

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

25 June 2026

Security

- ◆ **Pakistan–Iran Expand Security Cooperation** — Interior Minister **Mohsin Naqvi** and his Iranian counterpart **Eskandar Momeni** have agreed to deepen collaboration in **security, counterterrorism, cybersecurity and immigration**. Meeting in Islamabad, the two ministers reviewed bilateral ties and discussed regional developments following the peace accord. They expressed satisfaction at reduced tensions and voiced hope that the agreement would yield **far-reaching positive consequences for peace and stability**. The talks mark a step towards institutionalising cooperation and building resilience against shared threats in the region. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Six Militants Killed, Seven Police Abducted** — Security forces killed six suspected militants in a **joint CTD–police operation** in Lower Dir’s Barchari area, recovering rifles, grenades and ammunition. The deceased, including **Khalilur Rehman alias Saddam** and **Najmuddin alias Abu Jana**, were wanted in multiple terrorism cases, including the Badwan Bridge attack that martyred Constable Muhammad Ismail. Hours later, unidentified gunmen abducted **seven police personnel**, including Sararogha SHO Ahmad Shah, in Upper South Waziristan. Authorities launched search operations, with locals urging swift recovery amid worsening insecurity. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan–US Maritime Cooperation** — Federal Maritime Affairs Minister **Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry** met US Chargé d’Affaires **Natalie A Baker** to discuss expanding collaboration in **port development, logistics, trade and the blue economy**. Chaudhry highlighted Pakistan’s strategic coastal resources and invited American investment in shipping and infrastructure. Both sides agreed in principle to form a **joint working group** to coordinate projects and deepen engagement. Baker reaffirmed Washington’s interest in sustainable maritime development and praised Pakistan’s role in promoting regional stability. The talks concluded with a commitment to strengthen bilateral partnerships. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan, Libya to Expand Defence Cooperation** — Libyan Deputy Commander-in-Chief **Lt Gen Saddam Khalifa Haftar** met **Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir** at GHQ, Rawalpindi, where he was accorded a Guard of Honour. Talks focused on **regional security, defence collaboration and military training**, with both sides emphasising the importance of strengthening bilateral ties. The COAS highlighted Pakistan Army’s commitment to peace and constructive engagement, while Haftar praised the professionalism of Pakistan’s armed forces and their role in regional stability. The meeting underscored plans to deepen cooperation in **training and security**. (*The Nation*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan Navy’s Modernisation Drive** — Admiral **Naveed Ashraf**, Chief of the Naval Staff, has urged a reassessment of traditional warfighting concepts to meet evolving maritime challenges.

Addressing the **55th Pakistan Navy Staff Course** in Lahore, he stressed the need for **technological proficiency, adaptive strategies and indigenisation** to counter both conventional and non-conventional threats. He reaffirmed the Navy's commitment to innovation and unity across the armed services, noting that "the Indian Ocean region remains fluid and contested" Admiral Ashraf called on officers to uphold professionalism and strategic foresight. (*The News*, [25 June 2026](#))

Economy

- ◆ **Chinese Investors Back Pakistan's Markets** — The **China Financial Futures Exchange** has expressed strong confidence in Pakistan's capital markets, praising reforms by **SECP Chairman Dr Kabir Ahmed Sidhu**. In a letter, EVP **Yu Hong** welcomed progress on PSX, CDC and NCCPL, noting plans for **cross-border ETFs** and expanded investment. Separately, the **SECP** and **NAB** agreed to formalise cooperation against illegal deposit schemes, with NAB chief **Nazir Ahmed Butt** pledging joint enforcement. Sidhu warned such schemes erode trust, stressing that strict action is vital to protect citizens and strengthen accountability. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan Rice Festival Showcases Basmati in Europe** — Commerce Minister **Jam Kamal Khan** hailed the success of the **Pakistan Rice Festival 2026** in the Netherlands, themed "*From Pakistan's Fields to Europe's Tables*." The event drew over **100 European importers, retailers and food experts**, signalling growing confidence in Pakistani exports. Ambassador **Syed Haider Shah** noted that basmati rice is exported to more than 100 countries and is protected by **Geographical Indication status**. Bilateral trade with the Netherlands has reached **USD 1.94 billion**, with over 50 Dutch firms active in Pakistan. Karachi's **Food Exhibition 2026** is the next milestone. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pak-Iran Trade Boost with Taftan Customs Station** — The **Federal Board of Revenue (FBR)** has designated **11.75 acres** at **Taftan Railway Station** as a **Land Customs Station**, enabling import-export clearance and strengthening Pakistan-Iran commerce. The move is expected to streamline border trade. Meanwhile, **Pakistan Customs** seized smuggled goods worth **Rs77 million**, including **21 vehicles**, electronic items, gutka, textiles and petroleum products. Legal proceedings are underway against organised networks. Separately, the FBR extended working hours until **30 June** to meet revenue targets, keeping tax offices open late into the fiscal year's close. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Tourism Balance Sheet Shows Deficit** — Pakistan earned **USD 1.15 billion** from inbound tourism in 2024 but citizens spent **USD 2.4 billion** abroad, exposing policy and infrastructure gaps, according to an **FPCCI report**. Tourism contributes **5.9% to GDP** and supports **4.7 million jobs**, yet exports remain far below regional rivals. The study cites visa hurdles, weak marketing, poor connectivity and fragmented governance as key obstacles. Former PTDC chief **Salman Javed** urged visa reforms, central regulation and stronger branding, highlighting potential in **religious tourism**. The report projects receipts could reach **USD 1.5 billion by 2030**. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **PPL Launches BLZ Project Execution Phase** — **Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL)** has begun the execution phase of the **Barite, Lead & Zinc (BLZ) Project**, a joint venture with the **Government of Balochistan**, marking a major milestone in mineral resource development. PPL

signed a **Project Management Consultancy contract** with Germany's **DMT**, underscoring commitment to international standards and efficient delivery. The large-scale open-pit mining venture is expected to drive regional economic growth, boost mineral exports and strengthen Pakistan's mining sector. PPL hailed the project as a landmark in sustainable resource development. (*The Nation*, [25 June 2026](#))

- ◆ **Fiscal Discipline without Growth** — The **Fitch Ratings** review of Pakistan's **Budget 2026-27** warns that aggressive spending cuts, while ensuring short-term stability, are undermining long-term growth prospects. Fitch projects a **primary surplus of 2.5% of GDP**, but notes federal tax collections will fall short by 0.7% of GDP. Persistently low capital expenditure “may weigh on medium-term economic growth” and complicate debt dynamics. The editorial cautions that “discipline without investment is austerity without growth”, urging policymakers to balance IMF targets with urgent capital spending needs. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **China Praises Pakistan's Mediation Role** — Deputy PM/Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar** met Chinese Foreign Minister **Wang Yi**, who congratulated Pakistan's leadership on the successful signing of the **Islamabad MoU**. Wang lauded Pakistan's “**continuous outreach, active mediation and sustained engagement**” in promoting peace and stability. Dar briefed him on developments since the Burgenstock talks, including a high-level committee and three working groups on nuclear issues, sanctions, and dispute resolution, aiming for a comprehensive agreement within 60 days. Both ministers reaffirmed close cooperation for a negotiated settlement and permanent end to hostilities. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **EU, UK Back Pakistan Against TTP** — In a significant diplomatic boost, **EU Special Envoy Gilles Bertrand** and **UK Special Envoy Richard Lindsay** have publicly recognised Pakistan's **legitimate right to self-defence** against terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan. Both envoys condemned the Taliban regime's failure to dismantle safe havens and reaffirmed that the **Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)** is a terrorist organisation receiving cross-border support, weapons and financing. They stressed that authorities in Kabul and Kandahar bear full responsibility and must act to prevent Afghan soil from being used against neighbours. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Shehbaz, Tamim Stress Dialogue Momentum** — Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** and Qatari Emir **Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani** underscored the need to sustain momentum in negotiations after the first round of **US–Iran technical talks** in Switzerland. In a cordial call, Shehbaz thanked Tamim for supporting peace efforts culminating in the **Islamabad MoU**, and for Qatar's hospitality towards Pakistanis. He also spoke with **Prince Fahd bin Sultan** of Tabuk, who praised Pakistan's mediation. Shehbaz reaffirmed ties with Saudi Arabia and invited both leaders to visit Pakistan. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Turkish Envoy Reaffirms Pakistan–Türkiye Brotherhood** — Turkish Ambassador **Dr Irfan Neziroglu** described bilateral ties as a **time-tested brotherly bond** rooted in shared history, culture and religion. Speaking at the closing of a **Turkish Summer Camp** at AIOU, he highlighted

expanding cooperation in education, cultural diplomacy and people-to-people exchanges. He announced plans to extend such programmes nationwide, offering Pakistani students greater access to scholarships and cultural initiatives. AIOU Vice Chancellor **Dr Nasir Mahmood** urged students to act as goodwill ambassadors, while participants celebrated the enduring friendship between the two nations. (*The Nation*, [25 June 2026](#))

- ◆ **India's Strategic Misstep on China** — Public policy analyst **Durdana Najam** argues that India's China policy has been shaped more by Washington than by its own judgment. The US reverting its **Indo-Pacific Command** to **Pacific Command** signals a reduced role for India in American strategy. By opposing the **BRI** and sidelining **SAARC**, India isolated itself while China expanded across South Asia. Najam stresses that “successful foreign policy requires independence of judgement”, warning that India's reliance on US frameworks left it vulnerable as Beijing entrenched itself regionally. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **US–Iran Talks: A Fragile Peace Framework** — Retired Major General **Inam Ul Haque** notes that the **Islamabad MoU** and subsequent talks in Switzerland mark “encouraging progress” towards ending hostilities between the US–Israel bloc and Iran. Washington granted a **60-day sanctions waiver** and released **USD 12 billion** in frozen funds, while Iran disputed claims of new nuclear concessions. Agreements on the **Strait of Hormuz** and Lebanon were reached, yet Haque stresses that “militarily, when a weaker side denies a stronger side the attainment of its war objectives, the weaker side technically wins”. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pezeshkian's Regional Security Pitch** — Iranian President **Masoud Pezeshkian's** swift visit to Islamabad was both a gesture of gratitude and a strategic unveiling. His doctrine for a “**new regional security structure**” among Muslim nations aims to address regional tensions collectively, with Pakistan positioned as an indispensable mediator after its role in the **US–Iran talks**. The editorial notes that “Pakistan is now, inevitably, the net security provider for the region and beyond”. Pezeshkian's call for cooperative security underscores shifting dynamics as the US retreats from its Middle East umbrella. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Shehbaz–Fazl Exchange in NA** — Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** and JUI-F chief **Maulana Fazlur Rehman** shared a rare moment of light banter in the **National Assembly**. Arriving during Fazl's speech, Shehbaz crossed to the opposition benches to greet leaders, including **Mahmood Khan Achakzai**, **Gohar Ali Khan**, and others. He later joked that he would never disclose his private discussions with Fazl, even if given permission. Members welcomed the PM with desk thumping, and **Bilawal Bhutto Zardari** also greeted him. Shehbaz praised Fazl as highly respected and noted his cordial ties. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **PTI to issue Notice to Afridi** — The **Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)** has decided to serve a **show-cause notice** to MNA **Mirza Iqbal Afridi** over his recent conduct. The decision was taken at a parliamentary party meeting after Afridi's disputes with fellow lawmakers, including a clash with **Junaid Akbar** in the National Assembly and an argument with **Sibghatullah** outside Adiala Jail. Party sources said Afridi's behaviour was discussed at length, with members agreeing that

disciplinary action was necessary to maintain cohesion. The notice is expected to be issued shortly. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))

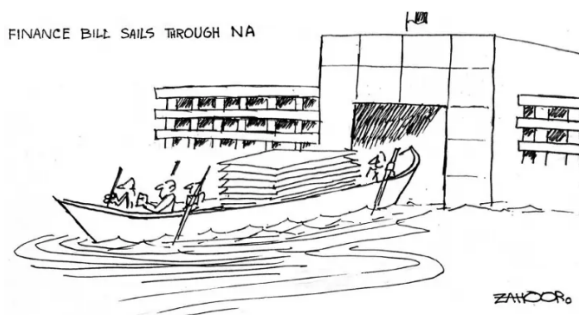
- ◆ **Bilawal, Aleem Discuss G-B Government Formation** — PPP Chairman **Bilawal Bhutto Zardari** and IPP President **Abdul Aleem Khan** met at Parliament House to discuss the **Gilgit-Baltistan set-up** and pledged continued cooperation. Bilawal thanked the people of G-B for supporting the PPP, and expressed gratitude to **Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif**, the **PML-N**, **IPP**, **MWM** and **PTI**-backed members for endorsing PPP candidates for chief minister and speaker. He also highlighted regional peace efforts and called for prioritising the **Pakistan–Iran gas pipeline** once conditions improve. Bilawal voiced concern over Kashmir’s deteriorating situation. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Govt Invites PTI to Sign Charter of Democracy** — Defence Minister **Khawaja Asif** urged the PTI to join the **Charter of Democracy**, stressing collective responsibility to strengthen parliamentary norms. Speaker **Ayaz Sadiq** emphasised respect for all members and fairness in rulings, noting opposition was given extended time in budget debates. Deputy PM **Ishaq Dar** highlighted Pakistan’s role as mediator in the **US–Iran talks**, with the **Islamabad MoU** signed in Switzerland. JUI-F chief **Maulana Fazlur Rehman** called for restraint, dialogue and serious consideration of **AJK groups’ demands**, warning against forceful responses. (*The Nation*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **135 Skilled Workers Depart for Saudi Arabia** — Punjab Chief Minister **Maryam Nawaz Sharif** bid farewell to the first batch of **Parwaaz Card beneficiaries**, comprising **135 skilled workers** heading to Saudi Arabia. At a ceremony in Lahore, she described them as Pakistan’s ambassadors, urging them to represent the country positively abroad. The programme prioritises vocational training aligned with international labour markets, aiming to shift workers from unskilled to skilled categories for better pay and recognition. The batch includes **105 hospitality workers** and **30 construction workers**, with departures beginning **28 June**. (*Express Tribune*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Mangla Dam Crisis Exposes Systemic Failures** — The **Mangla Dam** has been drawn down to just **33.3% of capacity**, leaving storage at 2.465 MAF against a maximum of 7.3 MAF. Outflows surged to **65,000 cusecs**, a 333% rise year-on-year, far exceeding sluggish inflows of 27,800 cusecs. Severe shortfalls at the **Chenab’s Marala station** and reduced inflows at **Tarbela** forced reliance on Mangla as a shock absorber. The **Indus River System Authority** warns that “this stress cannot be looked at in isolation”, highlighting Pakistan’s urgent need for expanded reservoir capacity. (*The News*, [25 June 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan to Host Asian Buffalo Congress** — After an **18-year gap**, Pakistan will host the **12th Asian Buffalo Congress** alongside the **Dairy Asia Expo-2027** in Lahore from **14–16 October 2027**. Chaired by **Prof Dr Masood Rabbani** of UVAS, the first planning meeting brought together senior academics, officials and industry leaders. **Prof Dr M Ijaz**, President of the Asian Buffalo Association, said the congress will link research, academia, industry and farmers. Participants proposed buffalo milk and beauty competitions to boost public engagement, showcasing Pakistan’s livestock and dairy potential. (*The News*, [25 June 2026](#))

- ◆ **Managing Tensions in AJK** — The **Dawn** editorial stresses that the fraught situation in ‘Azad’ Jammu and Kashmir demands restraint and dialogue. With temperatures rising across the political divide, it warns against rhetoric that could deepen wounds. The AJK government’s refusal of a “blanket amnesty” for the proscribed **Joint Awami Action Committee** may be justified, but collective punishment would be counterproductive. The JAAC, too, must renounce violence and populist messaging. The piece concludes that “confrontation and retribution will not yield any positive outcomes”, urging both sides to pursue negotiation. (*Dawn*, [25 June 2026](#))

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FINANCE BILL SAILS THROUGH NA



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