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PRESS RELEASE IPRI MEDIA WORKSHOP

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ACHIEVING SEA-BASED DETERRENCE & DEVELOPING BLUE ECONOMY VITAL FOR PAKISTAN

Media's role critical for creating maritime awareness



This was the conclusion of the **Media Workshop on ‘Strategic Importance of Maritime Affairs for Pakistan and the Role of Media’** organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute, here in the capital today. The workshop was well attended by students of media communications, media personnel, journalists and reporters from all major news and print media houses.

Renowned academician **Prof. Dr Muhammad Ali, Vice Chancellor, Quaid-i-Azam University,**



in his Inaugural Address, highlighted that Pakistan has untapped natural resources, and called for efficient use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, especially of fishing communities and sustainable ocean ecosystems. ‘When 80 per cent of the global trade is carried via sea routes and aquaculture is the fastest growing food sector, Pakistan can harness this potential and move towards becoming a blue economy,’ the Vice Chancellor said. He also pointed out that Pakistan should harness renewable energy from the

sea like wind and develop its Hyderabad Belt.

In the working session of the Maritime Media Workshop, *Ambassador Vice Admiral (R) Syed Khawar Ali HI (M), Director General, National Institute of Maritime Affairs, Bahria University*



discussed ‘Contemporary Maritime Dynamics in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and Pakistan’s Preparedness.’ He said seas are major lines of communication, and hence, require collective security - ‘Nations must be able to subordinate their individual political agendas for the common good to all. Multilateral diplomacy and international law needs to be the norm at sea. Now more than ever, countries have greater interdependence in maritime economy, and there is need for cooperative coalitions and information sharing.’ Vice Admiral Ali pointed out that the sea had also become an arena for competition between states characterised though naval build-ups and military competition to

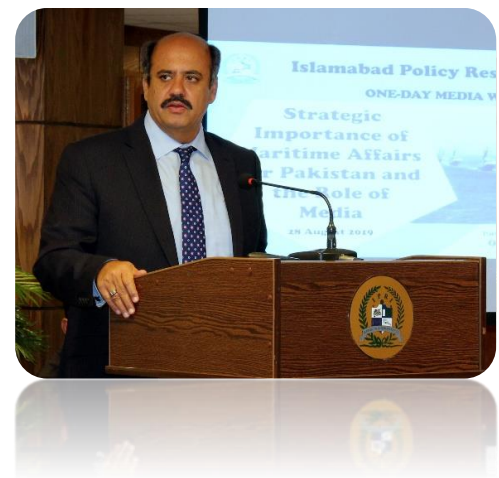
influence others. ‘Strategic debate in modern international politics is now focused on maritime issues like the US pivot to Asia and emergence of China as a naval power. The epicentre of Indo-Pakistan nuclear rivalry is slowly drifting outward from the sub-continental landmass into the Indian Ocean. India has invigorated sea-based deterrence with the induction of nuclear submarine INS Chakra and induction of INS Arihant. **Nuclearisation of Indian Ocean does not bode well for the peace and stability of this vital region,**’ he stressed. On the role of media, he opined that there is a lack of understanding, and thereby, coverage of maritime issues. ‘Media has serious capacity issues to handle the current maritime debate. Pakistani media needs to be galvanised for projecting maritime potential of the country,’ he urged.

Dr Salma Malik from Quaid-i-Azam University made a presentation on ‘Pakistan’s Maritime Imperatives – Awareness & Media’, and pointed out that with the expansion of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to 350 nautical miles, effective investment in the EEZ can easily double the size of Pakistan’s economy. Offering an overview of borders and security challenges, Dr Malik opined that Pakistan is a destination and transit country for both migrant smuggling and human trafficking. ‘In Pakistan’s context, migrant smuggling is more prevalent than other forms of human trafficking. Migrant smuggling to Europe has the largest economic blueprint in terms of fees paid to smugglers and the numbers of migrants involved,’ she said. In this regard, under Regional Maritime Security Patrol, Pakistan Navy is operating against pirates and terrorism at many choking points around the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman and Strait of Hormuz, she shared. While giving her recommendations, Dr Malik said that celebrating Maritime Day

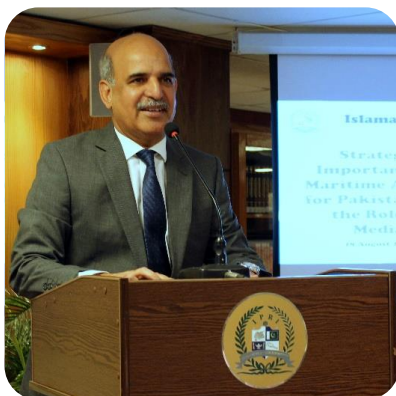


once a year is important, however, wider country-wide exposure and coverage of maritime issues, especially of the 2019 theme 'Empowering Women in the Maritime Community' is vital. She also strongly urged the media to focus more attention on the resource-rich Sir Creek marshlands dispute between Pakistan and India. 'Sir Creek not only has important security dimensions, it also relates to demarcation of the maritime boundary of the two countries in the Arabian Sea.' Dr Malik warned that with the help of companies like Google, India is manipulating land and sea maps. Media professionals should be careful about the maps they use since any country's territorial boundary is recognised on their basis.

Discussing nuclearization of Indian Ocean and concerns for Pakistan, **Dr Zafar Nawaz Jaspal from Quaid-i-Azam University** highlighted that deployment of the Arihant in the Indian Ocean was alarming for Pakistan because the vessel can remain underwater, virtually undetected, for months at a time. Moreover, India's sea-based missiles have augmented the strike capability of the Indian Navy. He warned that there might be a further large shift in reach of the Indian Navy with addition of the sea-based, sub-sonic, stealth Nirbhay cruise missile in the near future. 'Pakistan's navy cannot ignore India's blue water naval build-up, especially its nuclear weapons. It is important to invest in the development of Pakistan's sea-based nuclear weapons capable of providing a second-strike capability,' he urged. Dr Jaspal opined that the Indo-US strategic relationship had increased asymmetry in the balance of power between India and Pakistan, and lowered the nuclear threshold between the two neighbours and in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). 'This arms race between India and Pakistan is a result of the former's ambitious realpolitik policies as New Delhi struggles to establish its hegemony in South Asia and Asia Pacific with the help of the US to contain China,' he observed.



Earlier, President of IPRI, **Ambassador Vice Admiral (R) Khan Hasham bin Saddique** in his Welcome Address emphasised the importance of understanding maritime affairs for Pakistan and role of media in creating sea awareness. He said that it is imperative for nations to utilize their maritime



resources for economic development which ultimately fortifies defensive capabilities. 'In the case of Pakistan, we are fortunate to have direct access to the Indian Ocean, albeit we are yet to optimally utilize it to our advantage. This is largely due to the absence of maritime knowledge or sea blindness', he said. Vice Admiral Saddique remarked that Pakistan's sea resources if strategically used can provide seamless connectivity and commerce with the rest of the world, and strengthen the country's economy. He further said that Pakistan is gifted with a geostrategic position which offers us with the opportunity to have key role in trade and oil routes across the Arabian Sea. He

stressed that Pakistan’s coastline needs to be developed if the country wants to undergo an economic renaissance.

Concluding the media workshop, *Dr Azhar Ahmad, Head of Department, Humanities & Social*

Sciences, Bahria University stressed that earlier it was the responsibility of the media to provide vital information to the public, but with changing times and access to more mediums, capacity and impact of media has increased significantly. ‘In today’s day and age, the media not only influences perceptions, but also influences decisions and policy-making. Such an important tool should be used with caution and prudence. In order to do this, the media needs to understand all aspects of the issues they cover. Sea blindness is a global concern, one which the media in Pakistan needs to highlight more,’ he concluded. The media workshop was followed by an interactive Q/A session between the media participants and speakers.

