

# DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

22 September 2026

## Security

- ◆ **Pakistan Launches Air and Ground Operations Against Militants After KP Attacks** — The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting stated that Pakistan carried out coordinated ground operations in Kohat, Hangu and Thal, followed by calibrated air strikes on militant hideouts in border regions of Afghanistan, in response to recent terrorist attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the government, a total of 37 militants were killed, including nine in ground operations and 28 in strikes that destroyed three targets, among them a suicide bombers' training centre. The ministry said maximum precautions were taken to avoid civilian casualties and reaffirmed its commitment to “maintenance of peace and stability in the region” while continuing counterterrorism efforts under *Azm-e-Istehkam*. Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said Afghanistan would respond appropriately to the strikes. (*The News*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Security Forces killed Four Militants in Panjgur Intelligence-Based Operation** — Security sources reported that security forces killed four militants during an intelligence-based operation in the Aphan Koh area of Prom, Panjgur, conducted under Operation Radd-ul-Fitna 3. An intense exchange of fire took place during the operation, resulting in the deaths of the militants and the recovery of a significant cache of modern weapons and ammunition. The sources stated that follow-up operations are continuing in the area to locate and eliminate any remaining militant elements. They reaffirmed the commitment of security forces to continue counterterrorism actions until (“the last terrorist is eliminated”), underscoring ongoing efforts to improve security and stability in Balochistan. (*The Nation*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **UNICEF Report Highlights Scale of Online Risks Facing Pakistani Children** — UNICEF reported that an estimated 1.5 million children in Pakistan experienced online exploitation during a one-year period, with most victims aged between 12 and 17. The report found that many incidents began through online interactions and that a large proportion of affected children did not seek help because of stigma, fear and social pressures. Daniel Kardefelt, lead author of the UNICEF report, said perpetrators often spend considerable time building trust before targeting children. Rights advocates, including Usama Khilji, digital rights activist, and Salman Afridi, human rights lawyer, called for stronger implementation of laws, improved online safety measures and greater awareness to protect children in an increasingly digital environment. (*The News*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Kohat attack** — The Editorial commented on Pakistan's escalating security crisis following a wave of violent terror incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The piece highlights that at least 22 people, including 16 police officials, were martyred when explosions targeted a mosque inside Kohat Police Lines during Friday prayer, alongside a subsequent clash in Hangu District where two army officers and four soldiers were martyred. It attributes this surge to Pakistan's terror resurgence

linked to Afghan Taliban support for groups like the TTP and BLA operating from Afghanistan. Emphasising that (“if a country can lose over 20 security personnel to terror attacks within the space of a few days, something has seriously gone wrong”), the Editorial Board argues that **domestic counterterror strategies must be strengthened** to protect frontline police, while Islamabad continues pressing diplomatic initiatives internationally. (*The News*, [22 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Trilateral Defence Summit** — Pakistan is preparing for a key trilateral meeting with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye in New York on **24 September 2026** during the high-level week of the **81st United Nations General Assembly**. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman are expected to attend to discuss **escalating tensions in the Gulf region** and their implications for the recently signed **Mecca Joint Defence Agreement**. Signed on **7 August 2026**, the pact commits the three nations to collective security, stipulating that **an armed attack against any one of them would be regarded as an attack against all three**. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has arrived in New York, where his official programme includes **holding key meetings** and **addressing the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2026**. (*The Express Tribune*, [22 September 2026](#))

## Economy

- ◆ **Planning Ministry Seeks Restoration of Role in IMF Negotiations** — Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, revealed that the Planning Ministry has formally requested Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to include it in Pakistan’s core team for negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). **He argued that broader economic issues, including growth, inflation and poverty, fall within the Planning Ministry’s mandate and should be represented during IMF discussions.** The minister also expressed optimism about economic prospects, emphasising an export- and investment-led growth model rather than consumption-driven expansion. Commenting on planned protests, he criticised efforts that could create political instability and maintained that **“This kind of irresponsible growth will not be pursued”**. The ministry’s latest outlook highlighted productivity, private investment, technology and climate resilience as key drivers of sustainable development. (*The News*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan, EU Launch €65 Million Partnership for Investment, Energy and Rule of Law Reforms** — Raimundas Karoblis, European Union Ambassador to Pakistan, and Muhammad Humair Karim, Secretary Economic Affairs Division, signed three grant agreements worth **€65 million (approximately Rs20.64 billion)** to support investment facilitation, renewable energy development and rule-of-law reforms in Pakistan. **The programmes aim to improve Pakistan’s investment climate, expand clean energy access in off-grid rural areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and strengthen access to justice and commercial dispute resolution mechanisms in multiple provinces.** Ambassador Karoblis said the initiatives demonstrate the EU’s commitment to Pakistan’s development agenda, while Karim described them as closely aligned with national priorities for foreign investment, energy access and governance reforms. (*The Nation*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Foreign Interest in Pakistani Bonds Surges Despite Regional Uncertainty** — Shahid Iqbal, journalist and economic commentator, reports that foreign investment in Pakistan’s domestic bonds reached **\$275 million during the first 70 days of FY2026-27, including \$151.4 million in**

**Treasury Bills and \$123.7 million in Pakistan Investment Bonds.** The United Arab Emirates emerged as the largest investor, particularly in long-term bonds, despite regional instability linked to the Gulf conflict. **The article notes that Pakistan's relatively high bond yields attracted investors seeking secure returns, while foreign direct investment also rose significantly during the early months of the fiscal year.** However, some experts cautioned that **"the investments were not long-term but mostly for quick earnings and safe exit"**. (*Dawn*, [22 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **International Lenders Show Interest in Revamped ML-1 Railway Project** — Officials of the **Economic Affairs Division** informed the National Assembly Standing Committee on Economic Affairs that major international institutions, including the **Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)**, have expressed interest in financing the 1,800-kilometre Karachi-Peshawar Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway project. **Following a reassessment, the project's estimated cost has been reduced to about \$6.8 billion from the earlier \$9 billion and now includes institutional and operational reforms aimed at improving Pakistan Railways.** The committee stressed that operational speeds should, where feasible, match the infrastructure's design capacity of 160 kilometres per hour. It also voiced concern over delays to Karachi's K-IV water project and called for coordinated efforts to accelerate its completion. (*Dawn*, [22 September 2026](#))

## Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan-Iran Engagement Deepens Amid Regional Tensions and US Pressure** — **Eskandar Momeni, Iran's Interior Minister**, thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir for Pakistan's efforts to promote regional peace and stability during talks with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Tehran. **Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Pakistani officials reaffirmed their commitment to expanding cooperation in trade, energy, tourism, investment and security.** Meanwhile, **Scott Bessent, US Treasury Secretary**, warned that Iranian airlines could effectively be shut out of global operations under expanded US sanctions from 23 September. The report also highlighted continuing tensions in the Gulf, threats of further escalation by Iranian officials, and concerns over regional security, shipping and energy supplies. (*The News*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Strengthen Diplomatic Ties Through New Visa-Free Agreement** — **Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, and Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Saudi Foreign Minister**, signed an agreement on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly to abolish visa requirements for holders of diplomatic, official and special passports. **The move is intended to facilitate high-level engagements, institutional exchanges and further strengthen the longstanding strategic partnership between the two countries.** During separate discussions, the two sides reaffirmed cooperation under the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement** and emphasised continued coordination on regional security and bilateral affairs. Dar also conveyed Pakistan's solidarity with Saudi Arabia following recent attacks on the Kingdom. (*Dawn*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Proposal to Ease Entry for Chinese Tourists in Gilgit-Baltistan Gains Momentum** — Officials from the **Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC)**, Gilgit-Baltistan government and relevant federal ministries discussed a proposal to introduce a visa-on-arrival facility for Chinese

tourists entering Gilgit-Baltistan through the Khunjerab Pass. **The plan envisages a pilot phase covering Hunza and Nagar districts, with possible expansion to the rest of Gilgit-Baltistan if successful.** Stakeholders argued that increased Chinese tourism could boost foreign exchange earnings, employment and local economic activity, while the GB government offered to provide necessary security arrangements. **The proposal also includes a one-window online system for security clearances and no-objection certificates to simplify travel procedures.** (*Dawn*, [22 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan Seeks Continued EU Trade Support Through GSP+ Engagement** — Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, emphasised the importance of the European Union's GSP+ trade scheme during a meeting with Kaja Kallas, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. **Dar highlighted the significance of GSP+ for Pakistan's trade and economic relations with the EU, which remains the country's largest export market.** The two sides also discussed regional developments, with Dar appreciating the EU's support for de-escalation and dialogue. **The meeting came as Pakistan seeks inclusion in the EU's new GSP framework amid concerns raised by Brussels regarding human rights, governance and treaty-compliance obligations.** (*Dawn*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan's Role in Promoting Regional Stability Through Diplomacy** — The editorial argues that declining global oil prices and Iran's appreciation of Pakistan's peace efforts demonstrate the importance of diplomacy in reducing regional tensions and safeguarding economic stability. **The editorial contends that Pakistan's ability to engage with diverse regional actors positions it as an effective facilitator of dialogue and de-escalation at a time of heightened geopolitical uncertainty.** It maintains that **"the capacity to foster genuine de-escalation is a rare and valuable asset"** and that sustained diplomatic engagement can help prevent energy shocks and broader economic disruption. **The piece calls for institutionalised regional cooperation to transform temporary reductions in tension into lasting peace and stability.** (*The Nation*, [22 September 2026](#))

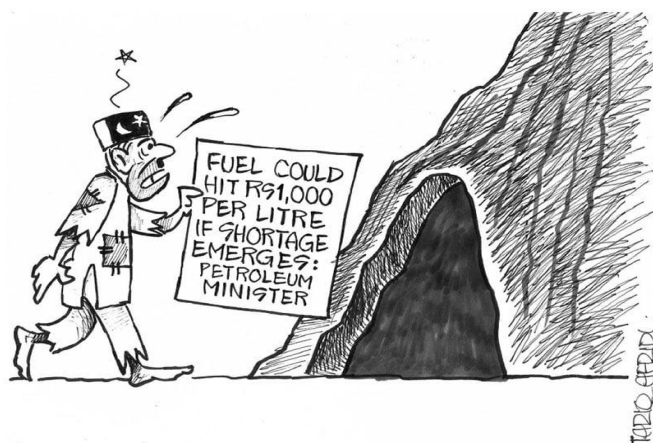
## Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Fazlur Rehman Signals No-Confidence Option if PPP Withdraws Support** — Maulana Fazlur Rehman, chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), said the opposition could consider a no-confidence motion against the government if the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) withdrew its support, arguing that the government would then be reduced to a minority administration. **He stated that the opposition currently lacks the numbers required to move such a motion but would explore all constitutional and parliamentary options if the PPP joined its ranks.** Fazl also called for dialogue between the government and protesting parties, defended the right to peaceful protest, criticised recent arrests of PTI leaders' family members and warned that Pakistan faces serious political and economic challenges: **"The state's power has assumed a defensive posture and the house is on fire"**. (*The News*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Backchannel Efforts Fail to Ease PTI-Government Standoff Before Islamabad March** — Sources familiar with discussions said recent contacts between Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders and authorities failed to produce a breakthrough owing to a deep trust deficit ahead of the party's planned 27 September march on Islamabad. **The discussions reportedly explored possible concessions concerning PTI founder Imran Khan and his family, including improved visitation**

arrangements and medical facilities, in exchange for de-escalation and assurances against future sit-ins or confrontational protest methods. However, no agreement was reached. The report suggests that PTI's main mobilisation is expected to come from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while leaders continue to publicly insist that the march will proceed as planned. (*The News*, [22 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan Railways Upgrades Karakoram Express to Enhance Passenger Experience** — Muhammad Hafeezullah, Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Railways, inaugurated the upgraded Karakoram Express in Lahore, highlighting the organisation's commitment to modernising passenger services. The refurbished train has been equipped with improved travel facilities, and senior railway officials reviewed the upgraded coaches and onboard amenities during the inauguration ceremony. Hafeezullah stated that several other passenger trains would also be modernised in phases as part of broader improvement efforts. (**"Providing passengers with safe, comfortable, quality and improved travel facilities is the priority of Pakistan Railways"**), he said, underscoring the railway's focus on enhancing service standards and passenger comfort. (*The Nation*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **PTI Vows to Proceed with Islamabad March Despite Arrests and Restrictions** — Sohail Afridi, Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) would continue with its planned 27 September protest in Islamabad, arguing that the party would (**"forcefully exercise"**) its constitutional right to peaceful assembly despite the arrest of lawmakers, workers and party supporters. Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, PTI interim chairman, claimed that around 1,500 workers and several elected representatives had been detained, urging authorities to reconsider their approach and pursue political solutions. PTI leaders maintained that the protest would remain peaceful and denied any intention to attack Islamabad. Meanwhile, TTAP condemned the arrests and demanded the release of detained political workers and lawmakers. (*Dawn*, [22 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **LHC Asked to Strike Down Detention Orders Against Imran Khan's Sisters** — Shahraiz Khan, son of Aleema Khan, challenged in the Lahore High Court the 30-day preventive detention of Aleema Khan, Dr Uzma Khan and Noreen Niazi under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance ahead of PTI's planned 27 September protest. The petition argues that the Lahore Deputy Commissioner failed to follow the legal procedure, did not provide specific allegations, and issued detention orders without adequately considering less restrictive alternatives. It seeks to have the detention orders declared unlawful and set aside. The challenge comes amid a broader crackdown on PTI leaders and supporters before the planned Islamabad march, while authorities maintain restrictions in the interest of public order. (*Dawn*, [21 September 2026](#))

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*[Disclaimer: We do not subscribe to the views expressed by the Pakistani reporters, leaders and commentators, we are making available for perusal by our experts/analysts/policymakers every day. We put it all together in Daily Pakistan Watch (DPW) with a view to acquainting our readers with the prevalent thought process in Pakistan having its bearing on India, with the hope that such effort will help us in devising appropriate policies to deal with Pakistan in a more effective manner. DPW is curated by Dr. Afroz Khan, Research Fellow, CPS, New Delhi].*