COVERT
TRUTH UNFOLD
November 8 -14, 2026

FS Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, British envoy Jane Marriott discuss Pakistan-UK ties, global developments **Liaqut Ali**

Islamabad: Foreign Secretary Asim Iftikhar Ahmad received British High Commissioner Jane Marriott at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this week, with discussions focusing on Pakistan -United Kingdom relations and important regional and international developments.

The meeting highlighted the im (Page-5)

UK opens new doors for Pakistani talent through Chevening scholarships **Celina Ali**

Islamabad: For ambitious young Pakistanis dreaming of studying at some of the world's finest universities, Britain is opening another promising chapter. A (Page-11)

Minister Liu Haixing highlights pillars of Pak-China friendship

Celina Ali

Islamabad: Liu Haixing, Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, has emphasised the central role of political parties in strengthening Pakistan-China relations, promoting governance cooperation and advancing the countries' shared development aspirations.

Addressing a symposium on Pakistan-China relations and governance cooperation in Islamabad o this week, Liu said exchanges between political parties had remained an important component of the longstanding friendship between the two countries and contributed significantly to mutual understanding, trust and institutional collaboration.

The symposium was co-chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Liu Haixing, bringing together senior political leaders, parliamentarians, policymakers, academics and representatives of think tanks from Pakistan and China.

Liu expressed appreciation for Pakistan's leadership and political parties for their continued commitment to strengthening bilateral relations.

He thanked Dar for co-chairing the symposium and acknowledged the participation of prominent Pakistani political figures and representatives of various institutions.

Highlighting the significance of the 75th anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations, Liu said the enduring friendship between the two countries had been built through the consistent efforts of successive generations of leaders and peoples. He said political party exchanges had helped sustain the relationship and strengthen its foundations.

The Chinese minister stressed that cooperation between the CPC and Pakistani political parties provided an important avenue for sharing governance experiences, exchanging policy perspectives and exploring approaches to development and institutional strengthening.

He highlighted the importance of established platforms, including the China-Pakistan Political





Parties Forum and mechanisms for political parties' engagement on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), in promoting dialogue and cooperation.

Liu also underscored the value of the Pakistan-China Research Center for Party and State Governance, describing institutional research and intellectual exchanges as important means of deepening mutual understanding and strengthening practical cooperation.

He said continued interaction among political parties, parliamentarians, academics, think tanks and young people could further enrich the bilateral relationship and help address emerging challenges through shared experiences.

Liu reaffirmed China's commitment to working closely with Pakistan to advance political cooperation, strengthen governance exchanges and promote the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.

The symposium provided an opportunity for participants to discuss governance, political cooperation, development experiences and ways to expand institutional engagement between Pakistan and China.

Canada introduces sweeping asylum reforms to streamline claims and ease immigration system



Covert Report

Ottawa: Canada has introduced new regulations to modernise its asylum system, establishing a single online application process, clearer procedural requirements and fixed timelines for key government reviews as part of efforts to make the country's refugee protection framework more efficient, orderly and sustainable.

The new regulations, which came into force on November 3, 2026, build on the federal government's wider efforts to strengthen immigration and border management under the Strengthening Canada's Immigration System and Borders Act. The reforms come amid a significant decline in asylum applications. According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the number of asylum claims submitted between January and August 2026 fell by 52 per cent compared with the same period in 2025, and by 68 per cent compared with 2024. The government says the reduced volume has helped ease pressure on the asylum system, allowing authorities to focus on improving processing procedures and addressing delays.

A central feature of the new regulations is the introduction of a single online application process for all asylum claims, whether submitted by individuals already inside Canada or by those making claims at a port of entry. The unified system is intended to simplify the application process and provide claimants with clearer guidance on the steps they must follow.

The regulations also establish timelines for important government reviews and specify procedures for reinstating withdrawn claims and dealing with claims that have not been formally abandoned. These measures are designed to reduce administrative uncertainty and prevent unnecessary delays in the processing of applications.

The reforms further include provisions to strengthen support for vulnerable asylum claimants and facilitate access to work permits for individuals whose claims meet the eligibility requirements. They also provide exceptions to the new rules governing ineligibility for asylum claims.

According to the Canadian government, the changes will help applicants better understand their responsibilities and deadlines while enabling authorities to move cases more efficiently through screening and referral procedures.

The measures are also expected to support timely decisions by the independent Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, which is responsible for determining refugee protection claims.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Minister Lena Metlege Diab said an effective asylum system must be capable of processing applications efficiently while protecting people who genuinely need international protection.

"These changes will give claimants greater certainty so they can move forward with their lives. At the same time, they will help keep Canada's asylum system fair, well managed and sustainable for the future," she said.

The regulations were initially proposed in June 2026 and published in the Canada Gazette, Part I, for public consultation. The final version incorporated feedback received during that process.

The reforms form part of the broader legislative framework established through Bill C-12, the Strengthening Canada's Immigration System and Borders Act, which received royal assent on March 26, 2026.

The legislation introduced changes in four major areas: new eligibility requirements for asylum claims, modernisation of asylum procedures, improved domestic information sharing and expanded authorities relating to immigration documents and applications.

The government has also identified opportunities to simplify administrative procedures through its red tape review, with the stated aim of improving the efficiency and integrity of the immigration system.

With the latest regulations now in force, Ottawa is seeking to balance two priorities: ensuring that people eligible for refugee protection can access the system while improving the management, speed and predictability of asylum processing.

The government maintains that the reforms will provide greater clarity for applicants, reduce procedural delays and help preserve the long-term sustainability of Canada's asylum framework.

Bilawal Bhutto calls for zero tolerance for crimes against journalists

Liaqut Ali



Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has called for stronger protection of journalists against threats, violence, harassment and murder, saying the state and society share a collective responsibility to ensure that media workers can perform their duties without fear.

In his message on the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, Bilawal said remaining silent over crimes against journalists amounted to suppressing the voices of truth and justice. He stressed that those responsible for attacks on media professionals must be held accountable and prevented from escaping punishment.

Allowing perpetrators of crimes against journalists to go unpunished, he said, was tantamount to silencing the public's right to information.

Bilawal highlighted the vital role of journalists in bringing facts to the public, holding those in positions of power accountable and promoting awareness and understanding across society. He said the failure to bring those involved in crimes against journalists to justice posed a serious threat to press freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Referring to Pakistan's constitutional framework, the PPP chairman said the unanimously adopted Constitution of 1973 guaranteed every citizen the fundamental right to freedom of expression. Protecting this right, he added, was both a constitutional and moral responsibility of a democratic state.

Bilawal also recalled the role of his mother, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, in advancing press freedom during her tenure as prime minister. He said her government had abolished restrictive laws introduced during General Zia-ul-Haq's military rule that had been used to suppress press freedom and silence independent voices.

He described the move as a historic demonstration of the importance of dissent and independent journalism in a democracy.

Reaffirming his party's commitment, Bilawal said the PPP would continue its struggle for press freedom, freedom of expression and the protection of journalists.

He maintained that democracy could neither become stronger nor citizens become fully informed and empowered without an independent and free press.

COVERT is published every Sunday

IRON BROTHER - 铁兄弟

CPC charts course for tougher action against corruption, stronger self-governance





China Economic Net

Beijing: As China enters a critical period in its modernization drive, the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) has charted the course for tougher action against corruption and stronger self-governance in the years ahead.

Last week, the fifth plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee adopted a resolution on persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance, underscoring the need to step up the fight against corruption and strengthen checks on and oversight over the exercise of power.

In doing so, the CPC, the largest political party in the world with more than 100 million members, is seeking to overcome the unique challenges facing a party of its size.

These challenges, as outlined by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, include how to maintain the Party's strong governance and leadership capacity, and sustain a clean and upright political environment.

"It is now both imperative and timely for the Party to study issues concerning persevering with full and rigorous self-governance," Xi said in a January meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee that set the agenda of the plenum.

At the January meeting, Xi said the decision to focus the plenary session on Party self-governance had been made after thorough deliberation.

Since it was founded in 1921, the Party has attached great importance to its self-supervision and self-governance. Today, the CPC's membership and ranks of officials have undergone structural changes, presenting new challenges for Party building.

In response to these challenges, Xi has repeatedly stressed the need for an unwavering commitment to strict Party self-governance, sending a clear signal that discipline will be enforced ever more strictly.

"It was with this in mind that the CPC Central Committee decided to make persevering with full and rigorous self-governance the plenum's agenda," he noted.

Explaining the resolution at the plenary session, Xi emphasized that persevering with full and rigorous self-governance is essential for maintaining the Party's advanced nature and integrity and consolidating its long-term governing position.

This year marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), a critical period for achieving the goal of basically realizing socialist modernization by 2035.

"To successfully achieve the goals and tasks of the 15th Five-Year Plan, it is imperative to focus on enhancing the ability and competence of the Party in leading economic and social development," Xi told senior provincial- and ministerial-level officials attending a study session at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee earlier this year.

In January 2026, a drafting group was set up to prepare the resolution, with Xi at its helm.

Throughout the drafting process, he played a decisive role, chairing multiple meetings, delivering important speeches and issuing instructions to guide the work.

On Feb. 6, Xi chaired the group's first plenary meeting, where he outlined the key principles for the drafting of the resolution.

He called for strict measures to address misconduct and corruption, while stressing that Party building should be pursued as a coordinated whole and integrated with the country's broader development goals.

At the same meeting, Xi identified 39 key issues for further study, covering the full scope of Party building and governance.

On May 6, Xi chaired a meeting in Shanghai on persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance, setting out further requirements for the drafting of the resolution. He called for a problem-oriented approach, stressing the need for firm action to tackle prominent problems.

As the preparation of the document was underway, Xi stressed the importance of broad consultation and drawing on a wide range of views. He called on non-CPC parties and personages without party affiliation to speak candidly and offer constructive suggestions.

During consultation on the draft resolution, 1,173 suggestions for revisions were received from localities, departments and various sectors. After careful consideration, the drafting group incorporated 208 suggestions.

The document took shape over more than eight months, with the drafting group holding five plenary meetings and 35 specialized meetings.

During the plenary session last week, participants held in-depth discussions and exchanged views, putting forward suggestions that led to 13 revisions to the draft resolution before it was finally adopted on Oct. 29.

The resolution examines new circumstances, challenges and tasks facing the Party as it advances full and rigorous Party self-governance.

It identifies three increasingly arduous tasks for the CPC: safeguarding China's sovereignty, security and development interests amid a changing international environment; advancing reform and development while maintaining social harmony and stability at home; and preserving the Party's advanced nature and integrity.

It also warns that, under new circumstances marked by profound changes, the Party faces challenges to its governance and leadership capacity, the quality of its membership, and its resistance against corruption and moral decline.

The resolution has established a problem-oriented approach as one of the guiding principles for persevering with full and rigorous Party self-governance.

It places particular emphasis on strengthening Party spirit among CPC members, as problems in Party conduct and discipline often stem from a lack of strong Party spirit. The resolution sets out specific measures to ensure that Party members and officials remain loyal, upright, and responsible.

Another focus is eliminating hidden rules and curbing malpractices such as cultivating connections and making back-room deals. The resolution sets out concrete measures to root out such practices.

The more than 200 measures outlined in the resolution combine the reinforcement of existing requirements with new responses to emerging challenges.

In the fight against corruption, for example, the resolution calls for intensified efforts to expose new and concealed forms of graft. These include the use of proxies, or so-called "white gloves," to disguise illicit dealings, as well as the "revolving door" phenomenon of bureaucrat-merchant collusion after officials' retirement.

It also calls for a crackdown on corruption involving the internet, virtual currencies, cross-border capital flows and blockchain technology.

The resolution also sets out measures to improve the Party and state oversight systems and ensure that political responsibility for full and rigorous Party self-governance is effectively discharged.

"No other political party in the world takes its own development as seriously as the CPC does, or advances its own self-reform with such a high degree of self-awareness, scientific rigor and systematic effort," Xi has said. "This is a distinctive strength of our Party."

The resolution, as observers point out, signals a renewed commitment by the CPC to advancing full and rigorous Party self-governance with higher standards and more concrete measures, recognizing this as a fundamental underpinning of the broader endeavor to build China into a strong country and advance national rejuvenation.

"We have already forged a bright path ahead, and we must keep moving forward," Xi has said.



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28,000-year-old prehistoric couple's burial goes on display at Italian museum



H.E. Ugo Ciarlatani, Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan

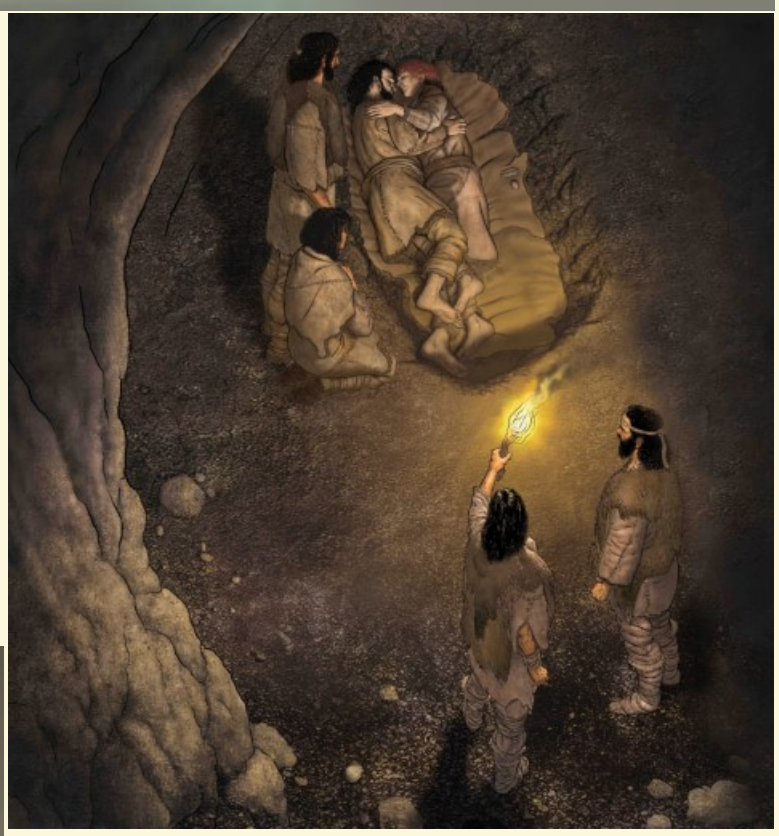
Newswire

Lecce: A remarkable glimpse into human life nearly 28,000 years ago was offered to visitors in southern Italy, where the skeletal remains of a prehistoric couple from the Upper Paleolithic period went on public display at the University of Salento's Museum of History and Archaeology (MuSA).

The exhibition, inaugurated on November 5, showcased the remains of a Gravettian burial discovered inside the Grotta delle Veneri di Parabita, a cave in southern Italy. Dating back approximately 28,000 years, the burial provided an extraordinary insight into prehistoric human life, burial customs and the cultural practices of hunter-gatherer communities.

The remains were originally discovered in 1968 by Giuliano Cremonesi, a professor of prehistory and protohistory at the University of Salento. Following the discovery, Italy's Ministry of Culture entrusted the material to the museum for preservation, scientific study and eventual public display. A major scientific reassessment of the archaeological material was undertaken in 2020 under the supervision of researchers Elettra Ingravallo and Renata Grifoni Cremonesi. The multidisciplinary team included specialists from the University of Salento, who examined the remains through archaeological, anthropological, animal-bone and radiocarbon-dating studies. The findings were subsequently published in a research volume titled La Grotta delle Veneri di Parabita (Lecce) by Edipuglia, providing the scientific foundation for the museum's exhibition.

The project was developed under the leadership of Jacopo De Grossi Mazzorin and Grazia Maria Signore, director of MuSA. Signore coordinated the exhibition's design, bringing together anthropologists, prehistoric archaeologists, scientific illustrators, videographers and 3D modelling specialists to present the ancient discovery in an engaging and accessible format. The exhibition presented the burial through a combination of original archaeological remains, scientific illustrations, digital technology and multimedia displays. At its centre, a specially designed display case featured the couple's skeletal remains arranged in their anatomical positions, allowing visitors to observe the burial in a form that closely reflected the original archaeological context.





Interactive QR codes placed alongside the display provided bilingual written and audio information about the individuals, including their estimated ages, biological sexes, health conditions and aspects of their way of life.

One of the exhibition's most striking features was a detailed scientific illustration by Alberto Gennari, which reconstructed the burial scene and offered a visual interpretation of the hunter-gatherer community's daily activities outside the cave approximately 28,000 years ago.

The exhibition also displayed objects discovered alongside the human remains, offering further clues about the customs and personal adornments of the prehistoric community. Among the most significant finds were red deer teeth coated with ochre. Archaeologist Jacopo De Grossi Mazzorin interpreted these objects as components of a cap worn by the woman buried in the cave. A reconstruction of the presumed headpiece was included in the exhibition to help visitors understand how such prehistoric ornaments might have appeared.

A documentary film, complete with subtitles, retraced the original discovery and the subsequent decades of archaeological investigation.

The presentation also featured a three-dimensional animation of the skeletons, produced by Fabio Andriani and Adriana Bandiera at the university's 3D Laboratory.

The preparation of the exhibition presented considerable challenges because the skeletal remains were severely fragmented and damaged, making their interpretation and visual presentation particularly complex.

Signore explained that the team had sought to reconstruct and communicate the couple's story as accurately and comprehensively as possible, ensuring that every element of the exhibition was grounded in the scientific findings of the 2020 reassessment.

Rather than presenting the remains simply as archaeological objects, the museum aimed to provide visitors with a broader understanding of the individuals, their burial practices and the prehistoric society in which they lived.

The exhibition also served as a tribute to two researchers whose contributions were central to bringing the discovery into public focus.

The opening was dedicated to Elettra Ingravallo, who promoted and coordinated the scientific study of the archaeological material recovered during Cremonesi's excavation, and Jacopo De Grossi Mazzorin, who directed MuSA from 2019 to 2022 and played a leading role in designing the exhibition.

Shanghai event calls for greater understanding, pragmatic cooperation, stronger people-to-people ties amid complex bilateral relation





The Paper

Shanghai: Chinese and American academics, former government officials, business leaders and cultural figures have called for a new generation of "bridge-builders" to strengthen communication, overcome mutual distrust and promote pragmatic cooperation between the two countries.

The call came at the China-US Intergenerational Dialogue 2026, titled "Finding Kissinger," jointly organised by Chinese news outlet The Paper and the Shanghai Institute of International Studies at the Jinjiang Hotel in Shanghai this week.

More than 100 participants from diplomacy, academia, business, arts, culture and civil society attended the event, discussing how younger generations could sustain engagement between Beijing and Washington at a time when bilateral relations remain strategically significant and complex.

Speakers stressed that the future of China-US relations could not depend on a single influential figure but required a broader generation of individuals willing to understand each other's societies, maintain open channels of communication and seek common ground despite differences.

Hu Minghua, Communist Party secretary and president of Shanghai Newspaper Group, outlined three priorities for advancing mutual understanding: providing credible information, building bridges between people and ensuring that the responsibility for dialogue passes from one generation to the next.

He said accurate, comprehensive and reliable information was particularly important when disagreements between the two countries intensified.

"The seemingly grand relationship between China and the United States is ultimately made up of individuals and real interactions," Hu said, highlighting the importance of bringing together people from diverse professional and social backgrounds.

He added that intergenerational dialogue was not simply about passing established answers from older generations to younger people. Rather, it involved transmitting historical memories, experience, communication channels and a sense of responsibility while allowing young people to develop their own understanding of the relationship.

"As the media, we feel a deep responsibility," he said.

Chen Dongxiao, president of the Shanghai Institute of International Studies, said the legacy of former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger offered important lessons for contemporary China-US engagement, particularly the need to develop practical experience of cooperation rather than discuss it only in abstract terms.

Building bridges, he said, did not require the two sides to agree on every issue. Instead, it meant keeping communication open, moving beyond stereotypes and identifying areas where cooperation remained possible.

Chen noted that the dialogue brought together participants with different professional backgrounds and perspectives, including former officials, academics, business representatives, non-governmental organisations and artists.

Such diversity, he said, could enrich understanding of bilateral relations and help identify new opportunities for engagement.

Kissinger's legacy and the next generation

Zhao Qizheng, former director of China's State Council Information Office, recalled the historical significance of the venue, where Chinese and American representatives signed the Shanghai Communique during US President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972.

He also recounted his interactions with Kissinger, including the former US diplomat's support for Shanghai's development of Pudong.

Recalling Premier Zhou Enlai's description of Kissinger as "very wise and clever," Zhao said the challenge today was to cultivate a new generation capable of demonstrating a similar commitment to understanding China and sustaining dialogue between the two countries.

China and the United States, he argued, could not rely on a single Kissinger-like figure. Instead, they needed a broader pool of people, particularly young Americans with a genuine understanding of China.

"I believe these are the 'Kissingers' of the future," he said.

Qian Jing, vice-president of the Asia Society in the United States, told participants through a video address that the search for a new generation of bridge-builders was ultimately about continuing efforts to create a peaceful future.

"Today we are looking for Kissinger, but we are also looking for people who are willing to continue this mission to create our peaceful and beautiful future together," he said. "To continue this mission, we need a bridge."

During a thematic discussion on China-US relations in a pivotal year, participants examined the prospects for bilateral engagement and the role of dialogue in addressing differences.

Thomas Fingar, a Stanford University professor and former US assistant secretary of state, said the central task of bridge-builders was to remove obstacles to engagement rather than engage in mutual blame.

He stressed that meaningful communication required the courage to speak honestly about disagreements and the willingness to work together to resolve problems.

The purpose of dialogue, he said, was not simply to determine who was right or wrong, but to identify barriers to cooperation and find ways to overcome them.

Fingar described this pragmatic approach to engagement as one of the most important lessons future generations could draw from Kissinger's diplomatic legacy.

John Quelch, a senior academic leader at Duke Kunshan University, compared the process of building trust between the two countries to constructing a bridge that needed a solid foundation and the confidence of those crossing it.

He said bridge-builders needed to establish strong, balanced foundations that would allow people on both sides to engage with one another confidently and without fear of being prevented from returning.

Zhu Feng, executive director of Nanjing University's Collaborative Innovation Center for South China Sea Studies, said understanding China's long history and civilisation was essential to appreciating the foundations of its development.

He also emphasised the importance of mutual respect and a shared sense of humanity, arguing that global peace benefited everyone and should not be subordinated to narrow geopolitical competition.

People-to-people ties at the centre

Two round-table discussions examined how personal experiences, cultural exchanges and professional relationships could help strengthen China-US ties across generations.

The first, focusing on the memories, inheritance and future of bilateral exchanges, brought together participants who shared objects and personal stories connected with their experiences of studying or living in China and the United States.

Several speakers highlighted the importance of direct interaction with local residents and students, saying such experiences offered deeper insights into each other's cultures and helped people integrate into unfamiliar communities.

The second discussion explored the diverse connections underpinning China-US engagement, including business, traditional culture, arts and crafts, education and international exchanges.

Jing Ying, president of the Shanghai Association for the Promotion of International Communication, outlined the organisation's efforts to promote understanding of Shanghai and China among American audiences and assist foreigners living in the city.

Her remarks highlighted the role of public engagement and civil society in creating opportunities for meaningful exchanges between people from the two countries.

Zheng Yi, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, reviewed the chamber's history and recalled its cooperation with the Shanghai municipal government in advancing the Shanghai Disney Resort project.

He said China continued to be an important market for American companies, adding that businesses hoped to maintain their presence and achieve further success despite the challenges they faced.



George Rethlas, a documentary filmmaker and descendant of a participant in the Second World War's Doolittle Raid, discussed his decision to make a documentary about the historic operation and his commitment to preserving its history.

He said the value of the project lay not only in documenting past events but also in inspiring younger generations to undertake similar initiatives.

Chinese pianist Kong Xiangdong, meanwhile, shared his experiences of cultural exchanges between China and the United States, highlighting music's ability to transcend national, religious and ideological boundaries.

Referring to the Chinese song "Farewell," which originated from an American folk song, Kong said music demonstrated how cultural traditions could cross borders and connect people.

He also offered to compose music for Rethlas's documentary, saying the American participants in the Doolittle Raid were heroes whose stories deserved to be remembered and honoured through cultural collaboration.

A bridge to the future

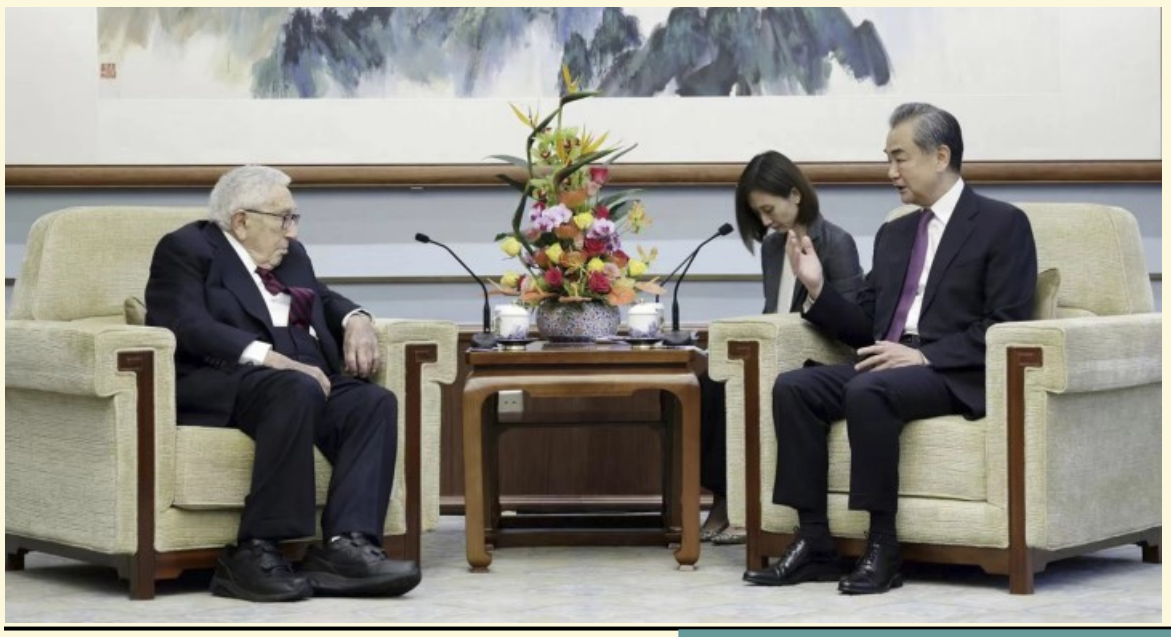
Xia Zhengyu, president and editor-in-chief of The Paper, chaired the opening session and said the publication had sought to uphold professional, open and rational journalistic values since its establishment, reporting on the world from a Chinese perspective while helping international audiences better understand China.

Introducing the dialogue's themes, "Finding Kissinger" and "The Next Bridge-Builders," he said the discussions aimed to draw lessons from the experience of earlier generations while encouraging more people to develop mutual understanding and maintain lasting connections.

The event also formed part of The Paper's broader coverage of China-US relations, with the outlet launching a special reporting project examining the foundations, bridges and safeguards needed to make bilateral ties more stable and resilient.

Organisers said the intergenerational approach was intended to connect historical experience with contemporary challenges and future opportunities, encouraging participants to look beyond official diplomacy and explore the role of individuals, institutions and communities in sustaining engagement.

The discussions underscored a central message: although differences between China and the United States cannot be eliminated through dialogue alone, sustained communication, mutual respect and practical cooperation remain essential to managing disagreements and preserving opportunities for a more stable relationship.



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

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FS Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, British envoy Jane Marriott discuss Pakistan-UK ties, global developments





Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Foreign Secretary Asim Iftikhar Ahmad received British High Commissioner Jane Marriott at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this week, with discussions focusing on Pakistan-United Kingdom relations and important regional and international developments.

The meeting highlighted the importance of sustained diplomatic engagement between the two countries as they continue to navigate an increasingly complex regional and global environment.

According to the Foreign Office, discussions covered bilateral relations as well as developments of mutual interest at the regional and international levels.

The engagement provided an opportunity for the two diplomats to exchange perspectives on the longstanding relationship between Islamabad and London, which extends across diplomatic, political, economic and people-to-people spheres. Both countries maintain regular high-level contacts and cooperation on a range of bilateral and international issues.

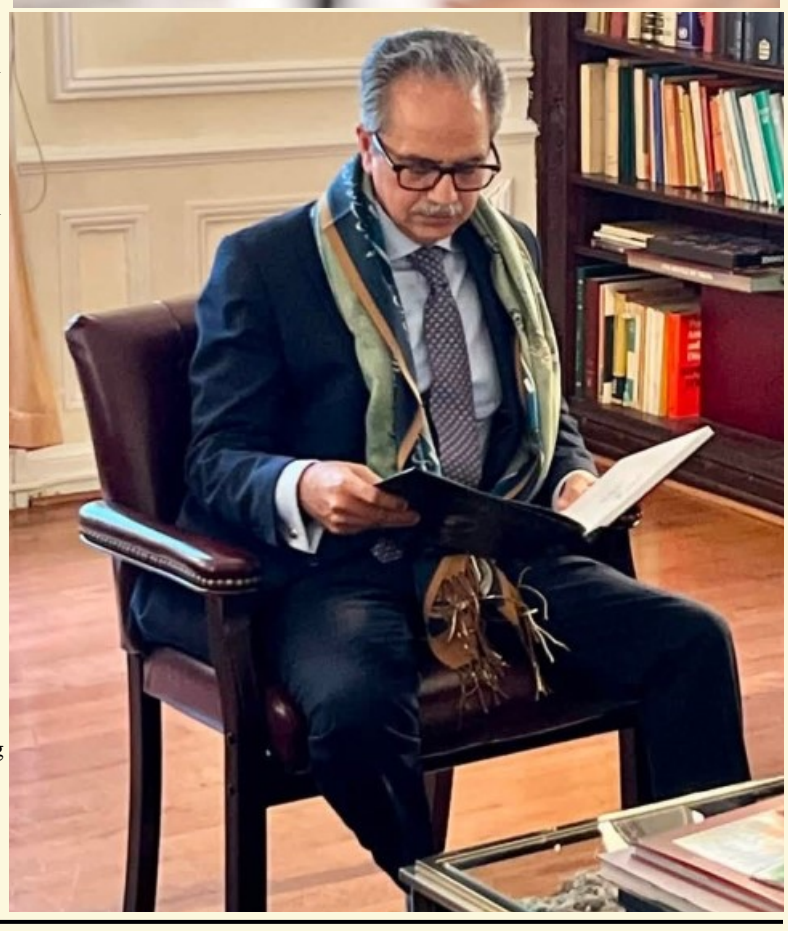
Pakistan and the UK have traditionally maintained close links, supported by historical connections, a substantial Pakistani diaspora in Britain and extensive educational, cultural and commercial exchanges. These connections provide an important foundation for continued diplomatic interaction and cooperation.

The Pakistani community in the United Kingdom also represents a significant bridge between the two countries, contributing to British society while maintaining strong family, cultural and economic links with Pakistan. Educational exchanges, business engagement and institutional contacts further add to the breadth of the relationship.

Regional and global developments were another important dimension of the meeting. At a time of shifting geopolitical dynamics and interconnected security, economic and diplomatic challenges, regular consultations between the two countries provide an avenue for exchanging perspectives and identifying areas of common interest.

The meeting reflected the continuation of diplomatic contacts aimed at maintaining momentum in Pakistan-UK relations and keeping communication open on matters affecting both countries.





Dr Toaha Qureshi: Advancing housing and social development through four decades of service





Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: From addressing housing challenges to strengthening communities, Prof Dr Toaha Qureshi MBE has dedicated much of his professional life to improving living conditions, supporting social development and creating opportunities for people to build better futures.

For Professor Dr Toaha Qureshi MBE, housing is more than the provision of accommodation. It is closely connected to social stability, individual dignity, community wellbeing and the opportunities available to people seeking to improve their lives.

With more than four decades of experience in housing, community relations and social development, he has built a career around addressing practical challenges facing communities and strengthening the organisations that serve them. His work has included leadership roles in the housing sector, engagement with charitable and community organisations, and initiatives aimed at supporting vulnerable people and promoting social inclusion.

Since taking over as chief executive of Ash-Shahada in late 2018, Prof Qureshi has continued to draw on his extensive experience in organisational leadership and community development. His work has focused on supporting the organisation's mission while contributing to wider efforts to address social needs and improve community services.

Housing has remained a central part of his professional journey. Over the years, he has worked across the sector, gaining experience in its institutional, operational and social dimensions. His involvement with housing associations and charitable organisations has also provided opportunities to contribute to discussions and initiatives concerning housing provision, organisational development and the needs of communities.

His approach reflects an understanding that housing challenges cannot be addressed in isolation. Secure accommodation is closely linked to access to education, employment, health and other essential services. Effective housing and social development therefore require cooperation between institutions, community organisations and the people directly affected by these challenges.

Beyond the housing sector, Prof Qureshi has maintained a strong commitment to education, rehabilitation and community development. His work has involved supporting initiatives intended to create opportunities, encourage social participation and help individuals overcome barriers to progress.

He has also served on the boards of housing associations and charitable organisations, bringing his professional experience to institutions working in different areas of social development. These roles have enabled him to contribute to organisational governance, strategic planning and efforts to strengthen services for communities. His contribution has been recognised through several honours, including the Lambeth Civic Award, the British Community Honours Award and a Metropolitan Police Commendation Award. He was also awarded an MBE by the late Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of his services to community relations.

Alongside his executive and community responsibilities, Prof Qureshi has remained active as an educator, author, speaker and commentator, sharing his experience on issues relating to management, social development and community relations. His professional journey highlights the important relationship between housing provision and wider social progress. At a time when housing pressures and social inequalities continue to challenge communities, his experience underscores the need for sustainable institutions, effective leadership and a long-term commitment to improving people's lives.

For Prof Qureshi, the central focus of this work has remained the same: strengthening communities by addressing their needs, expanding opportunities and helping build a more secure and inclusive future.







Pakistan, Kazakhstan seek stronger trade and investment ties, focus on connectivity, private-sector cooperation





Covert Report

Islamabad: Pakistan and Kazakhstan have reaffirmed their commitment to expanding bilateral economic cooperation, boosting trade and exploring new investment opportunities, with both sides emphasising stronger business-to-business (B2B) engagement, improved connectivity and effective implementation of existing agreements.



The understanding was reached during a meeting between Federal Minister for Investment Qaiser Ahmad Sheikh and Deputy Prime Minister–Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan Zhumangarin Serik Makashevich this week.

During the meeting, Sheikh stressed the need to strengthen economic ties through greater private-sector participation, enhanced business-to-business cooperation and improved banking channels to facilitate trade and investment between the two countries.

Highlighting the considerable potential for economic collaboration, the minister identified several promising sectors, including e-commerce, warehousing, textiles and mining, where businesses from both countries could explore mutually beneficial investment opportunities.

He particularly pointed to Kazakhstan's affordable energy resources as an attractive opportunity for Pakistani investors, especially in the textile industry, noting that closer economic cooperation could help Pakistani businesses explore new avenues for investment and industrial growth.

Referring to the memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed during President Asif Ali Zardari's visit to Kazakhstan in February, Sheikh underscored the importance of their early and effective implementation. He said translating the existing agreements into practical initiatives was essential to achieving concrete economic results and strengthening bilateral commercial relations.

Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister–Minister of National Economy, Zhumangarin Serik Makashevich, expressed his desire for the Prime Minister of Pakistan to undertake a visit to Kazakhstan, describing high-level exchanges as an important means of further strengthening relations between the two countries.

He reaffirmed Kazakhstan's commitment to expanding bilateral cooperation and increasing trade with Pakistan, disclosing that a five-year roadmap had been developed to provide a structured framework for advancing economic relations and identifying new areas of collaboration.

The Kazakh deputy prime minister highlighted the significant opportunities offered by Pakistan's market of approximately 250 million people, saying the country's large consumer base presented considerable potential for Kazakh businesses and investors.

He also pointed to Pakistan's strategic geographical position, observing that Kazakhstan could benefit from enhanced access to Pakistani markets, while Pakistan could utilise Kazakhstan as a gateway to the wider Eurasian region.

Emphasising the importance of physical connectivity in promoting economic activity, Makashevich called for establishing direct air links between Pakistan and Kazakhstan. He said improved air connectivity would facilitate business travel, strengthen commercial exchanges, encourage investment and promote people-to-people contacts.

He further informed the Pakistani minister that Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister would visit Pakistan to participate in the preparatory meeting for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), providing another opportunity to strengthen bilateral engagement.

Both sides agreed that closer institutional coordination, improved transport and financial connectivity, timely implementation of existing agreements and increased private-sector participation were essential to unlocking the full potential of Pakistan-Kazakhstan relations.

The meeting underscored the shared resolve of Islamabad and Astana to move beyond existing diplomatic commitments and develop practical economic partnerships that could expand bilateral trade, attract investment and create new opportunities for businesses in both countries







Portugal-Sindh cooperation gains momentum as Murad invites Portuguese investment in water, energy





Newswire

Karachi: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah this week invited Portuguese companies to invest in Sindh's water, energy and infrastructure sectors, while seeking Portugal's technological expertise in desalination and football development to address Karachi's growing water needs and promote young sporting talent in Lyari.

During a meeting with Portugal's Ambassador to Pakistan, Paulo Domingues, at CM House, the chief minister proposed establishing direct engagement between Portuguese companies specialising in water management and desalination and the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWSC) to explore the feasibility of modern desalination plants in Karachi.

The meeting highlighted Portugal's potential role as a technological and investment partner for Sindh, with discussions covering water security, energy cooperation, infrastructure development, private-sector investment and sports, particularly football.

Welcoming Ambassador Domingues, Murad Ali Shah said Sindh was keen to benefit from Portugal's experience and technological capabilities to develop sustainable solutions for Karachi's increasing demand for drinking water.

He proposed that Portuguese companies work with KWSC to examine the technical and commercial feasibility of desalination projects, including available technologies, investment requirements, financing arrangements and potential implementation models.

"Portugal has valuable technological expertise in water management and desalination. We want to benefit from this experience to develop sustainable and modern water supply solutions for Karachi," the chief minister said.

He emphasised that international partnerships could help Sindh introduce innovative technologies, strengthen public infrastructure and improve essential services, while creating opportunities for mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

Karachi's expanding population and rising demand for drinking water have intensified the need for sustainable water management solutions. In this context, engagement with Portuguese companies could help Sindh explore alternative water sources and modern desalination technologies, subject to feasibility assessments and investment considerations.

The chief minister also invited Portuguese investment in Sindh's energy sector, highlighting opportunities for cooperation through advanced technology, technical expertise and private-sector participation.

He directed the provincial Investment Department to establish contact with the Portuguese Embassy and identify potential projects and areas of commercial cooperation for Portuguese investors.

The initiative is intended to translate diplomatic engagement into practical investment opportunities by connecting Portuguese companies with relevant provincial institutions and local partners.

Football development emerged as another prominent area of potential cooperation, with Murad Ali Shah inviting Portugal to help nurture young talent in Karachi's Lyari neighbourhood, renowned for its footballing culture.

The chief minister said Lyari possessed considerable sporting talent that could benefit from Portugal's established football traditions, professional coaching expertise and modern training methods.

"Lyari has tremendous footballing talent. We want our young players to benefit from Portugal's rich footballing experience, modern coaching techniques and international standards of training," he said.

He discussed the possibility of partnerships between Portuguese football institutions, coaches and sports organisations and their counterparts in Sindh to promote grassroots football and provide young players with greater opportunities for professional development.

Potential initiatives could include coaching exchanges, specialised training programmes, technical assistance and international exposure for promising footballers.

The proposed cooperation would not only strengthen football development in Sindh but also create avenues for people-to-people engagement and youth exchanges between Pakistan and Portugal.

Ambassador Paulo Domingues expressed interest in expanding Portugal's engagement with Sindh in water management, desalination, energy and sports, and highlighted opportunities for Portuguese companies to share expertise and explore potential projects.

He welcomed the proposal for direct engagement between Portuguese firms and KWSC to examine desalination opportunities, providing a basis for further discussions on technological cooperation and investment.

Portugal's expertise in water management and football development, alongside potential commercial engagement in energy and infrastructure, could contribute to expanding economic and institutional links between Portugal and Sindh. The meeting was attended by Portugal's Political Officer David Arcaú, Honorary Consul of Portugal in Karachi Amin Fakar, and Secretary to the Chief Minister Asif Jameel.

The discussions reflected a growing interest in strengthening Pakistan-Portugal cooperation through provincial-level partnerships, with Sindh seeking to attract Portuguese technology, investment and expertise to address development challenges and create new opportunities for economic growth.

Both sides agreed to maintain coordination to identify potential projects and advance cooperation in priority sectors, with the proposed initiatives to be pursued through further engagement and feasibility assessments.



Rubio acknowledges Pakistan's concerns over terrorism from Afghan soil, offers US role

Newswire

Atlanta: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio this week acknowledged Pakistan's concerns over terrorist attacks originating from Afghan territory, saying Washington has taken note of Islamabad's position and would be willing to play a constructive role if an opportunity arises.

Speaking at a press briefing in Atlanta, Georgia, Rubio said the United States was aware of Pakistan's concerns that militant attacks inside the country were being sponsored from Afghanistan, adding that Washington did not want Pakistan to continue facing such threats. "Pakistan is concerned about terrorist attacks that are being sponsored from the territory of Afghanistan," Rubio said, noting that Islamabad believed the Afghan Taliban had not done enough to prevent such attacks and had consequently taken action against them. "We obviously have heard those concerns on their part, we obviously don't want them to be targeted," he said.

The US secretary of state acknowledged that Washington did not necessarily have the closest relationship with the Taliban administration in Kabul, but said the United States had heard Pakistan's concerns and had seen some of the attacks Islamabad had highlighted.

"If there's a productive role for us to play, we'll play it," Rubio said, reiterating Washington's opposition to terrorism regardless of its origin or intended targets.

"We're against terrorism no matter where it emanates from and who it targets," he added.

Rubio's remarks come amid persistent tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan over cross-border terrorism and Islamabad's demand that the Afghan Taliban prevent militant groups from using Afghan territory to launch attacks inside Pakistan. Pakistan has repeatedly called on the Taliban administration to honour its commitments and take effective action against terrorist organisations, particularly the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which Islamabad accuses of operating from sanctuaries across the border. Islamabad has maintained that assurances from Kabul have not translated into sufficient action on the ground. Pakistani authorities argue that the threat extends beyond the movement of militants across the border, alleging that terrorist networks also benefit from training facilities, weapons supplies and operational support inside Afghanistan.

Security officials have estimated that up to 70 per cent of militants infiltrating Pakistan belong to Afghan-origin groups. Pakistani security authorities have also alleged that weapons left behind by US and NATO forces in Afghanistan have reached militant organisations, including groups identified by Pakistan as Fitna al-Khawarij and Fitna al-Hindustan. The Pakistani security establishment has repeatedly linked the escalation in terrorist attacks to the presence of militant infrastructure on Afghan soil. According to figures cited by Pakistani authorities, terrorism emanating from Afghanistan claimed 1,327 lives in Pakistan during 2026, while another 2,484 people were injured.

Rubio's comments are significant as they publicly acknowledge Islamabad's security concerns and leave open the possibility of a constructive American role, although he did not outline any specific initiative or mechanism for US engagement with Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In the same press engagement, Rubio also addressed the growing tensions with Iran, saying President Donald Trump had not yet made a decision on whether to launch fresh military strikes amid stalled peace negotiations.

"He hasn't made a decision. I have no announcement in that regard with you today, and nor do we take any of it lightly," Rubio said at a G20 press conference in Atlanta.

The US secretary of state maintained that Trump preferred a diplomatic settlement but stressed that Washington retained the military capability to act if required.

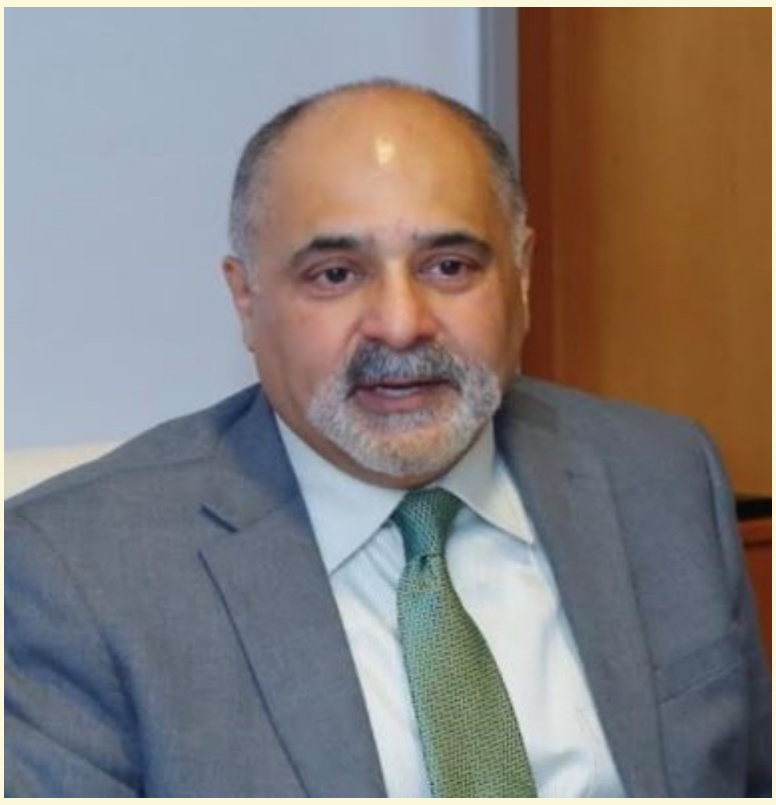
"We can achieve military objectives if we seek



to," Rubio said, adding that the administration would prefer to resolve the situation peacefully. Rubio also criticised what he described as Iran's threats to target commercial shipping and the energy infrastructure of neighbouring countries and the wider region. He said the Iranian position appeared to be that, unless Tehran secured its demands, it could disrupt shipping and damage regional energy facilities. The remarks reflected Washington's continuing effort to keep diplomatic options open while maintaining pressure on Tehran amid uncertainty surrounding the stalled negotiations.

Taken together, Rubio's comments on Pakistan-Afghanistan tensions and the Iran crisis highlighted the range of regional security challenges confronting Washington, while signalling that the United States remained attentive to Pakistan's concerns over cross-border terrorism.

Japan confers prestigious decoration on former Pakistani ambassador Farukh Amil



Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: The Government of Japan this week conferred the prestigious Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star on former Pakistani Ambassador to Japan Farukh Akhter Amil in recognition of his contributions to strengthening Pakistan-Japan relations and promoting friendship and mutual understanding between the two countries.

The decoration was announced on November 3 as part of Japan's 2026 Fall Conferment of Decorations on Foreign Nationals, recognising individuals whose contributions have helped advance Japan's relations with other countries and foster international goodwill.

Farukh Amil served as Pakistan's Ambassador to Japan from 2013 to 2017, a period during which he worked to expand bilateral engagement beyond traditional diplomatic channels, placing particular emphasis on cultural exchanges, educational cooperation and people-to-people contacts.

One of the notable aspects of his diplomatic tenure was his effort to bring the people of the two countries closer through cultural initiatives and direct engagement with Japanese institutions. In August 2015, he invited Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado to a calligraphy exhibition organised at the Embassy of Pakistan in Japan. The occasion symbolically strengthened cultural links between Pakistan and Japan and provided an opportunity to highlight the artistic and cultural heritage of Pakistan.

His engagement with Japan's academic community was another significant feature of his tenure. He delivered lectures at more than 50 universities across Japan and held repeated interactions with students, researchers and academics. These engagements helped introduce younger Japanese audiences to Pakistan's history, society and perspectives, while encouraging dialogue and greater understanding between the two countries.

Beyond formal diplomacy and cultural outreach, Amil also established a personal connection with communities affected by one of Japan's most devastating natural disasters.

Shortly after arriving in Japan to assume his diplomatic assignment, he travelled to Fukushima, a prefecture severely affected by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. The visit took place before he had presented his credentials, making his decision to personally visit the disaster-hit region particularly meaningful to local residents.

His presence was regarded by people in Fukushima as a gesture of solidarity and compassion at a difficult time. Local residents described the visit as "unforgettable support", and it reportedly left a lasting impression on the community. The gesture reflected a dimension of diplomacy that extended beyond official meetings to include empathy, friendship and engagement with ordinary people.

Amil's efforts to promote Japan-Pakistan friendship continued even after the completion of his ambassadorial assignment. In February 2025, he co-hosted a photographic exhibition, titled Beautiful Japan – Through the Eyes of an Ambassador, in collaboration with the Embassy of Japan in Pakistan.

The exhibition featured photographs he had taken during his diplomatic tenure in Japan, offering Pakistani audiences a personal perspective on the country's landscapes, culture and everyday life. The initiative attracted considerable media attention, with coverage in 14 major Pakistani newspapers, further extending public interest in Japan and its cultural identity.

Japan's decision to honour Amil recognises a diplomatic contribution that combined official representation with sustained efforts to build cultural bridges, promote academic engagement and strengthen people-to-people relations.

The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star is among Japan's decorations awarded to individuals for distinguished contributions. Amil's recognition reflects the value attached to his role in deepening understanding and friendship between Japan and Pakistan, and highlights the importance of cultural diplomacy in sustaining long-term bilateral relations.



European Union

EU trade ties in focus as Dar pushes for full utilisation of GSP+ benefits to boost Pakistan's exports





Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Strengthening Pakistan's trade and economic partnership with the European Union (EU), Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar this week called for a coordinated, whole-of-government strategy to maximise the benefits of the bloc's Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) framework, improve trade facilitation and expand Pakistani exports to European markets.

Chairing an inter-ministerial meeting on Pakistan's trade and export promotion agenda at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday, Dar emphasised that the European Union's preferential trade arrangement offered significant opportunities for Pakistan's export growth, requiring stronger institutional coordination, effective policy implementation and strict adherence to international commitments.

The meeting focused on strengthening Pakistan's engagement with the EU, one of its most important trading partners, while exploring ways to improve the competitiveness of Pakistani products and ensure maximum utilisation of preferential market access.

Senior officials from relevant ministries and departments participated in the deliberations, which covered trade facilitation, international market access, human rights, labour standards and environmental governance.

Dar stressed that Pakistan needed to make full use of the GSP+ arrangement to consolidate its position in European markets, increase export volumes and create new opportunities for Pakistani businesses.

He called for closer coordination among government institutions to ensure that trade policies, regulatory frameworks and export promotion initiatives remained aligned with Pakistan's international commitments and the requirements of the European market.

The DPM emphasised that preferential access alone was not sufficient to sustain export growth, underlining the importance of improving product quality, meeting international standards, strengthening production capabilities and enhancing the competitiveness of domestic industries.

The EU's GSP+ framework remains a significant pillar of Pakistan's economic engagement with Europe, providing substantial tariff preferences on eligible Pakistani exports and offering domestic businesses improved access to the European market.

The arrangement also connects trade opportunities with commitments relating to human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and good governance through the effective implementation of international conventions.

Dar highlighted the importance of fulfilling these obligations, stressing that sustained compliance was essential to maintaining the benefits of the preferential trade arrangement and strengthening Pakistan's credibility as a trading partner.

He called for a comprehensive approach involving federal ministries, provincial governments and relevant institutions to ensure effective implementation of international commitments while facilitating greater access for Pakistani exporters.

The discussions also highlighted the need to strengthen trade facilitation mechanisms, improve regulatory coordination and encourage businesses to meet evolving international quality and sustainability standards.

Dar reaffirmed the government's commitment to export-led economic growth and directed relevant ministries and departments to maintain momentum in trade promotion efforts.

He stressed that Pakistan's diplomatic missions, particularly in Europe, should play an active role in identifying commercial opportunities, facilitating business contacts and strengthening engagement with European institutions and trading partners.

The meeting underscored the importance of bringing trade diplomacy, economic policy and regulatory compliance together to translate Pakistan's preferential access to the EU market into greater export earnings and sustainable economic growth.

It was attended by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Bajwa; the secretaries of foreign affairs, commerce and human rights; Pakistan's ambassador to Belgium and the European Union; and senior representatives from the provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and relevant ministries and departments.

The deliberations reflected Pakistan's focus on deepening its economic partnership with the European Union, safeguarding the opportunities offered by GSP+ and strengthening the country's competitiveness in one of the world's major consumer markets.



COVERT is published every Sunday

UK opens new doors for Pakistani talent through Chevening scholarships

Celina Ali

Islamabad: For ambitious young Pakistanis dreaming of studying at some of the world's finest universities, Britain is opening another promising chapter. A new partnership under the UK Government's prestigious Chevening scholarship programme is creating fresh opportunities for talented Pakistani students to pursue fully funded master's degrees in the United Kingdom, strengthening educational ties and investing in Pakistan's future leadership.



The initiative, announced this week through a partnership between Chevening and Allied Bank Limited, reflects Britain's continuing commitment to educational cooperation with Pakistan and to developing the skills, knowledge and leadership potential of young people who can contribute to their country's progress.

At the heart of the programme is a simple but powerful vision: give exceptional Pakistani talent access to world-class British education, international exposure and professional networks, enabling scholars to return home with fresh perspectives and expertise.

British High Commissioner Jane Marriott CMG OBE described the partnership as an investment in Pakistan's greatest asset — its people.

"Pakistan's greatest strength is its people. This partnership will help impressive future leaders to study at world-leading UK universities and bring fresh ideas home," she said.

Her remarks underline the broader significance of Chevening, which has long served as an educational bridge between Britain and Pakistan, connecting talented individuals with British universities and encouraging leadership, professional development and international collaboration.

The new Chevening-ABL Scholarship will support two Pakistani scholars annually over three academic years, beginning in 2027-28. Students will pursue subjects critical to Pakistan's future development, including artificial intelligence, technology, cybersecurity, digital transformation, economics and financial inclusion.

These disciplines reflect the growing importance of technological innovation, digital capabilities and economic expertise in shaping the next generation of professionals and policymakers.

For successful candidates, studying in Britain will offer much more than a postgraduate qualification. It will provide opportunities to engage with leading academic institutions, develop professional networks, experience international perspectives and acquire skills that can help address Pakistan's development challenges.



The partnership also illustrates how Britain's international scholarship programme continues to evolve through collaboration with local institutions, broadening access to educational opportunities and strengthening its reach in Pakistan.

Chevening works with more than 140 organisations globally, including private companies, NGOs, foreign government departments and UK universities, to support outstanding individuals with leadership potential.

The first two Chevening-ABL scholars will be selected from the existing applicant pool for the 2027-28 academic year. Applications for the 2028-29 scholarships are expected to open in August 2027, with successful candidates beginning their studies in the UK in 2028.

For aspiring Pakistani scholars, the initiative reinforces Britain's position as an important destination for higher education and professional advancement.

Beyond individual academic achievements, the scholarships carry a wider promise: stronger educational links, deeper people-to-people connections and a new generation of Pakistanis equipped with international knowledge and experience.

As Britain continues to invest in educational partnerships, Chevening remains one of the most meaningful avenues through which UK-Pakistan relations can translate into opportunities for young people — creating lasting connections between British institutions and Pakistan's future leaders.



Your personality is not something you make up in your head. It's actually an experience people have of you. Suzy Welch

COVERT
TRUTH UNFOLD
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The greatest deception men suffer is from their own opinions. Leonardo da Vinci

Italy says strategic ties with US will remain unchanged after Democratic midterm victories

Newswire

Rome: Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani this week said that Italy's strategic relationship with the United States will remain unchanged following Democratic victories in the November 3 midterm elections, emphasising that Rome's commitment to transatlantic cooperation does not depend on which party controls the US government or Congress. Tajani said Italy respected the democratic choice of the American people and would continue working with Washington on the basis of the longstanding partnership between the two countries. "We always respect the will of the American people," he said, underscoring that the United States remained a strategic partner for Italy. Tajani stressed that Rome would maintain the same level of cooperation regardless of the political composition of the US administration or Congress, reflecting Italy's intention to keep bilateral relations stable through changes in American political leadership. "We will continue to do so with the same loyalty and fairness with which we have worked with governments led by Democratic or Republican presidents," he said. His remarks signalled continuity in Italy's foreign policy approach towards Washington, with the Italian government seeking to preserve cooperation across political transitions in the United States.





Italian Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Ugo Ciarlatani

The League party also called for the American election results to be respected, saying the outcome reflected voters' concerns over ongoing wars, international tensions and the rising cost of living. "When a people votes, their vote must always be respected and understood," the party said in a statement.

It also expressed hope that the electoral outcome would encourage renewed efforts to end conflicts and restore peace, linking domestic political developments in the United States with wider international concerns. The Democratic victories in the November 3 midterm elections marked a significant shift in the balance of power in Washington, with the party securing control of both chambers of Congress and ending Republican majorities in the House of Representatives and Senate. The new congressional majorities are scheduled to take office in January 2027. The change is expected to reshape the political environment in Washington and influence legislative debates on domestic and international issues. However, Tajani's comments made clear that Italy intends to maintain its established strategic partnership with the United States, irrespective of the political balance in Congress.

French ambassador Jean-Noël Poirier seeks stronger media ties, professional exchanges with Pakistan



Celina Ali

Islamabad: French Ambassador to Pakistan Jean-Noël Poirier this week expressed his willingness to strengthen cooperation with Pakistani media institutions and journalists, highlighting the role of media engagement in promoting closer relations between Pakistan and France.

During his visit to the National Press Club (NPC) Islamabad, the French envoy discussed opportunities to expand bilateral cooperation in journalism, professional training, cultural exchanges and media-related activities.

Emphasising the importance of sustained communication and closer interaction between the media communities of the two countries, Ambassador Poirier showed interest in working closely with the Press Club and Pakistani journalists to develop practical avenues for professional collaboration.

The discussions focused on promoting direct engagement between Pakistani and French journalists, facilitating the exchange of professional experiences and exploring capacity-building opportunities that could contribute to the development of the media sector in both countries.



The possibility of organising joint media programmes, professional exchanges and cultural activities was also discussed as part of efforts to create stronger institutional links and encourage a better understanding of each other's societies.

The ambassador's interest in closer engagement with Pakistani media reflects France's willingness to broaden its relationship with Pakistan beyond conventional diplomatic and government-to-government contacts. Media institutions, journalists and cultural organisations can play an important role in building public understanding, encouraging dialogue and highlighting areas of shared interest. Cooperation in journalism and professional training could also provide opportunities for Pakistani media practitioners to engage