

# CLAWS Newsletter



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by Akashika Mate



## **INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **1. Finance Ministry Defends Debt Outlook, Citing Improved Sustainability ([Business Recorder, September 16](#))**

Pakistan's finance ministry has sought to ease concerns over the country's rising debt levels, insisting that the debt trajectory is "more sustainable today than suggested by headline rupee figures." In a statement, the ministry emphasised its continued focus on debt-to-GDP reduction, early repayments, lower interest costs, and a stronger external account. It stressed that sustainability must be assessed in relation to the size of the economy, not absolute numbers. According to State Bank of Pakistan data, government debt rose by nearly Rs9 trillion in the year to June 2025, reaching Rs77.9 trillion. Despite this, the ministry highlighted that Pakistan's debt-to-GDP ratio declined from 74% in FY22 to 70% in FY25. It also noted early repayments worth Rs2.6 trillion, the first such move in Pakistan's debt history, which it said saved taxpayers "hundreds of billions" in interest. Meanwhile, the country posted a primary surplus of 2.4% of GDP for the second year running and achieved a record current account surplus of \$2bn in FY25. While critics warn of bleak fiscal options and the continued burden of debt servicing, the government insists its strategy of prudent liability management, extended maturities, and reduced interest outflows underscores a commitment to "macroeconomic stability, reduced risk, and responsible fiscal management."

### **2. Bogus Wheat Report Exposed in Sargodha; Hoarding Suspected ([Dawn, September 16](#))**

Authorities in Sargodha have uncovered large-scale misreporting of wheat stocks after a surprise raid revealed over 60,000 bags (6,000 metric tonnes) hidden at Sultan Feed Mills, despite official claims that no wheat was available. The fraud came to light when Shahpur Assistant Commissioner contradicted a written report by Grain Food Inspector Muhammad Aslam, who had falsely declared "zero stock". Deputy Commissioner Sargodha reprimanded District Food Controller Mudassar Javed, calling the submission of false data a "criminal act and gross misuse of authority". Officials believe that over 1,00,000 metric tonnes of wheat may have been concealed across the district, raising fears of deliberate hoarding to manipulate market prices. Though a show-cause notice has been issued to Inspector Aslam, sources allege that mill owners and food officials colluded in the scheme and face little substantive action.

### **3. Balochistan PAC Probe Uncovers Billions in Financial Irregularities** **([Dawn, September 16](#); [Balochistan Pulse, September 17](#))**

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Balochistan Assembly has unearthed massive financial irregularities amounting to billions of rupees, including unsurrendered savings, mismanaged funds, and money unlawfully retained in private bank accounts by government officials. At a meeting chaired by PAC Chairman Asghar Ali Tareen, the committee reviewed recent audit reports and flagged what it described as “serious lapses in financial discipline” and “gross violations” in the management of budgetary allocations and revenue collection across several provincial departments. An audit of the 2016-17 accounts revealed that of the Rs3.34 billion allocated for non-development expenditures, savings of Rs740.6 million were never surrendered, in violation of fiscal rules. More alarmingly, between 2020 and 2022, deputy commissioners retained more than Rs19.14 billion in commercial bank accounts instead of depositing the funds into the provincial treasury, a direct breach of financial regulations. The PAC also noted disturbing gaps in revenue collection. Between 2019 and 2021, the provincial government failed to recover over Rs1.1 billion in usher, irrigation tax, and agricultural income tax. At the same time, auditors were denied access to expenditure records worth Rs33.74 million, raising concerns of deliberate concealment. In another irregularity, commissioners’ offices issued cheques worth Rs228.96 million directly to drawing and disbursing officers (DDOs), bypassing the requirement of payments being made to vendors. The committee also criticised several deputy commissioners for failing to implement PAC directives dating back to 2020, signalling a persistent culture of weak accountability within the provincial bureaucracy.

### **4. Balochistan Launches First-Ever Digital Financial E-Filing System** **([The Express Tribune, September 17](#); [Digital Rights Foundation Pakistan, September 17](#); [Balochistan Pulse, September 18](#))**

The Balochistan government has inaugurated the province’s first automated financial digital e-filing system, a move aimed at promoting transparency and modernising public sector operations. CM Mir Sarfraz Bugti launched the system at the Chief Minister's Secretariat, in the presence of provincial ministers, assembly members, and senior officials. The initiative allows government departments to submit budget requests digitally and ensures that all financial transactions are recorded and accessible. Speaking at the event, CM Bugti said the

system would streamline financial processes, reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies, and strengthen public oversight. The platform enables officials to access live data for faster, informed decision-making, while citizens can monitor development projects and financial records directly on their devices. Future cabinet meetings will also be conducted digitally to phase out paper-based processes. Bugti praised the local youth and professionals who developed the system without external assistance, announcing a one-month salary bonus for government employees involved and promising similar incentives for private-sector contributors. Finance Secretary Imran Zarkoon provided a live demonstration of the system, and the ceremony concluded with certificates of appreciation distributed to the development team, underscoring the government's commitment to responsible and transparent use of public resources.

### **5. Gwadar Power Crisis Cripples Daily Life and Port Operations ([Dawn, September 21](#))**

Gwadar continues to reel under a severe power crisis that has paralysed both daily life and critical port operations. According to Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) Chairman Noor ul Haq Baloch, the electricity shortages have disrupted water supply and crippled the fishing industry, the two key pillars of the local economy. During a meeting with Qesco CEO Yousaf Shah, Baloch called for immediate intervention from the federal government and the Quetta Electric Supply Company (Qesco) to find a sustainable solution. The discussions focused on persistent voltage drops, unannounced load-shedding, and transformer breakdowns that have plagued the region since its connection to the national grid. The GPA chief also noted that the power disruptions are severely affecting the Gwadar Free Zone, port operations, and the 1.2MGD desalination plant, a crucial facility for the city's water security. Both sides agreed on the need to upgrade infrastructure and replace outdated lines and transformers to stabilise the grid.

### **6. Diamonds, Drones, and the FBR's New Social Media Watchdog ([Reuters, September 24](#))**

Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has launched a 'Lifestyle Monitoring Cell' to identify tax evaders flaunting wealth online, according to a Reuters report. A 40-member team is now scanning Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to track influencers, realtors, and businesspeople whose lavish lifestyles don't match their declared income. Using screenshots

and timestamps, the cell builds digital profiles to support tax and money-laundering investigations. The initiative comes as Pakistan struggles with a low tax-to-GDP ratio, among the lowest in Asia, and seeks to meet IMF-backed revenue targets. One high-profile case already under review involves a Rs248 million (\$878,000) wedding, featuring diamond jewellery, designer bridal outfits, drone light shows, and luxury catering for 400 guests. Officials say such evidence, drawn directly from social media, provides faster and stronger leads for enforcement. The FBR hopes the digital watchdog will finally turn online extravagance into taxable evidence and close Pakistan's widening revenue gap.

### **7. Gilgit-Baltistan Traders Call Off Two-Month Sit-In at Sost Dry Port** **([Arab News, September 24](#); [CPEC News, September 27](#); [Dawn, September 27](#))**

After more than two months of continuous protest, traders in Gilgit-Baltistan have ended their sit-in at the Sost Dry Port, allowing trade and tourism through the Pakistan-China border to resume. The protest, launched in July 2025, was sparked by dissatisfaction over the government's taxation policies and the suspension of customs clearance at the strategic border port. Following negotiations with federal and GB officials, Power Minister Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari announced that the government would grant tax exemptions on imports via Sost, capped at Rs4 billion annually, for goods meant for local consumption under strict eligibility criteria. Trade leaders confirmed the end of the sit-in after consultations with the supreme council, though some expressed reservations that the agreement did not fully meet their demands. Under the deal, containers stranded at the port for nearly two years are to be cleared within two days, and a statutory regulatory order (SRO) formalising the exemptions will be issued within a month. The council and traders plan to review the government's implementation once the SRO is released. The Sost Dry Port, located on the Karakoram Highway, is Pakistan's principal land trade link with China and a vital hub for CPEC-related commerce.

### **8. IMF Mission Begins Pakistan Review Before Next \$1 billion Payout** **([Dawn, September 26](#))**



An IMF review mission commenced work in Karachi and Islamabad on September 26, 2025, without Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, who was in the United States at the time. The two-week mission is evaluating Pakistan's programme performance, including monetary and fiscal policies, ahead of disbursing the next \$1 billion tranche under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility and \$1.4 billion climate-linked Resilience & Sustainability Facility. Authorities must justify emergency fund expenditures, including Rs130 billion used to clear past dues for commercial banks and remittance incentives, while also requesting relaxations for flood-related spending. The government has yet to finalise flood damage estimates, complicating discussions on budgetary flexibility. The IMF is also reviewing governance and corruption reforms, state-owned enterprise (SOE) restructuring, and provincial tax implementation, areas where progress has stalled. While quantitative performance criteria for end-June 2025 have mostly been met, structural benchmarks and indicative targets remain incomplete, posing challenges for future disbursements. The mission's outcome will determine Pakistan's ability to receive the \$1 billion tranche by the end of October 2025.

### **9. Quetta ATC Denies Further Physical Remand for BYC Chief Mahrang Baloch ([Dawn, September 26](#); [Pakistan Today, September 26](#))**

A Quetta Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) refused to extend the physical remand of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) chief Dr Mahrang Baloch and four other organisers, Bebow Baloch, Sibghatullah Shahji, Beberg Baloch, and Gulzadi, ordering that they be sent to jail on judicial remand. According to BYC's legal team, Judge Muhammad Ali Mubeen rejected the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD)'s request for an extension to the 15-day physical remand, which had been granted earlier on September 11. The BYC, founded in 2018, has been a key advocacy group highlighting enforced disappearances in Balochistan. Mahrang and other leaders were arrested on March 22 following a police crackdown on protesters outside Quetta Civil Hospital, accused of "inciting violence" and "attacking" public property. The court's latest decision marks a notable development in the case, signalling possible judicial pushback against prolonged detentions under counterterrorism laws in Balochistan.

## **10. Pakistan to Close 16 Afghan Refugee Camps as Repatriation Continues ([Dawn, September 27](#); [Khaama Press, September 28](#))**

Pakistan has decided to shut down 16 Afghan refugee camps across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Punjab, as part of the ongoing repatriation of over 1.3 million Afghan nationals holding expired Proof of Registration (PoR) cards. According to the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (Safron), the denotified camps are located in Haripur, Chitral, and Upper Dir (KP); Chaghai, Loralai, Killa Saifullah, Pishin, and Quetta (Balochistan); and Mianwali (Punjab). The land and non-movable assets in these areas will be handed over to the respective provincial governments and district administrations. The decision follows the government's July 31 announcement declaring that all PoR cards had expired on June 30, rendering holders unlawful residents unless repatriated or regularised through visas. The UNHCR expressed concern over the denotifications, urging Pakistan to ensure that returns remain voluntary, safe, and dignified. The agency warned that many refugees, some living in Pakistan since the 1980s Soviet invasion, face severe hardship if forced to return abruptly. As of June 2025, Pakistan hosts over 1.3 million Afghan refugees, with more than half residing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

## **11. Pakistan Launches Cotton Plan 2026 to Revive Declining Yields ([Dawn, September 29](#))**

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar is leading efforts to revitalise Pakistan's struggling cotton sector through the Pakistan Cotton Plan 2026, a new strategy aimed at boosting yields, improving quality, and reducing the country's import bill for cotton and edible oils. The plan consolidates earlier proposals from the Ministry of Food Security and the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA), and is expected to be formally presented to the deputy prime minister soon. Officials anticipate that its implementation will bring long-term stability to the cotton value chain, a critical component of Pakistan's textile-driven economy. Stakeholders, however, point to weak enforcement of crop zoning laws as a persistent obstacle. The Cotton Ginners Forum has blamed the widespread cultivation of sugarcane within designated cotton zones for damaging yields and fibre quality. Forum Chairman Ihsanul Haq underscored the need for a complete ban on sugarcane cultivation in these zones, adding that areas such as Balochistan and Cholistan, where cotton is grown on a smaller scale, produce higher-quality

fibre despite minimal input use. Cotton from these regions reportedly commands premium prices, Rs 500 higher per 40kg of raw cotton and Rs 1,200 higher for cottonseed, owing to superior fibre length and oil content.

## **12. Pakistan Tests New Long-Range Fatah-4 Cruise Missile ([Associated Press, September 30](#); [Dawn, September 30](#); [Gulf News, September 30](#))**

The Pakistan Army has successfully conducted a training launch of its newly inducted Fatah-4 cruise missile, capable of striking targets up to 750 kilometres away, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The Fatah-4 is described as an indigenously developed system equipped with advanced avionics and state-of-the-art navigational aids. Its terrain-hugging flight path reportedly allows it to evade enemy missile defences while ensuring high-precision engagement, a capability designed to enhance Pakistan's conventional deterrence posture. The launch, observed by senior military officials, scientists, and engineers, marks a major milestone in the evolution of the Army Rocket Force Command, a newly formed arm of the Pakistan Army responsible for long-range conventional missile systems. The Fatah-4 follows the Fatah Series of surface-to-surface missiles, the last of which, with a range of 120 km, was test-fired in May 2025 as part of Exercise Indus.



## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **1. PM Shehbaz Reaffirms Support for Qatar After Israeli Strike ([Dawn, September 16](#); [The Diplomatic Insight, September 26](#))**

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani in Doha on Tuesday, pledging Pakistan's "all-out support and solidarity" in the wake of the Israeli attack on the Qatari capital. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the emergency Arab-Islamic Summit, where regional leaders from the Arab League and OIC called for a reassessment of ties with Israel after its strike on Hamas members in Doha. Shehbaz Sharif condemned the attack of September 09 as a "flagrant violation of Qatar's sovereignty and international law", stressing that Israeli aggression in the Middle East "must be stopped immediately". He underlined the need for Muslim unity against repeated provocations. Accompanied by Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Army Chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, the premier praised Qatar for convening the summit, co-sponsored by Pakistan, and recalled Islamabad's push for an emergency UN Security Council session on the crisis. The Qatari emir expressed gratitude for Pakistan's support and Shehbaz's visit to Doha shortly after the strike. Both leaders agreed to remain in close contact as regional tensions continue to escalate.

### **2. 'We have "very large" and "effective" armed forces': Dar on Pakistan's stance if a united Middle East force is formed ([Dawn, September 16](#); [Arab News, September 17](#))**

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said Pakistan possesses "very large" and "effective" armed forces capable of conventional warfare and suggested Islamabad would play a role, consistent with its capacity and deterrent posture, if Arab states formed a united body to check Israeli aggression. Speaking ahead of the emergency Arab-Islamic summit in Doha, Dar described the idea of a combined security mechanism as legitimate, "not for aggression, but for peaceful purposes, for stopping the aggressor". He reiterated Pakistan's view that its nuclear arsenal is strictly a deterrent and that the country would defend its territorial integrity "no matter by whom". Dar also criticised repeated Israeli strikes, including the attack on Doha on 9 September, and argued the multilateral system, particularly the UN Security Council, needs "very serious reforms" because resolutions are not being enforced. He pointed to recent

tensions between India and Pakistan in May as evidence that claims of regional hegemony have been challenged. While stressing Pakistan's preference for diplomacy, Dar warned that practical mechanisms, potentially including physical interventions, may be required where international rules fail to restrain actors.

### **3. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Sign Strategic Defence Pact to Counter Aggression ([Dawn, September 17](#); [Reuters, September 18](#); [CLAWS, September 21](#); [Atlantic Council, September 26](#))**

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan formalised a mutual defence pact on September 17, reinforcing a decades-old security partnership amid heightened regional tensions following Israel's recent strikes on Qatar. The agreement stipulates that any aggression against either country will be treated as an attack on both, institutionalising deep military and strategic cooperation. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman signed the pact at Riyadh's Yamama Palace, with Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, also present. As a mark of respect, Saudi Air Force jets escorted PM Shehbaz's plane upon entering Saudi airspace, reflecting the historic brotherly ties between the two nations, the Foreign Office said.

A senior Saudi official told Reuters that the pact "encompasses all military means," though Pakistan has consistently emphasised its nuclear arsenal is solely aimed at deterring India. Pakistan is the only nuclear-armed, Muslim-majority nation and fields the Islamic world's largest army. The agreement follows weeks of upheaval in the Gulf, including Israel's September 09 airstrikes on Hamas leaders in Doha, which disrupted Qatar-mediated ceasefire efforts in Gaza and angered Arab states. Gulf monarchies, traditionally reliant on the United States for security, are increasingly seeking regional partnerships to safeguard strategic interests. The defence pact also builds on Pakistan's long-standing military support in Saudi Arabia, with an estimated 1,500-2,000 Pakistani troops providing operational, technical, and training assistance. Economic ties remain robust: Riyadh extended a \$3 billion loan to Pakistan in December to bolster foreign exchange reserves. The agreement cements nearly eight decades of fraternal ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, rooted in shared faith, strategic interests, and economic interdependence, and is described by officials as an institutionalisation of longstanding cooperation rather than a response to any single event.

#### **4. Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal 'keeps Indian designs in check,' says Adviser ([Dawn, September 17](#))**

Retired Lt Gen Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, a top adviser to Pakistan's National Command Authority, said the country's nuclear arsenal remains the key factor restraining Indian military ambitions. Speaking at an event organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), Lt Gen Kidwai stated that Pakistan's Full Spectrum Deterrence (FSD), also described as minimum credible deterrence, was never compromised during the May standoff with India. He highlighted the newly-formed Army Rocket Force Command (ARFC), which he said will enhance strategic deterrence by bridging the gap between conventional operations and potential nuclear deployment. The ARFC, he explained, addresses modern battlefield requirements while the nuclear deterrent remains the ultimate shield. A former head of the Strategic Plans Division (SPD), Lt Gen Kidwai, emphasised that Pakistan's FSD works on both eastern and western fronts and is not a "bluff." He underscored that Pakistan has consistently demonstrated restraint and responsibility in its nuclear policy, unlike India. "The large size of the Indian army does not tell the entire story... quality, technology, and training are the force multipliers that determine the victor in an armed confrontation," he remarked, adding that India suffered major military reverses during the recent standoff, particularly in the Indian Air Force.

#### **5. Gwadar at Core of Maritime, CPEC Plans as Pakistan Unveils New Strategy ([Dawn, September 18](#); [The Daily CPEC, September 29](#))**

Pakistan reaffirmed Gwadar's central role in its economic future, unveiling a five-year Maritime Affairs Action Plan (2025-2029) alongside the formal launch of CPEC Phase-2 in Beijing. Together, the two landmark initiatives aim to transform the port city into a regional trade and transit hub, while deepening strategic and economic ties with China. At a high-level meeting in Islamabad, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said the action plan was designed to integrate the New Gwadar International Airport with the port to create a multi-modal logistics hub. The framework prioritises expansion of Gwadar Port, completion of Free Zone Stage-II, and acceleration of the East Bay Expressway Phase-II to improve inland accessibility. The plan also envisages the adoption of smart-port technologies and electronic data systems to link Gwadar with Chinese and global shipping



networks. Port-related industries, from fisheries and cold storage to shipbuilding and aquaculture, are to be promoted as part of wider industrialisation. The minister said the strategy reflected Pakistan's commitment to a "resilient maritime economy" aligned with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with emphasis on sustainable use of marine resources.

Meanwhile, in Beijing, Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal formally launched CPEC Phase-2 at the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC). Unlike the first phase, largely focused on government-to-government infrastructure projects, the second stage pivots to business-to-business partnerships, offering Chinese firms an investment-friendly climate in Pakistan. Mr Iqbal identified five thematic areas of CPEC Phase-2: boosting exports, building a digital economy, promoting renewable energy, expanding transport connectivity, and creating a mineral corridor to link Balochistan's vast reserves with Gwadar. He also highlighted Pakistan's long-term economic vision, '[Uraan Pakistan](#),' which aims to propel the country into a \$1 trillion economy by 2035. "Our youth are at the heart of this transformation," he said, announcing that 10,000 students would be sent to Chinese universities over the next decade to pursue PhDs in engineering, IT, and emerging sciences. Both sides agreed to fast-track work on the second phase of the Karakoram Highway and operationalise the mineral corridor, strengthening trade routes with Central Asia and beyond. Analysts say the dual rollout of the maritime and CPEC frameworks signals Islamabad's intent to consolidate Gwadar's role as a logistics hub at the crossroads of Asia, while also shifting focus towards industrialisation, digital growth, and youth-driven transformation.

## **6. Pakistan, IAEA Ink 2026-31 Country Programme Framework ([IAEA, September 17](#); [Arab News, September 18](#); [Profit by Pakistan Today, September 18](#); [Dawn, September 19](#))**

Pakistan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have signed their fifth Country Programme Framework (CPF), setting the agenda for nuclear cooperation between 2026 and 2031. The signing took place on the sidelines of the IAEA General Conference in Vienna, with Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) Chairman Dr Raja Ali Raza Anwar and IAEA Deputy Director-General Hua Liu representing the two sides. Framed as a roadmap for technical cooperation, the CPF is aimed at aligning nuclear science and technology with Pakistan's national development priorities and international commitments, particularly the UN

Sustainable Development Goals. It covers five priority areas: food and agriculture, human health, climate change and water management, nuclear power, and radiation and nuclear safety.

<b>PRIORITY AREAS IDENTIFIED UNDER THE PAKISTAN-IAEA CPF 2026-31</b>	
<b>Priority Area</b>	<b>Focus/Applications</b>
Food & Agriculture	Use of nuclear techniques to boost crop yields, improve pest control, enhance livestock health, and strengthen food safety. Participation in the IAEA's Atoms4Food initiative for food security and climate-resilient farming.
Human Health & Nutrition	Expansion of nuclear medicine, radiation oncology, medical physics, and radiopharmaceuticals. Upgradation of 20 Atomic Energy Cancer Hospitals with advanced therapies and precision diagnostics.
Climate Change & Water Resource Management	Application of isotope hydrology to monitor water resources, improve irrigation efficiency, and enhance resilience against extreme weather. Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology as a key collaborating centre.
Nuclear Power	Safe operation of six operational plants (with one under construction), plant life management, waste management, safe decommissioning, and meeting greenhouse gas reduction targets by 2030.
Radiation & Nuclear Safety	Strengthening oversight by the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA). Enhanced capacity in emergency preparedness, radioactive waste disposal, safe transport, and integration of AI in regulation.

The agreement builds on decades of collaboration since Pakistan joined the IAEA in 1957. For Islamabad, it not only reinforces its credentials as a “responsible nuclear state” but also highlights how nuclear technology is increasingly positioned as a tool of development diplomacy, beyond its traditional energy and strategic dimensions.

## **7. US Navy Ship Docks at Karachi Port to Boost Maritime Cooperation** **([Pakistan Navy/YouTube, September 24](#); [Aaj News, September 25](#);** **[Dawn, September 25](#))**

The USS Wayne E. Meyer, a United States Navy destroyer, arrived at Karachi Port for a two-day goodwill visit, marking another milestone in US-Pakistan maritime collaboration. During

the visit, US and Pakistan Navy officers engaged in joint training exercises, professional exchanges, and operational discussions aimed at enhancing interoperability and coordination between the two navies. The visit will culminate in a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) in the North Arabian Sea, featuring combined manoeuvres between USS Wayne E. Meyer and Pakistan Navy vessels, underscoring shared commitments to regional maritime security and cooperation.

#### **8. Etihad Airways Resumes Flights to Peshawar After a Decade ([Daily Times Pakistan, September 29](#); [Dawn, September 29](#)); [Gulf News, September 29](#))**

In a major boost to Pakistan's international air connectivity, Etihad Airways has resumed flight operations to Peshawar after a ten-year hiatus. The inaugural flight EY 276 from Abu Dhabi landed at Bacha Khan International Airport on September 29 and was welcomed with a traditional water cannon salute, according to the Pakistan Aviation Authority (PAA). Etihad will now operate five weekly flights between Abu Dhabi and Peshawar. The PAA said the resumption of Etihad's operations reflects its commitment to enhancing passenger convenience and global connectivity through safe and efficient airport services.

Etihad becomes the third international carrier to expand operations to Peshawar this year. Earlier in May, Flydubai launched flights from Dubai, and in August, Saudi Arabia's low-cost airline Flyadeal began services from Riyadh. The return of major Middle Eastern carriers to Peshawar signals growing regional confidence in Pakistan's aviation sector and offers greater travel options for the large expatriate community residing in the Gulf.



## **TERROR TALLY**

### **1. Counterterrorism Operations and Confrontations**

#### **a. Dozens of Militants Killed in Bannu and Lakki Marwat Operations (Anadolu Ajansi, September 15; Dawn, September 16)**

At least 31 militants were killed over the weekend in intelligence-based operations in Bannu and Lakki Marwat, ISPR said on September 15. According to local sources, fighter jets struck militant hideouts in Bannu's Bakkakhel area, destroying a community hall and a school reportedly used for storing weapons and explosives. The ISPR statement, however, did not mention the air strikes. The military confirmed that 14 militants were killed in Lakki Marwat and 17 more in Bannu following intense exchanges of fire. It described the militants as 'Indian-sponsored Khawarij,' a term used by the state for the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Security forces have launched a sanitisation drive in the area to prevent further militant movement, with officials saying the operations thwarted planned terrorist activities.

#### **b. Four More Bajaur Villages Declared Terrorist-Free, Thousands Return Home (Dawn, September 16)**

Authorities in Bajaur have cleared four additional villages of militants, allowing displaced residents to return home as part of the ongoing counterterrorism operation. According to a notification from the district administration, the villages of Bara Laghari, Lara Laghari, Darmiyaani Laghari (Lowi Mamund tehsil) and Dabrai (War Mamund tehsil) have been declared secure. With this, a total of 14 villages have been reopened for resettlement. Officials said that more than 4,000 families have so far returned to their homes in the Mamund region following clearance operations. Meanwhile, Bajaur police have launched a crackdown on non-custom paid (NCP) vehicles that remain unregistered with the excise department. Several vehicles were impounded, with police stressing that profiling was "a legal requirement and crucial for community safety" amid the prevailing law and order situation.

#### **c. Three Terrorists Killed in Bannu Operation After Police Repulse Coordinated Attacks (Dawn, September 17)**

At least three terrorists were killed after police repelled coordinated militant attacks on two security installations in Bannu. According to District Police Officer (DPO) Saleem Abbas Kulachi, the militants targeted the Miryan Police Station and Mazang checkpoints. "Three terrorists were killed in the Bannu operation responding to the attacks, but the rest managed to

flee, carrying away the bodies,” he told Dawn. Police spokesperson Kashif Nawaz said the assault on Miryan Police Station was foiled within 20 minutes, while an exchange of fire at the Mazang checkpoint lasted for nearly an hour. Four police personnel sustained injuries during the clashes.

**d. Five Killed in Chaman Blast Near Pak-Afghan Border (Dawn, September 18; The Hindu, September 19)**

At least five people were killed and one was injured in a powerful blast near a taxi stand in Chaman, police confirmed. District Police Officer Abdullah Cheema told Dawn that the explosion took place close to a vehicle in the Pak-Afghan border town, a hotspot of militant activity and smuggling routes. Police and rescue teams rushed to the scene, while security forces cordoned off the area. A statement from the Balochistan Home Department said an investigation had been launched. “The process of collecting evidence is underway. The public is urged to avoid rumours and cooperate with law enforcement agencies,” the statement added.

**e. CTD Kills 3 ISKP Militants, Including an Afghan National, in Khyber Operation (Dawn, September 20)**

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) killed three militants, including an Afghan national from Nangarhar, during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Ali Masjid area of Khyber district. According to a CTD statement, the dead included Muhammad Naeem and Muhammad Karim from Karak, and Noor Nabi from Afghanistan, all linked to the banned Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). Weapons and ammunition, including three SMGs, 135 rounds and 12 magazines, were recovered. The group had been under technical surveillance and was linked to at least three militant attacks, including a suicide bombing in Peshawar that killed a sub-inspector and a constable. However, commander Fazal Noor and Hakim Nisar, both senior ISKP operatives, escaped during the 30-minute firefight. Authorities said the duo operated under foreign-based, foreign-funded handlers and were planning major attacks in Peshawar and Khyber.

**f. 3 Terrorists Killed in Dera Ismail Khan Operation (Xinhua Net China, September 24)**

Pakistan’s security forces killed 13 terrorists of the TTP during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Daraban area of Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on September 24, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). ISPR reported that weapons and

ammunition were recovered from the site. The group was allegedly involved in several terrorist incidents, including the December 2023 suicide bombing in Daraban and the abduction and targeted killing of officials and civilians. A sanitisation operation is ongoing in the region as part of Pakistan's efforts to eliminate "Indian-sponsored terrorism" and restore security in southern KP.

**g. Two Wanted Militants Killed in Separate Tribal-District Operations (Dawn, September 30)**

Security forces killed two wanted militants in separate operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tribal districts. In Lower South Waziristan, police killed Qari Hussain, a commander of the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), in a firing incident in a remote part of Birmal tehsil. Police described Hussain as a senior figure involved in attacks on security forces, extortion, kidnapping and targeted killings. Separately in Lakki Marwat, an intense clash in the Wanda Amir area left another wanted militant, Hikmatullah, dead. The operation was conducted by area police with support from armed local residents and the peace committee; Elite Force commandos and armoured personnel carriers also participated.

## **2. Targeted Militant Attacks**

**a. Five Security Personnel Killed in IED Blast Near Pak-Iran Border (Dawn, September 16)**

Five security personnel, including an army officer, were killed in Balochistan's Kech district after militants detonated a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) near the Pak-Iran border. The explosion occurred in the Mand area when a vehicle travelling between Dashat and Mand was targeted by remote control. The martyred officer was identified as Captain Waqir Kakar. The other personnel were Naik Junaid, Naik Asmat, Lance Naik Khan Muhammad and Sepoy Zahoor Ahmed. Following the attack, security forces secured the site and moved the bodies to nearby health facilities. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) later claimed responsibility for the attack.

**b. Policeman Killed, Levies Personnel Injured in Sherani Attacks (Khabar Kada, September 17)**

At least one policeman was killed and two Levies personnel injured when armed assailants attacked two police stations and a Levies post in Balochistan's Sherani district. According to



Deputy Commissioner Hazrat Wali Kakar, the assaults triggered a three-hour exchange of fire after police and Levies forces retaliated, preventing what he described as “major damage.” The policeman was identified as Aftab-ur-Rehman, while the injured, Kalu Khan and Abdul Wahid, were shifted to the Trauma Centre in Quetta for treatment. Another Levies official remains missing. “The attackers used rocket launchers, snipers and explosives, which damaged the stations’ communication systems,” the deputy commissioner said. He added that the assailants also torched a Levies vehicle as well as a truck transporting relief supplies of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). A search operation was launched soon after the incident to trace the perpetrators.

**c. Blast Derails Jaffar Express in Balochistan’s Mastung, Injuring Four (Dawn, September 23; Wion/YouTube, September 24)**

A blast derailed six bogies of the Jaffar Express near Spezand in Balochistan’s Mastung district, injuring at least four passengers, according to officials. The train, travelling from Peshawar to Quetta with 270 passengers onboard, was struck when explosives blew up a section of the railway track, Pakistan Railways said. Relief and rescue teams were dispatched from Quetta, while security forces cordoned off the area and launched a search operation. The injured were shifted to Quetta’s Civil Hospital and Combined Military Hospital, with authorities beginning track repairs the following morning. The incident marks yet another attack targeting Balochistan’s transport infrastructure, amid a spike in militant activity. Similar explosions and derailments have hit the Jaffar Express and other trains in Sibi, Jacobabad, and Sukkur in recent months, highlighting the persistent security challenges along Pakistan’s southwestern railway routes.

**d. Quetta Blast Targets Frontier Corps Headquarters (Al Jazeera, September 30; Dawn, September 30)**

At least 10 people were killed and 32 were injured in a powerful bomb blast near the Frontier Corps (FC) headquarters in Quetta, in what officials have described as a major terrorist attack. According to Balochistan Health Minister Bakht Muhammad Kakar, the casualties include both civilians and FC personnel. An emergency has been declared across Quetta’s major hospitals, with six of the injured reported to be in critical condition. Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti condemned the incident as a “terrorist attack” and confirmed that security forces swiftly eliminated four militants involved. President Asif Ali Zardari later termed the explosion a suicide attack, blaming militants affiliated with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and

accusing them of acting on “India’s agenda.” No group has claimed responsibility for the attack yet.

### **3. Thousands Rally in Swat, Declare Valley a ‘No-Go Zone’ for Terrorists** **([Dawn, September 20](#))**

In a powerful display of unity, thousands of residents of Swat gathered at Matta Chowk under the banner of the Swat Qaumi Jirga for the ‘Swat Aman Pasoon’ (Peace March). The demonstrators warned militant groups that the valley would not be allowed to serve as a sanctuary for terrorism again, declaring that if the government and police failed to act, locals would confront terrorists themselves. Speakers, including MNAs, MPAs, and jirga elders, stressed that Swat’s 7,000-strong police force was well-equipped but not authorised to carry out anti-terror operations. They condemned state negligence and demanded that security forces take decisive action within a one-month ultimatum, failing which the movement vowed to escalate protests, not just against terrorism but also against provincial authorities. The rally was described by organisers as a “referendum against terrorism”, with thousands symbolically rejecting extremist violence. The *jirga* leaders rejected what they called “artificial terrorism” in Bajaur and other southern districts, demanding a comprehensive peace strategy across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This latest demonstration drew comparisons with the historic 2022 Swat Olasi Pasoon rally at Nishat Chowk, which also mobilised mass opposition to the resurgence of militants. However, participants said the 2025 march was even larger, reflecting a growing grassroots impatience with both terrorism and government inaction.

### **4. FIA Nabs 16 in Quetta Crackdown on Human Trafficking and Hawala Network** **([Dawn, September 20](#); [Profit by Pakistan Today, September 20](#))**

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested 16 individuals in a major crackdown against human trafficking and illegal currency operations in Quetta. According to an FIA spokesman, the Anti-Human Trafficking Circle apprehended a key trafficker, Asadullah, along with 14 Afghan nationals who were attempting to cross into Iran en route to Europe. Mobile

phone data, including photos and communication records, revealed his links to a wider trafficking network. Officials said raids were ongoing to trace accomplices.

In a separate operation, the Commercial Banking Circle arrested two men, Ali Khan and Mohammad Taqi, for running an unlicensed Hawala-Hundi business. Authorities seized \$6,800, Rs2.11 million, a laptop, and mobile phones, along with records of illegal transactions. The FIA said both crackdowns form part of a wider campaign to dismantle human smuggling routes that run through Balochistan and to curb illegal financial networks used for cross-border movement of money.





## About the Author

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