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Pakistan Ramps Up Security for Chinese Nationals Amid Economic Concerns

July 23, 2025

– Categories: General News



The Pakistani government has announced new security measures aimed at protecting Chinese citizens working within the country, as part of its broader strategy to maintain foreign investment and economic ties with Beijing. While the initiative is being framed as a commitment to bilateral friendship, it raises pressing questions about national priorities and the allocation of state resources under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's leadership.

In a high-level security meeting on Tuesday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that ensuring the safety of Chinese nationals was the government's "top priority." He stated that

the confidence of Chinese businesses was “extremely important” for the country’s economic future. Sharif also reiterated that China is a “friendly country,” underlining the strategic partnership between Islamabad and Beijing.

The meeting included detailed briefings on enhanced protection efforts for Chinese workers across Pakistan, particularly those involved in infrastructure and energy projects. According to the interior minister, these steps include special security arrangements in response to rising terrorist threats. The government claims that the federal administration and provincial authorities are cooperating to enforce safety protocols, including the development of “Safe City” surveillance projects in key urban centers.

These measures are largely viewed as a response to multiple past attacks on Chinese nationals, particularly those involved in the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The CPEC, a multibillion-dollar initiative under China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has drawn scrutiny for its economic terms and implications on Pakistan’s sovereignty.

The National Police Academy (NPA) also came into focus as the prime minister visited the training institution and addressed the 52nd batch of Assistant Superintendents of Police (ASP). Sharif announced a restructuring plan for the academy to align its standards with those of the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA), indicating a move toward more militarized policing.

While the government’s emphasis on the safety of foreign nationals can be justified in the context of maintaining investment flows, critics argue that prioritizing the protection of foreign workers over pressing domestic concerns, such as rising inflation, lawlessness, and lack of employment opportunities, reveals a misplaced focus.

Supporters of the current approach argue that Chinese investment remains one of the few viable economic lifelines for Pakistan’s struggling economy. However, others see the strategy as overly dependent and increasingly one-sided, with Islamabad appearing more beholden than partnered.

The government’s moves signal an intensified effort to portray Pakistan as a secure destination for Chinese firms. Yet, the broader public remains divided, with growing concern over national autonomy, economic dependency, and whether similar attention will be paid to improving security and economic opportunities for ordinary Pakistanis.

As the current administration continues to emphasize foreign diplomacy and investor assurance, its ability to address the internal issues faced by everyday citizens remains a litmus test for its legitimacy and long-term stability.