

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

19 May 2026

Security

- ◆ **PAK-Saudi Strategic Brotherhood Reaffirmed Amid Media Speculation** — Pakistan’s security sources rejected Reuters’ report on Pakistani troop and jet deployment in Saudi Arabia, calling it “angled” and misrepresentative. They stressed that cooperation is rooted in a **“time-tested, deep-rooted brotherhood bound by shared religious, cultural, social, political, and economic convergences”**. Sources emphasised Pakistan’s pride in protecting the Harmain Shareefain, noting deployments are defensive and treaty-bound. They reiterated, **“The security of Saudi Arabia is inextricably linked to the sanctity of the Holy Mosques”**. Both nations’ stability remains mutually intertwined. (*The News*, [19 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Defence Minister’s Stern Warning to India** — Defence Minister Khawaja Asif cautioned that **“India would become part of history and its geography would be changed”** if it attempts any future misadventure against Pakistan. **Speaking on Geo News’ Capital Talk**, he criticised Indian Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi’s remarks, recalling India’s defeat in the April–May 2025 conflict. Asif highlighted Pakistan’s retaliatory “Operation Bunyan-um-Marsoos” and regional diplomatic gains, while noting divisions in India’s leadership. He welcomed the Hague Court’s ruling upholding the Indus Waters Treaty, calling it a victory for Pakistan. (*The News*, [19 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Indus Waters Treaty at Risk** — This Editorial, “Water of the Indus” warns that Pakistan’s water security faces grave threats as India rejects the Court of Arbitration’s ruling on Ratle and Kishenganga projects. The piece stresses that **“Water is not merely another diplomatic bargaining chip. It is a lifeline”**, criticising New Delhi’s unilateral suspension of the treaty as reckless. Climate experts caution that weakening the IWT undermines flood forecasting and drought coordination. The editorial urges India to show maturity, restraint, and keep water a source of cooperation, not conflict. (*The News*, [19 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Somali Pirates Demand \$3m Ransom for Hostages** — Somali pirates holding 17 crew members, including **10 Pakistanis**, have demanded **\$3 million** for their release, rejecting mediation and insisting on direct talks with the Pakistani government. According to **Qurrat-ul-Ain, Director of the Ansar Burney Trust**, the pirates denied earlier reports of a \$10m demand and distanced themselves from claims linked to a man named Usman. Hostages report severe shortages of food, medicine and clean water, surviving on one serving of boiled rice daily. (*The Express Tribune*, [19 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan’s Climate Migration Crisis** — In her column, *Attiya Munawer* warns that climate change has triggered mass migration, with **over 523,000 people fleeing South Punjab** after floods destroyed homes, crops and livestock. She stresses that **“climate migration is no longer a future**

threat; it is our tragedy today”, as displaced farmers weaken agriculture while cities collapse under population pressure, resource shortages and rising crime. Munawer urges climate-resistant infrastructure, smart city planning, green urbanisation and global “Loss and Damage” funds to avert a socio-economic tsunami. (*The Nation*, [19 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Indus Waters Treaty Ruling and Regional Shifts**— In his analysis, *Dr Hasan Zafar* explains that the Hague tribunal’s verdict reaffirming India cannot suspend the Indus Waters Treaty strengthens Pakistan’s legal position. He notes India’s rejection of the ruling coincides with mixed signals from figures like **A. S. Dulat** and RSS leaders urging dialogue. Zafar argues that “**with Article 370 gone, the notion of ‘bilateralism’ and even the LoC itself have inadvertently ceased to exist**”, reshaping Pakistan’s obligations. He situates the verdict within shifting global power dynamics post-2025. (*The Friday Times*, [18 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **TTP Operational Summary: 18 May 2026:** On 18 May 2026 (1 Dhu al-Hijjah 1447 AH), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed 23 operations across ten regions. Major incidents involved improvised explosive devices (IEDs), sniper fire, and ambushes primarily targeting Pakistani military, Frontier Corps (FC), and police units. Notable actions included vehicle bombings in South Waziristan and Lakki Marwat that allegedly killed two majors and multiple soldiers. Operations also featured the execution of an alleged spy in Tank and clashes with local peace committee members in Pishin. The attacks resulted in dozens of reported casualties and significant material damage.

Operations Breakdown by Region

District / Region	Number of Operations	Key Targets / Incidents
South Waziristan	5	Military vehicle IED (1 Major killed), sniper attacks, FC post raid.
Lakki Marwat	4	Military convoy ambush (1 Major killed), mortar attacks on Punjab Police.
Bannu	2	Convoy ambush, harassment attack on military fort defences.
North Waziristan	2	Soldier ambush, hand grenade attack on a military bunker.
Tank	2	Execution of an alleged spy via religious court, targeted killing of a policeman.
South Punjab	2	Mortar attacks targeting two Punjab Police posts in Mianwali.
Bajaur	2	Mortar attacks targeting military positions in Salarzo.
Pishin	2	Clash with peace committee workers, mine blast targeting an FC vehicle.
Khyber	1	Sniper attack killing one military personnel at Tirah Maidan.
Peshawar	1	Sniper attack killing one soldier at the Karbala post.
Total	23	

Economy

- ◆ **Pakistan, IMF Align on Fiscal Targets**— Pakistan and the IMF have agreed on a macroeconomic framework for the 2026-27 budget, with Islamabad projecting **GDP growth at 4.1%** and inflation averaging **8.6%**, slightly above the Fund's 8.4% forecast. The IMF set a **primary balance target of 2% of GDP (Rs2.9 trillion)**, requiring provinces to raise Rs400 billion in additional revenue. Measures include expanding GST on services and introducing new agricultural income tax rates. Independent economists warn inflation could reach 11%, prompting tighter monetary policy. (*The News*, [19 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **IMF Pushes Provinces for Higher Revenues** —Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb urged provinces to raise **Rs400bn more in revenue** next fiscal year to meet IMF targets, focusing on agriculture, property and services. The IMF mission, led by Iva Petrova, praised fiscal discipline but demanded stronger provincial contributions. Sindh was pressed on property tax, Punjab on Agricultural Income Tax. Provinces must provide a **cash surplus of nearly Rs2tr (1.4% of GDP)**, while the FBR's target is Rs15.264tr. Punjab and Sindh led current surpluses, with KP and Balochistan contributing modestly. (*Dawn*, [19 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Imports Push Current Account Back into Deficit** — Pakistan's external account slipped into a **\$324m deficit in April 2026**, reversing March's surplus, as imports surged 11.4% year-on-year to \$6.9bn, outpacing exports' 3.4% rise. SBP data showed the trade deficit widened to **\$3.4bn, up 47% MoM**. Services exports, particularly IT, grew 22%, but goods exports fell 2%. Remittances remained strong at **\$3.5bn in April**, cushioning pressures. Analysts warn rising imports without export growth could revive balance-of-payments risks, with the rupee's REER at 105.80 constraining competitiveness. (*The Express Tribune*, [19 May 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Bangladeshi Delegation Visits NIPA for Exchange** — A twelve-member team of senior civil officers from Bangladesh, led by **Salma Siddiqua Mahtab, Additional Secretary, Health Services Division**, visited Pakistan's National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) in Islamabad. The study tour aimed to enhance cooperation in civil service training. Senior officials including **Farhan Aziz Khawaja, Rector NSPP**, and **Asim Iqbal, DG NIPA Islamabad**, briefed delegates on training methodologies and institutional practices. The visitors appreciated Pakistan's hospitality and expressed interest in continued collaboration in public administration. (*The News*, [19 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Over 164,000 Pakistanis Deported from Gulf in Five Years** — Official data presented in the National Assembly revealed that **164,000 Pakistanis were deported from Gulf states since 2021**, with **Saudi Arabia leading at 108,029 cases**, followed by the UAE (40,497), Oman (9,814), Qatar (2,971) and Bahrain (2,779). The session also saw opposition protests over denial of access to PTI founder Imran Khan. Separately, the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency reported **531,000 complaints since 2023**, with 7,600 arrests. Rising private healthcare costs in Islamabad were also discussed. (*The Express Tribune*, [19 May 2026](#))

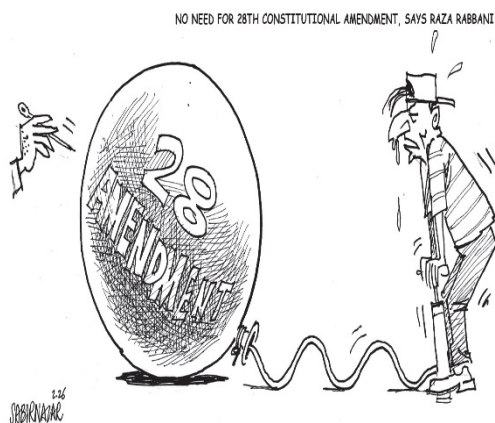
- ◆ **Bangladesh Hosts Pakistani Former Secretary** — Acting President and Speaker of Bangladesh's Parliament **Hafizuddin Ahmed** hosted a lunch in Dhaka for visiting former Pakistani Federal Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, **Syed Anwer Mahmood**. The goodwill visit, undertaken on Ahmed's invitation, concluded with discussions on enhancing **people-to-people contacts to strengthen Pak-Bangladesh relations**. During his stay, Mahmood met several officials and earlier joined the Acting President at a cricket match in Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla Stadium. (*The Nation*, [19 May 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Voting Rights Debate Clarified Amid Rumours** — Federal Information Minister Attaullah Tarar dismissed speculation about raising Pakistan's voting age to 25, insisting, **"No such proposals are under our consideration."** The debate followed Adviser Rana Sanaullah's remarks linking the issue to the 28th Constitutional Amendment. PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan warned that excluding 18-year-olds would harm democracy, while JUIF Senator Kamran Murtaza argued, **"If an 18-year-old person can get married, then they should also have the right to vote."** Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar stressed amendments require consensus. (*The News*, [19 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **UNICEF Highlights Malnutrition Crisis in Pakistan** — UNICEF revealed that **"one in every three Pakistani children faces malnutrition or growth-related problems"** at a University of Health Sciences (UHS) workshop in Lahore. The UHS launched a four-part programme with UNICEF to integrate nutrition and child health into MBBS curricula, beginning with training on Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition. Prof Najaf Masood termed malnutrition a **"silent emergency"**, while Prof Shahid Mahmood Sethi stressed nutrition education must be integral to medical training. Vice Chancellor Prof Ahsan Waheed Rathore reaffirmed UHS's commitment to public health priorities. (*The News*, [19 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Imran Khan Seeks Supreme Court Relief** — Former PM Imran Khan petitioned the Supreme Court for transfer to Shifa International Hospital, citing deteriorating vision from **central retinal vein occlusion** and requesting access to his chosen physicians, family and counsel. Filed by senior counsel Uzair Karamat Bhandari, **the plea challenges the Islamabad High Court's March 12 order**. Counsel Barrister Salman Safdar also contested an April 30 deadline on appeals in the £190m Al-Qadir Trust case, calling it "harsh, unjustified and unfair." Arrest warrants were separately issued for ex-CM Ali Amin Gandapur. (*Dawn*, [19 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **PPP Warns Against Curtailment of Sindh's Autonomy** — Former PPP Senator **Sassui Palijo** cautioned that Sindh would resist any move under the proposed 28th Constitutional Amendment that undermines provincial autonomy or alters boundaries. She said, **"If the move leads to a division of provinces, the people of Sindh will stand against it like a wall."** Palijo criticised attempts to roll back the 18th Amendment and change the NFC Award formula, warning against depriving Sindh of resources and water rights. She termed the 26th, 27th and proposed 28th Amendments "controversial." (*Dawn*, [19 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Two Policemen Killed Protecting Polio Teams in Bajaur** — Two police officers, **Constable Syed Aziz** and **Constable Syed Qadir Shah**, were killed in separate targeted attacks while on polio duty

in Bajaur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. District Police Officer Muhammad Khalid confirmed the incidents, which prompted heightened security and search operations. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief, while **CM Sohail Afridi** condemned the killings as “**cowardly acts**”. Governor Faisal Karim Kundi alleged foreign hostility, and officials praised the bravery of the martyrs. The attacks occurred during a nationwide polio campaign targeting 19 million children. (*The Express Tribune*, [19 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Wapda Hydel Generation Surpasses 6,000MW** — Pakistan’s hydropower output crossed the **6,000MW mark**, with Wapda supplying **6,118MW to the national grid** during peak hours, according to a Monday statement. Major contributions came from **Tarbela (2,332MW, including 1,095MW from its fourth extension)**, **Ghazi Barotha (1,160MW)**, **Mangla (930MW)**, **Warsak (135MW)** and **Chashma (101MW)**, while smaller stations added 365MW. Wapda emphasised that hydel electricity remains the **most affordable, clean and green energy**, subsidising the national energy sector. (*The Express Tribune*, [19 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **What’s the controversy surrounding 28th Amendment?**— The proposed **28th Constitutional Amendment** has stirred controversy, with speculation it may **carve out up to 12 provinces**, including Karachi as a separate province, and empower the judiciary to impose Governor Rule. The MQM-P demands stronger local government powers, while experts warn of changes to the **NFC Award formula** and election procedures. Critics fear curtailed provincial autonomy and resource redistribution. Achieving a two-thirds majority remains uncertain, especially before the federal budget. (*The Nation*, [19 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Youth Mobilisation in Balochistan**— The Baloch Students Action Committee’s three-day central committee meeting in Quetta reviewed organisational performance, zonal reports and future strategy under Chairman Uzair Baloch. **He warned that Baloch society faces educational decline, moral crisis and intellectual stagnation, urging youth to play active academic, intellectual and political roles.** Participants stressed the importance of student politics in promoting cultural and political awareness despite challenges. The committee also announced programmes including the Mehrgarh Conference, literacy campaigns, science exhibitions and action against ghost teachers in schools. (*Daily Sangar*, [18 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Concern Over Missing Baloch Student**— The Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP) protest camp in Quetta continued for the 6,159th day under Niaz Muhammad, with participants demanding an end to enforced disappearances in Balochistan. VBMP chairman Nasrullah Baloch expressed alarm over the alleged enforced disappearance of archaeology student Kambir Khan Jatak from Islamabad. **He described the incident as “extremely worrying” and urged authorities to recover him safely or present any charges before a court.** Students said repeated appeals to police and administrators yielded no information, increasing fear and distress among Baloch students. (*Daily Sangar*, [18 May 2026](#))



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