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PRESS RELEASE

One-Day Media Workshop on 'Pakistan's Relations with the US, China and Russia'

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- It is vital to turn Pakistan's strategic location from being a liability to a major driver of the country's economic uplift by overcoming political expediencies.
- The Government of Pakistan (GoP) needs to remove the choke points at Gwadar (Balochistan) by taking the Baloch and Iranians into confidence on the mutual use of Chabahar and Gwadar Ports.
- The United States (US) and India are uncomfortable with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), hence, spreading misperceptions and propaganda, especially against CPEC to subvert the projects and foment political instability in Pakistan.
- The US is exploiting Pakistan's economic vulnerability through the International Monetary Fund and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF); while India is using hybrid warfare techniques to subvert CPEC projects.

These points were highlighted by subject experts at the second One-Day Media Workshop titled ‘Pakistan’s Relations with the US, China and Russia’ organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) here in Islamabad, today. The workshop was attended by a large number of journalists working with leading print and electronic media.

Ambassador (R) Tajammul Altaf in his presentation on ‘Pakistan-China Relations in the Perspective of CPEC Strategic Partnership’ provided a brief overview of China’s economic and



political history from 221 BC when it emerged as a unified state to the modern-day vision of President Xi Jinping to make his country a number one economic power by 2030 and military power by 2050. Ambassador Altaf explained that Pakistan considers its friendship with China the ‘cornerstone of its foreign policy’ since it is a friendship which has stood the test of time. ‘Both countries enjoy very close people-to-people, friendly,

friction- free, robust, unique and pragmatic relations,’ he said.

Discussing CPEC, Ambassador Altaf said that CPEC is aimed at China’s development pathway through BRI and uplifting of Pakistan’s economy through development of the Gwadar Port which will be the second deepest port in the world; energy projects of 17,000 MW; infrastructure and data communication projects; construction of Industrial Parks and 26 Special Economic Zones (SEZs), apart from enhancing the agriculture and tourism sector. He explained that Pakistan’s GDP growth is expected to rise to 7 per cent by 2020. ‘80,000 trucks will transport oil & gas, agricultural, industrial products and natural resources daily from to Central Asia and Russia to China, Asia, Africa and Europe via Gwadar Port, with expected annual earnings of USD 5 billion by 2022 from toll collection, which would ease out the balance of payment. The relocation of light engineering sector industries from China and international foreign direct investment in SEZs would be a major contributor to revenue, jobs and GDP growth worth USD 20 billion annually.

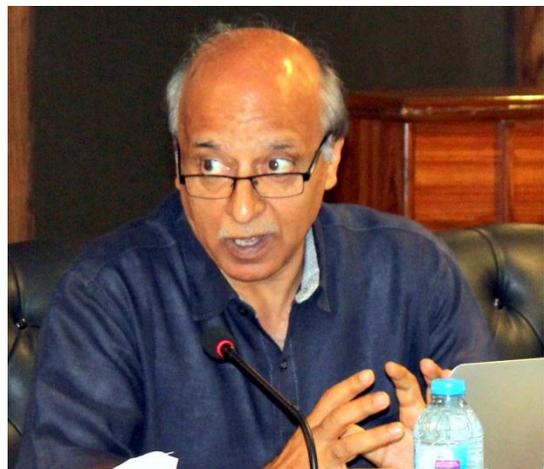
Ambassador (R) Fauzia Nasreen gave a comprehensive presentation on ‘Pakistan’s Relations with Russia’. She said that in an asymmetrical world order, Russia’s demand for recognition is very important. It is because of this need for recognition that the country has had a role in a



series of events starting from Georgia in 2008, Ukraine in 2013 and Syria in 2015. Following the Ukraine crisis, sanctions were imposed on Russia. This is the time when Russia moved closer to Asia under its new foreign policy. Discussing the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Ambassador Nasreen outlined that Russia is attaching greater importance to this platform under which member countries can deal with terrorism issues.

According to her, connectivity is also vital for Kremlin under CPEC and the BRI, through the Eurasia Economic Union. ‘Russia sees BRI and the EEU as a vehicle to integrate economic activity in the region,’ she said. The Ambassador also stressed that there’s growing recognition in Russia that the Taliban may be engaged to achieve stability and security in Afghanistan. Russia wants that the Islamic State (IS) must be contained also and this is where the Pakistan-Russia interests converge. Both China and Russia can play their role in bringing Pakistan and India to the negotiating table, she concluded.

Discussing ‘Pakistan’s Relationship with the US’, **Mr Imtiaz Gul**, Executive Director, Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), said US’ super power status has led to arrogance. However, Washington has lost whatever leverage it had over Islamabad. Unfortunately, despite this, the world continues to view Pakistan through a US lens, which needs to be countered. He said that US-India nexus has squeezed Pakistan in multiple ways especially with respect to Pakistan’s nuclear programme and its role in Afghanistan. Mr Gul said that Pakistan’s biggest challenge is creating a balance between its relations with the US and strategic partnership with China, while simultaneously maintaining good relations with its neighbours. ‘Pakistan should continue to maintain good relations with the US’, he remarked.



Earlier, *Ambassador (R) Abdul Basit*, President IPRI, in his opening remarks, said that IPRI has initiated these workshops for journalists to build the capacity of young media professionals, as



well as polish the skills of veterans about Pakistan's foreign relations and policies since there is a critical need to accelerate efforts to train the next generation of media leaders. 'We live in a world of fast and dramatic global changes and in order to stay abreast of and understand the nuances of foreign policy changes, in-depth understanding of key issues and relationships is required. I hope that such workshops will fast-track the transfer of knowledge and inspire and engage media professionals about Pakistan's foreign policy issues,' he said.

In the informal Q/A session, journalists shared that they found the workshop to be informative and hoped that this tradition of media workshops will be continued by IPRI. In answer to a question about the financial obligations of Pakistan on terms of repayment of CPEC loans, it was shared that it is a mix grant, including long-term government concessional loans, zero-interest loans and investments. Ultimately, CPEC will amplify Pakistan's pivotal role in the connectivity and provide immense economic opportunities. It was stressed that if Pakistan is able to resume dialogue with India and improve ties with Afghanistan at the same time, sustainable peace and stability may return to South Asia as a region.

