

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

13 May 2026

Security

- ◆ **Terror Strikes Lakki Marwat and North Waziristan**—This editorial “Now Lakki Marwat” warns that back-to-back attacks in Lakki Marwat and North Waziristan, killing nine civilians and policemen and martyring four soldiers, expose Pakistan’s worsening governance and security failures. **It argues terrorists are operating “scot-free”, while state responses remain reactionary.** The piece stresses that Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan continue bearing the brunt of cross-border militancy. It praises Islamabad’s demarche to Afghanistan, yet maintains Kabul has ignored commitments and sheltered militant networks. **The editorial urges coordinated civil-military action and verifiable Afghan cooperation to curb violence.** (*The Express Tribune*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Beyond Operation Sindoor: Lessons for South Asia**— Asif Durrani reflects on essays by former Indian diplomats TCA Raghavan and Sharat Sabharwal, noting their reluctant admission that **Pakistan’s geopolitical relevance has risen since the 2025 crisis**, particularly through its mediation in the 2026 Iran–US conflict. He argues India’s Operation Sindoor failed to isolate Pakistan or alter its behaviour, as Islamabad’s diplomatic standing improved after offering transparency on the Pahalgam incident. Durrani stresses that coercion alone cannot transform South Asia; sustainable peace requires political courage, regional accommodation, and recognition of permanent geography. (*The News*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **FO Rejects Report on Iranian Aircraft in Pakistan**— Pakistan’s Foreign Office dismissed a CBS News report alleging Iranian aircraft were parked at Nur Khan Airbase as **“misleading and sensationalised.”** Spokesperson Tahir Andrabi clarified that aircraft from Iran and the US had temporarily arrived during the ceasefire to facilitate diplomatic personnel for the Islamabad Talks. He stressed the planes had **“no linkage whatsoever to any military contingency”** and were part of routine logistical support. Andrabi reiterated Pakistan’s impartial role as a facilitator of dialogue, committed to promoting peace and regional stability. (*The Nation*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Kuwait to Explore Strategic Fuel Storage in Pakistan**— Kuwait has agreed to examine opportunities for building strategic fuel storages in Pakistan, following talks between Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik and Ambassador Nassar Abdulrahman Jasser Almutairi. **Both sides discussed enhanced cooperation in refining and energy, with focus on mutual benefit.** Malik thanked Kuwait for facilitating the safe dispatch of vessel *Khairpur*, which delivered 45,000 tons of diesel and 10,000 tons of jet fuel amid disruptions from the Strait of Hormuz closure. Ambassador Almutairi praised Pakistan’s peace efforts, noting its “renewed and elevated status” internationally. (*The Nation*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Mirage of Security: Unity Needed Against Terrorism**— Attiya Munawer argues that rising terrorism in Pakistan stems largely from the Taliban regime’s support for the TTP, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan hardest hit due to poverty and underdevelopment. **Pakistan**

ranked second in the Global Terrorism Index 2025, reflecting limited practical action against extremism. She stresses that military operations alone cannot uproot terrorism; economic, social, and educational reforms are vital. Munawer calls for political parties to rise above differences, adopt a common strategy, and ensure equal provincial partnership, praising Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz's pledge to fully implement the National Action Plan. (*The Nation*, [13 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Gwadar's Strategic Opportunity**— This editorial argues that rising insecurity in Gulf maritime routes amid the Middle East conflict has encouraged Pakistan to market Gwadar Port as an alternative regional trade hub. **The piece says tariff reductions and commercial incentives reflect Islamabad's attempt to exploit shifting geopolitical dynamics.** However, it cautions that instability alone cannot guarantee Gwadar's success, citing weak infrastructure, poor connectivity, security concerns and underdeveloped logistics networks. The editorial stresses that Gwadar's future depends on regional integration, diplomacy and sustainable economic competitiveness rather than rhetoric surrounding CPEC. (*Dawn*, [13 May 2026](#))

Economy

- ◆ **SIFC's Dormancy Raises Concerns Over Investment Drive**— Once hailed as a “gamechanger,” Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has not held an Apex Committee meeting since 2 January 2025, sparking doubts about its effectiveness. **Critics argue the absence of high-profile sittings undermines investor confidence.** While the Implementation Committee meets regularly, the Executive Committee last convened in June 2025. Officials insist the council remains active, with Secretary Dr Jahanzaib Khan promoting reforms abroad. Yet, independent sources highlight modest FDI inflows and stalled MoUs, warning the SIFC risks becoming “just another bureaucratic body.” (*The News*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan Commits to Ending Gas Cross-Subsidy by 2027** — The government has assured the IMF that the Rs140 billion cross-subsidy for protected and some non-protected gas consumers will be abolished by January 2027. **All consumers will pay the uniform average tariff of Rs1,750 per MMBtu, with targeted support shifting to income-based subsidies via BISP.** Currently, subsidies are financed through higher tariffs on industries and commercial sectors. Officials confirmed the transition is an IMF structural benchmark, aiming to replace slab-based relief with direct financial aid for low-income households. (*The News*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan's Fiscal Deficit Narrowed Amid Rising Debt Costs**— Pakistan curtailed its fiscal deficit to **0.7 percent of GDP (Rs856 billion) in July–March FY2025-26**, compared to 2.6 percent last year, according to Finance Ministry data. Debt servicing consumed nearly Rs5 trillion, defence Rs1.689 trillion, while development spending was restricted to Rs333 billion. Statistical discrepancy doubled to Rs444 billion, with Punjab showing the highest imbalance. Revenues reached Rs14.8 trillion, including Rs9.3 trillion in FBR taxes and Rs4.6 trillion in non-tax receipts. **The IMF welcomed the 3 percent primary surplus**, though concerns persist over revenue shortfalls and unresolved discrepancies. (*The News*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan Secures \$1.3 Billion IMF Disbursement**—The State Bank of Pakistan confirmed receipt of **SDR 914 million (about \$1.3 billion)** from the IMF under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF)

and Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). The IMF Executive Board approved SDR 760 million under the EFF and SDR 154 million under the RSF on 8 May 2026. **The funds will boost SBP reserves beyond \$17 billion by mid-May.** Pakistan has so far received \$4.5 billion against \$8.4 billion in IMF packages, though critics warn stabilisation policies have worsened poverty and unemployment. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Petroleum Levy Surge Strengthens Fiscal Position** —Pakistan’s petroleum levy collection rose **45% to Rs1.205 trillion in July–March FY2025-26**, nearly matching last year’s full-year total. Consumers now pay Rs117.5 per litre in levy. The IMF projects fiscal performance “better than pre-war,” with deficit potentially at 3.2% of GDP versus the 3.9% target. Record provincial surpluses of Rs1.63 trillion, reduced interest expenses, and higher petroleum taxes have bolstered finances. **The IMF budget mission begins talks today, reviewing subsidy reforms, sugar sector liberalisation, and post-2027 financial strategy.** (*The Express Tribune*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Fuel Tax Burden Exposed** —Consumers in Pakistan are paying **Rs144.26 per litre in taxes and levies on petrol**, making up 34.8% of the depot price of Rs414.78, according to Mountain Ventures’ analysis based on Ogra and Ministry of Energy data. The **Petroleum Development Levy alone accounts for Rs117.41 per litre**, with customs duty at Rs24.35 and a Climate Support Levy of Rs2.50. By contrast, diesel carries Rs76.16 in taxes per litre, highlighting petrol’s heavier burden. Marketing and distribution costs add about Rs24 per litre for both fuels. (*The News*, [13 May 2026](#))

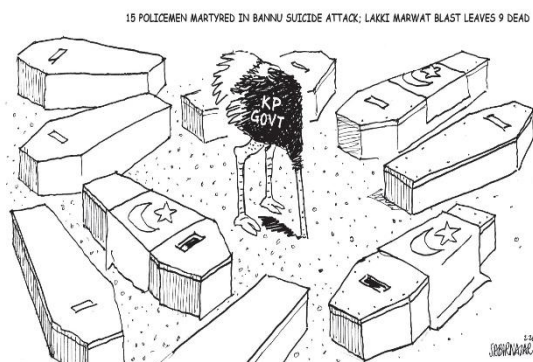
Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Strengthening Pakistan–Azerbaijan Partnership**— Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Ilham Aliyev reaffirmed their nations’ strong ties during a warm telephonic exchange, emphasising cooperation in trade, energy, and people-to-people contacts. **Both leaders expressed satisfaction with the positive trajectory of bilateral relations.** Sharif conveyed best wishes for the upcoming World Urban Forum in Baku, noting Pakistan’s representation despite his absence. They discussed regional peace efforts, with Aliyev praising Pakistan’s “remarkably successful initiatives” in mediating between Iran and the US. The leaders agreed to meet later this year. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Trump Praises Pakistan’s Mediation Amid Rising War Costs**— President Donald Trump hailed Pakistan’s role as mediator in US–Iran negotiations, declaring: **“No, they’re great. I think the Pakistanis have been great. The field marshal and the prime minister of Pakistan have been absolutely great.”** Speaking before his trip to Beijing, Trump insisted Washington did not need China’s help, asserting Iran was “very much under control. We’re either going to make a deal or they are going to be decimated.” Meanwhile, the Pentagon reported **war costs had soared to \$29 billion**, sparking fierce criticism from US lawmakers. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Beyond Operation Sindoor: Lessons for South Asia** — Asif Durrani reflects on essays by former Indian diplomats **TCA Raghavan and Sharat Sabharwal**, noting their reluctant admission that **Pakistan’s geopolitical relevance has risen since the 2025 crisis**, particularly through its mediation in the 2026 Iran–US conflict. He argues India’s Operation Sindoor failed to isolate Pakistan or alter its behaviour, as Islamabad’s diplomatic standing improved after offering transparency on the

Pahalgam incident. Durrani stresses that coercion alone cannot transform South Asia; sustainable peace requires political courage, regional accommodation, and recognition of permanent geography. (*The News*, [13 May 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Supreme Court Directs Swift Decision on Imaan Mazari Case**— The Supreme Court ordered the Islamabad High Court to decide within two weeks on petitions seeking suspension of sentences for lawyer Imaan Mazari and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha. **Justice Shahid Waheed’s bench noted delays in hearings, prompting the directive.** Counsel Faisal Siddiqi argued there was “no relief” from the IHC, while Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan observed no adverse order had been passed. Imaan and Chattha, sentenced to 17 years in January over controversial social media posts, claim violations of constitutional due process. (*Dawn*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Jamaat-e-Islami Announces Protest Against Petroleum Price Hike**— Jamaat-e-Islami chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman declared he will personally lead a major protest in Islamabad on **15 May 2026** against the sharp rise in petroleum prices. He warned that if the government fails to reduce rates and abolish the levy, JI may escalate to wheel-jam and shutter-down strikes. Rehman argued petrol’s ex-refinery price should be Rs270 per litre, but consumers pay Rs417 due to heavy taxes. He said “the ruling elite is extracting taxes from the public to fulfil revenue targets.” He urged youth participation and vowed peaceful resistance. (*The News*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **A River Controlled by Timing**—Former irrigation minister Mohsin Leghari argues in his article “**When Chenab Stops Behaving Like a River**” that unusual fluctuations in the Chenab River reveal a shift in the Indus conflict from water allocation to control over timing of flows. **He claims the river “behaved like a system being operated” rather than responding naturally to weather patterns.** Leghari warns that upstream hydropower projects and weak data-sharing mechanisms threaten Pakistan’s irrigation stability. He urges investment in downstream storage, transparency and legal action, stressing that “timing, by control, and by the asymmetric possession of information” now define the dispute. (*The Nation*, [13 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Blood on the Baloch Coast**— Writer Aziz Sanghoor condemns the reported shooting of labourers in Kantani, Jiwani, questioning “what was the crime of these unarmed workers?” **He argues that poverty-stricken labourers seeking livelihoods are increasingly treated as suspects rather than citizens.** Sanghoor cites criticism from Jamaat-e-Islami leader Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman Baloch and activist Dr Shali Baloch, who highlight deprivation, fear and exclusion in coastal Balochistan despite development rhetoric around Gwadar. **The article warns that “guns can create silence, but not trust”.** (*Daily Sangar*, [11 May 2026](#))



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