

# DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

04 June 2026

## Security

- ◆ **BLA and the digital weaponisation of women** — In this comment piece, **Durdana Najam** argues that the **Baloch Liberation Army (BLA)**, designated as a terrorist organisation responsible for severe violence and human rights abuses, has intensified its campaign by exploiting digital platforms to recruit women. Once absent from militancy, women are now appearing as suicide bombers or handlers, often coerced through online grooming and “**sextortion**” tactics. As Durdana Najam notes, “**When a group focuses on blowing up infrastructure, killing civilians, it is clearly not working to rebuild the future**”. The battle is shifting from mountains to mobile phones, demanding counter-narratives and digital vigilance. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **India’s dangerous military mindset** — Retired Major General Inam Ul Haque warns that **India’s military leadership is pursuing escalatory doctrines against Pakistan**, citing General Upendra Dwivedi’s “New Normal” of cross-border retaliation and preparations for *Operation Sindoor 2.0*. He argues that nuclear powers “**never fight conventionally, given the chances of miscalculation, escalation, unintended consequences,**” stressing the peril of compressed decision-making windows. At the Shangri-La Dialogue, Lt Gen Nauman Zakaria highlighted AI-driven warfare risks and the need for institutionalised communication channels. Haque concludes Pakistan must reinforce deterrence and declare its nuclear intent to counter India’s posture. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Taliban’s resolve?** — The reported decree by the Taliban leadership urging the **TTP to halt attacks against Pakistan** is a welcome step, though it requires verification from Kabul. The editorial stresses that exterminating militants, especially the outlawed TTP, has long been Islamabad’s demand, and “**it is high time Kabul exhibited responsibility to ensure that warlordism was done away with and serenity was restored.**” Trust deficit remains central, with Pakistan citing Taliban’s failure to act against militants. The Afghan rulers must condemn terrorism and uproot it entirely, not merely relocate or silence it. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **No return from seas in sight** — It has been over six weeks since **10 Pakistani sailors onboard the oil tanker Honour 25 were taken hostage off Somalia**, with families enduring an agonising wait. The editorial notes that while ransom demands have dropped from \$10 million to \$4 million, “**the government and the owners of the ship seem least interested in paying up to end the hostage crisis.**” Hostages report surviving on contaminated water and minimal food, with illness spreading. The piece urges Islamabad to act decisively, directly or with allies, to secure their release. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Centralising Pakistan’s policing future** — The federal government is preparing the **National Internal Security Policy 2026–30**, aiming to **centralise police operations, integrate crime data nationally, enhance interprovincial intelligence sharing, and choke terror financing**. FIA DG Dr Usman Anwar warned of a “serious disconnect” among civil law enforcement agencies,

stressing the need for a **uniform mechanism across provinces**. Proposals include raising a CTD in Gilgit-Baltistan and empowering the National Police Bureau as a central coordinating body. Former NPB DG Tariq Khosa urged a national criminal record system and likened NPB to GHQ for the Army. (*Dawn*, [4 June 2026](#))

- ◆ **Security upgrades at Reko Diq** — Pakistan and **Barrick Mining Corporation** are reviewing security arrangements for the multi-billion-dollar **Reko Diq Copper-Gold Project**, leading to increased costs. OGDCL CEO Ahmad Hayat Lak confirmed that partners are formally assessing procurement and security needs, stressing Pakistan's responsibility to protect the site. Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik said Barrick remains committed despite challenges, with new financiers showing interest. The delegation also discussed equipment acquisition and lending expansion. Malik hinted at **gas tariff relief for domestic consumers from 1 July**, alongside measures to tackle circular debt and refinery upgrades. (*Dawn*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **The elusive Indus**— Pakistan has crossed into **absolute water scarcity**, with per capita availability down to 899 cubic metres. Dr Sharmila Faruqi warns that [Pakistan's hydrological destabilisation is not a contained emergency but a structural threat to regional and global security. IRSA data shows a 15% shortfall for early sowing, while reservoirs like Tarbela have lost up to 40% capacity. Groundwater depletion, contamination, and gendered burdens intensify the crisis. She stresses reforms in governance, stricter regulation, and climate justice, noting that **civilisations collapse not for lack of solutions but for lack of time**. (*The News*, [4 June 2026](#))

## Economy

- ◆ **Coalition partners align on budget date** — The federal government and PPP have reached a breakthrough, agreeing to recommend **10 June 2026, for the FY2026–27 budget presentation**. Deputy PM Ishaq Dar and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb met PPP leaders, including Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah, to deliberate on expenditures and development priorities under the PSDP. **Sources emphasised that public welfare, development initiatives and economic stability are central priorities**. Provincial concerns, especially Sindh's water projects, were discussed. The consultative process reflects coalition coordination as the fiscal roadmap nears completion. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan: From the brink to steady ground** — Two years after fears of default, Pakistan's economy shows signs of resilience. Real GDP growth is provisionally **3.70 per cent for FY27**, with large-scale manufacturing up 6.5 per cent. The fiscal deficit fell to **0.7 per cent of GDP**, a historic low, while the primary surplus hit 3.2 per cent. Pakistan retired **Rs4 trillion of debt ahead of schedule**, reducing debt-to-GDP to 70 per cent. Inflation cooled to 6.1 per cent, reserves crossed \$16 billion, and global agencies noted reform momentum. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **PM reaffirms export-led growth strategy** — Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the **FY2026–27 budget will provide public relief while advancing export-led growth**, the central pillar of government policy. Addressing industrialists, he stressed measures to bring the informal economy into the tax net and praised business leaders as Pakistan's ambassadors. He highlighted cooperation under **CPEC 2.0 in agriculture, IT, SEZs and minerals**, while urging swift follow-up on decisions made during his recent China visit. Chairing a railway review, he directed prioritisation of freight services and timely completion of mega projects. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))

- ◆ **Reko Diq project remains on track** — Canadian firm **Barrick Gold** has assured Pakistan it will continue development of the multibillion-dollar **Reko Diq gold and copper project despite regional conflict**, dismissing speculation of withdrawal. Company executives visited to assess **security protocols and procurement strategies**, with talks held alongside OGDCL MD Ahmed Hayat Lak, who confirmed lenders were satisfied with existing safeguards. Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik presented an integrated energy plan, while officials stressed the need for **strategic oil reserves and energy security architecture**. Supply chains remain stable despite global tensions. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **CCP okays acquisition of Pakistan Oxygen's LCO<sub>2</sub> plant** — The **Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP)** has approved **Pak Arab Fertilizers Limited's acquisition of Pakistan Oxygen Limited's liquid carbon dioxide (LCO<sub>2</sub>) plant**, following a Phase-I review under the Competition Act, 2010. The commission concluded the transaction constitutes a horizontal merger but would not materially alter competitive conditions. CCP noted the deal would not create barriers to entry, strengthen dominance, or distort market dynamics. Pak Arab Fertilizers, a subsidiary of Fatima Fertilizer, will integrate the asset into its chemical and fertilizer operations. (*The Nation*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan, World Bank reaffirm commitment to continued collaboration** — Finance Minister **Muhammad Aurangzeb met with a World Bank Group delegation led by VP Mamta Murthi**, reaffirming partnership in health, education, social protection, workforce development and technology-enabled service delivery. Aurangzeb emphasized measurable outcomes, youth employability, and aligning skills with labour market needs. Discussions covered maternal and child health, nutrition, early learning, and digital solutions in healthcare and education. The World Bank invited Pakistan to a global forum on Universal Health Coverage in Japan later this year. Separately, Economic Affairs Minister Ahad Cheema discussed new initiatives on **skills development and primary healthcare digitisation**. Both sides pledged continued cooperation to strengthen human capital and inclusive growth. (*The Nation*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan's tax dilemma** — Khurram Husain argues that every budget for over a decade has relied on **gimmicks rather than genuine tax reform**, leaving Pakistan trapped in a shrinking resource envelope. He notes that while services now make up nearly 60% of GDP, they contribute less than 40% of revenues, with banking and telecom as the main sources. VAT, once seen as the solution, was abandoned in 2008, replaced by failed schemes and withholding taxes. Husain warns that the coming budget may be defined “almost entirely by its revenue effort”. (*Dawn*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Climate levies without accountability** — Ali Tauqeer Sheikh traces Pakistan's misuse of surcharges, from the **1970 Bhola cyclone levy to today's Rs1.55 trillion petroleum development levy (PDL)**, noting that “**no relief fund has ever been legally ring-fenced.**” He argues climate has been **weaponised as justification to tax citizens**, with revenues absorbed into federal accounts rather than disaster relief or resilience. The PDL bypasses NFC sharing, depriving provinces of billions. Sheikh proposes ring-fencing 15% into a sovereign climate fund to unlock private investment, but questions whether governments will surrender prized revenue streams. (*Dawn*, [4 June 2026](#))

## Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Saudi Arabia invited to invest in ports** — Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has invited Saudi Arabia to invest in **Pakistan’s maritime sector**, highlighting opportunities in ports, logistics, blue economy initiatives and infrastructure. In an online meeting with Mansour Bin Mohammed Al Saud, chairman of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Joint Business Council, he pitched projects including a **maritime business district, a multipurpose cargo terminal, a second oil terminal at Port Qasim, and a 100-acre Aqua Research and Technology Park**. The minister said collaboration aligns with Saudi Vision 2030 and Pakistan’s priorities. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
  
- ◆ **India’s \$2bn drone push** — India is preparing its **largest military drone order worth over \$2 billion**, with deliveries expected within 18–24 months. Smit Shah, president of the Drone Federation of India, said tactical drone procurements may exceed 200 billion rupees, following fast-track routes to meet urgent operational needs. The move comes after clashes with Pakistan and global conflicts underscored drones as “**force multipliers on the modern battlefield**” (Ramesh Chandra Padhi, IG Defence). India’s 600-strong drone industry, including major firms and startups, is benefiting from swifter procurement and domestic manufacturing incentives. (*Dawn*, [4 June 2026](#))
  
- ◆ **Sweden strengthens partnership with Pakistan** — Swedish Ambassador Alexandra Berg von Linde reaffirmed her country’s commitment to a **forward-looking partnership with Pakistan**, highlighting collaboration in trade, climate action, innovation, education and gender equality. Speaking at Sweden’s National Day celebrations themed “Made With Sweden,” she emphasised that **Swedish innovation and knowhow combine with Pakistani expertise to create lasting impact**. The envoy stressed sustainability-driven trade and local collaboration, while State Minister Bilal Azhar Kayani attended as guest of honour. Exhibitions showcased Swedish companies’ contributions to Pakistan’s industrial and digital progress. (*The News*, [4 June 2026](#))
  
- ◆ **Pakistan and Rwanda sign nuclear safety MoU**—Pakistan and Rwanda have formalised cooperation in nuclear regulation and radiation protection through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by **Zia Hussain Shah, Chairman PNRA, and Claude Nkusi, Deputy Director General RURA**. The agreement, concluded during a RURA delegation’s visit to Islamabad, establishes a framework for **regulatory cooperation, technical expertise sharing, and capacity building**. Delegates toured PNRA and PAEC facilities to study Pakistan’s safety systems. Officials stressed that effective regulation, international collaboration, and continuous professional development remain critical to ensuring the highest standards of nuclear safety. (*The News*, [4 June 2026](#))
  
- ◆ **The million-dollar question**— Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s refusal to take questions abroad sparked uproar when Norwegian journalist Helle Lyng asked him in Oslo why he avoided the press. She was swiftly trolled in Indian media, branded a “spy” and “disrespectful.” Columnist **Hussain H Zaidi** argues this reaction reflects three trends in India: the rise of corporate-controlled media, crony capitalism, and the marginalisation of minorities. He notes India ranks 157th on the World Press Freedom Index and observes that [the ‘lion’ at home behaves sheepishly abroad]. (*The News*, [4 June 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan's envoy caught in Japan mosque row**—A dispute over the newly inaugurated Jamia Masjid Ramazan in Kawagoe has drawn international attention after **Pakistan's Ambassador Abdul Hamid attended the opening ceremony**. Kawagoe Mayor Hatsui Morita alleged the mosque was built without required permits in an Urban Development Control Area, calling it an unauthorised development. The Pakistani Embassy clarified the envoy had been assured all legal requirements were met, later learning some may not have been completed. The mission reiterated it does not support initiatives conflicting with Japanese law. (*The News*, [4 June 2026](#))

## Politics, Culture, Etc.

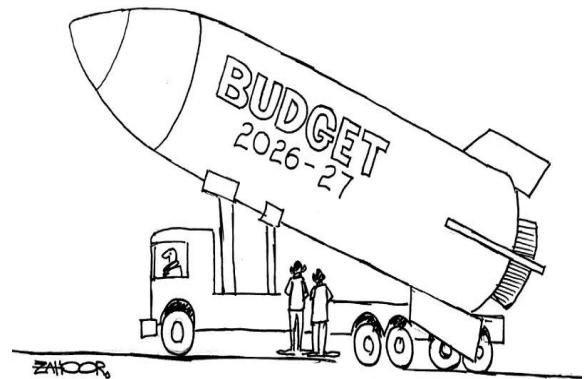
- ◆ **Bilawal urges fast-tracking Diامر-Bhasha Dam** — PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, addressing a rally in Diامر, called on the federal government to expedite the **Diامر-Bhasha Dam project**, pledging immediate resettlement of displaced communities if PPP wins the **June 7 Gilgit-Baltistan elections**. He stressed, “**No project is more important for Pakistan at the moment than the Diامر-Bhasha Dam**”, urging PM Shehbaz Sharif to show his famed “*Shehbaz speed*” in Diامر. Bilawal vowed PPP would secure G-B's constitutional rights and deliver energy self-sufficiency through public-private partnerships. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **G-B LG polls scheduled for August 2** — Chief Election Commissioner Raja Shahbaz Khan announced that **Gilgit-Baltistan's long-delayed local government elections will be held on August 2**, marking the first LG polls in over two decades. Initially set for February 14, 2026, alongside the region's legislative assembly elections on 24 January, both were postponed indefinitely due to harsh weather. Earlier this month, Khan confirmed preparations were underway but no date had been fixed. The announcement now sets the stage for a significant democratic exercise in G-B. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Multi-party confab rejects JAAC demand on 'AJK' refugee seats** — An **All-Parties Conference in Muzaffarabad unanimously rejected the JAAC's demand to abolish refugee seats in the 'AJK' Legislative Assembly**, stressing that only elected representatives can decide such matters. Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said the decision was taken “in the larger public interest and in the interest of the Kashmir liberation movement.” He added that while most JAAC demands had been met, the group refused to postpone its **9 June protest**, insisting on agitation. Authorities pledged not to use force against peaceful demonstrators. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Transporters threaten Taftan route shutdown** — All Balochistan Goods Truck Transport Companies Association President **Noor Ahmad Kakar condemned repeated attacks on goods trucks and drivers**, demanding compensation by **10 June**. At a press conference in Quetta, he warned that cargo supply on the Quetta–Taftan Highway would be halted if claims remain unpaid, with possible suspension of services across Balochistan. Kakar stressed that “**rising lawlessness has left transporters feeling extremely insecure**,” adding that responsibility for fallout would rest with the government if grievances are ignored. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Before the next amendment** — Pakistan's constitutional debate is intensifying, with reports of another amendment sparking political and legal speculation. Lawyer **Hammad Rohila** stresses that while constitutional reform shapes power structures, it is distinct from justice reform, which determines citizens' access to timely and fair dispute resolution. He notes that litigants complain of delays, adjournments and costs rather than constitutional design. Rohila argues that reforms must

be measured by **citizens' experience of justice, not legislative activity**, urging scrutiny of the Law Ministry's performance in delivering faster, fairer outcomes. (*The Express Tribune*, [4 June 2026](#))

- ◆ **Over 832,000 farmers receive Kissan Cards in Punjab** — Punjab Chief Minister **Maryam Nawaz Sharif** announced that more than **832,000 farmers** have been issued **Kissan Cards**, enabling access to formal agricultural financing and reducing reliance on middlemen. Farmers utilised loans worth **Rs2.54 billion**, while inputs valued at over Rs100 billion were purchased during the wheat season. With an **86% recovery rate**, repayments reached Rs57 billion. For the kharif season, inputs worth Rs90 billion are available, with 300,000 farmers already accessing Rs30 billion. Maryam said the scheme is fostering **economic empowerment and farm productivity**. (*The Nation*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Fuel Discovery** — The discovery of new **oil and gas reserves in Sindh** at OGDCL's **Bobi Deep-1 well in Sanghar** is hailed as a major boost for Pakistan's energy security. The well tested at **2,000 barrels of oil per day and 1.1 million cubic feet of gas per day**, marking the first hydrocarbon find from the Massive Sand play in the Bobi and Dhamraki lease. The editorial stresses that this validates further exploration and should shape energy policy, reducing reliance on costly imports. It urges incentives, regulatory clarity, and investment in exploration, noting OGDCL's success reflects the value of indigenous expertise and political will. (*The Nation*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **'AJK' electorate expands significantly** — Fresh electoral rolls show the **number of registered voters in 'Azad' Jammu and Kashmir has risen by 583,839 since the 2021 elections**, bringing the total to 3,804,385 across 45 constituencies. Of these, 3,365,839 voters are in 'AJK's' 33 territorial constituencies, while 438,546 are in Pakistan's 12 refugee constituencies. **LA-7 Bhimber-III has the largest electorate with 129,994 voters**, while LA-30 Muzaffarabad-IV is the smallest with 68,228. The rolls list 2,001,730 male and 1,802,655 female voters, reflecting a substantial demographic shift ahead of the upcoming polls. (*Dawn*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Tribunal dismissals weaken PTI's rigging claims** — More than two years after Pakistan's February 2024 elections, **PTI-backed candidates have failed to secure a single tribunal victory** despite filing the majority of petitions alleging Form 47 manipulation. According to Fafen, **246 of 374 petitions have been decided, with 242 dismissed outright**. Mudassir Rizvi of Fafen noted that many were rejected on grounds of non-maintainability, while others collapsed due to lack of proof. The vast majority of dismissed petitions directly undermine PTI's core narrative of systematic Form 47 rigging. Appeals continue in the Supreme Court. (*The News*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Islamabad grapples with worsening water crisis**— Islamabad's downtown sectors and adjoining posh localities are facing **acute water shortages** this summer, with CDA officials attributing disruptions in I-8, I-9 and I-10 to unscheduled electricity load shedding affecting tube wells. Residents in upscale areas remain dependent on private tanker mafias charging up to Rs5000 per tanker. CDA currently secures **60 MGD against a requirement of 70 MGD**, while overall demand stands at 120 MGD versus supply of 80 MGD. DG Water Sardar Khan Zimri outlined short- and long-term projects, including Shahdara Dam and a **100 MGD Tarbela initiative**. (*The News*, [4 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Islamabad's missing democracy**—Islamabad has been without an elected local government for over five years, leaving neighbourhoods without drainage, roads or water lines. **Yousuf Nazar** argues that postponement itself has become a governing philosophy, with rumours of a 28th

Amendment reflecting power struggles rather than capacity repair. He stresses that Pakistan's fragility stems from weak governance below the provincial level and excessive concentration above it. Without empowered metropolitan governments and fiscal alignment with population and productivity, urbanisation risks becoming instability rather than growth. (*The News*, [4 June 2026](#))

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