



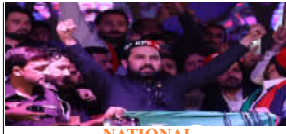
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Email address: dquettavoice@gmail.com
Website: www.quettavoice.com

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QUETTA VOICE

Nushki Banking Shutdown: Financial Lockout Hits Citizens and Businesses

From Our Correspondent:

NUSHKI— All commercial banks and financial services across Nushki district have halted operations from August 5 until August 31, 2026, citing security con-



cerns. The unexpected closure has paralyzed local trade and left government workers, pensioners, and students unable to access critical funds.

Residents reported that financial institutions suspended services without prior notice, leaving the district unprepared for a complete financial lockout. Key Community Impacts: Salaries & Pensions Delayed: Government workers and citizens whose payments were deposited directly into accounts cannot withdraw

cash. Trade at a Standstill: Local traders face severe liquidity shortages, leaving check clearing and wire transfers at a standstill. Utility Payment Delays: Thousands face potential late fees and service cutoffs for QESCO, SSGC, and PTCL utility bills.

Months of Compounding Banking Issues The total shutdown follows months of constrained financial infrastructure in Nushki. Both National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) and Meezan Bank branches have remained non-operational since January 31, 2026, when armed attackers damaged both facilities.

Student Deadlines Missed: University and college applicants face missing crucial admission and exam fee deadlines.



File Photo: PM Shehbaz Sharif, CM Sarfraz Bugti Praise Patriotic Song from Balochistan Ahead of Independence Day.

PM Shehbaz Sharif, CM Sarfraz Bugti Praise Patriotic Song from Balochistan Ahead of Independence Day

NEWS DESK:

QUETTA: As Pakistan's Independence Day approaches, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti have expressed appreciation for a new patriotic song emerging from Balochistan, describing it as a reflection of the province's enduring love for Pakistan.

In separate messages shared on social media, both leaders praised the singers, performers, producers and others involved in the musical project, highlighting its patriotic spirit ahead of August 14.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he was proud to see

such a beautiful and patriotic song coming from Balochistan. He expressed his heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to everyone involved in the effort, saying the song had beautifully captured the spirit of love for the country.

"Pakistan Zindabad!" the prime minister said in his message. Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti also welcomed the patriotic tribute, saying Balochistan's land had long echoed with patriotism, sacrifice and an unwavering love for Pakistan.

Bugti said the song reflected the true spirit of the people of Balochistan as the nation prepares to celebrate the blessings of independence. The messages come as

preparations for Pakistan's Independence Day celebrations gather pace across the country. August 14 is marked every year with national flags, ceremonies, cultural programmes and patriotic songs.

The new musical tribute from Balochistan has added to the festive atmosphere, highlighting the province's cultural contribution to national celebrations and the role of music in expressing patriotic sentiments.

Both leaders extended their appreciation to those who contributed to the production, with their messages underscoring the significance of unity, patriotism and national pride as Pakistan prepares to celebrate another Independence Day.

تاریخ ہوئی رقم۔۔۔ دفاع ہوا مضبوط تر

پاکستان، سعودی عرب اور ترکیہ

3★ برادر اسلامی ممالک۔۔۔ 1★ مشترکہ دفاع

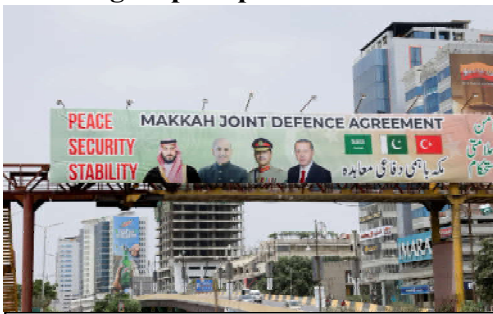
★ مکہ جائنٹ ڈیفینس ایگریمنٹ ★

وزیر اعلیٰ بلوچستان میر سرفراز بگٹی کی جانب سے اس تاریخی دفاعی معاہدے کا خیر مقدم

یہ معاہدہ مسلم امہ کے اتحاد اور مشترکہ دفاع کیلئے فیصلہ کن سنگ میل ثابت ہوگا

محکمہ تعلقات عامہ - حکومت بلوچستان

Iran says Pak-Saudi-Turkiye deal shows 'change in perception' towards US



File Photo: Iran says Pak-Saudi-Turkiye deal shows 'change in perception' towards US.

NEWS DESK:

Iran's foreign ministry said on Monday that the defence pact signed last week between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye was "a sign of a change in the perception" of regional countries towards the United States.

The joint defence agreement, signed in Makkah on Friday, aims to strengthen collective deterrence and empowers its signatory states to treat an attack against one of them as an attack against all of them.

"This development is a sign of a change in the perception of the countries of the region," ministry spokesperson Esmail

Baqaei said while responding to a query during a weekly press briefing on Monday.

"Considering the developments of the last two to three years, the countries of the region have realised that security is not a commodity that can be bought from false security brokers," Iran's state media quoted him as saying, referring to the United States.

Baqaei further said that there was "no reason to worry that this treaty will be against Iran," highlighting Iran's deep religious, historical and civilisational ties with Pakistan, Türkiye and even Saudi Arabia.

"This development is an important sign that the countries of

the region have concluded that they cannot rely on and trust the claim of security provided by the United States and some other actors outside the region, and they are attempting to try another method,

by relying on their own capabilities and perspectives," IRNA quoted Baqaei as saying.

"Any plan that is based on the geopolitical and historical realities of the region, is comprehensive and inclusive, and correctly identifies the enemy and the threat,

has a chance of helping to strengthen security and prevent instability and abuses by the Zionist enemy and its allies," he added, referring to Israel.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Plastic in the Womb: Balochistan's Invisible Health Crisis

By Myra Zahid:
In the dusty plains of Balochistan, where drought already strains farms and families, a different kind of threat is moving in quietly. It cannot be seen, smelled, or stopped at the door.

It is microplastics, plastic fragments smaller than five millimeters, and they are now turning up in the air we breathe, the soil we farm, and even inside newborn babies.

Microplastics form when plastic waste breaks down under sun, heat, and friction.

They have been found almost everywhere scientists have looked: household dust, farmland drinking water, vegetables, and human tissue.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that the average person eats and breathes in roughly 39,000 to 52,000 microplastic particles every year. In 2019, a global study commissioned by WWF International made headlines when it calculated that people may be ingesting close to a credit card's worth of plastic every week. The Express Tribune carried the story for Pakistan readers, a reminder that this is not a distant problem, but one already inside our food and water.

Pakistan's Plastic Problem



Pakistan generates an estimated 6.41 million tons of plastic waste a year, according to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), with the vast majority never properly collected or recycled. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) says 86 percent of the country's plastic waste is mismanaged, left in open dumps, burned, or washed into rivers and the sea. That puts Pakistan among the

world's worst plastic polluters.

When this waste breaks down in open dumps, fields, and gutters, it does not disappear. It fragments into microplastics that drift into the air or sink into the soil, eventually working their way into the crops we eat.

Mothers and Babies at Risk
The most alarming discoveries are happening before birth. In 2020,

scientists in Italy found microplastics inside the human placenta for the first time, proof that plastic particles can pass from a pregnant mother to her unborn child. Since then, researchers have also found microplastics in human breast milk.

According to exposure data reported in the Journal of the Pakistan Medical Association (JPMa), microplastics can carry toxic chemicals such as BPA and phthalates, both known to disrupt hormones.

These chemicals are linked to low birth weight and long-term developmental risks in children. In Pakistan, a 2024 study by the University of Karachi's Institute of Marine Science found microplastics in the breast milk of lactating mothers in fishing communities along the Karachi coast, where seafood is

eaten almost daily. No equivalent study has yet been done in Balochistan, but the risk factors are familiar here too: communities along the Gwadar, Pami, and Ormara coastline depend just as heavily on the sea, while facing even thinner access to maternal and child healthcare.

What Can Be Done
There are practical defenses. Lab tests show that fine water filters (around 0.2 microns, such as certified reverse-osmosis systems) can remove 94 to 100 percent of plastic particles from drinking water.

Balochistan's Agriculture Department is already distributing seeds for home gardening. Families growing their own vegetables on terraces or small plots, using compost instead of plastic mulch, can cut their exposure while also improving food security.

A Policy Gap, and a Climate Connection

Experts say microplastic pollution needs to be treated as both an environmental and a public health issue. That means enforcing waste management laws, banning single-use plastics and plastic mulching in farming, and monitoring microplastics in soil, air, and food, something Pakistan currently does very little of.

Climate change is making the problem worse. Rising heat speeds up plastic breakdown, drought-driven dust storms carry particles further through the air, and floods wash plastic waste into farmland and waterways. Protecting mothers and children from microplastics is, in that sense, also a matter of climate justice.

Pakistan's progress on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals is already behind: official data shows reliable figures exist for less than 10 percent of SDG indicators nationally, and only 7 percent for Balochistan.

Microplastics sit at the intersection of two of those goals, SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), yet remain almost entirely unmeasured here.

The Bottom Line
Microplastics are invisible, but the risk they carry is not. In a province already facing drought, poverty, and stretched healthcare, this is a threat reaching the next generation before it is even born.

Water filtration, home gardens, and less plastic use can help right now. But lasting protection will need real monitoring, enforced policy, and research starting with the studies Balochistan still doesn't have.

The growth-jobs paradox

Israt Husain:
THE 2024 upheaval that toppled Sheikh Hasina's government in Bangladesh, alongside the youth-led protests over joblessness in India,

point to a shared crisis across South Asia: strong economic growth has not translated into enough good jobs for a workforce that is more educated than ever before.

As access to schooling and universities has expanded, so have people's employment expectations—expectations that a narrow job market has failed to meet, sparking widespread anger.

In India, nearly 40 per cent of graduates under 25 can't find work; youth joblessness is near 29pc.

Roughly four in five Indian workers depend on informal, insecure employment.

Economic theory holds that growth happens as workers shift from low-output farming to more productive factory and service jobs, and that this shift should expand labour demand and shrink joblessness.

But India, Bangladesh and Pakistan complicate that story. India and Bangladesh have sustained 6-7pc annual growth for over three decades.

Pakistan has managed only 3-4pc. Yet, none of the three has generated sufficient formal, productive work. Growth rate alone doesn't explain the shortfall.

Data from the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies show Indian employment expanding just 1.6pc a year from 2000 to 2012, then flat-lining from 2012 to 2019 even as GDP kept climbing.

The type of growth



a country experiences, not merely its speed, appears to shape how many jobs it creates. India's economic transformation makes the point vividly.

Agriculture accounted for 35pc of GDP in 1990, absorbing 63pc of the workforce; by 2025, its GDP share had dropped to 16pc, yet it still employed about 42pc of workers.

A sign of chronic underemployment and surplus labour stuck on the farm. Meanwhile,

economy-wide productivity nearly quadrupled, ie, rising incomes came mostly from efficiency gains in industry and modern services, not new job creation. Workers haven't left agriculture at the rate that genuine structural change requires.

The outcome is reflected in living standards: CLSA data put average urban household income at around \$20,000, and just \$3,600 in rural areas.

Part of the problem is that new, productivity-boosting technologies tend to displace low-skilled workers faster than emerging industries can absorb them.

For instance, India's IT sector has become a world-class tech hub, pulling in over \$13 billion in venture capital each year, spawning countless start-ups and unicorns, and generating some \$300bn in annual revenue.

Yet, it employs only around six million people, barely 1pc of the national workforce.

Rapid GDP growth by itself cannot ensure enough jobs or social stability.

The roughly 2,000 global capability centres set up by MNCs add only about 2m jobs. Against this, India's labour force grows by some 12m young people

annually, including about 1m engineering graduates, only half of whom are considered employable in their field. Over the past decade, the IT sector has added only about 1m jobs.

India may handle over 30pc of global outsourced business-process work, but this tech-driven growth has been skill-intensive, not job-intensive.

As Indian industry and services keep climbing the value chain, the need for unskilled and semi-skilled labour is set to shrink further, a trend that AI, robotics, and automation may speed up,

leaving policymakers with a dilemma: how to keep India competitive in technology while generating enough jobs for millions of young people without advanced skills.

As services focus on finance, IT, e-commerce, and other knowledge-heavy fields, older labour-intensive jobs in retail and community and personal services contract.

Agriculture, the fallback employer for surplus labour, offers no real cure.

Modernising it would raise productivity and rural incomes, but reform efforts run into political opposition—the Modi government's

three farm laws sparked mass protests and had to be repealed.

Even so, nearly 480m people rely on farming, a large share of them underemployed.

Here lies the central paradox: the more agriculture modernises and mechanises, the fewer workers it will need, eroding its role as a buffer for surplus labour.

Seasonal migration from poorer states like Bihar and UP to richer farming regions may also taper off as mechanisation reduces demand for hired labour. Briefly, agriculture can't continue absorbing new job-seekers indefinitely.

Beyond the shifting nature of growth and its shrinking capacity to generate jobs, other structural issues compound youth unemployment.

low participation by women in the workforce, premature decline of manufacturing growing inequality, and above all, a widening gap between what education delivers and what employers need.

India has expanded higher education dramatically: gross tertiary enrolment is approaching 28pc, with some 45m students in colleges and universities.

Yet this growth hasn't produced better job outcomes: millions of young people remain out of education, work, and training.

From 2004 to 2023, Indian universities turned out around 5m graduates a year, only 2.8m or so found jobs annually.

The mismatch between supply and demand is severe. Between 2014 and 2022, over 220m applications competed for just 72,000 central government positions.

The quality gap is worse than the quantity gap. McKinsey research found only about a quar-

ter of Indian graduates have globally competitive skills, with another fifth meeting domestic hiring standards, leaving more than half short of what employers want.

Outmoded syllabi, rote memorisation and scant hands-on training have left graduates credentialed but not always employable.

Educated unemployment stems from higher education's disconnect with real economic needs. Students, families and institutions are fixated on degrees and scores rather than analytical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Universities churn out graduates in fields with little market demand; technical and vocational roles go unfilled.

Government funding patterns deepen these imbalances.

Elite schools like IITs and IIMs receive outsized public investment due to their prestige, while the overall cost of higher education keeps rising.

forcing families into major financial sacrifice, often for degrees that don't pay off, as graduates face long jobless stretches or settle for work below their qualification level.

The lesson from South Asia is that rapid GDP growth by itself cannot ensure enough jobs or social stability. It needs to be more labour-absorbing.

Manufacturing needs new momentum, agriculture needs to enable rather than obstruct structural change, and education must build skills the modern economy actually demands.

Otherwise, the gap between growth and employment needs to enable breeding frustration, endangering economic progress and political stability in the region.

German Honorary Consul Mir Murad Baloch Meets Chief Minister (CM) Sarfraz Bugti in Quetta

QASEEM SHAH
QUETTA: German Honorary Consul General Mir Murad Baloch met Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti in Quetta on Monday and discussed Pakistan-Germany relations, bilateral cooperation and matters of mutual interest.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on strengthening ties between Pakistan and Germany and exploring further opportunities for cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

The meeting was held in the context of the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Germany, which is being commemorated in 2026.

German Honorary Consul Presents Souvenir to CM

During the meeting, German Honorary Consul Mir Murad Baloch presented a commemorative souvenir to Chief



Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti. The souvenir marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Germany, which is being commemorated in 2026.

highlighted the longstanding diplomatic relationship between the two countries and served as a symbolic gesture to commemorate the important milestone.

Sarfraz Bugti and Honorary Consul Mir Murad Baloch also discussed the importance of further strengthening Pakistan-Germany relations and enhancing engagement with Balochistan.

The meeting reflects continued diplomatic engagement in Balochistan, with opportunities for greater cooperation and interaction between Pakistan, Germany and the province.

Balochistan Minister Calls for Quality Education and Youth Guidance for Sustainable Development

TURBAT: Provincial Minister for Planning and Development Mir Zahoore Ahmed Buledi has said that proper guidance of the younger generation and quality education are essential for sustainable development and a brighter future for society.

He urged parents to pay attention not only to their children's academic activities but also to their daily routines and company, provide them with a positive and constructive environment, and guide them toward better opportunities in the future.

He expressed these views while addressing an educational conference at Government Shaheed Ayub Buledi Degree College, Buledi, as the chief guest.

The conference was attended by teachers, students, district administration officials and people from different walks of life.

Mir Zahoore Ahmed Buledi said that in the prevailing global environment, lasting solutions to complex challenges could be achieved more effectively through political, social and constructive means rather than force.



He said prolonged conflicts in different parts of the world had caused immense losses of human lives and societies. Therefore, it was essential to protect young people from such circumstances and encourage them toward education, skills development and positive activities.

The provincial minister urged Baloch youth to channel their energies into education and building their future, saying that the genuine development of any society was closely linked to the constructive future of its younger generation.

He stressed that parents and all segments of society must play their role in positively guiding young people and creating a supportive environment for them. Government

Take Steps for Girls' College in Buledi

Mir Zahoore Ahmed Buledi said that the education sector in Balochistan was gradually improving, but several areas still lacked adequate quality educational facilities and opportunities. He said Shaheed Ayub Buledi Degree College, Buledi, was now moving in the right direction, while positive progress was also being made in promoting female education.

The provincial minister announced that necessary steps would be taken for the establishment of a girls' college in Buledi.

He said promoting education was a shared responsibility of the government, parents, teachers and society as a whole so that the younger generation could be prepared according to modern requirements.

Given the rapid advancement of science and technology, he added, the education system must also be aligned with contemporary needs, while children should be provided opportunities for positive and constructive activities alongside formal education.

Education System Must Promote Critical Thinking

Speaking at the conference, Divisional Monitoring Officer Professor Barkat Ismail said that Makran Division ranked seventh in Pakistan in terms of the literacy rate, while literacy in Buledi was comparatively better than in other areas of the district. He said the demands of the modern era had changed, making it necessary to move beyond rote learning and provide children with opportunities to think, ask questions and develop their creative abilities. Education, he said, transforms individuals into responsible citizens, adding that educational development was not solely the responsibility of teachers. Parents and all segments of society must also fulfill their responsibilities in this regard.

Professor Barkat Ismail also requested the provincial minister to take practical steps toward the establishment and approval of a girls' college in Buledi.

Officer Kech Amjad Shahzad appreciated the services and efforts of Mir Zahoore Ahmed Buledi for improving the education sector.

Gwadar Fisheries Department Reviews Welfare Measures for Local Fishermen

GWADAR: A meeting of the Fisheries Department, Gwadar, was held under the chairmanship of Member of the Provincial Assembly Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman Baloch to review measures for the welfare of fishermen, development of the fisheries sector, provision of facilities to

fishermen in Pasni on August 15 and Jiwani on August 17, while a date for distribution in Ormara would be announced soon.

The meeting stressed that the distribution of fishing nets, safety equipment and other essential facilities must be conducted through a

transparent and merit-based process to ensure that genuine and deserving fishermen receive the support.

The initiative aims to improve the economic conditions of fishermen, increase fishing productivity and promote the sustainable development of the fisheries sector, which is a vital component of Gwadar's local economy.

Participants also emphasized the need to protect fisheries resources and prevent illegal fishing, the use of banned fishing nets and unsustainable exploitation of marine life. They agreed that promoting legal and responsible fishing, conserving marine resources and protecting fishermen's livelihoods were essential for the long-term development of the sector.

Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman said that the welfare of fishermen, protection of their economic rights and modernization of the fisheries sector were among his key priorities.



Director Fisheries Ahmed Nadeem, Assistant Director Shah Fahad, Assistant Director Jiwani Bashir Kakar, Assistant Director Pasi Shahzaib and other officials of the Fisheries Department attended the meeting.

The meeting held detailed discussions on the provision of cheques, green boats and other essential equipment to fishermen in Pasni, Jiwani and Ormara.

It was decided that cheques and green boats would be distributed among

transparent and merit-based process to ensure that genuine and deserving fishermen receive the support.

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Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman said that the welfare of fishermen, protection of their economic rights and modernization of the fisheries sector were among his key priorities.

He directed that transparency, merit and fairness must be ensured in the distribution of facilities, boats and equipment allocated for fishermen so that no deserving fisherman is deprived of his rightful support.

He said fishing was not merely a source of livelihood but also played a fundamental role in Gwadar's economy and the economic development of local communities.

He stressed the need to provide fishermen with modern facilities, improved equipment and safer fishing opportunities while taking effective measures to discourage illegal fishing and protect the province's marine resources.

Balochistan IGP Reviews Security Arrangements at Key Police Facilities in Quetta

QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan Muhammad Tahir conducted a detailed inspection of several police facilities in Quetta to review security and administrative arrangements.

During his visit, the IGP inspected the Police Training College, New Sarhab Police Station, and the Quetta Sarhab Police Station.

He emphasized that all necessary measures should be taken to ensure a secure and effective training environment.

He also reviewed the operational arrangements and ongoing training activities.

The IGP directed officials to further strengthen security and improve other arrangements at the Police Training College.

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Balochistan Finance Minister Reviews Investment Opportunities in Mines and Minerals Sector

QUETTA: Provincial Minister for Finance, Mines and Mineral Development Mir Shoaib Noshervani visited the office of the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBIT) and chaired a meeting with Vice Chairman Bilal Khan Kakar. Former Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Alauddin Marri was also present on the occasion.

The meeting focused on promoting investment in Balochistan, particularly the vast potential of the mines and minerals sector, facilitating investors, and promoting sustainable economic development.

The participants reviewed the province's natural resources, mineral reserves and available investment opportunities.

Mir Shoaib Noshervani described Balochistan's mineral resources as a key pillar of the province's economic development.

He said the government was focusing on promoting investment in the mines and minerals sector, ensuring transparency, adopting



He said the province had deposits of various valuable and strategically important minerals that could be transformed into a strong driver of economic growth through modern technology, responsible investment and effective policies.

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the vision of Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade was actively working to create a conducive investment environment, provide effective facilities to investors and highlight investment opportunities in different sectors of the province to both local and foreign investors.

The meeting also emphasized that the development of Balochistan's mineral resources must go hand in hand with environmental protection, safeguarding the interests of local communities, sustainable development and responsible investment.

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Hub Finalizes Comprehensive Arrangements for Pakistan Independence Day Celebrations

HUB: Deputy Commissioner Hub Jumma Dad Khan Mandokhail chaired a meeting of the District Coordination Committee to review arrangements for Pakistan Independence Day celebrations on August 14 across the district.

The meeting reviewed various aspects of the celebrations, including security, cleanliness, traffic management, activities in educational institutions, and beautification of the city. District officials, representatives of the Municipal Corporation, Education Department, police and other relevant institutions attended the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Jumma Dad Khan Mandokhail said Independence Day is an occasion for the entire nation to renew its commitment to Pakistan.

He directed all relevant departments to complete their assigned responsibilities on time and ensure effective coordination to provide citizens with a peaceful, safe and pleasant environment during the celebrations.

He said various areas of Hub would host flag-hoisting ceremonies, national songs and anthems, speeches, sports events and other cultural and national activities. He said that public places would also be decorated with the national flag and greenery to create a festive atmosphere.



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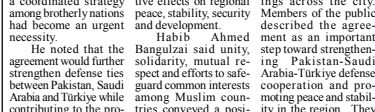
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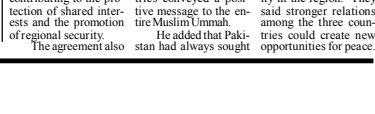
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Security forces kill 5 terrorists in intelligence-based operation in Balochistan's Panjgur

NEWS DESK: Security forces have killed five terrorists, including a key commander, in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Sarkani and Chedgi areas of Panjgur district in Balochistan, Pakistan reported on Monday.

The operation was conducted as part of Operation Radd-ul-Fitna-3 in Balochistan, the state broadcaster said.

"According to security sources, the security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation against Fitna al-Hindustani terrorists in Sarkani and Chedgi areas of Panjgur, killing five terrorists, including a key Fitna al-Hindustani commander, Wazir," it said.

Fitna al-Hindustani is a term used by the Pakistani military for India's alleged role in terrorism and destabilisation in Pakistan.

"Four motorcycles, machine guns, heavy weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the slain terrorists," Radio Pakistan reported.

The terrorists were allegedly involved in robbery, extortion, kidnapping and attacks targeting local traders and other residents in Panjgur, it added.

Interior Minister

Mohsin Naqvi lauded security forces on the successful operation, according to state-run APP. Paying tribute to the professionalism and operational capabilities of the security forces, Naqvi said the successful action had thwarted the nefarious designs of the terrorists in the region.

The operation comes a day after security forces killed 15 terrorists in multiple intelligence-based operations across Balochistan. The op-

erations were conducted in Mastung, Bolan, Washuk, Awaran, Sibi, Khuzdar, Harnai and Nushki under Operation Radd-ul-Fitna-3, according to state media.

The latest operations by the security forces in Balochistan take place as the province continues to face security challenges.

According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) monthly security assessment released on July 31, the security situation deteriorated

most significantly in Balochistan in the country's last month. The overall death toll increased by 241pc in Balochistan, from 109 in June to 372 in July, the report said.

Deaths in multiple intelligence-based operations increased from six in June to 62 in July, re-

presenting a rise of 933pc. Terrorist deaths rose from 75 to 238, while civilian deaths increased by 93pc, from 28 to 54. Eighteen members of peace committees were also killed in the province.

Last month, security forces and law enforcement personnel jointly launched Operation 'Shab-e-Ah' in Balochistan in retaliation for a deadly attack on a police post at the Mangi Dam pumping station in Zarat on July 6 when armed attackers kidnapped and killed 27 police officers.

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PTI leadership, TAP on board for September 27 long march to Islamabad: Sohail Afridi

NEWS DESK: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Monday said that PTI's political leadership and its ally, the Tehreek Tahafuz-i-Ayteen Pakistan (TTAP), were on board with the call for a long march on September 27.

Speaking on Geo News' programme 'Capital Talk', CM Afridi said, "The PTI's political leadership across the country and its ally, the TTAP, are all on board with the long march, and they collectively agreed on September 27 as the date for it."

Responding to a question about Imran Khan's sister Aleema Khan's reservations over the date, he said she was a "non-political individual" and would agree to the date once the PTI apprised her of all the facts and figures.

CM Afridi also denied allegations by a PTI member currently residing outside Pakistan that he had met Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi before finalising the date for the long march.

"That allegation was rubbish. At the time of the alleged meeting, I was at KP House in Islamabad, contrary to the claim that I had met him in

ing the recent Peshawar rally, he said and was instructed to defer the Sept 27 date for the long march, he would agree.

CM Afridi added that he would also follow Imran's instructions if asked to pave the way for talks.

At the outset of his interview, Afridi said the PTI had no option but to protest as its grievances were not being heard by the authorities.

"People say that the PTI does politics of chaos, unrest and protests; however, it

would not have resorted to these if it had been heard by the authorities."

He claimed Imran had been jailed unlawfully. "The PTI founder is in solitary confinement and denied his rights. No one is allowed to meet him

During the interview, the KP chief minister also criticised the federal government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for economic inefficiency and bad governance.

He said that if he met PTI founder Imran Khan at Adiala jail and was instructed to defer the Sept 27 date for the long march, he would agree.

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AJK govt appoints Public Service Commission members amid questions over timing

NEWS DESK: Days before its exit from power, the incumbent Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government has appointed seven members to the Azad Jammu and Kashmir's (AJK) Public Service Commission (PSC), the top recruitment body of the territory.

A move that has raised questions about its propriety and timing.

According to a notification issued by the Services and General Administration Department, the appointments were made by the govern-

ment in exercise of the powers conferred by the Article 48(2) of the AJK Interim Constitution, 1974, read with Section 4(3) of the AJK Public Service Commission Act, 1986.

Those appointed include former secretaries Munir Hussain Chaudhary, Dr Chaudhry Liaqat Hussain and Mohammad Zahid Abbas from the quota of retired government servants in BS-20 and above, former professor Dr Abdul Qadoos Khan and former vice chancellor Dr Abdul Hameed from the quota of educationists, former additional chief secretary Midhat Shehzad from the quota of women; and retired medical specialist Dr Mohammad Saleem Khan from the quota of professionals.

Under the Public Service Commission Act, seven members are to be appointed from among retired civil servants or other outstanding persons with a good reputation and an educational qualification of at least graduation from a recognised university.

Three members are to be appointed from among educationists or scholars having a good reputation and at least 10 years' experience in teaching, administration or both.

PML-N takes strong exception to move by outgoing

PPP govt

new members will have a three-year term and will be entitled to draw pay and allowances as prescribed, the notification said. It added that their appointments would take effect from the date they took oath of their respective offices in terms of Section 4-A of the AJK Public Service Commission Act, 1986.

Shahid Mahmood Wani, a senior PML-N leader who was also a member of the party's election manifesto committee, took strong exception to the move he described as the questionable propriety and timing of the appointments.

"Without questioning the competence or credentials of the individuals appointed, the propriety of making such appointments at

this stage is certainly open to question. A government continuing in office as a transitional arrangement after the expiry of the assembly's term, and having lost the people's mandate, should ordinarily leave decisions of such long-term institutional consequence to the incoming elected government," he said.

The AJK Public Service Commission has long faced criticism over delays in its constitution and allegations that its members are appointed on the basis of the pre-

ference of the government of the day rather than through a transparent process.

In May 2023, when the three-year term of chairman retired Air Marshal Masood Akhtar and those of the commission's members expired, the body was left without a complete composition for the next eight months.

The latest appointments come as the PPP government continues in office after the expiry of the AJK Legislative Assembly's constitutional term of five years, pending completion of the election process.

The PML-N has also lost its majority in the elections held so far, with the PML-N emerging as the largest party and poised to form the next government.

Security personnel have intensified surveillance in the area, while further details are being ascertained.

The DPO praised the personnel deployed at the post for their prompt response and bravery, saying Swat police remained at the forefront of the fight against terrorism.

Such cowardly attacks cannot demoralise Swat Police. Our personnel know how to respond effectively to terrorist attacks," he said.

The attack came a week after a suicide bombing near the Kabul Police Station in Swat district claimed 17 lives, including seven policemen.

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In letter to PM, Achakzai urges 'immediate' appointment of new chief election commissioner

NEWS DESK: In a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, National Assembly Opposition Leader Mehmoood Khan Achakzai on Monday urged the appointment of a new chief election commissioner of the Election Commission of Pakistan, as well as two members representing Sindh and Balochistan.

In the letter, dated August 10 and available with Dawn, Achakzai, who heads the Tehreek Tahafuz Ayteen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) and is chairman of the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, drew the prime minister's attention to a "critical constitutional duty" and stated that the statutory tenure of the CEC and the members representing Sindh and Balochistan had ended on January 26, 2025.

To that effect, he urged the "immediate filling" of the offices, terming it "essential for maintaining the operational continuity, independence, and credibility of the commission".

In his letter,

each province shall follow the exact same procedural requirement of

expiry of their constitutional terms, and that the prime minister has not

yet initiated the constitutional process for appointing new members.

The meeting termed the establishment of an "impartial and independent EEC essential for fair, transparent, and free elections."

"Therefore, the prime minister should immediately meet with the opposition leader in this regard and initiate this important constitutional process without delay," it added.

The incumbent CEC

have now been in office for over a year after the expiry of their constitutionally mandated five-year terms.

The terms of the three officials ended on Jan 26, 2025. Under Article 215(4) of the Constitution, appointments to these posts were required within 45 days after the positions became vacant, i.e., by March 12, 2025.

However, a proviso in the Constitution (215(1) through the 26th Constitutional Amendment allows the CEC and members to continue until their successors are appointed. The incumbent CEC and two ECP members are serving under this provision. At the time, the delay was partly attributed to the absence of an officially notified leader of the opposition in the NA. It should also be mentioned that on July 30, the ECP had refused to recognise Achakzai as chairman of the PMAP over the party's failure to hold intra-party elections.

consultation between the prime minister and the leader of the opposition under Article 213."

Achakzai also drew attention to the matter at a meeting of the TTAP on Monday and informed the participants about the letter, according to a post on TTAP's X account.

"The meeting expressed astonishment and concern over the fact that the current CEC and members continue to serve even after the

expiry of their constitutional terms, and that the prime minister has not

yet initiated the constitutional process for appointing new members.

The meeting termed the establishment of an "impartial and independent EEC essential for fair, transparent, and free elections."

"Therefore, the prime minister should immediately meet with the opposition leader in this regard and initiate this important constitutional process without delay," it added.

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