

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

16 September 2026

Security

- ◆ **Two civilians killed in Bannu drone strike** — In Bannu district's Wazir subdivision, a quadcopter attack allegedly carried out by terrorists martyred two civilians, including a woman, and injured two others on Monday. Following the incident, a **joint operation led by DPO Captain (r) Mohammad Furqan Bilal** was launched, involving the **Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), Elite Force and peace committee members**. Police reported an exchange of fire in which one terrorist was killed, while others were believed to have been wounded or carried away by accomplices using the rugged terrain. Authorities emphasised that ["action against terrorists targeting civilians will continue with full force and determination"], with security forces on high alert to safeguard citizens. (*Dawn*, [16 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **ISPR clarifies Makkah defence pact** — The **Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry** has emphasised that the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement** between **Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye** is **purely defensive**, rejecting suggestions of regional competition or aggression. In an interview with *Al-Arabiya English*, he stated the pact is based on **collective deterrence** with "no offensive, no interference, no aggressive element." He described it as **complementary**, not competing with other alliances, and stressed that Pakistan's ties with China remain unaffected. Chaudhry also dismissed the notion of a "Muslim strategic alliance," calling it instead a **regional stability alliance** open to new partners who share a vision of peace and non-aggression. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan's strategic test at Bab al-Mandab** — The **Houthis' capture of Perim Island** has created a major challenge for the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement** signed by **Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan**. By declaring the strait open to all but Saudi vessels, the Houthis have raised the question of whether selective denial of access constitutes an "**armed attack**" under the pact. As **Asif Durrani**, former ambassador to Iran and the UAE, explains, this is the first real test of the agreement, which is explicitly defensive and tied to **Article 51 of the UN Charter**. Pakistan's dilemma lies in balancing its **commitment to Saudi Arabia** with its need to avoid confrontation with **Iran**, while safeguarding its own maritime trade routes. Durrani warns that Islamabad must defend its ally and protect freedom of navigation without being drawn into another war in Yemen. (*The News*, [16 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan signs IAEA safeguards for Chashma-5 nuclear plant** — In Vienna, **Dr Raja Ali Raza Anwar**, Chairman of the **Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC)**, signed a **Safeguards Agreement for Chashma Unit-5 (C-5)** with **IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi** during the **70th IAEA General Conference**, witnessed by **China Atomic Energy Authority Chairman Shan Zhongde**. Approved earlier by the IAEA Board of Governors, the agreement underscores international confidence in Pakistan's commitment to the **peaceful use of nuclear**

energy and adherence to **non-proliferation obligations**. Construction of C-5, a **1,200 MW(e) reactor**, is advancing rapidly and scheduled for commissioning in 2028, adding significant low-carbon power to Pakistan's grid. Pakistan currently operates six nuclear plants with a combined capacity of **3,530 MW(e)** and over **100 reactor-years of safe operations**. Bilateral talks with China also explored future cooperation in nuclear science and technology. (*The Nation*, [16 September 2026](#))

Economy

- ◆ **SBP clarifies sandbox testing limits** — The **State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)** has cautioned that the **successful completion of sandbox testing does not imply regulatory approval**, stressing that participants must obtain formal authorisation before launching products commercially. In line with **SBP Vision 2028**, the first regulatory sandbox cohort was launched in August 2025, focusing on **inward remittances, open banking and remote merchant onboarding**. Six firms, including **Taptap Send UK Ltd, United Bank Ltd, Digi Khata, Swich Retail and Neem Exponential Financial Services**, successfully tested solutions between January and June. SBP said the findings will inform future regulatory frameworks, but reiterated that sandbox success alone is insufficient for approval. (*Dawn*, [16 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **PM Shehbaz Sharif prioritises exports for growth** — At a high-level review meeting, **Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif** directed that **boosting exports must be the foundation of Pakistan's economic growth**, urging diversification beyond traditional sectors. He stressed **value addition, compliance with international standards, and adoption of modern technology and digitalisation** to enhance competitiveness. The PM also ordered the removal of administrative hurdles to make exporting easier and more transparent. Exhibitions such as **TEXPO, FoodAg and Minerals Show** are being organised to showcase Pakistani products globally, while the **Export Development Fund** has been restructured to support businesses. Separately, Sharif instructed the **NDMA** to mobilise all resources for relief in rain-hit areas and reiterated the federal government's commitment to **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's development and welfare**. (*The Nation*, [16 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan–Canada push for deeper economic ties** — Pakistan and Canada have reaffirmed their resolve to **translate political goodwill into stronger commercial and investment partnerships**, with talks centred on the **Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA)**. Commerce Minister **Jam Kamal Khan** assured Canadian High Commissioner **Tarik Ali Khan** of Pakistan's commitment to advancing negotiations, while the envoy described FIPA as a *"foundational step for increasing Canadian investment in Pakistan"*. Discussions covered **agriculture, mining, clean energy, aviation and value-added industries**, with emphasis on joint ventures and renewable energy projects. Both sides agreed to maintain close coordination, facilitate delegations and pursue tangible outcomes from the forthcoming negotiations. (*The Nation*, [16 September 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Strengthening parliamentary ties across continents** — On the sidelines of the **69th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference** in Cape Town, National Assembly Speaker **Sardar**

Ayaz Sadiq met separately with **Uganda Parliament Speaker Jacob Marksons Oboth** and **Bangladesh Deputy Speaker Barrister Kayser Kamal**. In his meeting with Oboth, Sadiq recalled his longstanding friendship with Uganda and highlighted the role of former Ugandan Speaker **Rebecca Kadaga**, who supported Pakistan's successful bid for the **CPA Presidency in 2015**. These engagements underscore Pakistan's efforts to deepen parliamentary diplomacy and foster stronger ties with fellow Commonwealth nations. (*Dawn*, [16 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **IHC suspends expulsion of Afghan doctor** — The **Islamabad High Court (IHC)** has granted interim relief to **Dr Imadud Din**, an Afghan national, allowing him to continue his **postgraduate medical training** in Pakistan. Justice **Khadim Hussain Soomro** suspended a **Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC)** notification ordering the repatriation of Afghan students, ruling that it could not apply retrospectively to those already enrolled. Counsel **Barrister Qasim Nawaz Abbasi** argued that terminating training without notice violated constitutional guarantees, stressing that Dr Din was in his fifth year of **FCPS-II urology training**. Meanwhile, the **Balochistan High Court (BHC)** dismissed similar petitions, holding that Afghan nationals have no absolute right to remain or study in Pakistan, though they must be treated with dignity. (*Dawn*, [16 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Dar reviews UNGA agenda, meets Lebanese minister** — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar** chaired a meeting at the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** to review Pakistan's programme for the upcoming **81st UN General Assembly session**, including high-level engagements and bilateral meetings. He directed officials to ensure readiness for Pakistan's active participation. Separately, Dar met **Lebanese Interior Minister Ahmad Al-Hajjar**, with discussions covering **bilateral relations, law-enforcement cooperation and regional developments**. Both sides welcomed the signing of the **Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons**, calling it a milestone in legal cooperation. Al-Hajjar praised Pakistan's role in promoting regional stability and congratulated Islamabad on the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement**. Later, Dar spoke by phone with **IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi**, who is also a candidate for UN Secretary-General. They discussed the regional situation, reaffirmed the **Islamabad MoU** as the best path to defuse tensions, and Grossi offered technical support to Pakistan. Dar reiterated Pakistan's commitment to the **UN Charter** and wished Grossi success in his campaign. (*The Nation*, [16 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan rebuts Indian claims at Geneva** — At the **UN Human Rights Council**, Pakistan firmly rejected India's allegations of "**cross-border terrorism**", accusing New Delhi of selective adherence to international law. **First Secretary Adeel Mumtaz Khokhar**, exercising Pakistan's right of reply, cited the arrest of Indian naval officer **Kulbhushan Jadhav** on espionage and terrorism charges as evidence undermining India's claims. He stressed that "**international law cannot be treated as a set of selective options**", pointing out that the **Permanent Court of Arbitration** had affirmed the **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)** remained fully in force. Khokhar warned that India could not evade its treaty obligations, declaring: "**India may fancy itself the regional bully, but it cannot bully its way out of the IWT.**" (*The Nation*, [16 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan outlines inclusive digital roadmap at SCO forum** — At the **2026 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Digital Economy Forum in Urumqi**, **Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal** unveiled the **Uraan Pakistan vision**, aiming to transform Pakistan into a **\$1 trillion economy by 2035**. He highlighted rapid growth in digital connectivity, with users surpassing **150 million** and a **25% rise**

in data consumption over two years. Broadband expansion is scaling from 3 to 5 million fibre connections, targeting **10 million households**. Pakistan's **IT exports hit \$4.6bn**, with a shift toward proprietary tech products and digital platforms. Iqbal emphasised inclusivity, noting female mobile internet usage rose from **33% to 45%**, reducing the gender divide to **8%**. He urged SCO states to build **interconnected tech corridors, sovereign AI capability, and cross-border e-commerce systems**, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to **equitable digital transformation**. (*The Nation*, [16 September 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Imran Khan's family denied access at Adiala jail** — The sisters and lawyers of **PTI founder Imran Khan** were once again barred from meeting him at **Adiala jail**, despite **Islamabad High Court (IHC) orders** mandating family visits on Tuesdays and party leader meetings on Thursdays. **Aleema Khan**, speaking outside the jail, criticised the violation of court directives and suggested that **KP should not accord protocol to Nawaz Sharif** during his provincial visits. She alleged that the ruling elite was fearful and preparing to flee, adding that [“the constitutional court has been established to undermine the Supreme Court and keep Imran Khan in jail”]. Another sister, **Dr Uzma Khan**, accused judges of insulting the nation. Meanwhile, **PTI Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram** rejected the **Federal Constitutional Court's (FCC)** move to seek Supreme Court records on Khan's hospital transfer case, calling it evidence of deliberate weakening of the apex court through constitutional amendments. (*Dawn*, [16 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Government dismisses lockdown rumours amid fuel subsidy rollout** — The federal government has **rejected reports of a smart lockdown** to tackle rising fuel prices, with **Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry** clarifying that such measures were “neither discussed nor in my knowledge.” Speculation followed Information Minister **Attaullah Tarar's** remarks about austerity reviews, but officials stressed the focus remains on the **Prime Minister's Fuel Relief Scheme**, offering **Rs100 per litre subsidy** for motorcycles, rickshaws, Chingchis and cars up to 800cc. Citizens register via SMS to 9771 and generate a **fuel token (TOK)** before refuelling. **IT Minister Shaza Fatima Khawaja** inspected implementation in Islamabad, assuring uninterrupted relief and emphasising one-time registration. The scheme extends nationwide from midnight Wednesday. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Blaze devastates historic Leepa Valley bazaar** — A massive fire swept through the **Kappa Gali Bazaar in Leepa Valley, AJK**, destroying **47 shops along with their goods**, as well as a mosque and a hotel. According to the **State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA)**, the blaze spread rapidly due to the bazaar's predominantly **wooden structures**, making firefighting difficult. Local residents and **Rescue 1122 teams** joined efforts, managing to save 15 shops and prevent another mosque from being destroyed. The SDMA has begun assessing losses, while the **AJK government pledged priority relief for affected shopkeepers**. The incident highlights the vulnerability of historic marketplaces built with traditional materials, where flames can engulf entire communities within minutes. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **AJK pushes digital transformation for citizen services** — The ‘Azad’ Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has stepped up its digital initiatives to make public services faster, transparent and more accessible, reducing repeated visits to offices. The programme, overseen by the **AJK Information Technology Board** under **Prime Minister Barrister Syed Iftikhar Ali Gilani**, includes **computerisation of land records**, a **one-window public service system**, a **complaints management mechanism**, and **IT Excellence Centres** for skills development. **Digital land records** aim to cut reliance on paper files, while the **one-window system** will consolidate services under a single platform. The **complaints cell** will track grievances and ensure accountability. Gilani directed officials to use modern technology to deliver “**easier, faster and more transparent**” services for citizens. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa faces wheat shortfall** — The **Food Department** has revealed that **Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa’s wheat reserves have dropped to 189,000 metric tonnes**, enough for only about **13 days of consumption** at the province’s daily requirement of 14,900 tonnes. With an annual demand of **5.436 million tonnes** against local production of just **1.472 million tonnes**, K-P faces a deficit of nearly **3.964 million tonnes**, making it heavily reliant on external supplies. Officials noted that **225,000 tonnes from PASSCO are in the pipeline**, expected to ease pressure once delivered. The alarming decline in government stocks has raised concerns over food security, underscoring the province’s dependence on imports to sustain its population. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 September 2026](#))

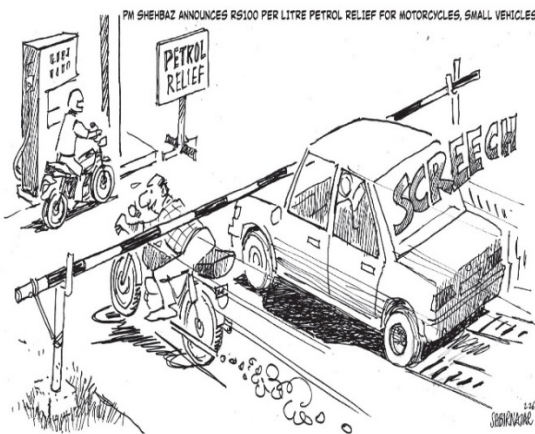
- ◆ **Jurisdictional clash between FCC and Supreme Court** — The **Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)** has ordered the **Supreme Court (SC)** to hand over records of cases concerning **Imran Khan’s hospitalisation**, raising questions about jurisdiction after the **27th Amendment** shifted constitutional interpretation powers to the FCC. The move came a day before the SC was to hear a contempt petition against PM Shehbaz Sharif for failing to implement its directive to transfer Khan to Shifa International Hospital. The FCC, led by **Chief Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan**, identified four constitutional questions, including which court can enforce fundamental rights. Commentators warned of an institutional crisis: **Barrister Tariq Mahmood Khokhar** described the FCC order as “*a belated obituary of the Supreme Court of Pakistan*”, while **Advocate Faisal Chaudhry** called it “*a defining moment for the SC*”. The confrontation underscores fears of a weakened judiciary and blurred constitutional authority. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **PTI calls for dialogue amid judicial tensions** — **Barrister Gohar Ali Khan**, Chairman of PTI, urged the government to engage in talks, noting that “**the atmosphere surrounding back-channel contacts appeared lukewarm this time.**” He warned that **Imran Khan’s health issue had been turned into a constitutional crisis** and criticised the **Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)** for taking up the matter, stressing that the Supreme Court’s directive to shift Khan to hospital had not been implemented. Gohar also condemned the treatment of **KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi in Lahore**, calling it “regrettable” and insisting Punjab authorities should apologise. He reaffirmed PTI’s support for **Jamaat-e-Islami’s protests against inflation**, while announcing PTI’s own march on September 27. (*The Express Tribune*, [16 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Gilgit-Baltistan presents delayed Rs218.8bn budget** — After a three-month wait, the **Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) government** unveiled its **Rs218.845 billion budget for FY 2026-27**, carrying a

deficit of **Rs52.65bn** and seeking federal support. **Senior Minister Mohammad Ali Akhtar**, also holding the finance portfolio, told the GB Assembly that the budget prioritises **education, health, infrastructure and welfare of the underprivileged**. Development expenditure is set at **Rs43.97bn**, while non-development spending stands at **Rs149.87bn**. Key allocations include a **wheat subsidy fund raised to Rs22bn**, a **minimum wage increase from Rs40,000 to Rs44,000**, and **Rs1bn for social protection** with a proposed **Rs4bn endowment fund**. Climate change measures include diverting 1% of development funds to a consolidated account and procuring hybrid vehicles. (*Dawn*, [16 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Frontex and FIA explore real-time intelligence sharing** — A high-level **Frontex delegation**, led by Executive Director **Hans Leijtens**, met **FIA Director General Dr Usman Anwar** in Islamabad to discuss mechanisms for secure, real-time exchange of intelligence on **human smuggling, irregular migration and suspicious cross-border travel**. Proposals included a **direct hotline** between Frontex and FIA authorities and possibly posting a **Pakistani representative at Frontex HQ in Warsaw**. FIA briefed the delegation on reforms such as **risk-based passenger profiling, enhanced data verification and tighter airport checks**, noting that **39,786 passengers were offloaded in 2025** and asylum claims by Pakistanis in the UK fell by 16% year-on-year. Frontex praised Pakistan's improved border management, with both sides emphasising cooperation to disrupt smuggling networks and facilitate legitimate travel. (*The News*, [16 September 2026](#))



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