

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

16 July 2026

Security

- ◆ **Pakistan bolsters mine security amid insurgent threats** — Pakistan has pledged to strengthen protection around the Chinese-run Saindak copper and gold mine in Balochistan after insurgent violence disrupted supply routes. **Managing Director Raziq Sanjrani insisted the project “has remained fully operational for the past 25 years and there is no possibility of its shutdown”**, rejecting reports of closure. He confirmed the company sought government help to ensure furnace oil supplies. **State Minister for Interior Talal Chaudhry stressed: “It is our priority to safeguard all projects run by international companies in Pakistan.”** China’s foreign ministry said it would work with Pakistan to protect its citizens and projects. (*The News*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Bilawal warns against targeting Pakistan’s military** — Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari declared that **“our military is our red line; it has always safeguarded our borders and recently handed Modi a historic defeat”**, stressing that attacks on Kashmiris, soldiers or the armed forces were intolerable. Addressing leaders in Muzaffarabad, he cautioned that prolonged unrest could damage Pakistan’s reputation and the Kashmir cause. Bilawal urged dialogue with protesters in AJK, proposed a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and vowed to remain in the region until elections to oversee the PPP campaign. (*The News*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Twin terror strikes hit Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa police** — At least two police personnel were martyred and **26 injured, including 22 policemen, in coordinated attacks in Bannu and Lower Dir**. In Bannu, terrorists rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into Miryan police station, sparking hours of gunfire. District Police Officer Captain (retd) Muhammad Furqan Bilal confirmed the assault, while hospital officials reported six injured policemen and four civilians. In Lower Dir, **two policemen were martyred and 16 injured during a fierce gun battle**. The banned Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen claimed responsibility for the Bannu attack. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Bugti pledges intensified counterterrorism efforts in Balochistan** — Chairing the 26th Hardening of the State Conference, Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti reaffirmed that **“terrorism remains a national challenge that requires a united response”**, stressing closer coordination between federal and provincial institutions. Participants expressed satisfaction with **Operation Shaban**, conducted jointly by the army, FC Balochistan and police, and vowed to intensify operations against militant networks. Bugti paid tribute to fallen personnel, emphasised governance reforms, and highlighted that sustainable peace depends on both security and socio-economic development. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Middle East’s shifting security order** — In his analysis, **Inam Ul Haque, retired major general**, argues that the US–Israeli war on Iran has profoundly altered the region’s security architecture, moving away from a US-led framework toward multipolar, regionally owned mechanisms. He

highlights the **emergence of a ‘Quartet’ (Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Türkiye)** and Iran–Oman–Qatar triangular understandings, alongside the Abraham Accords’ “Shield” dynamics. The future of the **Strait of Hormuz remains pivotal**, while Gulf states increasingly hedge with Russia and China. Haque concludes that expanding the Quartet could provide a foundation for inclusive regional security. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Afghanistan’s reckless adventurism undermines Pakistan’s stability** — In a strongly worded column, **Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President of the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore**, argues that recent terrorist attacks in Karachi and Balochistan reveal the **India-Israel-Afghanistan nexus**, which he describes as “driven by hostility and creating deliberate insecurity along Pakistan’s borders.” He notes that **Operation Ghazab Lil Haq** reduced attacks, but external actors exploit Afghanistan to sustain unrest. Suleiman stresses Pakistan’s armed forces have shown readiness through precision strikes and air defence, urging Afghans to “cease their adventurism” and embrace peaceful coexistence. (*The Nation*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **TTP Operations Summary: 15 July 2026:** On 15 July 2026, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) conducted ten operations across six provinces. The attacks, utilizing heavy machine guns, snipers, and landmines, primarily targeted security posts, camps, and convoys. Notably, an ambush in Lower Dir left six personnel dead and over twenty wounded, with four captured and subsequently released. In Zarghun, an intelligence operation claimed four lives, while five soldiers died in a Bajaur landmine blast. The remaining assaults occurred in North and South Waziristan and Mardan, resulting in further casualties, damaged vehicles, destroyed surveillance equipment, and seized weapons.

Operations Breakdown by Province

Province	District	Target/Attack Type	Reported Outcome
North Waziristan	Mir Ali	Shishkaror military post (DShK attack)	Personnel casualties highly probable
	Mir Ali	Zair Ghar military post (DShK attack)	Personnel casualties highly probable
	Miran Shah	Miran Shah military fort (GL attack)	Several personnel wounded
South Waziristan	Shaktoi	Waladin Zhay post (Guerrilla raid)	One security camera and Wi-Fi system destroyed
	Shaktoi	Re Pinga post (Sniper attack)	One soldier killed
	Shakai	Spalpinge camp (Large-scale assault)	Several personnel killed and wounded
Bajaur	Salarzai	Khazah Sar Road (Landmine explosion)	Five soldiers killed
Mardan	City	Sadar Police Station (Landmine explosion)	Casualties suspected
Lower Dir	Khal	Ladam area convoy (Ambush)	Six personnel killed, over twenty wounded, five vehicles damaged, four captured (later released), four weapons seized

Province	District	Target/Attack Type	Reported Outcome
Quetta	Zarghun	Security personnel (Intelligence operation)	Four personnel killed

Economy

- ◆ **Fatwa challenges Pakistan's crypto ambitions** — Pakistan's Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA) has sought clarification from Jamia Darul Uloom Karachi after its recent ruling that cryptocurrency is not permissible under Islamic law. **Chairman Bilal bin Saqib said the central question is whether a digital asset constitutes recognised wealth under Shariah, stressing "these instruments must be examined individually."** The fatwa has clouded Islamabad's rapid crypto push, including tokenised state assets and "crypto diplomacy" with Washington. Analysts warn it could hinder bank-led adoption, though trading volumes remain steady. (*The News*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan deepens economic ties with China and the UK** — Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb met Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi, who reported that **MoUs worth over \$20 billion have been signed with Chinese entities**, spanning manufacturing, logistics, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, textiles and industrial services. Nine agreements in pharma and biotech have already been concluded, with over 150 Chinese firms engaged via the embassy's facilitation platform. Aurangzeb also met British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, who **welcomed Pakistan's reform progress and assured UK support for its fiscal and energy reforms agenda**. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan seeks long-term Saudi oil financing** — Pakistan has requested a **\$6.7 billion concessional oil facility from Saudi Arabia at 1% interest over 15 years**, including a five-year grace period, to bolster energy security amid Middle East conflict and rising global prices. A spokeswoman for the Ministry of Economic Affairs confirmed discussions with the Saudi Fund for Development. Since 2019, Saudi Arabia has provided \$6.7 billion in deferred oil financing, but at higher rates. **Total Saudi cash deposits with Pakistan now stand at \$8 billion**, reinforcing bilateral economic ties. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan's textile sector struggles to sustain growth** — Textile and clothing exports stagnated at **\$17.93bn in FY26, rising just 0.26pc from the previous year**, reflecting mounting production costs and weakening demand. The country's overall merchandise exports missed the annual target by \$4.87bn, with the suspension of trade with Afghanistan and slowing Middle East demand compounding losses. June exports fell sharply by 16.71pc. Readymade garments rose modestly, but **cotton cloth exports dropped 7.55pc**. Meanwhile, Pakistan's oil import bill grew 5.76pc to \$16.86bn, driven by higher crude arrivals, while LNG imports declined 36.10pc. (*Dawn*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan seeks transit hub role with Central Asia** — A new EMPAK Strategies report projects Pakistan could earn **up to \$3 billion annually in transit and logistics revenues** by serving as a southern gateway for Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Current trade of \$525m (2024) could rise to \$5bn by 2035 through stronger connectivity. **Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training**, emphasised

equipping Pakistan's youth with modern skills, noting over 60% of the population is young. The report prioritises trade, energy, tourism, human resources and logistics. (*The Nation*, [16 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **The economic toll of Pakistan's prolonged conflict** — In a powerful analysis, **Faiz Ur Rehman**, faculty of Economics at IBA Karachi, highlights that conflict has cost Pakistan dearly, with the **Economic Survey 2017–18 estimating \$126.79 billion in losses from 2001–2018**, roughly one-third of output. He notes that terrorism peaked with over 1,000 attacks in 2025, undermining investment as FDI collapsed by nearly 90% after 2008. Conflict does not just destroy what exists. It prevents what could have been. He stresses that peace could yield over \$100bn in gains within a decade, reversing the destructive cycle. (*Pakistan Observer*, [16 July 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan adopts cautious stance in US–Iran conflict** — Once a principal mediator between Washington and Tehran, Pakistan now appears to have stepped back as renewed military exchanges render the **Islamabad MoU “virtually irrelevant”**. Officials admit months of diplomacy have been undone, with Islamabad adopting a “wait-and-watch” approach. Observers note this reflects frustration rather than disengagement, as Pakistan believes neither side is prioritising dialogue. A regional diplomat commented that both capitals seem intent on testing force before returning to talks. For now, Islamabad remains patient, ready to re-engage when conditions improve. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Russia and China reaffirm partnership with Pakistan in view** — Marking the 25th anniversary of their Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, **Ambassadors Albert P Khorev (Russia) and Jiang Zaidong (China) hailed the 2001 treaty as a “landmark document” and a “vital constant” amid global changes**. They emphasised political trust, high-level exchanges, and cooperation in trade, energy, innovation and education. Both envoys underlined support for a multipolar world, regional stability in Afghanistan, and Pakistan's strategic role in Eurasian connectivity. Cultural and educational exchanges were also highlighted as strengthening ties. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan prepares to lead SCO** — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's readiness to assume the chairmanship of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State** later this year, pledging to advance the grouping's objectives. Meeting SCO Secretary General Nurlan Yermekbayev in Islamabad, Dar emphasised a forward-looking agenda focused on economic cooperation, connectivity and poverty alleviation. Yermekbayev commended Pakistan's constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability. **Dar stressed Pakistan's “strong commitment to advancing the SCO's objectives”** ahead of September's chairmanship. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **France to streamline presence in Karachi** — French Consul General Alexis Chahtahtinsky announced that **France's diplomatic mission in Karachi will close permanently for budgetary reasons**, as part of a global effort to make its presence leaner. Speaking at Bastille Day celebrations, he assured that ties with Pakistan would continue through the Embassy in Islamabad. He emphasised that France's presence in Karachi would rely on three pillars: a new Honorary Consul

General, the Pakistan-France Business Alliance, and Alliance Française, which will keep promoting the French language and culture. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan's mediation and the Greater Israel debate** — In her analysis, **Durdana Najam, public policy analyst**, argues that the US–Iran war has not reached “ripeness” for settlement, with neither side yet in enough pain to accept compromise. She stresses Pakistan’s role is not mercenary but that of a “**textbook middle power**”, leveraging trust and geography rather than force. On Israel, Najam notes that explicit rhetoric and precedent suggest “**Greater Israel**” has moved from margins into mainstream politics, citing Netanyahu, Smotrich and Ben-Gvir’s statements alongside settlement expansion. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan urges revival of SAARC cooperation** — Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, meeting outgoing **SAARC Secretary General Ambassador Golam Sarwar**, stressed the importance of “**revitalising regional cooperation to promote connectivity, sustainable development, and shared prosperity**”, reaffirming Pakistan’s commitment to the SAARC Charter. He praised Sarwar’s leadership and conveyed best wishes for his future. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar also called for SAARC’s revitalisation, highlighting the region’s demographic and economic potential. SAARC, founded in 1985, has faced setbacks due to India–Pakistan tensions, with no summit since 2014. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Uzbek delegation to strengthen economic partnership with Pakistan** — Preparations are complete for the visit of **Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Jamshid Khodjayev and over 100 business leaders to Pakistan on 20–21 July**, aimed at boosting bilateral trade and investment. A **Five-Year Roadmap for Trade and Economic Cooperation** will be signed, covering connectivity, logistics, agriculture, pharmaceuticals and industry. A Business-to-Business Forum will bring together private-sector representatives from both countries. Economic Affairs Minister Ahad Cheema stressed the visit as a “valuable opportunity to deepen economic ties and unlock vast trade potential.” (*Dawn*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan's evolving role as a bridge state** — In his commentary, **Atteq Ur Rehman, research associate at SDPI**, highlights Pakistan’s growing diplomatic relevance amid regional instability. He argues that geography alone is insufficient; Pakistan must convert location into **trade, connectivity, investment and energy cooperation**. The country’s potential lies in linking **Central Asia with maritime routes, China with the Arabian Sea, and the Gulf with South Asia**. Stability in Afghanistan is described as an **economic necessity**, while cautious neutrality and active diplomacy with Iran and Gulf states are vital. Rehman concludes that Pakistan’s future influence depends on domestic reform, diversified partnerships and a shift from security to a geo-economic strategy. (*The News*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Iran-Pakistan pipeline dispute requires strict proof** — Analyst **Shahid M. Sattar** cautions that Iran’s reported damages claim against Pakistan over delays in the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline must be treated as a **commercial dispute, not political arithmetic**. He stresses that “**gross contract revenue is not damages**”, noting Iran’s domestic shortages, reliance on South Pars for internal consumption, and use of IGAT-7 for its own provinces. Any settlement must insist on evidence of exportable gas, export-specific sunk costs, and actual net loss. **Pakistan’s defence lies in disciplined fact, not denial**. (*Business Recorder*, [16 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Conference highlights Pakistan's evolving diplomatic role** — The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), with **Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Pakistan**, hosted a one-day conference titled “Pakistan in a Transforming Geopolitical Environment”. **Ambassador Khalid Mahmood** stressed Pakistan's strategic location as both opportunity and responsibility, while **Dr Amina Khan** noted its “tough neighbourhood” and potential for connectivity. **Murtaza Solangi** described Pakistan at the crossroads of multipolar transitions, reaffirming commitment to Afghan stability and Gulf engagement. **Felix Kolbitz** praised Pakistan's mediation efforts, citing its emergence as a contributor to regional stability. (*The Nation*, [16 July 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **AJK Police embrace digital investigation tools** — In Muzaffarabad, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Police launched a **Call Detail Record (CDR) Management System to modernise criminal investigations**, enabling digital analysis of telecommunication data. Inspector General of Police Captain (Retd) Liaquat Ali Malik said the system would allow investigators to identify communication links, reconstruct criminal networks and integrate mobile phone location data where legally permissible. “**The CDR Management System will significantly enhance our investigative capacity,**” Malik emphasised, announcing plans for cyber patrolling and a future dedicated cybercrime unit. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **SC issues notices on activists' bail plea** — The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought replies from the prosecution and respondents on bail petitions filed by rights activists Dr Mahrang Baloch, Bebo Baloch and Bebag Baloch. A three-member bench led by **Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar** heard the petitions. Counsel Jibran Nasir argued that “**all offences mentioned in the FIR are bailable**”, noting they carry maximum sentences of less than three years. Justice Mazhar questioned this interpretation, directing the counsel to read out the FIR before adjourning the hearing indefinitely. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Preparations finalised for AJK refugee constituencies** — Authorities have completed arrangements for the **27,907 registered voters to elect representatives on three refugee seats of the 'Azad' Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on 27 July**, though voter interest remains low. **Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has boycotted the polls, urging Kashmiri voters not to cast their votes**. Thirty-one candidates, including five women, are contesting from PML-N, PPP, Muslim Conference, Istehkam Party and independents. Around 1,600 police personnel will be deployed. Separately, **Hanif Shahbaz Jarral, Dr Saeed Elahi and Dr Israr Shah** urged doubling refugee seats to 24. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **PTI to launch protest drive on Imran's imprisonment anniversary** — The PTI parliamentary party has decided to begin a **nationwide movement on 5 August**, marking three years of party founder Imran Khan's imprisonment. Interim chairman **Barrister Gohar Ali Khan** announced rallies, demonstrations and a long march, while PTI General Secretary **Salman Akram Raja** confirmed consultations with Mehmood Khan Achakzai and Allama Raja Nasir Abbas to finalise plans. PTI reiterated its boycott of parliamentary standing committees, calling reports of reversal “inaccurate”. Leaders will also meet Imran Khan in Adiala jail today. (*Dawn*, [16 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Swift arrests in Karachi murder-robbery case** — Karachi Police announced the arrest of **three suspects within 36 hours** in connection with the murder of Dr Akash during a robbery in Frere. **DIGP South Asad Raza** termed the incident “highly tragic” and said investigators solved the case through **technical evidence and analysis of over 100 CCTV cameras**. The suspects, including a proclaimed offender, were traced via a lookout inside the bank and a car tracked to Defence. Police recovered cash, mobiles and the weapon, vowing justice for the victim’s family. (*The Nation*, [16 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **India’s lawfare undermines Kashmir and water treaties** — An opinion analysis argues that India’s “ultra-fascist lawfare” has eroded international legitimacy by **abrogating Article 370** and unilaterally suspending the **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)** in 2025. The writer, an independent IR and International Law analyst, stresses that these moves bypass the **UN Charter and UNSC resolutions on Kashmir**, violating the right to self-determination and humanitarian law. Drawing parallels with Israeli tactics in Palestine, critics highlight demographic engineering and militarised control. India’s suspension of the IWT sets a **dangerous precedent for the Transboundary Water Governance Framework (TWGF)**, undermining pacta sunt servanda. (*Pakistan Observer*, [16 July 2026](#))

FAZL'S REMARK DRAWS MINISTERS' IRE



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