

FS Asim Iftikhar Ahmad calls for modern, inclusive, forward-looking Foreign Service Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Foreign Secretary Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad this week called for a more innovative, inclusive and forward-looking Foreign Service, stressing that Pakistan's diplomats must adapt to changing global realities, embrace emerging technologies and explore new avenues to advance the (Page-6)

Pakistan, EU delegation discuss counter-terrorism, regional security and GSP+ cooperation Celina Ali
Islamabad: Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik this week held talks with a European Union (EU) delegation on strengthening Pakistan-EU cooperation in security, counter-terrorism, regional affairs and trade, underscoring the importance of sustained (Page-10)

Dar-Li Qiang discuss Pak-China strategic ties on SCO sidelines

Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar held an informal meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Dushanbe this week, reaffirming the importance of Pakistan-China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership amid evolving regional developments. The meeting took place on the sidelines of a banquet dinner hosted in honour of heads of delegations attending the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government (CHG), which is being held in the Tajik

capital on October 19-20. The Pakistani Foreign Office said the two leaders exchanged views in a cordial atmosphere on the longstanding Pakistan-China all-weather strategic relationship and current regional developments, reflecting the continued high-level engagement between the two countries within the SCO framework. Dar arrived in Dushanbe to lead Pakistan's delegation to the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting at the invitation of Tajikistan's Prime Minister Qohir Rasulzoda. The

gathering brings together senior government leaders from SCO member states to deliberate on economic cooperation, trade, investment, regional connectivity and broader socioeconomic development. China's participation in the meeting assumes particular significance given its strategic partnership with Pakistan and its role in promoting regional economic integration through multilateral platforms and connectivity initiatives. The SCO provides Islamabad and Beijing with an important forum to coordinate positions on

regional challenges, expand economic engagement and strengthen cooperation among member states. The Council of Heads of Government is the organisation's second-highest decision-making body and deals primarily with economic, financial, trade, connectivity and socioeconomic cooperation, alongside the organisation's budgetary matters. The meeting is expected to adopt a joint communiqué, statements and other decisions aimed at advancing cooperation among member states. Chinese Premier Li Qiang is representing Beijing at the gathering alongside other senior leaders and representatives of SCO member countries, including Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as Iran and India. During his visit, Dar is also scheduled to meet Tajikistan's president and prime minister and hold bilateral discussions with



counterparts from SCO member states on the sidelines of the summit. The engagements offer Pakistan an opportunity to strengthen diplomatic coordination with China and other regional partners, particularly on trade facilitation, transport connectivity, economic cooperation and regional stability. Pakistan and China maintain close strategic ties encompassing political cooperation, defence,

infrastructure development, energy and regional connectivity, with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) serving as a major component of their economic partnership. Dar's interaction with the Chinese premier on the sidelines of the Dushanbe meeting underscores the importance both countries attach to continued high-level dialogue and coordination through regional multilateral institutions.

Alberta votes to remain in Canada, handing Carney a boost amid separatist push

Covert Report
Ottawa: Residents of Alberta this week voted to remain part of Canada in the province's first-ever separation referendum, delivering a political boost to Prime Minister Mark Carney as he seeks to strengthen national unity amid an escalating trade dispute with the United States. CBC News, Canada's public broadcaster, projected the outcome late Monday after approximately 33 per cent of the votes had been counted. At that stage, 76 per cent of the ballots counted supported remaining in Canada, while 23 per cent backed moving towards a binding vote on separation. The referendum was non-binding, meaning its outcome did not itself trigger a legal process to separate Alberta from Canada. "Albertans made a clear choice," Carney said in a statement following the announcement of the preliminary results. "They chose unity, to build together, and to take care of each other." "Canada is greater than the sum of its parts," he added. The result offered Carney an important political opportunity to reinforce his message of national solidarity at a time when Canada is confronting economic uncertainty and pressure on its trade relationship with Washington. Alberta, a resource-rich western province and a major centre of Canada's oil and gas industry, has long expressed dissatisfaction with federal policies that some residents believe constrain its economic potential and limit the development of its energy sector. Although separatist campaigners have struggled to demonstrate majority support for independence, their movement has gained visibility by arguing that Alberta contributes disproportionately to the national economy while receiving insufficient consideration from the federal government. Alberta Premier Danielle Smith announced the referendum in May, saying a vote would allow residents to express their views on separation and enable the province to move forward with greater clarity. Smith said she wanted Albertans to have an opportunity to understand the level of public support for the issue rather than allowing the debate to continue indefinitely. Following the release of the preliminary results, she said on social media that she was "very pleased" with the early indication of widespread support for remaining in Canada. She said she would address residents on Tuesday to discuss the outcome and outline the province's next steps. The result appeared to contradict the ambitions of a small but vocal separatist movement that has campaigned for months to establish an independent Alberta. Supporters of independence argue that the province's substantial energy wealth is used to subsidise less prosperous parts of Canada and that Alberta could achieve greater prosperity outside the federal system.



They also contend that decisions made by the federal government in Ottawa have restricted the development and transportation of the province's oil and gas resources. However, pollsters and political analysts had repeatedly questioned whether the separatist movement could secure majority support, pointing to surveys indicating that roughly one-third of residents favoured holding a future referendum on leaving Canada. The preliminary results suggested that support for remaining in the federation was substantially stronger than support for advancing towards a binding separation vote. Nevertheless, the outcome is unlikely to end the independence debate, as some separatist leaders have indicated that they intend to continue their campaign regardless of the referendum result. Carney had personally intervened in the debate in the days leading up to the vote, using a rally in Calgary last week to warn residents against supporting separation. He described the prospect of leaving Canada as a dangerous bluff that could produce years of political conflict and deepen divisions within the country. The prime minister urged Albertans to consider the wider national consequences of their decision, appealing to them to vote as though Canada's future depended on the outcome. Carney, who spent much of his childhood in Alberta, acknowledged that many residents of the province have historically felt neglected or unfairly treated by successive federal governments. He sought to address those concerns by pointing to his government's approval of a proposed new pipeline, presenting energy infrastructure as an area where federal and provincial interests could converge. He also argued that Alberta would play a critical role in helping Canada reduce its economic dependence on the United States. The prime minister's message linked the question of national unity with the country's broader economic strategy, particularly as Ottawa seeks to diversify trade relationships and strengthen domestic economic capacity amid tensions with Washington. For Carney, the referendum outcome provides an opportunity to argue that Alberta's concerns can be addressed within the Canadian federation rather than through separation.

Aseefa Bhutto urges youth to reject extremism, hatred on 19th anniversary of Karsaz tragedy

Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: First Lady Asifa Bhutto Zardari this week urged Pakistan's youth to resist extremism, reject intolerance and never allow anyone to exploit their faith, frustration or aspirations to promote hatred and violence, saying the sacrifices of the Karsaz tragedy must inspire a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Pakistan. In her message on the 19th anniversary of the Karsaz tragedy, observed on October 18, 2026, Aseefa paid tribute to the victims of the deadly terrorist attack that targeted a massive reception for her mother, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, in Karachi following her return to Pakistan after years of exile. She recalled that hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis had gathered in Karachi on October 18, 2007, to welcome Benazir Bhutto home, carrying hopes of democracy, peace and a better future. However, terrorists turned the historic celebration into a night of death and destruction, killing more than 180 innocent people and injuring hundreds of others. "Today, I remember those brave men and women with profound grief, gratitude and pride," she said, paying tribute to the victims whose families continue to bear the pain of the tragedy. She observed that those who lost their lives were not merely political workers but ordinary Pakistanis, including fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, who believed in a future free from fear and violence. "Their families carry the pain of that terrible night even today," she said, underscoring the enduring human cost of terrorism and the need to remember those who sacrificed their lives for their political beliefs and democratic aspirations.



Remembering her mother's determination in the face of terrorist threats, Aseefa said Benazir Bhutto had remained committed to democracy despite knowing the dangers she faced. "My mother knew the dangers she faced, yet she refused to surrender to the forces of extremism," she said. Benazir Bhutto survived the Karsaz attack, but was assassinated in another terrorist attack in Rawalpindi just 70 days later, on December 27, 2007. Aseefa said her mother believed that terrorism must never be allowed to determine Pakistan's destiny or silence the democratic aspirations of its people. Her message highlighted the importance of preserving the democratic values for which Benazir Bhutto and numerous political workers and supporters had struggled, while reaffirming the need for national unity against terrorism.

Punjab to distribute 100,000 Chinese electric bikes free to students

Gwadar Pro

Sahiwal: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif this week announced plans to provide 100,000 Chinese-made electric bikes to students free across the province this year, highlighting the growing role of Chinese electric mobility technology in supporting student transportation and expanding access to education. The initiative is aimed at facilitating students' daily mobility and helping them overcome transportation difficulties that can affect their ability to attend educational institutions, particularly those who travel considerable distances to pursue their studies. Maryam Nawaz made the announcement while addressing a ceremony at the University of Sahiwal, where she distributed Honhaar (intelligent) scholarships among 1,500 students from different educational institutions and laptops among 4,700 male and female students in the district. The announcement places Chinese-made electric bikes at the centre of another provincial initiative designed to support young people, while also reflecting the expanding potential of electric mobility solutions in Pakistan's transportation sector. The planned distribution of the procured electric bikes combines a student welfare objective with the potential expansion of electric mobility in Punjab, placing affordable transportation alongside educational support as part of the province's youth-focused development agenda.



Gwadar port chief reviews donkey slaughterhouse operations

Gwadar Pro

Gwadar: Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) Chairman Noor-ul-Haq Baloch this week visited a donkey slaughterhouse operated by Hangeng in the Gwadar Free Zone and was briefed on production activities, officials said. The company also has donkey-

farming operations associated with its slaughterhouse business. During the visit, Baloch said industrial projects in the Free Zone could contribute to Pakistan's economy and exports. He said GPA was seeking to attract investment and support industrial development in Gwadar. The Free Zone forms part of the wid-



er China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework and is intended to support production, processing and commercial operations linked to domestic and overseas markets.

The longer-term contribution of such projects will depend on production capacity, overseas market access, logistics and compliance with applicable animal-health and export re-

quirements. Links with local suppliers and workers would also be important to any wider benefits for Gwadar.

Ancient sanctuary of Demeter in Italy reopened as excavations revealed roots in protohistory



Covert Report
Rome: An ancient sanctuary dedicated to Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture, grain and harvest, reopened to the public near Vetralla in central Italy following a major programme of archaeological excavations, conservation and site improvements that shed new light on the location's remarkably long history. The Sanctuary of Demeter at Macchia delle



Valli reopened after work led by Italy's Superintendency for Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape for the Province of Viterbo and Southern Etruria. The project was supported by funding from Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP). A presentation and opening ceremony were held on October 24, marking a new chapter in the public appreciation of an archaeological site whose origins extended much further back than previously established. The latest excavations significantly expanded archaeologists' understanding of the sanctuary, revealing evidence of human activity dating to protohistory — a period preceding the emergence of written historical records. The discoveries suggested that people had frequented the area long before the religious complex took shape, adding an important new dimension to its archaeological significance. The findings established a broader historical timeline, tracing the site's development from its earliest known use through the Late Etruscan period and into the Roman era. They also provided fresh evidence of the continuity of religious activity associated with Demeter, whose worship was closely linked to agriculture, fertility and the cycles of cultivation. A key objective of the archaeological campaign was to clarify how the sanctuary evolved over successive centuries. By examining previously unexplored areas and studying the surviving architectural remains, researchers gained a clearer understanding of its Late Etruscan and Roman phases. The discoveries helped reconstruct the transformation of the complex and provided further evidence of the site's enduring religious importance. The sanctuary appeared to have remained a place of devotion across different historical periods, reflecting the persistence of cult practices even as the surrounding society and its political circumstances changed. The excavations also reached the natural bedrock in several locations, enabling archaeologists to investigate the physical foundations of the site and identify activities that preceded or

accompanied its religious use. In areas that had not previously been investigated, researchers discovered evidence of quarrying. The traces indicated that stone had been extracted directly from the terrain, revealing another dimension of the site's history and illustrating how the landscape served both practical and religious purposes. Among the important discoveries were an ancient fountain, associated structures and terraces extending across the hillside. These remains offered insights into how the sanctuary's occupants managed and used the area's natural resources, particularly water. The fountain and its related infrastructure pointed to the practical arrangements that helped shape activity at the site, while the terraces demonstrated how the hillside had been adapted and maintained over time. Evidence that the slope continued to be used into the modern period further highlighted the site's long relationship with the surrounding landscape. Rather than representing an isolated ancient monument, the sanctuary formed part of a setting that had been occupied, modified and used across successive generations. The combination of archaeological remains, water infrastructure and terraced terrain also enhanced understanding of how the sanctuary functioned within its natural environment. Alongside the archaeological investigations, the project included conservation measures and improvements designed to make the sanctuary more accessible while safeguarding its historic fabric. Particular attention was given to the visitor route, with planners seeking to establish a pathway connecting the ancient structures with the surrounding landscape. The approach was intended to allow visitors to appreciate the ruins in their original geographical context and understand the relationship between the sanctuary, the hillside and the natural resources that influenced its development. The conservation programme aimed to protect the remains for future generations while improving the experience of visitors. The reopening

therefore represented not only an opportunity to display newly investigated archaeological features but also an effort to integrate heritage preservation with public access. The sanctuary's significance lay in the long chronology that emerged from the excavations. Evidence of early human activity, followed by the development of the religious complex and its subsequent use during the Etruscan and Roman periods, provided an opportunity to examine how sacred places evolved over time. Demeter, associated with grain, harvest and agricultural fertility, occupied an important place in the religious traditions of the ancient Mediterranean. The evidence uncovered at Macchia delle Valli reinforced the site's connection with her worship and offered a setting in which to explore the relationship between religious belief, agriculture and the landscape. The discovery of quarrying traces and water-related structures added further depth to this picture, demonstrating that the sanctuary's history encompassed not only ritual practices but also the management and transformation of its physical surroundings. The reopening brought renewed attention to the archaeological heritage of central Italy. The

excavation and conservation work expanded knowledge of the site's origins, clarified its architectural development and strengthened efforts to ensure its long-term preservation. Together, the discoveries offered a more complete picture of a historic landscape whose story stretched from protohistory through the Etruscan and Roman worlds and into more recent times.



Recreating 30 Years of Artistic Exploration of the Leopard Cat: From Unfathomable to Endlessly fascinating

The Paper

Gu Cunyan | Six Impressions of the Stone Tiger
Shi Hu (1942-2023) was a landmark figure in the reform of Chinese painting since the 1980s. As early as the 1970s, his "Sketches of Africa" ??had a significant impact. In his later years, he lived in seclusion in a mountain village, constructing his artistic system through heavy color painting, ink wash painting, and calligraphy. On the third anniversary of Shi Hu's death, how can we truly re-examine his work?
On October 20th, the "Unfathomable Yet Enduring: A Grand Exhibition of Shi Hu's Art" opened at the Jinling Art Museum. This is the largest comprehensive art exhibition since Shi Hu's death in 2023, bringing together more than seventy pieces (sets) of his works created over 30 years, starting in the 1990s, including heavy color paintings on paper, heavy color paintings on canvas, oil paintings on canvas, ink paintings on paper, and manuscripts. Two specialized academic seminars were held concurrently with the exhibition, discussing Shi Hu's artistic explorations, calligraphic practices, and their profound significance for the modern transformation of Chinese art.
On-site | Recreating 30 Years of Artistic Exploration of the Leopard Cat: From Unfathomable to Endlessly fascinating
At the Jinling Art Museum exhibition hall, in front of the huge "Tianming Tu" painting

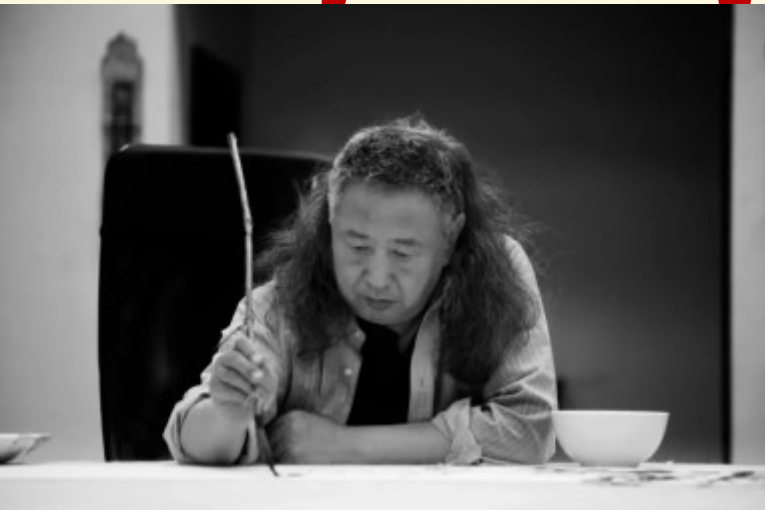


On-site | Recreating 30 Years of Artistic Exploration of the Leopard Cat: From Unfathomable to Endlessly fascinating
Shi Hu (1942-2023) spent his later years in a mountain village in Guangdong. How did it go from "unfathomable after countless readings" to "endless enjoyment"? Art scholar Peng De, over 80 years old, had already positioned Shi Hu as a "paradigm of Chinese modern art" during his lifetime, noting his immense exploratory nature and pointing out that he "opposed the new wave of art copying the West and the conservatives copying tradition." The exhibition's title, "Unfathomable After a Hundred Readings," actually points to Shi Hu's continuous artistic exploration. His 1978 work, "African Sketches," grafted Chinese ink painting onto Western realism, already astonished and puzzled the art world at the time. In the 1980s and 90s, he turned to "character imagery" experiments, dissolving grammar and deconstructing Chinese characters, making his poems "completely unreadable." The use of peacock feather brushes to write Chinese characters and the heavy color technique further concealed the objects beneath layers of lines and colors. Each exploration surpassed existing boundaries, naturally leading to a sense of "incomprehension" when faced with such works.

On-site | Recreating 30 Years of Artistic Exploration of the Leopard Cat: From Unfathomable to Endlessly fascinating
Exhibition opening scene
The phrase "never tires of looking at it" stems from its inherent artistic charm. Shi Hu's lines are vigorous and powerful, intricately intertwined, sharp and sculpted, their colors mottled yet brilliant, like rosy clouds or radiant light. What appears to be an abstract, massive work reveals figures, animals, and plants vividly when viewed from a distance, as if brought to life by animation. This "unresolved yet understood"—the closer you get, the more enigmatic it becomes; the further you step, the clearer it becomes—makes viewing a continuous process of adjusting perception. The incomprehension breeds questioning, and questioning prolongs the viewing experience; the longer one views, the more inexhaustible its "primordial" energy becomes. Therefore, "never tiring of looking at it" is the entry point, and "never tires of looking at it" is the ultimate destination. Curator Liu Chunjie, specially appointed director of Jinling Art Museum, said: "Shi Hu spent his life searching for new ways, exploring his own artistic language, and establishing his own theoretical system. He sought theoretical basis and spiritual sustenance from folk art and traditional culture, taking the old as the new and transforming



the old into his own. His art is self-expressive, conscious, and distinctive. Since the 1980s, Shi Hu has never lacked confidants and has never been lonely. It is fortunate that people understand him. He stands alone in the art world, vigorous, vibrant, intelligent, versatile, and profound. He is a warrior in the contemporary art world."
On-site | Recreating 30 Years of Artistic Exploration of the Leopard Cat: From Unfathomable to Endlessly fascinating
Exhibition of "Swing Picture"
Wang Luxiang, the academic director of the exhibition and a renowned cultural scholar, began by discussing Shi Hu's inscription at the exhibition: "Only calligraphy can drive away the vulgarity and oppression around us." He believes that the enormous impact of Shi Hu's death was not accidental. He was an artist who attempted to construct a "world painting" with a comprehensive civilization, based on a global consciousness, rooted in a sense of seeking roots, using "visualized land anthropology" as a method, and embracing "self-exile" as a life attitude. "His exploration highlights the free essence of art. He was a more intense, more far-reaching, and more extreme artist, and a huge presence



in the history of modern Chinese art. Anyone who looks at it repeatedly will surely find a solution."
Zhao Xucheng, honorary president of Jiangsu Provincial Academy of Chinese Painting, said: "I still remember when Shi Hu held an exhibition in Nanjing in the 1980s. I attended and gave a speech. The exhibition was very well received at the time. I am 86 years old this year, and like Shi Hu, I believe that Chinese calligraphy has extremely great artistic value. Shi Hu has a broad mind and his artistic attainments have reached a height that most people cannot reach."
On-site | Recreating 30 Years of Artistic Exploration of the Leopard Cat: From Unfathomable to Endlessly fascinating
Wang Yiqiao, representative of Hengbang Art Center, donated the artwork "Duo Ning Tu" to Jinling Art Museum. Zhang Xueting, Vice President of Nanjing Academy of Painting and Calligraphy and Deputy Director of Jinling Art Museum, accepted the donation, and Liu Chunjie, Special Appointed President of Nanjing Academy of Painting and Calligraphy and Special Appointed Director of Jinling Art Museum, presented the collection certificate.
The exhibition list spans from "Jade Beauty" (paper painting, heavy color) in 1992 to "Overturning Basket" in 2022, juxtaposing works from three decades in the same space, rather than being displayed in separate halls according to "oil painting period - heavy color period - ink painting

period". This synchronic juxtaposition logic is precisely material evidence of Shi Hu's "growth".
On-site | Recreating 30 Years of Artistic Exploration of the Leopard Cat: From Unfathomable to Endlessly fascinating
A partial view of the painting "Jade Beauty"
Shi Hu himself said, "My creation actually has no stages; it's a continuous process." He has a very vivid way of putting it—"anti-sweeping": "We spend our whole lives doing 'anti-sweeping work'... so we have to fight against it, struggling back and forth painfully. That's actually how the journey of art is." Every time a style takes shape, it's a danger of being captured by inertia for him; every "growth" is an active break free. In the exhibition, the 1995 oil painting on canvas "Emerald Pond" (75×75cm) and the 2018 heavy color painting on canvas "Clear Fragrance" (124×163cm) are compared side by side; the 1992 "Jade Beauty" and the 2017 "Indigo Looking Up" and the 2021 "Overturning Basket" are placed in the same room, and the boundaries between the media are intentionally blurred. Shi Hu did not "progress" from oil painting to heavy color painting, nor did he "return" from heavy color painting to ink painting, but rather he tore and activated each other between multiple media.

A prominent Shanghai-based digital newspaper and current affairs media platform in China

More than 100 masterpieces, showcasing "the birth of the Shanghai School" and Huangpu District

The Paper

If Shanghai is the birthplace and center of modern Shanghai-style visual art, then Huangpu District is undoubtedly the most important piece of the puzzle in Shanghai-style art. For over 100 years since Shanghai opened as a treaty port, Huangpu District has witnessed the development of various aspects related to Shanghai-style visual art, including Chinese calligraphy and painting, Western painting, advertising design, and art publishing. The Yu Garden Calligraphy and Painting Charity Association, as well as modern organizations such as the Tianma Society, the Jue Lan Society, and the Shanghai Cartoon Society, were all active in Huangpu District.
The Paper learned that the special art exhibition "The Birth of the Shanghai School: Huangpu in Visual Art" opened on October 20 at the Hu Wensui Art Museum in Shanghai. The exhibition presents the colorful evolution of Shanghai School visual art in Huangpu over the past century through a variety of means, including original works by more than 100 famous artists over the past 100 years, as well as documentary images and plot settings.
More than 100 masterpieces, showcasing "the birth of the Shanghai School" and Huangpu District.
Exhibition site
According to Zhang Lixing, the curator of this exhibition, among the calligraphy and painting societies from the late Qing Dynasty to

modern times, the one with the widest social influence, the largest number of members, the longest duration, and the greatest role in promoting the development of Shanghai-style art in later generations is undoubtedly the "Yuyuan Calligraphy and Painting Charity Association," established in the old city of Huangpu. The "Yuyuan Calligraphy and Painting Charity Association" was founded in 1909, with its headquarters located in the Deyuelou Pavilion of Yuyuan Garden in present-day Huangpu District. In the history of Shanghai's visual arts development, many famous Western painting societies and institutions, such as the Tianma Society and Juelan Society (advocating modern art), private studios like Chongren Studio, Hading Studio, and Mengguang Studio, as well as China's first modern cartoon creation society—the Cartoon Society (Shanghai Cartoon Society)—were active in Huangpu District. More than 100 masterpieces, showcasing "the birth of the Shanghai School" and Huangpu District.

This exhibition approaches the subject from three dimensions, divided into three sections. The first section, "Inheriting the Past and Ushering in the Future," uses the "Yu Garden Calligraphy and Painting Charity Association" as its central hub to reflect the cultural lineage and development of Shanghai-style calligraphy and painting art in Huangpu District. This section primarily features over 40 artworks, including precious original works by artists such as Ren Bonian, Xu Gu, Yu Yue, Li Ruiqing, Wu Changshuo, Shen

Yinmo, Qian Huan, Pu Hua, Fu Baoshi, Liu Haisu, Xu Beihong, Wang Zhen, Wu Hufan, Wang Fu'an, Zheng Wuchang, and Xie Zhiliu. It showcases the significant role of modern, contemporary, and renowned calligraphers and painters who have left their mark on Huangpu District in promoting Shanghai-style calligraphy and painting art.

More than 100 masterpieces, showcasing "the birth of the Shanghai School" and Huangpu District.
"Winter Plum Blossoms of India" (ink and color on paper) by Wu Changshuo, 1920
More than 100 masterpieces, showcasing "the birth of the Shanghai School" and Huangpu District.
"Chrysanthemums by the Fence and Autumn Chickens" Ink and color on paper, Ren Bonian, 1876
Founded in 1909, the Yuyuan Calligraphy and Painting Charity Association was initiated by Yao Hong, Huang Jun, Wang Kun, Gao Yong, and others. Qian Huan was elected as its president, and members included Wu Changshuo, Wang Yiting, Cheng Yaosheng, Huang Shanshou, Pu Hua, Shen Xinhai, Yang Yi, and many other prominent calligraphers and painters of the time. Like other calligraphy and painting organizations, the Yuyuan Calligraphy and Painting Charity Association held regular meetings to appreciate works, exchange artistic techniques, and organize annual exhibitions. It also collected membership fees, set prices, and accepted commissions. However, unlike other calligraphy and painting organizations, the Yuyuan Calligraphy and Painting Charity Association was also a charitable organization, emphasizing the concept of "charity." More than 100 masterpieces, showcasing "the birth of the Shanghai School" and Huangpu District.
Seven-character couplet in running script, "Night Rain Clears Up," ink on paper, by Li Ruiqing
More than 100 masterpieces, showcasing "the birth of the Shanghai School" and Huangpu District.
Four-panel calligraphy scroll in running script by Zeng Xi (on paper)
Therefore, the "Yuyuan Calligraphy and Painting Charity Association" can be said to be an important pivotal organization for the Shanghai School of calligraphy and painting, which not only carried forward the functions and spirit of previous Shanghai School art organizations, but also extended its influence to this day. The works of Shanghai School calligraphers and painters exhibited in this section are not only precious original works, but also documentary images, which clearly outline the artistic styles of Shanghai School calligraphers and painters who had direct and indirect relationships with the "Yuyuan Calligraphy and Painting Charity Association" and Huangpu District in different periods.
More than 100 masterpieces, showcasing "the birth of the Shanghai School" and Huangpu District.
Six-character couplet in running script, "Enjoying the view with hands tucked in sleeves," ink on paper, by Wu Hufan.
Huangpu District was once a major center for modern Western painting in the development of visual arts in Shanghai. Many renowned Western painting societies and institutions, national art academies, and former residences of artists were gathered here. From the Tianma Society and Juelan Society, which advocated modern art, to private studios such as Chongren Studio, Hading Studio, and Mengguang Studio, to the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts and Xinhua Academy of Fine Arts before the founding of the People's Republic of China, and even to the former residences of Liu Haisu and Lin Fengmian, all have witnessed and participated in the development of the Shanghai School of Art.
The second section, "Integration of Chinese and Western Art,"



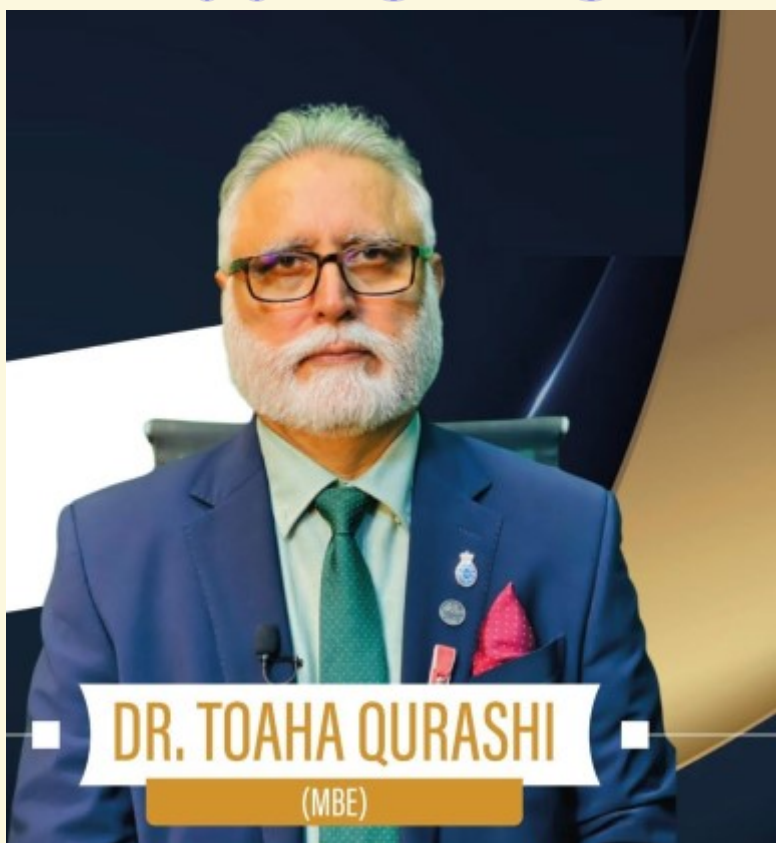
showcases original Western paintings, signed prints, and high-resolution reproductions equivalent to the originals by artists such as Liu Haisu, Yan Wenliang, Pang Xunqin, Zhu Dequn, Wu Guanzhong, Zao Wou-Ki, and Li Yongren. These renowned artists, embodying the theme of "Integration of Chinese and Western Art," have either resided in Huangpu District, taught at art schools in Huangpu District, participated in art societies in Huangpu District, established their creative and educational bases in Huangpu District, or held exhibitions in art galleries, museums, and art spaces in Huangpu District. They have intricate connections with Huangpu District and are powerful witnesses to the development of visual arts in Huangpu District. This section also uses detailed documentary photographs to recreate the landscape of art institutions, art schools, art media, art publishing, and art dissemination in Huangpu District, especially before the founding of the People's Republic of China.

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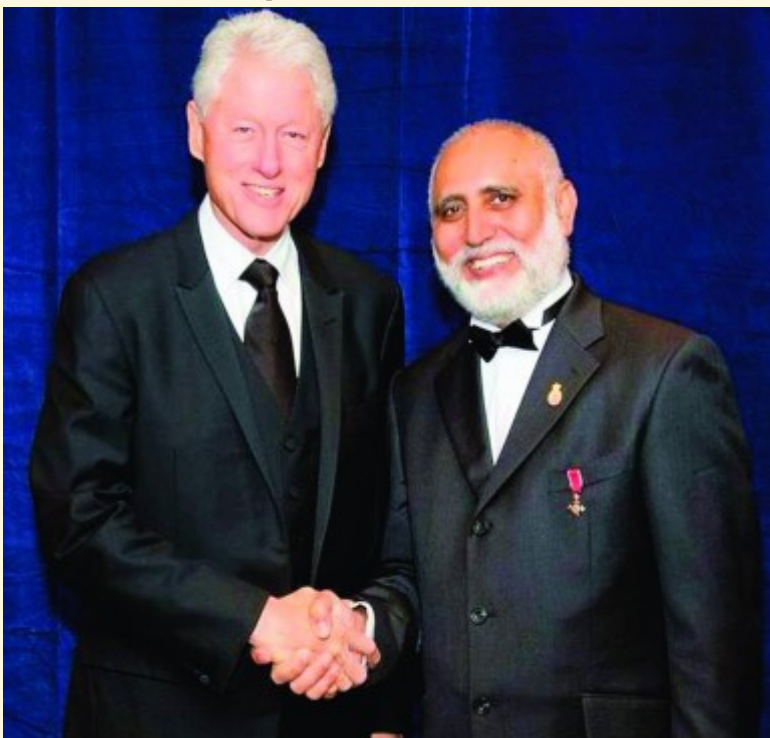


Toaha Qureshi MBE's enduring legacy reflected in heartfelt tribute from former LLM student



DR. TOAHA QURASHI
(MBE)

Celina Ali community leader and mentor, has been reflected in a heartfelt message from his former Master of Laws



(LLM) student, Muhammad Usman, who credited him with making a lasting difference in his life. In a personal message expressing gratitude, respect and prayers, Usman said Qureshi continued to inspire his former students long after their academic journeys had ended, highlighting the lasting impact of a teacher whose guidance and kindness remained deeply valued. Recalling his recent appearance on Ek Din Geo Ke Saath, a television programme on Geo News,

referred to as "Saad bhai", during the programme and wondered whether he might still remember him. The message went beyond a simple expression of admiration, offering a glimpse into the personal relationships that educators and mentors build with their students and the influence those relationships can have over the years. "The true measure of you is the difference they make in others' lives," Usman wrote, reflecting on Qureshi's continuing influence on those he had taught and guided. He said he would always remain

Qureshi's long life, good health and continued happiness, expressing the hope that he would keep guiding and helping others for many years to come. "Thank you, Sir, for everything you have done for me. Your kindness will always stay with me," he wrote. The tribute underscores the significance of mentorship as a lasting legacy, demonstrating how the respect earned through teaching, personal encouragement and compassion can endure well beyond the classroom. The message from a former student, for Professor Toaha Qureshi, serves



Usman said watching Qureshi looking happy brought him considerable joy and revived cherished memories of his time as his student. He also mentioned seeing Saad, whom he

grateful for the difference Qureshi had made in his life, describing him as a source of inspiration whose kindness would never be forgotten. Usman also offered prayers for

as a personal testament to the enduring bonds formed through education and the lasting appreciation of those whose lives have been positively influenced by a teacher's guidance.



FS Asim Iftikhar Ahmad calls for modern, inclusive, forward-looking Foreign Service



greater responsibility to sustain this momentum and explore new avenues and opportunities,” he said. Highlighting the changing nature of international relations, Ambassador Asim said diplomacy was no longer confined to traditional statecraft, as economic diplomacy, public diplomacy, strategic communication and emerging technologies were increasingly shaping how countries pursued their interests and engaged with the world. He urged Pakistan’s diplomatic service to broaden its horizons, embrace innovation and develop the capacity not only to respond to international changes but also to anticipate and influence them. The foreign secretary emphasised that adapting to emerging global trends would be essential for maintaining Pakistan’s diplomatic relevance and strengthening its ability to protect and promote national



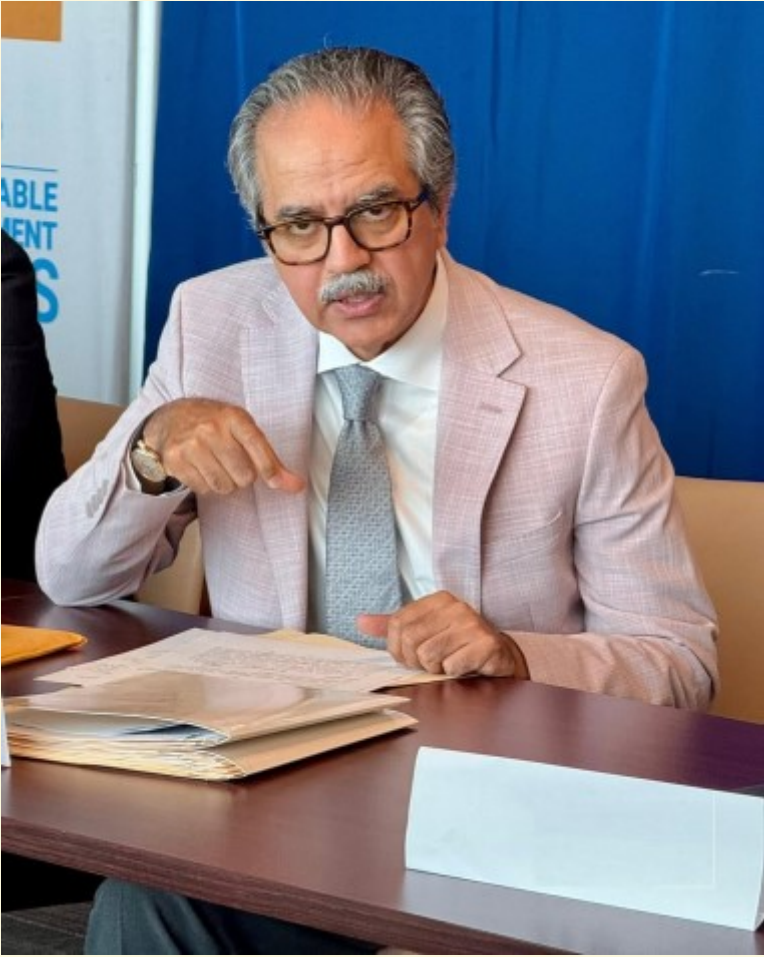
rightful place in the community of nations was strengthened. Foreign Service of Pakistan Day provides an opportunity to recognise the contributions of the country’s diplomatic corps and reaffirm its role in representing Pakistan abroad, strengthening bilateral and multilateral partnerships, promoting economic interests and pursuing peaceful solutions to international disputes.

Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Foreign Secretary Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad this week called for a more innovative, inclusive and forward-looking Foreign Service, stressing that Pakistan’s diplomats must adapt to changing global realities, embrace emerging technologies and explore new avenues to advance the country’s national interests. In his message on Foreign Service of Pakistan Day 2026, Ambassador Asim paid tribute to generations of Pakistani diplomats for their dedication, professionalism and perseverance, saying their legacy remained a source of strength and inspiration for the country’s diplomatic community. “Let us celebrate our collective achievements, honour the remarkable contributions of our predecessors, and take pride in the institution we have built together,” the foreign secretary said. He observed that Pakistani diplomats had served the nation with commitment and a strong sense of purpose, often navigating formidable challenges despite limited resources.



Their contributions, he said, had helped build an institutional legacy that continued to guide the country’s diplomatic efforts and strengthen its engagement with the international community. The foreign secretary described the occasion as particularly significant in view of Pakistan’s evolving diplomatic position, growing geopolitical relevance and expanding international engagement. He said Pakistan’s increasingly recognised role in promoting dialogue, building bridges and facilitating peaceful solutions reflected the enduring importance of principled and purposeful diplomacy. “These achievements inspire confidence, but also place upon us a

interests in an increasingly complex international environment. He also underscored the importance of human resources in building a dynamic and effective diplomatic institution, identifying the talent and fresh perspectives of younger officers, the growing contributions of women diplomats and the accumulated experience of serving officers as key strengths of the Foreign Service. “Our greatest strength remains our people,” he said, adding that the collective capabilities of the diplomatic community provided the foundation for a dynamic, inclusive and forward-looking institution. His message highlighted the importance of combining institutional experience with new ideas and approaches to prepare Pakistan’s diplomatic service for emerging challenges and opportunities. Concluding his message, Ambassador Asim urged Pakistani diplomats to look beyond simply keeping pace with a rapidly changing world and play a proactive role in shaping international developments. He said the ultimate objective was to ensure that Pakistan’s voice was heard, its national interests were advanced and its



Kazakhstan, Pakistan move to tighten customs controls, boost trade



H.E. Yerkin Tukumov Appointed Kazakhstan's Ambassador to Pakistan



Abida Shaheen

Islamabad: Kazakhstan and Pakistan are moving to strengthen cooperation against customs violations, improve information-sharing and facilitate cross-border trade

February 4, 2026, was ratified by Kazakhstan's Qurultay in two readings this week. The pact provides a legal and organisational basis for the two countries to assist each other in preventing, investigating and



after Kazakhstan's parliament ratified an intergovernmental agreement establishing a formal framework for collaboration between the two countries' customs authorities.

The agreement, signed in Islamabad on

suppressing violations of customs legislation, while strengthening coordination to address suspicious trade transactions and improve the monitoring of cross-border goods movement.



Under the agreement, the customs authorities of Kazakhstan and Pakistan will exchange information on export and transit declarations, including declarations considered suspicious. The arrangement is intended to help the authorities identify potential violations more effectively and improve their ability to respond to customs-related offences. The agreement also establishes safeguards for

maintaining the confidentiality and security of information exchanged between the two sides, recognising the importance of protecting sensitive data while expanding institutional cooperation.

A key feature of the arrangement is a request-and-response mechanism through which either country can seek assistance or information from the other's customs authorities. This framework is expected to provide a formal channel for addressing cases requiring cross-border coordination and support more effective enforcement of customs regulations.

Beyond enforcement, the agreement provides for the exchange of professional expertise and practical experience. Customs officials from either country may be sent to their counterparts' authorities for training and professional development, allowing both sides to strengthen institutional capacity and improve working practices.

The initiative comes as Pakistan and Kazakhstan seek to expand economic engagement and improve connectivity between Central and South Asia. More effective customs cooperation could help address regulatory obstacles, improve oversight of trade flows and support more reliable movement of goods through re-



gional transport and logistics networks. For Pakistan, stronger customs coordination with Kazakhstan could complement broader efforts to diversify export markets, develop trade links with Central Asian economies and increase the use of regional transit routes. Kazakhstan, in turn, could benefit from improved institutional coordination with Pakistan as both countries pursue opportunities for expanded commercial and logistical cooperation. The agreement's emphasis on information exchange and professional training also provides a mechanism for building closer working relations between the two countries' customs administrations, potentially

helping them respond more efficiently to violations that extend across national borders.

Its implementation is expected to strengthen bilateral cooperation in customs matters, improve the effectiveness of enforcement measures and contribute to the development of trade and transit links between the two countries.

The ratification marks a step towards formalising customs cooperation within the broader Pakistan-Kazakhstan relationship, where improved trade facilitation, transport connectivity and regional economic integration remain important areas of potential collaboration.

Portugal's ambassador Paulo Domingues urges Pakistan to unlock untapped trade, investment potential

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Portugal and Pakistan need to move beyond their traditionally friendly diplomatic relations and develop a more ambitious economic partnership built on expanded trade, investment, technological cooperation and joint ventures, Portugal's Ambassador to Pakistan, Paulo Domingues, has said, underscoring the enor-

mous untapped commercial potential between the two countries. Addressing a meeting this week at the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), Domingues said, pointing out that the existing level of trade did not reflect the breadth of opportunities available to the two economies. He said the challenge was no longer simply to

maintain positive diplomatic relations but to build a stronger commercial framework that could encourage companies on both sides to explore new markets, establish long-term partnerships and invest in mutually beneficial ventures. According to the ambassador, considerable potential remains unexplored because Portuguese businesses have not yet developed suffi-



cient awareness of Pakistan's market opportunities. Greater interaction between the two business communities, he suggested, could help overcome this gap by providing investors and entrepreneurs with a clearer understanding of each other's commercial environments, industrial capabilities and consumer markets. At the same time, Pakistani businesses have increasingly begun exploring Portugal, with business delegations visiting the European country to assess potential opportunities across different sectors. Domingues expressed optimism that these initiatives would gradually strengthen commercial engagement and contribute to an increase in bilateral trade. "Portugal and Pakistan may be geographically far apart, but geography should never limit our ambitions. We have a strong foundation for cooperation, and what we need now is greater engagement between our companies," he said. The ambassador emphasised that regular exchanges between business leaders, targeted trade missions and direct contact between prospective buyers and suppliers could help convert existing opportunities into practical commercial arrangements. He also highlighted the importance of building confidence among companies that might be interested in entering unfamiliar markets but lacked the necessary information or reliable business contacts. He said the Portuguese Embassy was prepared to facilitate this process by helping businesses identify potential buyers, suppliers, distributors and dependable long-term commercial partners. Such assistance, he added, could make it easier for companies to assess market conditions, establish business relationships and explore opportunities for cooperation. Renewable energy, technology and agriculture offer promising avenues. Domingues identified trade and industry, renewable energy, technology, agriculture, fruit cultivation and innovation as particularly promising areas for strengthening Pakistan-Portugal economic cooperation. These sectors, he indicated, offered opportunities not only to increase the volume of existing trade but also to diversify the economic relationship and create new avenues for investment, technical collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Renewable energy emerged as one of the most significant areas in which Portugal's experience could be relevant to Pakistan. The ambassador noted that approximately 70 per cent of Portugal's electricity generation came from renewable sources, reflecting the country's substantial experience in developing and integrating clean energy into its power system. For Pakistan, which has considerable scope to expand its renewable energy capacity, Portugal's experience could provide opportunities for cooperation in technology, technical expertise, investment and the exchange of best practices. Closer engagement between companies and relevant institutions could help identify projects in which Portuguese expertise and Pakistani market opportunities complement each other. Such collaboration could also encourage joint ventures and facilitate the transfer of knowledge in areas related to clean energy development and innovation. Agriculture and fruit cultivation were other sectors highlighted by the ambassador, suggesting that the two countries could explore opportunities to strengthen commercial exchanges, develop business partnerships and expand cooperation in related industries. Technology and innovation could further broaden the scope of bilateral engagement, particularly if companies from both countries were encouraged to identify common interests and pursue practical projects rather than relying exclusively on traditional trading relationships. The ambassador's emphasis on sectoral diversification reflected the need to build a more resilient economic partnership capable of generating benefits for a wider range of businesses. Expanding cooperation beyond established export categories would allow the two countries to explore emerging industries, develop new mar-



such engagements commercially meaningful, with a focus on identifying potential partners and developing projects that could produce concrete outcomes. The business forum, therefore, offers an opportunity to move bilateral economic relations from general expressions of interest towards a more focused programme of commercial engagement. Its effectiveness will depend on the ability of participating institutions and companies to follow up on discussions and convert promising ideas into sustainable



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The proposed forum is expected to provide a platform for business leaders and institutional representatives to discuss commercial prospects, identify areas of mutual interest and explore opportunities for trade, investment and joint projects. By bringing relevant stakeholders together, the initiative could help businesses establish direct contacts, exchange information about their respective markets and develop a clearer understanding of the opportunities available in both countries.



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Rubio says US must maintain ties with nuclear-armed Pakistan, cites strategic geography

Newswire

Washington: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said this week that Washington needs to maintain relations with Pakistan because of its geographical significance and nuclear capabilities, describing engagement with Islamabad as an essential component of American foreign policy despite differences between the two countries.

In an interview, Rubio said Pakistan was a country with which the United States needed to maintain diplomatic relations, pointing to its possession of nuclear weapons and its strategic location.

“It’s a country that we have to have a relationship with. It’s a country that possesses nuclear weapons,” Rubio said, stressing the importance of maintaining communication with Islamabad.

He drew a comparison with India’s own diplomatic engagement with Iran, arguing that countries must maintain working relationships with strategically important neighbours and regional actors, even when their interests do not always align.

Rubio’s remarks came as Washington and New Delhi continued discussions on bilateral trade, defence cooperation and regional security, underscoring the complexities of US diplomacy in South Asia, where its relationships with India and Pakistan remain important to regional stability.

The US secretary of state acknowledged that maintaining relations with countries that have competing interests can be challenging. However, he suggested that continued American engagement with Pakistan could also serve India’s security

interests by giving Washington an opportunity to communicate its concerns directly to Islamabad.

“And I think in a way it could be a positive thing, because if we have a relationship and we can speak to them, it could perhaps put us in a position to help discourage the kinds of things that India is worried about,” he said.

Rubio’s comments indicated that Washington views diplomatic engagement with Pakistan as a means of retaining communication channels that could potentially help manage regional tensions. His remarks also highlighted the distinction between maintaining relations with a country and agreeing with all its policies or actions.

Explaining his responsibilities as America’s top diplomat, Rubio said his approach had changed since leaving the US Senate and assuming responsibility for managing the country’s foreign relations.

“In my new role, I’m no longer a senator. I’m the secretary of state. I have to manage the foreign policy of the US, and that does require us to have relationships with countries, including those that we may have some disagreements with,” he said.

His statement comes amid renewed diplomatic engagement between Washington and Islamabad following President Donald Trump’s involvement in efforts to broker a ceasefire between Pakistan and India during their brief military confrontation.

Since then, Pakistani and American leaders have exchanged cordial messages and publicly acknowledged their engagement. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif nominated Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his mediation efforts, while the US president has repeatedly praised Paki-



stan’s political and military leadership. Trump has also referred to Pakistan’s Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Asim Munir, as his “favourite field marshal”, a remark that attracted considerable attention in diplomatic and political circles.

Islamabad has sought to build on the improved atmosphere to advance its economic interests, particularly by pursuing more favourable trade arrangements with Washington. Pakistan is looking for tariff concessions, greater access to the American market and expanded opportunities for Pakistani exporters.

For Pakistan, stronger engagement with the United States could provide opportunities to improve trade, attract investment and broaden economic cooperation at a time when Islamabad is seeking to strengthen its external economic position.

The relationship also carries implications for regional security, given Pakistan’s nuclear status, its geographical position and its role in South Asian and wider regional affairs. Maintaining communication with Islamabad allows Washington to engage directly with Pakistani leaders on issues ranging from security and counterterrorism to regional stability.

Pakistan has also sought a more active diplomatic role in efforts to reduce tensions in West Asia. Islamabad’s reported mediation efforts between Washington and Tehran, including the announcement of a two-week ceasefire on April 8 and subsequent talks in Islamabad on April 11 and 12, have added another dimension to its regional diplomacy.

These developments have placed Pakistan in contact with multiple regional and international stakeholders, including the United States and Iran, at a time when diplomatic channels are

particularly important for managing competing security interests.

Rubio’s remarks, therefore, underline Washington’s stated need to maintain a working relationship with Pakistan while continuing its strategic partnership with India. Rather than presenting the two relationships as mutually exclusive, his comments suggest that the United States considers engagement with both countries necessary to pursue its broader diplomatic and security objectives.

For Islamabad, the challenge will be to translate renewed political engagement into lasting economic cooperation, sustained diplomatic contact and a more predictable relationship with Washington. While cordial exchanges can create opportunities, progress on trade, investment and security cooperation will ultimately depend on concrete agreements and the continued alignment of interests.

Japan-backed school in Tarnol to expand education opportunities for 250 girls

Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: Up to 250 girls in Tarnol, Islamabad, will have access to improved educational facilities following the completion of a Japan-funded primary school, as the two countries step up community-level cooperation to promote girls’ education and human development.

Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan Akamatsu Shuichi inaugurated the Tine Girls Model Primary School this week, marking the completion of a project financed through the Japanese government’s Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) programme.

The Government of Japan provided \$44,025 for the initiative, which was implemented by the Community Services Programme (CSP), a non-governmental organisation working in educa-



tion, healthcare, clean water provision and women’s empowerment.

The school currently has 240 enrolled students

and can accommodate up to 250 children, offering local families an expanded opportunity to educate their daughters in a purpose-built learning environment.

The project comes amid continuing efforts to improve access to quality education for girls, particularly in communities where inadequate facilities can create obstacles to school attendance and learning. By providing dedicated classrooms and essential amenities, the new facility aims to create a safer and more supportive environment for students.

The school features eight classrooms, a principal’s office, washrooms, a levelled playground and 250 student chairs. Additional facilities provided through CSP’s contribution include a solar power system, an underground water storage tank, an electric water cooler and an interactive smart board to support digital learning.

These facilities are intended to improve the daily learning experience while providing students and teachers with better educational resources. The solar power system and water facilities will also help address basic infrastructure needs, while the smart board introduces an additional tool for classroom instruction.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Ambassador Akamatsu congratulated CSP on completing the project despite challenging weather conditions. He emphasised that education was a fundamental human right and a central pillar of human security, describing it as essential to building a better and more prosperous society.

He particularly highlighted the importance of girls’ education to Pakistan’s future, reaffirming that education remained a major priority of Japan’s development cooperation with the country.

The ambassador also reiterated Japan’s commitment to supporting Pakistan’s sustainable development, expressing hope that the school would become a lasting symbol of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

Representatives of the Japanese Embassy and CSP, along with teachers, students, parents and community members, attended the inauguration ceremony.

The project reflects Japan’s approach of sup-

porting community-level initiatives that address essential human needs through its grassroots assistance programme. Rather than focusing solely on large-scale infrastructure, the programme also finances projects designed to deliver direct benefits to local communities.

For Tarnol, the new school represents an investment in educational access and the future prospects of young girls. With capacity for 250 students and facilities for both conventional and digital learning, it is expected to support local efforts to provide girls with better opportunities to acquire knowledge and develop the skills needed for their future.

The initiative also highlights the role of international development partnerships in strengthening Pakistan’s education sector, particularly through targeted support for underserved communities and projects that promote equal opportunities for children.



Pakistan, EU delegation discuss counter-terrorism, regional security and GSP+ cooperation



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



Buszta, Head of the Political, Trade and Communication Section at the EU Delegation to Pakistan, called on the minister at the Ministry of Law and Justice. The meeting provided an opportunity for both sides to exchange views on matters of mutual interest, with particular focus on regional developments, counter-terrorism cooperation, economic engagement and the future direction of Pakistan-EU relations. Discussions also covered Pakistan's role in facilitating peace and dialogue in the Middle East, reflecting the importance of diplomatic engagement and constructive international cooperation amid evolving regional challenges. Both sides highlighted the need to maintain communication and strengthen coordination on issues affecting regional peace and security.

Counter-terrorism remained among the key areas of discussion, reflecting the shared interest of Pakistan and the European Union in addressing security challenges through cooperation and dialogue. Trade relations and the European Union's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) framework also featured prominently in the discussions. The framework is an important component of Pakistan's economic engagement with the EU, providing preferential access to the European market subject to compliance with relevant international conventions and monitoring requirements. The discussion underscored the importance of continued engagement on trade-related matters and the broader economic relationship, which remains a significant dimension of bilateral ties. Barrister Aqeel Malik emphasised that sustained

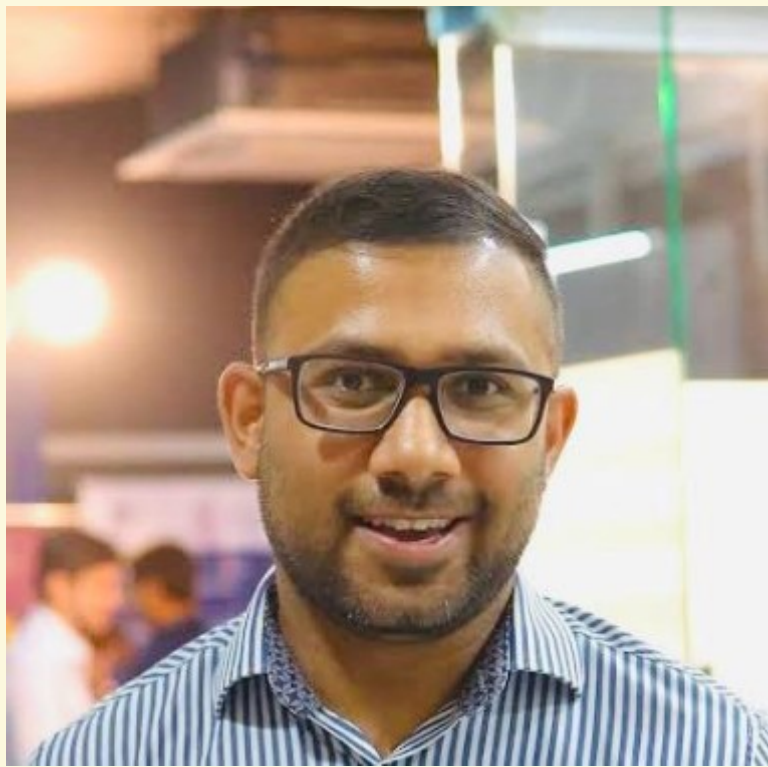
engagement and constructive dialogue were essential to advancing shared interests, strengthening bilateral cooperation and promoting peace and stability in the region. He highlighted the importance of maintaining close interaction between Pakistan and the European Union to address common concerns and explore opportunities for further collaboration across areas of mutual interest. The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to continued cooperation on shared priorities, including security, counter-terrorism, regional developments and trade. The engagement reflected the continuing importance of Pakistan-EU relations in promoting peace, security and development, while providing a platform for further dialogue on bilateral and regional issues.

Celina Ali
Islamabad: Minister of State for Law and Justice Barrister Aqeel Malik this week held talks with a European Union (EU) delegation on strengthening Pakistan-EU cooperation in security, counter-terrorism, regional affairs and trade,

underscoring the importance of sustained engagement to address shared challenges and promote regional stability. The delegation, comprising Konrad Duda, Policy Officer for Pakistan at the European External Action Service (EEAS), and Piotr



Pavan Kumar Dhande concludes tenure after advancing public diplomacy in Pakistan



High Commissioner of United Kingdom to Pakistan Jane Marriott



official diplomatic engagement by encouraging interaction among communities, institutions, media professionals and other stakeholders. His departure follows the completion of his tenure in Pakistan. His work in communication and public diplomacy formed part of the wider efforts to maintain engagement between the British High Commission and the Pakistani public. The British High Commission's communication and public diplomacy activities continue to serve as an important channel for conveying the UK's policies, facilitating public engagement and highlighting areas of cooperation between the two countries.



Pavan Dhande with British High Commission's Deputy Head of Communication Alice Fidler



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

Liaquat Ali
Islamabad: Pavan Kumar Dhande, Head of Communication and Public Diplomacy at the British High Commission in Pakistan, is leaving the country after completing his tenure, marking the conclusion of his assignment focused on strengthening communication, public engagement and people-to-people ties between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. During his tenure, Dhande worked on initiatives aimed at promoting public diplomacy, enhancing engagement with diverse audiences and highlighting the



importance of closer understanding between the two countries. His role involved communicating the United Kingdom's priorities, promoting dialogue and supporting efforts to strengthen bilateral relations through public outreach and strategic communication. As Head of Communication and Public Diplomacy, Dhande played a role in connecting the British High Commission with Pakistani audiences through communication initiatives designed to foster greater awareness of UK-Pakistan cooperation and shared interests. Public diplomacy remains an important element of relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, complementing



Life doesn't reward the naturally clever or strong but those who can learn to fight and work hard and never quit.

Bear Grylls

Patience is the strength of the weak, impatience is the weakness of the strong.

Immanuel Kant

Italy clinches EU deal to shield households and businesses from soaring energy costs

Newswire

Rome: Italy has reached an agreement with the European Union on measures aimed at limiting the impact of soaring natural gas prices on electricity costs for households and businesses, marking a step forward in the government's efforts to ease the energy burden on consumers and protect industrial competitiveness. The agreement, announced by the office of



UGO CIARLATANI Ambasciatore d'Italia in Pakistan

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, establishes a framework for Italy to introduce temporary measures in line with EU state-aid rules while seeking to reduce the pressure of rising gas prices on electricity bills. The Italian government said the arrangement followed intensive and constructive discussions with the European Commission, with both sides seeking to mitigate energy costs without undermining fair competition within the EU's internal market. Under the agreement, Italy will formally notify the European Commission of its proposed temporary measures, which the Commission will assess as a matter of priority. Meloni's office said the arrangements were designed to preserve a level playing field among businesses operating across the bloc and minimise potential market distortions. However, the govern-

ment's initial announcement did not disclose the detailed terms of the agreement or specify the precise savings households and businesses could expect. The deal comes as Italy faces mounting pressure to contain energy costs that have weighed on household budgets and increased operating expenses for businesses, particularly energy-intensive industries. Natural gas plays a significant role in Italy's electricity generation, making power prices particularly sensitive to fluctuations in gas markets. When gas prices rise, the increase can feed through into wholesale electricity prices, affecting consumers and manufacturers alike. The government has therefore sought greater flexibility to address the relationship between gas prices and electricity costs, arguing that high energy bills threaten household purchasing power and the competitiveness of Italian industry. For Rome, the agreement with Brussels represents an effort to reconcile its domestic energy-relief objectives with the EU's regulatory framework, which governs government assistance to businesses to prevent unfair advantages and distortions in competition. The European Commission's assessment will be an important next step in determining how the proposed measures can be implemented. The agreement also highlights the wider challenge facing European governments as



they seek to protect consumers from energy-price volatility while maintaining a common market in which companies compete under broadly equal conditions. For households, the potential benefit lies in limiting the extent to which rising gas prices translate into higher electricity bills. Businesses could also benefit from measures designed to ease energy-related costs, although the scale and timing of any relief remain unclear. Italy's announcement signals progress in

negotiations with the EU, but the practical impact will depend on the final measures notified to the Commission and the subsequent assessment under the bloc's state-aid rules. The government has pledged to pursue temporary intervention while preserving competition in the internal market, leaving the detailed implementation of the agreement as the next stage in its effort to address the country's energy-cost pressures.

Macron hits back at Trump over France riots, rejects claims linking unrest to migration

Covert Report

Paris: French President Emmanuel Macron this week sharply criticised foreign leaders, including US President Donald Trump, for spreading what he described as "stupid comments" and misinformation about the wave of protests and riots sweeping France, firmly rejecting claims that migrants and Islamists were responsible for the unrest. Macron's remarks came amid escalating political tensions over the causes of the demonstrations, which began in September over concerns about the state of education and the rising cost of living but have since escalated into widespread violence, looting and clashes with security forces. Speaking on Wednesday during a tour of Arab states in the Persian Gulf region, the French president dismissed claims that France had been overwhelmed by migrants and Islamist groups, accusing foreign leaders of making misleading statements that damaged his country's image. "We've had people claiming that we were invaded by hordes of migrants and Islamists, which is completely false," Macron said. He added that those speaking negatively about France did not have the country's best interests at heart, expressing frustration over what

he regarded as irresponsible commentary from abroad. The controversy intensified after Trump claimed on Monday that France was being "conquered, looted and burned to the ground" by migrants, jihadists and communists allegedly hostile to Christianity and Western civilisation. The US president offered no evidence to substantiate the claims, while dismissing the role of domestic concerns such as education and the cost of living in triggering the protests. Trump reiterated his position at the White House on Tuesday, arguing that immigration, rather than economic or educational grievances, was driving the unrest. "It's not about education. It's about immigration," he said, alleging that undocumented migrants arriving in France hated the country and its people. Macron's response reflected growing concern in Paris over the international portrayal of the violence and the political narratives being attached to it, particularly as French authorities struggle to restore order. Although Macron stopped short of naming individual leaders during his briefing, he made clear that his criticism extended to political figures in Europe and across the Atlantic. Asked whether there was evidence of foreign involvement in the

unrest, the French president said there was no visible foreign interference in the events themselves. However, he warned that the spread of misleading information from abroad was contributing to an increasingly distorted account of the situation. "There has been foreign manipulation of information, which has led to unacceptable and stupid comments from many people, including foreign leaders," Macron said. He stressed that France wanted order, respect and progress, while urging political leaders to refrain from making statements unsupported by facts. The French government's position distinguishes between direct foreign involvement in organising or sustaining the unrest and the dissemination of information that could influence public perceptions of the disturbances. Macron's comments suggest that, while Paris has not identified visible foreign interference in the protests themselves, it is concerned about the potential impact of misinformation on France's international standing and domestic political debate. US Vice President JD Vance has also linked the unrest to immigration and European integration policies, arguing that Western governments had failed to address questions of assimilation and cultural compatibility. In a post on X, Vance wrote that Western liberals had "imported the third world into France and other countries in the name of diversity and compassion". He argued that governments had neglected fundamental questions concerning integration and compatibility. Trump subsequently referred approvingly to Vance's remarks, reinforcing the administration's argument that immigration was central to the French crisis. The comments have added an international dimension to France's domestic turmoil, turning the unrest into a point of contention over migration policy, national identity and the political direction of Western societies. Macron, however, rejected attempts to attribute the violence broadly to migrants and Islamists, maintaining that the claims circulating among foreign political leaders were false. The dispute also illustrates differing approaches to immigration across the Western world, with some political leaders advocating tighter controls and stronger assimilation requirements, while Macron has challenged what he sees as the use of the French crisis to promote unsupported political narratives. The French unrest has also become a subject of debate elsewhere in Europe. Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar linked the violence to immigration policies in a social media post on Sunday, arguing that the destruction reinforced the case for Hungary's strict approach to migration. "In the face of this senseless destruction and unjustified violence, perhaps it is now clear to everyone why Hungary advocates the strictest possible approach to migration," he wrote.

His comments added to a wider European debate over whether migration and integration policies contribute to social tensions, although the statements cited in the controversy did not establish that migrants were responsible for the French disturbances. The competing interpretations have highlighted the political sensitivity surrounding immigration in Europe, where governments face pressure to address public concerns about security and integration while avoiding generalisations about entire communities. For Macron, the challenge is twofold: restoring public order at home and countering international claims that he believes misrepresent the causes of the crisis. Meanwhile, French authorities have intensified security preparations as the country confronts one of its most serious episodes of rioting in years. More than 2,000 people were arrested over the preceding weekend alone, according to the account provided, underscoring the scale of the unrest. Localised curfews have been imposed in affected areas, while officials have promised a "massive" police presence ahead of further demonstrations expected on Saturday. The authorities face mounting pressure to contain the violence, prevent additional looting and protect businesses and public infrastructure as demonstrations continue. The unrest has raised broader questions about the underlying social and economic grievances that initially brought protesters onto the streets, including concerns about education and the cost of living. While the protests have expanded into violence in several areas, the political debate over their causes remains sharply divided, with Macron rejecting attempts to reduce the crisis to immigration alone. Macron's comments came during a regional diplomatic tour that included an unannounced visit to Saudi Arabia on Wednesday. According to the Elysée Palace, the French president held talks with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman before departing for Paris. The visit formed part of Macron's diplomatic engagements in the Gulf, but the escalating unrest at home and the ensuing dispute with foreign leaders placed France's domestic crisis firmly in the international spotlight. The confrontation with Trump has exposed differences between Paris and Washington over how to interpret the violence and the role of immigration in European societies. As French authorities prepare for further demonstrations, Macron is seeking to defend France's international image while insisting that the crisis should not be exploited to advance claims he considers unfounded. The coming days will test the government's ability to restore public order and address the grievances behind the protests, even as the political dispute over migration and misinformation

