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EU enforces world's toughest AI law



BRUSSELS: The European Union will have the power to enforce landmark artificial intelligence rules and to fine any companies that break the law.

The EU has the world's most comprehensive digital rulebook covering social media, online retailers and search engines, with plans for more rules this year.

In 2024, the EU adopted a sweeping AI law known as the “AI Act”, but its rules have been introduced in stages.

New law

The EU's new law takes a risk-based approach to the technology from Sunday.

The higher the risk to Europeans' rights or health, for example, the greater the obligations of firms to protect individuals from harm.

It also bans AI used for predictive policing, emotion recognition systems in workplaces or schools and AI that manipulates human behaviour.

From Sunday, AI-generated content like deepfakes must be labelled, while firms must ensure their AI systems like chatbots make it clear to users they are AI.

Existing AI systems have until December 2 to adapt to the new rules, and there are exemptions for “artistic, creative, satirical, fictional” work.

Enforcement powers

On Sunday, European regulators in the AI Office will have the power to enforce the bloc's rules on the most advanced AI models.

The regulatory body attached to the EU executive will be made up of dozens of tech experts, lawyers and economists.

The AI Office will be able to test the most advanced general-purpose AI models, such as chatbots, to ensure they comply with the law.

Companies must also give the EU access to their models, and in some cases the EU can demand access before they are placed on the market, an EU official said.

The EU will also be able to restrict a model's deployment within the EU if it has concerns that the provider doesn't address.

The powers arrive at an opportune moment. The EU struggled this year to get access to American AI developer Anthropic's Mythos model, but the rules kicking in on Sunday mean an issue like that shouldn't happen again.

National authorities will be able to enforce the rules for smaller AI systems.

If the EU finds companies breaking the rules, it can force them to take action to remedy the breach and fine the firms if they fail to do so.

The stiffest fines are for businesses that allow their systems to conduct banned practices up to seven per cent of a company's annual worldwide turnover or €35 million (\$40m), whichever is higher.

For other violations, companies could be fined up to 3pc of their global annual revenue or €15m. They may also be fined if they hinder or fail to cooperate with EU probes.

What's next?

More rules under the AI Act will be enforceable later this year and beyond.

From December, there will be a ban on artificial intelligence systems generating sexualised deepfakes, introduced following the global outrage over non-consensual nudes produced by Elon Musk's chatbot Grok.

The EU is also delaying the implementation of some high-risk AI rules concerning models deemed as potentially dangerous to safety, health or citizens' fundamental rights to give companies more time to prepare.

The rules will apply for stand-alone high-risk AI systems from December 2027 and in August 2028 for AI tools embedded in other products.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 2ND, 2026

Pakistan, US hold counter-terrorism dialogue, reaffirm commitment to combating terrorist groups



Pakistan and the US convened the Fourth Round of Counterterrorism Dialogue in Washington DC, on Wednesday, July 5.

WASHINGTON: The United States and Pakistan held the fourth counter-terrorism dialogue in Washington, reaffirming their commitment to combating terrorist groups and strengthening security cooperation at a time when regional tensions remain high.

The talks were led by US Coordinator for Counterterrorism Ambassador Gregory LoGerfo and Foreign Ministry Special Secretary Ambassador Nabeel Munir, a joint statement released by the US State Department said.

“The dialogue underscored shared interests in the US-Pakistan counter-terrorism partnership and the two countries’ determination to confront terrorism,” the joint statement said.

“Delegations exchanged views on the current threat environment, explored avenues to enhance collaboration, and discussed steps to strengthen border security and disrupt terrorist facilitation networks,” it added.

The statement specifically named ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K), Al Qaeda, the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and its affiliates among organisations that both governments said posed threats to regional security.

“The US and Pakistan affirmed their joint resolve to confront terrorist organisations that endanger the safety of their citizens and the stability of the region,” the statement said.

“The two governments committed to ensuring their counter-terrorism collaboration to keep both of their nations safe and secure, and as part of an enduring vision of regional peace, prosperity, and stability,” it said.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office said that the two sides held “extensive deliberations on the regional and global terrorist threat and pledged to deepen counter-terrorism collaboration both bilaterally and at multilateral fora”.



The renewed engagement marks a shift from the difficult period in US-Pakistan relations following the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan in 2021. Washington had expressed concerns over terrorists sanctuaries in the region, while Islamabad repeatedly highlighted the security challenges it faced from cross-border militancy and instability in Afghanistan.

In recent years, both countries have sought to focus on areas of mutual interest, including counter-terrorism, trade, investment, climate cooperation, and regional stability.

Pakistan’s strategic location and longstanding diplomatic links with neighbouring countries have also increased its importance in regional diplomacy. The country’s diplomatic role also gained renewed attention during the US-Iran conflict, as Islamabad has mediated between the two sides.

The improved engagement with the US also comes as Pakistan continues to face serious internal security challenges. According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, an Islamabad-based think tank, violence linked to terrorist attacks and counter-terrorism operations intensified sharply in July, making it the deadliest month of 2026, with 112 security personnel among 205 people killed.

Pakistan, US look to finalise reciprocal trade framework

While representatives from the US and Pakistan held counter-terrorism discussions in Washington, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb held a virtual meeting with United States Trade Representative Ambassador Jamieson Greer from Islamabad.

The meeting was held to review the progress of ongoing negotiations, which are focused on strengthening bilateral trade and economic cooperation between Pakistan and the US, a statement released by the finance ministry said.

The engagement took place roughly three weeks after the finance minister visited Washington, where he held talks with senior American officials on trade, tariffs, investment and economic cooperation.

During his visit, Aurangzeb held meetings with officials from the Office of the Trade Representative, the US Export-Import Bank (Exim), the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and the International Monetary Fund.

The discussions focused on a possible bilateral trade agreement covering tariffs, market access, investment opportunities and wider economic cooperation. Separate talks with the Exim Bank and the DFC explored financing for infrastructure, energy and private-sector investment projects in Pakistan.



During the meeting on Wednesday, he recalled his recent discussions in Washington and “welcomed the steady progress made by the respective negotiating teams and appreciated the

constructive engagement that has characterised the dialogue over time”, the finance ministry said.

It added that both sides noted that negotiations on the proposed reciprocal trade framework had advanced significantly and reaffirmed their shared commitment to conclude the agreement at the earliest.

“The finance minister highlighted the importance of maintaining the momentum of negotiations in view of Pakistan’s economic priorities.

“He emphasised that a strengthened trade and investment partnership with the United States would contribute to Pakistan’s export-led growth strategy, support economic resilience, and create greater commercial opportunities for businesses in both countries,” the statement read.

It further said that Aurangzeb also underlined the importance of continued collaboration with the Exim Bank to facilitate bilateral trade and investment.

According to the finance ministry, Ambassador Greer acknowledged Pakistan’s continued engagement throughout the negotiations.

He reaffirmed the United States’ commitment to “sustaining the positive trajectory of bilateral trade discussions and expressed confidence that the remaining issues could be resolved through continued technical engagement”, the finance ministry said.

It added that Aurangzeb also emphasised the importance of maintaining close coordination and accelerating technical-level discussions to build on the progress already achieved.

“Both sides expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved and agreed to continue working closely to finalise the remaining elements of the framework and agreed to continue regular engagement with a view to concluding the reciprocal trade framework soon, further strengthening the longstanding economic partnership between Pakistan and the United States,” the ministry’s statement read.

It added that Greer also “appreciated the progress made on labour and regulatory reforms, including measures relating to forced labour compliance”.

Pakistan is among the 60 countries on which the US imposed new import tariffs last month over what Washington said was their failure to effectively prohibit imports of goods produced with forced labour. Pakistan was placed in the lower 10 per cent tariff category, alongside countries that had either adopted forced labour import prohibitions, committed to doing so under reciprocal trade arrangements, or had partial enforcement regimes.

The finance ministry said that Pakistan’s Federal Secretary for Commerce Jawad Paul and senior team members of the USTR also joined Wednesday’s meeting.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 05, 2026

Islamabad raises Afghan terrorism concerns at UN Security Council



Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad addresses the UN Security Council in New York, the US on August 5, 2026.

WASHINGTON: Pakistan informed the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) that multiple terrorist groups continued to operate from safe havens inside Afghanistan, posing a growing threat to regional security.

Speaking at a UNSC briefing on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad also highlighted Islamabad's concerns over Jammu and Kashmir, as the Council met on the seventh anniversary of India's August 5, 2019, decision to revoke the region's special constitutional status.

Ahmad described the measures imposed on that day as a new phase of repression against the Kashmiri people and accused India of committing what he called "state terrorism" in the disputed territory.

He said the international community must show "zero tolerance" for such actions and should not allow counterterrorism efforts to be used as a pretext to suppress what Pakistan describes as legitimate struggles for self-determination.

The Kashmir reference came alongside a broader discussion of terrorism and regional security, with the ambassador focusing heavily on Afghanistan-based terrorist groups — an issue that has become central to Pakistan’s security concerns and increasingly part of Washington’s regional agenda.



The UN remarks followed the fourth US-Pakistan Counterterrorism Dialogue held on Tuesday in Washington, where both countries reaffirmed their commitment to combating terrorist organisations and strengthening security cooperation.

In his address to the Council, Ahmad said that while sustained international counter-terrorism efforts had degraded the capabilities of groups such as the militant Islamic State, the terrorist threat continued to evolve, particularly in parts of Africa, the Middle East and Afghanistan.

He said Islamic State’s Khorasan chapter (IS-K) had suffered setbacks, including because of counter-terrorism operations by Pakistan, but continued to pose a significant concern, particularly in Afghanistan.

“The situation in Afghanistan remains deeply alarming,” Ambassador Ahmad told the Council.

“Since the Taliban takeover in August 2021, multiple terrorist groups continue to thrive in that country in an increasingly permissive environment.”

He specifically named the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and its Majeed Brigade, IS-K and its affiliates, the East Turkistan

Islamic Movement (ETIM) and Al Qaeda affiliates as groups that, according to Pakistan, have access to safe havens inside Afghanistan.

Pakistan has repeatedly accused the TTP of using Afghan territory to plan and carry out attacks inside Pakistan, a charge that Taliban authorities have rejected. Islamabad has also accused external actors of supporting terrorist groups operating against Pakistan.

The ambassador urged the Taliban authorities to fulfil their obligation to ensure that Afghan territory is not used by any terrorist organisation to threaten other countries. He also called for international action against what he described as external sponsors of terrorism.

The US-Pakistan counter-terrorism dialogue reflected a similar focus on Afghanistan-based terrorist groups.

Counter-terrorism has emerged as one of the areas where the two countries continue to see a clear convergence of interests.

Later in his UNSC speech, Ambassador Ahmad returned to Kashmir, linking the issue to Pakistan's broader argument that international security frameworks should address all forms of terrorism, including what Islamabad calls "state terrorism" resulting from foreign occupation.

He argued that the global response to terrorism must avoid double standards and selectivity, saying that all groups posing a threat to international peace and security should be addressed through a consistent approach.

The ambassador concluded that terrorism "knows no borders" and "has no religion," calling for a coordinated international effort to combat the threat.

According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, an Islamabad-based think tank, violence linked to terrorist attacks and counter-terrorism operations intensified sharply in July, making it the deadliest month of 2026, with 112 security personnel among 205 people killed.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 06, 2026

UNSC condemns Swat suicide blast after Pakistan sounds alarm on Afghan terrorist havens



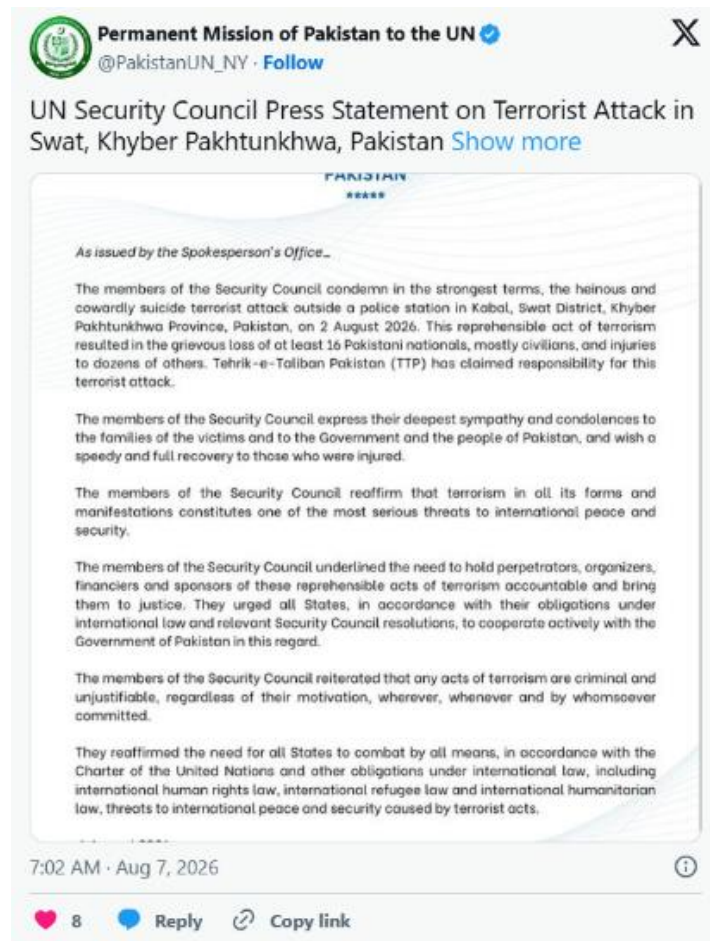
Police officials inspect the site following a suicide bombing during a protest in Swat district on August 2.

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) strongly condemned the suicide bombing in Swat last week, calling it a “heinous and cowardly” terrorist attack after Pakistan warned the body that multiple terrorist groups continue to operate from safe havens inside Afghanistan.

In a press statement issued by the Office of the UN secretary general’s spokesperson, the council said it condemned “in the strongest terms” the “heinous and cowardly” suicide attack outside the police station in Swat’s Kabal on Aug 2.

“This reprehensible act of terrorism resulted in the grievous loss of at least 16 Pakistani nationals, mostly civilians, and injuries to dozens of others. Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for this terrorist attack,” it added.

The UNSC also expressed solidarity with Pakistan, saying, “The members of the Security Council express their deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims and to the government and the people of Pakistan, and wish a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured.”



The statement reaffirmed the international body’s longstanding position that terrorism “in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security”.

It further stressed the importance of bringing those responsible to justice, declaring: “The members of the council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice.”

They urged all UN member states, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant UNSC resolutions, to cooperate actively with the government of Pakistan in this regard.

The council also reiterated that “any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed” and reaffirmed that all countries must combat terrorism in accordance with the UN Charter and international law, including international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

Earlier this week, Pakistan told a UNSC meeting that several terrorist organisations continue to operate from sanctuaries inside Afghanistan, posing an increasing threat to regional and international security.

Addressing a briefing on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorism, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar, said the country continued to face a grave terrorist threat emanating from across its western border.

He identified the banned TTP, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and its Majeed Brigade, the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) and its affiliates, the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), and Al Qaeda affiliates as groups that, according to Pakistan, maintain safe havens inside Afghanistan.

Pakistan urged the international community to ensure that Afghan territory is not used by terrorist organisations to launch attacks against neighbouring countries and called for stronger international cooperation against cross-border terrorism.

The developments also followed the fourth US-Pakistan Counterterrorism Dialogue held in Washington on Tuesday, where officials from both countries reaffirmed their commitment to combating terrorist organisations.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 07, 2026

Terrorist havens

DESPITE the use of both carrots and sticks by the international community, the Afghan Taliban refuse to cut their ties to terrorist groups such as the TTP. This poses a particular problem to Afghanistan's neighbours, including Pakistan, which has borne the brunt of terrorist violence ever since the Taliban's return to Kabul in 2021.

Both KP and Balochistan are currently in the grip of violent insurgencies, with the elements responsible for the bloodshed finding safe havens in Afghanistan. Pakistan raised the issue at the UN Security Council on Wednesday, with this country's permanent representative highlighting the "increasingly permissive environment" for terrorist groups in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover. He urged the Taliban to fulfil their obligations and ensure Afghan soil is not used against neighbouring states. China's representative at the same forum echoed these concerns, urging the Taliban to take action, whilst supporting Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts. The Chinese diplomat also called for sanctions on the BLA and Majeed Brigade.

These issues have been raised repeatedly, while UNSC monitoring reports have endorsed Pakistan's concerns regarding the permissive environment for terrorist groups in Afghanistan. It is not just the TTP; Al Qaeda, IS-K, ETIM and others are all believed to be active in Afghanistan. While the Taliban are opposed to IS-K, they have deep links with other violent actors. Moreover, nearly all of Afghanistan's neighbours have complained of the threat these outfits pose to their security.

Yet the Taliban only pay lip service to these concerns, denying the fact that terrorists operate from their territory. These denials are implausible as there is a convincing body of evidence proving that violent outfits operate in an agreeable atmosphere in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan.

As this paper has argued before, a regional response is required to tackle the problem of Afghanistan-based terrorist groups. The Afghan Taliban are an unpalatable reality and cannot be wished away. The challenge for the international community is to use a combination of deterrence and incentives to make them change their tune. Pakistan has tried kinetic methods to deter cross-border terrorism, but in the long term, continued hostilities are not sustainable.

The economic situation in Afghanistan is dire, and its people live in misery. Instead of protecting their terrorist comrades, the Taliban need to think about improving the lives of common Afghans. This can only happen through trade and regional integration. Yet Afghanistan will remain a pariah if its rulers keep harbouring terrorists. Therefore, Kabul's neighbours need to continue diplomatic, political and, where needed, kinetic efforts to end the 'export' of terrorism from Afghanistan, both for its own development, and regional peace.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 7TH, 2026

The supreme sacrifice

BY AFZAL ALI SHIGRI | TARIQ PARVEZ | TARIQ KHOSA

THE police are a vital pillar of our social fabric, serving not only as guardians of the law but also as protectors of the community, said President Asif Ali Zardari on Police Martyrs Day on Aug 4. “Their exemplary courage, firm dedication and ultimate sacrifice in the service of the nation will always inspire pride and command the deepest respect of every citizen of Pakistan,” he added. The prime minister, too, honoured the bravery of police officers who had laid down their lives in the line of duty, noting that the force displays “exceptional professionalism and unflinching resolve” in the nation’s fight against terrorism, violent extremism and crime.

The Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies reported that the first seven months of 2026 witnessed 2,786 deaths linked to terrorist violence and counterterrorism operations — 434 security forces’ personnel lost their lives, including 152 police officials in KP and 89 in Balochistan. So far, July has been the deadliest month of 2026, with 112 security officials offering the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty, compared to 38 fatalities a month earlier in June. This is an unprecedented 195 per cent increase in the deaths of law enforcers.

At least eight suicide attacks were recorded last month, the highest number in a single month during the past decade. The recent deadly attack near a police station in Swat caused 17 fatalities. As this paper rightly asserted after the Swat bombing, it “is far too high a toll, and the state needs to urgently refine its CT strategy to prevent further loss of precious lives”.

Following Police Martyrs Day, one of us convened a forum of serving and retired police officers to discuss the current vulnerabilities and challenges faced by police in general, and those in KP and Balochistan in particular. The trajectory and tenor of violence in these provinces have distinct traits. KP has been on the receiving end since 9/11, paying a huge price in the so-called war against terror. Since Kabul’s takeover by the Taliban in August 2021, violence and bloodshed have assumed greater intensity. Acts of terror have risen exponentially, with fatalities among security forces and civilians progressively rising each year. The last two years have been the worst so far, with police losing 314 personnel.

Balochistan is facing its fifth (and longest) phase (20 years) of insurgency by separatists. Nawab Akbar Bugti’s killing in a cave near Kohlu in August 2006 was an unfortunate incident that led to a sharp escalation in Baloch militancy. The terrorist nexus of the BLA, BRA and BLF has added lethality to insurgent attacks. BLA’s Majeed Brigade is well-equipped and emulates TTP’s violent tactics. It has superior weaponry, indicating the role of hostile foreign agencies in fomenting unrest in the province. The police’s challenge has increased manifold now that the entire province has been converted into police jurisdiction. The gap in human resources, infrastructure and training for the job is pronounced. A recent significant development is the incursion of the TTP in the Pakhtun areas as witnessed in the tragic July 6 attack on the Mangi Dam pumping station police post by the terrorist group, leading to the

kidnapping and killing of 27 policemen. Our deliberations have led to identification of certain vulnerabilities and constraints that beset the police operating in the terror and insurgency-prone areas of KP and Balochistan where violence is driven by a combination of enhanced militant capability, difficult terrain, cross-border dynamics and institutional challenges. The following issues are pertinent.

Intelligence coordination and information sharing: Coordination between police, intel agencies and other law-enforcement institutions is not always seamless; delays in sharing actionable intelligence reduce the ability to prevent attacks or intercept terrorists before they strike.

Inadequate protection of police personnel and infrastructure: Police stations, check posts and patrols are often targeted because they have limited physical protection, surveillance or early-warning capabilities; some units in dangerous zones lack sufficient protective equipment, secure transport and modern communication systems, increasing their vulnerability.

Limited capacity and community-based policing: In remote and conflict-affected areas, a trust deficit exists between communities and police. Without strong local engagement, authorities receive fewer timely reports about suspicious activities, allowing terrorist networks to operate with greater freedom.

The merger of Fata into KP and the conversion of ‘B’ areas into ‘A’ areas in Balochistan was undertaken without adequate planning, capacity building or the provision of necessary financial and operational resources. The denial of these essential resources has exposed both police and the civil armed forces to avoidable risks, contributing to a significant increase in casualties among personnel. Expressions of support and appreciation for their sacrifices must therefore be matched by meaningful investment in manpower, training, equipment, intelligence, mobility and welfare to enable police to perform their duties effectively and safely.

As former police chiefs we acknowledge that the challenges faced by current police commanders are far more daunting and require a strategic and operational rethink to restore order and promote peace in the restive borderlands in Pakistan’s north and south. Serving and retired police officers agree that the revised CT NAP must be implemented through professional tactics and strategic oversight. Here are a few recommendations at the operational level.

Strengthen intelligence-led policing: Establish integrated intelligence coordination mechanisms that facilitate timely information-sharing among police, intelligence services and local administration; expand analytical capabilities and use technology to identify emerging threats, while ensuring operations remain consistent with the law and human rights standards.

Modernise police protection and training: Upgrade security at vulnerable police facilities through better surveillance, convoy drills, ambush response, communications and sound infrastructure; provide regular training in CT tactics, drone threat response, incident command and officer safety, along with appropriate protective equipment.

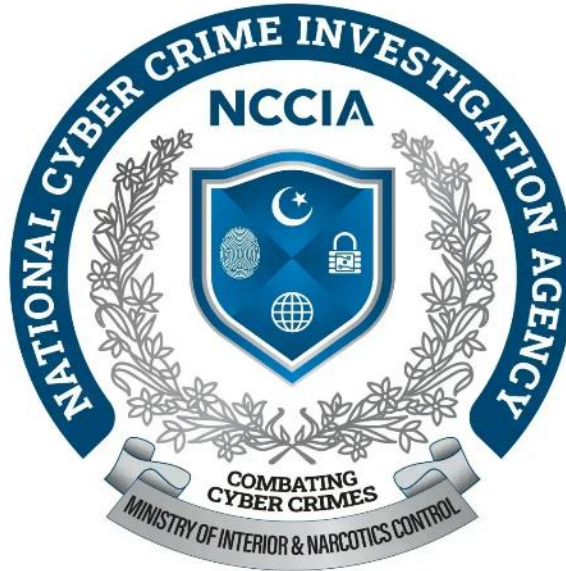
Expand community policing and public partnerships: Build stronger relationships with local communities, tribal elders, religious leaders and CSOs to improve trust and encourage lawful

reporting of suspicious activities; develop accessible mechanisms for citizens to share information confidentially; promote public awareness programmes that strengthen resilience.

The trend of rising terrorist attacks against, and thus higher casualties among, the police must be immediately stopped before it derails the entire CT effort in KP and Balochistan. This requires a balanced approach that combines effective policing, better intelligence coordination, professional training and meaningful community engagement. Strengthening these areas can enhance the safety of police personnel while also increasing public confidence and contributing to a more secure environment for local communities. Finally, for the policymakers and political leadership, our message is simple: invest in police and trust them to deliver.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 8TH, 2026

NCCIA arrests 28 suspects for online fraud



LAHORE: The National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), during a province-wide crackdown, arrested 28 suspects allegedly involved in organised online fraud schemes targeting citizens through impersonation, fake investment offers and fabricated official identities.

The NCCIA recovered 24 mobile phones and a laptop and are examining the devices for evidence of further links to the fraud network. In Lahore, 18 suspects were arrested in separate operations.

The agency said the suspects used a range of identities to gain victims' confidence, including those of relatives, visa agents, government officials and Punjab Safe Cities Authority personnel.

In one case, fraudsters allegedly posed as a relative and a visa agent and received Rs25.86 million from a victim, it said.

Three suspects were arrested in Faisalabad where, the NCCIA said, a victim was persuaded to invest money after being shown fabricated trading records, digital wallet balances and purported profit statements. The victim suffered a loss of Rs54.6 million.

Seven suspects were arrested in Multan who posed as relatives, bank employees and people based in Britain and demanded payments on the pretext of prize money, customs clearance, taxes and visa renewal.

“We are examining the seized digital devices through forensic analysis and reviewing financial transactions, call records and digital communications to determine the scale of the operation and identify other individuals linked to the network,” it said.

The NCCIA said the investigation highlighted a method of online fraud in which criminals would combine digital communication with impersonation and social engineering to establish trust before persuading victims to transfer money.

FIA: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Saturday arrested a woman allegedly operating an unauthorised office for providing Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) attestation and apostille-related services in Gulberg.

According to FIA, the suspect identified as Khadija Sameer was arrested during a raid by the Anti-Corruption Circle. The agency said documents relating to MoFA apostille services were recovered during the operation.

In a separate operation, the FIA arrested a proclaimed offender allegedly wanted in connection with electricity theft. Parvez Ahmad was wanted by the agency since 2024.

The FIA said further investigation into both cases was under way.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 9TH, 2026

Taliban support fuels deadlier TTP attacks in Pakistan: UN



Taliban soldiers load a rocket launcher in a vehicle near the Torkham border in Afghanistan.

ISLAMABAD: The Afghan Taliban’s continued support for the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has contributed to a rise in the frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, even as Kabul has taken some initial steps to rein in the group, according to a UN Security Council-mandated monitoring report.

The report also points to growing operational and facilitation linkages among the TTP, Al Qaeda, Islamic State-Khorasan (ISIL-K) and the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA).

The 38th report of the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, covering the period from Dec 16, 2025, to June 9, 2026, said that “cross-border attacks between Pakistan and Afghanistan escalated, provoked by a high number of attacks by Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan against Pakistan”.

Like previous editions, the report was unequivocal in its assessment of Kabul’s role, saying that “the de facto authorities (Taliban) continued their support to the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which escalated attacks against Pakistan, provoking military exchanges”.

It noted concern among member states that the continuing conflict could create opportunities for terrorist groups and generate additional security challenges for the region.

Taliban's dual-track approach

The assessment nevertheless recorded some initial steps by the Taliban authorities to contain the TTP, although these appeared aimed more at managing the group than dismantling its infrastructure.

The report said Afghan authorities had relocated around 2,000 TTP fighters and their families from areas along the Pakistani border to deeper inside Afghanistan in an effort to rein in the group.

It also said Taliban leader Hibatullah Akhundzada had warned the TTP leadership through backchannel communications to halt attacks against Pakistan or risk losing Taliban support.

The developments point to what appears to be a dual-track Taliban approach, continuing to provide the TTP space and support because of shared ideological ties while moving some fighters away from the border to reduce attacks on Pakistan, avoid a major escalation with Islamabad and address growing international concerns.

For Pakistan, however, relocating fighters deeper inside Afghanistan would do little to address the underlying problem as long as the TTP's command, training and logistical networks remain intact.

Meanwhile, the TTP has continued to expand its organisational structure and operational reach.

The report said that following its annual rahbari shura in December, the group announced a revised structure with two new divisions covering Balochistan and the central region, and Kashmir and Gilgit.

The restructuring also included a new division described by the group as the "TTP Air Force", suggesting an effort to broaden its operational capabilities.

In March, the group announced in several languages its spring campaign, "Operation Khyber", calling for increased attacks against Pakistani security forces and civilians.

One of its deadliest attacks during the reporting period came on Feb 16 in Bajaur, where a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device martyred 11 security personnel and a child and wounded others. The TTP claimed responsibility and was reportedly operating from Afghanistan, the report said.

Blurred lines

The UN assessment also points to increasingly blurred lines between terrorist groups operating in and from Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda's official media outlet, As-Sahab Media Foundation, issued a statement on April 28 supporting the Taliban and, for the first time, backing the TTP in its operations against Pakistan.

The report said that while Al Qaeda had previously provided ideological guidance, training and support to the TTP, the latest statement represented more direct backing.

“One member state reported that BLA terrorists were trained along with TTP by Al Qaeda trainers in Afghanistan,” it said.

The report also noted that Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) formed the backbone of Ittihadul Mujahideen Pakistan, which was reportedly involved in several attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

AQIS leadership was reported to remain in Kabul after being issued tazkiras, suggesting “close cooperation between the Taliban and AQIS”, according to the report.

The assessment thus points towards a wider militant ecosystem rather than an isolated TTP problem, with training, facilitation and logistical networks increasingly cutting across organisational boundaries.

ISIL-K remains another major component of the threat. The report described it as the greatest threat to the Taliban authorities and the region, despite serious setbacks suffered as a result of counterterrorism operations by Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban.

ISIL-K was reported to have moved its operational infrastructure towards northern Afghanistan while dispersing training networks across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and retaining a presence in the suburbs of Kabul.

The UN report said ISIL-K was in a rebuilding phase, having shifted from attempts to hold territory to conducting fewer but high-profile, mass-casualty attacks, demonstrating resilience and adaptability.

Member states reported that the group possessed modern tactical equipment, including drones, night-vision devices and thermal imagers, and had received training in urban combat and the use of drones. One member state also reported that ISIL-K and the BLA shared facilitation networks for logistics. The report said ISIL-K attacks had declined in Afghanistan but increased in Pakistan.

On Feb 6, a suicide bomber detonated explosives during Friday prayers at the Khadija Tul Kubra Mosque of the Shia community in Islamabad, killing 32 people and injuring more than 150. The attack was claimed by a group calling itself ISIL in Pakistan but was likely conducted by ISIL-K, the report said.

The group also claimed responsibility for the May 5 assassination of Pakistani cleric Sheikh Muhammad Idrees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The findings suggest that the threat facing Pakistan from Afghanistan is becoming more complex, with the TTP retaining Taliban ideological and logistical support, Al Qaeda providing training and ideological backing and ISIL-K and the BLA benefiting from overlapping facilitation networks.

The Taliban’s reported relocation of TTP fighters and warning to its leadership may reduce immediate pressure along the border, but the UN assessment does not suggest that Kabul has taken the more consequential step of severing its relationship with the group.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 13TH, 2026

Pakistan's crypto gamble

BY DR IKRAMUL HAQ



LAHORE: Pakistan's renewed embrace of cryptocurrency is being presented as technological progress. Official statements describe blockchain, tokenisation and virtual assets as instruments capable of attracting investment, modernising financial services and positioning Pakistan within the emerging digital economy. Few would dispute that financial technology is reshaping global commerce or that Pakistan should remain isolated from it.

The real question is not whether Pakistan should engage with digital assets. It is whether the State has first built the constitutional, legal and regulatory foundations required for sovereign-level crypto initiatives and partnerships with private foreign entities. This distinction is fundamental. Pakistan's governments have repeatedly adopted ambitious reforms before constructing the institutions needed to regulate them. Energy, public procurement, taxation, privatisation and financial regulation all demonstrate how institutional weaknesses can eventually overwhelm sound policy objectives.

Cryptocurrency presents an even larger challenge because it combines finance, technology, cross-border transactions, cybersecurity and national security within a single ecosystem. Reports of Pakistan's engagement with foreign cryptocurrency ventures, including entities

associated with the family business interests of US President Donald Trump, have understandably attracted international attention. The issue is not whether these associations are lawful.

No evidence presently suggests that Pakistan has acted unlawfully or that any foreign partner has committed misconduct in relation to Pakistan. The concern is whether adequate institutional safeguards existed before such strategic relationships were pursued. Governments routinely scrutinise transactions involving politically exposed persons, sovereign wealth, strategic infrastructure and financial institutions. Such scrutiny is not hostility towards investment. It is an essential part of good governance. Pakistan must apply the same standards to itself.

The country's enthusiasm for digital assets also sits uneasily beside its recent regulatory history. Pakistan spent nearly two decades strengthening its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing framework. Meeting international monitoring requirements demanded extensive legislative amendments, regulatory restructuring, enhanced financial surveillance and greater cooperation among enforcement agencies.

Cryptocurrency adds a new layer of complexity. Blockchain technology is neutral. The same distributed ledger that can improve payment efficiency may facilitate illicit transfers where regulation and enforcement remain weak. The challenge lies not in the technology itself, but in governance. International investigations continue to show the difficulties regulators face in supervising virtual-asset markets. Cross-border ownership structures, decentralised exchanges, jurisdictional arbitrage, sanctions-evasion techniques and anonymous wallets have tested even sophisticated regulatory systems. Such findings should not be treated as accusations against every crypto enterprise. They are warnings that digital finance requires exceptional institutional capacity.

Pakistan must ask a simple but uncomfortable question: have its institutions developed at the same pace as its policy ambitions? Parliament still lacks a comprehensive legislative framework governing virtual assets. Issues concerning licensing, consumer protection, taxation, insolvency, cyber liability, anti-money laundering obligations, cross-border enforcement and regulatory jurisdiction remain only partly addressed. The State Bank of Pakistan, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, tax authorities, investigative agencies and newly created regulatory bodies possess overlapping responsibilities, while their coordination mechanisms remain largely untested. The sequencing is therefore troubling. A regulator created after political enthusiasm has already taken hold may be forced to legitimise decisions rather than independently evaluate them.

A statutory framework enacted after partnerships are announced can become an instrument of ratification instead of scrutiny. Sound governance requires the law, institutional mandates and risk controls to precede commercial commitments, not follow them. This uncertainty matters because cryptocurrency is not merely another financial product. It affects monetary policy, capital controls, foreign-exchange regulation, taxation, banking supervision and national security simultaneously. Decisions taken today may shape Pakistan's financial architecture for decades. Monetary sovereignty is particularly important. Privately issued stablecoins

increasingly perform functions traditionally associated with sovereign currencies. If cross-border trade, remittances or domestic settlements migrate towards private digital currencies, central banks face new challenges in implementing monetary policy, monitoring capital movements and protecting financial stability. These questions require public debate before commitments become difficult to reverse.

The fiscal implications are equally serious. Pakistan's tax system already struggles to capture digital commerce, offshore transactions and emerging financial products. Virtual assets create further questions involving capital gains, business income, indirect taxation, reporting obligations and cross-border information exchange. Without legislative clarity, taxpayers and administrators will face uncertainty, unequal treatment and avoidable litigation.

Transparency is indispensable. Whenever governments enter strategic partnerships involving emerging technologies, public confidence depends upon disclosure rather than secrecy. Citizens are entitled to know the legal framework governing such arrangements, the safeguards incorporated into them and the due diligence undertaken before approval. This obligation becomes stronger where foreign private entities possess substantial political visibility. Democratic accountability does not presume wrongdoing. It recognises that public confidence grows when governments disclose how significant decisions were made, who evaluated the risks and which public authority accepted responsibility. Pakistan's digital future cannot rest on confidential understandings inaccessible to parliament, independent experts and the public. Straightforward answers are required. Has parliament debated a national cryptocurrency policy? Has the cabinet approved the strategic framework?

Have the State Bank and SECP independently assessed the implications for monetary policy and financial stability? Has a comprehensive anti-money laundering, counter-terrorism financing and sanctions-risk assessment been conducted? Has the Federal Board of Revenue developed a coherent taxation framework? Have the Ministry of Law and other relevant institutions examined the constitutional implications for financial sovereignty and regulatory jurisdiction? These questions are neither political nor ideological. They represent the minimum standards expected in a constitutional democracy.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, AUGUST 17, 2026

Punjab tells arms dealers to make digital inventories



LAHORE: The Punjab home department has made digital inventory mandatory for all arms dealers across the province to compile arms data.

The initiative has been taken under the provincial government's vision of a Punjab that is "safe and free from illegal weapons".

All arms dealers will be required to record their complete existing stock and details of all purchases and sales on the home department's online portal by Aug 26.

A home department spokesman said the inventory module had been introduced for business arms licence (BAL) holders across Punjab.

The complete record of all firearms and ammunition held by each arms dealer will be available on the online portal, along with a digital record of all arms purchases and sales.

All arms dealers are required to enter details of their existing stock on the Punjab Arms Licence portal (<https://pal.nadra.gov.pk/pal/>).

The deadline for registering existing stock and purchase and sale records has been set for Aug 26 this year.

The home department has directed all arms dealers to ensure complete registration of their existing stock by the stipulated deadline.

It has provided all deputy commissioners with details of arms dealers operating in their respective districts.

Warning of legal action

In a letter addressed to all deputy commissioners, the home department has directed them to ensure that all arms dealers register their existing stock on the online portal and submit a compliance report to the Punjab home department after updating the records.

Legal action will be taken against arms dealers who fail to upload their inventory, a department spokesman said.

Under the law, the licences of non-compliant arms dealers may be suspended, their businesses sealed and fines imposed for failure to upload stock details.

The home department is also organising a special training workshop for arms dealers on the arms licence inventory module at the Punjab Forensic Science Authority auditorium on Aug 24 (Monday).

Online arrangements for the training workshop have also been made at the offices of deputy commissioners across the province, from where arms dealers will be able to participate in the workshop online.

The workshop will provide arms dealers with detailed guidance on the online portal and the inventory module, while also giving them an opportunity to raise questions and concerns regarding the system, the home department stated.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 21ST, 2026

Government calls for global action against terrorism



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari called for unified global action against terrorism and stressed that no territory was used for terrorism against another country.

The two leaders made these assertions in their separate messages on the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, which is observed annually on August 21 to honour and support the victims of terrorism.

In his message, shared by the Prime Minister's Office on X, PM Shehbaz said Pakistan was joining the international community in observing this day dedicated to remembering the victims of terrorism and extended its "heartfelt solidarity and tribute to all those who had suffered from this scourge".

He noted that terrorism remained one of the most serious challenges confronting humanity.

"Only those devoid of humanity can inflict suffering and play with the lives of innocent people to pursue their nefarious objectives. The families of those who have lost their lives to terrorism, as well as those who have sustained lifelong injuries, equally deserve our compassion and solidarity," he added.



The premier said Pakistan was among the countries that had suffered immensely from terrorism.

“Not only have our valiant armed forces made the ultimate sacrifice in the fight against this scourge, but the brave officers and personnel of our law enforcement agencies, as well as our countless innocent citizens, have also laid down their lives.

“We salute the courage and sacrifice of all those civilians and security personnel who have lost their lives in acts of terrorism,” he said.

He highlighted that Pakistan had also paid a “heavy economic and social price” in the fight against terrorism.

“Terrorism has adversely affected the economic well-being of our people and hindered Pakistan’s journey towards development, progress and prosperity. With our unwavering national resolve, Pakistan will continue this struggle until this menace is completely eradicated,” he said.

The prime minister added, “No nation, civilisation, religion or faith in the world advocates terrorism. Acts of terrorism are a manifestation of diseased minds and an expression of inhuman ideologies.”

He stressed that “unconditional condemnation” of terrorism by the international community, coupled with effective mutual cooperation, was indispensable for the complete eradication of terrorism.

The prime minister further noted that the physical, psychological and social rehabilitation of victims of terrorism was also part of shared global responsibility and said that the government, despite its limited resources, consistently remained mindful of the welfare and needs of the victims of terrorism and the law enforcement personnel engaged in combating this menace.

“Pakistan has a comprehensive support system in place for martyrs, their families and victims of terrorism. Ensuring that all victims have easy and timely access to healthcare, rehabilitation and essential civic services remains a foremost priority of the government,” he said.

He called upon relevant institutions at the global, national, collective and individual levels to raise their voices against terrorism, subversion and all negative tendencies, while upholding universal human values and the rule of international law.

President’s message

In his message, shared by the Presidency on X, President Zardari expressed solidarity with the survivors of terrorism, their families and communities whose lives had been forever changed by violence.

Echoing PM Shehbaz’s words, he too said that Pakistan had paid an “enormous price” in the fight against terrorism.

“For more than two decades, tens of thousands of our people, including children, political leaders, members of the armed forces, law enforcement personnel, first responders and public servants, have lost their lives.

“From Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto to the innocent children and teachers of Army Public School Peshawar, and countless other Pakistanis, terrorism has inflicted wounds that remain part of our national memory,” he added, particularly mentioning the assassination of his late wife and former prime minister Benazir in 2007 and a deadly Army Public School attack in 2014 that claimed nearly 150 lives.

Even today, he said, “our citizens and security personnel continue to make sacrifices, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. We salute their courage and stand with every family that has lost a loved one to terrorism”.



He stressed that no religion, faith, sect, ideology, grievance, cause or political objective could justify the killing of innocent people.

“Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations must be condemned without distinction. The international community must ensure that no territory is used to perpetrate terrorism against another country and that no terrorist organisation receives sanctuary, financing, weapons, logistical assistance or any other form of external support,” he asserted.

At the same time, he said, remembrance must lead to responsibility and recovery.

Victims and survivors often lived for years with physical injuries, psychological trauma, loss of livelihood, interrupted education and social isolation, he noted, adding that their suffering could not be answered merely through immediate relief or one-time financial compensation.

“They deserve empathy, medical and psychosocial care, education, rehabilitation, legal assistance and livelihood opportunities that enable them to rebuild their lives with dignity.”

The president said Pakistan remained committed to strengthening a coordinated and survivor-centred system of support. “In keeping with this year’s focus on victim-led digital initiatives, we should responsibly harness technology to make information, assistance and rehabilitation services more accessible to victims and their families,” he emphasised.

“Supporting victims of terrorism is not an act of charity. It is a matter of justice, human dignity and national responsibility.

“Government institutions, healthcare and educational institutions, civil society, the private sector, media and development partners must work together to ensure sustained support for victims and their families. The suffering of victims must not disappear from our national conscience when it disappears from the news cycle,” he emphasised.

The president also stressed that the “struggle against terrorism must also confront the extremism, intolerance and hatred that allow violence to take root”.

“We must address the social, ethnic and religious discrimination that extremists exploit to spread hatred and division. When intolerance is allowed to deepen, it can create fertile ground for radicalisation, violent extremism and ultimately terrorism,” he added.

Terrorism, he said, could not be defeated by security measures alone.

“We must build a society in which our young people are protected from radicalisation and in which differences in ethnicity, religion, sect or political belief must never become a justification for violence. No child should inherit the fear, trauma or hatred created by terrorism,” he stressed.

The president noted that terrorists had targeted Pakistanis across provinces, communities, faiths and institutions. However, they had failed to “break our national resolve”.



“The sacrifices of our people belong to no single province, ethnicity, sect or institution. They are sacrifices made for Pakistan as a whole.”

On this day, he said, “let us remember those we have lost, stand with those who continue to bear the consequences of terrorism, and renew our collective determination to defeat terrorism and build a peaceful, tolerant, pluralistic, compassionate and resilient Pakistan”.

Concluding his message, he prayed for those who lost their lives to terrorism and wished strength and patience for their families.

FO highlights ‘familiar and grim’ pattern of violence

The Foreign Office (FO) also issued a statement in remembrance of victims of terrorism, saying that the day was “not only for ceremony but for honest reckoning and commemoration of the lives sacrificed to fighting terrorism and the cost paid by the victims’ families”.

It said that over 90,000 Pakistanis had lost their lives and the country had incurred economic losses of over \$150 billion in the fight against terrorism.

Behind the rising toll, it said, was a “familiar and grim” pattern of violence that was planned, financed and directed from across the border and often supported by “hostile elements” from neighbouring countries.

The FO also highlighted that terrorism was now “multi-faceted”, as terrorists employed emerging technologies and enhanced their outreach via cyberspace for “increasingly sophisticated and lethal attacks”. It added that Pakistan was a victim of disinformation campaigns, “hydro-terrorism” and extra-territorial assassination campaigns.

“Despite these challenges, Pakistan remains unflinching in its resolve, and unwavering in its commitment, to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations,” the FO said.

In its statement, it paid tribute and reaffirmed solidarity with the Kashmiri people living under “systemic state repression, encompassing draconian laws, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention” in India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, which it said met “every definition of terrorism”.

It also paid tribute to Palestine, noting that despite a ceasefire since last October, the Palestinian people continued to suffer “unspeakable human rights atrocities” while their right to self-determination was denied.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Pakistan
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 PR No: **223/2026**

Statement by Pakistan on the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to Victims of Terrorism (21 August, 2026)



Statement by Pakistan on the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism (21 August 2026)

Pakistan joins nations across the world in observing the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism - a day set aside not only for ceremony but for honest reckoning and commemoration of the lives sacrificed in fighting terrorism and the cost paid by the victims' families. It is also a moment to reflect and renew our unflinching resolve for continued vigilance and commitment in combating this global menace.

Pakistan continues to render unprecedented sacrifices in blood and treasure in fighting terrorism, not only for our own people but the region and beyond. Over 90,000 Pakistanis have lost their lives and the country has incurred economic losses surpassing US\$150 billion in the ongoing fight against terrorism.

Terrorism is now multi-faceted with terrorists employing emerging technologies and cyberwarfare to enhance outreach for increasingly sophisticated and lethal attacks. Pakistan is also a victim of disinformation/misinformation campaigns, hydro-terrorism and extra territorial assassination campaigns.

The year 2025 has been among the deadliest Pakistan has faced over a decade. Behind this grim toll lies a familiar and grim pattern of violence planned, financed and directed from sanctuaries across the border, often supported by hostile elements from neighbouring countries targeting minorities, children, women and security personnel without distinction.

Despite these challenges, Pakistan remains unflinching in its resolve, and unwavering in its commitment, to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Statement by Pakistan on the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism (21 August 2026)

On this day, we also pay tribute to and reaffirm our resolute solidarity with our Kashmiri brethren in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) who continue to live under systemic oppression, encompassing draconian laws, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention through a state-run campaign that denies every definition of terrorism. Despite decades of coercion and continuing, blatant violation of their fundamental human rights, the people of IOJK remain resolute in their demand for a UN-mandated right to self-determination.

The people of Palestine, too, remain in our thoughts. Despite ceasefire and diplomatic attempts that opened space for some humanitarian relief, the Palestinian people, particularly children, women and old people continue to suffer unpalatable human rights atrocities and denial of the fundamental right to self-determination. In this backdrop, the global lessons of the past remain relevant today - foreign occupation, unmediated conflicts and denial of the right to self-determination are exploited by extremists and terrorists necessitating urgent redressal.

As we pay tribute to the victims of terrorism, we call upon the international community to support victims and survivors of terrorism across the globe without discrimination and to advance international cooperation and dialogue objectively, impartially, consistently and equitably without double standard, to ensure a more peaceful world for our future generations.

Islamabad
August 21, 2026

 Last edited 3:45 PM · Aug 21, 2026

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The FO called on the international community to support victims and survivors of terrorism around the world without discrimination, and to enhance international cooperation and dialogue for peace “objectively, impartially, consistently and equitably without double standard”.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 21, 2026

Over 21,000 Pakistanis deported from Gulf countries

ISLAMABAD: As many as 21,951 Pakistanis have been deported from Gulf countries between March 1, and July 13, 2026 for numerous reasons including overstaying, begging, illegal entries, drugs, refused asylum, forged documentation and security reasons among others.

This was the written response from the Ministry for Narcotics Control in response to questions raised by MNA Hameed Hussain during the Question hour of the National Assembly.

As many as 4,628 absconders were deported, besides 1,294 jailed, 968 blacklisted, 1,155 were deportation cases pertaining to lost passports, and 689 Pakistanis were deported for visa violations and 342 were cases of refused entries into the Gulf States.

The highest numbers of Pakistanis were deported from Saudi Arabia, almost 15,500, while United Arab Emirates deported 3,803 Pakistanis, Oman 1,606, Bahrain 521, Qatar 429 and Kuwait deported 97 Pakistanis.

However, some 6,662 Pakistanis were deported from Gulf States under the “Others” heading. In the written response, the Ministry of Interior did not specify offences under “Others”. As many as 472 Pakistani beggars were also deported from the Gulf countries.

Nine Pakistanis were deported from the UAE through the Interpol, while the Gulf States deported several others after refusing them onwards travel, besides imposters, expired iqamas and passports, for theft, war zone, imposters, besides committing violations of immigration laws.

Saudi Arabia deported the highest numbers of absconders – 3,921, followed by UAE which expelled 636 Pakistanis. Saudi Arabia also deported 1,924 Pakistani nationals for over/illegal/entry/stay, while UAE and Oman deported 347 and 295 for the above-mentioned offences.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 21ST, 2026

Victims of terrorism

OVER the past quarter century, Pakistan has paid a staggering toll in lives lost to terrorism. Therefore, today, as the world observes the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, the state must pledge to root out the scourge of violent extremism, and continue to care for the families of the victims.

From 2001, when America's so-called war on terror began, till 2022, terrorism in Pakistan claimed at least 83,000 lives. From 2022 till the present, several thousand lives have been added to this grim tally, due to the ongoing terrorist activities in the country, which picked up pace after the Afghan Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021.

Cumulatively, over the course of these 25 years, terrorists have struck mosques and churches, bazaars and processions, schools and madressahs. It took several military operations to quell the post-2001 wave of terrorism, especially as terrorist attacks increased in frequency from 2007 onwards. Today, we find ourselves back to square one, as a new generation of terrorists wreaks havoc across the land.

Much has been written about counterterrorism strategies; but keeping with the theme of the day — 'Healing through Memory' — we must never forget those who were martyred or injured in acts of terrorism. One way of doing so would be for the state to ensure that the next of kin of victims of terrorism, whether security personnel or civilians, are looked after financially.

The state does announce Shuhada packages, and it should be ensured that assistance is offered in a transparent and dignified manner. Victims who are injured, or left permanently disabled and thus unable to work, need to be looked after.

Apart from the financial aspect, victims of terrorism and their families need to be offered professional psychological support to expedite mental recovery. Above all else, to honour the memory of victims, the state must vow to permanently uproot the menace of terrorism from Pakistan.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 21ST, 2026

Virtual assets licensing launched



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has built a complete licensing system for virtual assets in less than six months and has given existing operators until September 5, 2026 to apply. Minister of State and Chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority Bilal bin Saqib announced the development on Saturday while briefing the media on the Pakistan Virtual Asset Regulation Service 2026.

Saqib said the regulatory framework "does more than supervise exchanges" and described it as the foundation of the digital economy. He stated that blockchain, stablecoins and tokenisation could create new opportunities for exports, remittances and SME financing.

Tokenisation, he explained, could link exporters' trade receivables and other assets to global capital markets and improve access to working capital. Pakistan, he added, could also play a significant role in Islamic finance through tokenised products. The regulatory journey, according to the chairman, follows three stages. The first stage covers licensing, consumer protection and the enforcement of anti-money laundering rules. Later stages will focus on practical applications of blockchain in remittances, cross-border payments, digital exports, trade finance and tokenised securities.

The Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority has issued the licensing regulations and opened its licensing portal. The authority has now completed the full regulatory architecture

under which it will licence and supervise virtual asset service providers in Pakistan. The regulations issued under the Virtual Assets Act 2026 create 10 categories of licences.

These cover exchanges, custody, broker-dealers, advisory services, lending and borrowing, derivatives, asset management, transfer and settlement, asset issuance, and mining-related services. Each category carries its own detailed rules on conduct, financial prudential requirements, technology standards, and anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing obligations. Existing operators face a firm deadline. Under Section 70 of the Act, every person who provided virtual asset services before the Act came into force must submit an application for a no-objection certificate by September 5, 2026. Anyone who continues operations after that date without filing an application commits a criminal offence and must shut down the activity.

Bilal bin Saqib said a generation of young Pakistanis built this market at a time when the state was not ready. "Today, the state stands with them." For hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis, he said, their assets would no longer rest only on hope. "Licensed providers must keep client funds and assets separate from their own, must not lend or pledge them without written permission, and must leave those assets untouched even if the firm fails. These obligations now carry the force of law rather than remaining mere promises."

He told the existing market participants that the regulations gave them a clear path: obtain a licence, connect with the banking system, and build something durable. He told the young people who entered the market first that they moved ahead of the state, and "now the state has joined them".

The authority issued the regulations after public consultations that ran from June 11 to July 2, 2026 and included a public stakeholder webinar. The licensing process itself has two routes. Applicants who wish to register a company in Pakistan can either enter a supervised regulatory sandbox or first obtain a no-objection certificate under Section 19 and then apply for a full licence after incorporating the company. All transitional operators must still file their no-objection applications by the September 5 deadline. Applicants can submit applications through the authority's website. Licensed entities will gain formal access to the banking system. Under the State Bank of Pakistan's Circular No 10, issued on April 14, 2026, regulated banks may now open accounts for licensed virtual asset service providers, including segregated accounts for client funds. This decision lifts the ban that had been in place since 2018.

The entire framework took shape in six months. Parliament established the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority as a permanent statutory body through an Act in March 2026. The State Bank circular in April secured banking access for licensed firms. After public consultation, the authority has now issued the licensing regulations and opened the portal. Bilal bin Saqib noted that artificial intelligence and blockchain were rapidly reshaping the global economy. Pakistan, he said, must develop national capacity that could capture the benefits of successive waves of technological change rather than depend on any single technology.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 23, 2026

Pakistan, Malaysia agree on joint working group, security cooperation



Malaysia's Minister for Home Affairs Saifuddin Nasution Bin Ismail calls on President Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-i-Sadr.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Malaysia agreed to establish a joint working group between their interior ministries to promote institutional cooperation, with a focus on counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, cybercrime and the prevention of illegal immigration.

The understanding was reached during delegation-level talks between Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Malaysian Minister of Home Affairs Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

According to officials, the discussions centred on enhancing cooperation in counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, prevention of illegal immigration and cybercrime. Cooperation in the areas of coast guards and training programmes also came under discussion.

Both sides agreed to enhance cooperation between the National Police Academy of Pakistan and the Royal Malaysia Police College.

The two ministers also discussed promoting tourism between Pakistan and Malaysia and facilitating visa procedures.

Mr Naqvi expressed hope that the Malaysian minister's visit would prove to be an important milestone in taking bilateral relations to the next level. He said an increase in the work quota for Pakistanis would enable more Pakistani citizens to travel to Malaysia through legal

channels. It was also agreed that a high-level Pakistani delegation would soon visit Malaysia to further advance bilateral ties.

‘Unified efforts’

Separately, Mr Ismail also met President Asif Ali Zardari, who called for a deepening strategic alliance between Pakistan and Malaysia.

During the meeting, Mr Zardari highlighted the critical need for unified efforts to combat transnational networks involved in human trafficking and migrant smuggling, signalling a major step towards regional security stabilisation.

Mr Zardari appreciated the positive progress in strengthening institutional cooperation, particularly in internal security, immigration, and legal and judicial matters.

SOURCE: DAWN, AUGUST 23RD, 2026

Drones, night vision reshape terrorism



PESHAWAR: The battle against terrorism in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is entering a new phase as militants increasingly use drones, thermal imaging and night-vision equipment to target police personnel, security installations and government infrastructure.

Information obtained by The Express Tribune shows that 156 police personnel were martyred in militant attacks across K-P and its tribal districts between January and July.

While violence remains concentrated in Hangu, Bannu, Karak, Tank, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan, and Khyber, the threat is now spreading to the mountainous areas of Malakand Division, including Swat.

According to information gathered by The Express Tribune, police and government installations in affected districts have faced nearly 250 attacks involving drones and drone-copters in recent months.

Militants are allegedly using commercially adaptable drones to target police patrols, operational parties and sensitive installations. Explosives can be attached to drones and launched from elevated positions, allowing attackers to strike while remaining concealed.

A senior police officer deployed in the southern districts said militants had benefited from sophisticated equipment and weapons believed to have become available following the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan.

"The militants have thermal equipment, night-vision capability, high-capacity batteries, power banks and long-range drones," noted the officer, adding that between 15 and 20 drone-copters had appeared in some areas simultaneously, making it difficult for police to respond.

A police officer familiar with operations in the tribal and southern districts said the technological gap had forced personnel in some areas to adopt a more defensive approach.

"The problem is not only the availability of equipment. There is also an urgent need to train police personnel to effectively operate and counter modern technologies being used by militants," he said.

Poor electricity and communications infrastructure is further hampering operations. A senior police officer said anti-drone guns provided to Karak, Tank and Hangu require six to seven hours of charging.

"Electricity is not consistently available in many operational areas. As a result, even when anti-drone equipment is provided, its effective use becomes difficult," he said.

A former district police officer explained that personnel were also facing a new pattern of attacks in which responding parties become secondary targets.

"When a police checkpoint or patrol team is attacked, a reinforcement party is immediately dispatched to respond," he said. "We have increasingly seen militants use thermal technology to target the responding party as well."

He said militants could remain concealed in darkness while monitoring police movements, making specialised training and modern equipment essential.

Deteriorating security infrastructure is another vulnerability. Police constable Rafaqat told The Express Tribune that some checkpoints in Mohmand were still constructed with mud and other temporary materials.

"Even in this modern age, there are mud-built checkpoints in some areas. Such a structure could be completely destroyed by a single hand grenade," he said.

Wasal Khan, a police official who has served in Bannu, described similarly difficult conditions.

"In one of the checkpoints in Bannu, we have used grass and leaves to make a temporary roof," he said. "We are forced to perform our duties in these conditions despite Bannu being one of the districts most affected by terrorism."

Speaking during Police Martyrs' Day, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed said the provincial police force continued to stand "like a wall of lead" against terrorism despite limited resources.

He claimed that anti-drone guns, armoured vehicles and thermal technology had been provided to vulnerable districts, while acknowledging the need for more advanced technology and bulletproof jackets.

"The nature of terrorism is changing and the police need modern resources to effectively confront these challenges," a senior police official said.

K-P Chief Minister Sohail Afridi said the provincial government had increased the police budget from Rs35 billion to Rs85 billion and was providing residential plots to families of slain personnel in addition to the existing martyrdom compensation package.

Security officials believe the growing use of drones, thermal technology, night vision and coordinated attacks marks a shift in the militant threat, making technological capability as important as manpower as violence spreads towards Malakand and Swat.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, AUGUST 24, 2026

Terrorist attacks increase but fatalities decline during August: PICSS

IKRAM JUNAIDI

ISLAMABAD: The number of terrorist attacks increased significantly in August despite sustained counter-terrorism pressure, but their human impact declined compared with July, according to a monthly security assessment by an Islamabad-based think tank.

According to monthly data compiled by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), 199 terrorist attacks were recorded in August, compared with 144 in July — an increase of 38 per cent. Violence linked to terrorist attacks and counter-terrorism operations had intensified sharply in July, making it the deadliest month of 2026.

However, the institute added that despite the increase in attack frequency, their human impact declined from the previous month. Data showed that the 199 attacks recorded during August resulted in 158 deaths and 181 injuries, compared with 268 deaths and 216 injuries in 144 attacks during July. Deaths resulting from terrorist attacks therefore declined by 41pc, while injuries declined by 16pc.

Security forces' continuing counter-terrorism operations during August resulted in 211 deaths, including 203 terrorists. The operations also resulted in 21 terrorists being injured and 26 suspected terrorists arrested. Security forces killed 115 terrorists in Balochistan, 56 in mainland Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 32 in the merged districts during the month.

The institute also recorded three suicide attacks during August, including two vehicle-borne suicide attacks. PICSS noted that this represented a substantial decline from July, when eight suicide attacks were recorded, including five vehicle-borne suicide attacks — “the highest number of suicide attacks recorded in a single month during the past decade”.

Kidnapping incidents declined by 36pc, falling from 66 in July to 42 in August.

In terms of attack typology, the report noted that tactical assaults emerged as the most frequently used tactic during the month, with 47 incidents, followed by target killings with 46 and attacks with improvised explosive devices (IED) with 36. Tactical assaults resulted in 40 deaths and 44 injuries, while target killings caused 50 deaths and 23 injuries. IED attacks resulted in 15 deaths and 50 injuries.

According to the PICSS report, the security situation remained most severe in Balochistan, where the number of terrorist attacks increased by 7pc from 83 in July to 89 in August. Deaths resulting from these attacks declined from 162 in July to 76, while injuries declined from 86 to 47.

Meanwhile, security forces' actions in Balochistan resulted in 118 deaths, including 115 terrorists, compared with 192 deaths, including 189 terrorists in July.

Mainland KP, excluding the merged districts, recorded 54 terrorist attacks in August compared with 36 in July, representing an increase of 50pc. Deaths resulting from terrorist attacks declined from 69 in July to 44 in August, while injuries declined from 96 to 70, representing a decrease of 27pc.

Security forces' actions in the province resulted in 60 deaths, including 56 terrorists — also lower than the July numbers.

The merged districts of KP, formerly known as FATA, recorded 52 terrorist attacks in August, an increase of 126pc compared with 23 in July. Deaths resulting from these attacks declined slightly from 36 to 34, while injuries increased from 33 to 59. Security forces' actions resulted in 33 deaths, including 32 terrorists, compared with 43 deaths, including 41 terrorists, during July.

In Punjab, the think tank recorded two terrorist attacks resulting in three deaths and five injuries. Security forces conducted two notable operations in the province and arrested five suspected terrorists.

Sindh also recorded two terrorist attacks in August, in which one person was killed, while security forces conducted two operations and arrested two suspected terrorists.

Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan witnessed no terrorist attacks during August, the report added.

SOURCE: DAWN, SEPTEMBER 01, 2026

Pakistan ranks third globally in crypto



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has emerged as the world's third-largest cryptocurrency market, with around 40 million Pakistanis holding crypto accounts.

Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (Pvara) Chairman Bilal Bin Saqib told the Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat that Pakistani youth had developed an understanding of digital currencies and were seeking greater economic independence.

The committee, chaired by Senator Rana Mahmood-ul-Hassan, discussed the growing trend of digital currencies as well as the pricing and taxation of imported mobile phones.

Highlighting a significant gap between the number of crypto users and registered taxpayers in the country, Bilal said Pakistan had around 40 million crypto accounts, while the total number of active taxpayers stood at approximately six million.

Talking with reference to Pvara, he said the authority had been established to bring digital currency users into the tax net and regulate the rapidly expanding virtual assets sector.

He said the authority was recruiting permanent staff and had so far utilised only eight per cent of the budget allocated to it by the government. "Pakistan aims to become a global leader in

Islamic finance through digital assets and plans to bring remittances from abroad onto digital platforms," he said.

The PVARA chairman said the concept of money was changing globally, with governments in the UAE, Thailand and Singapore moving towards alternative forms of currency, while Hong Kong had issued bonds on blockchain technology.

He said Pakistan had established a regulatory regime for cryptocurrencies, arguing that banning technology would amount to restricting the country itself.

According to Bilal, several international companies had applied for no-objection certificates (NOCs) to operate in Pakistan's digital currency sector. He warned that after September 5, the authority would take strict action against illegal digital asset companies.

On mobile phone taxation, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) officials told the committee that the Customs authorities would have to develop a proper mechanism for determining the prices of imported mobile phones.

The committee directed customs officials to devise an effective mechanism concerning taxes on imported handsets and immediately recommended a reduction in taxes on imported mobile phones.

Senator Abdul Qadir said consideration should also be given to whether taxes should be imposed on mobile phones at all. Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) officials told the committee that the authority to impose or abolish taxes rested with Parliament.

The committee subsequently sought reports from the FBR and the Tariff Commission on taxation of mobile phones. PTA officials said 35 companies were currently manufacturing smartphones in Pakistan.

Senator Saadia Abbasi called for facilitating businesses instead of exploiting consumers, saying the government was creating difficulties for people by imposing levies and taxes.

Senator Dilawar Khan said Pakistan's policies lacked a long-term perspective.

Cabinet Secretary Kamran Ali Afzal said digital payments were bringing about a revolution in the country's payment system. However, he opposed the imposition of sales tax on mobile phones.

The standing committee sought another briefing from Pvara on the digital assets sector.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, SEPTEMBER 01, 2026



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