

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

31 July 2026

Security

- ◆ **Saudi Arabia Launches Maritime Defence Coalition Amid Escalating Conflict** — Riyadh has announced a **multinational maritime alliance** to safeguard shipping routes in the **Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb and Gulf of Aden**, with **Saudi Arabia hosting its permanent headquarters**. Fourteen countries, including **Pakistan, Turkiye and Egypt**, backed the joint statement. The move comes as the Middle East war expands: US-Saudi strikes targeted Iran-aligned groups in Iraq, while Iran claimed attacks on US-linked sites in **Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain**. Egyptian President **Abdel Fattah al-Sisi** warned of “**serious escalation**” after a drone strike at Damietta port. (*Dawn*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan Gains Maritime Confidence** — Pakistan and its territorial waters have been removed from Lloyd’s Joint War Committee’s war-risk “Listed Areas” after more than two decades, a move expected to **reduce insurance premiums and shipping costs**. Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs **Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry** termed the development a milestone, saying it would “**improve the competitiveness of Pakistan’s exports and strengthen the confidence of international shipping companies, traders and investors.**” Karachi, Port Qasim and Gwadar are now poised to attract greater global trade and investment. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **IS-K Claims Rare Taliban Assassination** — A regional branch of the **Islamic State group (IS-K)** has claimed responsibility for killing **Zabihullah Amiri**, head of the Taliban’s information and culture department in Badakhshan, who was shot dead Tuesday en route to Faizabad. IS-K stated: “**The soldiers of the Caliphate targeted a commander from the apostate Taliban militia... with machine guns, killing him along with one of his guards.**” Amiri was also the nephew of **Amanuddin Mansur**, governor of Helmand province. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Labourers Killed in Balochistan Violence** — Six labourers abducted in Kech district were found dead in Nasirabad, with **Balochistan Home Department Adviser Babar Yousafzai** confirming four victims from Punjab and two from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Local sources said a contractor from K-P was also killed after resisting attackers. **Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti condemned the killings as “inhuman” and a “clear act of terrorism.”** Separately, security forces killed four terrorists and destroyed two explosives-laden vehicles in Khuzdar during an IBO under ‘**Azm e Istehkam**’, targeting Indian proxies. (*Dawn*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan’s Afghan Policy Under Strain** — In a commentary, **Muhammad Umar**, non-resident fellow at the Consortium for Asia Pacific & Eurasian Studies, argues that Pakistan’s repatriation of undocumented Afghans is not cruelty but the conclusion of unmatched generosity. He cites attacks planned in Afghanistan, including the February mosque bombing in Islamabad, and stresses: “*Our case is stronger than any of theirs, because for us this is not about labour markets or cultural anxiety, it is about*

blood.” Umar contends Pakistan must prioritise sovereignty and security over indefinite refugee hosting. (*The News International*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan’s Fight Against Terror Persists** — An editorial notes that while **Operation Ghazab Lil Haq** has reduced incidents, terrorism remains far from defeated. The attack in Hangu that martyred 10 policemen came hours after ISPR reported eliminating 32 India-backed militants in KP and Balochistan. According to **CRSS**, KP and Balochistan accounted for **96% of violence-related fatalities** in Q2 2026, with the **TTP and BLA spearheading attacks**. The Editorial Board stresses: “No amount of domestic military success can permanently eliminate terrorism if its external sources of support remain intact.” (*The News International*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Defending the Defenders Amid Criticism** — In his column, **Inam Ul Haque**, retired major general, addresses allegations of corruption and perks within Pakistan’s military. He argues that “**Military corruption in Pakistan’s context is dealt with decisively, swiftly and with due diligence at all levels**”, contrasting this with unchecked corruption in the political class. Haque stresses that generals’ privileges are modest compared to other sectors, and veterans’ sacrifices cannot be measured in material terms. He criticises **Maulana Fazlur Rehman’s** July 19 speech, calling it historically inaccurate and politically opportunistic. (*The Express Tribune*, [30 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Security Forces Foil Major Attack in Balochistan** — According to **ISPR**, four terrorists were killed and two **explosive-laden vehicles configured as VBIEDs** were destroyed during an intelligence-based operation in **Khuzdar District**. The militants were identified as belonging to the Indian proxy group *Fitna al Hindustan*. The operation was part of the ongoing counterterrorism campaign “**Azm-e-Istehkam**”, approved under the National Action Plan, aimed at eliminating foreign-sponsored terrorism. Sanitisation operations are continuing to clear the area of any remaining threats. (*The Nation*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **TTP Operations Summary: 29 July 2026:** On **29 July 2026**, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) executed **11 operations** across six provinces. The highest activity was recorded in **North Waziristan (4)**, followed by **Orakzai (2)** and **South Waziristan (2)**, with single incidents in Swat, Tank, and Peshawar. Tactics included sniper fire, DShK machine-gun strikes, ambushes, raids, targeted assassinations, and counter-attacks. Notably, a high-profile clash in Swat resulted in the death of a targeted Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) operative alongside nine others. Across all engagements, casualties and material losses were inflicted on security forces, while the TTP reported one martyrdom in Tank.

Operations Breakdown Table

District	Area	Operation Type & Details
North Waziristan	Shawal	Sniper attack destroying a security camera at Dabar fort.
	Shawal	DShK ¹ machine-gun attack on Shoi Khel fort (casualties possible).

¹ The DShK (Russian: ДШК, pronounced Deh-Sha-Ka) is one of the most famous heavy machine guns ever built. It is a 12.7×108 mm heavy machine gun developed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s and has served in conflicts across the world for nearly nine decades. The name DShK is an acronym for: D – Degtyaryov (Vasily

District	Area	Operation Type & Details
	Shawal	DShK machine-gun attack on Dabar fort (casualties possible).
	Shawal	10-metre ambush on an eight-vehicle convoy; 30 reported casualties.
Orakzai	Hangu	Raid on Khazina Band police checkpoint; 4 wounded, 7 captured, 4 vehicles targeted.
	Hangu	Ambush on police reinforcement convoy; 10 reported killed.
South Waziristan	Azam Warsak	Arrest of two alleged army supply providers; later released via tribal guarantee.
Swat	Matta	Counter-operation following a failed CTD raid; 10 killed, including a wanted operative.
Tank	Khas Tank	Clash following an attempted army raid; 1 soldier killed, 1 TTP member martyred.
Peshawar	Badh Bera	Targeted attack in Matni Adizai killing a wanted CTD operative.

Economy

- ◆ **PPL's Fourth Hydrocarbon Discovery in Shah Bandar** — Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) has announced a new **gas and condensate find** at exploratory well **Rahi X-1** in Sujawal, Sindh. This marks the **fourth consecutive discovery** in the Shah Bandar Block, where PPL holds a 63% working interest alongside Mari Energies (32%) and two government partners (2.5% each). Drilling reached **2,612 metres** in the Lower Goru Formation, identifying a hydrocarbon-bearing zone. Testing showed flows of **0.493 mmscfd of gas and 12 bpd of condensate**, strengthening Pakistan's energy prospects. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Saudi Group Eyes \$10bn Investment in Pakistan** — Saudi Arabia's **Falcon Vision Group** has expressed interest in investing **\$10 billion** in Pakistan, with Federal Minister for the Board of Investment **Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh** assuring full facilitation. Sheikh highlighted incentives in **Special Economic Zones**, including **income tax exemption until 2035**, **duty concessions on machinery imports**, and **100% profit repatriation**. Falcon Vision, led by Vice Chairman **Muhammad Tariq Ghaus**, is active in infrastructure, construction and technology. Delegation members also discussed real estate ventures, Special Technology Zones, and a shopping mall project in Chakwal. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Reserves Fall as Gold Climbs** — The **State Bank of Pakistan's reserves dropped \$229m to \$17.03bn** in the week ending July 24, 2026, due to external debt repayments. Pakistan's total liquid reserves stood at \$22.4bn, with commercial banks holding \$5.4bn. The rupee closed at 277.81 against the dollar, gaining marginally as the greenback stabilised. Meanwhile, **gold rose Rs1,000 to Rs427,436 per tola**, tracking international gains after softer US inflation data. Analyst **Adnan**

Degtyaryov), Sh – Shpagin (Georgy Shpagin), K – Krupnokoliberny ("large-calibre" in Russian). Thus, DShK means "Degtyaryov-Shpagin Large-Calibre Machine Gun."

Agar cautioned that rising US bond yields and oil prices could keep bullion in a “danger zone.” (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Economic Gains Shadowed by External Risks** — The **Finance Ministry** has warned that escalating **US-Iran tensions could disrupt energy prices, trade flows and financial markets**, posing risks to Pakistan’s outlook despite stronger domestic indicators. Remittances rose 8.6% to \$41.6bn and the stock market surged 27.6%, yet **exports fell to \$30.8bn, imports climbed to \$64.5bn, and FDI dropped to \$1.64bn**. Inflation averaged 7.1%, large-scale manufacturing grew 5.8%, and IT exports hit \$4.6bn. **S&P Global Ratings upgraded Pakistan’s sovereign credit rating to B**, citing fiscal and reserve improvements. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan’s Image Under Global Scrutiny** — In her column, **Durdana Najam**, public policy analyst, notes that July brought a cluster of critical international reports on Pakistan, including the **EU’s GSP+ monitoring report**, a UK labour rights account, **Amnesty International’s commentary**, and a DW documentary. She argues this reflects Pakistan’s rising diplomatic relevance but also its failure to project its own narrative. Najam stresses: “*The real danger is not that Pakistan is criticised. The real danger is that Pakistan is criticised in ways that drown out everything else.*” (*The Express Tribune*, [30 July 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **FO Confirms Ongoing Negotiations** — Pakistan’s **Foreign Office** spokesperson **Tahir Andrabi** confirmed on Thursday that “**negotiations between parties are ongoing, particularly on (the) Strait of Hormuz and to de-escalate.**” He emphasised efforts to bring the US and Iran back to the **Islamabad MOU** and the **Pakistan-Qatar Joint Statement of June 22**, noting that dialogue and diplomacy remain the only viable path forward. Andrabi added: “**We encourage the parties to exercise maximum restraint and fully adhere to their commitment to resume technical-level talks.**” (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Dar Holds Talks on Red Sea Security** — Pakistan’s **Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar** met **Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan** to discuss maritime security in the **Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb**, amid escalating regional tensions. The Foreign Office said both sides welcomed Jordan’s proposal for a meeting of Arab and Islamic countries on Palestine. Dar also conferred with **Turkiye’s Hakan Fidan** and **Malaysia’s Dato’ Seri Mohamad Hasan** on regional developments. These engagements underscore Pakistan’s diplomatic role in promoting stability and dialogue. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Amnesty Warns of India’s Arms Trade with Israel** — A report by **Amnesty International** revealed that India supplied at least **2,596 military shipments** to Israel between October 2023 and November 2025, including **564,970 explosive ordnance parts and drone warheads**. Amnesty’s Secretary General **Agnès Callamard** said: “*Indian authorities cannot credibly argue they were unaware that continuing to authorise arms transfers carries a substantial risk of contributing to serious violations of international law.*” UN Special Rapporteur **Francesca Albanese** also warned of complicity in international crimes. Amnesty urged an immediate arms embargo. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Expert Urges Waiver for Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline** — Prominent Pakistani-American energy expert **Mossadaq Chughtai** has called for Pakistan to prioritise energy security by seeking a **non-revocable 50-year U.S. sanctions waiver** to enable uninterrupted gas imports from Iran. He described the Iran-Pakistan pipeline as the country's most strategic energy project, warning: *"The system we are living under has collapsed. If it continues in its present form, we will be continuing discussing them in the next 10 years."* Chughtai argued affordable Iranian gas could generate millions of jobs and transform Pakistan's economy. (*The News International*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Kazakhstan-Pakistan Maritime Cooperation Discussed** — At a farewell meeting in Islamabad, Kazakhstan's **Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin** and **Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar Chaudhry** explored ways to expand bilateral trade through Pakistani ports and strengthen regional connectivity. Chaudhry said **"Pakistani seaports can act as transit hubs for Kazakhstan and the wider Central Asian region, offering access to markets in the Persian Gulf, Africa and Southeast Asia."** Both sides highlighted opportunities in shipping, trade facilitation and joint ventures in export free zones to boost commerce. (*The News International*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **India's Youth Challenge Modi's Governance** — In a column, **Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani**, MNA and patron-in-chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council, highlights how thousands of Gen Z protesters at Jantar Mantar united across faiths against exam paper leaks and poor governance. He notes scenes of **Hindu-Muslim solidarity**, such as worshippers praying side by side and volunteers serving meals, which he says have unsettled the Modi government. Dr Vankwani argues: *"Hatred may mobilise crowds and win votes, but it is mutual respect and humanity that ultimately strengthen nations."* (*The News International*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **America at 250: Reckoning with Unfinished Debts** — In a reflective essay, **Dr Rakhshinda Perveen** explores the United States' 250th anniversary as both celebration and reckoning, noting that anniversaries must also invite honest accounting. She recalls the plight of **324,000 stateless Biharis** abandoned in Bangladesh's camps since 1971, lamenting Pakistan's failure to acknowledge their suffering. Drawing on American literature, she cites **Toni Morrison's *Beloved*** as proof that *"unmourned history does not disappear. It moves in with you."* For Dr Perveen, America's unfinished truths mirror Pakistan's own unresolved contradictions. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan, Iran Deepen Border Cooperation** — During a visit to Zahedan, **Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui** met senior Iranian officials, including **Governor General Mansour Bijar**, to strengthen bilateral ties. Both sides agreed to **expedite pending projects** and enhance trade through the **Mirjaveh-Taftan crossing**, while reaffirming cooperation in education and border management. Siddiqui also visited the **University of Sistan and Balochistan** to discuss academic linkages, including Pakistan Studies courses. Meetings with the Zahedan Chamber of Commerce highlighted plans for **business-to-business engagement** and expanded commercial ties. (*The Nation*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan, Türkiye Coordinate on Palestine Crisis** — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar** held a phone call with Turkish Foreign Minister **Hakan Fidan** to review regional developments, focusing on the worsening situation in Palestine. Both expressed **deep concern over Israeli military operations in Gaza and the West Bank**, as well as repeated violations at the Al-

Aqsa Mosque compound. They reaffirmed support for Palestinian rights and discussed Jordan's proposal for a joint Arab-Islamic meeting to coordinate diplomatic efforts. The conversation underscored close Pakistan-Türkiye cooperation on regional issues. (*The Nation*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan to Export Vehicles to Bangladesh** — MG JW Automobile Pakistan and Bangladesh's RANCON Group have signed an MoU to export locally assembled vehicles, marking a milestone for Pakistan's automotive industry. Special Assistant to PM **Haroon Akhtar Khan** said the deal will generate millions in foreign exchange and aligns with the government's **export-led industrial growth agenda**. Under the agreement, 100 vehicles will be exported this year, with total exports projected to reach **5,800 units over four years**. RANCON's **Mostafizur Rashid Bhuiyan** noted the partnership will introduce healthy competition in Bangladesh's auto market, while MG JW CEO **Jianqiang Shao** reaffirmed commitment to expanding exports. (*The Nation*, [31 July 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Shehbaz directs monthly FBR outreach** — Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** ordered the **FBR chairman and senior officials** to visit Karachi every month to hear business concerns and act on them. He instructed strict measures against tax evasion, a **digital monitoring system** for industries by December, and merit-based appointments. Chairing the **Daanish Authority Board**, he directed timely completion of schools, full boarding facilities, and mandatory IT and AI training. He also pushed for the **National Digital Vision** rollout in health, agriculture, housing and SMEs, and urged a comprehensive employment strategy under the **Prime Minister's Youth Programme**. (*The News*, [30 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Bilawal Appeals to PTI Voters in AJK** — At a rally in Muzaffarabad, **PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari** urged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf supporters to back PPP candidates in the **2 August elections**, warning that **"if they rob the people's votes, then that will truly mark the beginning of their downfall."** He accused the PML-N of treating the polls as a matter of "life and death" and vowed to defend PPP's mandate, recalling past confrontations with military rulers. Bilawal framed the vote as a choice over Kashmir's future, demanding **"election results should be decided by the ballot, not the bullet."** (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Alliance Under Strain in Lahore** — Analysts warn that the **PPP and PML-N are dangerously close to a point of no return**, as trading of allegations has intensified. Senior analyst **Mujeebur Rehman Shami** cautioned that "ever-growing bitterness" could make reconciliation difficult, while **Hasan Askari**, former caretaker Punjab chief minister, said: **"Somebody who steals elections should not be allowed to rule the country... how can both parties bury these recent allegations and move on?"** A PPP leader suggested de-escalation may follow the Kashmir elections. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Bushra Bibi Appeals for Bail on Health Grounds** — Former first lady **Bushra Bibi** has petitioned the **Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)** seeking suspension of her trial court sentence and release on bail, citing deteriorating health. Filed through counsel **Salman Safdar**, the appeal names the state and NAB as respondents. Bushra claims she developed an eye ailment in custody, underwent

surgery, and was kept in solitary confinement without adequate medical care. The petition argues that as an ailing woman, she is entitled to bail concessions. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **AJK Assembly Calls for Truth Commission** — The **AJK Legislative Assembly** passed a resolution urging the creation of an **independent, impartial and suitably empowered truth commission** to investigate recent unrest, including deaths, injuries and property losses. PPP Chairman **Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari** said the move sought to “*end the ongoing crisis and provide immediate relief to the people of Kashmir.*” The commission would examine evidence without predetermined conclusions, recommend relief and reforms, and submit reports within agreed timelines. It also called for protests to end and civic life to be restored. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **ECP Declines Recognition of Achakzai as PkMAP Head** — The **Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)** refused to recognise **Mahmood Khan Achakzai** as leader of the Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party, citing failure to hold intra-party elections. A five-member bench led by the **Chief Election Commissioner** noted that without elections, the party had no chairman. The hearing was adjourned until 19 August. Meanwhile, the ECP delisted four parties — **Technology Movement Pakistan, Awami Jamhoori Party Pakistan, Hum Awam Pakistan Party and Pakistan Reform Party** — for non-compliance with electoral laws. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Naqvi Calls for Governance Overhaul** — Federal Interior Minister **Mohsin Naqvi** told Pakistan’s first Economic Summit that the country’s governance system has “collapsed” and requires consensus-based reforms, including **new administrative units or provinces** to improve service delivery. He warned: “*If it continues in its present form, we will be continuing discussing them in the next 10 years.*” Naqvi urged political parties, institutions, businesses and civil society to pursue structural reforms, stressing that youth demand merit and justice. Leaders of the **Hazara Province Movement** welcomed his proposal. (*The News International*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan Launches Gender-Responsive AI School** — The **Ministry of IT and Telecommunication (MoITT)**, in partnership with **UN Women Pakistan** and supported by **KOICA**, inaugurated the country’s first **Gender-Responsive AI School** to promote inclusive and ethical artificial intelligence. UN Women’s **Jamshed M. Kazi** hailed it as “*setting a new benchmark for the Asia-Pacific region*”, while KOICA’s **Sodam Baek** emphasised building an innovation ecosystem where women and girls can participate equally. Federal Minister **Shaza Fatima Khawaja** reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to ensuring AI transformation is inclusive and responsive. (*The News International*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan’s Groundwater Crisis Demands Urgent Action** — In a column, **Syed Mohammad Ali**, academic and author, warns that Pakistan’s greatest water challenge lies underground, not in rivers governed by the **Indus Waters Treaty**. He stresses that **aquifers are being depleted far faster than they are replenished**, threatening food security and rural livelihoods. Ali argues that promoting water-intensive crops in stressed regions is unsustainable, and cautions that subsidising solar-powered tube-wells without regulation risks worsening over pumping. He concludes that sustainable groundwater management is vital for long-term water security. (*The Express Tribune*, [31 July 2026](#))

- ◆ **Coalition Partners Clash in AJK** — An editorial highlight growing acrimony between the **PPP** and **PML-N** after the first phase of polling in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. PPP Chairman **Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari** alleged his party's mandate was “*stolen*” through administrative manipulation and violence, while PPP's **Nayyar Bokhari** demanded the Election Commission delay notifications, likening irregularities to the **Form 47 controversies of 2024**. In response, **Ahsan Iqbal** dismissed the remarks as “immature” and **Maryam Nawaz** advised the PPP to accept defeat gracefully. The editorial warns that such spats expose the impoverishment of Pakistan's democracy. (*Dawn*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **Punjab's Outsourcing Drive Faces Scrutiny** — In his column, **Faisal Bari**, senior research fellow at IDEAS and associate professor at LUMS, critiques Punjab's outsourcing of **18,000 primary schools** to the private sector, with plans to extend this to higher levels. He argues that the supposed cost advantage is overstated, noting that savings stem mainly from **private schools paying teachers far below minimum wage**. Bari warns: “*The answer lies not in outsourcing but in improving the quality of service and governance.*” He cautions that reliance on cheap labour undermines teaching as a profession. (*Dawn*, [31 July 2026](#))
- ◆ **The Province Question** — An editorial underscores **Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's** call to openly debate the creation of new provinces in Pakistan. It argues that existing provincial structures, inherited from an earlier era, have become **too large and unwieldy for effective governance** as populations grow and cities expand. While acknowledging sensitivities around identity, representation and resources, the piece insists that reform cannot be postponed indefinitely. It concludes: “*Pakistan cannot run away from the province question forever. It is time to have the conversation.*” (*The Nation*, [31 July 2026](#))



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