

Undermining the military weakens Pak: Army chief

PM says he is working on a five-year plan to resolve economic crisis

ISLAMABAD

PAKISTAN'S Army chief General Asim Munir said that any attempt to undermine the nation's powerful military is tantamount to weakening the country.

Addressing the Azadi Parade at the Pakistan Military Academy on the eve of the country's 78th Independence Day, the Chief of Army Staff also underscored the importance of maintaining national unity amidst efforts by foreign powers using "digital terrorism" to create a gulf between state institutions and the people of Pakistan.

Asserting that no negative force could undermine the country, he said, "Any effort to weaken our armed forces is akin to weakening the state." He stressed that the nation's unwavering trust in the Pakistan Army is the military's most valuable asset, and said, "Neither any negative force has ever been able to weaken this relationship of trust and love nor can it do so in future."

"Historically, we as a nation have always emerged stronger after every hardship," he said, adding that mutual trust between the country and the armed forces played a key role. He also highlighted the importance of unity, warning that discord and division could hollow the nation from within, paving the way for external aggression.

"Pakistan's future is bright and secure, and our forces will



Students wave national flags during a ceremony to celebrate Independence Day in Karachi on Wednesday | AP/PTI

continue to defend it with unwavering resolve," he said.

The powerful Pakistan Army, which has ruled coup-prone Pakistan for many years of its existence, has wielded considerable power in matters of security and foreign policy.

Gen Munir's remarks came days after 71-year-old jailed former prime minister Imran Khan refused to apologise for the May 9 riots and said that the Army owed him an apology since he was 'abducted' by the paramilitary rangers on the day of the violence.

On Independence Day, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced that he would soon unveil a new five-year plan to bring cash-strapped Pakistan out of the economic crisis and asked countrymen to undertake self-introspection to correct mistakes of the past.

Sharif said a fresh journey with new zeal should be started to steer the country out of existing crises and a five-year economic programme will soon be launched. He said that there is a need for self-introspection to correct mistakes of the past.

After Kursk, Ukraine shells Russia's Belgorod

KYIV

RUSSIA'S Belgorod border region declared an emergency on Wednesday under heavy shelling by Ukrainian forces that are pressing a major cross-border incursion into the adjacent Kursk region for a second week. Belgorod Gov Vyacheslav Gladkov described the situation there as 'extremely difficult and tense' as the attacks destroyed homes and caused civilian casualties, unnerving local people. Children in particular are being moved to safety, he said on his Telegram channel, adding that about 5,000 children are in camps in safe areas. He said the previous day that around 11,000 people had fled their homes, with about 1,000 staying in temporary accommodation centres.

The surprise Ukrainian charge onto Russian soil that began on August 6 has rattled the Kremlin. The daring Kursk operation is the largest attack



Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukrainian President

on Russia since World War II and could involve as many as 10,000 Ukrainian troops backed by armour and artillery, military analysts say.

An emergency was declared in Kursk last Saturday. A Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday

that Kyiv has no intention of occupying the Russian territory it says it is holding. The goal is to stop Russia from firing missiles into Ukraine from Kursk, he said.

It was not clear how or when or whether Ukraine would attempt to extricate itself from

the ground it has taken. The Ukrainian military claims it controls 74 settlements, believed to be villages or hamlets, in the Kursk region. Russian officials say more than 100,000 people have been evacuated, mostly from Kursk.

Ukraine's 1+1 TV channel published a video report Wednesday it said was from Sudzha, a Russian town about 10 kilometres from the border.

Russia's predicament is whether to pull troops from the frontline in Ukraine's Donetsk region, where achieving a breakthrough is currently a primary war goal for the Kremlin, to defend Kursk and stop the incursion from ballooning.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said the incursion is unlikely to shift the dynamics of the war.

US President Joe Biden said Tuesday that the developments in Russia are 'creating a real dilemma' for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

EXPRESS READ

Meth found in sweets given out by NZ charity

Wellington: Pineapple sweets dished out by a New Zealand charity have tested positive for potentially lethal amounts of methamphetamine, police said on Wednesday, sparking an urgent race to remove them from the streets. A child, a teenager and a charity worker have already been taken to hospital after they tasted the candies. Although none are seriously ill, police have launched a criminal investigation and are now trying to track down up to 400 other people who may have received the sweets. "We need to round these up as quickly as we can," said a detective.

B'desh war crimes tribunal to deal with recent cases of riots

DHAKA

A complaint was filed on Wednesday with the investigation agency of Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and eight others, accusing them of committing genocide and crimes against humanity during the mass movement of the students against her government.

"The complaint was filed by the father of one of the stu-

dents who died in police gunshots during the massive street protests," an official of the agency said.

The complaint was filed on behalf of Bulbul Kabir, father of slain Arif Ahmed Siyam, who was shot dead by police during the protest on August 5. "We have registered the complaint and thus the investigation of the case has started," Ataur Rahman, deputy director of the agency was quoted as saying. "Upon completion of

the probe, we will submit the report to the Chief Prosecutor's Office of the tribunal for the next procedures," he added. Hasina and eight others were accused of "genocide and crimes against humanity in the complaint," the state-run BSS news agency reported. The complaint comes on a day when the interim government said that the murders conducted within the period from July 1 to August 5 will be tried by the International Crimes Tribunal.

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