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# LAUNCHING OF THE FIRST PN MILGEM

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Transition from geo-politics to geo-economics has brought the world to a crisscross struggle for power and re-balancing in the international system. Ripples of continental events and uncertainties are reverberated on the high seas while also accentuating the significance of maritime security. Pakistan with a coastline that spans over 1,000 km, an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 240,000 Sq km and an Extended Continental Shelf of 50,000 sq km, has unique geographical proximity to critical waterways located in the North Arabian Sea. The large volume of maritime traffic provides greater economic opportunities for Pakistan while at the same time it is also a source of vulnerability. The

surrounding seas in our region are fast becoming a battle ground for power competition between countries near and far that advocate for the principle of Mare Liberum, yet they often assert influence and

control of the seas as an extension of their own national interest. The result of this spectacular great game being orchestrated by rivals in proximity of Pakistan has created a multitude of internal

and external challenges that have spread across the traditional to nontraditional threat spectrum. Thus, making Pakistan in general and the Pakistan Navy specifically an indispensable stake holder in this dynamic situation which is often marred with chaos and the use of violence.

The Pakistan Navy cognizant of contemporary challenges in the maritime domain imbued with threats to national interests as well as consequences on regional maritime security must maintain ubiquitous vigilance backed by a robust response mechanism. In pursuance of protecting our sovereignty, the Government of Pakistan and the Pakistan



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Navy have engaged in significant endeavors to ensure the existence of a multidimensional naval fleet, armed and equipped to quantitatively mitigate any threat scenario across the application spectrum such as benign, constabulary, and military roles. Amongst a host of inductions being pursued, currently, one of the most important projects is the MILGEM Class Corvette. These ships are being built in collaboration with our KAN KARDEŞ (blood brother) Turkey. Turkish defense companies have ascended the international defense industry ranking, with seven vendors now a part of world's top 100 list. The ADA Class Corvette commonly referred to as MILGEM, an acronym for Turkish MILLI GEMİ (National Ship) is a testimony of Turkish technological excellence and indigenous ship building capability.

In September 2018 Pakistan Navy, through the Ministry of Defense Production, contracted M/s ASFAT of Turkey for the construction of 4 PN MILGEM Class Corvettes, 2 of which are to be built in Karachi and Istanbul concurrently. Customized according to the needs of Pakistan Navy, with its stealth features, PN MILGEM will be the most technologically advanced surface platform of the Pakistan Navy Fleet. These warships are designed as multi-mission platforms capable of executing Surface, Subsurface and Air Operations equipped with state-of-the-art weapon systems, helicopters and UAVs for



offensive and defensive maritime operations. With the induction of MILGEM Class Corvettes in the PN Fleet, Pakistan will acquire effective capabilities to respond to future challenges, maintain peace & stability and the balance of power in the Indian Ocean Region. It will also support securing the sea for international shipping by maintaining a presence in distant waters through Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP), an initiative of the Pakistan Navy for maritime security.

The contemporary warship building process is always a feat of imagination with precision, detailed planning, multiple engineering dominions and unlimited errands of logistics. Hundreds of technical drawings, miles of wires and pipes, tons of steel and thousands of components jostled together with sheer hard work, in a process from steel cutting to launching and from launch to

induction gives birth to a modern warship. The steel cutting of the first MILGEM class corvette, christened as BABUR (named after the first Mughal Emperor), was conducted in January 2020 by then Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood ABBASI and President of Turkey Mr. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN. After a year and half of conscientious work, the launch of BABUR was held at Istanbul Naval Shipyard on the 15th of August 2021. Undoubtedly it was a unique event for both Pakistan and Turkey. The President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Dr. Arif ALVI and the President of the Turkish Republic Mr. ERDOĞAN were the chief guests, together. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan NIAZI and Commander of the Turkish Naval Forces Admiral Adnan ÖZBAL also attended the ceremony. The presence of both heads of state as well as Naval Commanders demonstrates the strength of Pakistan-Turkey

relations, commonality of interests and growing strategic alignment.

The PN MILGEM project is not just relevant to the construction of 4 modern warships, it also embodies transfer of technology, the upgrade of Karachi Shipyard and designing a purpose-built Jinnah Class Frigate for the Pakistan Navy. The project, thus, not only addresses the current operational requirements of the Pakistan Navy but a major step towards self-reliance and capability enhancement of the Pakistan Navy and the local ship building industry. This prestigious project is a solid foundation to further fortify the indissoluble bonds between the two countries which would yield impressive dividends and herald another chapter in the long and enduring partnership between the two countries and their Navies.

**Long-live the Pakistan-Turkey brotherhood! ■**