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Condemns brutal killing of innocent labourers:

Anti-state elements not to be forgiven under any circumstances: CM Bugti

Five labourers martyred by terrorists in Balochistan's Mashkail area

QUETTA (ANN): Unknown armed assailants opened fire on shops in the Mashkail area of Washuk district, Balochistan, on Sunday, killing five laborers from Punjab.

Deputy Commissioner Washuk, Majid Sarparah, confirmed the incident and said that all of the deceased belonged to different areas of Punjab and were working at local shops.

According to police sources, the armed men opened fire on the shops, killing all five workers on the spot. The attackers fled immediately after the shooting.

Following the incident, police and security forces reached the area, shifted the bodies to a hospital, and launched a search for the suspects. After post-mortem examinations, the bodies of the victims were sent to their native hometowns.

Deputy Commissioner Majid Sarparah said that a full investigation into the incident has been initiated and that efforts are underway to identify and arrest those responsible.

He added that a search operation has also been launched in the area, security has been enhanced, and evidence is being collected as part of the ongoing investigation. Meanwhile, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti strongly condemned the brutal killing of unarmed and innocent laborers in Mashkail district, saying that those martyred were not just Punjabi workers, but citizens of Pakistan, hardworking individuals, and "our own brothers."

In his statement of condemnation, the Chief Minister said that the barbaric attack on innocent civilians was not an attack on any one province or ethnicity, but a direct assault on Pakistan's unity, Constitution, and the state.

He said that terrorists hiding behind the guise of a so-called freedom movement have exposed their true motives before the world by targeting unarmed laborers.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti stated that the objective of the terrorists is not to fight for any legitimate cause, but to spread terror, hatred, bloodshed, and destabilize Pakistan. He made it clear that anti-state elements and their facilitators would not be forgiven under any circumstances, and that every drop of Pakistani citizens' blood would be accounted for. The Chief Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to bringing every individual involved in terrorism to justice.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti offering fateha for the departed souls of people martyred in Hanna Urak terrorist attack.



Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail inquires about health of Nouman Mandokhail.

Religious, political parties demand justice for Ziarat martyrs

QUETTA (ANN): Leaders of political and religious parties have said that there are other people behind the terrorist incidents that took place in Ziarat and Hanna Urak, and that these incidents not only bring disrepute to the region but also pose serious threats. They said that people have become exhausted from carrying the bodies of victims day after day. The government should investigate the matter and present all the facts before the public; otherwise, it could lead to further resentment and difficulties. They expressed full support for the Ziarat sit-in and demanded that the government implement the demands presented to it. They warned that if the demands are not met, the political parties and the sit-in committee will jointly adopt a strict course of action.

These remarks were made by Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) Balochistan chief and Senator Maulana Abdul Wasey, Awami National Party (ANP) Balochistan President Asghar Khan Achakzai, Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party Balochistan President Abdul Qahar Wadan, Pashtunkhwa National Awami Party Balochistan President Nasrullah Zerey, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Nazaryati Central Ameer Maulana Abdul Qadir Luni, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Member of the National Assembly Malik Adil Bazai while addressing the sit-in of the Ziarat martyrs.

They said that it was deeply regrettable that terrorists had once again martyred innocent people in Ziarat, while the government, particularly the local administration, remained silent on the matter.

When the bodies were sent to Quetta, the same administration and security institutions allegedly tried to prevent them from coming.



WASHINGTON: Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul, who led the Pakistan delegation, characterised the talks as positive and appreciated the significant progress made during the negotiations.

"Operation Shaban" underway to compeletely eliminate terrorists from Balochistan: Dummar

SANJAVI/ZIARAT (ANN): Balochistan Provincial Minister for Food, Haji Noor Muhammad Khan Dummar, visited various areas of Ziarat and Sanjavi to offer condolences to the families of the police personnel martyred in the Ziarat Kach incident and offered Fateha prayers for the deceased.

On the occasion, Commissioner Sibi Division Asadullah Faiz, Deputy Commissioner Ziarat Abdul Qadoos Achakzai, District Chairman Ziarat Abdul Sattar Kakar, Chairman Municipal Committee Haji Khan Muhammad Dummar, Haji Baz Muhammad Khan Dummar, Haji Raz Muhammad Dummar, Malik Ayaz Khan Dummar, District Vice Nazim Haji Momin Shah Dummar, Chairman Malik Bayaz Khan Dummar, Chairman Haji Nasruddin Tareen, Malik Muhammad Ghaus Panizai, Haji Muhammad Noor Panizai, Haji Allah Noor Panizai, District Vice Chairman Ziarat Habibullah Panizai, Deputy Chairman of Sanjavi Municipal Committee Dunya Khan Bacha Andar, Haji Habibullah Dummar, Muhammad Ashraf Khan Dummar, Haji Khayal Salman Khel, Malik Ghaffar Tareen, Maulvi Faqeerullah Dummar, Mehboob Khan Dummar, Naseebullah Dummar, Maulvi Abdul Samad, Maulvi Muhammad Akbar Dummar, and other notable elders of the area accompanied him.

Speaking to the media, the provincial minister said that the martyrdom of the police personnel in Ziarat Kach was an indescribable tragedy. He said the martyred police officers were "our own children and brothers," adding that while the parents and families of the martyrs had suffered immense grief, he himself had been even more deeply shocked by the incident.

He said that certain individuals were politicizing the funerals of the martyrs. "If these people were truly grieving, they would have attended the funeral prayers and visited the homes of the bereaved families to share in their sorrow. Instead, these politically unemployed people are using the funerals of the martyrs to restore their lost political credibility rather than expressing genuine sympathy with the families.

President, PM grieved over loss of lives, devastation in Bangladesh floods

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari, Sunday, expressed grief over the tragic loss of lives and the widespread destruction caused by the devastating floods and landslides in Bangladesh.

The president said that Pakistan stood firmly with the Government and the people of Bangladesh at this difficult time.

"The President extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured and the well-being of all those affected, "a post on X said.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Sunday, expressed his deep grief and condolences over the tragic loss of life and widespread devastation caused by the severe floods and landslides in Bangladesh.

"Deeply saddened by the tragic loss of life and widespread devastation caused by the severe floods and landslides in Bangladesh," the prime minister posted on X handle. On behalf of the people of Pakistan, he extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and expressed the unwavering solidarity with the Government and people of Bangladesh. "We pray for the swift recovery of the injured and the safety of all those affected," the prime minister further said in his post.

US conducts strikes on Iran missile systems around Strait of Hormuz

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): The US carried out several strikes on Iranian missile and air defence systems and targeted small speed boats of the IRGC at several locations around the Strait of Hormuz, Axios reported on Sunday, citing a senior US official. US President Donald Trump said on Sunday that the Strait of Hormuz is open to commercial traffic as CENTCOM said US forces are 'prepared' to ensure freedom of navigation. Trump's comments were made during an interview on NBC's Meet the Press. The Strait of Hormuz is open to all vessels and US military forces are "positioned and prepared" to ensure freedom of navigation, US Central Command said, a day after US and Iranian forces exchanged fire and Iran said it had closed the vital waterway. US strikes Iran, Tehran says Strait of Hormuz closed, Gulf states hit.The US military launched fresh strikes on Iran after it struck a container ship on Sunday, Tehran said it had again closed the Strait of Hormuz and escalated attacks on US facilities in states across the Gulf. A series of attacks between the US and Iran over the past several days led President Donald Trump to declare the end of a ceasefire meant to halt the fighting that the US and Israel began on February 28, though Trump has left the door open to continued negotiations.

OIC Women's Conference sends strong message of hope to women in refugee camps, displacement; Syrian Minister

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Syrian Minister of Social Affairs and Labour Hind Kabawat described her participation in the 9th Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ministerial Conference on Women as a significant milestone, saying the gathering reflected the unity of women across the Muslim world and offered a valuable opportunity to advance women's empowerment, human rights and shared cooperation.

Speaking to Pakistani media on the sidelines of the conference here on Sunday, Kabawat said that visiting Pakistan and Islamabad itself was a special occasion for her, particularly at a time when influential women from across OIC member states had come together to exchange ideas, experiences and best practices.

Mediator Pakistan expresses deep concern over escalating ME tensions, urges restraint

ISLAMABAD, (Agencies): Pakistan on Sunday expressed deep concern over the recent escalation in Mideast tensions and urged all sides to exercise restraint and honour their commitments under the Islamabad (MoU). US and Iranian forces have exchanged heavy missile and drone assaults, with Tehran targeting US facilities in states across the Gulf on Sunday and saying it had again closed the vital Strait of Hormuz. The renewed violence casts further doubt on the future of an interim US-Iran Islamabad MoU signed last month that aimed to reopen the strait and end the war after a further 60 days of negotiations. In a statement issued today, the FO reiterated Pakistan's strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all brotherly countries in the region.

7 more terrorists killed as Operation Shaban continues in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD/QUETTA, (Monitoring Desk): Security forces killed another seven terrorists during the ongoing Operation Shaban in Balochistan, following which the total number of terrorists killed in the operation reached 71, according to state-run Radio Pakistan.

Operation Shaban is being jointly carried out across the province by the army, Frontier Corps and Balochistan Police following the terrorist July 7 attack in the Mangi Dam area, in which 27 police personnel were martyred.

Citing security sources, Radio Pakistan said a total of 109 "khawarij terrorists" have been killed in Operation Shaban and other intelligence-based operations in Balochistan since July 5.

The outlet had earlier reported that three terrorists were killed, and later said another four were eliminated in the Saran Tangi area.

Security sources said a large cache of arms and ammunition was recovered from the possession of the killed terrorists. The recovered weapons include M4 rifles, submachine guns, rocket launchers, mobile phones, and other equipment. Security sources reaffirmed that Operation Shaban will continue in Balochistan until the last terrorist is eliminated.

PTV News reported that air and ground operations against Fitna-al-Khawarij — a term the state uses for the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) — were also ongoing.

In the July 7 attack on a police checkpost, terrorists had martyred nine police personnel and taken away 18 other cops at gunpoint. Later, they killed the abducted police personnel, whose bodies were found in the Zarghoon Gar mountainous area.

Following Sunday's update of the killing of three more terrorists in Operation Shaban, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi lauded the security forces, the FC and police.



QUETTA: Leader of various parties sitting in protesters camp to express solidarity with relaticves of martyred police officials during attack on Mangi Dam police post.

Reviews security operation in Hanna Urak:

Terrorists to be eliminated from Balochistan at all costs: CM Bugti

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti visited the village of Babri in Hanna Urak on Sunday, where he reviewed the ongoing Operation Shaban against terrorists and met with police personnel participating in the operation.

The Chief Minister met each police officer individually and paid glowing tribute to their bravery, determination, professionalism, and sense of duty. He said that the sacrifices of the Police, Levies, Frontier Corps, and other security forces in the fight against terrorism are a source of pride for the entire nation.

He added that the personnel who have laid down their lives for peace in Balochistan are the nation's true heroes, and their services will always be remembered.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that operations against terrorists and their facilitators will continue with full force, consistency, and determination until the last terrorist is eliminated. He made it clear that there will be no space in Balochistan for elements challenging the writ of the state and that the protection of the lives and property of the people will be ensured at all costs.

On the occasion, police personnel expressed their pleasure at the Chief Minister's visit and chanted resounding slogans of "Pakistan Zindabad" alongside him.

Appreciating the high morale and patriotism of the personnel, the Chief Minister said that such brave sons of the nation are the state's strongest pillar in the fight against terrorism.

Later, the Chief Minister visited the families of those martyred in the Hanna Urak incident, offered his condolences, recited Fateha, and prayed for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks. He assured the bereaved families that the Government of Balochistan stands with them in their grief and will provide every possible support and full official assistance to the families of the martyrs.

The Chief Minister said that the sacrifices of the martyrs will not go in vain.

Pakistan implementing priority measures for women's empowerment: Tarar

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Human Rights, Azam Nazeer Tarar Sunday said Pakistan continues to prioritize women's empowerment, with women making significant contributions in politics, parliament, judiciary, education, business and other sectors.

He expressed these views during a meeting with Jalila Allahverdiyeva, Head of the Administrative Division of the OIC Labour Centre in Azerbaijan, during which the two sides held detailed discussions on women's rights, social development, and the promotion of bilateral cooperation.

The meeting also focused on advancing women's empowerment, social protection, capacity building and promoting joint initiatives under the platform of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Tarar said Islam had granted women dignity, equality and fundamental rights, adding that it was the collective responsibility of the Muslim Ummah to ensure the protection and promotion of these rights.

Pakistan and the OIC Labour Center reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation for women's development by enhancing institutional linkages, exchanging experiences and promoting closer collaboration in areas of mutual interest.

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Human Rights, Azam Nazeer Tarar on Sunday reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment towards protecting and promoting women's rights.

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Vision for a greener Balochistan

The recent address by Jaffar Khan Mandokhel at the graduation ceremony of the University of Balochistan stands as a powerful reflection of a government increasingly focused on long-term development, environmental stewardship, and youth empowerment.

At a time when global challenges like climate change and resource scarcity are intensifying, the Governor's message was both timely and forward-looking. By urging newly trained officers to move ahead with courage, determination, and a sense of responsibility, the provincial leadership is clearly signaling that the future of Balochistan lies in capable, educated, and motivated hands. This is not merely ceremonial rhetoric—it is a strategic vision that aligns governance with modern scientific thinking and sustainable development.

The participation of key public representatives, including Mir Asim Kurd Gelu and Saeed-ul-Hassan Mandokhel, underscores the collective commitment of both provincial and federal stakeholders toward capacity-building initiatives. Such coordination reflects a healthy democratic framework where institutions work together to address pressing issues.

Particularly noteworthy is the government's emphasis on water resource management. Balochistan, being the largest province by area, faces unique environmental and infrastructural challenges. The Governor's call for increased federal funding to construct dams and improve water systems is not just a policy suggestion—it is a necessary step toward securing the province's future. By prioritizing water conservation and ecosystem restoration, the government is demonstrating a clear understanding of the region's vulnerabilities and opportunities.

Equally important is the focus on youth as agents of change. The training program, supported by international collaboration, has equipped officers with scientific knowledge and practical skills. This reflects a governance model that values expertise, innovation, and global partnerships. When young professionals are encouraged to act as "protectors of nature," it fosters a culture of responsibility that extends beyond government offices into society at large.

The Governor's remarks about the interconnectedness of human life and nature highlight an enlightened approach to policymaking—one that balances development with environmental preservation. His vision of every individual action contributing to a "wave in the ocean of change" is both inspiring and pragmatic. It reinforces the idea that sustainable progress is built through collective effort. In essence, this event was more than a graduation ceremony—it was a reaffirmation of the government's commitment to progress, sustainability, and inclusive development. By investing in human capital, advocating for critical infrastructure, and promoting environmental awareness, the leadership in Balochistan is laying the groundwork for a more resilient and prosperous future. If this momentum continues, Balochistan could well emerge as a model for how regional governments can tackle global challenges through local action, empowered youth, and visionary leadership.

Cure or curse?

ZAFAR MIRZA

According to the World Health Organisation and UNAIDS, Pakistan has one of the fastest-growing HIV epidemics in Asia. Meanwhile, WHO's Global Hepatitis Report 2026 identifies Pakistan as the single largest contributor to the global burden of hepatitis C. Are these two facts coincidental? Sadly, no. They are tragically intertwined. Both HIV and hepatitis C are blood-borne infections, transmitted when infected blood ent-ers the human body. Both can also spread through sexual contact. And both, if untreated, are potentially fatal. The pathways through which these diseases spread are ubiquitous in Pakistan's healthcare and social practices. But we also suffer from a dangerous form of collective myopia.

When there is a media report of an outbreak of HIV — Taunsa being the latest — we have a hysterical fit, we hyperventilate, we deny, we defend, we look for a conspiracy, we blame, we want to kill the messenger who brings the bad message and we also quietly desire in our hearts, and even pray, that it passes quickly so that we can go back to our comfortable slumber. If you are finding it difficult to understand this description, then please see the press conference of a provincial health minister held after the BBC's documentary on Taunsa. Before we can control these diseases, we must treat this myopia.

Should we not feel a sense of national shame that Pakistan is home to one of the world's largest populations of hepatitis C patients — an estimated 10 million — many of whom continue to suffer and die unnecessarily? At the same time, HIV has been knocking at our doors, yet our response is fragmented and inadequate. Domestic investment in HIV/AIDS is minimal and we continue to rely heavily on the Global Fund. Our attention shifts from one outbreak to another, without building sustained, systemic responses.

The persistence of blood-borne infections in Pakistan reflects a broader failure of governance.

Globally, the trajectory is different. In most countries, new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths are declining. The world has learned hard lessons, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa, where the epidemic once devastated societies and economies. Through a combination of political commitment, widespread testing, effective antiretroviral therapy, stigma reduction and strong infection prevention measures, countries have reversed the trend. Critical interventions have also included reducing unnecessary injections, eliminating the reuse of disposable syringes, introducing auto-disable syringes and ensuring rigorous screening of all transfused blood. Pakistan, regrettably, has lagged on most of these fronts, and the consequences are visible in the rising number of new infections.

Can this trajectory be reversed? Yes — and Egypt offers a compelling example. In 2008, Egypt had one of the highest hepatitis C prevalence rates in the world, with nearly 10 per cent of its adult population infected. Much of this was attributed to past medical practices involving the reuse of contaminated syringes. Recognising the scale of the crisis, Egypt established a National Committee for the Control of Viral Hepatitis. In 2014, it launched an ambitious nationwide campaign — '100 Million Healthy Lives'. More than 60m people were screened. Over 80pc of infected individuals were diagnosed, and more than 4m received free treatment. Within just seven years, prevalence dropped dramatically — from 10pc to 0.5pc. In October 2023, WHO declared Egypt the first country to achieve 'gold tier' status for hepatitis C elimination.

I had the opportunity to live and work in Egypt for some years with WHO. In many ways, Egypt is as complex and challenging as Pakistan. The difference lies in one decisive factor: political will. Egypt mobilised its institutions, aligned its policies and executed a clear national strategy. Today, it is not only hepatitis C-free but also supports other countries to replicate its success. Some Egyptian experts have visited Pakistan, yet we remain entangled in bureaucratic rigmarole, unable to launch a comparable national programme for years now. HIV in Pakistan presents an additional, deeply troubling dimension.

Globally, HIV is concentrated among high-risk groups such as people who inject drugs and sex workers. This is also true for Pakistan. However, we face a unique and alarming phenomenon: large numbers of young children are becoming infec-ted. In over 90pc of these cases, the infection is not transmitted from mother to child — the mothers are HIV-negative. Instead, these children are infected through unsafe medical practices: the reuse of disposable syringes, contamination of multi-dose vials and unsafe intravenous infusions.

This pattern was evident in the 2019 outbreak in Ratodero and has resurfaced in Taunsa. In fact, Taunsa represents at least the ninth recorded HIV outbreak in the country. These outbreaks are only the visible tip of a much larger, hidden epidemic. In 2019, when the Ratodero outbreak occurred, I visited the area alongside Sindh's health minister, Dr Azra Pechuho. What we witnessed was heartbreaking: mothers carrying infected children and running from pillar to post in search of care. Nearly 1,000 children were ultimately diagnosed with HIV — most infected through unsafe injections. I immediately established a national Task Force on Injection Safety, which developed a comprehensive National Action Plan. A key recommendation was to ban the manufacture, import and use of reusable disposable syringes. This policy was implemented, despite resistance from manufacturers, who were required to transition to auto-disable syringe technology. Eventually, the industry complied.

It is therefore deeply troubling to learn that some manufacturers are reportedly still producing reusable syringes and mislabelling them as auto-disable. This is not merely a regulatory lapse; it is a criminal act. Law-enforcement agencies must act decisively to shut down such operations, and the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan must strengthen post-market surveillance which is currently very weak. The persistence of blood-borne infections in Pakistan reflects a broader, long-standing failure of governance. Successive governments have not prioritised health, particularly primary healthcare, as evidenced by chronically low public spen-ding. Many of our public health challenges are not technical but failures of governance, accountability and behaviour. The unchecked spread of HIV represents a gathering storm — one that threatens social stability, economic productivity and national development. It must be recognised and addressed as a matter of national security, demanding the same level of political ur-gency and financial commitment. More on this, later.

The writer is a former SAPM on health with ministerial status, adjunct professor of health systems and president of the Pakistan Association of Lifestyle Medicine.

Europe: doctrinal shift towards violence

ANEELA SHAHZAD

In March 2025, army chiefs of more than 30 Western countries met in Paris. They urged Europe to be ready for war, and to operate without US support if needed. Two of army chiefs - Gen Knighton of the UK and Gen Breuer of Germany - called for Europe to rearm rapidly and for the European public to accept preparation for war. Gen Fabien of France said "war is no longer hypothetical; it's plausible within this decade". NATO's chief Mark Rutte, while framing Russia as a direct long-term threat, said Europe is already "in harm's way".

As part of the EU's Readiness 2030 initiative, up to 800 billion will be mobilised for defence; joint procurement and defence industry expansion are being accelerated; Finland, Estonia, Norway, Greece, Switzerland already have mandatory military service; and border militarisation has increased with more surveillance and troop mobility.

Europe is not just preparing for independent European defence capability; it's rebuilding its defence industrial base - its shifting towards a war-economy. Last month German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius unveiled Germany's strategy for becoming Europe's strongest military by 2039, with 460,000 combat-ready troops. Titled 'Verantwortung für Europa' i.e. Responsibility for Europe, the strategy also marks a doctrinal shift toward a 'one theater approach', treating NATO territory, the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific as interconnected security spaces rather than discrete theaters.

A month earlier, French President Emmanuel Macron had presented his 'Forward Deterrence' strategy with a new nuclear strategy. France will increase its nuclear warheads and allow temporary deployment of French nuclear-armed Rafale jets to allied European countries like Germany, Britain, Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Sweden and Denmark to bolster security.

The latest reviewed British Defence Doctrine also calls for integration with allies; need for agile, joint and multinational integrated operations; investing in British-based firms for defence technology; and the Manoeuvrist Approach to disrupt enemy's cohesion rather than just focusing on physical destruction.

These doctrinal shifts point to the fact that European states want to take the responsibility of war in their own hands now, and that the passive approach of relying on a disregarding and exclusionist US has ended. But does this also not mean that the era of Europe's 'liberal democracy', wherein the individual was the prime focus and whose path was nothing but his/her individual pursuit of happiness, is over? Now, quoting Rutte, Europe "must be prepared for the scale of war our grandparents or great-grandparents endured"; and quoting Gen Fabien, "we have to accept losing our children."

Foreseeing Russia's attack on Europe, which according to Rutte will be within the next five years, there has been an element of urgency. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have signed a $4.7 billion deal, under which Ukraine will produce low-cost drones and missiles for Germany, and Germany will share software and modern defence systems with Ukraine. A similar 'Drone Deal' is being finalised between Italy and Ukraine too. Not only this, Zelensky is signing 'drone deals' with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE and the Netherlands too. So, let's review this.

Before the Ukraine War, the EU and NATO had made regime change attempts in several pro-Soviet states, like the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003) and Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004). Every time Russia protested but could do nothing. More and more states from post-Soviet space were being admitted into the EU and NATO. But when it came to Belarus and Ukraine, Russia drew a redline and said it would intervene militarily because NATO was encircling it and was literally going for militarisation along its boarders. In fact, it was Europe that wanted to corner and attack Russia, not the other way around.

Stubborn as it was, Europe pursued Ukraine's admission into NATO even when it knew that this would result in the destruction of Ukraine and the displacement of millions of Ukrainians. Even now Europe is constantly pumping Zelensky to carry on with an unwinnable war that will delay the country's reconstruction forever, despite knowing that it can't defeat Russia. Rather, Europe's solution for Ukraine seems to be to make it a 'military state' to produce weapons and rent its troops for future wars that Europe or its Middle East clients would demand.

Rather, Europe is choosing 'war economy' as the solution to its crumbling economy.

At the European Industry Summit in February, Belgian PM Bart De Wever warned, "We are on the brink of an existential crisis". Elaborating, he said, "Energy prices, competitiveness, dumping and regulatory pressure" had pushed parts of European industry to the brink, and "if Europe wants to matter in the world, our industry must first matter to Europe."

But no, why think humanely, why have sagacity - if Europe can't compete, why not go for wars and destroy the competition!

Is this what Europe will yield, after centuries of scientific thinking, after industrialisation, liberalism and feminism! After all the lectures on human rights, freedom and democracy, is Europe making a turn towards pre-colonial adventurism, which was brute, barbaric, murderous and genocidal!

Was the free-market open competition there only until it suited the white collar and blue tie politico-economic elite of the West! Till the profits were pouring in and till humanity was economically subservient, the West was the loudest advocate of free-market; but when it could not compete, it started talking about protectionism.

Now they're telling their own people to prepare to sacrifice their lives so that the market and political elite of Europe can regain a global hegemony they have become habitual of. The bad habit of power and control, like any drug, is hard to give up, but carrying it on is also suicidal, because the crumbling body cannot sustain the load of pure ecstasy that is merely eating up whatever is remaining.

The right thing for you to do is to admit your failures, decrease hourly wages in your countries, bring back industry and re-enter the market. Decades back, the US was the core and China and the Global South were the periphery. Everyone toed the line, accepted capitalism and followed the system. Now, when China is rising and the Global South has consolidated, the US and the West are being pushed to the periphery. So now they want to break the system and remake it. But the remaking is sadly based on wars, chaos and destruction, and humanity needs to save itself from another era of misery, carnage and degression.

The writer is a geopolitical analyst.

She also writes at globaltab.net and tweets @AneelaShahzad

The politics of belonging in West Bengal

SYED MOHAMMADALI

Amidst India's recurrent cycle of state elections, West Bengal has often been viewed as a politically significant and closely contested state, where electoral competition between major parties intersects with deeper debates over identity, governance and citizenship. Recent debate over pre-election revisions to electoral rolls has revived questions about inclusion in India's democratic process and the ways electoral legitimacy is being shaped and potentially manipulated.

Voter list revisions are meant to be a routine administrative exercise carried out by the Election Commission of India.

These updates are intended to remove deceased voters, eliminate duplicate entries and update records of individuals who have permanently relocated.

Such revisions are standard practice across all Indian states, as in many other democratic countries, and are considered essential for maintaining accurate electoral rolls.

However, in West Bengal, these routine processes have generated heightened political attention. Claims about the scale and impact of voter deletions vary widely, but the exact figures and demographic composition of removed names are difficult to independently verify.

However, concerns have been raised in public debate that some Muslim communities within the state may have been disproportionately affected by discrepancies in the voter lists, with numerous individuals having reported their names to be missing from the revised voter lists.

West Bengal's political sensitivity cannot be separated from its history. Bordering Bangladesh, the state has long experienced migration flows shaped by the partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947 and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Such turbulent events created significant displacement, resulting in cross-border social and familial ties, while also generating complex questions of documentation and citizenship.

Thus, electoral records in West Bengal are not merely administrative lists. They are widely perceived as records that define political belonging. For many citizens, especially poorer and marginalised communities, access to formal documentation can be uneven due to socioeconomic constraints, mobility or administrative barriers, rather than questions of legal citizenship.

Even Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the All India Trinamool Congress expressed concern that hurried scale electoral record revisions may have disenfranchised many eligible voters instead. Conversely, the Bharatiya Janata Party has defended voter roll revisions as necessary for ensuring electoral integrity.

Skeptics have suggested that these revisions are likely to help the BJP secure power in another key state.

Such contentions are linked to other contentious measures such as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and proposed citizenship verification frameworks like the National Register of Citizens.

Critics have been persistently pointing out how the BJP's reliance on seemingly neutral documentation-based systems risks disenfranchising vulnerable groups, particularly Indian Muslims. There are currently no official statistics demonstrating that voter list revisions in West Bengal have systematically excluded individuals on religious grounds.

Yet, independent media outlets such as Al Jazeera have reported that Muslims were "disproportionately" affected following the removal of around nine million voters from electoral rolls prior to the recently concluded state elections.

Ultimately, what is unfolding in West Bengal illustrates how questions of documentation, identity and trust are increasingly shaping participation in India's democracy.

The integrity of elections depends not only on accurate voter lists, but also on the transparency and credibility of the processes used to compile them. This ongoing controversy surrounding voter list management further complicate India's claim to be the world's largest democracy.

The writer holds a PhD from the University of Melbourne and is the author of Development, Poverty and Power in Pakistan, available from Routledge.

Vaccination gaps fuel worst measles surge in decades in Bangladesh

DHAKA, (Monitoring Desk): Bangladesh is facing its deadliest measles outbreak in decades, overwhelming hospitals as pediatric wards fill and doctors struggle to contain a surge that has killed more than 300 children.

The South Asian nation had made steady gains in vaccination coverage in recent years, helping suppress the virus.

But those advances were undermined by immunization gaps that emerged during and after the turmoil of a 2024 uprising that toppled the autocratic government, leaving many young children vulnerable.

"I was almost sure I was going to lose her today. Her condition was terrible in the morning," said Rina Begum, 45, as she held her 3-year-old granddaughter, Afia.

Exhausted and tearful, Begum said Afia had missed her second measles vaccine dose at 18 months and had spent the past two weeks in a measles ward in Dhaka.

Measles is highly contagious, spreading through respiratory droplets from coughs and sneezes, and has no specific treatment once infection sets in.

It hits children the hardest. Their breathing can become strained, their strength fades and, in severe cases, the infection can reach the brain, causing swelling that may lead to permanent damage or death.

Hospitals are treating thousands of young patients while authorities race to expand vaccination coverage and prevent further deaths.

Begum offered a faint smile as Afia reached up after just turning a corner in her recovery.

"After putting her on oxygen, now she is doing much better," she said.

Doctor's help

Bangladesh has recorded 336 child deaths since March 15, with more than 50,000 confirmed and suspected cases, according to the latest government data.

Most cases have been among children ages 6 months to 5 years.

On May 4, the country recorded its highest single-day child death toll, 17 in 24 hours.

Bangladesh has made significant progress in immunization against infectious diseases, but a measles vaccination campaign scheduled for 2024 was delayed by the uprising that toppled the government of Sheikh Hasina.

Health officials, supported by UNICEF, the World Health Organization and security forces, are now working to vaccinate children through an emergency measles-rubella campaign launched April 5. Nearly 17 million children have received vaccines since the drive began, according to government data.

Last year, vaccination coverage stood at 59 percent, far below the 95 percent needed to achieve herd immunity.

Without herd immunity, outbreaks can still occur even among vaccinated populations, said Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan, a senior Health Ministry official.

He said it would take about a month before the impact of the campaign becomes clear.



In Bridgeview, Illinois, a naming ceremony was held at the intersection of 87th Street and Harlem Avenue, where honorary street signs reading 'Wadea Al-Fayoume Way' and 'Little Palestine Way' were installed.



Pope Leo XIV held the Angelus midday prayer at his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, near Rome, the capital of Italy.

Ukrainian, EU Council presidents discuss joint work on Kyiv's European integration

KYIV, (Monitoring Desk): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he discussed joint work on Kyiv's European integration with European Council President Antonio Costa in a phone call.

In a statement on the US social media platform X, Zelenskyy expressed gratitude to Costa for his greetings to Kyiv and the Ukrainian people on the occasion of Europe Day, as well as for the support Europe has provided in the war against Russia.

"We will defend our independence and our people's right to freely choose their path. And in doing so, we will also defend the right of all European peoples to live as they themselves wish. Russia will not succeed in breaking Europe or fracturing it — there have been many attempts, but all have failed. And none will succeed," Zelenskyy said.

Several hikers killed, others rescued after volcano erupts in Indonesia

HALMAHERA, (Monitoring Desk): A volcanic eruption killed three people and triggered a rescue operation to get more than a dozen hikers stranded near the crater of Indonesia's Mount Dukono to safety, officials said. Singapore nationals and an Indonesian citizen were among those killed when the volcano, on the island of Halmahera in North Maluku province, erupted, according to the island's police chief and search and rescue officials.

Nine foreigners and 11 local hikers were climbing Mount Dukono at the time of the eruption, North Halmahera Police Chief Erlichson Pasaribu told Indonesia's Kompas TV.

Seventeen of the 20 climbers have been safely evacuated, Iwan Ramdani, head of the Ternate Search and Rescue (SAR) Office, said at 6 p.m. local time. The bodies of the three deceased currently remain on the mountain. Search operations have been suspended for Friday and will resume on Saturday.

A huge column of smoke and ash could be seen rising above the mountain in dramatic video from near the crater recorded by Alex Djangu, an Indonesian mountain guide.

US, Iran no closer to ending war as Gulf clashes flare

WASHINGTON/TEHRAN, (Agencies): The US and Iran appeared no closer on Saturday to finding an end to the US-Israeli-imposed war after the two sides traded fire in the Gulf amid a tenuous ceasefire. At the same time, a US intelligence analysis concluded Tehran could a naval blockade for months. Recent days have seen the biggest flare-ups in fighting in and around the Strait of Hormuz since a ceasefire began a month ago, and the United Arab Emirates came under renewed attack this week, a claim that Iran has denied responsibility for.

Washington has been awaiting Tehran's response to a US proposal that would formally end the war before talks on more contentious issues, including Iran's nuclear program. Speaking in Rome on Friday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the US was expecting a response that day, although an Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson said Tehran was still weighing its response.

Trump threatens 'Project Freedom Plus' if Iran deal not sealed

US President Donald Trump warned that Washington may escalate its military posture in the Strait of Hormuz if a deal with Iran is not finalised, threatening to revive and expand the paused "Project Freedom" operation.

"We'll go a different route if everything doesn't get signed up, buttoned up," Trump told reporters at the White House.

When asked whether the US would return to "Project Freedom," Trump responded, "I don't think so," but added that it still "might do it."

He explained that Pakistan, which is mediating talks between Washington and Tehran, asked the US not to resume the military operation.

"We may go back to Project Freedom if things don't happen," he said. "It'll be Project Freedom Plus, meaning Project Freedom plus other things," without elaborating on what additional measures the expanded operation would entail.

Tehran could withstand blockade for four months, CIA report shows, as fighting flares

Efforts to end the war between the US and Iran appeared to stall as the two sides traded fire in the Gulf on Friday, while a US intelligence analysis concluded Tehran could withstand a naval blockade for months.

A CIA assessment indicated that Iran would not severe economic pressure from a US blockade of Iranian ports for about another four months, according to a US official familiar with the matter, suggesting that US leverage over Tehran remains limited as the two sides seek to end a conflict that has been unpopular with US voters.

The Washington Post first reported the assessment.

A senior intelligence official called the "claims" about the CIA analysis "false," saying the blockade "is inflicting real, compounding damage - severing trade, crushing revenue, and accelerating systemic economic collapse."

Washington is awaiting Tehran's response to a US proposal that would formally end the war before talks on more contentious issues, including Iran's nuclear program.

"We should know something today," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters in Rome earlier in the day. "We're expecting a response from them."

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson said Tehran was still weighing its response, and none was reported by mid-afternoon in Washington, just before midnight in Tehran.

Meanwhile, a near-total internet blackout imposed by Iranian authorities has entered its 11th week, internet monitoring group NetBlocks said on Saturday.

"The censorship measure presents an extraordinary barrier to knowledge, information and communications for Iranians trying to go about their daily lives," the group said in a post on X.

The severe internet restrictions have disrupted jobs and businesses across the country.

Sporadic clashes in Strait

Meanwhile, more sporadic clashes between Iranian forces and US vessels took place in the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's semi-official Fars news agency reported. The Tasnim news agency later cited an Iranian military source saying the situation had calmed, but warned more clashes were possible.

The US military said it struck two Iran-linked vessels attempting to enter an Iranian port, with a US fighter jet hitting their smokestacks and forcing them to turn back. Iran has largely blocked non-Iranian shipping through the strait since the war began with joint US-Israeli airstrikes across Iran on February 28, the first of which killed over 100 children in a strike on a girls' school in Minab. The US imposed a blockade on Iranian vessels last month. Oil prices rose, with Brent crude futures above $101 a barrel, though still down more than 6% for the week.

Trump said on Thursday the ceasefire was still holding despite the flare-ups in the strait, which, before the war, handled one-fifth of the world's oil supply.

The confrontation extended beyond the waterway. The United Arab Emirates said its defences engaged with two ballistic missiles and three drones from Iran on Friday, with three people sustaining moderate injuries.

During the war, Iran has repeatedly targeted the UAE and other Gulf states that host US military bases. In what the UAE called a "major escalation", Iran stepped up attacks this week in response to Trump's announcement of "Project Freedom" to escort ships in the strait, which he paused after 48 hours.

Iran accused the US of breaching the ceasefire, which had largely held since it was announced on April 7 but has come under strain this week.

"Every time a diplomatic solution is on the table, the US opts for a reckless military adventure," Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said.



A view from centuries-old Galichnik Wedding, one of the Balkans' most traditional wedding ceremonies, held in the historic mountain village of Galichnik, about 110 kilometers west of Skopje, in Mavrovo and Rostusa, North Macedonia

ASEAN summit for regional fuel-sharing framework

CEBU, (Monitoring Desk): Philippines: Southeast Asian leaders were united in calling for a regional fuel-sharing framework to be ratified quickly, as their summit ended without a plan for a more immediate response to the impacts of the Middle East crisis.

Leaders meeting on the Philippine island of Cebu stressed the urgency of a joint approach beyond the oil-sharing pact for the region that depends heavily on oil imports, making it particularly exposed to the unprecedented energy supply disruption caused the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, expressed optimism that the members' ratification of the voluntary, commercial-based framework would be completed as soon as possible, but said the mechanics needed to be worked out. "We're trying to examine everything we can do," he told a press conference when asked about frustrations that the plan could not be implemented immediately. "How is the sharing? Who gets what? How do you pay for it? Do you pay for it? Is it an exchange? ... We haven't done it before," he said. "And what do we do about the others who are also in need? Who comes first? Those are the questions that still need to be decided."



In Miami Beach, Florida, hundreds of fans gathered to perform the famous 'Viking Shovel' chant as part of the 2026 FIFA World Cup celebrations.

US sanctions 10 individuals, companies for aiding Iran's weapons, drone programs

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): The US Treasury Department announced sanctions against 10 individuals and companies, including several based in China and Hong Kong, for allegedly enabling Iran's military to procure weapons and materials used in Shahed-series drones and ballistic missiles. The move targets networks that allegedly helped Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its affiliated bodies acquire weapons components and aerospace-grade raw materials. The Treasury Department said it is ready to take economic action against Iran's defense industrial base.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar meeting with H.E. Zahra Behrouz Azar, Vice President of Iran for Women and Family Affairs on the sidelines of the 9th OIC Ministerial Conference on Women, held under the theme 'Socio-Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in the OIC Countries: Challenges and Way Forward,' hosted by the Government of Pakistan under the auspices of the Ministry of Human Rights at the Convention Centre

New hantavirus case suspected on remote island as contact tracing continues

AMSTERDAM, (Monitoring Desk): A new suspected case of hantavirus has been identified in a British man who was a passenger on the virus-hit luxury cruise ship MV Hondius and is now on the remote South Atlantic island of Tristan da Cunha, health authorities. The UK Health Security Agency did not disclose further details of the new suspected case on the British overseas territory where the ship made a stop on April 15. Tristan da Cunha, home to only around 200 people, is halfway between South Africa and South America and the world's remotest inhabited island, more than 1,500 miles and a six-day boat ride from St Helena, its nearest inhabited neighbour. An islander had been hospitalised and his wife was self-isolating, the UK Minister for the Overseas Territories, Stephen Doughty, said in a statement posted on Tristan da Cunha's local government website.

Four islanders took a lift on the Dutch-flagged vessel to St Helena, he added.

Iran Guards target US bases in Gulf with ballistic missiles

TEHRAN (INP): Iran's Revolutionary Guards said Saturday they hit "enemy bases" in the Gulf with a volley of missiles, state media reported, after US forces said they struck radar sites in Iran.

"Following the invasion of the child-killing and terrorist US army into Sirik and Qeshm Island, enemy bases in the region were hit by aerial missiles," state broadcaster IRIB reported, quoting the Guards.

US military officials said Iran launched seven ballistic missiles toward neighbouring Gulf nations of Kuwait and Bahrain on Friday, hours after reporting four Iranian "one-way attack" drones were thwarted.

In a statement posted to X, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said it intercepted six of the missiles Iran launched and the seventh "did not reach its intended target."

"There are currently no reports of harm to US personnel, and Iranian claims of damaging US 5th fleet headquarters in Bahrain are false," the statement said. Contrary to Centcom statement, explosions were heard early Saturday in Kuwait and Bahrain after US strikes against Iran. In a statement on Friday, the US State Department said it would allow purchases of counter-drone technology from defence company Anduril, which was founded by a supporter of President Donald Trump.

"This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States by improving the security of a major non-NATO ally that has been an important force for political stability and economic progress in the Middle East," the statement said.

Austrian FM reaffirms support for two-state solution after talks with Israeli counterpart

VIENNA, (Monitoring Desk): Austrian Foreign Minister reaffirmed support for a two-state solution following a phone call with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar, stressing that no developments should make such a solution "de facto impossible."



"Austria continues to advocate for a two-state solution. No facts may be created that make the two-state solution de facto impossible and undermine a peace perspective," Beate Meinl-Reisinger said on US social media company X.

The foreign minister added that she had spoken with Saar about the situation in the Middle East, particularly Iran and Lebanon.

Meinl-Reisinger said she supported direct talks between Lebanon and Israel.

She added that "the safety of the civilian population on all sides as well as the protection of international, including Austrian, troops have the highest priority."

She also welcomed Israeli participation in Eurovision 2026, describing the contest as a platform for "cultural understanding, music, and love."



HYDERABAD: Workers of PPP participate in a rally against India 's violation of Indus Waters Treaty

Balochistan's coal miners receives over Rs260 million in welfare grants since 2019

ISLAMABAD (APP): Balochistan coal miners and their families received over Rs260 million in welfare assistance under the death and marriage grant schemes during the seven-year period from 2019 to 26.

According to official documents available with Wealth Pakistan, a total of 641 cases were supported during the period, including 307 death grant cases and 334 marriage grant cases.

The disbursements highlight the continued dependence of mine workers and their families on welfare support in a province where coal mining remains one of the most difficult and hazardous occupations.

According to the data, death grants accounted for the largest share of assistance, with Rs173.24 million disbursed in 307 cases.

For the 2019–20 fiscal year, the document lists two separate entries under death grants: 72 cases totaling Rs 36 million and 64 cases totaling Rs 32 million. Combined, these represent 136 cases and Rs 68 million in disbursements.

In 2020-21, death grant support was provided in 29 cases, with Rs15.3 million released. The number declined to 25 cases in 2021-22, involving Rs15 million. In 2022-23, 27 cases were supported with Rs14.8 million, while 18 cases were covered in 2023-24 with Rs11 million disbursed.

The death grant cases rose again in 2024-25, when 53 cases were provided with Rs33.94 million. During 2025-26, 19 death grant cases were recorded, with Rs15.2 million disbursed.

Marriage grants were provided in 334 cases, totaling Rs 87.7 million during the period. This includes 33 cases receiving Rs 3.3 million in 2019–20, and 58 cases supported with Rs 7.8 million in 2020–21.

In 2021-22, Rs9.6 million was released in 48 marriage grant cases. The number fell to 31 cases in 2022-23, with Rs6.2 million disbursed. However, the amount increased sharply in 2023-24, when 61 cases received Rs23.60 million.

The highest number of marriage grant cases was recorded in 2024-25, with 70 cases receiving Rs24 million. During 2025-26, 33 cases were supported with Rs13.2 million. Overall, death grants represented about two-thirds of total welfare disbursements, reflecting the financial support extended to families after the loss of life in the mining sector.

Marriage grants made up the remaining share and were aimed at supporting miners' families in meeting social and household expenses.

The figures indicate that welfare disbursements for Balochistan's coal miners have continued across successive years, though annual amounts and case numbers varied. The data also underlines the need for stronger safety, monitoring, and social protection mechanisms for coal miners, whose work remains exposed to serious occupational risks.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar meeting with H.E. Ms. Hind Qabawat, Minister of Social Welfare and Labour, Syria on the sidelines of the 9th OIC Ministerial Conference on Women, held under the theme 'Socio-Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in the OIC Countries: Challenges and Way Forward,' hosted by the Government of Pakistan under the auspices of the Ministry of Human Rights at the Convention Centre



Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti inquires about health of Dr Muhammad Hussain Bugti.

Govt raises kerosene price by Rs11.19 per litre

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government has increased the price of kerosene by Rs11.19 per litre, days after revising the prices of petrol and high-speed diesel.

According to a notification, the price of kerosene has been raised to Rs242.33 per litre, up from the previous rate of Rs231.14 per litre.

The latest increase is expected to add to the financial burden on consumers who rely on kerosene for household and other daily needs.

The revised price has come into effect following the issuance of the official notification.

People of Balochistan desires peaceful, progressive, prosperous province: Zarak Mandokhail

QUETTA (ANN): Member of the Balochistan Assembly Sheikh Zarak Khan Mandokhail applauded the security forces for their successful operations against militants under Operation Shaban and in other parts of the province, describing the ongoing campaign against terrorist elements as a significant step towards restoring peace and stability.

In a statement, Mandokhail said the nation stood shoulder to shoulder with the armed forces and other security institutions in their efforts to eliminate terrorism. He said the unwavering commitment and sacrifices of security personnel in the line of duty reflected their determination to safeguard the country and its citizens.

The provincial legislator said eradicating terrorism remained a national priority and emphasized that every available resource was being employed to counter militant activities. He added that close coordination among the government, security agencies and the public was indispensable for overcoming security challenges and establishing lasting peace.

Mandokhail said the people of Balochistan desired a peaceful, progressive and prosperous province and would not allow extremist groups to undermine its stability or obstruct its path to development.

Pakistan-US negotiations on Reciprocal Trade held in Washington

ISLAMABAD (APP): The negotiations on the Pakistan–United States Agreement on Reciprocal Trade were held in Washington, D.C. with a view to its early conclusion.

"The talks were conducted in a cordial atmosphere, with both sides ironing out differences and building convergence, with a view to the early conclusion of the Agreement," Tahir Andrabi, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul, who led the Pakistan delegation, characterised the talks as positive and appreciated the significant progress made during the negotiations.

Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said the negotiations on the Pakistan-United States Agreement on Reciprocal Trade were held on July 9 and 10 in Washington in what he described as a cordial atmosphere.

"The talks were conducted in a cordial atmosphere, with both sides ironing out differences and building convergence, with a view to the early conclusion of the Agreement," Andrabi said in a post on X.

According to the spokesperson, Commerce Secretary Jawad Paul, who led Pakistan's delegation, termed the negotiations "positive" and appreciated the significant progress made during the discussions.

The Pakistani delegation included Secretary Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Nadeem Chaudhary, Joint Secretary Tariff Policy Mohammad Ashfaq and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while representatives of other ministries participated virtually, according to Pakistan TV.

The negotiations focused on strengthening bilateral trade, facilitating greater commercial cooperation and expanding existing trade between the two countries.

Photographs shared by the foreign office showed officials from both sides posing after the talks. In one image, Paul presented a Pakistan-made football to a US official, highlighting one of Pakistan's leading export industries.

The latest round of negotiations came as Islamabad and Washington seek to deepen economic engagement through trade, investment and commercial partnerships. The US remains Pakistan's largest single-country export destination, while both countries have recently expanded cooperation in areas including investment promotion and critical minerals. According to the office of the US Trade Representative, total US goods and services trade with Pakistan was estimated at $10.1 billion in 2024. US goods trade reached $8.7 billion in 2025, with US exports to Pakistan rising to $3.3 billion and imports from Pakistan increasing to $5.4 billion.

Business leaders have welcomed the progress in the negotiations, saying a reciprocal trade agreement could improve Pakistani exporters' access to the US market. Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Faheem Ur Rehman Saigol said the agreement could benefit key export sectors, including textiles, apparel, surgical instruments, sports goods and information technology services.



HOUSTON: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, addressing students, faculty members, researchers, and members of the Pakistani community at Rice University.

EU supports young Pakistanis for economic opportunities, climate action, community leadership

ISLAMABAD (APP): With young people facing growing challenges ranging from unemployment and climate vulnerability to limited opportunities to participate in public decision-making, a new EUR 1.2 million initiative co-funded by the European Union aimed to equip the next generation with the skills, opportunities and leadership needed to drive inclusive economic growth and sustainable development across Pakistan.

Launched in Lahore and Karachi, the project MANZIL (Youth Leadership Transforming Communities for Inclusive Economic Growth, Climate Action and Good Governance) will directly support approximately 4,000 vulnerable young women and men and strengthen 40 youth-led organizations across Rawalpindi, Lahore, Mirpurkhas and Sanghar.

The initiative is designed to help young people move beyond being beneficiaries of development programmes to becoming entrepreneurs, climate champions, community leaders and active partners in local governance, said a press release. Pakistan is home to one of the world's largest youth populations, presenting both a significant opportunity and a pressing development challenge. While young people possess the energy and potential to drive economic growth and social progress, many continue to face barriers to employment, entrepreneurship, civic participation and access to resources.



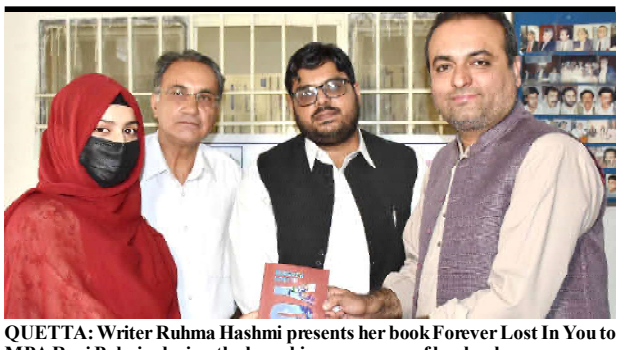
CHAMAN: Deputy Commissioner Chaman Habib Ahmed Bangulzai and SP Chaman AitzazArif presenting 10.1 million cheque to relatives of Shaheed ATF Police Constable Muhammad Saleem martyred during Mangi Dam incident.

Govt, people stand firmly with security forces in fight against terrorism: Bakht Kakar

QUETTA (ANN): Balochistan Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar paid tribute to the security forces for their successful counter-terrorism operations under Operation Shaban and in other parts of the province, describing their dedication and sacrifices in safeguarding the country as a matter of national pride.

In an official statement, the minister said those attempting to disrupt peace and stability in Balochistan would never be allowed to achieve their objectives. He reaffirmed that the government and the people stood firmly behind the security forces in the collective fight against terrorism.

Kakar said the federal and provincial governments, along with law enforcement agencies and the public, were united in confronting the menace of militancy. He noted that this spirit of national cohesion remained the country's greatest strength in defeating terrorist elements and securing enduring peace. The minister observed that anti-state groups had repeatedly sought to create fear by attacking innocent citizens.



QUETTA: Writer Ruhma Hashmi presents her book Forever Lost In You to MPA Ravi Pahuja during the launching ceremony of her book

Pakistan's population should be viewed as human capital: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Saturday reaffirmed the government's commitment to addressing Pakistan's population challenge through coordinated, evidence-based and whole-of-government action, saying the country's future would depend on the quality, productivity and preparedness of its people rather than the size of its population.

In a message issued on World Population Day, observed this year under the theme "Realizing the hopes and aspirations of young people, today and for the future," the minister said Pakistan's large youth population was both a national asset and a major policy responsibility.

He said Pakistan's population should be viewed as human capital to be developed rather than a burden to be managed, adding that investments in health, nutrition, education, skills development and women's empowerment would translate into greater productivity, resilience and prosperity.

Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan had made progress in reducing fertility, with the total fertility rate declining from 4.1 births per woman in 2006-07 to 3.6 in 2017-18, a figure reaffirmed by the latest Household Integrated Economic Survey 2024-25.

However, he said the pace of decline remained insufficient to meet the country's development requirements. He noted that Pakistan's population had reached 241.49 million according to the 2023 Digital Census, growing at an annual rate of 2.55 percent, and could exceed 386 million by 2050 if current trends continued, placing enormous pressure on education, healthcare, housing, employment, water resources, food security, infrastructure and public finances.

The minister said population outcomes were fundamentally linked with governance.

Compensation cheque presented to family of martyred ATF constable

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Superintendent of Police (SP) Chaman Aitezaz Arif, Deputy Commissioner Chaman Habib Ahmed Bangulzai and Additional Deputy Commissioner Chaman Fida Baloch visited the residence of martyred Anti-Terrorism Force (ATF) Constable Muhammad Saleem to offer condolences and pray for the departed soul. During the visit, the officials, on behalf of the Government of Balochistan, handed over a compensation cheque amounting to Rs11.1 million to the bereaved family in recognition of the constable's supreme sacrifice while performing his official duties.

Speaking on the occasion, SP Aitezaz Arif said the sacrifices rendered by police martyrs in the fight against terrorism were a source of immense pride for the nation and would always be remembered with honour. He assured the family that the provincial government remained committed to supporting the families of fallen personnel and would continue to stand beside them in every possible way.

Police launches extensive drive against criminal elements

QUETTA (APP): Sariab Police have launched an extensive campaign against criminal elements on the directives of senior police authorities, stepping up operations against drug traffickers, motorcycle snatchers, proclaimed offenders and absconders while enhancing patrols and intelligence-led policing to improve law and order in the area. Following his assumption of charge as Station House Officer (SHO) of Sariab Police Station, Fazal Rehman Khilji addressed officers and personnel, reiterating the department's resolve to enforce the law without discrimination. He declared that there would be no tolerance for individuals involved in criminal activities, adding that police were utilizing all available resources to apprehend proclaimed offenders, absconders and habitual lawbreakers.

Empowerment of youth vital for Pakistan's sustainable development, says Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani said that World Population Day highlighted the importance of investing in young people and creating opportunities that enable them to realize their full potential.

Referring to this year's theme, "Realizing the hopes and aspirations of young people – today and for the future," he stressed that empowering youth is essential for Pakistan's sustainable development and prosperity.

In his message, the Chairman Senate noted that Pakistan's large youth population represents a valuable national asset.

He said that with quality education, healthcare, skills development, and employment opportunities, the country's young people could become a driving force for economic growth and social progress. Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani observed that rapid population growth continues to place pressure on education, healthcare, employment, water resources, and other public services. He emphasized the need for effective population management, greater awareness of family planning, improved maternal and child health services, and sustained investment in human capital.



USTA MUHAMMAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ramzan Palal distributing motorcycles amongst the vaccinators.



Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman addresses Majlis-e-Shura session at Mansoorah, Lahore.

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