

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

16-18 May 2026

Security

- ◆ **ISPR Labels Indian Army Chief's Remarks as Madness** The Pakistan Army, through the **Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR)**, strongly rebuked Indian Army chief **General Upendra Dwivedi** for his provocative statement that “Pakistan should decide if it desired to be part of geography and history.” ISPR declared: “**Threatening a sovereign nuclear neighbour with elimination from ‘geography’ is sheer bankruptcy of cognitive capacities, madness and warmongering... such geographic obliteration would certainly be mutual and comprehensive.**” It accused India of a “hubristic, jingoistic and myopic mindset” and warned that any attempt to target Pakistan would trigger consequences beyond India’s control. (*The Nation*, [18 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **HRCP alarmed over worsening security in Balochistan & KP** — The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) expressed deep concern over the **sharp deterioration in security across Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**, citing enforced disappearances, targeted killings and militant attacks. It highlighted the alleged abduction of Gwadar University officials in Mastung and the killing of Professor Ghamkhar Hayat in Nushki as alarming indicators. In KP, deadly attacks in Bannu, Bajaur and Lakki Marwat, including a market bombing, underscored escalating violence. HRCP urged the state to **move beyond condemnations and ensure protection of human life and public spaces**. (*Dawn*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Bridging Borders Through Law**— Former caretaker federal law minister Ahmer Bilal Soofi argues that **Pakistan and India should replace military retaliation with “legal diplomacy” and law-enforcement cooperation** after terrorism incidents. Recalling a 2016 workshop involving Pakistani officials and Indian diplomats, he says neglected recommendations on police-to-police collaboration worsened mistrust after attacks like Mumbai, Pathankot and Pulwama. **He contends that investigations and mutual legal assistance could prevent escalation and unilateral strikes**. Soofi also urges legal dialogue on disputes including Kashmir and Sir Creek, while criticising India’s security posture. (*Dawn*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **TTP commander killed in Bannu operation** — Police in Bannu claimed to have eliminated five “high-value targets” in an intelligence-based operation, including a **TTP commander responsible for the Fatehkhel suicide bombing that killed 15 policemen last week**. DIG Sajjad Khan said the operation, named *Avenging the Police’s Martyrs*, also killed militants Hayatullah, Asad Yar, Naimatullah and one unidentified affiliate. Security forces continued raids across the district, killing several suspects linked to attacks on civilians and police. Khan vowed that “for every martyr, 10 terrorists would be eliminated”. (*Dawn*, [17 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Six security personnel killed in militant attacks** — At least six security men were killed and dozens injured in separate incidents across **Bajaur, Kohat and Mastung**. In Bajaur, militants used a drone and a suicide vehicle bomb to attack a checkpoint, killing four personnel and injuring 35, before being neutralised by security forces. The **TTP claimed responsibility**. In Kohat's Kurram district, two personnel, including FC Subedar Najeebullah, were martyred in clashes with "Fitna al-Khawarij" militants. In Mastung, attackers torched mineral trucks and blew up a bridge, disrupting traffic on the Pakistan-Iran route. (*The News*, [16 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Tribunal Rejects India's Pondage Methodology** —Pakistan has secured a **major legal victory** at the Hague-based Court of Arbitration (CoA), which on 15 May ruled against India's methodology for calculating pondage sizes in hydropower projects under the Indus Waters Treaty. The tribunal deemed India's approach "artificial" and inconsistent with treaty principles. **Syed Mehr Ali Shah, Additional Secretary and spokesperson for the Ministry of Water Resources, stressed that India cannot unilaterally determine pondage sizes** "artificial grounds". India's External Affairs Ministry dismissed the ruling, calling the CoA an "illegally constituted body." (*The News*, [18 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Centcom Praises Pakistan's Counterterrorism Role**— The United States Central Command (Centcom) has hailed Pakistan as a "**critical counterterrorism partner**" in the regional fight against Daesh. Briefing a US Senate committee, **Admiral Brad Cooper, Centcom chief**, highlighted Islamabad's cooperation in operations against high-value targets, including the 2025 arrest of Daesh operative Mohammad Sharifullah. He noted that the "**strong military-to-military partnership with Islamabad has produced tangible results against high-value individuals with American blood on their hands.**" Centcom also praised Pakistan's role in humanitarian relief during last year's floods, calling the collaboration an "enduring friendship and shared resolve." (*The News*, [18 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **The Afghan Problem**— Pakistan has intensified pressure on Afghanistan after deadly attacks in Bannu, Lakki Marwat, and Bajaur, alleging that militants operated from Afghan territory. Following intelligence linked to the Bannu assault, the Foreign Office issued a strong demarche to the Afghan chargé d'affaires, while Defence Minister Khawaja Asif warned of possible "open war" if such attacks persist. **The editorial stresses that Islamabad's restraint "should not be mistaken for weakness"**. It urges stronger intelligence coordination between KP authorities and federal agencies, alongside a "**zero-tolerance**" policy against militants and their facilitators to curb cross-border terrorism. (*Dawn*, [18 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Cultural Tribute to Fallen Baloch Fighters** —A musical and cultural event was organised on Friday to commemorate fighters killed during the Baloch Liberation Army's "**Operation Herof II**". Balochi and Brahui artists, including Ustad Mir Ahmed Baloch, Meeral Baloch, Sawal Qandeel and Sarfaraz Wahid, performed poetry and songs honouring those who died. The BLA stated that the operation, conducted between 31 January and 6 February across 14 districts of Balochistan, resulted in the deaths of 93 of its fighters, including 50 "fidayeen" from the Majeed Brigade. **The group also claimed to have killed 362 Pakistani security personnel during the attacks.** (*The Balochistan Post*, [18 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **TTP Operations in Frontier Provinces:** On 17 May 2026, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) executed eight synchronised operations targeting state infrastructure across three frontier provinces. The majority of actions hit North Waziristan, consisting of deadly base raids, water-supply ambushes, sniper fire, and a guerrilla hit. Crucially, two local police securing commercial assets were captured but later negotiated away by elders. Meanwhile, severe clashes and convoy ambushes disrupted Dera Ismail Khan, resulting in mutual casualties, including the death of two named TTP militants. A final sniper operation in South Waziristan targeted logistical support, underscores an ongoing, highly volatile regional security threat. ([Telegram](#), 18 May 2026)

Details of Operations

| Province | District / Location | Operation Type | Reported Outcome / Casualties |
|------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| North Waziristan | Hasukhel, Mir Ali | Retaliatory military camp raid | 2 personnel killed, several injured |
| | Sheratlah, Mir Ali | Water supply convoy ambush | 3 soldiers killed, 1 injured |
| | Darozanda Alam Khel, Shewa | Sniper attack | 1 military personnel killed |
| | Almarah, Shewa | Asset security raid | 2 police captured, equipment seized (<i>released on local guarantee</i>) |
| | Tashanki, Dosali | Guerrilla post attack | 2 personnel injured |
| Dera Ismail Khan | Rodi Road, Kulachi | Military convoy ambush | Unconfirmed casualties expected |
| | Gharah Aslam, Kulachi | Counter-raid clashes | Multiple casualties on both sides; 2 TTP fighters killed |
| South Waziristan | Walah Sar, Shaktoi | Sniper attack (FC water supply) | 1 FC personnel killed |

Economy

- ◆ **Chinese firm to set up Pakistan Digital Economy HQ** — Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed IBI Group's decision to establish its Pakistan Digital Economy Headquarters, calling it a boost to **expanding Pak-China B2B cooperation**. Meeting founder Qian Xiaojun and his delegation, the PM praised China's progress under President Xi Jinping and expressed anticipation for his upcoming visit to Beijing. Qian said the HQ would serve as a command centre for Pakistan's digital transformation, offering SMEs access to China's vast market. Shehbaz also congratulated Bulgarian PM Rumen Radev on assuming office. ([The Nation](#), [16 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan enters Panda Bond market with \$258m issue** — Pakistan has debuted in China's renminbi bond market with a **CNY 1.75 billion (\$258 million) sustainable Panda Bond**, supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The issuance, aimed at financing green and socially inclusive infrastructure, is the first with partial guarantee coverage to achieve a domestic AAA rating. ADB's Leah Gutierrez said the transaction expands Pakistan's access to international capital markets, enabling investment in water governance, energy efficiency and healthcare capacity. ([The Nation](#), [16 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan's energy circular debt reaches Rs5.20tr** — Pakistan's power and gas sectors face mounting fiscal pressures as circular debt surged to **Rs5.206 trillion**, according to the IMF's latest review. **The power sector's debt stood at Rs1.764 trillion, while gas sector liabilities reached Rs3.442 trillion.** The IMF noted reforms including tariff rationalisation, subsidy phase-outs and extra charges for consumers to retire debt stock. While these measures aim to restore sustainability, they pose affordability challenges. Industrial consumption growth remained strong, yet gas companies struggled with weak demand and surcharges. (*The Nation*, [16 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **FPCCI calls for unified tax regime** — The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has urged the government to introduce a **single-window national sales tax compliance system** to replace fragmented provincial regimes. Senior Vice-President **Saqib Fayyaz Magoon** said a unified digital platform would simplify registration, filing and payments. FPCCI also demanded restoration of the **Final Tax Regime (FTR)**, abolition of the super tax, and reduction of corporate tax to 25pc. Executive committee member **Adeel Siddiqui** stressed incentivising IT exports, noting their surge to Rs54bn. (*Dawn*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Sharing the Fiscal Burden:** Ehsan Malik argues that Pakistan's budget crisis stems less from low taxes than from an unequal fiscal structure burdening the formal economy and salaried class. **He urges phased tax rationalisation, relief for businesses and middle-income earners, and broader taxation of agriculture, property and retail sectors.** Malik also advocates expenditure cuts, reform and stronger non-tax revenues, warning that "stability without growth eventually becomes self-defeating". **He calls for a new economic compact sharing responsibility for recovery across sectors** (*Dawn*, [16 May 2026](#)).

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan's mediation role highlighted in Iran-US talks** — Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi arrived in Tehran to **facilitate stalled peace talks between Iran and the United States**, following earlier visits by Field Marshal Asim Munir. Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni praised Munir's efforts, while US Congressman Jack Bergman lauded Pakistan's leadership, calling it "indispensable." President Donald Trump told Fox News that **"a very nice group of people from Pakistan" convinced him to stop and wait for a deal with Iran**, underscoring Islamabad's growing diplomatic influence. (*The News*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Maryam Nawaz represents Punjab at World Urban Forum in Baku** — Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has embarked on a three-day visit to Azerbaijan to attend the World Urban Forum (WUF) as a special state guest. She will deliver a keynote address at the World Leaders Summit, presenting Punjab's flagship housing initiative *Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar* as a model for affordable housing. Accompanied by senior ministers, she will also meet President Ilham Aliyev. Maryam emphasised that **Pakistan's recognition as a peace-loving nation is a matter of pride for every Pakistani.** (*The News*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **India's diplomatic isolation attempt fails, admits ex-RAW chief** — Former Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) chief AS Dulat has acknowledged that **India's efforts to diplomatically isolate Pakistan have not succeeded**, despite sustained lobbying and terrorism-related narratives.

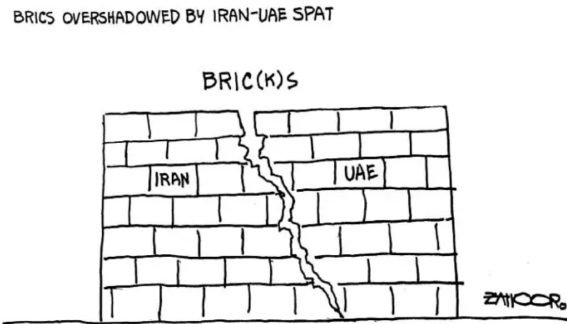
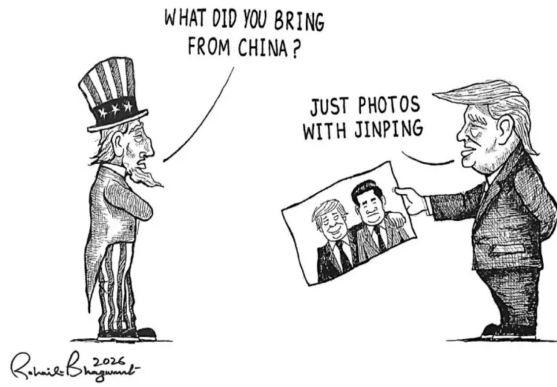
Speaking to The BBC , he said it was a misconception that Pakistan would disintegrate, stressing the country would “never break apart.” Dulat noted that **Field Marshal Asim Munir is receiving growing international recognition**, even being referred to by the US president as his “favourite field marshal.” He added Pakistan’s mediation strengthened its global standing. (*The News*, [17 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan-Bangladesh civil service ties deepen through Lahore visit** — A senior delegation of Bangladeshi civil servants visited the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) Campus at the Civil Services Academy in Lahore under the Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor Programme. The initiative aims to **promote institutional cooperation, administrative learning and governance collaboration**, while reviving historical linkages between the two countries’ civil service institutions. The delegation was received by Director General CSA Farhan Aziz Khawaja, Additional Director PAS Usman Ali and Additional Director MCMC Nazia Jabeen, alongside senior faculty and officials. (*The News*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **US Congressman lauds Pakistan’s diplomatic role in Iran-US ceasefire** — In a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Congressman Jack Bergman, Co-Chair of the Congressional Pakistan Caucus, expressed “**sincere gratitude and lasting appreciation**” for Pakistan’s leadership in facilitating peace talks between Washington and Tehran. He described Islamabad’s engagement as “**true statesmanship**” and praised its emergence as a credible diplomatic bridge. Bergman noted that both the White House and Congress had publicly recognised Pakistan’s role, announcing plans to visit soon to strengthen bilateral ties. (*The Nation*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Dar, Uzbek FM discuss strengthening ties** — Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar held talks with Uzbekistan’s Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov on Saturday, focusing on **bilateral and multilateral matters of mutual interest, including Pak-Uzbek relations and regional developments**. According to the Foreign Office, Saidov appreciated Pakistan’s constructive role in mediation for regional peace and security. Both sides agreed to remain in close contact to further enhance cooperation and dialogue. (*The Nation*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **The rise of Hindutva through BJP’s electoral victories** — Zaid Bin Inam in this article argues that the recent state elections in Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala and Puducherry have expanded the BJP’s reach, signalling “**saffronisation**” of **Indian politics**. Defeating Mamata Banerjee’s Trinamool Congress in West Bengal marked a symbolic breakthrough, reflecting consolidation of Hindu votes and a shift in political dynamics. AS Dulat and other analysts note that **Hindutva, fused with populism, nationalism and digital mobilisation, is reshaping India’s democracy**, challenging secular foundations. The BJP’s success highlights both growing acceptance of majoritarian politics and opposition parties’ lack of counter-strategy. (*The Nation*, [16 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan’s delicate balancing in US-China rivalry** — Security analyst **Muhammad Amir Rana** argues that President Xi Jinping’s invocation of the *Thucydides Trap* during Donald Trump’s China visit signals Beijing’s confidence as a global power. While China challenges US dominance in trade and technology, Washington retains structural advantages. Pakistan has emerged as a **key mediator between Iran and the US**, with China encouraging its role while avoiding direct confrontation.

Rana stresses that “Pakistan must ably balance its ties with the US and China”, as success could strengthen its **middle-power** credentials. (*Dawn*, [17 May 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **‘AJK’ Election Commission bars PTI from registration** — The ‘Azad’ Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission, led by Chief Election Commissioner Mustafa Mughal, has rejected Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf’s (PTI) registration application ahead of the July polls. PTI condemned the move as “**unjust, arbitrary and politically motivated**”, arguing it undermines democratic rights and deprives voters of a level playing field. The party noted compliance with the ‘AJK’ Election Act, 2020, yet claimed discrimination compared to other parties. PTI demanded reversal of the decision, calling it “**unconstitutional and discriminatory**”. (*The News*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Centre consults provinces on digital master plan** — The federal government is seeking provincial input on the **National Digital Master Plan (NDMP)** before the upcoming budget to accelerate digital governance. Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema and PM’s Adviser Dr Tauqeer Shah co-chaired a meeting reviewing progress on Pakistan’s digital transformation agenda. IT Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja and senior officials briefed on reforms in governance, economy, infrastructure and society. Cheema stressed that **strong provincial participation is essential**, noting the plan will minimise human intervention and ease public access to services. (*Dawn*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **PTI demands medical access for Imran Khan** — Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram has demanded immediate access for Imran Khan to his family and doctors of choice, citing **Barrister Salman Safdar’s medical report that the PTI chairman has lost 85 per cent vision in his right eye**. Akram condemned the government’s denial of medical rights as “**a calculated act of cruelty**”, warning of nationwide protests if restrictions persist. He dismissed official claims of providing adequate facilities as “**laughable fiction**”, accusing authorities of concealing Khan’s condition. (*Dawn*, [17 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan honours Chinese nationals for contributions to bilateral ties** — Pakistan has conferred civil awards on five Chinese nationals in recognition of their outstanding services to China-Pakistan relations. Ambassador Khalil Hashmi presented the honours at a ceremony in Beijing. **Wang Yongge** received the *Hilal-i-Quaid-i-Azam* for advancing cooperation in peaceful nuclear energy. **Xu Zhaodong** and **Cui Peng** were awarded the *Sitara-i-Imtiaz* for achievements in earthquake engineering and earth sciences. **Cui Jun** earned the *Sitara-i-Quaid-i-Azam* for strengthening media ties, while **Qian Feng** received the *Tamgha-i-Quaid-i-Azam* for research fostering mutual understanding. (*Dawn*, [17 May 2026](#))



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