

Military strongly reacts to Indian army chief calling Pakistan 'epicentre of terrorism'

Islamabad (News Desk) The military on Wednesday strongly reacted to the Indian army chief calling Pakistan the "epicentre of terrorism", saying that instead of trying to "conjure up non-existent terror infrastructure in Pakistan, it would be wise not to indulge in self-delusion". The statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) came in response to Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi's remarks during a press conference on Monday, ahead of India's Army Day, when he claimed that in 2024, "60 per cent of the terrorists eliminated" in

Indian-occupied Kashmir (IoK) were allegedly of Pakistani origin. General Dwivedi further alleged that "80pc of the remaining fighters in IoK were of Pakistani origin", according to the Press Trust of India. In a strongly-worded response today, the Pakistani military said: "Insinuating Pakistan as the epicentre of terrorism by the Indian Army chief is not only contrary to facts but also an exercise in futility to beat the dead horse of India's default position — blaming Pakistan for indigenous reaction to state-sponsored brutality. It is a classic case of

extreme duplicity." The statement added that the remarks were being made in an "attempt to deflect the world's attention from India's brutality in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), repression of minorities internally and India's trans-national repression". It continued: "The general officer, in his earlier stint in IIOJK personally oversaw the most brutal repression of Kashmiris. Such politically motivated and fallacious statements reflect the extreme politicisation of the Indian Army." General Upendra

Dwivedi officially took over as the Indian Army chief on June 30, 2024. His command appointments include leading the 18 held-Jammu and Kashmir Rifles regiment, the 26 Sector Assam Rifles brigade, and serving as inspector general of Assam Rifles and the Indian Army's 9 Corps. He has also served as Northern Army Commander for the Indian army where he oversaw the Indian Army Corps in Occupied Kashmir and the Chinese border and played an important role in India's ongoing negotiations with China to resolve border issues.



Tribesmen holding party flags stage a rally in Mian Mandi Bazaar, Mohmand, to oppose any military operation in the district. — Photo by Fauzee Khan Mohmand

Pakistan not formal ally, but strong partner: White House

Washington (News Desk) Pakistan has played a pivotal role in US counterterrorism efforts over the years, but it has never been a formal ally bound by treaty obligations, senior White House official John Kirby has clarified.

This nuanced positioning underscores the delicate and complex nature of US-Pakistan relations, shaped by shared security concerns and divergent strategic priorities.

At a Washington briefing, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby candidly addressed the nature of the US-Pakistan relationship, highlighting the absence of any formal defence pact.

"Pakistan was never a technical ally of the United States. I mean, there was no treaty of alliance with Pakistan," he stated in response to a question. Despite this, Kirby emphasised the long history of cooperation between the two countries, particularly in combating terrorism in the volatile Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.

"Certainly, over many, many years in the last couple of decades, we partnered with Pakistan as appropriate to deal with the terrorist threat that still exists on that spine between Afghanistan and Pakistan," he explained. A US State Department report released in December noted that Pakistan has made substantial progress in countering terrorist financing and addressing regional extremist networks.

4 terrorists killed in North Waziristan operation: ISPR



North Waziristan (News Desk) Security forces killed four terrorists during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district, the military's media wing said on Wednesday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), security forces conducted an IBO on Tuesday night in the Spinwaj area of North Waziristan "on the reported presence of khwarij". "During [the] conduct of the operation, own troops effectively engaged khwarij's location, and after an intense exchange of fire, four khwarij were sent to hell," the statement said. Security forces also recovered weapons and ammunition from the terrorists who were "actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as target killing of innocent civilians".

PTI's Yasmin Rashid, Ejaz Chaudhry, Mian Mehmoodur Rasheed amongst 32 indicted in yet another May 9 case

Lahore (News Desk) A Lahore Anti-Terrorism Court on Wednesday indicted 32 people, including PTI leaders Dr Yasmin Rashid, Mian Mehmoodur Rasheed and Senator Ejaz Chaudhry, in a May 9 case of allegedly setting fire to the PML-N office in Model Town. Countrywide protests erupted on May 9, 2023, after the paramilitary Rangers whisked away PTI founder Imran Khan from the Islamabad High Court in a corruption case. While the protests were underway,

social media was flooded with footage of rioting and vandalism at various spots, including the Lahore Corps Commander's residence and General Headquarters, the army's head of office in Rawalpindi. A crackdown was subsequently launched against the PTI's leaders and supporters. Around a dozen cases were registered in Lahore alone against PTI leaders and workers for attacking and vandalising public and private property besides army facilities. The accused denied that

they had committed the crime in today's indictment proceedings. The court summoned the prosecution witnesses on January 23. PTI social media activist Sanam Javed also appeared in court and completed her attendance.

Speaking to the media at the occasion, Rashid criticised the PPP leadership over the lack of government compliance with the production orders issued by Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gillani for Chaudhry in Tuesday's Senate session.

She said President Asif Zardari and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari "should be ashamed of themselves" that no one was listening to the Senate chairman.

She added that the government was violating the sanctity of the upper house of parliament. "Our workers were sentenced by military courts, hundreds of our workers are being imprisoned and the media is being silenced by creating an atmosphere of fear," she alleged.



This photo shows India's Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi.

PTI walks out of NA to press for probe bodies

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The members of the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) on Tuesday continued their noisy protest on the floor of the National Assembly demanding judicial probe into the May 9 and Nov 26 incidents and disrupted the proceedings by pointing out lack of quorum. However, during the brief proceedings amid sloganeering and

desk-thumping by the opposition members, the assembly witnessed the introduction of five bills, besides a response from a parliamentary secretary on a calling attention notice "regarding lack of funds for essential services" including transportation for special children and utility payments in the directorate general of special education, Islamabad. NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq

suspended the proceedings for 15 minutes after declaring the house not in order when PTI's Dr Nisar Ahmed pointed out lack of quorum after a walkout by his colleagues. Later, the house met after nearly half an hour under Deputy Speaker Ghulam Mustafa Shah who ordered a head-count as per the rules. Interestingly, the deputy speaker announced that the quorum was complete

as 100 members were present in the house against the required presence of 84 members, but instead of carrying out the remaining agenda item, he adjourned the session till Wednesday (today) at 2pm.

Out of the 57 items on the agenda, the house could only take up 11 items, including introduction of five bills, all moved by woman members of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

Punjab Standing Committee approves setting up of special courts to tackle wildlife violations

Lahore (News Desk) The Punjab Assembly's Standing Committee on Wildlife on Tuesday approved amendments to the Wildlife Act 1974 and announced the setting up of special courts to take action against those committing violence against wildlife.

Recently, the incidence of killings of striped hyenas, grey wolves and leopards in the tribal areas of Punjab (Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur) and Balochistan (Dera Bugti, Khuzdar) has raised concerns over the sustainable growth of endangered species.

To regulate the rising trend of keeping large cats, including lions, tigers and cheetahs, in homes, and putting an end to illegal ownership and public and social media display of these animals, the Punjab Wildlife and Parks Department had also proposed changes to the relevant law.

Imran, spouse file appeals in Toshakhana case in IHC

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) Former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi have filed an appeal before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) against the dismissal of their acquittal plea in the Toshakhana case.

While the appeal was filed through their attorneys, Barrister Salman Safdar and Advocate Khalid Yousuf Chaudhry, Bushra Bibi personally appeared in the court to complete biometric verification.

She then proceeded to the anti-terrorism court where Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra granted her interim bail in 13 additional cases till Feb 7, requiring a surety bond of Rs5,000 for each case.

Before the judge, Bushra Bibi expressed her dismay, criticising the judicial process and highlighting the challenges faced by her family. "Our trust in the courts has been lost. After what happened to Imran Khan and us, we have lost faith in the law. I have witnessed judges fall ill and tremble under pressure during the trials," she remarked, adding that the legal actions seemed aimed at undermining justice.

On the other hand, special judge Shahruxh Arjmand presided over a hearing in the Toshakhana case in Adiala jail.

Mr Khan was produced in court where proceedings mainly focused on witness testimonies and cross-examinations.

FBR seeks banker's bail cancellation in Rs40bn tax fraud case

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has complained that the grant of bail to a suspect in Rs40 billion tax fraud case by the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on just Rs100 surety bonds has hampered FBR's ability to investigate financial scams and set a dangerous precedent for tax evasion cases by rendering the law passed by parliament irrelevant.

The FBR filed a petition before the Supreme Court seeking cancellation of the post-arrest bail to the suspect.

On Dec 23, Justice Babar Sattar while granting post-arrest bail to the suspect observed that he had no role in the taxpayer's business operations or in any understatement of tax liability. The judge criticised tax officials for abusing their powers under the Sales Tax Act and initiating criminal proceedings disregarding the established legal precedents.

The Supreme Court is set to review the FBR petition challenging the IHC decision to grant bail to Shahid Hussain Khawaja, a bank manager accused of involvement in a multibillion rupee sales tax fraud. The FBR, represented by its deputy director of the inland revenue's directorate of intelligence and investigation, has sought leave to appeal under Article 185(3). The FBR in its petition before the SC argued that the high court misinterpreted legal provisions under the Sales Tax Act, 1990, and ignored critical amendments introduced via the Finance Act, 2024.

SC to mull jurisdiction of regular bench tomorrow

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) The Supreme Court will on Thursday (tomorrow) deliberate on a recurring question about whether regular benches can hear matters involving the constitutionality of laws, following the establishment of the Constitutional Bench under the 26th Amendment.

Headed by senior puisne judge Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, a three-judge SC bench earlier noted that it has become necessary to resolve the controversy in light of objections raised during

proceedings and the reply provided by one of the lawyers.

The bench was hearing an appeal filed by the federal government through the revenue division against the Sindh High Court's decision to strike down Section 221-A(2) of the Customs Act, 1969.

At the outset, during Monday's proceedings, the petitioners argued that the regular Supreme Court bench cannot hear such cases, as they involve challenges to the constitutionality of laws, specifically Section 221-

A(2) of the Customs Act. According to a two-page order issued on Tuesday, when the counsel was asked by Justice Shah why this bench cannot hear these cases, he referred to Article 191A which was added to the Constitution through the 26th Amendment.

Constitutional benches have been in the Supreme Court and high courts under Article 191A, with exclusive jurisdiction over constitutional matters. In response to the petitioners' objection regarding the present bench's

lack of jurisdiction, the order stated that Advocate Salahuddin Ahmed, representing the respondents, argued that Article 191A — the basis of the jurisdictional objection — was constitutionally invalid as it violated the salient features of the Constitution, including judicial independence and the separation of powers among the three organs of the state.

Mr Ahmed, who has also challenged the vires of the 26th Amendment before the Supreme Court, argued that a constitutionally invalid amendment



cannot override the constitutionally valid conferment of jurisdiction on the regular benches. When asked how the present bench could determine t

he constitutional validity of Article 191A, he replied that since the objection pertained to the bench's jurisdiction, the issue must be decided by the bench itself.