

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

30 May-01 June 2026

Security

- ◆ **EU-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue to Strengthen Ties**— European Union foreign policy chief **Kaja Kallas** will arrive in Pakistan on 1 June to co-chair the **8th Pakistan-EU Strategic Dialogue** with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Mohammad Ishaq Dar**. The dialogue will review progress under the **2019 Strategic Engagement Plan** and explore deeper cooperation in trade, climate action, governance and security. Kallas will also meet President **Asif Ali Zardari**, Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif**, and Chief of Defence Forces **Field Marshal Asim Munir**. “Pakistan highly values its longstanding and multidimensional partnership with the EU.” (*Business Recorder*, [31 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Understanding Balochistan Beyond Stereotypes** — Security analyst Muhammad Amir Rana argues that Pakistan’s state institutions continue to misunderstand the evolving insurgency in Balochistan, particularly by viewing educated Baloch youth as the primary source of unrest. He criticises remarks attributed to Mir Sarfraz Bugti and warns that stigmatising young Baloch alienates those seeking integration into the national mainstream. **Rana contends that the state recognises key issues—political representation, missing persons and deprivation—but repeatedly applies ineffective coercive policies.** He maintains that **dialogue remains part of the solution** with nationalist, rights-based and other willing groups, while divisive narrative campaigns risk strengthening insurgent narratives and deepening public resentment. (*Dawn*, [31 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **India’s Dulhasti-II Project Heightens Water Tensions** — India’s approval of the **Rs 3,277.45 crore Dulhasti Stage-II hydroelectric project** on the Chenab River has intensified hydro-political strains with Pakistan. The 260 MW run-of-the-river scheme, featuring diversion tunnels, pondage and underground power units, is seen as undermining the **Indus Waters Treaty**. Analysts warn that unilateral upstream expansion and withholding of hydrological data increase India’s capacity to manipulate downstream flows, threatening Pakistan’s **agriculture and food security**. “India’s manipulation of transboundary rivers reflects an increasingly irresponsible approach toward regional water security.” (*The Nation*, [30 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Official Claims Highlight Militant Alliances in Balochistan** — According to report, Pakistani authorities contend that the banned Balochistan Liberation Army maintains operational links with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Al-Qaeda, receiving funding, training, weapons and logistical support. The report cites statements by Mir Sarfraz Bugti and security officials alleging that these networks operate through Afghan territory and target security forces, civilians, Chinese workers and infrastructure linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. **Authorities further claim that vulnerable women and youth are being radicalised and recruited for suicide attacks through coercion and online manipulation.** The report notes that security forces continue intelligence-led operations, de-radicalisation programmes and efforts to counter online recruitment. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Afghanistan's Shifting Alliances and Pakistan's Dilemma** — In this opinion piece, Imtiaz Gul argues that post-2021 geopolitics around Afghanistan increasingly prioritises security and connectivity over human rights. He highlights expanding Russian, Indian and Chinese engagement with the Taliban, including Moscow's military cooperation and New Delhi's infrastructure initiatives, while noting concerns that Afghanistan may again become a theatre for regional proxy competition. **Gul contends that Pakistan's border closures, intended to pressure the Taliban over Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan sanctuaries, have damaged trade, reduced leverage and hurt border communities without curbing violence.** He concludes that **Pakistan should pursue "pragmatic deterrence" combined with selective engagement, reopening key crossings and maintaining dialogue, as geography and regional realities leave little alternative.** (*The Express Tribune*, [30 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Past the Battlefield** — Muhammad Umar reflects on the year since the **May 2025 ceasefire (Marka-e-Haq)**, noting how Pakistan's airpower performance reshaped global assessments. He argues that while tactical military gaps can be closed through discipline and procurement, the harder challenge lies in converting **favourable perception into structural economic gains.** Umar critiques Islamabad's focus on **import bans**, warning they only fuel inflation and smuggling. Instead, he calls for a **reorientation of foreign missions:** embassies should be judged by measurable trade and investment outcomes, with underperforming posts shut and resources redirected to high-potential markets. "The battlefield has been answered. The ledger has not." (*The News*, [31 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Weaponising Water** — Pakistan's **Climate Minister Musadik Malik** has warned against India's "**water aggression,**" citing last year's monsoon flooding and New Delhi's unilateral suspension of the **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).** The editorial stresses that the dispute is no longer bilateral but a test of **international norms on shared water resources,** with India accused of using water as a coercive tool. For Pakistan, the stakes are existential: the **Indus basin underpins food security, hydropower and rural livelihoods.** "Attempts to weaponise water will further destabilise the region." (*Dawn*, [30 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Taliban Assurances Fail to Sway Pakistan** —The Taliban regime has conveyed that Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada warned the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to halt cross-border attacks or risk losing allegiance. Yet **Islamabad remains unconvinced,** with a senior Pakistani official stressing: "The problem is not the absence of assurances, the problem is the absence of verifiable action." Despite China's mediation in Urumqi and joint calls with Pakistan for Kabul to act against groups like TTP and ETIM, **terrorist attacks continue from Afghan sanctuaries,** fuelling mistrust and tensions. (*The Express Tribune*, [01 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **TTP condoles deaths of Islamic Scholars:** TTP issues a statement on 31 May on the death of Maulana Mufti Saifullah Haqqani, Head of Dar al-Iftha at Darul Uloom Haqqania, Akora Khattak and what it called "a Mujahid Islamic Scholar" Maulana Ghulam Qadir. About **Mufti Saifullah Haqqani,** it says that he passed away after a long illness. He is described as a devoted scholar for over fifty years, who taught Islamic sciences for four decades at Haqqania. Known for his landmark fatwa against Pakistan Army operations, he had refused funeral prayers for soldiers aiding oppression. His stance embodied "the best jihad is a word of truth before a tyrant." About **Ghulam Qadir,** the statement says that he was from Swat, a longtime member of TNSM and later TTP, who endured multiple imprisonments and lost his son in 2009. Released after sixteen years

(2010-2026) in jail, he passed away recently. TTP expressed condolences, praising his sacrifices and praying for his family's patience. (*Telegram*, 31 May 2026)

- ◆ **TTP Attacks Continue:** On 30 May 2026 (13 Dhu al-Hijjah 1447 AH), the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed nine operations across Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Their actions included direct armed clashes, snipers, mortar attacks, and the capture of a police officer. Notably, two security personnel defected in Tank. The TTP targeted Pakistani security forces—rhetorically labelling them as the “Royal Indian Army” or “Zionist collaborators”—resulting in reported state casualties, vehicle damage, and one TTP fatality in Kohat. They call Pakistan Army Royal Indian Army because according them the Pakistan Army was a successor of the British Royal Indian Army which was a kafir army and worked against the interests of Islam. (*Telegram*, 31 May 2026)

TTP Operations Summary (30 May 2026)

Province / Region	District	Operation Type / Details	Reported Outcome / Casualties
Tank	Gomal	Security personnel defections	Two personnel (ex-Rangers/FC) quit service.
Bannu	Bakakhel	Counter-attack against army ambush	Several army personnel killed/wounded; 1 vehicle damaged.
South Waziristan	Wana	Capture and conditional release of police officer	Officer released on tribal elders' guarantee to quit duty.
Bajaur	Wara Mamond	Clashes in multiple areas	Severe personnel and financial losses reported.
Kohat	Darra Adam Khel	Counter-attack against joint raid (Army/FC/CTD)	9 personnel killed/wounded; 3 vehicles damaged; 1 TTP operative killed.
Lakki Marwat	Tajori	Mortar attack on military post (occurred 1 week prior)	3 personnel wounded; solar power system damaged.
Peshawar	FR Peshawar	Sniper attack on Karbala post	1 security personnel member killed.
Pishin	Chaman	Target killing on Roghani Road	1 alleged collaborator killed.

Economy

- ◆ **Governance Failures Behind Pakistan’s Mega Projects** — In this editorial, *Business Recorder* argues that Pakistan’s major dam projects, including Diamer-Basha Dam and Tarbela Dam’s 5th Extension, exemplify chronic institutional weaknesses: cost overruns, delays, weak oversight and poor accountability. **The paper contends that these are “not minor administrative lapses” but evidence of a systemic inability to manage strategic infrastructure effectively.** Citing the Neelum–Jhelum Hydropower Project experience, it warns that **(delays and cost overruns thrive most easily within opaque systems)**. The editorial calls for mandatory transparency, independent reviews and timely compensation for displaced communities, stressing that without genuine accountability, Pakistan’s infrastructure ambitions will remain trapped in recurring cycles of failure. (*Business Recorder*, [30 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Fears of a Tough IMF-Backed Budget** — In this editorial, *Business Recorder* argues that the recent International Monetary Fund mission focused primarily on approving Pakistan’s FY2027 budget strategy, effectively making it a prerequisite for continued programme support. The paper notes that fiscal targets require a 2 per cent primary surplus and likely revenue-raising measures, including reducing GST exemptions, strengthening tax audits and enforcing agricultural income tax. **The editorial warns that tighter fiscal and monetary policies could increase borrowing costs, constrain private-sector growth and worsen unemployment.** It concludes that **indications are that it would be an extremely harsh budget for the common man**, with significant consequences for household finances. (*Business Recorder*, [31 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **IMF Pushes for Higher GST Amid Budget Talks** — The International Monetary Fund has proposed increasing Pakistan’s standard General Sales Tax from 18 to 19 per cent in the 2026–27 budget to offset revenue shortfalls. According to official estimates, **the measure could generate between Rs250 billion and Rs300 billion but would likely add to inflationary pressures, a concern cited by Pakistani authorities resisting the proposal.** The report also notes IMF recommendations to raise GST on hybrid vehicles, support a fixed tax scheme for small retailers, and consider limited reductions in Super Tax. **Negotiations remain ongoing, with possible budget revisions even after parliamentary presentation, while FBR Chairman Rashid Mahmood Langrial denied that a GST increase is currently under consideration.** (*The News*, [31 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **China–Pakistan to Advance CPEC 2.0** — During Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif’s visit to Beijing (May 23–26)**, both countries agreed to accelerate **CPEC Phase II**, upgrade the free trade agreement, and expand cooperation in **AI, digital economy, agriculture and other fields**, according to Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson **Mao Ning**. She emphasised that the partnership marks 75 years of ties and aims to deepen **political trust, security cooperation and international coordination**. Separately, Prof **Cheng Xizhong** of the Charhar Institute praised Pakistan’s **“remarkable economic turnaround”** in 2026, citing rising reserves, curbed inflation, and projected **3.5% GDP growth**, with CPEC 2.0 acting as a **core engine of revitalisation**. (*The Nation*, [30 May 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

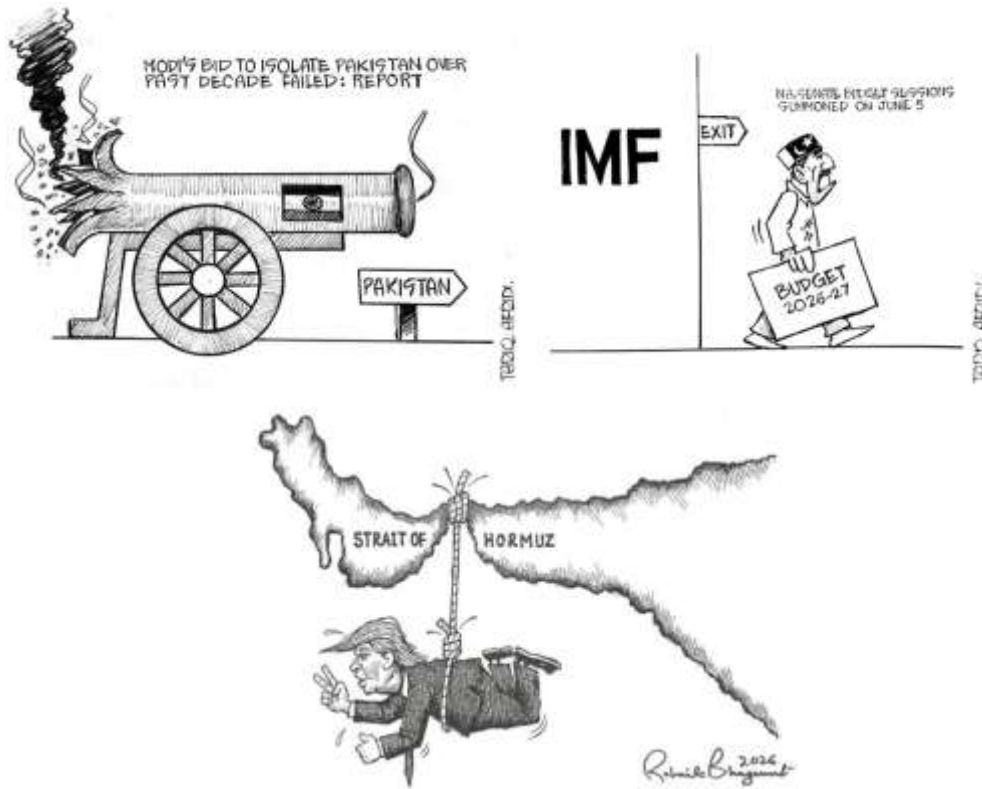
- ◆ **Dar Reaffirms Pakistan's Stance on Abraham Accords**— In Washington, Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar** met US Secretary of State **Marco Rubio**, with both agreeing to strengthen cooperation in **security, trade, investment and counterterrorism**. Rubio praised Pakistan's "**sincere diplomatic and mediatory efforts**" in regional peace, while Dar raised concerns over terrorism from Afghan territory. Dar categorically rejected rumours of Pakistan joining the **Abraham Accords**, stressing "Until Palestine is recognised with the pre-1967 model with Quds Al Sharif as its capital, there will be no flexibility." The meeting underscored a commitment to advancing **Pak-US partnership**. (*The Express Tribune*, [30 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **America's 'True Friendship' with Pakistan** — US Defence Secretary **Pete Hegseth** praised Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** and Chief of Defence Forces **Field Marshal Asim Munir** for their role in **US-Iran peace talks**, declaring that Washington and Islamabad are developing a "**true friendship**." Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Hegseth highlighted Pakistan's growing importance in regional diplomacy while reaffirming India's role as a "critical anchor" in US Indo-Pacific strategy. His remarks mark a notable improvement in **US-Pakistan ties**, which have strengthened under President Trump's second term. (*The Express Tribune*, [30 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Isolated India** — Nearly a decade after Prime Minister **Narendra Modi's vow in 2016** to diplomatically isolate Pakistan, the results appear inverted. Pakistan has expanded its diplomatic space, engaging constructively with the **US, China, and Middle Eastern powers**, while India faces setbacks from its own foreign policy choices. The **May 2025 conflict** exposed limits of New Delhi's narrative, as global powers resisted unverified accusations against Islamabad. India's alignment with Israel and allegations of covert operations abroad have further complicated its image. The editorial argues that isolation strategies have failed because **geography and geopolitics ensure Pakistan's relevance**, urging India to reconsider confrontation in favour of **regional cooperation and conflict resolution**. (*The News*, [31 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Afghanistan as a Terror Export Hub** — Afghanistan under Taliban rule is increasingly seen as a **launchpad for extremist recruitment and transnational operations**, with **ISIS-K actively recruiting militants from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and migrant workers in Russia**. Russia's FSB Director **Alexander Bortnikov** warned of clandestine networks and foiled plots, stressing the need for counter-terrorism cooperation. Analysts note Afghanistan now hosts **over 20 terrorist organisations and 20,000–23,000 fighters**, including ISIS-K, TTP and Al-Qaeda. "Afghanistan under Taliban rule risks becoming principal global launchpad for ISIS-K expansion, terrorist recruitment and transnational jihadist operations." (*The Nation*, [30 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Three Islamic Republics** — Former State Bank governor **Ishrat Husain** compares Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, noting starkly divergent outcomes. Afghanistan's Taliban policies, including bans on girls' education, have entrenched inequities and reversed development gains, leaving per capita income at **\$420**. Iran, despite sanctions, has invested in **education, science and technology**, achieving near-universal literacy and globally recognised research output. Pakistan, once a high-growth economy, has faltered due to **weak governance, elitist growth and institutional decay**, with poverty affecting nearly 30pc. Husain concludes that legitimacy rests not on slogans but on delivering **justice, opportunity and dignity**. (*Dawn*, [30 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Critical Minerals and the Geopolitics of Stability** — In this opinion piece, **Amir Jahangir**, public policy expert and head of the Country Partner Institute of the World Economic Forum in Pakistan, argues that control of critical minerals is becoming a key determinant of technological and geopolitical power. He highlights Pakistan's vast untapped mineral reserves worth over \$6 trillion, particularly the Reko Diq project, as a potential alternative to China-dominated supply chains. Yet, **The challenge is not geological; it is geopolitical**. Jahangir contends that militancy, regional rivalries and instability in Balochistan threaten investment, connectivity and mineral security, raising a crucial question for Washington's long-term strategic interests. (*The News*, [1 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Divided We Stand: Gulf War Lessons** Saleem Qamar Butt observes that the volatile Middle East/Gulf conflict has left both the US/Israel and Iran claiming partial victories, while “**war is a bloody and deadly business**” with heavy costs. Iran's resilience has shaken NATO and exposed Gulf states' vulnerabilities, leaving OPEC fractured and Arab reliance on the US security umbrella shattered. Pakistan's balancing diplomacy underscores that only strong military capability; internal stability and reliable alliances can ensure security. He urges translating diplomatic stature into economic dividends, including operationalising the Iran-Pakistan pipeline. (*The Nation*, [01 June 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Seven Pakistanis Shine in Forbes Asia's 30 Under 30** — Seven young Pakistanis have been named in **Forbes Asia's 30 Under 30 list for 2026**, spanning science, technology, finance, social impact and entertainment. Honourees include scientist **Maheera Ghani** (Healthcare & Science), recognised for her postdoctoral research on ultra-thin semiconductors and leadership of **WinSci Pakistan**; entrepreneur **Syed Ismail**, co-founder of **Saraaf**; and finance innovators **Muhammad Furqan Karim Kidwai** and **Sarfraz Shahid Hussain** of **Plouton AI**. Social activist **Fahad Shahbaz** was honoured for founding the **Youth General Assembly**. In entertainment, **Hania Aamir** and filmmaker **Saman Kamran** were celebrated. (*Business Recorder*, [31 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Centre-JPAC Talks Resume on Refugee Seats and Charter Demands** — The second round of talks between the Federal Negotiation Committee and the **Joint Public Action Committee (JPAC)** began in Muzaffarabad, centred on a **38-point charter of demands**, including the contentious abolition of 12 refugee seats. Federal ministers **Rana Sanaullah** and **Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry**, along with senior politicians such as **Raja Pervez Ashraf** and **Qamar Zaman Kaira**, are representing the Centre. 'Azad' Kashmir leaders, including Prime Minister **Faisal Mumtaz Rathore** and PML-N President **Shah Ghulam Qadir**, are also engaged. The talks are hosted by Chief Secretary **Khushal Khan Khattak**. (*Business Recorder*, [31 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **PTI Alleges Pre-Poll Rigging in Gilgit-Baltistan** — The **Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)** has accused authorities of **political victimisation and pre-poll rigging** after its KP President and MNA **Junaid Akbar Khan** was arrested during campaigning in Gilgit-Baltistan and later expelled. PTI claimed he was barred from rallies for lacking an NOC, while ruling party leaders were allowed full facilitation. “His expulsion from the region shows that the action is not based on legal grounds but a political victimisation,” the party said. KP Chief Minister **Sohail Afridi** warned of visiting GB himself if lawmakers were not released. (*The Nation*, [30 May 2026](#))

- ◆ **Sharjeel Memon Slams Irsa Over Sindh's Water Shortage**— Sindh Senior Minister **Sharjeel Inam Memon** has condemned Irsa's "**unjust reduction**" of Sindh's water share, urging the Centre to intervene. He stressed that the cutbacks violate the **1991 Water Apportionment Accord**, warning "No province can be given preference at the expense of another." Sindh faces a **22% shortage**, with Guddu Barrage at 42% and Kotri at 29%, threatening agriculture and Karachi's water supply. A letter from Sindh's Irrigation Department highlighted unmet indents and canal extractions, calling for immediate corrective action. (*Dawn*, [31 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistani Documentary Wins Spirit of Doc Lab Award**— Pakistani filmmakers **Mahnoor Batool** and **Shahnawaz Ahmed Khan** won the "**Spirit of Doc Lab**" award at the Kathmandu Doc Lab for their documentary *The Emergency Exit*. The film, set in **Parachinar and conflict-hit regions**, challenges global cinema's detached portrayal of Pakistan's borderlands by focusing on **everyday resilience, family life and dignity under uncertainty**. A haunting teaser features a child saying, "If a missile comes, it will come... At most, we will die." The documentary was praised for its **raw cinematic language and artistic courage**. (*The Express Tribune*, [30 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **Gilgit-Baltistan Election: A Test of Representation**— On 7 June, Gilgit-Baltistan will vote in an election that is more than routine. As Shakeel Ahmed Shah argues, it is a test of how Pakistan understands representation, development and accountability in a strategically vital yet constitutionally unsettled region. Campaigns rely heavily on memory "I initiated this project"; "I completed it" but **memory alone is a weak foundation for the future**. Voters deserve clear five-year plans with milestones, not vague promises. **Democracy in the margins must be taken as seriously as democracy at the Centre**. (*The Express Tribune*, [30 May 2026](#))
- ◆ **PTI's KP Parliamentary Party Shows Strains**— Internal divisions within Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa surfaced as **over 30 lawmakers skipped a parliamentary party meeting** chaired by Chief Minister Sohail Afridi. He insisted that the turnout was proof of unity, declaring: "*No one can break us, nor can anyone force us to retreat from Imran Khan's ideology.*" Afridi alleged Imran Khan had suffered serious health issues due to the "fake government" and demanded medical treatment of his choice. Former CM Ali Amin Gandapur criticised indirect accusations in party WhatsApp exchanges, exposing rifts. (*The News*, [01 June 2026](#))



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