

# DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

03 September 2026

## Security

- ◆ **Pakistan Navy Conducts Sea Spark 2026** — The **Pakistan Navy** has launched its flagship operational exercise **Sea Spark 2026** in Karachi to test combat readiness against conventional and emerging maritime threats. **Admiral Naveed Ashraf**, Chief of the Naval Staff, emphasised that the Navy could not afford any compromise on preparedness, stressing the growing importance of the information domain in modern warfare. The exercise involves **warships, submarines, aircraft, drones, Marines and Special Operations Forces**, with the **Army and Air Force** also participating to demonstrate integrated combat capabilities. It aims to enhance inter-service coordination and safeguard Pakistan's maritime interests. (*The Nation*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan Keeps Options Open After India Rejects IWT Ruling** — Pakistan has vowed to pursue “all diplomatic and non-diplomatic options” after India rejected the **Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling** on the **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)**. Outgoing FO spokesperson **Tahir Andrabi** stressed that India, as a signatory, cannot absolve itself of treaty obligations, calling its defiance “abuse and contempt of international law.” He warned that unilateralism undermines the sanctity of treaties and erodes confidence in dispute-settlement mechanisms. Andrabi urged India to return to full compliance, noting that “**New Delhi cannot treat international law as a matter of convenience.**” (*The News*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **HRCP Warns Against Expansive Anti-Terrorism Powers** — The **Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)** has voiced concern over the **Punjab Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill 2026**, which empowers a confidentially designated officer to classify cases as ‘special security cases’, allowing the identities of judges, prosecutors, police officers, witnesses and defence counsel to be withheld. HRCP cautioned that the Bill lacks clear definitions of circumstances for invoking such powers, creating scope for misuse against citizens, political opponents or protesters. It urged reconsideration to align with constitutional and international fair-trial guarantees, warning that secrecy could undermine **Articles 9, 10A and 14 of the Constitution**. (*The News International*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Four Militants Killed in CTD Operation in Peshawar** — The **Counter Terrorism Department (CTD)** in Peshawar reported killing four militants linked to the **Fitna al-Khwarij group** during an operation in **Badaber**. Acting on intelligence about militant movement, CTD teams intercepted suspects riding motorcycles. When signalled to stop, they opened fire, prompting a **20–30 minute exchange**. The militants were killed, while others escaped under cover of darkness. Recovered items included **SMGs, a pistol, a grenade, ammunition, mobile phones and two motorcycles**. An Afghan identity document was found on one deceased, reportedly matching his photograph. A search operation continues to trace those who fled. (*The News*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Emerging Muslim Security Architecture** — In her analysis, foreign policy expert **Nasim Zehra** underscores the significance of the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement** between Pakistan, Saudi

Arabia and Turkiye. She notes that while collective defence is not new, the pact's importance lies in its **regional ownership, rapid institutionalisation and unique composition**. Pakistan's pivotal role is highlighted, with Zehra stressing that Islamabad combined deterrence with diplomacy during crises, embodying "**sufficient strength to deter aggression, sufficient diplomacy to prevent deterrence from having to be used.**" The agreement, she argues, could evolve into a **cross-regional Muslim security framework** prioritising diplomacy over confrontation if implementation succeeds. (*The News*, [3 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Deepen Cybersecurity Cooperation** — Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed a **memorandum of understanding (MoU)** to strengthen collaboration in **cybersecurity**, aiming to protect cyberspace and vital interests of both nations. The agreement was signed by **Federal IT Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja** and **Saudi National Cybersecurity Authority Governor Engineer Majed Al-Mazyed**, with provisions for **expertise exchange to counter emerging cyber threats**. Earlier, Khawaja also met **SDAIA President Abdullah bin Sharaf Alghamdi** in Riyadh, discussing cooperation in **artificial intelligence, data governance and emerging technologies**, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to building a strong digital economy. (*The Express Tribune*, [3 September 2026](#))

## Economy

- ◆ **ADB Reaffirms Support for Pakistan's Reform Agenda** — Finance Minister **Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb** met **Yingming Yang**, Vice-President of the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**, who praised Pakistan's progress in macroeconomic stabilisation and fiscal management. Aurangzeb stressed shifting focus from stabilisation to **sustainable and inclusive growth**, highlighting reforms in **domestic resource mobilisation, energy, pensions and insurance**. He emphasised expanding **SME financing and integration into global value chains**, while Yang reaffirmed ADB's commitment to supporting Pakistan's priorities, including **private-sector development, infrastructure, clean energy and climate resilience**. Minister **Ahad Cheema** also welcomed ADB's partnership, noting ML-1 as a flagship project. (*The Nation*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Government Raises Rs680b in T-Bill Auction** — The government mobilised **Rs680 billion** through the auction of **Market Treasury Bills**, short of its Rs800 billion target, despite bids totalling **Rs2.77 trillion**. The **State Bank of Pakistan** accepted papers across four tenors at a weighted average yield of 11.60%, with demand skewed towards shorter maturities. Cut-off yields moved in mixed directions: one-month bills at 11.39% (down 8bps), three-month at 11.60% (down 5bps), six-month at 11.90% (up 10bps), and 12-month unchanged at 11.99%. Meanwhile, the rupee closed at 277.45 against the dollar, while **gold plunged Rs11,300 per tola** locally, contrasting with international bullion's recovery. (*The Express Tribune*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **ML-1 Declared National Priority** — Pakistan and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** have agreed to accelerate development projects and expand private-sector participation. During talks between **Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema** and **ADB Vice President Yingming Yang**, the bank proposed a **joint working group for institutional reforms in Pakistan Railways**, which both sides will initiate immediately. Cheema reiterated that the **ML-1 railway project is a flagship national priority**, while ADB welcomed the government's momentum and pledged close cooperation for early commencement. The meeting also discussed reforms, SME

promotion, export-led growth, and infrastructure strengthening, with ADB promising to expand its private-sector portfolio in Pakistan. (*The Express Tribune*, [3 September 2026](#))

## Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan Seal Landmark Trade Accord** — Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** and Kyrgyz President **Sadyr Japarov** signed a binding agreement to raise bilateral trade from **\$16 million to \$200 million within two years**, marking a major step in economic partnership. The accord, signed at Bishkek airport, was accompanied by agreements in **health, science, defence, education and other sectors**. Shehbaz hailed Kyrgyz cultural heritage during his visit to **Ala-Archa National Park**, while Japarov personally drove him to the airport — a gesture underscoring “**the depth of the warmth characterising ties between the two countries.**” (*The Nation*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan and Belgium Strengthen Maritime Cooperation** — Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs **Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry** met Belgian Ambassador **Idesbald Van der Gracht** to discuss closer institutional ties in the maritime sector. Both sides agreed to enhance coordination between their maritime institutions and explore **training and exchange programmes for students**, with Pakistan’s Marine Academy being upgraded to a degree-awarding institution. The minister outlined plans to expand port infrastructure, including a **multipurpose terminal, automobile zone and garment zone at Port Qasim**, alongside energy storage facilities at Karachi Port Trust. He emphasised Gwadar’s role in improving regional connectivity with Central Asia. (*The Nation*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Makkah Defence Pact Signals New Phase in Pakistan’s Foreign Policy** — Former federal health minister **Dr Nadeem Jan** argues that Pakistan’s foreign policy is entering a transformative era, with the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement** between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye marking a shift from being seen as a security-dependent state to a potential **net security provider**. The pact envisages **collective security, peaceful dispute resolution and strategic autonomy**, with Pakistan’s military credibility and diplomatic reach giving it distinctive value. Dr Jan stresses that “**credible deterrence can create the space in which diplomacy becomes possible**”, urging institutionalisation of military, diplomatic and economic cooperation. (*The News*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **India’s Waning Soft Power** — The *Editorial Board* observes that India, once a cultural gateway for South Asia, has seen its **regional goodwill eroded since 2014** under the BJP’s Hindutva-driven policies. Bollywood and cultural diplomacy once strengthened India’s image, but “**its politics of oppression and obsession with building a Hindutva state have started giving India a bad name.**” A UN committee has raised grave concerns over alleged abuses against minorities, while Christians in Mumbai face intimidation at places of worship. International surveys show declining favourability, with only 45% viewing India positively. The editorial warns that India has traded pluralism for polarisation, damaging its global reputation. (*The News*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **PIA Expands London Operations** — Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) will begin operating **daily flights to London from October 27**, increasing its current four weekly flights to seven. According to a spokesperson, five flights will run between **Islamabad and London**, and two between **Lahore and London**, reflecting growing passenger demand and confidence in the carrier.

The expansion aims to provide travellers with more options between Pakistan and the UK. Meanwhile, PIA has floated an international tender to appoint a **freight handling agent in France** for its Paris station, under a three-year contract, to streamline cargo operations and improve efficiency. (*The Express Tribune*, [3 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Expanding Pakistan–Uzbekistan Energy Ties** — Federal Minister for Power **Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari** has emphasised the “**significant scope for expanding cooperation in the energy sector**” between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Speaking at a reception marking Uzbekistan’s 35th Independence Day, he highlighted opportunities in **electricity connectivity, renewable energy, hydropower, energy infrastructure and investment**. Leghari noted that recent high-level visits — Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Tashkent in 2025 and President Mirziyoyev to Islamabad in 2026 — have given fresh momentum to bilateral ties, with agreements spanning trade, IT, agriculture and defence. He stressed that connectivity is central, with Pakistan offering Uzbekistan access to the Arabian Sea and Uzbekistan providing Pakistan entry into Central Asian markets. (*The Express Tribune*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **RSS and India’s Identity Debate in the US** — Public policy analyst **Durdana Najam** writes that protests during RSS chief **Mohan Bhagwat’s US visit** highlight a deeper clash over India’s future. For nearly a century, the **RSS has sought to redefine India as a Hindu civilisation**, contrasting with the constitutional vision of a diverse republic. Najam notes that “**much of India’s contemporary political debate can be understood through this clash of visions.**” Education, culture and symbols like *Vande Mataram* have been central to the RSS project, raising concerns among minorities about belonging and equality. Internationally, India’s image as a pluralist democracy faces scrutiny, complicating regional relations. (*The Express Tribune*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **SCO’s Afghan Lens** — The editorial argues that the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** has taken a **principled stance** by urging an inclusive government in Afghanistan and censuring Kabul for failing to honour its **Doha commitments**. The **Bishkek declaration** identifies Afghanistan as a hub of war, terrorism and drugs, reaffirming the SCO’s commitment to peace and development. Pakistan, as the new chair, is credited with steering diplomacy and highlighting its mediation successes, while India’s regional isolation is noted. The piece concludes that the SCO’s **focus on counterterrorism and geopolitical inclusivity** under Islamabad’s leadership reflects the rise of **multilateralism** and resistance to unilateral Western influence. (*The Express Tribune*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan’s Diplomatic Momentum and Internal Challenges** — The *Dawn* editorial notes that Pakistan’s foreign policy reputation has improved markedly, with recognition for its **diplomatic finesse, ability to bring adversaries together, and contributions to regional peace**. Recent successes include assuming the **SCO chairmanship**, leading the **Makkah Defence Alliance secretariat**, and mediating between **Iran and the US**. Yet, the piece cautions that “**the true value of these diplomatic successes can only be realised when there is peace and prosperity within.**” Persistent insurgencies in KP and Balochistan, economic fragility, and political instability remain formidable hurdles. Internal reconciliation and stability are essential to sustain external achievements. (*Dawn*, [3 September 2026](#))

## Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Gilani Engages Leaders on National and Regional Issues** — Acting President and Senate Chairman **Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani** met political figures and business representatives at **Aiwan-e-Sadr**, discussing national, regional and international matters including the security situation and flash floods. KP Governor **Faisal Karim Kundi** briefed him on peace and rehabilitation efforts, while former AJK President **Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan** recalled development projects from Gilani's premiership, including medical colleges and the **Bab-e-Yousuf bridge**. Gilani reaffirmed that "**Kashmir had always remained close to the heart of the PPP leadership**", underscoring the party's longstanding commitment to the Kashmir cause. (*The Nation*, [3 September 2026](#))
  
- ◆ **Balochistan Can Adapt China's Poverty Reduction Lessons** — A new policy paper by the **University of Balochistan's Government Innovation Lab (GIL)** argues that the province can benefit from **China's internationally recognised anti-poverty model** through adaptation rather than replication. Authored by **Dr Siraj Bashir Baloch**, the study highlights China's integrated approach — combining **long-term planning, targeted interventions, institutional coordination and sustained investment in human and physical capital** — as key to eliminating extreme rural poverty. It suggests Balochistan could strengthen poverty reduction by improving **rural connectivity, vocational education, agriculture value chains, SME support and public service delivery**, with **targeted poverty identification** singled out as highly transferable. (*The Nation*, [3 September 2026](#))
  
- ◆ **Imran Khan's Sister Files Second Contempt Petition** — Dr **Uzma Khan**, sister of PTI founder **Imran Khan**, has again approached the **Supreme Court** seeking contempt proceedings against the federal government and senior officials for failing to implement the apex court's **18 August order**. The petition alleges "**wilful, deliberate and contumacious disobedience**" of directions regarding Khan's transfer to Shifa International Hospital, family meetings, and twice-weekly phone calls with his sons. Uzma claims only two meetings were allowed, while phone calls have been denied since March, accusing authorities of obstructing justice and violating judicial directives. (*The News International*, [3 September 2026](#))
  
- ◆ **IHC Division Bench Overturns Navy Farms Ruling** — The **Islamabad High Court (IHC)** has set aside the 2022 single-bench judgment that declared **Pakistan Naval Farms** and the **Navy Sailing Club at Rawal Lake** illegal. A division bench comprising **Justice Inaam Ameen Minhas** and **Justice Shah Rukh Arjumand** annulled orders for demolition of the Sailing Club, misconduct findings, and criminal proceedings against former Naval Chief **Admiral (R) Zafar Mahmood Abbasi**. Directions to recover alleged losses from officers and to declare land transfers illegal were also quashed. Appeals had been filed by the Ministry of Defence and Admiral Abbasi against the earlier ruling. (*The News*, [3 September 2026](#))
  
- ◆ **Minority Leaders Oppose Sindh's Move on ETPB** — Minority representatives have voiced strong reservations over the Sindh government's decision to appoint deputy commissioners as administrators of the **Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB)**, warning that provincial interference could affect the management of **Gurdwaras and temples**. **Sardar Bishan Singh** stressed that the ETPB is a federal institution under the **Nehru-Liaquat Pact (1950)** and **Pant-Mirza Agreement (1955)**, and "should not be given a provincial character." He argued that the Sindh Act of 2019 conflicts with constitutional provisions, noting that under **Article 270AA**, the ETPB was not devolved through the 18th Amendment. Representatives urged the federal government to safeguard the ETPB's status and protect minority religious sites. (*The News International*, [3 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan Seeks UNESCO Heritage Recognition for Ranighat and Banbhore** — Pakistan has urged UNESCO to advance the nominations of **Ranighat (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)** and the **Port of Banbhore (Sindh)** for inscription on the **World Heritage List**, while requesting international technical support for preservation. Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture **Aurangzeb Khan Khichi** met UNESCO's Representative in Pakistan **Fuad Pashayev**, who assured full assistance. Currently, 37 Pakistani sites are on UNESCO's Tentative List. Khichi also sought recognition of Pakistani culinary traditions under the **Intangible Cultural Heritage framework**, and proposed conferences on ancient trade routes linking the Indus Valley to Mesopotamia. (*The News*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **AJK Faces Political and Governance Challenges** — A new government under Prime Minister **Iftikhar Gilani** has taken charge in **Muzaffarabad** amid unrest, incomplete elections in **Poonch and Sudhnoti**, and simmering public discontent. Since June 2026, protests led by the banned **Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC)** have resulted in nearly 100 deaths, an internet blackout, curfews in Rawalakot, and widespread closures. **Ershad Mahmud** notes that Gilani faces a legitimacy crisis, having lost elections and risen through a special seat, but argues that if he pursues **dialogue, reconciliation and service delivery**, he could gain credibility. The choice, he writes, is between **structural reforms or another short-lived experiment**. (*The News*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Civil Service Reforms Near Completion** — After two years of deliberations, the **Ahsan Iqbal-led committee** has finalised **43 recommendations** to overhaul Pakistan's bureaucracy, though disagreements persist on **specialised recruitment, Urdu option in CSS exams, and the National Executive Service (NES)**. Consensus has been reached on reducing administrative tiers, integrating federal and provincial services after Grade-21, and enhancing training with domain-specific courses. The reforms aim to address weaknesses such as poor expertise, slow decision-making and colonial legacies. Compensation proposals include inflation-indexed pay, housing support and education grants. However, unresolved issues like NES risk politicisation and disparity, leaving final decisions to the prime minister. (*The Express Tribune*, [3 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Low Attendance in National Assembly's 29th Session** — A report by the **Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen)** reveals that only **65 of 332 MNAs (20%) attended all eight sittings** of the National Assembly's 29th session (Aug 17–28), while **37 lawmakers (11%) skipped the entire session**. Attendance peaked at 74% in the fourth sitting but fell to 54% in the fifth. The prime minister attended one sitting, whereas the opposition leader joined seven. Of 26 federal ministers scheduled for question hour, only 12 were present when required. Overall, **267 MNAs (80%) missed at least one sitting**, highlighting persistent concerns over parliamentary participation. (*The Express Tribune*, [3 September 2026](#))

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