

CLAWS Newsletter



Pakistan Unveiled | Volume I | No. 4

by Akashika Mate

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

1. KP Government Announces Rs30 Billion Investment in Security Infrastructure ([ARY News, March 16](#))

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has announced a major investment of over Rs30 billion to enhance the province's security infrastructure. The funds will be used to purchase modern weapons, vehicles, and equipment to combat terrorism, alongside significant reforms in the police department. The provincial government plans to procure 105 bulletproof vehicles worth Rs321 million and 4,000 submachine guns (SMGs). Additionally, 2,423 personnel are being recruited for terrorism-affected areas, while 3,797 new positions are being created in the security division. Over 1,200 elite force personnel have already received advanced training. CM Gandapur criticised the federal government for mismanaging security and blamed external influences for the resurgence of terrorism in tribal districts. To support the families of police martyrs, the government has distributed Rs367 million in cash, land plots, and jobs.

2. Open Letter to Army Chief: “Resign or Face the Reckoning” ([@MoeedNj/X, March 18](#); [Dr Moeed Pirzada/Youtube, March 18](#); [News18, March 26](#))

In a major act of defiance in Pakistan, junior officers within the Pakistan Army have openly called for the resignation of Army Chief General Asim Munir, accusing him of turning the military into a tool of political oppression. In a scathing open letter, reportedly written by colonels, majors, captains, and jawans, they warn that Munir must step down immediately or face severe consequences. The letter draws comparisons to the events of 1971 when Pakistan suffered a humiliating defeat that led to the creation of Bangladesh. “Resign or face the reckoning. This is not a plea. This is not a negotiation. This is your 1971, General, and we will not let you bury us in its shadow,” the letter declares. The officers accuse Munir of destroying the Army's reputation by suppressing political dissent, manipulating elections, silencing journalists, and crushing democratic forces. They cite the military's violent crackdown following the removal of Imran Khan in April 2022 and the alleged rigging of the February 08, 2024 elections as key moments that have discredited the institution.

The letter describes a nation suffering under General Munir's rule, painting a grim picture of economic collapse and widespread public anger. *"The economy's a corpse—and yet you strut in GHQ like some tin-pot dictator, extending your term to 2027 while we starve."* Public resentment against the military is reportedly at an all-time high, with even children resisting military authority. *"Children throw stones at our checkpoints. You've made the Pakistan Army a pariah in its own land."* The officers demand a transfer of command to a senior council to restore the institution's integrity, citing recent security failures, including the hijacking of the Jaffar Express in Balochistan by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). They highlight the incident as a moment of national disgrace, where insurgents successfully seized a train, held passengers hostage, and escaped unchallenged. *"We lost Balochistan that day; we lost our dignity."*

Prominent Washington-based Pakistani journalist Moeed Pirzada shared the letter on his X account, calling the demand for Munir's resignation a "wise suggestion." "BLA and TTP have brought the Pakistan Army under siege! Unfortunately, for the first time, the Pakistan Army is extremely unpopular in its traditional support areas like KP and Punjab—which also happen to be the breeding ground for its soldiers and officers! Huge achievement for the likes of Gen Bajwa and Gen Asim Munir—whose incompetence has made it possible," [Pirzada stated on X](#).

3. Pakistan's Leadership Calls for Unity Against Rising Militancy **([Associated Press, March 18](#))**

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has urged the country's political leadership to unite in tackling militancy with the full force of the state following a recent surge in deadly violence. The recent hijacking of the Jaffar Express by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), one of the deadliest attacks in recent months, has intensified concerns over national security and drawn widespread condemnation across Pakistan. Sharif chaired a meeting of parliament's National Security Committee, attended by top government officials and Army Chief General Asim Munir. However, the opposition party of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan boycotted the meeting. The committee unanimously condemned the attacks and paid tribute to security forces, emphasizing the need for a united political front to combat terrorism. The meeting called for a national consensus to confront the growing security threats. General Munir stressed the importance of better governance in tackling terrorism and warned that those supporting such

acts would face severe consequences. He declared that Pakistan is united in its resolve and will not only defeat terrorist elements but also dismantle their networks and facilitators.

4. Pakistan Launches its First ‘Home-Grown’ GPT Model ([Arab News, March 21](#); [MM News, March 21](#))

In a significant step for Pakistan’s artificial intelligence (AI) landscape, tech firm Data Vault has unveiled the country’s first locally developed generative pre-trained transformer (GPT) platform, Zahanat AI. The platform, launched on March 20, 2025, in Islamabad, is designed to cater specifically to regional needs, supporting English, Urdu, and local languages, said Syed Muhammad Yahya, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Data Vault. Built on Meta’s Large Language Model Architecture (LLaMA), Zahanat AI boasts 1.5 billion parameters and follows an open-source approach like DeepSeek. The model has been locally trained and hosted in Pakistan, ensuring its alignment with the country’s cultural and cybersecurity considerations. According to Yahya, the AI is equipped to handle queries across diverse domains, including healthcare, mathematics, coding, and history. Privately funded, Zahanat AI was developed over six to eight months using a multi-GPU architecture with a stack of 12-15 GPUs. It currently offers limited access within Pakistan, with plans to launch a mobile application soon.

The unveiling comes at a crucial time as Pakistan prepares to introduce its first AI policy. Dr Aneel Salman, overseeing the policy development, emphasised the importance of fostering local AI ecosystems while mitigating cybersecurity risks associated with foreign AI models. Despite early-stage limitations, such as inaccuracies in responses, the developers remain optimistic, viewing the launch as a stepping stone for future iterations. Experts stress that widespread adoption and collaboration with research and development institutions will be vital for Zahanat AI to thrive.

5. Pakistan Marks 85th Independence Day Resolution ([Anadolu Ajansi, March 23](#); [Gulf News, March 23](#))

Pakistan observed the 85th Independence Day resolution on ‘Pakistan Day’, March 23, commemorating the Lahore Resolution of 1940, which laid the foundation for a separate homeland for Muslims in the subcontinent. On this occasion, President Ali Zardari and Prime

Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed their commitment to overcoming the country's political, economic, and security challenges. In his address, President Zardari acknowledged the pressing difficulties Pakistan faces but expressed confidence in the nation's ability to navigate complex global realities, revitalise its economy, and ensure sustainable development. He emphasised the importance of strengthening national security, advancing agriculture, securing energy resources, and investing in youth, healthcare, and social welfare. He also highlighted Islamabad's steadfast support for Jammu & Kashmir and Palestine, urging the international community to ensure the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions. Prime Minister Sharif echoed this sentiment, stating that no challenge is insurmountable if the nation remains united in purpose and committed to progress. With determination and hard work, he affirmed that Pakistan would continue striving for a stronger, more prosperous future.

6. Crackdown on Protests in Balochistan; BYC Leaders Arrested ([ANI, March 25](#); [ANI, March 28](#))

Protests have erupted in Balochistan's Panjgur district with security forces resorting to the use of force against demonstrators who are demanding an end to enforced disappearances and state repression. The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), which has led these protests, reported police action, including the use of tear gas and live fire, against peaceful protesters. The demonstrations follow the arrest of BYC chief organiser Dr Mahrang Baloch and 16 others from their Quetta protest camp, a move that has sparked widespread condemnation. Amid reports of detainees being denied access to legal counsel and family members, Mahrang's sister, Nadia Baloch, revealed that she was only allowed a brief meeting after hours of pleading. Mahrang, despite her detention, remained defiant, urging supporters to continue their peaceful struggle for justice. Meanwhile, Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai expressed her concern over Mahrang's arrest, calling for her immediate release and highlighting the broader human rights crisis in Balochistan. International human rights lawyer Kurtulus Bastimar also announced he would escalate the issue to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Babu Ram Pant, Deputy Regional Director for South Asia at Amnesty International, has also condemned the Pakistani authorities' crackdown on Baloch activists, stating that the continued detention of protesters, including Sammi Deen Baloch and Mahrang Baloch, reflects a "systematic attack" on the rights of the Baloch community.

7. Rising Persecution of Religious Minorities in Pakistan: HRFP Report ([Business Standard, March 26](#))

The Human Rights Focus Pakistan (HRFP) has reported a sharp rise in the victimisation of religious minorities in the first quarter of 2025. The report highlights alarming cases of false blasphemy accusations, forced conversions, abductions, and communal violence. Incidents include the abduction of 12-year-old Ariha Gulzar in Okara, the attack on shopkeeper Javed Masih over a fabricated blasphemy claim, and protests in Lahore's Khaliq Nagar over sewage flooding. The desecration of a Christian cemetery in Narowal and the burning of a church in Sargodha further reflect growing religious intolerance. HRFP President Naveed Walter condemned the lack of justice, noting that over 400 calls reporting religious persecution were received by HRFP's helpline in just three months. The organisation has called for independent investigations into blasphemy cases, particularly those involving minors.

8. Pakistan Secures IMF Staff-Level Agreement ([ANI, March 26](#))

Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have reached a staff-level agreement on the first review of the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and a new \$1.3 billion Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). Once approved by the IMF's Executive Board, this agreement will grant Pakistan access to approximately \$2 billion in total disbursements. The IMF acknowledged Pakistan's progress in economic reforms, citing improvements in tax equity, monetary stability, and climate resilience. Inflation has dropped to its lowest since 2015, financial conditions have improved, and external balances have strengthened. However, the IMF also warned of risks such as policy pressures, geopolitical shocks, and global financial constraints that could challenge stability. With this agreement, Pakistan aims to maintain macroeconomic stability while addressing long-term structural vulnerabilities and climate-related risks.

9. ECNEC Approves Projects Worth Rs1.28 Trillion ([The Express Tribune Pakistan, March 26](#); [Profit by Pakistan Today, March 26](#))

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) has approved 13 major development projects valued at Rs1.28 trillion, spanning transport, communications, railways,

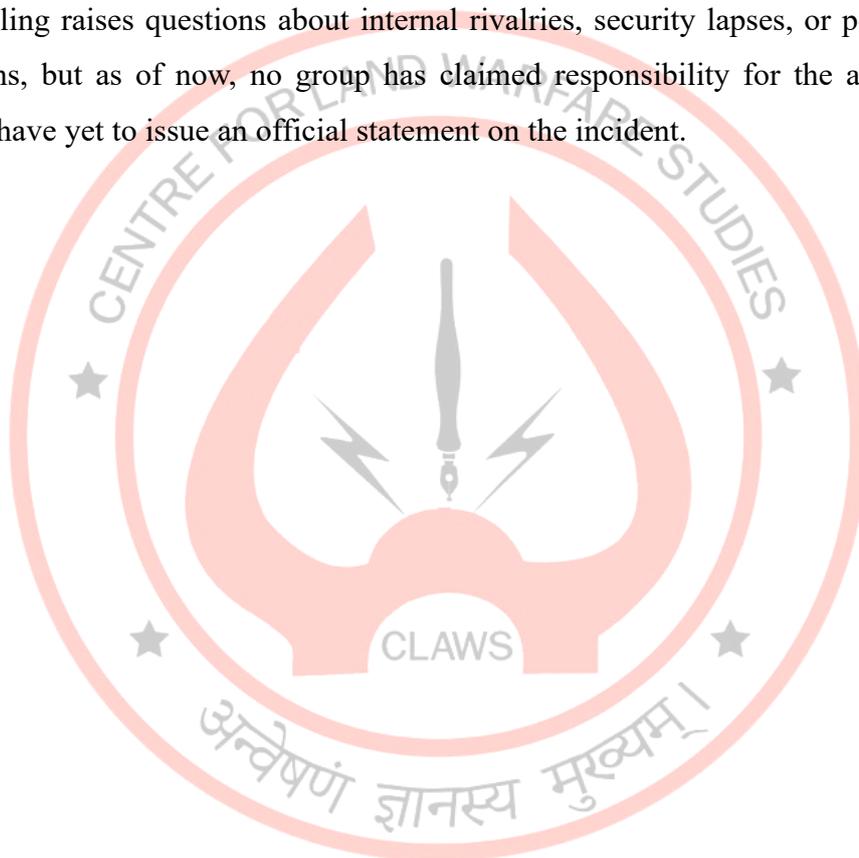
space technology, and public infrastructure. The approvals signal a push for economic transformation, with key projects benefiting Punjab, Sindh, and Gilgit-Baltistan:

- **Lahore-Sahiwal-Bahawalnagar Motorway:** Originally budgeted at Rs264 billion, its cost has surged by 65% to Rs436 billion. Despite federal restrictions on funding provincial projects, the government is proceeding with construction, with negotiations ongoing for Punjab to cover half the cost.
- **Pakistan Optical Remote Sensing Satellite (PRSS-O2):** Approved at a revised cost of Rs19.5 billion, with 85% financing from a Chinese concessional loan. The satellite will enhance Pakistan's remote sensing capabilities with high-resolution Earth imagery.
- **Sindh Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project (SFERP) Phase-I:** Budget increased to Rs88.4 billion, with additional funding allocated to restore infrastructure and improve food security post-floods. A \$288 million World Bank loan supports the initiative, with ECNEC mandating greater transparency in fund utilization.
- **Rawalpindi Ring Road:** Revised to Rs33 billion, up 40% from its initial cost. The scope has expanded, with added culverts, underpasses, and bridges.
- **Pakistan Railways Expansion:** The procurement of 820 railway wagons and 230 passenger coaches now stands at Rs71 billion, reflecting a 129% cost increase. The project is expected to be completed by June 2027.
- **Multan-Vehari Road Rehabilitation:** Approved at Rs12.9 billion for the 93.5-kilometre road upgrade.
- **Green Line BRT:** Administrative clearance granted to settle liabilities before transferring the system to the Sindh government. Fare adjustments remain undecided.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Rs28 billion allocated to enhance collaborations, with Sindh instructed to complete related projects by mid-2026 to avoid additional financial charges.

Despite severe fiscal constraints and an already stretched development budget, the federal government is moving forward with these large-scale infrastructure initiatives. However, rising costs and financing gaps remain a challenge, particularly in projects requiring provincial co-funding.

10. LeT Financier Killed in Karachi ([IndiaTV News, March 31](#))

Abdul Rehman, a key financier of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and a close aide of terrorist Hafiz Saeed, was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Karachi, Pakistan. According to reports, two assailants arrived on a motorbike and opened fire on Rehman while he was standing in a shop. The incident, which occurred in broad daylight, was captured on video and has since gone viral on social media. Rehman was a prominent figure in LeT's fundraising operations, responsible for collecting and managing financial contributions for the group, which has been designated as a terrorist organisation by several countries due to its involvement in attacks across Pakistan and India. His deep connections and influential role in Karachi made him a crucial asset to LeT, as he oversaw the transfer of funds from local collectors to the group's higher authorities. The targeted killing raises questions about internal rivalries, security lapses, or possible external interventions, but as of now, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack. Pakistani authorities have yet to issue an official statement on the incident.



EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

1. Pakistan's Reliance on China for Military Supplies Grows: SIPRI Report ([SIPRI, March 10](#); [South China Morning Post, March 16](#); [Indian Military Review, March 17](#))

Pakistan's reliance on China for military imports has grown significantly, with Beijing now supplying 81% of Pakistan's total arms imports between 2020 and 2024, according to the latest data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). This marks a steady increase from the previous period (2015–2019) when China accounted for 74% of Pakistan's arms purchases. Over the past five years, Pakistan has acquired advanced weaponry from China, including J-10CE multirole fighter jets, VT-4 battle tanks, long-range reconnaissance drones, and Type 054A guided-missile frigates. One of the most notable defence deals was the US\$5 billion agreement for eight Hangor II submarines, with the first launched in April 2023. Additionally, Pakistan expanded its missile defence capabilities with the acquisition of HQ-9, LY-80, and FN-6 missile systems. China's increasing military collaboration with Pakistan reflects deepening strategic ties, driven by Islamabad's need to modernise its defence forces amid ongoing tensions with its neighbours. With China's global share of arms exports reaching 5.9% in 2024—of which Pakistan accounted for 63%—this partnership is set to reshape regional defence dynamics in the years ahead.

2. Counter-Terror Cooperation with Iraq ([Arab News Pakistan, March 16](#))

Iraqi Special Forces have successfully completed an intensive two-month training course at Pakistan's National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) in Pabbi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The training, which began in December 2024, is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen military and defence cooperation between Iraq and Pakistan. State-run Radio Pakistan highlighted that Pakistani military institutions play a pivotal role in providing advanced counter-terrorism training, a collaboration that dates back to 1955 when the Pakistan Army first agreed to train Iraqi Special Forces. This latest course reinforces the longstanding defence ties between the two nations. In recent years, Pakistan has frequently provided specialized training and equipment, including the sale of Super Mushak trainer aircraft in 2014, further solidifying their

defence relations. The NCTC, renowned for its modern facilities, is set to train more Iraqi personnel in the future.

3. Developments with Afghanistan

a. Torkham Reopens After 27-Day Closure (Reuters, March 19; ANI, March 20)

Pakistan and Afghanistan have reopened the Torkham border crossing, the primary trade and travel route between the two nations, after nearly a month of closure due to clashes between security forces. The border, which had been shut since February 21 following disputes over construction activities, reopened for cargo movement on March 19, with pedestrian crossings resuming on March 21. The closure led to significant disruptions, leaving approximately 5,000 commercial trucks stranded and causing millions of dollars in losses to traders. A resolution was reached through negotiations led by a joint *jirga* of Pakistani and Afghan elders and traders. During a flag meeting at Torkham on March 19, both sides agreed to halt the construction of border checkpoints, a key point of contention. A temporary ceasefire has also been established until April 15. The reopening of Torkham is expected to restore vital trade routes, particularly crucial for Afghanistan, which faces a severe humanitarian crisis and relies on imports from Pakistan. However, tensions over border infrastructure remain an underlying issue in bilateral relations.

b. Pakistan Killed 16 Fighters Near Afghan Border (Al Jazeera, March 23)

Pakistan's army has announced that its forces killed 16 armed fighters along the country's western border with Afghanistan during a nighttime exchange of fire between 22 and 23 March in North Waziristan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The military stated that its border troops effectively engaged the infiltrators and thwarted their attempt to cross into Pakistan. The incident comes at a time of growing tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, with Islamabad repeatedly urging the Taliban-led Afghan government to enhance border security and prevent militant incursions. Despite Pakistan's diplomatic efforts, including a recent visit by its Special Representative for Afghanistan, Sadiq Khan, to Kabul, relations between the two neighbours have deteriorated significantly in recent years.

c. Deadline Expires on Afghan Nationals in Pakistan: Deportations and Human Rights Concerns (Amnesty International, March 26; ANI, March 31)

As Pakistan's deadline for Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders to leave the country expired on 31 March, law enforcement in Islamabad and Rawalpindi has been instructed to arrest and deport Afghan nationals involved in criminal activities, along with their families. The crackdown follows directives from the Rawalpindi police chief to detain undocumented Afghan residents and those engaged in illegal activities, with a particular focus on individuals living in rented properties. Since the launch of the government's deportation drive in January, 923 Afghan nationals have been detained in the twin cities. Official data indicates that 715 were released after verification, while 213 have been repatriated via Torkham. Meanwhile, Afghan refugees holding Proof of Registration (PoR) cards have been given until 30 June 2025 to leave Pakistan. The Pakistani government has justified these actions as part of its broader efforts to curb illegal immigration and security threats. However, the deportations have sparked international criticism. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) acknowledged Pakistan's role in hosting Afghan refugees for decades but urged a more collaborative approach to ensure voluntary and safe returns.

Amnesty International has strongly condemned Pakistan's mass deportations, labelling them as part of an opaque 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan' that, according to the organisation, unfairly scapegoats Afghan refugees as criminals and terrorists. Isabelle Lassée, Amnesty's Deputy Regional Director for South Asia, criticised the forced relocations, arguing that the government's actions violate international human rights law, particularly the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of refugees to a country where they face persecution. Human rights lawyers and advocacy groups have also raised concerns over the lack of legal transparency in Pakistan's deportation drive. Lawyer Umer Gillani noted that the 31 March deadline was imposed through an executive order rather than any specific law, calling it a direct violation of fundamental rights. The crackdown has been accompanied by increasing restrictions on Afghan refugees, including requirements for a no-objection certificate (NOC) to stay in Islamabad, racial profiling, and allegations linking Afghan nationals to political unrest and crime. Amnesty International warns that such policies fuel xenophobia and discrimination, undermining the rights of thousands of refugees who have lived in Pakistan for years. Pakistan currently hosts 1.52 million registered Afghan refugees and around 800,000 Afghan citizens, many of whom lack official documentation. With thousands already deported, international rights groups fear a worsening humanitarian crisis, particularly as Afghanistan remains unstable under Taliban rule.

4. Naval Cooperation with Russia (Arab News, March 19)

Pakistan and Russia conducted a bilateral naval exercise, Arabian Monsoon-VI, in the North Arabian Sea on March 19, aimed at countering maritime security threats and enhancing interoperability between their navies. The exercise saw the participation of various assets from the Pakistan Navy, including a destroyer, an offshore patrol vessel, a fast attack craft, a maritime patrol aircraft, and a UAV, operating alongside Russian Federation Navy ships. The exercise also featured multi-faceted maritime warfare serials, coordinated patrols, and joint operations, with additional support from the Pakistan Air Force's fighter aircraft. Beyond these military drills, the Russian navy delegates paid an official visit to Pakistan Navy officials and honoured the country's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, by laying a floral wreath at his mausoleum. The exercise follows the Russian navy flotilla's arrival in Karachi on March 13, where cross-ship visits, harbour drills, and discussions on maritime security took place.

5. Defence Cooperation with South Africa (Associated Press of Pakistan, March 19)

Pakistan's Ministry of Defence hosted the 2nd Pakistan-South Africa Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting from March 17 to 19, 2025, to strengthen bilateral defence ties. The meeting, led by Pakistan's Secretary of Defence Lt. Gen. (Retd) Muhammad Ali and South Africa's Acting Secretary of Defence Dr. Thobekile Gamede, focused on reviewing ongoing cooperation and exploring new areas of collaboration. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepening defence relations, with discussions covering key areas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, space, technology transfer, and capacity building in the defence industry. General Ali highlighted Pakistan's longstanding contributions to UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and stressed the importance of expanding defence partnerships. Dr. Gamede praised Pakistan's hospitality and expressed South Africa's interest in enhancing joint ventures, technology exchange, and training programmes. The meeting underscored the growing strategic cooperation between the two nations, paving the way for deeper engagement in the defence and security sectors.

6. PM's Visit to Saudi Arabia ([Dawn, March 20](#); [Arab News, March 20](#); [Arab News Pakistan, March 21](#))

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited Saudi Arabia from March 19-22, 2025. He met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on March 20 in Jeddah to discuss expanding cooperation in economic, trade, investment, energy, and defence sectors. The visit is part of Pakistan's ongoing efforts to strengthen ties with key allies, with Saudi Arabia reaffirming its commitment to a \$5 billion investment package aimed at stabilising Pakistan's economy. Both leaders reiterated their dedication to enhancing defence and security collaboration, recognising the importance of joint efforts in addressing regional security challenges.

Economic cooperation remained a focal point of the discussions, with both sides expressing satisfaction over growing business-to-business ties. In October 2024, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed 34 agreements worth \$2.8 billion to boost private-sector collaboration, with five of these agreements already operational. Talks are also progressing on Saudi investment in the Reko Diq copper and gold mine, as well as allocating a share of Saudi Arabia's \$200 billion annual construction and procurement contracts to Pakistan. Additionally, last month, Pakistan secured a one-year deferral on a \$1.2 billion oil payment from the Saudi Fund for Development.

Prime Minister Sharif also met Saudi Investment Minister Khalid Al-Falih and Mohammad Al-Tuwajri, head of the Joint Task Force for Economic Engagement, to discuss attracting Saudi investments and expediting joint initiatives in energy, infrastructure, agriculture, and technology under Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). The Saudi side expressed strong interest in deepening economic ties and enhancing institutional collaboration to accelerate investment projects. Saudi Arabia remains a key partner for Pakistan, serving as its top source of remittances and a major supplier of petroleum products. The two nations have further consolidated their ties as Pakistan navigates economic challenges, with Saudi Arabia playing a crucial role in supporting Pakistan's financial stability.

7. Pakistan to Host First-Ever Digital FDI Summit in April ([Daily Times Pakistan, March 21](#))

Pakistan is set to host its first-ever Digital Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Summit on April 29-30, 2025, in Islamabad. This landmark event aims to attract global investors, policymakers,

and tech leaders by showcasing Pakistan's growing digital economy and investment potential. IT Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja, speaking at the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) General Assembly in Amman, invited international stakeholders to participate. She emphasised Pakistan's commitment to digital transformation, calling it an opportunity for the world to see Pakistan as a new hub for technology and innovation. Pakistan has become the first country to adopt the Digital FDI Initiative by the World Economic Forum and the DCO. With 27 per cent annual growth in the tech sector, Pakistan is actively enhancing its digital investment climate. However, challenges remain, including the need for better international payment systems for freelancers and tech firms, secure digital infrastructure, and long-term investor confidence. The Digital FDI Summit will feature high-level policy discussions, networking sessions, and investment showcases. The pilot initiative in Pakistan will later be expanded globally to support digital investment strategies worldwide.

8. Baloch National Movement Protests 'Black Day' Worldwide

a. Hanover, Germany (BNM Germany, March 25)

The Baloch National Movement (BNM) organised a protest and rally in Hanover, Germany, to mark 77 years since Pakistan's military annexation of Balochistan on March 27, 1948. The demonstration brought attention to ongoing human rights violations, enforced disappearances, and state repression in the region. Activists carried placards, raised slogans, and delivered speeches condemning Pakistan's occupation and the recent crackdown on peaceful protests in Quetta. BNM leaders addressed the gathering, emphasising that the Baloch people have never accepted Pakistan's rule and continue their struggle for independence. They highlighted the recent attack on a peaceful sit-in in Quetta, where Pakistani forces opened fire on demonstrators demanding the recovery of missing persons, resulting in deaths and injuries. The speakers condemned this as an act of state terrorism, accusing Pakistani authorities of obstructing medical aid and destroying public property. The protestors reaffirmed that March 27 is observed as a Black Day by the Baloch community, symbolizing their continued fight against Pakistan's control. The BNM urged the international community to acknowledge the plight of the Baloch people, hold Pakistan accountable for its actions, and support Balochistan's right to self-determination.

b. Amsterdam, Netherlands (BNM Netherlands, March 26)

The BNM held a protest in Amsterdam condemning the arrest and torture of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) leaders by Pakistani authorities. The demonstration also saw participation from the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), with activists expressing solidarity with the Baloch struggle against state repression. Protesters carried placards and images of forcibly disappeared individuals, highlighting Pakistan's ongoing human rights violations in Balochistan. Speakers denounced the recent crackdown on a peaceful BYC rally in Shaal, where security forces opened fire on demonstrators, killing three people and injuring many others. They also condemned the abduction of Dr Maahrang Baloch, Bebagr Baloch, and other activists, who were taken to undisclosed locations while communication networks were cut off in the region. BNM leaders accused the Pakistani state of decades-long systematic oppression, with enforced disappearances leaving thousands missing without accountability. They also pointed out that Pashtun activists face similar persecution, citing the arrest of PTM leader Ali Wazir for speaking out against state-sponsored human rights abuses.

c. London, United Kingdom (BNM UK, March 26)

The BNM staged a protest outside 10 Downing Street, London, denouncing Pakistan's continued human rights violations in Balochistan. The demonstration specifically highlighted the 11-year-long enforced disappearance of Zahid Baloch, chairman of BSO-Azad, and junior joint secretary Asad Baloch. Protesters also condemned the extrajudicial killing of Zahid Baloch's brother, Shah Jahan, by Pakistani forces last week. Speakers at the protest accused Pakistan's military and its affiliated death squads of systematically targeting the Baloch nation and emphasised the government's desperation to silence even peaceful resistance. Salim Elahi, brother of the forcibly disappeared Zahid Baloch, addressed the gathering, sharing the tragic loss of his other brother, Shah Jahan, in March 2025. He stated that such sacrifices strengthen the resolve of the Baloch people in their struggle for independence, reaffirming that no amount of state brutality will deter their movement. Several key figures, including BNM Junior Joint Secretary Hassan Dost Baloch, Foreign Secretary Faheem Baloch, BNM UK President Manzoor Baloch, and BRP UK President Mansoor Baloch, also spoke at the event. Representatives from the World Sindhi Congress, Baloch Raji Zrumbesh (BRZ), and the Baloch Human Rights Council (BHR) joined the protest, urging the international community to take immediate action against Pakistan's repression in Balochistan.

9. US Bill Seeks Sanctions on Pakistan Army Chief ([Business Standard, March 25](#); [The Economic Times, March 25](#))

A bipartisan bill, the Pakistan Democracy Act, has been introduced in the US Congress, proposing sanctions against Pakistan's Army Chief, General Asim Munir, for his alleged role in political repression, including the imprisonment of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. Sponsored by Reps. Joe Wilson and Jimmy Panetta, the bill calls for penalties such as visa bans under the Global Magnitsky Act and mandates that the US government identify individuals involved in political persecution within 180 days. The legislation states that sanctions could be lifted if Pakistan restores civilian democracy and releases detained political figures. While the bill has gained support from several lawmakers, analysts doubt its implementation, given Khan's past anti-US rhetoric and Washington's strategic ties with Pakistan. The move has sparked debate on US involvement in Pakistan's internal affairs and the broader implications for democracy in the region.

10. High-Level EU-Pakistan Business Forum Set for May 2025 ([European External Action Service, March 25](#))

The European Union (EU) and Pakistan are set to take a major step in enhancing economic cooperation with the first-ever High-Level EU-Pakistan Business Forum, scheduled to take place in Islamabad on 14-15 May 2025. Organised by the Delegation of the EU to Pakistan in collaboration with the Government of Pakistan, the forum will bring together top policymakers, business leaders, investors, and financial institutions to explore new opportunities for trade and investment. As the world's largest single market and the leading destination for Pakistani exports, the EU plays a key role in Pakistan's economy. The forum will showcase Pakistan's potential in vital sectors such as agribusiness, energy and renewables, green logistics, pharmaceuticals, IT, and textiles. With its strategic location, a rapidly growing market of over 240 million people, and preferential trade access to the EU, Pakistan presents a compelling case for foreign investment. The event will also introduce the EU-Pakistan Business Network, connecting over 300 European companies currently operating in Pakistan. Additionally, discussions will focus on improving the regulatory framework, promoting sustainable business practices, and fostering stronger public-private partnerships. A key highlight will be the presentation of the EU's Global Gateway strategy, a major initiative aiming to leverage €300

billion in global investments by 2027. With dedicated Business-to-Business and Business-to-Government meetings, engaging panel discussions, and exhibitions, the EU-Pakistan Business Forum marks a crucial milestone in strengthening economic ties between the two partners.

11. Chinese Private Security Companies Deployed in Pakistan (India Today, March 26)

In a significant and unprecedented move, China has deployed private security personnel in Pakistan to safeguard its nationals and projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This development comes in the wake of escalating terror attacks, including recent strikes by Baloch militants that targeted Pakistani security forces. According to reports, China has contracted three private security firms—Dewe Security Frontier Service Group, China Overseas Security Group, and Huaxin Zhongshan Security Service—to oversee security arrangements in Pakistan. The first phase of deployment has placed 60 Chinese security personnel at two CPEC power projects in Sindh province, specifically at the Thar Coal Block, where around 6,500 Chinese nationals are currently working. Intelligence reports indicate that these personnel will be stationed in the first security circle around Chinese workers, ensuring their movements are controlled and minimising direct contact with outsiders. Previously, Beijing had pressured Islamabad to allow the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to directly protect Chinese nationals. While Pakistan initially resisted, it ultimately signed the Joint Security Companies Framework, which led to the current deployment of Chinese security personnel. Pakistan has seen an alarming rise in attacks targeting Chinese citizens and assets. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), which opposes China's presence in Balochistan, has been behind several high-profile attacks, including the October 2024 suicide bombing that killed two Chinese nationals. In response to these security concerns, Pakistan has significantly increased its defence budget, allocating 90 billion rupees specifically for the protection of Chinese nationals and CPEC projects. With an estimated 30,000 Chinese nationals working on various projects across Pakistan, including in sensitive regions like Balochistan and Gwadar, China's decision to deploy its own security forces signals a growing concern over Islamabad's ability to ensure their safety.

12. Denmark's Investment in Pakistan's Port Sector (Dawn, March 26)

Denmark's \$2 billion investment in Pakistan's port sector is progressing, with Danish investors working closely with the government to accelerate the process. Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwaar Chaudhry highlighted this development during his visit to Port Qasim, emphasising that land at the port will be strictly allocated for industrial use. Pakistan and Denmark's economic ties have strengthened, with bilateral trade surging by 31% in the first eight months of FY 2024-25. The minister invited the Sindh government and investors to collaborate on improving Karachi's infrastructure, stressing that such projects require joint efforts. He also announced policy improvements for lands under Port Qasim, the Karachi Port Trust, and the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC). PNSC is undergoing a fleet renewal process, replacing ageing vessels with newer ones to enhance competitiveness. The ministry has also sought detailed plans from its subsidiaries, with monthly progress reviews and a special cell being established to fast-track maritime affairs in Islamabad. Denmark's Maersk Line had pledged a \$2 billion investment in Pakistan's maritime sector last year, a move welcomed by the Pakistan government.

13. Pakistan PM Extends Felicitations to Bangladesh (The Business Standard Bangladesh, March 26)

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif extended warm felicitations to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus on Bangladesh's National Day on March 26. Notably, his message referred to it only as the 'National Day' rather than the 'Independence and National Day.' In his statement, Shehbaz Sharif conveyed best wishes on behalf of the people and government of Pakistan, emphasizing the deep historical, cultural, and religious ties between the two nations. He highlighted that Pakistan-Bangladesh relations have entered a new era of understanding and cooperation, crediting the personal engagement of Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus in strengthening bilateral ties. Recalling his meetings with Yunus in New York and Cairo last year, Sharif noted the discussions focused on enhancing collaboration across various sectors. He expressed confidence that joint efforts would pave the way for a new chapter of mutually beneficial cooperation, contributing to regional development and prosperity.

PAKISTAN-OCCUPIED-KASHMIR (PoK)

1. LeT Operative Abu Qatal Shot Dead in PoK (The Economic Times, March 16)

Abu Qatal, a wanted Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operative and close aide of LeT chief Hafiz Saeed, was shot dead by unidentified assailants in the Jhelum area of PoK on the night of March 15. Qatal, also known as Qatal Sindhi, was a high-priority target for Indian security agencies, including the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Indian Army. He had been involved in multiple attacks on civilians and security forces in J&K. He was linked to the January 2023 Rajouri attacks, where terrorists killed seven civilians, including two children, and planted an IED blast the following day. He was also credited with orchestrating the Reasi bus attack in June 2024, where eight pilgrims and the driver were killed, and 41 others were seriously injured. According to NIA investigations, Qatal played a key role in recruiting and dispatching LeT terrorists from Pakistan to India, working alongside other LeT handlers, Saifullah (alias Sajid Jutt) and Mohd Qasim. He was also instrumental in establishing The Resistance Front (TRF), a Lashkar proxy that has been active since 2019. The circumstances of his death remain unclear, with no group claiming responsibility for the attack so far.

2. Protests in PoK Over Baloch Unrest (Times Now News, March 25)

As Pakistan grapples with escalating unrest in Balochistan, a new front of defiance is emerging from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Displaced persons from PoK are taking to the streets, demanding their rightful entitlements, including a full package and 12 Assembly seats. The protests highlight growing discontent with Islamabad's policies, adding to the government's internal challenges. In a bold warning, the Joint Awami Action Committee of Rawalakot has threatened fierce resistance if the Pakistan Army attempts to suppress their movement. At an Iftar gathering, committee leader Raja Ghulam Mujtaba declared that if oppression were unleashed upon them, they would not flee but fight back, warning that, unlike in Balochistan, the army "would not receive bodies but would find them in Mangla Dam." This defiant stance underscores rising tensions in the region, as Islamabad struggles to maintain control over its restive territories.

3. India at UN: “Pakistan Must Vacate PoK” ([The Kashmir Monitor, March 25](#); [ANI/X, March 25](#))

India delivered a strong rebuttal to Pakistan’s repeated references to J&K at a UNSC debate on peacekeeping reforms. India’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, dismissed Pakistan’s claims as “unwarranted” and reaffirmed that Jammu and Kashmir was, is, and will always be an integral part of India. Mr Harish called out Pakistan's attempts to use the international platform to push its “parochial and divisive agenda” and reiterated that Pakistan must vacate the illegally occupied territory of PoK. The remarks came in response to Syed Tariq Fatemi, Special Assistant to the Pakistani Prime Minister, who raised Kashmir-related issues during the discussion on the future of UN Peacekeeping. India has consistently maintained that while it seeks normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan, the onus lies on Islamabad to create an environment free of terror and hostility for any meaningful engagement.

4. Barrister Chaudhry’s Calls for Global Action on Kashmir ([Daily Parliament Times, March 25](#))

PoK President Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has urged the international community to take concrete action against Indian state terrorism in Kashmir and support the Kashmiri people’s right to self-determination. Speaking at an Iftar dinner hosted in his honour by Member Municipal Corporation Bagh Syed Ashfaq Gardezi on March 25, he emphasised that the world must abandon its indifference toward the suffering of Kashmiris and recognise that peace in South Asia is directly linked to resolving the Kashmir dispute. He asserted that the main purpose of his recent visits to Britain and the US was to draw the world’s attention to the Kashmir issue. Reaffirming his dedication to the people of PoK, Barrister Chaudhry highlighted key development initiatives undertaken during his tenure as Prime Minister of the state, particularly in Bagh. He noted that a special educational package was introduced for the region, and the Bagh Development Authority and the Municipal Corporation were established. He assured residents that their concerns and developmental needs would be addressed on a priority basis. The event was attended by Minister for Agriculture, Livestock, and Dairy Development Sardar Mir Akbar, Presidential Advisor Sardar Imtiaz Khan, Chairman District Council Bagh Sardar Asif, Mayor Bagh Abdul Qayyum Baig, and Basharat Badshah Advocate, among others.

TERROR TALLY

1. Confrontations and Counter Terrorism in KP, Balochistan and Punjab

- a. **Dawn, March 17** | **Karak:** Pakistani SFs eliminated Kashif Azmatullah, a key commander of the TTP's Kalimullah group, in Karak district. Azmatullah was wanted by the KP Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) for his involvement in attacks on a Frontier Corps (FC) fort, police stations, check posts, targeted killings, abductions, and a bank robbery. He was killed in an operation launched in response to recent militant attacks, including an assault on a police post in Lakki Marwat.
- b. **Geo TV, March 17** | **Tor Darra:** SFs eliminated three terrorists in the Tor Darra area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Khyber district during an intelligence-based operation (IBO). Weapons and ammunition were recovered, and a sanitisation operation was launched to clear the area of any remaining threats.
- c. **Aaj TV, March 17**; **ARY News, March 18** | **Bakkakhel:** The CTD killed two terrorists in an operation in North Waziristan's Bakkakhel area. The militants identified as Hakimullah, alias Shoaib, deputy commander of the Ibrahim Zarar group, and his accomplice, were reportedly involved in the killing of Constable Arman in Bannu. During the exchange of fire, a passerby was tragically killed, and another person sustained injuries.
- d. **ARY News, March 18** | **Charsadda:** KP police successfully killed Javed, a 'most-wanted terrorist', involved in multiple cases of murder and target killings. SFs recovered weapons and explosives from the slain terrorist. KP Inspector General Zulfiqar Hameed commended the police for their dedication and announced a reward for the officers involved.
- e. **Press Trust of India, March 20** | **Rawalpindi:** Punjab's CTD arrested two "highly dangerous" TTP terrorists, thwarting a potential attack in Rawalpindi. According to a CTD spokesperson, an IBO led to the capture of the militants, who had conducted reconnaissance of sensitive locations in Rawalpindi and Islamabad in preparation for an attack. Authorities revealed that the suspects were in direct contact with a key TTP commander in Afghanistan.
- f. **Deccan Herald, March 21** | **Dera Ismail Khan:** A Pakistan Army captain and at least 10 terrorists were killed during an IBO in the Karri Malang area of Dera Ismail Khan, bordering South Waziristan. Weapons and ammunition were recovered from

the militants, who were involved in multiple attacks on law enforcement and civilians.

- g. Dawn, March 27 | Hangu:** A senior commander of the TTP was killed in a CTD operation in Hangu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. SFs launched the raid in the Shanaori area based on intelligence inputs, leading to a fierce gunfight. While the commander was neutralized, another militant managed to escape. Officials confirmed his involvement in multiple attacks, including the killing of a policeman. Weapons, grenades and an Afghan SIM card were recovered from the scene.

2. Targeted Militant Attacks

- a. Convoy Attacked in Suicide Bombing in Noshki (Associated Press, March 16; @AdityaRajKaul/X, March 16; The Balochistan Post, March 19)**

A suicide car bomb attack targeted a convoy of buses carrying security personnel in Noshki, Balochistan. Pakistan's official figures say that the attack resulted in the deaths of at least five police officers and two civilians while injuring twelve others. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed responsibility for the attack, stating instead that 90 lives were lost. The militant group targeted the eight buses carrying Pakistani soldiers using a VBIED (Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device) followed by a coordinated ambush, which allegedly eliminated over 90 personnel. SFs responded to the assault, reportedly killing at least four of the attackers in the ensuing exchange of fire.

- b. Attack on PPP Senator's Convoy in Sindh (Dawn, March 16)**

A guard was killed, and three others were injured after unidentified assailants opened fire on the convoy of Pakistan People's Party Senator Jam Mehtab Dahar in Sindh's Khenjoo area. The senator was unharmed in the attack, which occurred while he was en route to visit his agricultural land. Officials confirmed that the assailants ambushed the convoy on Allahyar Shakh Khenjoo Road. The deceased, identified as Zafar Dahar, was a security guard for the senator. The injured have been moved to Taluka Hospital Daharki, though their identities remain undisclosed. President Asif Ali Zardari and Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar condemned the attack and called for an immediate investigation. Lanjar has directed law enforcement to mobilise police teams, enhance intelligence gathering, and ensure swift arrests of those responsible.

c. **JUI-F Leader Assassinated in Attock (@khorasandiary/X, March 22; Dawn, March 23)**

Qari Nizamuddin, Vice Chairman of Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI-F) for Attock district, was shot dead in a targeted attack on March 21 after offering *Taraweeh* prayers. According to police reports, masked gunmen ambushed Nizamuddin near his home in Khattak Colony, killing him on the spot. He was a prominent religious leader who ran a local seminary. Law enforcement agencies are investigating the motive behind the attack. His funeral was held on March 22, with JUI-F Punjab chief Maulana Mahmood Mian condemning the provincial government's failure to protect citizens.

d. **IED Blast in Kalat (The Balochistan Post, March 25)**

An attack on Pakistani forces in the Kalat district of Balochistan claimed the lives of two personnel and left three others injured, including a major-rank officer, officials confirmed. The attack carried out in the Harboi area, targeted a military convoy with an IED explosion, reportedly destroying a vehicle. The deceased have been identified as Naik Muhammad Sharif and Naik Baqar, while the injured include Major Haseeb Alam, Naik Muhammad Ziaullah, and Naik Javed Ahmed. The BLA has claimed responsibility, stating that its fighters launched the remote-controlled attack to resist ongoing Pakistani military operations in the region. The BLA further alleged that the Pakistani military suffered five fatalities and was forced to retreat. This incident follows a similar attack a day earlier, where four personnel were killed and six others injured in an ambush on motorcycles in the same area.

e. **Blasts in Gwadar and Quetta (Anadolu Ajansi, March 27)**

At least eight people were killed in two separate attacks in Balochistan, underscoring the worsening security situation in the province. In Gwadar, militants blocked a highway in the Kalmat area, offloaded seven passengers from a Karachi-bound bus, and executed five individuals after checking their identity cards. The victims were from Punjab, and while no group has claimed responsibility, the BLA has carried out similar attacks in the past. In another incident, a blast on a busy street in Quetta killed three people and injured 21, including children. Security forces are investigating the cause and target of the explosion. The attacks come amid a surge in militant activity and unrest in Balochistan. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti and top government officials have strongly condemned the attacks, calling them acts of terror aimed at destabilising the region. Meanwhile, security forces continue operations in Bolan, Kolpur, and Mastung, where armed groups have blocked roads.

3. Forced Disappearances in Balochistan

a. Surge in Enforced Disappearances (HRCB, March 16; ANI, March 18)

The Human Rights Council of Balochistan (HRCB) has released [a concerning report](#) detailing a sharp rise in enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in February 2025. According to the findings, 144 people were forcibly disappeared, with only 41 later released, while 102 remain missing, and one was killed. Additionally, 46 killings were recorded, including extrajudicial executions. The report highlights that the victims, mainly students and political activists, were primarily abducted in house raids, at checkpoints, or after being summoned to security camps. The Frontier Corps (FC) was implicated in 125 cases, intelligence agencies in 13, and local death squads in four. Enforced disappearances in Balochistan have been an ongoing human rights crisis, with victims often facing prolonged detention, torture, or extrajudicial execution.

b. Four Missing Baloch Found Dead in Awaran (The Balochistan Post, March 26)

In yet another disturbing incident in Balochistan, four men were allegedly detained and later killed by Pakistani security forces in Awaran district, with their bodies dumped in a remote area. The victims, identified as Zaheer s/o Niaz Muhammad, Irshad s/o Abdul Wahid, Saif s/o Abdul Latif, and Tasif s/o Azeem, were reportedly taken into custody on February 28 from different locations in Mashkay. Their bodies were later discovered, marking another case of suspected extrajudicial killings in the region. This incident follows a similar pattern, as four other men detained on the same day were also found dead under identical circumstances on March 03. The alleged killings have fuelled anger and fear among the local population, further highlighting concerns over enforced disappearances and human rights abuses in Balochistan.

4. BLA Announces ‘Historic Defeat’ on Pakistan Army Through Op Dar-e-Bolan ([The Balochistan Post, March 19](#); [ANI, March 19](#))

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has announced the completion of Operation Dar-e-Bolan, claiming a major offensive against Pakistani security forces. According to the BLA, the operation was carried out in two phases—beginning with the capture of Mach City in February 2024 and culminating in an attack on the Jaffar Express in March 2025. The BLA alleges that the Pakistan Army suffered heavy losses, with over 354 security personnel killed, more than 100 wounded, and 214 taken hostage. The group claims that all hostages were executed due to

the refusal of authorities to negotiate. The Noshki convoy attack was reportedly a part of the operation. The Pakistan military has not officially confirmed these claims, and the media wing has dismissed them as propaganda. The BLA, however, insists that its resistance is rooted in local support, rejecting accusations of external influence. [Videos of Dar-e-Bolan](#) have been shared widely on social media platforms.

5. CT Operation in Mardan Sparks Outrage Over Civilian Casualties

(Dawn, March 29; Dawn, March 30)

A counter-terrorism operation conducted in the early hours of March 29 in Mardan's Katlang area has sparked outrage as reports confirm the deaths of at least 11 civilians, including women and children. While locals insist the incident was a drone strike, officials maintain that it was an intelligence-based operation targeting militants. According to the provincial government's statement, security forces "successfully neutralised" several high-value targets linked to militant activities. However, it acknowledged that "non-combatants" were also killed in what it described as collateral damage, blaming the complex terrain and militants' use of civilian populations as cover. Expressing regret, the government has promised an investigation, medical assistance for the injured, and compensation for victims' families.

Following the incident, grieving families and residents staged a protest on the Swat Motorway, blocking traffic and demanding justice. The demonstrators, primarily from the Gujjar community, claimed that the deceased were peaceful shepherds who had temporarily settled in the area before their seasonal migration. Political leaders and district officials intervened in negotiations, eventually leading to the reopening of the motorway. The government's response has done little to quell public anger, with accusations of state violence growing louder. Dr Amjad Ali, an MPA from Swat, condemned the attack as "an act of state terrorism against innocent civilians." Protesters have warned of further demonstrations after Eid if their demands for accountability and justice are not met.

About the Author

Akashika Mate is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) with a focus on strategic and security issues concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan. She recently earned her master's in international relations from King's College London, where her research explored themes of conflict, diplomacy, and resistance. Her areas of interests include South Asian geopolitics, foreign policy analysis, and gender in conflict. She can be reached at akashika.claws@gmail.com



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