

# CLAWS Newsletter



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by Akashika Mate



## **INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **1. Mahrang Baloch's Detention Extended Again as Islamabad Sit-in Enters Day Three ([Dawn, July 18](#); [Hamid Mir/X, July 18](#))**

An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Quetta extended the police custody of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leader Dr Mahrang Baloch and other activists for another 15 days, marking yet another round of extended detention since their March arrest. The BYC, an advocacy group against enforced disappearances, has been under state scrutiny for months following protests in Quetta. Dr Mahrang and five other activists were earlier arrested under charges of attacking Quetta's Civil Hospital and inciting unrest. Her detention, governed under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO), has now been repeatedly extended, despite legal challenges and limited investigative progress. Her lawyers argued in court that the previous 10-day remand yielded no new evidence, but their objections were overruled. Amnesty International has urged Balochistan's Chief Minister to drop all charges and release the detainees, calling their arrest a violation of basic human rights. Despite the BYC not being a banned group, Mahrang remains listed as a proscribed person by Pakistan's National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA). Legal attempts to secure her release were dismissed by the Balochistan High Court, prompting an appeal to the Supreme Court in June, filed by her sister Nadia Baloch. Nadia claims the repeated detentions aim to suppress Mahrang's activism for missing persons.

Meanwhile, BYC's sit-in in Islamabad has entered its third day, drawing attention from civil society and journalists. Veteran journalist Hamid Mir visited the site, highlighting personal stories of suffering, including that of a girl whose father disappeared in 2016. Political leaders from the Tehreek-i-Tahaffuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) also met the protesters, signalling broader support for the cause amid mounting concerns over the suppression of dissent in Balochistan.

### **2. Pakistan Records \$2.1 Billion Current Account Surplus in Fiscal Year, Highest in 22 Years ([Dawn, July 18](#); [Emirates News Agency, July 18](#))**

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) announced that Pakistan achieved a current account surplus of \$2.1 billion during the ongoing fiscal year, marking the highest surplus in more than two

decades. Despite a \$103 million deficit recorded in May, a decline attributed to a widening trade gap and increased external debt servicing, the overall fiscal year performance shows significant improvement compared to the \$2.1 billion deficit in the previous year. Finance Minister's Adviser Khurram Shehzad highlighted the milestone, noting that June 2025 closed with a \$328 million surplus, helping the full-year figure reach over \$2.1 billion. He pointed to a remarkable 27% year-on-year increase in remittances, which surged to a historic \$38 billion. Exports also showed robust growth, with textile exports rising 7.4% year-on-year to \$17.9 billion and IT and IT-enabled services exports soaring 44% to \$4.6 billion. Financial markets reflected this optimism, with the Pakistan Stock Exchange's KSE-100 index crossing 140,000 points, reaching a market valuation of nearly Rs 16.8 trillion (\$60 billion). Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the surplus, attributing the positive trend to increased remittances and export performance. He noted that foreign exchange reserves have surpassed \$19 billion following government measures.

### **3. Pakistan Imposes Five-Year Ban on New Hotels Near Northern Lakes to Curb Environmental Damage ([Arab News, July 18](#); [France24, July 18](#))**

Pakistan has announced a five-year ban on the construction of new hotels around lakes in the country's scenic north, citing mounting environmental concerns in the ecologically fragile region of Gilgit-Baltistan, home to the largest number of glaciers outside the polar zones. The ban, confirmed by the Gilgit-Baltistan Environmental Protection Agency (GB-EPA), is aimed at curbing unchecked tourism-led development that has strained local resources and threatened the region's delicate ecosystem.

The region's lakes, glaciers, and cherry orchards along the historic Silk Road corridor attract tens of thousands of tourists annually, but surging construction by outside developers has worsened water shortages, overburdened electricity supply, and led to increased waste disposal problems. Tensions around sustainability escalated last month after a viral video by a foreign tourist alleged a hotel was discharging wastewater directly into Lake Attabad, a key freshwater source in Hunza. Authorities responded by slapping the hotel with a fine exceeding \$5,000. Local voices have backed the decision, saying the move was essential to safeguarding the long-

term future of the area. The government has not clarified whether the moratorium will be accompanied by a formal environmental zoning or tourism regulation policy.

#### **4. Pakistan Eyes Ferry Link Between Gwadar and Gulf to Boost Regional Trade and Connectivity ([Arab News, July 18](#); [Dawn, July 18](#))**

Pakistan is exploring potential routes for a proposed ferry service connecting Gwadar port to Gulf countries, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs announced, as the country seeks to leverage its strategic coastline to enhance regional trade and passenger movement. The initiative was discussed at a high-level meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, where officials examined the technical and financial feasibility of launching the ferry service. The plan has already drawn interest from five private firms, signalling strong private-sector engagement. Located on the Arabian Sea, Gwadar port is a flagship node of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). With billions of dollars of Chinese investment flowing into infrastructure and energy projects, Pakistani officials say Gwadar is well-positioned to emerge as a transshipment hub for the Gulf and landlocked Central Asian markets. During the review meeting, Minister Chaudhry also reached out to Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti, who pledged full provincial cooperation to facilitate the service.

#### **5. Pakistan Unveils Student-Centric EV Scheme to Cut Oil Imports and Boost Local Industry ([Arab News, July 18](#); [Business Recorder, July 19](#))**

In a move to accelerate electric vehicle (EV) adoption and curb the country's fuel import bill, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced a federal initiative targeting students and the unemployed, promising large-scale distribution of electric bikes, rickshaws and loaders through low-cost loans and targeted grants. The scheme, reviewed in a high-level meeting chaired by Sharif in Islamabad, aims to reduce Pakistan's dependence on costly oil imports, which declined to \$15 billion from July 2024 to May 2025, and to support the government's broader climate and industrial goals. According to the Prime Minister's Office, the scheme will initially enable the provision of 1,00,000 electric bikes and 3,000 electric rickshaws and loaders, with priority access granted to unemployed individuals and top-performing students.

The initiative also includes a 25% quota for women and provincial allocations based on population share. Emphasising inclusivity, Sharif urged that economically vulnerable groups should be given preference in the disbursement process.

To ensure transparency and effectiveness, Sharif directed that:

- Third-party validation should oversee the entire implementation mechanism.
- Quality and safety standards of all vehicles under the scheme must be rigorously enforced.
- A comprehensive EV ecosystem, including maintenance and manufacturing capacity, should be developed in tandem.

The EV promotion plan comes on the heels of Pakistan's new Electric Vehicle Policy (2025-2030), which sets an ambitious target of 30% of new vehicle sales to be electric by 2030. The policy, covering cars, motorcycles, buses and rickshaws, aims to cut carbon emissions and fuel dependence while stimulating domestic EV manufacturing. Officials at the meeting said that four battery manufacturing companies are set to begin operations in Pakistan, creating fresh employment and business opportunities.

## **6. Pakistan Slashes Karachi Port Charges by 50% to Boost Trade and Support Green Shipping ([Arab News, July 19](#); [Maritime Gateway, July 21](#))**

In a major move to enhance trade efficiency and promote environmentally sustainable shipping, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, announced a 50% reduction in Karachi Port charges. The reform is aimed at lowering trade logistics costs and encouraging climate-resilient, low-emission maritime practices, according to a statement from the minister's office. The new measures apply to port handling, vessel services, and storage fees, and also scrap a planned 5% annual fee hike, providing significant relief to exporters, particularly those dealing in dry bulk goods. The reform is part of a broader government strategy to modernise Pakistan's maritime infrastructure while aligning it with global environmental standards. Officials say the changes will enhance port efficiency, reduce emissions by cutting vessel turnaround time, and strengthen the port's position as a regional hub for climate-conscious shipping. The announcement comes amid a series of reforms by the Maritime Affairs Ministry to modernise logistics operations, including the use of AI and drones



for port monitoring and the formation of a high-level committee tasked with reducing container dwell times by up to 70%.

## **7. Pakistan Reaffirms Support for Kashmiris on Accession to Pakistan Day ([Arab News, July 19](#); [Khyber News, July 19](#))**

On the occasion of ‘Accession to Pakistan Day’, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reiterated Pakistan’s unwavering diplomatic, moral, and political support for the Kashmiri people’s right to self-determination. The observance marks the July 19, 1947, resolution by the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in Srinagar, which supported Kashmir’s accession to Pakistan based on cultural, religious, and geographical affinity. “On that day, the brave people of Kashmir passed a resolution for the accession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan,” Sharif said, affirming that a peaceful resolution in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions remains the only path to sustainable regional peace. Events were held across Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) to commemorate the day, with participants renewing their commitment to the Kashmiri cause and demanding implementation of UN-mandated plebiscites.

## **8. Pakistan Senate Moves to Abolish Death Penalty for Two Offences ([Arab News, July 20](#))**

In a significant legal reform, Pakistan’s Senate has voted to abolish the death penalty for two criminal offences—publicly stripping women and harbouring hijackers—replacing it with life imprisonment. The move, part of an ongoing effort to align Pakistan’s legal framework with international human rights standards, particularly under the EU’s Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), has been welcomed by rights advocates but also met with caution from some lawmakers. While executions for these offences were never carried out, their presence on the statute books has long drawn criticism from legal experts and human rights groups for impeding convictions and encouraging abuse. Rights activists hailed the Senate’s decision as a step toward fairer and more enforceable justice. However, critics expressed concern about Pakistan’s low conviction rates and weak enforcement mechanisms.

Pakistan currently retains the death penalty for at least 31 offences, many of which do not meet the threshold of “most serious crimes” under international law. While executions have ceased since 2020, over 3,646 individuals remain on death row, according to Justice Project Pakistan. The reform must now pass the National Assembly and receive presidential assent to become law. If approved, it would mark a symbolic yet meaningful shift in Pakistan’s criminal justice orientation, especially amid growing global and domestic calls for restraint, fairness, and justice reform.

## **9. Top PTI Leaders Sentenced to 10 Years Over May 9 Violence; Party Slams Verdicts as Political ([Arab News Pakistan, July 31](#); [ANI News, July 31](#))**

An anti-terrorism court in Faisalabad sentenced 108 members of former Prime Minister Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), including top parliamentary leaders, to 10 years in prison over their alleged roles in the May 09, 2023, protests and violence. The convicted include Omer Ayub Khan (Opposition Leader in the National Assembly), Shibli Faraz (Opposition Leader in the Senate), and Zartaj Gul Wazir (PTI’s parliamentary leader), whose disqualification from public office now follows the ruling.

The unrest erupted after Khan’s brief arrest in Islamabad, with widespread protests, some turning violent, targeting military sites and government buildings. The state responded with a crackdown that led to mass detentions and trials under anti-terrorism laws. PTI’s Zulfi Bukhari called the verdict “a sad day for democracy,” while PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan accused the courts of punishing political commitment, stating the party would soon decide whether to remain in Parliament or launch a movement. Notably, PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi and former minister Chaudhry Fawad Hussain were acquitted, as was Qureshi’s son Zain.

The government hailed the decision. Information Minister Attaullah Tarar called it a “victory for the law,” saying those convicted orchestrated attacks on state property and personnel. He stressed the trial was lengthy and fair, involving extensive evidence and cross-examination. The verdicts come as PTI prepares for protests on August 05, marking two years since Khan’s incarceration. Authorities claim the May 09 violence caused billions in damage; Khan and his supporters maintain the charges are politically driven.

## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **1. Developments with China**

#### **a. Dar, Wang Yi Reaffirm Strategic Partnership; Focus on CPEC, Security, and 75-Year Diplomatic Ties (Dawn, July 16)**

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Tianjin, reaffirming the strength of the China-Pakistan strategic relationship across core sectors, including China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), security, agriculture, mining, and industry. During the wide-ranging discussions, both leaders reiterated mutual support for each other's core national interests. Wang Yi underscored China's readiness to deepen cooperation under the CPEC and work toward building a "China-Pakistan community with a shared future." He called for enhanced strategic dialogue and joint planning for the upcoming 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2026. Security cooperation remained a focal point, with Wang raising concerns over the safety of Chinese nationals working on various projects in Pakistan. However, he voiced confidence in Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts and urged Islamabad to continue ensuring the security of Chinese personnel and institutions. Dar assured Beijing of Pakistan's full support and commitment to safeguarding Chinese interests. He also reiterated Pakistan's adherence to the One-China policy and thanked China for its hospitality at the SCO event.

#### **b. First Batch of 300 Pakistani Agriculture Graduates Complete Training in China (Dawn, July 18; Profit by Pakistan Today, July 18)**

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced that the first group of 300 Pakistani agriculture graduates successfully completed their practical training in China's Shaanxi province, under a joint agriculture training program between the two countries. Launched last July, the initiative plans to send 1,000 Pakistani students to China for modern agricultural vocational training, fully funded by the Pakistani government. The initial batch began their training at the start of the 2024-25 academic year, while the next group will join Chinese agricultural universities after completing language courses in Pakistan. PM Sharif described the accomplishment as "very heartening," noting the students' training covered vital areas such as water-saving irrigation, seed production, animal husbandry, agricultural production, and prevention of post-harvest losses. He extended special thanks to the Chinese leadership, the Shaanxi provincial government, and the two universities involved: North West Agriculture and Forestry University



and Yangling Vocational and Technical College. The Prime Minister also acknowledged the efforts of Pakistan's Ministry of National Food Security, the Higher Education Commission (HEC), and the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing for their roles in the program's success. The Chinese Embassy in Pakistan also congratulated the graduates, expressing hope that these young professionals would significantly contribute to Pakistan's agricultural modernisation and strengthen agricultural cooperation between Pakistan and China.

**c. ADB Team Assesses Readiness of Pakistan's ML-1 Railway Project Amid Hopes of Co-Financing Boost (Arab News, July 19; The Express Tribune Pakistan, July 20)**

Pakistan is exploring financial support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the long-delayed Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway upgrade, a \$6.7 billion flagship initiative under the CPEC. ADB's interest marks a potential diversification in project financing, as a fact-finding team inspected a key 480-km segment of the Karachi-Rohri section. ADB's Chief Transport Planner Sangyoon Kim, alongside senior Pakistani railway officials, conducted the inspection. The visit forms part of a technical review to determine whether ADB can partially finance the project, which has stalled repeatedly since being approved by the Economic Coordination Committee in 2020.

The ML-1 project involves upgrading Pakistan's 1,687-km Karachi-Peshawar railway corridor through track doubling, installation of modern signalling systems, and infrastructure upgrades to allow for higher-speed trains. Once completed, the line is expected to dramatically improve cargo and passenger capacity, reduce transit times, and enhance access between southern ports and northern trade hubs. While China remains the principal financier, ADB's possible involvement could complement Chinese funding and provide technical rigour, particularly in project governance and environmental safeguards. The ML-1 upgrade is considered vital for CPEC's long-term viability and Pakistan's regional connectivity ambitions, especially as Islamabad seeks to position itself as a trade conduit for landlocked Central Asian countries

**2. Pakistan Stands by Iranian Envoy Amid FBI Allegations in Levinson Case (Dawn, July 16)**

Pakistan has publicly backed Iran's ambassador in Islamabad, Reza Amiri Moghadam, after the FBI added him to its Most Wanted list over his alleged involvement in the 2007

disappearance of retired FBI agent Robert Levinson. Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan stated that Moghadam is “widely respected” in Pakistan and enjoys full diplomatic privileges as a representative of a “friendly neighbouring country.” The FBI claims Moghadam, once a senior figure in Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), oversaw operations tied to Levinson’s abduction and later played a role in the cover-up. However, Iran’s foreign ministry lists Moghadam’s past role as a deputy in the Supreme National Security Council, denying any wrongdoing. Levinson vanished after arriving on Iran’s Kish Island in March 2007. Though Iran has maintained that he left the country long ago, the US concluded in 2020 that he had died in custody. A 2013 AP investigation had earlier revealed that Levinson was on an unauthorised CIA mission, leading to a quiet settlement with his family.

The case takes a new diplomatic turn as Moghadam currently serves in Islamabad. Pakistan, while not implicated in the case, now finds itself in the spotlight. The FBI’s move comes against a backdrop of escalating US-Iran tensions, including recent American airstrikes on Iranian nuclear sites and stalled nuclear negotiations. Tehran, in turn, condemned US immigration raids and fresh rounds of sanctions, asserting that such actions violate international norms. With both Iran and the US locked in intensifying hostilities, Pakistan's firm support for Moghadam signals its strategic priority of maintaining stable ties with Tehran, despite growing pressure from Washington.

### **3. Developments with Afghanistan**

#### **a. Ghulam Khan Border Reopens, Restoring Key Trade Route (Pajhwok Afghan News, July 16)**

After a 15-day closure, the Ghulam Khan border crossing has reopened for commercial activity, offering relief to Afghan traders and reinstating a critical trade artery with Pakistan. Located in Khost province, the crossing resumed operations on July 16, following a disruption that had hampered cargo movement and impacted local economies. Pakistani authorities had closed the border without publicly providing reasons, effectively halting one of the most vital and cost-effective trade links. Taliban border police spokesperson Abidullah Farooqi confirmed the resumption of trade, with cargo trucks now back in motion. The move has been widely welcomed by local business communities, who urged both governments to ensure better coordination to avoid abrupt closures in the future.



**b. Pakistan Urges Revival of SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group for Regional Peace (Amu TV, July 16; Khaama Press, July 16)**

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has urged the reactivation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Contact Group on Afghanistan, stressing its importance for regional peace, stability, and practical cooperation. Speaking at the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers in China on July 15, Dar underscored Afghanistan's crucial role in regional equilibrium. He argued that revitalising the Contact Group would offer a pragmatic platform for addressing Afghanistan's multifaceted issues through collective engagement. Dar warned that continued instability in Afghanistan presents significant risks to neighbouring countries and the wider region. Islamabad has repeatedly called on the Taliban to prevent militant activities emanating from Afghan territory. The proposed revival of the Contact Group is seen as a key step towards coordinated peacebuilding, economic progress, and counterterrorism among SCO nations.

**c. Counterterrorism Commitment Amid High-Level Diplomatic Push (Arab News, July 20)**

Pakistan and Afghanistan have reiterated their shared commitment to tackling terrorism and improving border coordination during a high-level meeting in Kabul between Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and his Afghan counterpart, Sirajuddin Haqqani. The one-day visit followed several recent developments, including a trilateral Pakistan-Afghanistan-China meeting and a framework agreement for a feasibility study on the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) Railway Corridor. The talks centred on counterterrorism, narcotics trafficking, and the repatriation of undocumented Afghan nationals in Pakistan. Pakistan's interior ministry noted that both sides agreed on peaceful coexistence, regional stability, and enhanced collaboration, particularly in fighting militancy and managing their shared border.

**d. Kabul and Islamabad Sign Trade Pact to Cut Tariffs and Boost Bilateral Exports (Khaama Press, July 23; The Express Tribune Pakistan, July 24)**

To strengthen trade ties and support local producers, Pakistan and Afghanistan have signed a preferential trade agreement that reduces customs duties and promotes bilateral exports. The agreement, concluded in Islamabad between Taliban Deputy Minister for Industry and Commerce Ahmadullah Zahid and Pakistan's Deputy Minister of Commerce Javed Paal, is set to take effect on August 01, 2025, for a one-year term, with a renewal option upon mutual agreement. Under the deal, tariff rates on eight key items will drop significantly, from over 60% to 27%. The covered items include four Afghan products (grapes, pomegranates, apples,

tomatoes) and four Pakistani goods (mangoes, kinnows, bananas, plums). Officials said the agreement aims to enhance exports, benefit farmers, stabilise domestic markets, and set the stage for deeper economic cooperation. Additional products may be included later, depending on evolving priorities. The agreement signals a pragmatic economic shift between Kabul and Islamabad at a time when political relations remain sensitive.

#### **4. Pakistan Overhauls Pilgrimage Policy Amid Concerns Over Missing Pilgrims ([Arab News, July 17](#); [Balochistan Pulse, July 28](#))**

Pakistan is set to overhaul its pilgrimage travel framework for Iraq, Iran, and Syria following alarming revelations that around 40,000 Pakistani pilgrims have either overstayed or gone missing over the past decade. The new Ziyarat Management Policy aims to address growing diplomatic and security concerns flagged repeatedly by host governments. Director General of Immigration and Passports, Mustafa Jamal Kazi, confirmed that most disappearances occurred in Iraq, often driven by employment in the construction sector, bonded labour involving women, or exploitation for begging. Last year alone, 50 individuals were deported from Iraq.

To prevent further misuse of pilgrimage visas, the government has abolished the decades-old Salar system, where private group leaders handled logistics, and replaced it with a centralised, computerised mechanism. The new structure mandates that all pilgrims travel in organised groups led by licensed tour operators, now designated as Ziyarat Group Organisers (ZGOs). These operators will be held accountable for ensuring that all group members return before visa expiry. The Ministry of Religious Affairs stated that any operator failing to comply will have their license revoked. Moreover, pilgrims who disappear abroad will have their passports blocked and names added to the border control list.

#### **5. Taliban, Pakistan, Uzbekistan Sign Railway Pact in Kabul to Boost Regional Connectivity ([Arab News, July 17](#); [Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan/X, July 17](#); [Kabul Now, July 18](#))**

In a major step towards enhancing regional connectivity, the Taliban, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan signed a framework agreement in Kabul on July 17, 2025, to carry out a joint feasibility study for the proposed Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (UAP) Railway Corridor. Pakistan's



Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar announced the development on X, calling it a “landmark achievement” for regional integration and trade facilitation. The corridor, designed to significantly cut freight transit times by up to five days and reduce costs by as much as 40%, aims to link Central Asia with Pakistani ports. The signing ceremony saw participation from Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Dar, Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi, and other senior officials; Uzbekistan was represented by Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov, and the Taliban by their Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. The proposed rail line will run from Uzbekistan’s Termez to Mazar-i-Sharif and Logar in Afghanistan, eventually connecting with Pakistan via the Kharlachi border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Stretching roughly 573 kilometres, the railway is intended to handle both cargo and passenger services. Completion is targeted for the end of 2027, with an expected annual capacity of 15 million tonnes of freight by 2030.

During the visit, Dar also met Taliban Prime Minister Mullah Hassan Akhund to discuss bilateral relations and regional projects in light of the growing connectivity agenda. The agreement represents one of the most significant Taliban-era multilateral economic engagements since 2021 and could mark a shift toward infrastructure-driven diplomacy in a volatile but strategically vital region.

## **6. Pakistan-EU Bolster Strategic Ties, Focus on Security, GSP+, and Peace Initiatives ([Dawn, July 17](#); [European Union External Action, July 17](#))**

Pakistan and the European Union (EU) held their 10<sup>th</sup> Political Dialogue in Brussels, reaffirming their commitment to deepening cooperation under the Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP) signed in 2019. Key areas of focus included security, counter-terrorism, trade, migration, and regional peace. According to the Foreign Office (FO), both sides agreed to enhance dialogue on security, counter-narcotics, and terrorism, condemning all forms of terrorism and underlining the importance of diplomacy, dialogue, and adherence to international law and treaties. The meeting also reaffirmed mutual commitment to the GSP+ framework, a crucial trade arrangement under which Pakistan enjoys duty-free or reduced-duty access to the EU, its second-largest trading partner. Discussions also covered migration cooperation, with both sides preparing for the third Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Dialogue in 2025. Foreign

Secretary Amna Baloch led Pakistan's delegation, while Olof Skoog, Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service, represented the EU.

On global issues, both sides exchanged views on Ukraine, Indian-occupied Kashmir, and Gaza, stressing the need for peaceful solutions and respect for the UN Charter. They jointly called for a resumption of the ceasefire in Gaza and supported a two-state solution for lasting peace in Palestine. Looking ahead, both parties agreed to convene the 7<sup>th</sup> Pakistan-EU Strategic Dialogue in 2025 and hold the next Political Dialogue in Islamabad.

## **7. Developments with the United Kingdom**

### **a. UK Lifts Air Safety Ban on Pakistani Airlines (Dawn, July 16; Jane Marriott/X, July 16; PIA/X, July 16)**

In a major development for Pakistan's aviation sector, the United Kingdom removed Pakistan from its Air Safety List, paving the way for Pakistani airlines to apply for flight operations to the UK after a three-year ban. The decision follows a satisfactory aviation security inspection by the UK Department for Transport at Islamabad International Airport, declaring compliance with international safety standards. The ban had been imposed in June 2020 after a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) crash in Karachi that killed nearly 100 people. While the European Union lifted its restrictions in 2023, the UK's decision marks a significant recovery milestone. The British High Commission in Islamabad confirmed that individual carriers must still obtain operational permits from the UK Civil Aviation Authority. PIA has already announced its intent to resume UK-bound operations.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other top leaders welcomed the development, terming it a boost for trade, travel, and diaspora ties, especially with over 1.6 million people of Pakistani origin residing in the UK. Aviation Minister Khawaja Asif noted that Airblue had also been cleared for UK operations. He attributed the success to "three years of continuous hard work" by Pakistani authorities and confirmed that steps are underway to apply for route licences and eventually resume flights to New York as well. The announcement coincides with other positive UK-Pakistan developments, including the launch of e-visas for students and workers, and the signing of a bilateral Trade Dialogue Mechanism, reflecting renewed momentum in diplomatic and economic cooperation.



**b. PAF's JF-17 Block-III Wins Big at RIAT 2025 (Dawn, July 17; Arab News, July 19)**

The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) made a commanding impression at the Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) 2025 in the United Kingdom, clinching two major honours and showcasing its cutting-edge aerial capabilities on the world stage. Held from July 18 to 20 at RAF Fairford, RIAT is among the world's premier military airshows. The PAF's newly-inducted JF-17 Thunder Block-III fighter jets, making their international debut, were awarded the coveted 'Spirit of the Meet' Trophy, highlighting the aircraft that best represents the spirit and dynamism of the global aviation gathering. Additionally, Pakistan's C-130 Hercules, uniquely painted with an 'Eyes in the Skies' theme, secured the 'Concours d'Elegance' Trophy for the most well-maintained and aesthetically presented aircraft.

According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the awards reflect the "professionalism, technical expertise and relentless pursuit of excellence" within the PAF. Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu congratulated the team, calling it a proud moment for the nation. The JF-17 Block-III, co-developed with China, is a 4.5-generation multi-role fighter with advanced avionics, BVR missile capability, and long-range strike capacity. It gained further attention after playing a key role in a recent four-day military standoff with India in May, where it reportedly helped shoot down advanced Indian jets.

**c. Pakistan Commerce Minister Pitches Industrial Diversification in UK, Eyes EV and Halal Food Sectors (Arab News, July 18)**

In a bid to diversify Pakistan's export portfolio and foster deeper commercial ties with Britain, Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan met with leading UK businesses and trade bodies in Birmingham, focusing on sectors beyond the country's traditional textile exports. During the visit, the minister held meetings with the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, British firms in the Midlands, and major Pakistani food retailers, promoting Pakistan's growing capacities in processed foods, pharmaceuticals, leather goods, and information technology.

According to UK government data, Pakistan exported £2.5 billion worth of goods and services to the UK in 2024, while importing £2.2 billion, bringing total bilateral trade to £4.7 billion, a 7.3% increase from the previous year. A notable thrust of the engagement was placed on Pakistan's emerging electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem, with the minister presenting investment openings under the country's National EV Policy, especially in battery technology, electric drivetrains, and component manufacturing. Birmingham's ongoing EV supply chain expansion

and renewable energy goals were positioned as complementary to Pakistan's low-cost manufacturing capabilities.

Khan's itinerary also included a visit to Birmingham City Football Club, where discussions touched on sports diplomacy and Pakistan's role in manufacturing football equipment used across international leagues. He also visited Nouvo, a food distributor supplying UK supermarkets, to explore the expansion of halal-certified and ethnic food lines.

## **8. Developments with the United States of America**

### **a. Finance Minister Meets US Officials to Deepen Trade Ties (Dawn, July 18)**

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb held a key meeting on Friday with US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick and US Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer in Washington, as part of Pakistan's efforts to consolidate trade and economic engagement with the United States. In a statement, the Ministry of Finance described the meeting as "productive," highlighting mutual satisfaction with the progress made. Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to deepening trade cooperation across traditional and emerging sectors, including information technology, minerals, agriculture, and technology-driven industries. Aurangzeb underlined that the US remains Pakistan's largest trading partner, and emphasised Islamabad's interest in broadening the commercial relationship in ways that generate mutual economic benefit. The meeting comes amid a broader strengthening of US-Pakistan strategic ties. Last month, former President Donald Trump hosted Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Asim Munir, at the White House, a rare gesture that signalled elevated engagement between the two nations. Trump praised Pakistan's contributions to regional peace and counterterrorism efforts, according to ISPR. Separately, in April, the Pakistan Crypto Council entered into a partnership with World Liberty Financial, a DeFi platform backed by Trump, to expand cryptocurrency applications and blockchain adoption in Pakistan.

### **b. Trump Announces US-Pakistan Oil Development Deal (The Hindu, July 31)**

In a surprise move, US President Donald Trump announced that Washington has concluded a new energy cooperation agreement with Pakistan to jointly develop the country's untapped oil reserves. "We have just concluded a Deal with the Country of Pakistan, whereby Pakistan and the United States will work together on developing their massive Oil Reserves," Trump posted

on Truth Social. “We are in the process of choosing the Oil Company that will lead this Partnership. Who knows, maybe they’ll be selling Oil to India some day!”

The deal signals a rare deepening of US-Pakistan economic engagement, particularly in the energy sector, where American involvement has historically been limited. While specific financial and technical details remain undisclosed, Trump’s remarks suggest Washington is aiming to position American companies as key partners in exploring and commercialising Pakistan’s long-speculated hydrocarbon potential. The announcement is also geopolitically loaded, coming on the same day Trump imposed punitive trade measures on India, a longtime US strategic partner. The new 25% tariff and secondary penalties are reportedly linked to New Delhi’s sustained purchases of Russian military hardware and discounted energy, which Washington views as undermining Western sanctions on Moscow.

## 9. Developments with India

### a. Pakistan Decries TRF Terror Listing, Urges Neutral Probe into Pahalgam Attack (Arab News, July 18)

Pakistan has criticised India’s use of US terror designations to shape global perceptions following the blacklisting of The Resistance Front (TRF) by Washington, even as Islamabad maintained that its probe into the April 22 Pahalgam attack remains inconclusive. The US State Department, under Secretary Marco Rubio, designated TRF as a foreign terrorist organisation (FTO) and a specially designated global terrorist (SDGT) entity. The move was made in connection with the attack in Pahalgam on April 22. Rubio said the TRF had claimed the attack before retracting its statement and called the outfit a “front and proxy” of LeT, a banned Pakistan-based group. In response, Pakistan’s foreign office dismissed the alleged link between TRF and LeT as unfounded, saying LeT was a defunct group banned within Pakistan and that “ground realities” belied US assumptions. Islamabad also accused India of weaponising such designations to “divert attention from its own human rights abuses in Kashmir and elsewhere,” alleging that New Delhi has a longstanding practice of using global counterterrorism tools for political gain. Pakistan further urged the international community to adopt an unbiased and non-discriminatory approach to terrorism, highlighting its own cooperation on high-profile cases, including the arrest of Sharifullah, the alleged mastermind of the 2021 Abbey Gate bombing in Kabul that killed US troops and Afghan civilians. Calling for consistency in



applying terror designations, Islamabad demanded that the Majeed Brigade of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) also be sanctioned under US law.

**b. Pakistan Extends Airspace Ban on Indian Aircraft Amid Ongoing Tensions**  
**(Arab News, July 19)**

Pakistan has extended its airspace ban on Indian aircraft for a third time, pushing the restriction to August 24, the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) announced, amid continuing tensions between the two neighbours following the April attack in Pahalgam. The airspace restriction, first enforced on April 24, was part of reciprocal punitive measures adopted by both sides in the aftermath of the attack. The continued restriction has disrupted Indian commercial flight routes, especially those operated by Air India to Europe and North America, leading to longer flight durations, increased fuel burn, and escalating operational costs. Air India had earlier estimated up to \$600 million in annual losses due to rerouting and has since requested compensation from the Indian government. Pakistan had earlier extended the one-month restriction twice, in May and June, indicating that aviation corridors remain a key point of leverage as geopolitical tensions persist.

**10. Pakistan Condemns Israeli Airstrikes in Syria** **(Anadolu Anjansi, July 18; Arab News, July 18)**

Pakistan has strongly condemned Israel's ongoing airstrikes in Syria, describing them as "dangerous and deliberately destabilising", during a UN Security Council briefing on the intensifying conflict in the war-torn country. The condemnation was issued by Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Asim Ifikhar Ahmad, who called for an "immediate cessation of all violations of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity". The statement came amid a sharp escalation in Israeli air raids over Damascus and southern Syria over the past week. Israeli forces have struck military and strategic sites, citing threats from Iranian-linked groups and concerns over the security of the Druze community in the region. However, Syrian and regional monitoring groups report civilian casualties and extensive damage to infrastructure.

Israel has claimed its operations are pre-emptive measures to prevent a hostile build-up near its border, especially in areas near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Since December, Israeli forces have also seized Syrian territory adjoining the Golan, further inflaming tensions. Syria's

interim President Ahmed Al-Sharaa, addressing the attacks, accused Israel of exploiting sectarian divisions and “consistently targeting Syria’s stability”. He warned that Israeli actions are aimed at undermining national unity and promoting long-term fragmentation. The latest developments have drawn concern from multiple UN Security Council members, with growing calls for restraint and adherence to international law.

### **11. Deputy PM Ishaq Dar Attends High-Level UN Conference on Palestine in New York ([Arab News, July 21](#))**

Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, arrived in New York on July 21, 2025, for an official visit that includes participation in a high-level United Nations conference on Palestinian statehood, as well as a series of multilateral and bilateral meetings in New York and Washington. The visit coincides with the High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, to be held at the UN Headquarters on July 28. Co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and France, the conference aims to galvanise urgent and actionable steps towards achieving a two-state solution and ending decades of conflict in the Middle East. The event is being convened under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. According to a statement from Pakistan’s Foreign Office, Dar will represent Pakistan at this key diplomatic platform and lead “high-level signature events” under Pakistan’s presidency of the United Nations Security Council. Pakistan has maintained a longstanding and principled stance in support of the Palestinian cause, consistently advocating for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and an end to Israeli occupation. Islamabad has also reiterated its demand for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and has called upon Israel to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to civilians affected by the ongoing violence.

### **12. Pakistani Top General Meets Egyptian Leadership to Deepen Defence Ties ([Arab News Pakistan, July 31](#))**

Pakistan’s Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, held high-level meetings with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and senior military leaders during his official visit to Cairo for the third round of Pakistan-Egypt defence

and security talks. The visit underscored growing strategic convergence between the two countries, as General Mirza met Egypt's Defence Minister General Abdel Mageed Saqr, Admiral Osama Rabie of the Suez Canal Authority, and Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Professor Dr. Ahmed El-Tayeb. Talks focused on military cooperation, counterterrorism, and regional security dynamics. According to Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening defence ties through enhanced training exchanges, joint exercises, and operational collaboration. General Mirza also discussed the role of religious harmony in combating extremism during his meeting with the Grand Imam. Egyptian officials praised the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their contributions to global counterterrorism efforts. The Pakistani delegation was welcomed with a ceremonial guard of honour by the Egyptian Armed Forces.





## **TERROR TALLY**

### **1. Confrontations and Counter Terrorism Operations**

- a. **Dawn, July 17 | Bannu:** Three wanted terrorists affiliated with the Zarar group were neutralised in a joint intelligence-based operation by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police and the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in Bannu district, officials confirmed. The slain militants were reportedly involved in attacks on security forces and the targeted killing of police personnel. All three militants were residents of Bannu, and their identities were established during the operation. Security forces recovered a cache of weapons from the scene, including three Kalashnikov rifles, multiple magazines, pistols, and handmade improvised explosive devices (IEDs).
- b. **Dawn, July 18 | Askani Mohallah:** Two alleged militants affiliated with the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were killed in a joint operation by the CTD and an intelligence agency along Hub River Road. The raid, prompted by intelligence regarding the presence of militants from the group Fitnatul Khawarij, took place in Askani Mohalla under the jurisdiction of Moachko police station. A fierce exchange of gunfire ensued, during which both suspects were gunned down. Authorities recovered a suicide jacket, a Kalashnikov rifle, a pistol, and explosive materials from the scene. The Bomb Disposal Squad later safely defused the suicide vest, averting potential devastation. Their identities had not been confirmed yet.
- c. **Dawn, July 18 | Bannu:** Three wanted militants were gunned down in Bannu's Miryan area after police and CTD commandos launched a joint operation based on credible intelligence. The militants, identified as Mudassir alias Mudassiri, Turab alias Umar Khitab alias Malang, and Mohammad Hussain alias Maaz, were linked to the TTP and were involved in targeted killings of police personnel and attacks on police stations. Weapons, explosives, and an IED were recovered from the scene. Bannu's Regional Police Officer Sajjad Khan and DPO Saleem Abbas Kulachi led the operation.
- d. **Dawn, July 18 | Malakand:** In Malakand's Dargai tehsil, the CTD engaged a group of militants linked to a 30-member Afghan-led cell reportedly planning to infiltrate Mardan district. One terrorist, identified as Saadullah, was killed, and another, Syed Habib, was arrested with injuries. Both were Afghan nationals. The hours-long gunfight also injured three civilians, who were rushed to Batkhela hospital. Seized

materials included a rocket launcher, grenades, foreign and local currency, and communication devices.

- e. **Dawn, July 18** | **Lakki Marwat:** In Lakki Marwat's Kurram Par region, police and Elite Force commandos conducted a search and strike operation targeting criminal hideouts and miscreants near the Karak-Mianwali border. Officials said the effort helped suppress criminal activity and restore law and order.

## 2. Targeted Militant Attacks

### a. **Two Policemen Killed in Dera Ismail Khan (Dawn, July 16)**

Two policemen were killed in a terrorist attack in the Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to police spokesperson Yaqoob Khan, the officers, Head Constable Ghulam Muhammad and Constable Shahzad, both ex-servicemen, were ambushed while out to buy food. Following the assault, police and CTD units launched a swift operation, killing one assailant. Weapons and ammunition were recovered from the deceased militant, while two others, though injured, managed to escape. A search operation is currently underway to apprehend the fugitives. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi strongly condemned the attack and paid tribute to the fallen officers, calling them "brave sons" of the province.

### b. **Three Injured in Motorcycle IED Blast in Quetta's Hazarganji Area (Dawn, July 17)**

An IED planted in a motorcycle exploded in the Hazarganji area of Quetta, injuring three pedestrians, including a woman, according to police officials. The blast, reportedly triggered by a timer device, occurred along the roadside and caused panic in the densely populated locality. The injured were identified as Hoori Bibi, Bagh Ali, and Abdul Qadir, residents of Mari Camp. All three were immediately shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment. Security forces cordoned off the area following the explosion, and a bomb disposal squad was deployed to inspect the site for additional threats. An investigation is underway to determine the perpetrators and the motive behind the attack. No group has claimed the attack.

### c. **Balochistan Constabulary Officers Killed in Mastung Ambush (Dawn, July 18)**

Two personnel of the Balochistan Constabulary, including Acting Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Abdul Razzaq and Constable Raza Muhammad Jam, were killed when unidentified gunmen opened fire on their vehicle along the National Highway in Mastung

district. Two others, Constables Taj Muhammad and Khursheed Ahmed, were injured. The convoy was en route from Kalat to Quetta when it was ambushed near the Choto area. The injured were rushed to Shaheed Nawab Ghaus Bakhsh Hospital in Quetta, with some airlifted for emergency care. A search operation has since been launched, with additional security forces deployed to the scene.

**d. Army Officer Killed, BLA Claims Quetta IED Blast (Arab News, July 19)**

A Pakistani Army officer, Major Anwar Kakar, was killed, and three civilians, including a child, were injured in a magnetic IED blast in Quetta in yet another escalation of separatist violence in Balochistan. The explosion targeted a private vehicle on the city's western bypass, a known flashpoint in the insurgency-hit province. Police confirmed the improvised explosive device was planted on the vehicle and detonated remotely. "Initial findings suggest Major Kakar was the intended target," said DSP Sadar Shoukat Jadoon. The injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for treatment. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), designated a terrorist group by Pakistan, claimed responsibility, stating its "special tactical operation unit" had executed the targeted attack.

**3. Balochistan Bus Attack: Civilians Targeted Again Amid Rising Violence (Dawn, July 16; Government of Balochistan/X, July 16)**

At least three people were killed and up to ten injured in a brutal attack on a passenger coach in Kalat, Balochistan, on its way from Karachi to Quetta. The ambush occurred in the Nemargh area, with provincial spokesperson Shahid Rind confirming that terrorists indiscriminately fired on the bus from both sides of the road. Security forces have launched a search operation, while emergency services were activated at both Kalat and the Civil Hospital Quetta. The attack was described as "cowardly and despicable" by Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, who said terrorists of the so-called 'Fitna-Al-Hindustan' were behind the incident. Authorities believe the attackers were frustrated over recent successful operations by security forces, including border closures that disrupted smuggling networks. According to official statements, these terrorists are now targeting soft civilian targets to distract security forces from operational areas. Condemnations poured in from top political leaders. President Asif Ali Zardari called for the best medical care for the injured and vowed to continue the fight against terrorism. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and PPP leaders, including Sherry Rehman and Shazia Marri, accused



India-backed groups of orchestrating the violence. Speaker Ayaz Sadiq called it a conspiracy against Pakistan's peace and sovereignty.

This latest attack comes just a week after nine Punjab-bound passengers were abducted and killed in a similar incident near Zhob. The banned Balochistan Liberation Front had claimed responsibility for that act, which targeted passengers based on their ethnic identity. The targeting of innocent civilians, especially in areas already grappling with insurgency, has heightened fears of a renewed wave of violence.



## About the Author

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