

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

21 July 2026

Security

- ◆ **Kidnapping of Revenue Officials in Balochistan**— Three employees of the Balochistan Excise and Taxation Department were abducted in Chaghai district after unidentified gunmen blockaded a section of the Dalbandin–Taftan highway. The armed squad reportedly ambushed a temporary security post near Dhadar, disarmed staff, and seized two official vehicles along with service arms. **Police officials confirmed the kidnapping and said contingents of law enforcement later secured the area.** The incident underscores persistent insecurity in Balochistan, where government personnel remain vulnerable to armed groups. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Senate Panel Briefed on NHA Challenges in Balochistan**— The Senate Functional Committee on Less Developed Areas, chaired by **Senator Niaz Ahmed**, was informed that many **National Highway Authority (NHA) employees posted in Balochistan are seeking transfers to Islamabad due to the province's law and order crisis.** Officials disclosed that even staff with Balochistan domiciles were reluctant to serve locally. **Senator Kumar remarked that employees from the province itself were unwilling to stay,** while Senator Jan Muhammad proposed restricting air travel for NHA staff. The committee also learnt that **52% of NHA's development budget is allocated to Balochistan,** though no new schemes are planned this year, with priority given to ongoing projects. Members raised concerns about delays, cost escalations, and misuse of risk allowances. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Sindh Sees Sharp Decline in Terror Incidents** — Reviewing law and order, **Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah** was informed that **terrorism-related incidents fell by 75% in 2026,** alongside declines in major crimes and street offences. **IG Police Javed Alam Odho** reported murders down 17%, motorcycle snatching down 31%, and robbery fatalities reduced by 38%. Enhanced intelligence-led policing, inter-agency coordination, and surveillance projects like the **Safe City system** were credited. **Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar** highlighted expanded anti-narcotics drives and katcha area operations, while Shah directed strict action against gangs and assured protection for foreign missions and Chinese nationals. (*Business Recorder*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Kasuri urges regional peace for prosperity** – Former foreign minister **Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri** has stressed that peaceful co-existence between **Pakistan, India and China** is vital to unlocking regional connectivity, stabilising trade routes and fighting poverty. Speaking at a forum marking 75 years of Pakistan-China ties, he praised China's progress built on **people-centred governance, theoretical innovation,** leadership development and a commitment to peaceful development. He noted Pakistan's diplomatic confidence but lamented that less than 25pc of CPEC's potential has been realised. Peaceful co-existence is essential to prosperity. (*Dawn*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Democracy denied in Kashmir** – The protest by elected chief minister **Omar Abdullah** and National Conference leaders in New Delhi underscores the **emptiness of India's claims of political normalisation** in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Seven years after the abrogation

of Articles 370 and 35A, the elected assembly remains stripped of powers, with police and public order under central control. The Indian Supreme Court's 2023 assurance of restoring statehood "at the earliest" has yielded only indefinite delay. This is not meaningful self-government. (*Dawn*, [21 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Modi's shattered mask** – The editorial argues that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's majoritarian fascism and the BJP-RSS project of Hindu supremacy have reached their limits, as repression cannot silence dissent indefinitely. It highlights India's "daily lynchings, desecration of mosques, discrimination against minorities and absence of accountability" as fuelling public anger. The **Cockroach movement** is described as more than a protest over leaked examinations, symbolising resistance against contempt for youth. Modi's mask of domestic invincibility has been shattered. The piece warns that a new generation is overcoming fear. (*The Nation*, [21 July 2026](#))

Economy

- ◆ **Pakistan's Costliest LNG Purchase** — Pakistan LNG Limited (PLL) has approved the procurement of its most expensive spot cargo for July at **\$21.88 per MMBtu**, sources confirmed. The cargo, scheduled for delivery on July 27–28, was awarded after PLL received only a single bid in response to its tender. **TotalEnergies Gas & Power submitted the lone offer**, which was subsequently accepted by the PLL board. This marks the highest-priced LNG spot cargo Pakistan has procured for July, underscoring the country's mounting energy cost challenges. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Profit Repatriation Surges Amid Eased Bottlenecks** — Pakistan's improved foreign exchange position has enabled multinational firms to repatriate **\$2.31 billion in profits and dividends during FY26**, according to **State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data**. Outflows comprised \$2.2 billion from FDI and \$103.7 million from FPI, with **June alone recording \$151.4 million**. The **manufacturing sector led with \$564m**, followed by financial and insurance activities (\$537m) and electricity, gas and steam (\$496m). The **UK and China were the largest recipients**, at \$621m and \$486m respectively. Analysts caution that while easing restrictions boosts investor confidence, **fresh FDI remains crucial to offset rising profit outflows**. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan, Iran Reaffirm \$10b Trade Goal** — During high-level talks in Islamabad, **Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni** and **Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi** reiterated plans to raise bilateral trade from \$3 billion to **\$10 billion**, stressing the need for improved border infrastructure and daily movement of 2,000 trucks. Momeni noted only 20% of this target is currently realised. The visit comes amid renewed **US–Iran tensions**, threatening Pakistan-led diplomacy. Naqvi expressed hope the talks would "contribute positively to regional diplomacy." Both sides emphasised sustained dialogue despite regional instability. (*Pakistan Today*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Elite Capture Bleeds Pakistan's Economy** — In his analysis, **Yousuf Nazar** argues that Pakistan's stagnation stems from a deeper political economy where **state resources are captured by ruling elites**, costing the country **Rs6.7 trillion annually (over \$25 billion)**. Vast fortunes are made through land allotments, real estate schemes and preferential access to public resources, while ordinary citizens bear the burden via fuel levies, electricity bills and indirect taxes. Nazar highlights cases like **Bahria Town Karachi's Rs460 billion settlement** and Islamabad's F-14/F-15 plot allocations as examples of privilege over productivity. He stresses that Pakistan's tax system

disproportionately extracts from the powerless while shielding politically connected groups. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan launches crypto crime unit** – The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has established a **cryptocurrency investigation unit** within its new **National Command and Control Centre (NC3)** to curb money laundering and terror financing through digital assets. FIA Counter-Terrorism Wing Director Dr Muhammad Athar Waheed emphasised that while the **Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA)** regulates digital assets, the FIA unit will probe their criminal use. He urged other agencies to follow suit, noting Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's pivotal support. With reform initiatives, FIA has demonstrated significant improvement. (*Dawn*, [21 July 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan–Canada Relations Enter New Era** — During Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand's landmark visit to Islamabad, both countries agreed to deepen cooperation in **trade, investment, security and development**. Ottawa announced **\$2.2 million for security initiatives** on border management, counter-terrorism and financial crime, alongside **\$45 million in development assistance** for climate resilience, education and healthcare. PM Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the visit, noting the Pakistani-Canadian community as a vital bridge. Anand highlighted Pakistan's role in Middle East diplomacy and reaffirmed Canada's commitment to a **Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPPA)**. (*The News International*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Call for a New Global Order** — Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, addressing the **World Peace Forum** at Tsinghua University, argued that the post-World War II Western-led order is collapsing due to "double standards" and urged the **Global South** to shape a new system. He praised **Pakistan–China relations**, marking 75 years of ties, and highlighted the **Strategic Work Plan (2026–2030)** as a blueprint for deeper cooperation. Mushahid lauded China's peaceful rise, contrasting ASEAN's success with SAARC's failures, and concluded with Mao's words: "*Nothing is hard in this world if you dare to scale the heights.*" (*The News International*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **UK–Balochistan Cooperation Expands** — Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti met British High Commissioner Jane Marriott in Quetta to discuss **development cooperation, governance reforms and investment opportunities**. The talks focused on education, healthcare, institutional capacity-building and public service delivery. Bugti highlighted Balochistan's mineral wealth and strategic location, stressing reforms for transparency and efficient development. He expressed confidence that collaboration with Britain would boost economic growth and welfare. Marriott appreciated the province's initiatives and reaffirmed the UK's interest in expanding cooperation across multiple sectors. (*The News*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **EU–India FTA: A Wake-Up Call** — The newly signed **EU–India Free Trade Agreement** grants Indian exporters duty-free access to Europe, eroding Pakistan's long-held advantage under the **GSP+ scheme**. With textiles making up 60% of Pakistan's exports, the deal exposes structural weaknesses in its trade model. Scholar Kamil Khan argues that Pakistan must move beyond tariff preferences, citing **Vietnam's transformation** through SEZs, FDI, and global value chains. He stresses that Pakistan's SEZs under **CPEC** should drive industrial diversification, cluster-based growth, and integration into global supply chains. (*The News International*, [21 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Enduring Pak–Italy Partnership** — Daud Khan, a retired UN official and Rhodes Scholar, highlights Pakistan’s longstanding collaboration with Italy, spanning mountaineering, science, agriculture, archaeology and labour migration. The partnership dates back to the **1954 Italian conquest of K-2**, involving Pakistani climbers, and later expanded through **EvK2CNR’s glacier research**, which produced Pakistan’s most detailed glacier inventory. Italians pioneered **olive cultivation**, supported **archaeological excavations in Swat and Gandhara**, and led construction of **Tarbela Dam**. Today, over 150,000 Pakistanis work legally in Italy, while scholarships attract skilled youth. Khan recalls wartime solidarity, when Italian families sheltered future Pakistani leaders, underscoring people-to-people ties. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Iran stresses peace and security in ties with Pakistan** – Iranian Foreign Minister **Abbas Araghchi** told Pakistan’s new envoy Imran Ahmed Siddiqui in Tehran that **peace and security are the key objectives** in strengthening bilateral relations. He thanked Islamabad for its diplomatic role in recent regional developments, noting the opportunity to deepen cooperation. The meeting coincided with the arrival of Iranian Interior Minister **Eskander Momeni** in Islamabad to discuss the US-Iran conflict with Pakistani leaders. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to friendship and cooperation despite challenges posed by sanctions and border security. (*Dawn*, [21 July 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **AJK Elections Under Uncertainty** — With the PTI boycotting the polls, ongoing protests, and communication blackouts, ‘Azad’ Jammu and Kashmir heads to elections clouded by questions of legitimacy. Chief Election Commissioner Ghulam Mustafa Mughal insists voting will proceed on July 27, with 6,983 polling stations set up for 3.8 million voters. **“The PTI’s boycott reflects political weakness,”** argued **Federal Minister Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry**, while PPP and JUI-F formed an alliance to contest seats. Campaigning continues despite unrest, with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Nawaz Sharif leading their parties. (*The News*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Glacier Protection Authority Proposed** — Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Amjad Hussain Azar has called for the creation of a **Glacier Protection Authority** to safeguard the region’s nearly 700 glaciers and strengthen disaster preparedness. Meeting NDMA Chairman Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik, he urged universities to introduce glacier studies and directed the GBDMA to maintain early warning systems and clear flood channels before the monsoon season. He criticised the Federal Flood Commission for neglecting GB’s share of projects. Lt Gen Malik assured full NDMA support for **climate resilience and emergency preparedness**. (*The News*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **AJK Election Campaign Intensifies** — With less than a week to go before the ‘Azad’ Jammu and Kashmir polls, the contest is shaping up as **‘Nawaz vs Bilawal’**. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari is already canvassing in AJK, while PML-N President Nawaz Sharif has stepped in to lead his party’s campaign. Observers note resentment against the PML-N over its role in the crackdown on JAAC protests. **“We learnt a lot from Gilgit-Baltistan elections,”** said **PM’s adviser Ikhtiyar Wali**, stressing PML-N’s renewed vigour. Analysts suggest PPP holds an edge. (*Dawn*, [20 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **ECP Withdraws TLP Election Symbol** — The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has ruled that **Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP)** failed to conduct intra-party elections in line with its constitution, declaring the exercise legally defective. In its seven-page judgment, the ECP invoked

Section 215(5) of the Elections Act, 2017 and withdrew the party's election symbol, the crane. The commission noted that allotting a symbol is conditional on fulfilling statutory requirements, which TLP did not meet. The party was outlawed in October 2025 under the **Anti-Terrorism Act** after violent clashes in Punjab. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Strong Advance Turnout in AJK** — Advance voting for government employees on election duty in the 'Azad' Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly polls concluded peacefully across eight districts, with turnout exceeding 80%. Voting was postponed in Rawalakot and Sudhnoti due to security concerns, but officials described the process as "smooth, orderly and incident-free." **Chief Election Commissioner Justice (retd) Ghulam Mustafa Mughal stressed: "There is no question of delaying the elections... no attempt to disrupt the democratic process will be allowed to succeed."** Senior members Khawaja Ahsan and Syed Nazirul Hasan Gillani confirmed preparations for the July 27 polls are complete. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Brewing Wheat Crisis in Pakistan** — The federal and provincial governments met for the second time in five days to address looming shortages as **Punjab demanded one million tonnes** and **Sindh sought at least 220,000 tonnes** from federal reserves. Officials admitted Punjab failed to procure three million tonnes from farmers, securing only 480,000, while Sindh managed just over 200,000. **Economic Affairs Minister Ahad Cheema stressed imports may be considered but only after assessing domestic conditions.** Prices have surged nationwide, with flour reaching Rs142 per kg in major cities. **Muzzammil Aslam, finance adviser to the K-P government, warned: "Provincial reserves are at extremely low levels... the only possible way to reduce prices is to import wheat."** PASSCO holds 1.7 million tonnes, but depletion looms, prompting urgent coordination between federal and provincial authorities. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Silent Threat of Lead Exposure** — Experts revealed at a Karachi Press Club workshop that **nearly 40% of Pakistani children aged 12–36 months have unsafe blood lead levels**, with Karachi's high-risk localities recording 39%. **"Even small amounts can impair brain development, the nervous system, learning ability and physical growth,"** warned Prof Dr Zafar Fatmi of Aga Khan University, describing lead exposure as a "silent threat." UNICEF's Dr Humaera Irshad stressed the need for a nationally representative survey, while **LEEP Pakistan head Abid Hassan** urged coordinated action across health, environment and industry. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Fresh Probe Sought into Radio Pakistan Tragedy** — The **Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly's Special Committee**, chaired by **Provincial Law Minister Aftab Alam**, reviewed investigation progress into the **Radio Pakistan Peshawar incident**. Members reminded police that a detailed proforma had been provided earlier, requiring stage-wise investigation details, records of accused persons, evidence sources, chain of custody, and case status. **Committee members insisted on a comprehensive fresh report**, highlighting concerns over the quality of the probe and delays in filing challans. Senior officials from police, law, and home departments attended the session. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **GB Assembly Renews Demand for Provisional Status** — In a unanimous resolution, the **Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly** urged the federal government to grant the region **provisional provincial status** along with "constitutional and political rights." Lawmakers clarified this would be "without prejudice" to Pakistan's Kashmir stance, a caveat welcomed by the **All Parties Hurriyat Conference (AJK chapter)**. The editorial notes GB's incremental integration since **Zulfikar Ali**

Bhutto abolished feudal rule, yet stresses that constitutional changes must not undermine the Kashmir cause. **PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari** has called for conventions in GB and AJK to address unrest and governance concerns. (*Dawn*, [21 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Supreme Court demands Adiala jail report** – The Supreme Court has directed the Adiala jail administration to submit within three weeks a detailed account of meetings between PTI founder Imran Khan and his family, lawyers, and friends during his incarceration. A three-member bench led by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar issued the order while hearing contempt petitions. Advocate Salman Akram Raja argued Khan was kept in **solitary confinement** and suffered from an **eye ailment**, stressing that visitation rights had been curtailed. This constitutes a miscarriage of justice. (*Dawn*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly presses for provincial status** – The newly elected GB Assembly has unanimously resolved to seek **provisional provincial status** from the centre, along with **constitutional and political rights**. Lawmakers clarified this demand would be “**without prejudice**” to Pakistan’s stance on Kashmir, a caveat endorsed by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (AJK chapter). The editorial notes GB’s long journey since liberation in 1947-48, with successive governments incrementally granting rights. It stresses that integration must be legally sound and not harm the Kashmir cause, citing the Sartaj Aziz report as a blueprint. (*Dawn*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Opposition calls for grand dialogue** – PTI leaders have proposed a **national dialogue** involving all political parties, the military, civil society, and other stakeholders, while refusing to compromise on principles. PTI Secretary General **Salman Akram Raja** stressed that talks with the establishment must remain within the ambit of the Constitution, noting Imran Khan’s imprisonment stems from his refusal to compromise. He announced protests from August 5 to mark Khan’s three years in jail, while criticising the judiciary as “**controlled**” and the media as “**gagged.**” (*Dawn*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **JI to hold national conference on Balochistan** – Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) deputy chief **Liaquat Baloch** has voiced grave concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in Balochistan, citing recent terrorist incidents. He announced that the party will convene a **national conference** to bring all stakeholders to the negotiation table, stressing that “**all issues should be resolved through dialogue.**” The JI leader said the worsening security environment makes such a forum essential to address the province’s challenges and seek a peaceful solution. (*Dawn*, [21 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **KP Assembly protests mobile blackout** – Lawmakers in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly strongly objected to the suspension of **mobile and internet services** in Bannu, Bajaur and Tank, citing severe hardships for residents. Ruling MPA **Pakhtoon Yar Khan** staged a walkout over the shutdown in Bannu, later returning after assurances from Deputy Speaker **Suraya Bibi**, who directed a coordination committee meeting. Opposition members highlighted insecurity in Bajaur, with **Nisar Baz** pointing to daily bomb blasts. Separately, the Assembly passed the **Kalash Marriage Bill 2026**, ensuring legal registration, age limits, and banning cousin marriages. (*The Express Tribune*, [21 July 2026](#))



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