

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

29 July 2026

Security

- ◆ **Violence and Abductions in Balochistan** — Unidentified armed men abducted seven labourers in Kech district, killing one captive, Javed from Swabi, and a passer-by, Abdul Razzaq, during the attack. The abducted included **four labourers from Punjab and three Pashtun workers**. Police later recovered Javed's bullet-riddled body in Surog. In a separate incident, **DSP Mureed Bugti was martyred** and another officer injured when gunmen ambushed a police patrol in Barkhan district. These attacks underscore the persistent insecurity facing Balochistan's workforce and law enforcement. (*The News*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Militant Elements Infiltrate JAAC Protests** — The federal government and AJK administration alleged that **armed militants had infiltrated demonstrations organised by the proscribed Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC)** during elections. Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the polls were peaceful but claimed protesters were "militant elements pursuing a foreign agenda and receiving Indian funding." AJK Information Secretary Rashid Hanif displayed footage of masked gunmen, warning civilians were being used as human shields. DIG Irfan Kashfi confirmed **automatic weapons including M-4 rifles and AK-47s** were recovered, with one police official martyred. (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Strategic Ripples of the Hangor Submarine** — Dr Murad Ali writes that Pakistan's commissioning of its first **Hangor-class AIP submarine** marks a major modernisation of its naval forces, complicating India's maritime operations in the Arabian Sea. While India retains conventional superiority, he warns it would be a "strategic blunder to underestimate Pakistan's resolve," recalling the May 2025 aerial conflict where Rafale jets were downed. The Hangor enhances **sea-denial and deterrence**, and could eventually support a nuclear role via Babur-3 SLCMs, raising risks of miscalculation and intensifying the regional arms race. (*The News*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Coordinated Violence Strikes Balochistan** — Officials confirmed **three people, including DSP Rakhni Murid Bugti, were martyred** in separate attacks across Barkhan, Kech and Chagai districts. In Barkhan, armed men ambushed a police patrol, killing the DSP. In Kech, attackers intercepted labourers, killing Javed Khan of Swabi and abducting six others, while a passer-by, Abdul Razzaq, was also martyred. Meanwhile, in Chagai, gunmen torched **five trailers and two gas bowers** on the N-40 highway, injuring a truck driver. Security forces have launched search operations to trace the assailants. (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Balochistan's unrest and the state's challenge** — Dr Raashid Wali Janjua, security and defence analyst, writes that the sixth uprising in Balochistan reflects a mix of **longstanding grievances, governance deficits and external support for militants**. According to CRSS, the **BLA and affiliates launched 181 terrorist attacks in 2026, causing 708 casualties**, while security forces

eliminated 618 militants. He argues that political marginalisation, collapsing tribal structures, corruption and exclusion from corridor economics fuel discontent. Yet, a silent majority still seeks inclusion. He stresses that “**trusting the people and their political inclusion through empowered local governments is the magic bullet**”. (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Restraint and responsibility in AJK** — The editorial stresses that in moments of crisis, all stakeholders must prioritise the collective good over narrow interests. The deteriorating situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir demands protection of the **right to peaceful protest**, while drawing a clear line against organised violence. The claim that militants have infiltrated protests is described as “extremely serious,” with citizens urged to distance themselves from armed elements. The piece calls for **discipline, proportionate law enforcement and transparent communication**, warning that escalation would be far costlier. (*The Nation*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Cleric killed in suspected quadcopter strike** — A local cleric, **Maulana Amanullah**, was killed and two others injured in a suspected quadcopter attack near a mosque in **Landi Doag, Birmal tehsil, Lower South Waziristan**. Police said the injured were taken to Wana hospital, where Amanullah succumbed to his wounds. The incident has heightened fear among residents, with several such strikes reported in the region over the past year. The **JUI-F Lower South Waziristan chapter** condemned the attack, while **PTI MNA Zubair Wazir** decried the insecurity, saying “*neither homes, nor mosques, nor madrassas... are secure.*” (*Dawn*, [29 July 2026](#))

Economy

- ◆ **Gwadar Expands Marine Fuel Services** — Pakistan has completed its **second marine bunkering operation at Gwadar Port**, marking the port’s transition from symbolic achievement to operational capability. Conducted by Vitol’s bunker barge *Marine Ista*, the operation supplied IMO-compliant Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (VLSFO) produced by Cnergyco PK Limited to an LNG carrier. Coming in the days after the inaugural bunkering, the move extends Pakistan’s bunkering network from Karachi and Port Qasim to Gwadar, strengthening its role as a strategic maritime gateway and enhancing its commercial attractiveness for global shipping. (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Refinery Policy Breakthrough Unlocks Investment** — Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved amendments to the **Brownfield Refinery Policy**, removing tax and procedural hurdles that had stalled implementation. The Cabinet Committee on Energy endorsed a framework requiring refineries to sign upgrade agreements within 90 days, with projects to be completed in seven years. A key relief is the **GST waiver on imported machinery**, expected to unlock \$5–6 billion in investments. Industry leaders hailed the move as a landmark step, enabling Euro-V compliant fuels and reducing furnace oil output. (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Dar Targets Doubling Trade with US** — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar** said Pakistan’s trade with the United States reached \$9.4 billion last fiscal year, adding that bilateral trade could rise to **\$20 billion within five years** by harnessing economic complementarities. Addressing a US Congressional and Business Delegation, he emphasised that “**strong and**

mutually beneficial economic ties are the true measure of a mature, strategic partnership". Dar highlighted Pakistan's imports of US cotton and soybeans, Exim Bank's \$1.25bn Reko Diq financing, and opportunities in technology, energy and defence. (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan Seeks WFP Support on Food Security** — The government has requested the **World Food Programme's technical assistance** to integrate nutrition, digital innovation and international best practices into the National Food Security Policy. Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain met WFP Country Director Anita Hirsch, with both sides agreeing to collaborate on **post-harvest management, grain storage, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, food fortification and digital solutions** for resilient food systems. Dr Paracha noted that **"chronic malnutrition levels in Pakistan have not changed in the past 40 years and cost the economy 3% of GDP annually."** (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Sindh CM Courts UK Investment with Reforms** — Sindh Chief Minister **Murad Ali Shah** assured British investors of swift resolution to regulatory and administrative hurdles during a Pakistan-UK roundtable in Karachi. He pledged reforms to simplify regulations, ensure policy continuity and foster a business-friendly environment. Stressing that **"the purpose of this roundtable is not merely to listen but to act,"** Shah acknowledged challenges such as taxation, infrastructure gaps and utility issues, and vowed to digitise services and streamline procedures to boost investor confidence. (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan's industry at risk of de-industrialisation** — Dr **Kamal Monnoo**, entrepreneur and economic analyst, warns that Pakistan faces a **"73 moment"**, with state organs seemingly aligned against industry. He recalls how poor policies in the 1970s dismantled a promising industrial economy, and argues that today's closures are even more dangerous as they are not preceded by growth, risking the loss of industrial memory. He highlights coercive taxation, bureaucratic corruption, inflation and debt mismanagement as key impediments. Stressing labour-intensive industries for exports, he insists **"Pakistan is de-industrialising"** unless genuine private-sector leaders are engaged. (*The Nation*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Beyond arithmetic and into welfare economics** — Senior banker **Zafar Masud**, chairman of the Pakistan Banks Association, argues that headline GDP growth of **3.7% in FY26** masks the reality for households. He introduces the idea of **"welfare GDP growth"**, noting that per capita expansion falls to 1.2%, remittances add unseen value, inequality skews benefits, and food inflation erodes welfare. He warns that **"rising poverty estimates amid almost continuous headline growth are not a paradox; they are the measurement gap made visible."** Masud calls for export-led, labour-intensive growth and welfare-adjusted statistics. (*Dawn*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Invisible women in Pakistan's export economy** — **Dur e Sameen Akhund**, senior manager sustainability at the Pakistan Business Council's Centre of Excellence in Responsible Business, highlights how Pakistan's export sectors are built on women's labour yet fail to record their presence in audits, wage data or grievance logs. With the EU's **Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive** now requiring gender-sensitive reporting, invisibility has become a liability. She stresses that **"Pakistan's export sectors were built on the labour of women"**, urging exporters, associations and government to make women visible, counted and protected to retain global markets. (*Dawn*, [29 July 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Iran's Bid for Hormuz Control Raises Tensions** — Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said Tehran proposed to Oman that **“one direction of traffic would pass through Iranian waters”**, rejecting Muscat's plan for equal division. He warned the Strait of Hormuz would remain closed if Oman refused, stressing Iran no longer recognised the Traffic Separation Scheme. Gulf states backed Oman's fee-based management plan, while the US dismissed Iran's demands as unreasonable. Meanwhile, Houthis targeted a Saudi tanker, and Brent crude fell amid a lull in hostilities. (*The News*, [29 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan's Passport Weakness Exposed** — The latest Henley Passport Index ranks Pakistan's passport **fourth weakest in the world**, placing it 101st globally with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to just 29 destinations. The green passport stands ahead only of Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. Neighbouring countries fare better: China at 60, India at 81 and Iran at 96. Pakistani citizens enjoy visa-free entry to places such as Barbados, Dominica and Rwanda, and visa-on-arrival in countries including Nepal, Maldives and Cambodia, with limited e-visa options. (*The News*, [29 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Diplomatic Shifts in Islamabad and Beyond** — Pakistan has designated **Dr Syed Ali Asad Gillani**, Additional Foreign Secretary for Asia-Pacific, as its new ambassador to China, pending agrément from Beijing. He will replace Khalil Hashmi, due to retire next year. Meanwhile, Pakistan's envoy to the UN, Asim Iftikhar, has received a one-year extension. In Riyadh, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman administered an oath to **Major General (Retd) Rajeh Albugami**, Saudi Arabia's incoming ambassador to Pakistan. France has also nominated senior diplomat Jean-Noël Poirier as its new envoy to Islamabad. (*The News*, [29 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Regional Diplomacy and Condolences** — Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam and Afghanistan's Ambassador Sardar Ahmad Shakeeb met Jamaat-e-Islami chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman to offer condolences on the death of JI Secretary General Ameerul Azeem. Both envoys praised Azeem's services and expressed solidarity with JI. Rehman stressed that **“Pakistan and Iran are two brotherly Muslim countries”** and urged unity of the Ummah against US aggression, calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon. Ambassador Moghadam and Ambassador Shakeeb emphasised dialogue, cooperation and stronger bilateral ties. (*The News*, [29 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan and Jordan Unite Against Israeli Aggression** — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar** and his Jordanian counterpart **Ayman Safadi** held a phone call to discuss the worsening situation in Palestine. Both leaders expressed grave concern over intensified Israeli military operations in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, including air strikes, ground offensives and settler violence. They strongly condemned **“the repeated mass incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound by Israeli settlers and far-right groups”**, stressing the need to protect the sanctity of the holy site. (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Gen Z Movements Reshape South Asia's Politics** — Zahid Hussain argues that youth-led protests have become defining forces across the region. In India, exam paper leaks triggered mass demonstrations that evolved into a democracy movement, forcing the education minister's resignation and denting Modi's strongman image. The rise of the **Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)** reflects Gen Z's political awakening. Similar uprisings in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka toppled

entrenched regimes, showing the power of youth mobilisation. Hussain warns Pakistan's 70 million Gen Z could turn a "demographic dividend" into a "**demographic catastrophe**" unless democratic rights are restored. (*Dawn*, [29 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **China's initiative versus Western misinterpretation** — Syed Sardar Ali explains that President **Xi Jinping's Global Civilisation Initiative**, announced in March 2023, sought to answer the question: "*what kind of modernisation does the world need and how can we achieve it?*" Xi emphasised sustainable development, cultural inheritance and national conditions, rejecting a "**cookie cutter approach**". Ali argues the West misread the initiative as an ideological tool, reflecting Cold War biases and cultural hubris. He stresses that China promotes multiple paths to modernisation, not a universal model, urging developing nations to pioneer their own. (*Dawn*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan strengthens ties with Uzbekistan** — Pakistan's Ambassador to Uzbekistan **Mudassir Tipu** presented his credentials to President **Shavkat Mirziyoyev**, reaffirming Islamabad's commitment to deepen cooperation in **trade, investment, tourism and regional connectivity**. He conveyed greetings from President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. President Mirziyoyev appreciated Pakistan's mediation efforts and constructive role in promoting regional peace. Both sides noted growing engagement through high-level exchanges and projects linking **Central Asia to Pakistan's seaports via Afghanistan**, with the new envoy's mission expected to provide fresh momentum to the partnership. (*The Nation*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Kuwaiti FM begins Islamabad visit** — Kuwait's Foreign Minister **Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah** arrived in Islamabad on Tuesday at the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar**. The two sides are set to hold talks covering the full spectrum of bilateral relations and exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest. The visit underscores the **longstanding brotherly ties between Pakistan and Kuwait**, rooted in shared history, mutual trust and close cooperation. (*The Nation*, [29 July 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

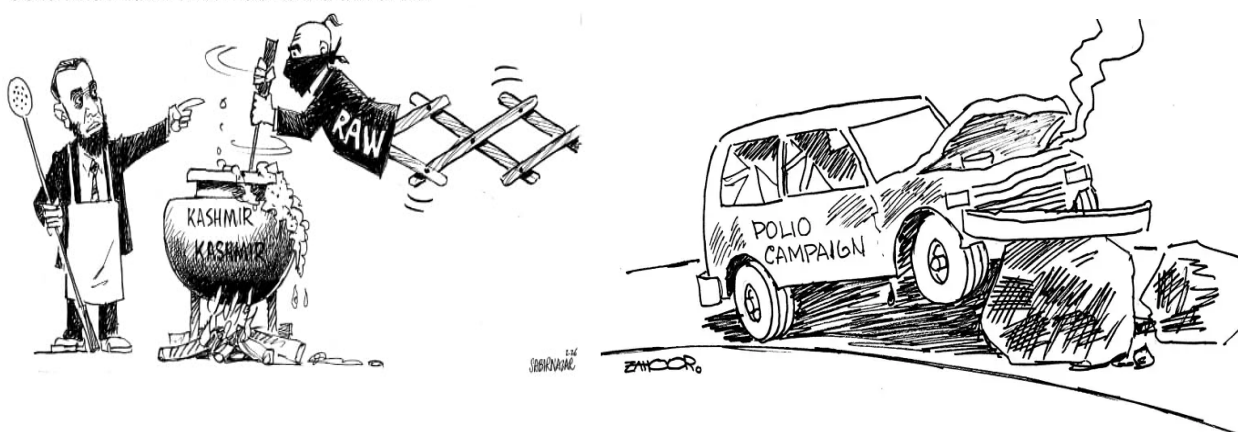
- ◆ **PMLN Gains Majority in First Phase of AJK Elections** — Amid deadly clashes and allegations of rigging, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) secured **nine of 13 seats** in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections, while Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won four. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari accused the state of prioritising PMLN's interests, warning "**PPP will never allow Azad Kashmir to resemble Occupied Kashmir**". Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz hailed a "resounding victory" and urged PPP to accept results gracefully. Violence around Rawalakot left casualties, with authorities blaming the banned JAAC. (*The News*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Unity and Elections Amid Turmoil** — Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that "**meeting with the PTI founder was the key to an improvement in the given situation**", stressing unity against terrorism and the need for free and fair elections. He announced a major rally in Peshawar on 5 August to outline the party's next steps, while rejecting any support for the banned TTP. Aleema Khan highlighted strong grassroots mobilisation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, claiming social media reveals support ignored by national media. (*The News*, [29 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Elections Overshadowed by Violence in AJK** — The Editorial notes that while early results show **PML-N winning nine seats and PPP four** in the first phase of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections, the process has been marred by **allegations of rigging, polling violence and unrest linked to the banned JAAC**. The group's demand to abolish 12 refugee seats is described as deeply troubling, since these symbolise Pakistan's commitment to the Kashmir dispute. The editorial stresses that **"even one protestor killed is one too many"**, urging peaceful engagement over intimidation. (*The News*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Coalition Rift Deepens After AJK Polls** — Preliminary results from the first phase of Azad Jammu and Kashmir elections gave **PML-N nine seats and PPP four**, sparking sharp exchanges between coalition partners. Punjab Chief Minister **Maryam Nawaz** congratulated her party on an "outstanding victory" and urged PPP to "accept defeat with grace," criticising Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's language and governance record in Sindh. Former premier **Nawaz Sharif** hailed the win as "a testament to the trust of the people." Bilawal, however, vowed **"we will not back down and we will not bow before anyone"**, alleging rigging and coercion. (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Audit Flags Punjab's Flood Preparedness Failures** — The Auditor General of Pakistan has raised **serious concerns over the Punjab government's disaster planning**, noting that the **PDMA and district administrations failed to prepare disaster risk reduction plans** despite legal requirements. The audit report for FY 2024–25, submitted to the Punjab Assembly, highlights inadequate pre-disaster planning for seasonal streams and river flooding, which led to heavy financial losses. The government spent **Rs7.17 billion rehabilitating canals damaged by the 2022–23 floods** in Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur, underscoring costly gaps in preparedness. (*The Express Tribune*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Bilawal warns against prioritising party over nation** — Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman **Bilawal Bhutto Zardari** told a workers' convention in Muzaffarabad that the state must decide whether to serve **national interest or the political interests of PML-N**. He alleged violence, polling station attacks and internet disruptions had undermined democracy in AJK, insisting **"we will neither retreat nor compromise on the people's right to have their votes protected and counted."** Bilawal reiterated his call for a **Truth and Reconciliation Commission** and announced a rally under the slogan *"Kashmir Pe Daaka, Na-Manzoor."* (*The Nation*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Maryam hails PML-N's AJK victory, urges PPP to concede** — Punjab Chief Minister **Maryam Nawaz Sharif** celebrated her party's win in nine of 13 seats in Mirpur Division, calling it a vote for development and the future. She insisted **"the people did not merely stamp the lion; they voted for their own success and the development of Azad Kashmir."** Criticising **Bilawal Bhutto Zardari** for alleging rigging, she reminded him that PML-N had accepted PPP's Gilgit-Baltistan win without dispute. Maryam urged PPP to respect the people's mandate and improve governance in Sindh. (*The Nation*, [29 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Shehbaz pushes reforms, US ties and flood readiness** — Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** ordered the abolition of unnecessary posts to improve efficiency, noting that closures of **Utility Stores Corporation, Pak PWD and PASSCO** had already saved funds. He directed a third-party audit for transparency and asked the Right-Sizing Committee to finalise recommendations within a

month. Meeting a US Congressional delegation, he reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to stronger trade and investment ties, while also stressing refinery upgrades as part of energy security. He instructed full preparedness for monsoon floods, emphasising climate resilience. (*The Nation*, [29 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **135 Pakistani medical students repatriated from Afghanistan** — A group of **135 medical students**, mostly from Upper and Lower Dir, returned home after being stranded in Afghanistan for nine months. Representatives **Idrees Khan** and **Fayaz Yousafzai** told a press conference in Timergara that the students crossed via **Torkham border** with travel permissions facilitated by Pakistan's Consul General in Jalalabad, **Shafqat Ullah**, and Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior. They thanked both governments for coordinated efforts. The repatriation follows an earlier initiative on **July 11, 2026**, when 68 students returned. Over 1,000 Pakistani students remain enrolled in Afghan medical colleges. (*Dawn*, [29 July 2026](#))

SUSPECT ARRESTED OVER INDIA-LINKED DIGITAL INFLUENCE CAMPAIGN: TARAR



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