

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

22 July 2026

Security

- ◆ **KP Assembly Voices Concerns Over Security Operations** — Lawmakers from both **treasury and opposition benches** in the **Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly** raised alarm over ongoing security operations in **Bannu and southern districts**, criticising the **lack of consultation with elected representatives** and the **hardships faced by civilians**. Members questioned the **effectiveness of military campaigns since 2010**, urging **relief and rehabilitation for displaced families**. Disgruntled **PTI legislators** accused their own government of **sidelining jailed founder Imran Khan**, alleging **unusual closeness with PML-N and PPP**. The assembly called for **political unity to restore peace**. (*The Express Tribune*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **The Balochistan Tragedy** — **Zahid Hussain** writes that the rising death toll from clashes between security forces and outlawed groups reveals only part of the province's crisis. He argues that **decades of reliance on kinetic tactics** have deepened alienation, with roots tracing back to the **2006 killing of Akbar Bugti** during Musharraf's rule. Despite Balochistan's vast resources, it remains economically deprived, fuelling resentment. Hussain highlights enforced disappearances, sidelining of nationalist parties, and corruption as factors worsening unrest. He warns that **brute force has failed to quell violence**, the **state's writ is weakening**, and time is running out to address political and social causes. (*Dawn*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **New Hope, Old Risks** — **Touqir Hussain** cautions that while Pakistan's diplomacy and military performance in the **2025 conflict with India** have raised its profile in the Middle East, expectations of strategic and economic gains must be tempered. He notes that the **US-centric, Israel-backed, Iran-targeted security architecture** has weakened, creating space for overlapping alliances involving the US, China, and regional powers. Pakistan could benefit from groupings like the **R4 (Pakistan, Turkiye, Egypt, Saudi Arabia)**, but risks entanglement in intra-Arab rivalries and the Arab–Iran crossfire. Hussain warns against rash commitments, urging Pakistan to focus on **defence exports, joint production, and economic opportunities** in energy, mining, IT, and construction, while stressing that internal security and governance must improve before Pakistan can fully leverage the “new Middle East.” (*Dawn*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Operation Shaban: A Path Towards Lasting Stability** — **Qaiser Nawab**, Chairman of the Belt and Road Initiative for Sustainable Development, argues that the operation seeks to **restore peace by countering militancy while fostering long-term economic and social development**. He stresses that **security alone cannot ensure peace**, highlighting the need for **inclusive governance, local participation, transparency, and investment in education, healthcare, and skills**. Nawab contends that balancing security with development will **unlock Balochistan's strategic potential, strengthen public confidence, and promote national prosperity through enduring stability**. (*The Pakistan Observer*, [22 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Vanity, Prisoner's Dilemma and Logic of Conflicts** — In this reflective essay, **Dr Shujjat Ahmed** argues that conflicts mirror the **Prisoner's Dilemma**, where rational self-interest undermines cooperation, trapping opponents in attrition. He introduces **Tangible Rationality**, shaped by three agents: the **Anchored Agent** (social, moral, religious frameworks), the **Mechanical Agent** (amoral calculus of gain), and the **Pensive Agent** (integrating trade-offs and consequences). He contends that human needs escalate from **survival, pleasure, power to Vanity**, with Vanity driving destructive choices. Citing the **2003 Iraq War** and **2026 US-Israel strikes on Iran**, he shows how bypassing moral anchors leads to chaos. He concludes that strengthening institutions and peer review of intelligence is vital to counter self-interest. (*The Express Tribune*, [22 July 2026](#))

Economy

- ◆ **Pakistan Seeks Rare US Backstop Facility** – Pakistan has requested a **\$10 billion exchange stabilisation facility** from the US Treasury to bolster reserves, ease rupee pressure and reduce reliance on IMF tranches. **This is basically a US government financial safety net for Pakistan**, usually through the US Treasury's Exchange Stabilization Fund. It can provide dollars, currency swaps, or guarantees to help stabilize a country's foreign-exchange reserves and support its currency in times of stress. The move follows Islamabad's diplomatic role in brokering Iran war talks, raising hopes of economic gains. Such facilities are rare, with Argentina's 2025 package the first since Uruguay in 2002. Pakistan remains under IMF discipline, with **politically unpopular tax increases, spending restraint and reforms**. **A US backstop would be both a liquidity lifeline and a powerful political signal**. (*The News*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Petrol Price Rises Again** – The government has raised fuel prices, with **petrol now at Rs320.73 per litre after a Rs4.93 increase**. High-speed diesel climbed by Rs7.15 to Rs367.21 per litre, while kerosene rose Rs6.78 to Rs289.37 per litre. Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik explained that daily pricing is now based on a seven-day average of international market rates to align with global standards. The shift to daily reviews follows volatility in oil prices amid renewed Middle East hostilities. (*The News*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Fuel Strike Threatens Nationwide Supply** — Pakistan faces disruption as the **All Pakistan Petrol Pump Owners Association (APPPOA)** announced an indefinite strike from midnight 23 July, after talks with the government collapsed. Vice Chairman **Nauman Ali Butt** confirmed “all petrol pumps will remain completely closed,” with tanker owners joining the protest. The strike follows a government hike of **Rs4.93 per litre for petrol and Rs7.15 for diesel**, raising prices to Rs320.73 and Rs367.21 respectively. APPPOA Chairman **Humayun Khan** demanded monthly price revisions and higher dealer commissions. (*The Nation*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Maritime Minister Invites Chinese Investment** — Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs **Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry** urged Chinese firms to expand investment in Pakistan's ports, logistics and maritime sectors, highlighting Gwadar Port as a flagship project of CPEC offering opportunities in **logistics, warehousing and free zone development**. Speaking at the Regional Transit Trade Hub Initiative in Beijing, he emphasised Pakistan-China's “All-Weather Strategic Partnership” and reforms at Karachi Port Trust, Port Qasim Authority, Gwadar Port Authority and Pakistan National Shipping Corporation to build a modern maritime hub. (*The Express Tribune*, [22 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan and China Sign EV Charging Agreement** — Pakistan and China have inked an MoU to strengthen the **electric vehicle ecosystem through local manufacturing and technology transfer**, witnessed by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister **Haroon Akhtar Khan**. He announced a forthcoming **Battery Energy Storage System Policy** to reduce oil imports and promote sustainability. Khan emphasised EVs as the future of transport, highlighting government support for charging infrastructure and strategic partnerships with Chinese firms to boost local battery production, technology transfer and youth employment. (*The Express Tribune*, [22 July 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan–Iran Mediation Amid Escalating Gulf Conflict** — Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** urged restraint from all sides, stressing Pakistan's role as mediator for peace. Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni praised Islamabad's efforts, while meetings with Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir reaffirmed security cooperation. Meanwhile, **President Donald Trump declared "We're not finished at all... we're not leaving right now"**, as US strikes hit Iranian military assets. Iran's Guards confirmed attacks on Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain, heightening fears of wider conflict. Oil prices surged, ASEAN ministers warned of global risks, and France summoned Iran's envoy. (*The News*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan's Mediation and Digital Governance Drive** — Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** expressed concern over Gulf escalation, pledging Pakistan's role as a sincere mediator between Iran and the US. Meeting Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni, he emphasised restraint and regional stability, while Momeni praised Pakistan's mediation efforts and cooperation with Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir. On the same day, Shehbaz launched the **AI-powered Prime Minister Office System (PMOS)**, declaring "From today onwards, I will not expect any of you with a file in your hands," marking a shift to digital governance. (*The Nation*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan's Diplomatic Calendar Reviewed** — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar** chaired a high-level meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to assess preparations for upcoming diplomatic engagements. Joined by **Foreign Secretary Ambassador Amna Baloch** and senior officials, the meeting reviewed Pakistan's diplomatic calendar and coordination measures. Dar directed comprehensive planning to **advance Pakistan's foreign policy priorities** and emphasised close coordination across all levels. The review reflects Islamabad's proactive approach to diplomacy as it prepares for bilateral and multilateral forums. (*The Nation*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Bangladesh Quota Introduced in Danish Schools** — The Board of Governors of the Danish Schools Authority has approved an increase in quota for students from **Balochistan** and introduced a **special quota for children from Bangladesh** on the directions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Chaired by Punjab Education Minister **Rana Sikandar Hayat**, the meeting also included two top-performing girl students in consultations. The minister highlighted that 1,100 students from other provinces already benefit from quotas, while 3,460 graduates are serving professionally. AI-based syllabi and social skill development initiatives were also noted. (*The Express Tribune*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Washington Plans Nuclear Agreement with Riyadh** — US media reports say the **Trump administration** is set to announce a **30-year civilian nuclear cooperation deal with Saudi Arabia**, allowing American firms to help build a uranium enrichment facility if deemed necessary. The agreement, a **123 Agreement under the US Atomic Energy Act**, will be signed by **US Energy**

Secretary Chris Wright and Saudi Energy Minister Abdulaziz bin Salman. It does not include the “Gold Standard” safeguards or the IAEA Additional Protocol, raising proliferation concerns. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has previously stated Saudi Arabia would match Iran if it developed nuclear weapons. Congress will have 90 days to review, but approval is not required unless lawmakers pass a joint resolution to block it. (*Dawn*, [22 July 2026](#))

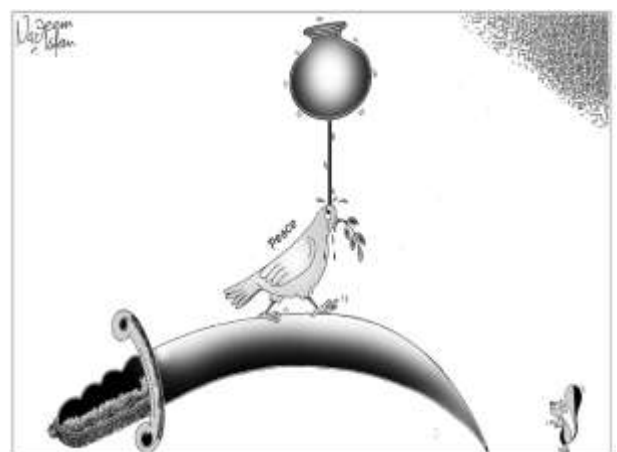
- ◆ **Dar Arrives in Manila for ARF Meeting** — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar reached Manila on Wednesday to attend the 33rd Asean Regional Forum (ARF) ministerial meeting, the Foreign Office confirmed. He was received by Philippines’ Assistant Secretary Elmer G. Cato, Pakistan’s Ambassador Asima Rabbani, and other officials. The FO said Dar’s programme includes participation in the ARF plenary session and bilateral meetings with counterparts. Established in 1994, the ARF brings together 27 member states to discuss political and security issues in the Asia-Pacific, with Pakistan an active member since 2004. (*Dawn*, [22 July 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Nawaz Quips on AJK Premiership** — At a rally in Muzaffarabad, PMLN President Nawaz Sharif joked he would ask Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to appoint him AJK premier if the party won the July 27 polls. Accompanied by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, he pledged major development, including a scenic motorway, green buses and mobile hospitals, and vowed to visit AJK every three months. Maryam declared, “This is my Azad Jammu and Kashmir. I am Kashmiri by blood, by heart and mind, by soul, and through my ancestry.” (*The News*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **AJK Elections to Proceed in Phases Amid Security Concerns** — The ‘Azad’ Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission announced that polling will be held in three phases from 27 July to 10 August, citing worsening law and order. Chief Election Commissioner Ghulam Mustafa Mughal confirmed the phased approach instead of postponement, rejecting demands from political parties. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has boycotted the polls, while PPP and JUI-F formed an alliance. Over 1,265 candidates will contest across 45 constituencies, with 6,983 polling stations set up for 3.8 million voters. (*The News*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Judicial Commission Recommends New Appointments** — The Judicial Commission of Pakistan, chaired by the Chief Justice of Pakistan, has recommended the confirmation of Justice Tariq Mahmood Bajwa as judge of the Lahore High Court, alongside the appointment of 10 additional judges to the LHC and three judges to the Balochistan High Court. The nominees include senior advocates and district judges, filling part of the vacant positions. The Commission also reviewed proposed amendments to the Appointment of Judges Rules, 2024, circulating them for wider consideration. (*The Nation*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Court Issues Arrest Warrants for KP Chief Minister** — The District and Sessions Court of Islamabad has issued non-bailable arrest warrants for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi in a Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) case. Senior Civil Judge Abbas Shah ordered authorities to arrest and produce Afridi after repeated absences, warning he could be declared a proclaimed offender. The case, registered by the National Cyber Crime Investigation

Agency, alleges Afridi spread misleading claims against state institutions. Proceedings were adjourned until 3 September to review progress. (*The Nation*, [22 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Supreme Court Defers Mazari Case Hearing** — The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Tuesday deferred hearing of petitions filed by human rights lawyer **Imaan Mazari** and her husband **Hadi Ali Chattha**, noting that parties may seek an early hearing if an emergency arises. A three-member bench headed by **Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar** observed that the apex court cannot regulate High Court proceedings, as the Islamabad High Court has already fixed the matter for 24 July. Counsel **Faisal Siddiqi** argued for maintainability, but the bench adjourned proceedings. (*The Nation*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Grand Dialogue a Must** — The editorial stresses that **PTI's offer of a national grand dialogue is commendable** and must be seized to resolve political instability. The **coalition government must extend an olive branch**, ensuring political space, fair litigation and the release of prisoners including Imran Khan. PTI Secretary-General **Salman Akram Raja's call for a huddle of all stakeholders** is described as an opportunity amid crisis. The piece notes PTI's adaptable stance, urging clarity from PTI, TTAP and government, as **political bickering is untenable amid rising oil prices and terror incidents**. (*The Express Tribune*, [22 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Setting the Record Straight on Balochistan's Accession** — Barrister **Mansoor Azam** argues that claims of Balochistan acceding as a single sovereign entity in 1948 are historically inaccurate. He explains that the region was a **mosaic of polities** — the Khanate of Kalat, Makran, Kharan, Lasbela, and British-administered districts — each acceding separately, with **Gwadar purchased from Oman in 1958**. He stresses that Balochistan's present provincial structure was created through the **1973 Constitution**, not primordial unity. Azam advocates for **reorganising Balochistan into smaller units** to improve governance, resource distribution, and counter-terrorism, while suggesting Gwadar could be placed under federal control. He concludes that a **constitutional amendment under Article 239** could strengthen national cohesion and dismantle separatist myths. (*Dawn*, [21 July 2026](#))





A poster published in various newspapers across the country by the **Ministry of IT & Telecom, Government of Pakistan (GoP)**, for the **Indus RAS Expo 2026**. It announces Pakistan's largest Robotics & Autonomous Systems Expo, bringing together innovators, researchers, startups, industry leaders, and technology enthusiasts. The event is scheduled for 22–23 July 2026 at the **Pak-China Friendship Centre, Islamabad**. The expo will showcase cutting-edge technologies, including robotics, drones, AI-powered systems, smart manufacturing, agritech innovations, and other advancements in autonomous systems.

[Disclaimer: We do not subscribe to the views expressed by the Pakistani reporters, leaders and commentators, we are making available for perusal by our experts/analysts/policymakers every day. We put it all together in Daily Pakistan Watch (DPW) with a view to acquainting our readers with the prevalent thought process in Pakistan having its bearing on India, with the hope that such effort will help us in devising appropriate policies to deal with Pakistan in a more effective manner.]