

Pak under pressure as BLA tightens grip on Balochistan

NEW DELHI, July 10 (IANS)

PAKISTAN'S troubles appear far from over. Even as the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) has called for intensified protests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has also escalated its activities in Balochistan, adding to Islamabad's growing challenges.

Casualties among Pakistan's security personnel have risen sharply over the past few months. The scale of the losses is evident from the fact that 38 security personnel were killed between July 5 and 8 alone. The dead includ-

PoK unrest escalates

ed 27 policemen and 11 soldiers. In recent weeks, this has been the biggest setback that Pakistani security forces have faced. Weeks ago, a deadly attack targeted a train carrying Pakistani security personnel in Balochistan.

An official said that while the Pakistani establishment could be hiding the real number of casualties, intelligence inputs indicate that nearly 150 personnel have been killed in the past two months.

The official said the casualty

rate has risen since security forces launched operations to regain control of highways that had fallen into the hands of insurgents.

Organisations such as the BLA have been enhancing capacity over the last couple of years. Today, they have control over the highways and also know the logistics better than the Pakistani security forces. The forces are also losing out due to poor intelligence.

The official said the BLA enjoys widespread local support in parts of Balochistan, which has led to

a sharp decline in ground-level intelligence available to the security forces.

An Intelligence Bureau official said, "What has shocked the Pakistani establishment is the manner in which the BLA has been operating in recent times. An organisation that once specialised in guerrilla warfare has evolved well beyond that. It now has a full-fledged suicide squad, which also includes women."

The BLA's intelligence unit is more efficient than that of the Pakistani establishment. It can carry out coordinated attacks. The sophistication of the BLA's attacks has also increased sig-

nificantly, making it far more challenging for the Pakistani establishment to counter the group's operations, the official said. Another official said one of the biggest changes has been the growing support for the BLA. For years, Pakistan has faced criticism from human rights organisations over allegations of enforced disappearances, targeted killings and sexual violence against local women.

"These allegations have fuelled resentment among sections of the local population, many of whom now stand united against the Pakistani establishment," the official said.

China blocks exports of helium

HONG KONG, July 10 (AP)

CHINA on Friday said it is temporarily blocking the export of helium, a key element for chipmaking, as the Iran war's escalation adds to global supply disruptions.

China's Commerce Ministry and its customs agency said in a brief statement that they are imposing a temporary export ban on helium, effective immediately, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Foreign Trade Law of the People's Republic of China.

They did not elaborate further on the reasons.

Helium is crucial for semiconductor manufacturing, and is also used in the medical sector such as in the cooling of MRI machines. Since the Iran war began in late February, global helium supply has been disrupted and prices have gone up substantially. China only produces about 15 per cent or less of its own helium, importing much of it from Qatar, which generates roughly one-third of the world's supply, according to estimates cited in a research note by the consultancy Trivium China.

EAM discusses regional devpts with Omani counterpart

MUSCAT, July 10 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday met his Omani counterpart Sayyid Badr Albusaidi and the two leaders reviewed the full spectrum of the Strategic Partnership and exchanged views on regional and global issues.

Jaishankar, who is on a visit to Gulf countries, arrived in Oman earlier in the day.

The Minister, in a social media post, said he was delighted to meet the Omani Foreign Minister and hold discussions on “various facets of our cooperation”.

“Focused on trade, investments, connectivity, maritime, technology, defence and cyber & AI domains. Had a comprehensive exchange of views on developments in the Gulf, and efforts to ensure peace and sta-



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Oman Foreign Affairs Minister Badr Albusaidi during a meeting, in Muscat, Oman. (@DrSJaishankar/X via PTI)

bility,” he said.

The two ministers reviewed the full spectrum of the India-Oman Strategic Partnership and exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

Jaishankar also conveyed India’s appreciation to the Oman Government for the prompt assistance extended to Indian seafarers during the recent regional developments, it added.

Three Indian seafarers were killed in a US attack off the coast of Oman last month on the commercial tanker Settebello, which had 24 Indian crew members on board.

The attack on Settebello came two days after a Palau-flagged vessel with 24 Indians came under attack by the US Navy as the ship tried to evade the US blockade of Iranian ports.

PM Modi in New Zealand on final leg of 3-nation tour

AUCKLAND, July 10 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Friday arrived in New Zealand on the final leg of his three-nation visit, during which he will hold talks with his counterpart Christopher Luxon and address the Indian diaspora. This is the first visit to New Zealand by an Indian Prime Minister in 40 years.

Modi was received by Luxon at the airport, where the two leaders exchanged a warm hug.

“Reached Auckland a short while ago. Thankful to Prime Minister Luxon for the welcome at the airport,” Modi said in a post on X. “This visit is historic, being the first Prime Ministerial visit to New Zealand in four decades. I look forward to holding talks with Prime Minister Luxon and discussing the complete range of the India-NZ friendship. I will also be addressing a community programme tomorrow in Auckland,” he said.

PM MODI MEETS AUSTRALIA'S OPPN LEADER: PM Modi met the country's Leader of Opposition Angus Taylor on Friday and discussed bilateral ties, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

“They held productive discussions on the growing India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The warm and cordial meeting reflected the strong bipartisan support in

Australia for deepening ties with India,” the MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on X.

“Met Mr. Angus Taylor, Leader of the Opposition of Australia. We had an engaging conversation on the growing strength of India-Australia ties and the many opportunities ahead. I deeply value the warmth and broad support that our partnership enjoys across Australia,” he wrote.

Leorio Sky Tower sports Indian tricolor

India notifies process to claim UK FTA tariff quota benefits on vehicle imports

NEW DELHI, July 10 (PTI)

INDIA has notified the procedure for importers to seek Government approval to avail quota-based duty concessions on imports of passenger cars and goods vehicles under the free trade agreement with UK, which will come into force on July 15.

Under the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), India will reduce import duties on automotive imports from about 110 per cent to 10 per cent,

with quotas on both sides. India is allowing import of 3.78 lakh units of conventional-engine passenger cars, including those in the mass segment, from the UK at concessional customs duty during the first 15 years of the implementation of the trade pact between the two countries.

"Procedure for allocation of Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQ) under India-UK (CETA) is notified," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has said in a public notice dat-

ed July 9.

It said that at the time of clearance of the import consignment, the importer in India has to produce a Certificate of Origin issued by concerned authorities in the UK. "Only Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), dealers/channel partners duly authorised by the OEMs of vehicles originating in the UK shall be eligible to apply for the TRQ," it added.

The DGFT also said that to be eligible, each applicant will have to submit a

pre-purchase agreement issued by an OEM of the vehicles in the UK setting out the quantity of vehicles agreed to be supplied to the applicant during the TRQ year.

"The year in respect of these imports will be the period from January 1 to December 31, i.e., calendar year in India. DGFT shall monitor the cumulative quantities for TRQ Certificates issued. No TRQ Certificates shall be issued once the stated TRQ quantity limit is reached," it said.

Give back to society, build developed India: ISRO chief

BENGALURU, July 10 (PTI)

ISRO Chairman V Narayanan on Friday urged graduating students of the IISc to give back to society, pursue lifelong learning, and said they had a "great role to play" in contributing towards making India a developed nation by 2047.

Addressing the 2026 convocation ceremony of the Indian Institute of Science here, he described the opportunity to study at the premier institute as a "God's gift" and said every degree awarded reflected the collective efforts of parents, teachers, faculty members, institute staff and taxpayers.

"Please give back to society, contribute to society, and work towards making our country a developed nation," he said.

He said today's graduates have greater opportunities, unlike earlier generations who struggled to find jobs.

"Today, you have a lot of opportunities to contribute to the country, and the Prime Minister of India (Narendra Modi) has a clear vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. I do not doubt that the country will become a developed nation

before we celebrate 100 years of Independence," he said.

Highlighting India's progress since Independence, he said the country had grown from widespread poverty to become the



ISRO Chairman V Narayanan

world's fourth-largest economy, while making major advances in healthcare, agriculture, electrification and science.

Stressing the importance of continuous learning, he urged students to keep reading, as science and engineering continue to evolve.

The ISRO chairman urged students to work hard and uphold integrity, teamwork and self-confidence, saying these qualities were as important as academic

excellence.

Citing the example of ISRO, he said the organisation's achievements were the result of teamwork.

Recalling ISRO's achievements, he said India had come a long way. "We have accomplished 105 launch vehicle missions and 135 satellite missions," he said, adding that India has the best camera in lunar orbit and that the best photographs of the Moon belong to the country.

Narayanan said India remains the only country to have successfully landed near the Moon's south pole through Chandrayaan-3.

"A country that started its space programme 15 years after Independence, in 1962, became the first to accomplish a Mars orbital mission on its maiden attempt. No other country has achieved that," he said.

Speaking about future missions, Narayanan said India was working towards establishing its own space station by 2035 and landing an Indian on the Moon by 2040, in line with the vision laid out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

MYSTERIOUS airstrikes hit Iran

■ By Jon Gambrell
DUBAI, July 10 (AP)

A SERIES of mysterious, unclaimed airstrikes that hit Iran after the US said it finished its attacks have again raised questions of who else may be targeting the Islamic Republic.

The strikes on Thursday, just as Iran prepared to bury the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, hit areas across southern Iran. The country's theocracy hasn't directly blamed anyone for the strikes, though one lawmaker issued a warning to

'Iran planning to assassinate Trump'

WASHINGTON DC, July 10 (ANI)

ISRAEL has shared fresh Intelligence with the United States alleging that Iran recently developed a new plan to assassinate US President Donald Trump, according to multiple media reports.

'The Wall Street Journal' reported that Israel passed the Intelligence to US officials this week. Concurrently, CNN, cit-

ing two sources familiar with the matter, reported that the warning was delivered this week and referred to a specific alleged plot.

While the exact details of the purported plan remain unclear, CNN reported that US agencies had not independently verified the intelligence or been

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the United Arab Emirates over allegedly providing support to the United States in its campaign against Iran.

Gulf Arab states, which repeatedly have been targeted by Iran since the war began February 28, did not immediately respond to requests for comment Friday over the strikes.

The attacks come as they and the US insist the Strait of Hormuz must be open and free to ships to transit. Iran insists the strait, through which about a fifth of all oil and natural gas passes, must now be under its sole control and that vessels should begin to pay fees to Tehran - even though the world for decades

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