**Communication matters**

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The controversial statement of Ayaz Sadiq, PML-N’s MNA and former speaker of the National Assembly regarding the release of military prisoner Indian pilot Abhinandan Varthaman, caused uproar across the country. Similarly, the statement of Fawad Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Science and Technology was also termed controversial by a section of media and politicians; perceived against national interest.

Apparently, the two statements provided an opportunity to the Indian media to blow the horn of its armed forces for an achievement in the last year’s military row between India and Pakistan. These statements whether uttered in anger or explained badly apparently dent the reputation of the country and the achievement of Pakistan’s army, which had clearly secured victory in the recent military tit for tat.

Since last week, the debate continued on national press on these stances as it does in India media as well, which was at the advantage to easily twist facts. Political parties remained engaged in throwing their weight behind affiliated members, benefiting not themselves but the enemy.

[Can’t shake hands with those who bring country into trouble: Ali Muhammad](https://nation.com.pk/08-Nov-2020/can-t-shake-hands-with-those-who-bring-the-country-into-trouble-ali-muhammad)

DG ISPR Maj General Babar Iftikhar had to come on media and defend our position with a statement.

This episode of self-inflicting damage is not a novel mistake but has been repeated many times in the past at the national level by different individuals that put the position of the state at stake. Considering the present regime, we can recall the recent cases to review the blunders.

Our Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi spoke about the role of Saudi Arabia in a TV interview. His statement, whether it was true or false, apparently ruined the mutual relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. It did not favour our national interest. Our COAS Qamar Bajwa and PM Imran Khan had to visit the Kingdom and make efforts to mend the bond.

Moving back to the recent past, Federal Minister of Aviation Ghulam Sarwar issued a statement about the qualification of the pilots at the floor of the house that badly hurt the reputation of the national airline and the country with its far-reaching impacts. Not only pilots serving in foreign airlines lost their credibility but the national flag carrier also witnessed a loss of business in different countries.

[PM Imran Khan presents real concept of state of Madinah: Speaker NA](https://nation.com.pk/08-Nov-2020/pm-imran-khan-presents-real-concept-of-state-of-madinah-speaker-na)

These gentlemen did not realise how their statements and speeches were communicated messages to stakeholders such as the media, brotherly states, authorities, masses etc.

Imagine for a few minutes, the statements and speeches of these four people were not aired on the media. There was no hue and cry and firefighting in the press. There was no damage to the country’s image and the loss of business in the case of the national flag carrier.

Media policy is very crucial to decide an in-camera session or on-camera session in order to protect the national interest of the country. But this is not such a simple act—to maintain a censorship policy. The ministers and advisors must acquire skills of communicating the messages through speaking to parliament, public and the media.

Strategic communication is a very essential skill which must be acquired by all representatives of the government and public, whether he is a politician or bureaucrat or a businessman. There are definitely some sensitive areas including defence, foreign affairs and business relationships, unlike local politics wherein politicians are found busy in point scoring and accusing each other without any care at TV shows and political conventions. In strategic ministries, any U-turn cannot be affordable.

[Banker arrested in Islamabad after being filmed groping woman](https://nation.com.pk/08-Nov-2020/banker-arrested-in-islamabad-after-being-filmed-groping-woman)

An Urdu proverb fits here: First weigh, then speak (pehlay tulo, phir bolo).

Not only ministers but the Prime Minister, the President and relevant offices should also equip themselves for the public and media interaction. Our honourable PM speaks well, no doubt, but he speaks extempore most of the time—a risky style which is prone to blunders. On the contrary, heads of states of different countries often read their speeches from text, which is prepared by the team after realising all aspects of communications and strategic goals in their words.

Unfortunately, the education of strategic communication is not considered a specialised field to be taught at universities, even at professional institutions in our country. The resulting blunders are frequent, from personal matters to state affairs.

In Pakistan, every minister and civil servant should be provided training in strategic communication with the help of professional teams that could save the country from unseen damages and losses that usually occur unintentionally.