

# DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

20 May 2026

## Security

- ◆ **Pakistan Vows Relentless Offensive Against Terrorism and Regional Threats**— Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir reaffirmed Pakistan’s resolve to eliminate terrorism during visits to Quetta, declaring that **Operation “Ghazab-lil-Haq” would continue “until we eradicate this menace from the face of Pakistan.”** Shehbaz praised the armed forces’ response to Indian aggression and stressed that Pakistan’s peace efforts reflected strength, not weakness. He urged Afghanistan’s Taliban regime to act against militant groups operating from Afghan soil. Munir emphasised modern military preparedness, counter-terrorism and Balochistan’s development, while the government announced enhanced security measures to protect mineral projects and economic activity. (*The News*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **22 India-backed terrorists killed in North Waziristan**— Security forces in Pakistan’s North Waziristan killed **22 terrorists of Fitna al-Khwarij** during an ongoing sanitisation operation under *Azm-e-Istehkam*. The ISPR confirmed the militants were **Indian-sponsored and used civilians as human shields** (“Such deplorable acts are highly condemnable and no justification can rationalise the endangerment of public lives”). President Asif Ali Zardari praised the bravery of troops, calling their sacrifices vital for peace, while Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed that **“our security forces are standing like a wall of steel against terrorism.”** (*The News*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Trust the signals, but verify the policy**— In this commentary Baqir Sajjad Syed argues that India’s contradictory messaging towards Pakistan reflects **uncertainty inside its system**. While RSS leader Dattatreya Hosabale urged that “doors for dialogue...should not be permanently shut,” Indian army chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi provoked Pakistan to choose between “geography or history.” The silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his top aides suggests **deliberate ambiguity** rather than a policy shift. Pakistan’s Foreign Office spokesman Tahir Andrabi welcomed pro-dialogue voices but stressed that **“official policy actually mattered.”** (*Dawn*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **PM orders mineral security corridor in Balochistan** — Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the **immediate deployment of Frontier Corps (FC) in Rakhshan division** to establish a “security corridor” safeguarding Balochistan’s mineral wealth. The Provincial Apex Committee, attended by Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, approved checkpoints, surveillance grids and reinforced border posts. Shehbaz emphasised that **“Pakistan is blessed with abundant natural resources, especially minerals”** and stressed secure conditions for investors. He also lauded the armed forces’ sacrifices, reaffirmed support for Kashmir and Palestine, and highlighted youth empowerment and development projects. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Indian ex-deputy NSA admits Pakistan's narrative triumph** —In a rare admission, India's former Deputy National Security Advisor Dr Arvind Gupta acknowledged that **Pakistan has outmanoeuvred India in the global "narrative war."** Speaking on a podcast, he noted Islamabad's decades-long investment in think tanks, media influence and public relations has proved more resilient than New Delhi's short-term campaigns. By consistently projecting its stance on Kashmir and regional security, Pakistan has shaped global perceptions. Analysts say this concession underscores a **decisive victory for Pakistan's foreign policy apparatus.** (*The Nation*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **A group from Bunair province joins Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan:** As per statement by Muhammad Khurasani Spokesperson, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a group of Mujahideen belonging to the Mandanr Khadokhel area of Bunair province, under the leadership of respected Commander Yasir Sahib (may Allah protect him), pledged allegiance to the Ameer of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Abu Mansoor Asim Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud (may Allah protect him), and vowed to abide by all the principles and regulations of the movement. (*Telegram*, 19 May 2026)

## Economy

- ◆ **Pakistan Plans Sweeping Auto Tariff Cuts Amid IMF Talks**— Pakistan has committed to reducing weighted auto-sector tariffs to **below 6 per cent by 2030** under the National Tariff Policy, while resisting the IMF's proposal to impose 18 per cent GST on Electric Vehicles (EVs). Instead, the government proposed a concessional **1 per cent GST across the EV supply chain** to encourage New Energy Vehicles and avoid refund accumulation issues. Officials argued that regional competitors maintain higher duties on imported vehicles. The forthcoming auto policy also envisages phasing out Additional and Regulatory Duties by 2030, alongside stricter environmental and safety standards through pending legislation. (*The News*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Foreign firms' profit repatriation surges** — Foreign companies in Pakistan repatriated **\$172 million in April 2026, up 42% year-on-year**, with the financial sector leading at \$72 million, followed by food (\$30m) and tobacco (\$26m). The UK topped country-wise outflows at \$81m. Cumulative repatriation for 10MFY26 exceeded **\$2 billion, rising 8.7%**, signalling investor confidence despite economic challenges. The rupee closed at 278.57 against the dollar. Gold prices held steady locally, though international bullion fell over 2%. **Adnan Agar, Director at Interactive Commodities, warned: "A break below \$4,500 could take prices towards \$4,400 and possibly \$4,200."** (*The Express Tribune*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Govt greenlights PNSC restructuring** — The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC), chaired by Finance Minister **Muhammad Aurangzeb**, has approved the sale of **30% shares of Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) to National Logistics Corporation (NLC) along with management control.** The Ministry of Finance said the move aims to tap emerging maritime and transshipment opportunities. The ECC also sanctioned supplementary grants exceeding Rs8.6 billion, including **Rs160m for repair of the Prime Minister's Office**, Rs480m for Frontier Corps KP (North) Hospital, and Rs1.5b for the Prime Minister's National Health Programme. It endorsed the **National Policy to Realise Pakistan's Gemstone Potential 2026-2030.** (*The Express Tribune*, [20 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan Urged to Pursue Self-Reliant Economic Reform**— Farhan Bokhari argues that Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb’s pledge to avoid new foreign loans signals a necessary shift towards economic self-reliance and reduced dependence on external lenders. The writer contends that decades of **excessive government spending, weak taxation and neglect of agriculture and industry have deepened Pakistan’s economic vulnerabilities**. He warns that climate change, regional instability and inconsistent policymaking threaten future growth, while rising poverty reflects widening inequality. Bokhari stresses that **“reducing Pakistan’s indebtedness is essential to its survival”** and calls for long-term reforms in taxation, governance, agriculture and public administration. (*The News*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **FDI Decline Deepens** — **Pakistan’s foreign direct investment fell 31% in the first 10 months** of FY26, totalling \$1.409bn compared to \$2.035bn last year. April inflows dropped sharply to \$54m from \$179m. Interestingly, **China’s \$61m investment exceeded total net inflows for April**, reaffirming its role as Pakistan’s largest investor, contributing \$740m overall. Other inflows came from Hong Kong (\$281m), Switzerland (\$170m) and UAE (\$169m), while Norway withdrew \$365m. The power sector attracted \$785.6m, followed by financial services at \$659m, but telecom saw heavy disinvestment. (*Dawn*, [20 May 2026](#))

## Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan, Russia hold talks on strategic stability** —Pakistani and Russian officials met in Moscow for the **16th meeting of the Russia-Pakistani Consultative Group on Strategic Stability**, co-chaired by FO Spokesperson and Additional Secretary Tahir Andrabi and Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister. The Foreign Office reported a **“confident and detailed exchange of views”** on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, with both sides discussing broader issues of international security and global stability. The talks underscored continuing cooperation between Islamabad and Moscow on sensitive strategic matters. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Indian aircraft ban extended till June 24** —The Pakistan Airport Authority (PAA) has extended restrictions on **Indian aircraft using its airspace until June 24**, according to a fresh Notice to Airmen (NOTAM). Pakistan has kept its airspace closed to Indian aircraft since April 2025, following tensions after the Pahalgam attack in IIOJK. The ban applies to **all aircraft registered in India, including those operated, owned or leased by Indian airlines or operators, as well as military flights**, the NOTAM confirmed. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Govt vows modernisation of mining sector with Japan’s support**— Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, during his visit to the Geoscience Advance Research Laboratories (GARL), reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to **replace outdated mining practices with advanced technologies** for sustainable development and greater value addition. Meeting Japanese Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi, he praised Japan and JICA’s role in strengthening GARL, calling it a landmark cooperation. Both sides expressed satisfaction with ongoing collaboration and agreed to deepen ties in **geosciences, mineral research, analytical sciences and technical capacity development**. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 May 2026](#))

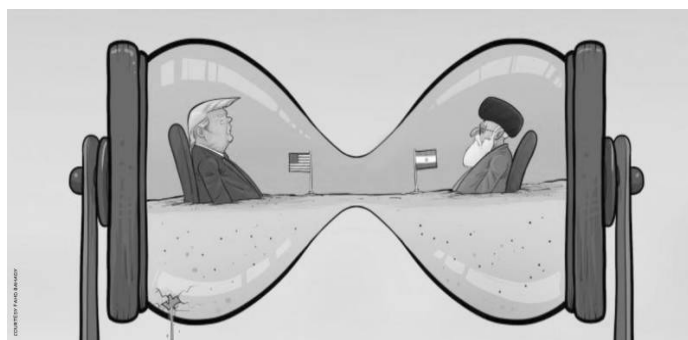
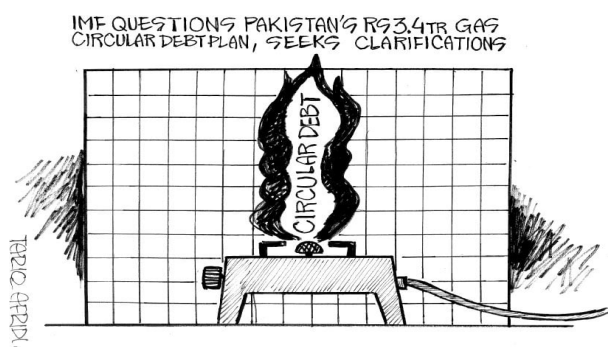
- ◆ **Political Unity Among Indian Muslims** —Adeela Naureen and Waqar K Kauravi argue that Indian Muslims face escalating discrimination, violence and institutional marginalisation under Hindutva politics, citing warnings from Genocide Watch and comments by Dr Gregory Stanton regarding risks of mass persecution. **The writers criticise the BJP, RSS, sections of the judiciary and bureaucracy, alleging complicity in anti-Muslim oppression, while referencing the Gujarat riots, Delhi violence and disputes over mosques.** They also condemn “Sarkari Mussalmans” for supporting secular accommodation, asserting that **Indian Muslims “must unite under a single banner”** to defend their rights, dignity and security. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Press Freedom Meets Silence** —During his Oslo visit for the India-Nordic Summit, **Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi faced criticism for avoiding media questions.** As he and Norwegian PM Jonas Gahr Støre left after a joint statement, journalist Helle Lyng called out: “**Prime Minister Modi, why don’t you take some questions from the freest press in the world?**” She later pressed India’s Ministry of External Affairs on human rights concerns. MEA’s Sibi George replied: “**We are proud to be a democracy.**” (*Dawn*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan can buy Russian Oil** —Pakistan could benefit from a temporary United States licence permitting selected energy-vulnerable countries to import Russian oil for 30 days. According to diplomatic sources, the concession aims to ease global crude supply pressures and stabilise oil markets amid rising energy concerns. However, **officials cautioned that Pakistan may struggle to fully utilise the opportunity because of limited refining infrastructure and lack of experience in processing Russian crude imports at scale.** US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent stated the measure would help ensure oil reached “the most energy-vulnerable countries” while limiting China’s discounted stockpiling capacity. (*Dawn*, [20 May 2026](#))

## Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Safe City project set to transform policing in ‘AJK’**— ‘AJK’s’ Inspector General of Police, retired Captain Liaqat Ali Malik, announced that a memorandum of understanding with Punjab for the **Safe City Project** will be signed within a month. The initiative will introduce **AI-based monitoring, facial recognition, e-challan facilities and modern policing tools** in Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot and Mirpur, later expanding across ‘AJK’. Mr Malik also confirmed federal approval for a Rs1.90 billion **Counter Terrorism Department project**, with 472 posts created. He emphasised peaceful elections, respect for lawful protests, and plans for Elite, Cyber Crime and Quick Response Forces. (*Dawn*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Opposition rifts ahead of anti-govt protest**— Major opposition parties are preparing demonstrations against inflation on May 22, but **disunity persists.** Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP), backed by PTI, announced nationwide protests focused also on **Imran Khan’s incarceration and medical access.** JUI-F chief Fazlur Rehman and JI chief Hafiz Naemur Rehman separately called for protests over inflation, with JI also filing a constitutional petition against fuel prices. Senior JUI-F and JI leaders cited “**trust issues” with PTI**, ruling out a joint platform. PTI’s Haleem Adil Sheikh urged unity on public issues despite political differences. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **KP CM, cabinet blocked from meeting Imran Khan**— Despite Tuesday being the scheduled visiting day, **no PTI leaders or family members were allowed to meet Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi at Adiala Jail**. A list of six designated visitors had been submitted, but none reached before visiting hours ended amid a **massive security lockdown under Section 144**, with the jail declared a red zone. Heavy police contingents, barriers, and water cannons sealed access routes, while shops and petrol stations nearby were closed. KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi condemned the move as **“discriminatory”**, noting his cabinet was blocked at Toll Plaza. Meanwhile, a four-member medical team conducted a comprehensive check-up of Imran Khan. PTI’s Sh Waqas Akram termed the restrictions **“an assault on democracy.”** (*The News*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **AIIB backs Pakistan’s resilient highway upgrade** — The Economic Affairs Division and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank signed a **\$320.16 million loan agreement** to reconstruct critical sections of National Highway N-5, a vital corridor linking Sindh, Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Federal Minister for Economic Affairs **Ahad Cheema praised AIIB as a “reliable development partner”**, noting the project will boost connectivity, trade and growth. AIIB Chief Investment Officer **Konstantin Limitovskiy emphasised its “strategic importance”**, highlighting reconstruction with **modern, green and climate-friendly methods**. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Climate Governance in Crisis** — Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s inquiry into the GLOF-II project highlights Pakistan’s faltering climate adaptation. Senator Sherry Rehman condemned **“glacial slow governance”**, citing delays, poor coordination and weak accountability. **Maleeha Sattar and Neelum Nigar argue that despite international funding, weak polycentric governance, frequent leadership changes and lack of community-centred participation undermined outcomes. Pakistan’s climate governance is primarily a transparency crisis**, with fragmented institutions and inaccessible data. Future adaptation must integrate local expertise, participatory structures and honest reflection to avoid turning vulnerability into catastrophe. (*The News*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Solitary Confinement Challenge**— A petition has been filed in the Islamabad High Court by **Mubashra Khawar Maneka, daughter of Bushra Bibi**, wife of PTI founder Imran Khan, against her alleged solitary confinement in Adiala jail. The plea argues that **no court ordered her confinement** and that prison rules prohibit solitary confinement beyond 14 days. It cites the UN Mandela Rules, calling indefinite isolation a violation of human dignity. The petition also highlights Bushra Bibi’s recent eye surgery and restricted family and lawyer access. (*Dawn*, [20 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **University Staff in Turbat Demand Safe Return of Missing Academics**— Faculty members and administrative staff at the University of Turbat organised a protest walk during a **“Black Day”** observance against the disappearance of Prof. Dr. Abdul Razaq Sabir, Dr. Syed Manzoor Ahmed, lecturer Dr. Irshad Buledi and driver Hatim. Participants urged the government and law enforcement agencies to ensure their immediate and dignified recovery, stressing that **such incidents were harming Balochistan’s education system** and causing distress among families, students and academic circles. The demonstrators also praised the missing teachers’ contributions to higher education and expressed solidarity with their families. (*Daily Sangar*, [19 May 2026](#))

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