rather than embracing certainty, Malik advocated continual

AN ESSAY ON LANGUAGE AND CONTACT WITH REALITY

Every Explanation Begins as a Description

Most disagreements aren't about facts. They're about which one we forgot we were making.

Ali Rehman Malik

news platforms, he noted that discussions frequently invoke broad concepts such as “the West,” “normal people,” “the media,” “democracy,” “freedom,” and “truth” without first questioning what those terms actually describe. Malik said description is an attempt to identify what is being encountered, while explanation seeks to determine why it is happening. Although both are essential to understanding the world, he argued that they serve fundamentally different purposes and should not be treated as interchangeable. He maintained that description itself is never entirely neutral because it requires people to assign names, draw distinctions and define boundaries around complex experiences. While

refinement of both descriptions and explanations. He argued that every description should be regarded as provisional and every explanation should remain open to revision, not because reality is unknowable, but because reality always exceeds the language used to describe it. Malik stressed that language is intended to help people engage more closely with reality rather than replace it. He suggested that a more valuable question than asking whether an explanation is correct is to ask whether an explanation has been mistaken for a description, arguing that many of humanity’s deepest disagreements begin when that distinction is lost.



Pakistani, German and Slovak researchers identify rare new grass skink species in Lower Dir

Covert Report

Peshawar: An international team of researchers from Pakistan, Germany and Slovakia this week identified a rare grass skink in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Lower Dir district, solving a decades-old scientific mystery surrounding a reptile previously known from only a single specimen collected in Afghanistan more than 50 years ago.

The discovery was made during field surveys in the rain-soaked foothills of Lower Dir by a team that included Dr Rafaqat Masroor, Curator at the Pakistan Museum of Natural History, alongside researchers from Comenius University in Slovakia and scientific institutions in Germany.

According to a study that has been accepted for publication and is currently in the production stage, the skink populations found in eastern Afghanistan and Pakistan’s Lower Dir represent a distinct species within the genus *Heremites*. The researchers have proposed the scientific name *Heremites afghanicus*, with “Afghan grass skink” or “Dir grass skink” suggested as its common English name.

The species traces its scientific history

back to 1972, when researcher Clas Naumann collected a small striped lizard in eastern Afghanistan. The preserved specimen remained the only known example of the reptile for more than five decades, leaving scientists uncertain whether it represented an isolated individual, a misidentified species or an evolutionary relic. The newly discovered population in Lower Dir has now provided the evidence needed to resolve the mystery.

Although the skinks closely resemble populations found farther west, particularly in Iran, detailed genetic and morphological analyses revealed that they represent a separate evolutionary lineage.

Lead researchers Dr Daniel Jablonski of Comenius University and Dr Rafaqat Masroor said the lizards had effectively remained hidden in plain sight because of their striking physical resemblance to Iranian populations.

Using advanced multi-locus DNA sequencing, the research team found substantial genetic differences between the newly identified species and its closest relatives. Mitochondrial DNA comparisons revealed divergence rates ranging from 15.8 to 21 per cent, confirming that the population is genetically distinct.

The study indicates that *Heremites afghanicus* diverged from its western relatives during the Late Miocene epoch, evolving independently for millions of years in the rocky valleys and mountainous landscapes where the Palearctic and Oriental biogeographical regions meet.

Researchers said the discovery highlights the enduring importance of museum collections in modern scientific research. The specimen preserved for more than half a century provided the historical link needed to connect the Afghan record with the newly documented population in Pakistan.

By combining museum records, extensive field surveys and molecular genetic analysis, scientists concluded that the reptile is not merely an isolated population but a



previously unrecognised species with its own unique evolutionary history. The researchers noted that because the species’ natural habitat extends across Lower Dir in Pakistan and Nangarhar

Province in Afghanistan, its long-term conservation will require cross-border ecological cooperation, coordinated scientific research and habitat protection to safeguard the newly recognised species.

Ancient mammoth remains emerge in Bulgaria as Danube water levels hit record low



Covert Report

Sofia: The remains of what is believed to be an ancient mammoth have been discovered in northern Bulgaria after the Danube River receded to a record low level, exposing prehistoric bones that had remained buried beneath the riverbed for thousands of years.

The discovery was made by a resident of Ryahovo village, who noticed unusual bones protruding from the exposed riverbed and alerted specialists from the Regional History Museum in the nearby town of Ruse.

Museum experts who examined the site identified what appears to be a lower jaw, two tusks and possibly a rib belonging to a mammoth. The remains are scheduled to be carefully removed for detailed examination to determine their precise origin, age and scientific significance.



Museum Director Nikolay Nenov said the discovery, while not unprecedented, represents an important contribution to scientific research and understanding of the region’s prehistoric past.

He noted that researchers have long believed the site was once a swamp, suggesting the mammoth may have become trapped and died there thousands of years ago before its remains were gradually buried beneath layers of sediment.

Scientists will conduct further analysis to confirm the identity of the animal and establish its age, findings that could provide new insights into the prehistoric environment and the distribution of mammoths across southeastern Europe.

The discovery comes as exceptionally low water levels in the Danube continue to expose archaeological and historical remains that are normally hidden beneath the river’s surface.

Portugal Ambassador Paulo Guedes Domingues sees bright future for Pakistan relations



level contacts and sustained collaboration in areas of mutual interest. The ambassador extended warm greetings to Portuguese citizens living and working abroad, acknowledging their contribution to representing Portugal across the world and strengthening its global presence. Reflecting on Portugal-Pakistan relations, he said the bilateral partnership had continued to develop steadily in recent years, with meaningful progress recorded in political dialogue, trade and investment, education, cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges. Ambassador Domingues particularly highlighted the role of the Pakistani-origin community in Portugal, describing it as a "living bridge" that continues to bring the



He also paid tribute to Portugal's Honorary Consuls in Karachi and Lahore, Fakir S. Ayazuddin and Iftikhar Firoz, acknowledging their dedicated efforts in enhancing engagement with Pakistani institutions, businesses and citizens and promoting stronger economic and cultural cooperation.

Drawing inspiration from Portugal's rich history, the ambassador referred to the legacy of renowned national poet Luis de Camões, whose literary works symbolize the country's enduring tradition of exploration, openness and dialogue among civilizations. He said these values continue to guide Portugal's diplomatic engagement and international partnerships.

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Portugal's Ambassador to Pakistan, Paulo Guedes Domingues, has underscored the growing strength of bilateral relations, describing the partnership between Portugal and Pakistan as entering "a particularly positive phase" marked by

expanding engagement and a shared commitment to deeper cooperation across multiple sectors. In a recent message, Ambassador Domingues said relations between the two countries were witnessing renewed momentum through increasingly regular high

two nations closer by fostering mutual understanding and strengthening societal links. He said the growing community has become an important pillar of bilateral relations, contributing positively to cultural diversity while reinforcing ties between the two countries.



Japan-funded IOM project strengthens Pakistan's border management as FIA receives equipment, vehicles

Abida Shaheen

Islamabad: Pakistan's border management capabilities received a major boost this week as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) handed over advanced border management equipment and transport vehicles to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), marking the successful completion of a four-year project funded by the Government of Japan.

The handover ceremony, held at FIA Headquarters in Islamabad, was attended by Japan's Ambassador to Pakistan Akamatsu Shuichi, IOM Pakistan Chief of Mission Mio Sato, FIA Director General Dr Usman Anwar, and senior representatives of the Embassy of Japan, IOM and the FIA.

The initiative forms part of IOM's broader efforts to strengthen migration governance in Pakistan by promoting safe, orderly and regular migration while enhancing protection-sensitive responses to human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants.

Under the project, IOM supplied biometric, information technology, surveillance, security, communication and

solar-powered systems to 21 FIA operational points across the country. The assistance also supports the FIA's National Command and Control Centre (NC3) at its headquarters, enhancing intelligence-led coordination against transnational crimes, including human trafficking, migrant smuggling and cybercrime.

Three dedicated transport vans were also handed over for deployment at Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore international airports to facilitate the safe and dignified reception and onward transportation of returning migrants.

The equipment delivery follows earlier investments in institutional development, including the refurbishment of the FIA Training Academy, completed in March this year. The academy now features upgraded information technology infrastructure, enhanced security systems and modern training facilities, enabling it to provide improved learning opportunities for new recruits and serving officers.

Training an average of 1,000 officers annually, the academy is expected to sustain the long-term impact of

the project by strengthening Pakistan's institutional capacity for protection-sensitive and rights-based border management.

The project also focused on capacity building, with more than 150 FIA officials receiving specialised training in rights-based and gender-sensitive border management, investigation techniques, and document and biometric verification. It also established a sustainable pool of FIA master trainers, including women, capable of independently delivering future training programmes within the organisation.

In addition, more than 200 participants, including FIA officials, provincial police personnel and civil society representatives, received training on victim identification, screening and referral mechanisms to strengthen Pakistan's response to trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling. Women accounted for more than half of the participants.

Speaking at the ceremony, FIA Director General Dr Usman Anwar said the partnership reflected the importance of sustained international cooperation in addressing increasingly complex migration and border management challenges.

He said support for the National Command and Control Centre would significantly enhance the agency's operational monitoring capabilities and strengthen coordinated responses to transnational crime.

Japan's Ambassador to Pakistan Akamatsu Shuichi said effective border management must uphold both national security and human dignity, stressing that security and human rights should be viewed as complementary rather than competing objectives.

He reaffirmed Japan's commitment to supporting strong, capable and humane border management institutions in Pakistan through continued bilateral cooperation.

IOM Pakistan Chief of Mission Mio Sato said modern border management extends beyond regulating cross-border movement and encompasses national security, economic connectivity, regional cooperation and the protection of human dignity.

She said Japan's generous support had enabled IOM to strengthen institutions and modernise systems that would continue serving Pakistan's evolving border management needs.

During the ceremony, Ambassador Akamatsu also visited the FIA's National Command and Control



Centre, where he received a briefing on its role in operational monitoring, intelligence coordination and responses to transnational crime. He later formally handed over one of the three transport vehicles to FIA officials.

At the conclusion of the event, IOM and the FIA ex-

pressed appreciation to the Government of Japan for its continued support in advancing migration governance and strengthening Pakistan's border management systems. IOM also acknowledged the FIA's leadership and cooperation throughout the implementation of the four-year project.



Pakistan, US discuss expanding education partnership with focus on cybersecurity

Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan and the United States this week reaffirmed their commitment to expanding bilateral cooperation in education, research and emerging technologies, with both sides placing particular emphasis on strengthening collaboration in cybersecurity education and capacity building.

The understanding was reached during a meeting between Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and a visiting United States Congressional delegation comprising Congressman Michael James Baumgartner, Representative for Washington's 5th Congressional District, and Congressman Ryan Keith Zinke, Representative for Montana's 1st Congressional District and former U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training Wajih Qamar, National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC) Chairman Qamar-ul-Islam Raja, the ministry's secretary and senior officials.

During the discussions, Dr Siddiqui stressed the need to develop specialised cybersecurity courses and internationally recognised certification programmes to equip students and professionals with the skills required to address evolving digital security challenges.

Both sides also explored opportunities to promote partnerships between Pakistani and American universities and educational institutions in curriculum development, faculty collaboration, joint research and knowledge sharing in cybersecurity and other emerging technologies.

Welcoming the visiting delegation, the federal minister expressed confidence that the visit would further strengthen the longstanding relationship between Pakistan and the United States. He reaffirmed that ties with the United States remain an important pillar of Pakistan's foreign policy and noted that bilateral relations continue to advance on a positive trajectory.

The two sides underscored the importance of sustained high-level engagement to deepen cooperation across a wide range of sectors, including trade, investment, energy, minerals, health, education and agriculture.

Dr Siddiqui also welcomed the resumption of United States Congressional delegation visits to Pakistan and expressed hope that such exchanges would become a regular feature of bilateral engagement.

Highlighting the role of education as a cornerstone of bilateral relations, the minister appreciated the continued success of the Fulbright Programme and other United States-sponsored academic exchange initiatives, describing them as merit-based opportunities that have enabled thousands of Pakistani students and scholars to pursue



higher education and research.

He encouraged greater participation from all provinces and across diverse academic disciplines, particularly in energy, water, agriculture, health, education and climate-related studies.

The meeting noted that more than 44,000 Pakistanis have benefited from United States Government-sponsored exchange programmes, reflecting the strong people-to-people ties between the two countries.

The minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to expanding academic collaboration through stronger partnerships between universities and research institutions.

Both sides discussed the establishment of joint research centres, dual-degree programmes, faculty exchange initiatives and collaborative projects in public health, climate resilience, water management, food security and teacher education, while respecting the legal and regulatory frameworks of both countries.

The discussions also focused on strengthening cooperation in science, technology and innovation to address shared development challenges and promote sustainable growth.

Recognising the growing importance of critical technologies, Dr Siddiqui noted that United States universities

and industries continue to value international talent in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). He reiterated Pakistan's readiness to serve as a reliable partner in information technology and innovation by encouraging collaboration between Pakistani technology companies, universities and their American counterparts in information technology, financial technology and agricultural technology.

The meeting further explored opportunities for targeted academic mobility programmes, short-term research exchanges, virtual laboratories and joint innovation incubators aimed at promoting research, entrepreneurship and skills development.

Both sides agreed that education, scholarships and innovation remain among the most effective avenues for strengthening bilateral relations and fostering mutual understanding.

The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training reaffirmed its commitment to expanding educational cooperation with the United States, expressing confidence that sustained collaboration in education, research, innovation and emerging technologies would further reinforce the longstanding partnership between the two countries.



EU pushes stronger global cooperation on cybersecurity at inaugural UN mechanism session



artificial intelligence; supporting implementation of the UN framework through the application of international law and the 11 voluntary norms of responsible state behaviour; encouraging broader participation by governments, technical experts and multi-stakeholder communities; and enhancing cyber resilience worldwide through international partnerships and capacity-building initiatives. To demonstrate its commitment, the European Union presented a non-paper outlining practical examples of how it is implementing the UN norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. The bloc also co-hosted a side event with regional partners and civil society organisations focusing on the practical implementation of these norms. The event was attended by Ambassador Egriselda López of El Salvador, who chairs the UN Global Mechanism. Highlighting its global engagement, the EU said it remains one of the world's largest providers of cyber capacity-building assistance, with €140 million committed to projects supporting partner countries across the globe. Through these initiatives, the bloc is helping countries strengthen cyber resilience while promoting a rules-based international order in cyberspace. The UN Global Mechanism, established in 2025, is the first permanent forum enabling all UN member states to cooperate on promoting responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. It provides a platform for countries to exchange experiences, address



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

emerging cyber threats and develop practical measures to reduce cyber risks while enhancing global resilience. Building on more than two decades of UN negotiations, the mechanism focuses on addressing cyber threats, applying international law in cyberspace, implementing agreed norms of responsible state behaviour, strengthening confidence-building measures and expanding global cyber capacity-

building efforts. With the conclusion of its inaugural substantive plenary, the mechanism will now move towards implementation through thematic working groups scheduled to begin later this year. The European Union reaffirmed its commitment to supporting these efforts and working with international partners to advance collective cybersecurity, strengthen global resilience and promote a secure, stable and rules-based digital future.

Liaquat Ali the cybersecurity implications of

Islamabad: The European Union this week reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening global cybersecurity by advocating practical international cooperation during the first substantive plenary session of the United Nations Global Mechanism on Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace, held in New York from July 20 to 24. The landmark meeting brought together representatives from UN member states to advance implementation of the international framework governing responsible state behaviour in cyberspace amid growing cyber threats targeting critical infrastructure, healthcare systems, businesses and public services worldwide. During the session, the European Union urged countries to move beyond commitments and accelerate practical implementation of the UN framework to build a more secure, open, free and stable digital environment. The EU highlighted four key priorities for strengthening international cybersecurity cooperation. These include advancing practical measures to protect critical infrastructure, combat ransomware attacks and address



UK deputy high commissioner, Sindh CM engage investor on business reforms



High Commissioner of United Kingdom to Pakistan Jane Marriott



Celina Ali
Islamabad: UK Deputy High Commissioner Alison Blackburne and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah this week convened senior representatives of British companies, multinational corporations and investors to discuss reforms aimed at improving Pakistan's investment climate and promoting sustainable economic growth.

The high-level roundtable, held in partnership between the UK Government and the Government of Sindh, focused on strengthening investor confidence by addressing key issues influencing investment decisions, including policy predictability, taxation, regulatory frameworks, foreign exchange processes, infrastructure and the overall ease of doing business. Speaking at the event, Deputy British

High Commissioner Alison Blackburne said British companies had maintained a long-standing presence in Pakistan, making significant contributions to employment, skills development and economic growth. "British companies have invested in Pakistan for decades, creating jobs, trans-



ferring knowledge and contributing to the country's economic growth. We want to see that partnership continue to grow," she said.

Blackburne added that the UK was working closely with Pakistani government partners to simplify regulations, strengthen public institutions and remove unnecessary barriers that hinder business activity, creating a more enabling environment for domestic and international investors.

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah welcomed the longstanding contribution of British businesses to Sindh's economy and reaffirmed his government's commitment to advancing reforms that improve the province's investment environment. He stressed the importance of continued collaboration with development partners to enhance taxation systems, customs procedures, regulatory practices, digitalisation and investment facilitation.

The participants also reviewed progress made under UK-supported reform initiatives. More than 500 regulatory reforms have been approved over the past year to streamline regulations, strengthen governance, improve institutional capacity and reduce compliance burdens on businesses.

The meeting also highlighted the UK's support for Karachi's implementation of the World Bank's Business Ready (B-READY) framework, an initiative designed to identify and remove practical obstacles facing businesses in areas such as business registration, taxation, access to utilities and commercial dispute resolution.

Participants agreed that sustained policy reforms, stronger public-private engagement and an improved regulatory environment would help attract greater foreign investment, boost private sector growth and contribute to Pakistan's long-term economic development.

The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting. **Sun Tzu**

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. **Francis of Assisi**

Italy's Leonardo expands strategic partnership with Microsoft to accelerate AI-driven digital transformation



Newsire

Rome: Italian aerospace, defence and security group Leonardo has significantly expanded its strategic partnership with Microsoft Italia, launching an ambitious digital transformation programme aimed at modernising workplace collaboration and accelerating the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) across the company. The initiative, titled “Digital Horizon – A New Era of Collaboration,” represents a major milestone in Leonardo’s long-term digital transformation strategy and will introduce Microsoft 365 cloud productivity services and generative AI technologies to approximately 50,000 employees across the Group. Developed in collaboration with Microsoft Italia, the programme is designed to transform the way employees communicate, collaborate and manage workflows by integrating advanced digital tools and AI-powered solutions into day-to-day operations. Under the initiative, Leonardo’s workforce will gain access to Microsoft Teams, OneDrive and Outlook through Mi-

crosoft’s secure cloud platform, enabling real-time collaboration, seamless document sharing and more flexible remote working. The programme also introduces Microsoft 365 Copilot, an AI-powered assistant capable of supporting employees in creating, analysing and summarising content while operating within the company’s secure digital environment. The adoption of generative AI is expected to streamline routine administrative tasks, improve operational efficiency and enable employees to devote greater attention to high-value and innovation-driven activities. Beyond technology deployment, the part-

nership places strong emphasis on workforce development and digital skills enhancement. Leonardo has introduced a comprehensive training programme featuring short learning modules, practical guidance, digital support tools and specialised instruction on advanced AI prompting techniques and the use of AI agents. A company-wide network of “Digital Pioneers” has also been established to encourage the adoption of new technologies, share best practices and support colleagues as they transition to the new digital working environment. Antonio Liotti, Leonardo’s Chief People and Organization Officer, said the Digital Horizon programme reflects the compa-

ny’s commitment to creating a more connected, integrated and collaborative workplace. He said the introduction of AI and advanced digital tools would enhance collaboration, improve information sharing and stimulate innovation by reducing the time employees spend on repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus on activities that generate greater value. Liotti emphasised that employee training remains central to the initiative, not only to equip staff with new technical skills but also to facilitate a broader cultural shift towards more agile, collaborative and innovative ways of working. Marco Fischetto, Director of the Public Administration Division at Microsoft Italia, said the partnership demonstrates Microsoft’s commitment to helping Leonardo accelerate innovation, productivity and collaboration while maintaining the company’s high standards for cybersecurity and information protection. He noted that successful digital transfor-



Leonardo's chairman H.E.Stefano Pontecorvo

mation depends not only on advanced technology but also on developing the skills and organisational culture necessary for the responsible adoption of artificial intelligence. The expanded collaboration underscores Italy’s growing focus on integrating cloud computing and AI into strategic industries, positioning Leonardo among the country’s leading companies driving digital innovation while strengthening its competitiveness in the global aerospace, defence and security sectors.



France orders deportation of former RT France chief over alleged Russian disinformation activities

Covert Report

Paris: France this week ordered the deportation of Xenia Fedorova, the former head of RT France, the French-language branch of Russia’s state-funded broadcaster RT, citing concerns over her alleged role in promoting Russian disinformation campaigns aimed at

destabilising public order. The expulsion order was issued by France’s Ministry of the Interior, according to French media reports, which said authorities accused Fedorova of facilitating information operations linked to the Russian government. Fedorova served as head of RT France

from 2017 until 2023. The broadcaster ceased operations in France following the European Union’s sanctions against Russian state media imposed after Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Despite the closure of RT France, Fedorova remained in the country and continued working as a political commentator for media outlets owned by French businessman Vincent Bolloré. She has regularly appeared on the television channel CNews, contributed to Europe 1 radio and written opinion pieces for Le Journal du Dimanche. French authorities allege that her media activities continued to promote narratives aligned with Russian state interests regarding the war in Ukraine and Moscow’s relations with Western countries. Fedorova’s lawyer, Emmanuel Piwnica, said the deportation order would be challenged immediately through the French legal system. The move comes as France and other European countries continue to tighten



measures against Russian state-backed media and influence operations following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Earlier this year, France’s Audiovisual and Digital Communication Regulatory Authority (ARCOM) blocked access to dozens of websites associated with Russian media organisations and broadcasters in line with European Union sanctions targeting Russian state-controlled media.

Western governments have repeatedly accused Moscow of using state-funded media platforms and coordinated information campaigns to influence public opinion, interfere in democratic processes and spread disinformation across Europe and other regions. Russia has consistently rejected such allegations, maintaining that its international media outlets provide alternative perspectives on global events.

