

CLAWS Newsletter



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by Akashika Mate

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

1. Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway Project to Begin in April, NHA Tells NA Panel (Dawn, August 01)

The much-delayed Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway project is set to begin in April next year, the National Highway Authority (NHA) informed the National Assembly Standing Committee on Communications. NHA Chairman Sheharyar Sikandar told the committee, chaired by MNA Ijaz Jakhriani, that financing would come from the Islamic Development Bank, with land acquisition expected to start within a month. However, ambiguity over timelines persists, as ministers have previously given varying start dates for the top-priority project. The committee expressed displeasure at the absence of the communications ministry's secretary and warned that repeated non-attendance would be referred to the privilege committee. Lawmakers also voiced concern over the third toll tax revision in a short period, which they said violated the policy of revising tolls every three years. The panel demanded a justification from the NHA.

2. Opposition Alliance Calls for National Dialogue and New Charter of Democracy (Dawn, August 01)

The opposition alliance, Tehreek-i-Tahafuz-i-Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP), urged the initiation of a grand dialogue among all political parties and the drafting of a new charter of democracy. The alliance convened its multi-party conference a day earlier, where it appealed for a fresh social contract to restore the Constitution and strengthen democratic norms. Formed last year, the coalition of six opposition parties finalised its organisational framework in July and pledged unified support for anti-government demonstrations. TTAP leader Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar presented the resolution adopted at the conference, stressing the urgency of forging a new democratic charter through national consensus.

KEY POINTS FROM THE TTAP RESOLUTION

Category	Demands
Democratic Framework	New Charter of Democracy through national consensus; supremacy of the Constitution and Parliament; fair elections; free and independent Election Commission.

Rule of Law & Judiciary	Independence of the judiciary; repeal of the 26th amendment; end to interference in judicial affairs; transparent system for appointment of judges; protection and support for IHC judges who raised concerns.
Governance & Institutions	Removal of recent constitutional amendments; dismantling of the Special Investment Facilitation Council; end to corruption and undue interference by political and defence institutions.
Political Rights & Opposition	End to “fascism and political manipulation”; release of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi; expedited hearings of their cases; release of political prisoners including Dr Mahrang Baloch; condemnation of sentencing of PTI leaders and workers.
Human Rights & Freedoms	Freedom of the media; protection of rights of women and minorities; establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
Provincial Issues	Resolution of grievances in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and former tribal areas; fair water distribution; respect for inter-provincial relations.
Balochistan	Justice for missing persons, particularly in Balochistan; dismantling of private militias; end to extrajudicial killings; law and order to be handled solely by civil agencies; end to harassment and prejudice against Baloch students.
Economic & Social Concerns	Recognition of poverty, unemployment, and declining purchasing power as urgent national issues; need for a comprehensive national strategy.
International Relations	Review and consensus on foreign policy priorities.

In response, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar dismissed the opposition’s efforts as a routine attempt to undermine the economy, timed ahead of the Iranian president’s upcoming visit.

3. Border Military Police Inducts Women Officers for the First Time in History (Dawn, August 02)

The Border Military Police (BMP) has recruited female officers for the first time in its century-long history, in a move aimed at safeguarding the rights of women in the tribal belt and enhancing the force’s operational capacity. The BMP, which had not conducted recruitment since 1998, resumed hiring after 27 years to strengthen its ability to counter terrorism, smuggling, and law enforcement challenges. The latest induction includes 40 female recruits in Dera Ghazi Khan and 12 in Rajanpur, an unprecedented step toward gender inclusion in the

traditionally male-dominated tribal society. The new recruits are undergoing six months of advanced training at the Police Training College in Multan, including specialised modules from the Elite Police to build professionalism and tactical expertise. Officials noted that while crime rates in BMP-controlled areas remain lower than those under Punjab Police, the presence of trained female officers is expected to further strengthen security, particularly in vulnerable areas such as the Koh-e-Sulaiman region. Their induction is seen as a critical step in countering organised criminal networks and improving the investigation of crimes against women.

4. ATC Extends Dr Mahrang Baloch's Police Custody by 20 Days (Dawn, August 02)

An anti-terrorism court on August 02 remanded Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) chief Dr Mahrang Baloch and other organisers to police custody for 20 days, extending their detention once again. The activists were earlier arrested in March for allegedly “attacking” Quetta Civil Hospital and “inciting violence” during protests against enforced disappearances. At the hearing, presided over by Judge Muhammad Ali Mubeen, advocates representing the BYC said police had sought a 30-day remand, but the court approved 20 days. Baloch activist Sammi Deen Baloch condemned the decision, calling it a “highly dangerous judicial trend” and evidence that Balochistan’s judiciary has been stripped of its independence. She said the move reflected “constitutional, legal and moral bankruptcy” and urged the judiciary to uphold civil liberties. The BYC, active since 2018 against enforced disappearances, is not banned, though Dr Mahrang is listed among proscribed persons by NACTA. Despite multiple petitions, courts have repeatedly upheld extensions of her detention, which has now continued for over five months.

5. Pakistan Army Inducts Chinese Z-10ME Attack Helicopters to Boost Battlefield Response (Dawn, August 02)

The Pakistan Army has formally inducted the Chinese-built Z-10ME attack helicopters to enhance its “integrated battlefield response”, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) announced. Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir presided over the induction ceremony at the Muzaffargarh Field Firing Ranges, where he also witnessed a firepower demonstration by the newly acquired fleet. While the military did not specify the

number of helicopters inducted, the ISPR described the addition as a “major leap” in the modernisation of Army Aviation. “This state-of-the-art, all-weather platform is capable of precision strike operations day and night. Equipped with advanced radar systems and cutting-edge electronic warfare suites, the Z-10ME significantly enhances the army’s capability to engage diverse aerial and ground threats,” the ISPR noted. The induction comes after previous trials of the Z-10 in 2021, which reportedly did not impress Pakistani officials at the time. However, the upgraded Z-10ME variant has now been integrated into the force structure, making Pakistan the only known export customer of the Chinese helicopter gunship. Field Marshal Munir lauded the professionalism and combat proficiency of troops during the live demonstration, emphasising the need to maintain a “decisive edge in the evolving character of warfare.”

6. Govt Ensures Air Travel Facilities for Arbaeen Pilgrims Amid Road Ban (Dawn, August 05)

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif assured the National Assembly that the government was taking concrete measures to facilitate Arbaeen pilgrims following the imposition of an overland travel ban. He said the Balochistan government had been authorised to operate direct flights from Quetta to Iran and Iraq to ensure the safety of pilgrims. Every year, thousands of Shia Muslims from Pakistan undertake the journey to Karbala in Iraq via Iran to observe Arbaeen rituals, marking the end of a 40-day mourning period after Ashura, the anniversary of Imam Hussain’s martyrdom. However, last month, the government barred overland travel for pilgrims citing serious security threats, a move criticised by political parties, provincial governments, and religious groups. Addressing the National Assembly, Asif said the ban was enforced due to terrorist threats to convoys but assured that alternative arrangements had been made. He added that Iran had allowed one such flight, while Pakistan was pressing for more frequent operations. Arrangements for onward transportation of pilgrims within Iran and Iraq had also been finalised. The minister further said private carriers and licensed airlines had been invited to operate on the Quetta-Iran/Iraq route, with chartered flights also approved to maximise capacity. “I want to assure the House and the people across Pakistan that the government is fully committed to ensuring safe, comfortable, and timely transportation for all Arbaeen pilgrims,” Asif said, noting that the matter was also discussed during the recent visit of the Iranian president, following which Iran allowed an additional flight.

7. Climate Change Intensifies Pakistan Floods, 300 Dead in Weeks of Monsoon Rains (World Weather Attribution, August 06; Associated Press, August 07)

Heavy rainfall that caused devastating floods in Pakistan in recent weeks, killing hundreds, was intensified by human-driven climate change, a new study has found. Research by the World Weather Attribution (WWA) group of international scientists concluded that rainfall between 24 June and 23 July was 10% to 15% heavier due to global warming, triggering widespread building collapses in both rural and urban areas. Government figures indicate at least 300 deaths and 1,600 damaged houses since 26 June. Climate scientists say unusually high temperatures and intense precipitation this year have brought extreme weather faster than anticipated. Jakob Steiner, a geoscientist at the University of Graz, Austria, noted that events forecast for 2050 have materialised in 2025, with summer temperatures far above average. South Asia's Himalayan belt has faced a cascade of disasters in recent months, including glacial lake overflows, washed-away bridges between Nepal and China, and hydropower dam collapses. Although responsible for less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan suffers disproportionate damage from climate impacts. UN assessments warn that existing global funds for climate-related loss and damage or adaptation fall far short of the levels required, with wealthy nations providing far less than what is needed. The WWA report notes that half of Pakistan's urban population lives in fragile, flood-prone settlements, where home collapses caused over half of the fatalities in this year's floods.

8. Pakistan Unveils First National AI Policy (Arab News Pakistan, August 13)

Pakistan has unveiled its first-ever National Artificial Intelligence Policy, a landmark initiative aimed at building AI infrastructure, training one million individuals in AI-related skills, and ensuring ethical, responsible use of the technology in line with global standards. The Ministry of IT & Telecom, which shared the policy with media, said the plan seeks to transform Pakistan into a knowledge-based economy by investing in research, innovation, and skills development while safeguarding personal data and human rights.

The 'National Artificial Intelligence Policy-2025' outlines a six-pillar framework covering AI innovation, public awareness, secure systems, sectoral transformation, infrastructure, and

international partnerships. It allocates 30% of the R&D Fund managed by Ignite, a state-run technology financing body, to a new National AI Fund, and sets up AI Centers of Excellence in major cities to drive demand-led research, offer advanced computing facilities, and run incubation and training programmes. The policy targets 90% public awareness of AI by 2026 and aligns with the International Telecommunication Union's "AI for Good" initiative and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It also mandates AI-integrated security guidelines, transparency in AI use within the public sector, and alignment of AI regulations with international best practices. Implementation will be overseen by a high-level AI Council chaired by the federal IT minister and comprising representatives from academia, industry, provincial governments, and civil society.

The policy forms part of the government's broader 'Uraan Pakistan' National Economic Transformation Plan (2024-29), which prioritises digital transformation through expanded ICT exports, support for freelancing, and the creation of a 'Quantum Valley' for high-tech innovation. Complementary efforts include AI-powered surveillance under Islamabad's Safe City programme, digitised power infrastructure management, and the launch of Zong's locally hosted AI cloud platform. The State Bank is piloting a central bank digital currency and finalising legislation for licensing virtual assets under the Pakistan Virtual Asset Regulatory Authority (PVARA).

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

1. Developments with the United States of America

a. Pakistan to Import First-Ever US Crude Oil (Dawn, August 01)

Pakistan's largest oil refiner, Cnergyico, will import 1 million barrels of US crude from global trader Vitol in October, the country's first purchase of American oil. The shipment of West Texas Intermediate (WTI) light crude will depart from Houston this month and arrive in Karachi in the second half of October, Vice Chairman Usama Qureshi confirmed. The deal follows months of negotiations that began in April after former US President Donald Trump threatened to impose 29% tariffs on Pakistani imports. Islamabad hailed the broader trade agreement with Washington, under which the US will levy a reduced 19% tariff on imports from Pakistan. Qureshi described the crude purchase as a "test spot cargo" under a term agreement with Vitol, noting that if commercially viable, Pakistan could import at least one cargo per month. He emphasised that the shipment is for local consumption and not intended for resale. The move marks a significant shift in Pakistan's energy sourcing strategy. Oil is the country's largest import item, valued at \$11.3 billion in FY2024-25, nearly a fifth of the total import bill. Until now, Pakistan has been heavily reliant on Middle Eastern suppliers for crude oil. Cnergyico, which operates a refining capacity of 156,000 barrels per day and Pakistan's only offshore single-point mooring terminal, is uniquely positioned to handle such shipments. The company also plans to expand capacity with a second offshore terminal and refinery upgrades over the next five to six years. Despite currently running at 30-35% capacity due to weak domestic demand, Cnergyico expects refining rates to rise as local demand grows and reliance on imported fuels declines. Importantly, Qureshi highlighted that WTI crude requires no special blending or refinery modifications, with refining margins on par with Gulf grades.

b. US Declares Balochistan Liberation Army a Foreign Terrorist Group, Pakistan Welcomes Move (Al Jazeera, August 11; US State Department, August 11; Associated Press, August 12)

The United States has intensified its measures against the Pakistan-based Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), formally designating it along with its alias The Majeed Brigade a "foreign terrorist organisation" in a move that significantly expands the scope of legal and financial restrictions on the group. Announced by the Department of State, the designation builds on the BLA's earlier classification as a "specially designated global terrorist" (SDGT) entity in 2019, a status imposed after a series of deadly attacks that year. The BLA, also known

as the Majeed Brigade, has been linked to multiple assaults in Pakistan's restive southwest, including the March hijacking of a passenger train travelling from Quetta to Peshawar, which left dozens of civilians and soldiers dead. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the move underscored the Trump administration's determination to counter terrorism, noting that such designations "play a critical role" in cutting off support to armed groups. While the earlier SDGT status primarily targeted the BLA's financial channels, the new designation makes it a criminal offence for anyone in the US to provide material support of any kind to the organisation, and is expected to trigger heightened scrutiny in both the US and allied jurisdictions.

c. US, Pakistan Hold Counterterrorism Talks After BLA Terrorist Designation (Reuters, August 12)

The United States and Pakistan held a new round of counterterrorism talks in Islamabad on Tuesday, with discussions focusing on strategies to address threats from groups including the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), ISIS-Khorasan, and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the US State Department said. The meeting came a day after Washington designated the BLA, a separatist militant group blamed for multiple deadly attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan province, as a foreign terrorist organisation. The move expands US legal measures against the group, following its earlier listing as a specially designated global terrorist entity in 2019. According to the State Department, both sides emphasised the "critical importance" of building effective counterterrorism strategies and sustaining cooperation in tackling regional security challenges.

d. US Signals Fresh Push for Economic Ties, Eyes Critical Minerals and Energy (Reuters, August 14)

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has signalled Washington's intent to deepen economic engagement with Islamabad, particularly in critical minerals and hydrocarbons. In a statement issued by the State Department, Rubio said the United States looked forward to fostering "dynamic business partnerships" and valued Pakistan's cooperation on counterterrorism and trade. The remarks come on the heels of a trade deal agreed last month, which Pakistan said would bring lower tariffs and encourage greater investment. Islamabad's Commerce Minister Jam Kamal has already highlighted opportunities for US firms to invest in mining ventures, particularly in Balochistan, through joint ventures with local companies. The province, which

hosts major projects such as the Barrick Gold-run Reko Diq mine, is believed to contain one of the world's largest gold and copper reserves.

2. Developments with China

a. Pakistan Successfully Launches Remote Sensing Satellite from China (CPEC Info, August 01; Dawn, August 01)

Pakistan has successfully launched its Remote Sensing Satellite-1 (PRSS-1) aboard a Kuaizhou-1A carrier rocket from China's Xichang Satellite Launch Center, the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) announced. The satellite entered its designated orbit at 10 AM (GMT+8), with Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal hailing it as a "moment that lifts our national spirit and elevates our friendship with China." Developed through collaboration between Suparco, China Electronics Technology Group Corporation and MICROSAT China, the PRSS-1 will enhance Pakistan's capabilities in Earth observation, supporting urban planning, disaster management, food security, environmental protection, and climate change monitoring. Suparco said the satellite will also aid precision agriculture, infrastructure mapping, glacier tracking, and deforestation monitoring, while contributing to national development projects such as CPEC. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Asif Ali Zardari, and the Chinese embassy congratulated Pakistani scientists on the achievement, with Suparco Chairman Muhammad Yousaf Khan terming the launch a milestone for sustainable socio-economic development.

b. Pakistan, China Discuss Next Phase of CPEC Cooperation (Dawn, August 03; The Daily CPEC, August 04)

Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal met Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong to review the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), reaffirming a commitment to strengthen industrial and business-to-business cooperation. Mr Iqbal recalled that during Mr Sun's earlier diplomatic tenure in Pakistan, "we transformed the CPEC from a paper plan into a multibillion-dollar reality." He said China's development model remains an inspiration for Pakistan, which is moving toward building an export-oriented, technology-driven economy. The minister highlighted that the government's 'Five Es' framework under the URAAN Pakistan initiative aligns with the next phase of CPEC, with industrial and technological sectors as key pillars. He stressed the importance of a skilled,

educated workforce and enhanced business collaboration. Mr Sun reaffirmed China's commitment to deepening cooperation across various sectors, noting that Pakistan's 'Five Es' framework provides a promising path to economic stability and self-reliance.

c. Gwadar Port Authority, Chinese Firm Sign Investment Deal to Boost Port Development (Dawn, August 05)

The Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) and China's Xinning Enterprise have signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) to drive major industrial and commercial investments at Gwadar Port and its Free Zone, Pakistan's maritime affairs ministry announced. The agreement aims to develop Gwadar as a regional transshipment centre, launch new industrial projects, optimise existing facilities, and relocate industries to the Free Zone. The LoI was signed by Xinning Enterprise's Yi Jiang and Maritime Affairs Ministry's Additional Secretary Umer Zaffar Shaikh, with GPA Chairman Noorul Haq Baloch attending online. A Chinese business delegation also met Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, who hailed the deal as a "significant milestone" for Gwadar's strategic growth, emphasising its potential to attract foreign investment and boost regional trade. Both sides pledged to work within Pakistan's regulatory framework and continue discussions to finalise operational details. The government has recently intensified efforts to commercialise Gwadar Port, including plans for new shipping lines and ferry services linking Pakistan with Gulf states. Officials say these measures will enhance trade flows, strengthen connectivity, and accelerate Pakistan's maritime and economic ambitions.

d. Chinese Firm to Build Pakistan's Largest Garment Facility in Punjab, 100 Electric Buses Also En Route from China (The Tribune, August 14)

A Chinese textile giant will establish Pakistan's largest advanced garment manufacturing facility in Punjab under a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), producing up to eight million items per month using six million metres of locally sourced fabric. The state-of-the-art special economic zone, to be built on 100 acres, will serve as the hub for exports through major American brands, generating more than \$100 million annually and creating 18,000 jobs within eight months and 25,000 over five years. During a meeting with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Chinese Consul General Zhao Shiren, Challenge Group Chairman Wego Hong praised the province's investment-friendly policies. The talks focused on advancing Punjab's textile sector and leveraging Chinese expertise for the planned "garment city."

Maryam Nawaz said the Punjab government intended to relocate major Chinese textile factories to the province, with the “Challenge Special Economic Zone” poised to accelerate industrial growth. She also noted that plastic waste was being recycled into high-performance fabrics under modern textile projects, and that the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) was equipping youth with market-relevant skills for industry. Wego Hong said his company aimed to bring technology surpassing China’s current textile machinery to Punjab, fostering innovation in the provincial textile market. He credited the chief minister’s pro-investment policies as a key reason for his visit and China’s growing interest in the province. Separately, Maryam Nawaz announced that 100 additional electric buses from China were being shipped from Yantai Port, with the new fleet set to expand public transport to underserved districts including Mianwali, Okara, Nankana Sahib, Muzaffargarh, Vehari, Pakpattan, and Dera Ghazi Khan.

3. Pakistani Naval Chief Awarded Highest Turkish Military Honour **(Arab News, August 05; Dawn, August 05)**

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf has been conferred Türkiye’s highest military honour, the Legion of Merit of the Turkish Armed Forces, for his role in strengthening defence and maritime cooperation between the two countries, the Pakistan Navy announced on Tuesday. The award was presented by Turkish Navy Commander Admiral Ercument Tatlioglu at the Naval Forces headquarters, where Admiral Ashraf was also given a guard of honour. During his visit, the naval chief held meetings with Türkiye’s Defence Minister Yasar Guler, Chief of General Staff Metin Gurak, and other senior officials, discussing regional maritime security, joint exercises, training, and exchange programmes. He also toured the Istanbul Naval Shipyard for a briefing on the Milgem project, under which Pakistan is constructing four corvettes in collaboration with Türkiye, and later observed submarine construction at Golchuk Naval Base. Admiral Ashraf paid tribute to Türkiye’s founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at his mausoleum, while his visit highlighted the growing Pakistan-Türkiye defence partnership, marked by regular joint military exercises and expanding naval collaboration.

4. Pakistan, UK Agree to Deepen Defence and Strategic Cooperation **(Dawn, August 05)**

Pakistan and the United Kingdom have agreed to deepen their partnership across key sectors with a renewed focus on defence collaboration and strategic dialogue during high-level talks in Rawalpindi on August 04, according to a statement issued by the Press Information Department (PID). The consensus was reached at a meeting between Minister for Defence Production Muhammad Raza Hayat Harraj and British High Commissioner Jane Marriott. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to the Enhanced Strategic Dialogue (ESD), established in 2011, which has broadened cooperation between the two countries in areas such as trade, economic growth, cultural ties, education, and security.

“Pakistan considers the United Kingdom a close friend and a genuine development partner,” Minister Harraj was quoted as saying. He added that frequent engagements between the two countries had been useful in aligning their positions on bilateral, regional, and international issues. “The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in all fields, including defence,” the statement further said. The British High Commissioner expressed her government’s commitment to strengthening the UK-Pakistan relationship, particularly in bilateral trade and defence production, underlining the importance of shared priorities. In July, the two countries signed the Trade Dialogue Mechanism Agreement and announced the establishment of the UK-Pakistan Business Advisory Council to institutionalise economic cooperation.

5. Pakistan Approves First Ferry Service Licence Amid Pilgrimage Travel Disruptions (Dawn, August 05)

In a major development for regional connectivity, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs has approved Pakistan’s first-ever ferry service licence to the UK-based company Sea Keeper. The move comes at a time when thousands of pilgrims travelling to Iraq have been stranded due to a sudden ban on land travel to Iran. Applications for ferry services had been pending since 2017–18, but Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry led a fast-track approval process, citing urgent demand. “Ferry services will provide pilgrims safe and secure travel, while also boosting regional connectivity and economic activity through sea routes,” the minister said. The initial operations will begin from Karachi and Gwadar ports, with modern vessels offering affordable and secure travel. Routes will expand based on demand and bilateral agreements. Officials stressed that the ferry initiative forms part of Pakistan’s broader strategy to strengthen the blue economy, enhance trade logistics, and promote maritime tourism. The Licensing Committee, comprising officials from the Ministries of Maritime

Affairs, Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Interior, along with representatives from the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) and port authorities, vetted the application. The PNSC will act as regulator, ensuring technical and service compliance. Meanwhile, Karachi Port Trust confirmed that a dedicated ferry terminal has already been built at Karachi port. Once formalities are completed, it will be handed over to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for immigration and passport control, while Customs and security agencies will also deploy staff at Karachi and Gwadar terminals. This landmark step is expected to ease pressure from the one million pilgrims attending Arbaeen in Karbala, while positioning Pakistan as a hub for sustainable regional maritime transport.

6. Iranian President's Visit to Pakistan ([Dawn, August 02](#); [IRNA, August 03](#); [The Diplomat, August 06](#); [CLAWS, August 07](#))

Visiting Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have expressed satisfaction over the progress in trade talks between Tehran and Islamabad, reiterating their shared vision to increase the volume of bilateral trade to \$10 billion in the near future. In a statement by the office of the Pakistani prime minister, Pezeshkian and Sharif met and exchanged views on numerous issues, after an official welcoming ceremony, first in the limited capacity and then at the level of high-ranking delegations. “The two sides continued their talks on expediting the holding of the 22nd meeting of the Iran-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission. Also, issues such as the development of barter trade, increasing exports of agricultural products, activating border markets, and removing trade barriers were discussed.

Over the two-day visit, Iran and Pakistan signed 12 agreements spanning trade, science and technology, agriculture, transportation, climate change, judicial cooperation, and cultural exchanges, while announcing an ambitious plan to elevate bilateral trade from \$3 billion to \$10 billion. Among the 12 cooperation documents were MoUs on plant protection and quarantine, joint use of the Mirjaveh-Taftan border gate, rail and road connectivity, cooperation in information technology, media, climate change, and a mutual commitment to finalise the FTA text in the near future. Officials said the pacts provide a framework to facilitate knowledge exchange, boost trade, and strengthen people-to-people ties between the two neighbours. At a high-profile Iran-Pakistan Business Forum in Islamabad on August 03, Sharif and Pezeshkian together announced their goal of \$10 billion and expressed hope to achieve it “as soon as

possible.” To lay the groundwork, the two countries are also reportedly moving towards a Free Trade Agreement.

Before departing from Tehran, Pezeshkian had said Iran and Pakistan have always maintained “good, sincere, and deep relations”. Meanwhile, Sharif, while hailing the long-standing relations, expressed his solidarity with the Iranian nation and leadership in the face of the recent Israeli aggression and praised Iran’s courageous stand in the 12-day war against the Zionist regime. He expressed condolences for the martyrdom of Iranian military commanders, scientists and citizens and also commended Tehran’s stance during the recent Pakistan-India tensions. In return, Pezeshkian thanked the Pakistani government and nation for their unwavering support during the critical days and said that the Iranian nation will not forget this fraternal stance.

7. Developments with India

a. Pakistan Warns India Over Indus Waters After Hague Tribunal Ruling (Arab News Pakistan, August 12)

Pakistan warned India it could not take away even “a drop” of its share of Indus River waters, after New Delhi’s earlier announcement to suspend the 1960 World Bank-mediated Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) following the deadly Pahalgam attack. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told a ceremony in Islamabad that any attempt to block water would invite a “lesson” India would regret. The IWT allocates the western rivers, Indus, Jhelum and Chenab, to Pakistan for irrigation, drinking and hydropower use, while India controls the eastern rivers, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej, but is restricted from significantly altering the western rivers’ flow. Pakistan has argued the treaty contains no provision for unilateral withdrawal and that any obstruction would be considered an “act of war.” Islamabad recently won a case at the Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration over the design of new Indian hydroelectric projects on the western rivers, with the court ruling that such works must “strictly” follow the treaty’s specifications and that India must allow the rivers to flow for Pakistan’s unrestricted use. The decision is final and binding, Pakistan’s foreign ministry said, though New Delhi maintains it does not recognise the court’s jurisdiction.

8. Pakistan Rallies Gulf Support in Push for Global Plastics Treaty (Arab News, August 13)

Pakistan has intensified its diplomatic outreach on the planned Global Plastics Treaty, engaging with senior officials from regional partners during high-level negotiations in Geneva. The talks took place on the sidelines of the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-5.2), a UN-led process aimed at producing the first legally binding international agreement to curb plastic waste. According to the Ministry of Climate Change, Pakistan's discussions with Gulf and regional counterparts centred on advancing cooperation for a fair and effective treaty, promoting circular economy solutions, and mobilising resources to mitigate the disproportionate impacts of plastic pollution on developing nations. Climate Minister Dr Musadik Malik held an interactive briefing with delegations from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, Kazakhstan, Iran, Azerbaijan, Algeria, and Kuwait, underscoring Pakistan's call for fairness, financial assistance, and technology transfer to support poorer countries in addressing the crisis. INC-5.2, which runs from 05-14 August in Geneva, follows INC-5 in Busan, Republic of Korea, held in late 2024. This final stage of negotiations seeks to complete and approve the treaty text before it is forwarded for adoption at a Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries.

TERROR TALLY

1. Targeted Militant Attacks

a. Miryan police station targeted by aerial strike (Dawn, August 01)

At least six law enforcement personnel were injured in a quadcopter attack on Miryan police station in Bannu district amid an ongoing operation against terrorists in the Nurar area. A police official said a joint intelligence-based operation was launched by police, security forces and Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) commandos targeting terrorists in the Miryan police station area. The operation followed intelligence about the presence of Fitna al-Khawarij, the state's term for the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). "During the aerial attack, a quadcopter dropped explosives on the police station, causing an explosion that left two army soldiers, three CTD personnel and one police constable injured," the police official said.

The wounded officers were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital and the Combined Military Hospital in Bannu. The official said the ongoing security operation has resulted in the destruction of several terrorist hideouts. Law enforcement personnel have set up barriers and cordons at various points in the area, carrying out raids and strikes on terrorist hideouts.

The operation came after the presence of over 200 terrorists in the Miryan police station area had caused panic among residents of Nurar five days ago. Armed groups of Fitna al-Khawarij militants roamed the streets, forcing local businesses to shut down and prompting civilians to stay indoors, halting all business activity. "The timely and effective actions of law enforcement have forced the terrorists to flee the area," the police official said, adding that targeted operations continue to ensure the terrorists are arrested and eliminated. Residents of the area described the situation as curfew-like, with business activities halted as a result of the security operation. Bazaars and markets were closed and many villagers stayed indoors. Reports indicated that loudspeakers in local mosques issued warnings in the early hours of the day, urging residents to stay at home and cooperate with the security forces conducting the operation.

b. Five Policemen Killed in Bandit Attack in Rahim Yar Khan (Dawn, August 01)

Five policemen were killed after bandits launched a violent assault on a police checkpoint in the Katcha area of Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab police confirmed. According to a statement from the Inspector General's office, around 40 heavily armed bandits, equipped with rocket launchers and grenades, attacked the Sheikhani police picket located between Chowk Sewetra

and Chowk Mahi on the Guddu-Kashmore Road late in the night. The policemen killed in the attack were identified as Muhammad Irfan, Muhammad Saleem and Nukhail of Bahawalnagar, along with Khalil and Ghazanfar of Rahim Yar Khan. Police reported that one bandit was killed during the exchange of fire. Following the incident, security forces launched a search operation in the area. Funeral prayers for the fallen policemen were scheduled to be held at the Rahim Yar Khan police lines at 2:30pm today. For decades, bandit gangs armed with sophisticated weapons have operated with impunity across northern Sindh and southern Punjab, engaging in kidnappings, extortion, killings and highway robberies, making lawlessness a daily reality for local residents.

c. Roadside Bomb Blast Kills Two in Dera Bugti (Dawn, August 03)

Two people were killed and another injured in a roadside bomb explosion in the Sui area of Dera Bugti district on August 02. Levies officials said the incident occurred in the Kanjo Saghari area of Sui, where an improvised explosive device (IED) planted along the roadside was detonated with a remote control. The victims were identified as Washo and Zahid, while a third individual, Sada, was injured. Local authorities shifted the bodies and the injured to a nearby hospital, later handing over the deceased to their families after necessary procedures. An investigation is underway.

d. Blast Derails Jaffar Express in Mastung (The Tribune, August 10)

A powerful blast struck the Jaffar Express near Spezant in Dasht Tehsil, Mastung district, damaging the locomotive and five coaches. According to Levies officials, the device, planted on the railway track, detonated as the train passed, causing it to derail and forcing an abrupt halt to the passenger service. Fortunately, no injuries or fatalities were reported. Rescue teams and railway staff swiftly reached the site, ensuring passengers' safety, while security forces cordoned off the area and launched an operation to track down the perpetrators. Authorities confirmed that the explosives were locally manufactured, underscoring persistent security challenges in the province. Train operations from Balochistan to other parts of the country have been temporarily suspended as investigations continue. Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi condemned the incident, calling it a "cowardly act" that would not weaken national resolve.

e. Three Policemen Killed in Kurram Ambush as Bajaur Curfew Eases (The Express Tribune, August 14)

Three police officers were killed when suspected militants ambushed their vehicle in the Alizai area of Kurram tribal district. Police sources said the attackers first hurled a hand grenade at the vehicle before opening fire and used a rocket-propelled grenade in the assault. The officers were travelling to Parachinar at the time. According to initial reports, the assailants seized the officers' weapons before fleeing. Security forces have since launched a search operation to locate and arrest those responsible. The attack came as authorities eased a two-day curfew in neighbouring Bajaur, allowing markets to reopen and daily activities to resume. Residents quickly returned to local bazaars, including Khark Bazaar, Inayat Kallay Bazaar, Siddiqabad Bazaar, and Nawagai Bazaar, to buy essential goods. Traffic on major roads also returned to normal. Despite the relaxation, police maintained tight security, with strict checkpoints on highways and all entry and exit points to the district amid the fragile security situation.

2. Militant Violence Sees Slight Rise in July, Says Think Tank (Dawn, August 01)

Pakistan recorded a marginal increase in militant violence in July, according to the latest monthly security assessment by the Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS).

STATISTICAL SYNTHESIS OF THE PICSS REPORT			
Category	June 2025	July 2025	Change / Notes
Number of militant attacks	78	82	5% increase
Fatalities (total from militant attacks)	100	101	Slight rise
– Security personnel killed (militant attacks)	53	36	32% decrease
– Civilians killed (militant attacks)	39	47	21% increase
– Militants killed (militant attacks)	6	18	Increase
– Peace committee members killed (militant attacks)	2	0	Drop

Injuries (total from militant attacks)	189	150	Decrease
– Security personnel injured	126	52	Drop
– Civilians injured	63	90	Increase
– Militants injured	0	7	New addition
– Peace committee members injured	0	1	New addition
Security operations (July 2025 only)	-	106 militants killed, 69 arrested	Operations also caused 7 civilian deaths
Overall deaths (attacks + operations)	-	215 total	124 militants, 54 civilians, 37 security personnel
Overall injuries (attacks + operations)	-	199 total	107 civilians, 56 security personnel, 35 militants, 1 peace committee member
Kidnappings by militants	-	14 individuals	
Regional breakdown of militant attacks	-	53 in KP (incl. tribal districts); 28 in Balochistan; 0 in Punjab, Sindh, AJK, ICT; 1 in GB (Diamer)	KP remained epicentre

A day prior to the report's release, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed that the state was pursuing a comprehensive strategy to counter terrorism. According to his office, this approach combines military operations, legislation, public engagement, and measures to discourage extremist ideologies. The prime minister also directed the Steering Committee on Counter-Terrorism and Establishment of the State Writ to ensure closer coordination between federal and provincial authorities. Earlier this year, the Global Terrorism Index 2025 ranked Pakistan as the world's second most affected country, reporting a 45 per cent increase in terrorism-related fatalities in 2024, rising to 1,081 deaths.

3. Seven-Year-Old Booked in Terror Abetment Case for Sharing Activist's Speech ([Dawn, August 01](#))

Authorities in Gwadar have booked a seven-year-old boy in a terror abetment case for allegedly sharing a video of human rights activist Gulzar Dost's speech on social media, officials said. The case was registered by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD), Makran, under the Anti-Terrorism Act, as Mr Dost has been placed in the Fourth Schedule by the provincial government. The boy, accused of sharing the video on TikTok, was presented before a court. Mr Dost has been in detention for the past two weeks. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) strongly condemned the move, terming it a misuse of anti-terror laws. In a statement, the commission said it was "appalled" by reports of a minor being produced before an anti-terrorism court on such charges, describing the incident as a "gross violation of child rights and due process." The HRCP demanded the immediate withdrawal of the charges, a review of the FIR, and accountability of officials responsible for what it called "an alarming overreach."

4. Mortar Strike Kills Mother and Two Children in Pakistan's Bajaur District (Arab News, August 13)

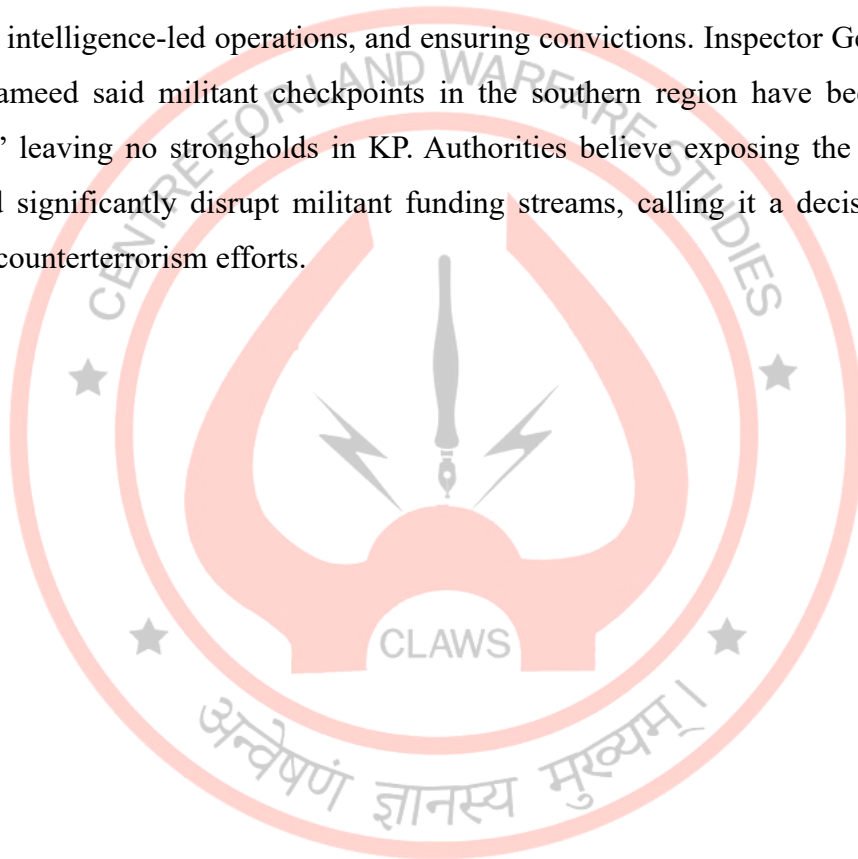
A mortar strike in northwestern Pakistan has killed two children and their mother in the town of Mamund, Bajaur district, near the Afghan border, local residents and hospital officials said. The incident occurred overnight as security forces continued a "targeted operation" against the Pakistani Taliban in the region. Dr Naseeb Gul, a local hospital official, confirmed the fatalities and said two others were wounded a day before when another mortar hit a separate home. It remains unclear who was responsible for the shelling. The civilian deaths sparked anger among locals, with hundreds of demonstrators refusing to bury the bodies until an investigation is carried out. Neither the government nor the military has issued an immediate statement on the incident.

5. KP CTD Uncovers Cryptocurrency Trail in Terror Financing (The Express Tribune, August 14)

The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) has uncovered a cryptocurrency-based terror financing network, marking a major breakthrough in several high-profile terrorism cases. Officials said the digital money trail was discovered during

investigations into recent attacks, providing vital evidence against militant groups. Enhanced operational capacity, through specialised units, upgraded facilities, and advanced training, has enabled the CTD to notch key successes, including solving the assassination of Mufti Munir Shakir in an IED blast, dismantling a network behind 18 terrorist attacks in Peshawar, and eliminating the Daesh Khurasan cell responsible for the May 11 suicide bombing in the city. Large arms and explosives caches have also been seized.

New initiatives include establishing anti-cybercrime and *madaris* monitoring cells and procuring anti-drone technology for both settled areas and newly merged districts. According to Additional IG CTD Shoukat Abbas, the department's focus is now on advanced investigative techniques, intelligence-led operations, and ensuring convictions. Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed said militant checkpoints in the southern region have been "completely eradicated," leaving no strongholds in KP. Authorities believe exposing the cryptocurrency route could significantly disrupt militant funding streams, calling it a decisive step in the province's counterterrorism efforts.



About the Author

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