

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

13 August 2026

Security

- ◆ **Major Blow to Militants in Balochistan** — Security forces eliminated **18 terrorists linked to Fitna al-Hindustan**, an ‘India-backed’ proxy group, in **Surab District, Balochistan**, after a premature **vehicle-borne IED blast** killed eight militants and injured others. The explosion tragically claimed the lives of **three civilians**. A swift clearance operation by security forces and police neutralised 10 more fleeing terrorists, though two soldiers were injured. President **Asif Ali Zardari** and Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** praised the forces’ bravery, with the PM declaring: “*Fitna al-Hindustan terrorists are enemies of peace and the people of Balochistan.*” The **National Party** condemned civilian deaths as a grave rights violation. (*The News*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Gunmen Abduct Workers in Chagai Mine Raid** — Seven workers were abducted when **eight armed men raided a private mining site in Mahian Kaur, Chagai district**, stealing equipment worth millions. The attackers, arriving on motorcycles, held staff hostage and took away four labourers from Gilgit — **Wajahat, Wajid, Shahid and Sabir** — along with three locals, **Ziauddin, Shah Saleem and Saeed Muhammad**. They looted vehicles, solar panels, fuel, bedding and supplies before fleeing. Authorities have launched efforts to trace the abducted workers and recover stolen property, though no recovery has yet been reported. (*The News*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Denied a Future** — Five years after the **Taliban’s return to Kabul**, Afghan girls remain barred from **secondary and higher education**, with **UNESCO reporting 2.4 million denied schooling**, a figure projected to reach **4 million by 2030**. Afghanistan is the only country where women face such sweeping restrictions, extending to **universities, jobs, parks, gyms, and public life**. The editorial condemns global responses as ritualistic “statements of concern” without action. It urges the **US, EU, UN, Muslim-majority states, and neighbours** to coordinate pressure, deny legitimacy, expand scholarships, and support Afghan women-led organisations to resist systematic erasure. (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **The New RCD** — A new **regional defence pact** was signed in **Makkah (Aug 7, 2026)** by **Pakistan, Turkiye and Saudi Arabia**, echoing the old **Regional Cooperation for Development (1964)**. The agreement pledges collective deterrence: “an attack on one shall be regarded as an attack on all.” Questions remain whether it replaces the **Saudi-Pakistan Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (2025)** or augments it. Analyst **F.S. Aijazuddin** highlights Saudi Arabia’s economic clout, Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal but financial fragility, and Turkiye’s growing defence industry. The pact could reshape regional alignments, potentially unsettling rivals if expanded further. (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **National Security Odyssey** — Interior Minister **Mohsin Naqvi** recently called for deep reforms in Pakistan’s **national security**, endorsed by the **ISPR**, stressing coherence, coordination and service

delivery. Analyst **Ali Tauqeer Sheikh** argues the agenda overlooks the most pressing threat: **climate change**, which has reshaped Pakistan's economy and governance more than militancy or political crises. With annual climate investment needs at **\$56.6bn**, far exceeding development budgets, resilience is undermined by weak **local government**, elite capture, and ad hoc fiscal choices. Sheikh contends that true reform must begin at the **district level**, building local capacity to manage floods and disasters. (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan's Moment** — Public policy analyst **Durdana Najam** highlights Pakistan's pivotal role in mediating between **Iran and the US** after the February assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader. Interior Minister **Mohsin Naqvi** has shuttled to Tehran, pressing for acceptance of the **Islamabad MoU** brokered with Qatar, while Iran's Interior Minister **Eskandar Momeni** reciprocated with visits to Pakistan. Over **20 hours of direct engagement** between US and Iranian officials in Islamabad marked the highest-level contact since 1979. Despite internal instability, Pakistan remains externally relevant, valued for its **security partnerships with Gulf states** and its ability to balance shifting alliances. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan's Alliance Power** — Retired Maj Gen **Inam Ul Haque** describes the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (Aug 7, 2026)** signed by **Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye**, pledging collective deterrence: "an attack on one shall be regarded as an attack against them all." The pact builds on the **Pak-Saudi SMDA (2025)** and reflects growing regional security cooperation. Haque notes Saudi financial clout, Türkiye's NATO-standard defence industry, and Pakistan's military strength as complementary assets. While the alliance is defensive, future expansion could include Egypt, Azerbaijan or Qatar. He argues **Tehran's inclusion** would be ideal once the Iran-US conflict subsides. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Afghan Taliban Support for TTP Fuels Attacks** — The UN Security Council's 38th report warns that Afghanistan remains a hub for terrorist groups threatening Pakistan and Central Asia. It states the **Taliban continue supporting the banned TTP**, which has escalated attacks against Pakistan, provoking military exchanges. Around **2,000 TTP fighters and families were relocated deeper into Afghanistan**, though Taliban leader **Hibatullah Akhundzada** reportedly urged TTP to halt attacks. The report highlights **Al-Qaida's ideological and training support**, BLA militants trained alongside TTP, and growing activity of **ETIM/TIP** in Badakhshan and Kunduz, including drone development. Despite Taliban denials, the threat persists. (*The Nation*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Talking to Tehran** — The editorial notes that Pakistan has moved swiftly after the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (MJDA)**, with Interior Minister **Mohsin Naqvi** visiting Tehran to meet **President Masoud Pezeshkian** and **FM Abbas Araghchi**. This proactive diplomacy strengthens Islamabad's role as a pivot between regional blocs. The MJDA with **Saudi Arabia and Türkiye** gives Pakistan added weight, while its strong channels with Iran allow it to push the **Islamabad MoU** forward from a new geopolitical position. Tehran's initial response has been positive, but mistrust and regional complexities remain. Persistence is key for Pakistan to keep doors open for peace. (*The Nation*, [13 August 2026](#))

Economy

- ◆ **Solarisation Reshaping Pakistan's Power Sector** — Consumers face a **Rs33.78 billion quarterly tariff adjustment**, including a possible **Rs1.34 per-unit increase**, as grid sales decline due to widespread **solar adoption**, reduced farm demand and cooler weather. At a **Nepra hearing**, distribution companies admitted falling domestic sales, with **QESCO and MEPCO reporting sharp drops as tubewells shifted to solar**. While capacity charges remain high, solarisation has eased daytime loadshedding, though Discos now shed load at night. The government's move from net metering to net billing has not slowed the transition. Industrial representatives warned higher tariffs would burden industry, underscoring Pakistan's dilemma: **consumers buy less grid electricity but remain liable for fixed plant costs**. (*The News*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **World Bank backs Punjab's civic upgrade** — The **Punjab government**, under CM **Maryam Nawaz**, is expanding development initiatives with **\$375 million support from the World Bank** for the **Punjab Inclusive Cities Programme**. Six cities — **Chakwal, Kasur, Chiniot, Mandi Bahauddin, Pakpattan and Rajanpur** — will see initial projects focused on **water supply, sewerage, wastewater treatment, stormwater management and underground storage**. Punjab Secretary Housing **Noor-ul-Amin Mengal** directed measurable targets and strict monitoring, while **PMDFC Managing Director Syed Zahid Aziz** reaffirmed transparent implementation. The programme, covering 16 cities, aims to deliver equitable, sustainable urban services and improve citizens' quality of life. (*The News*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **317k Pakistanis Seek Jobs Abroad** — Economic and political instability, repeated internet shutdowns, rising unemployment and inflation have driven **317,436 Pakistanis** to seek overseas employment in the first half of 2026. Skilled professionals, including **doctors, engineers, IT specialists and technicians**, are part of this exodus. **Saudi Arabia** was the top destination with **183,951 workers**, followed by the **UAE (50,773), Qatar (34,025), Bahrain (13,329)** and **Türkiye (4,673)**. Experts warn the trend reflects weak technological infrastructure and costly education at home, though remittances could boost the economy. Students abroad say they may return only if conditions improve. (*The Express News*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Australia Rejects India's Basmati Trademark Bid** — The **Federal Court of Australia** has dismissed an appeal by India's **APEDA** seeking exclusive rights to register "Basmati" as a certification trademark. The court upheld Pakistan's stance that **Basmati is a geographical indication (GI)**, recognising it as a historically shared growing region across **Pakistan and India**. The Registrar had earlier rejected APEDA's application in 2022, noting Pakistani traders' equal claim. By dismissing the appeal, the court confirmed that no single authority can monopolise the term. Pakistan's commerce ministry welcomed the ruling as a **significant victory** for its exporters. (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **NA Panel Alarmed Over Trade Deficit with China** — The **National Assembly Standing Committee on Commerce**, chaired by MNA **Jawed Hanif**, voiced concern over Pakistan's persistent **trade deficit with China and other FTA partners**. The committee reviewed tariff reforms, export promotion, and the performance of trade-related entities. It directed the **Ministry**

of Commerce to provide detailed reports on the **Export Development Fund (EDF)**, **GSP+ scheme (2027)**, and mineral exports, including the **Saindak project**, to assess economic returns. Members stressed the need for a comprehensive strategy to address imbalances and prepare for upcoming trade opportunities. (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Growth at a Crossroads** — The government is increasingly worried about the economy amid the **US-Iran war** and rising energy costs. The **State Bank's biannual monetary policy report** projects growth between **3.5%–4.5%**, inflation stabilising at higher levels, a current account deficit below **1% of GDP**, and reserves above **\$20bn** by year-end. Yet even one missed estimate could unravel stability. With a strong **El Niño** expected, floods could devastate agriculture and expose weak preparedness. The editorial warns that without **structural reforms** and investment in resilience, recovery will remain fragile, vulnerable to shocks and poor governance. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Debt, Liabilities Near Rs100tr** — Pakistan's total debt and liabilities reached **Rs99.6 trillion** by June 2026, with **87% public debt**, according to the **State Bank of Pakistan**. Servicing costs fell by **Rs1.2tr to Rs12tr** due to lower interest rates, though the debt burden still grew by **Rs5.2tr (5.5%)** in one year. The **debt-to-GDP ratio** contracted to **78.5%**, showing modest improvement. Gross public debt rose to **Rs86.7tr**, while external debt climbed to **\$138.6bn**. The IMF programme helped sustain a **primary budget surplus** for three consecutive years, containing debt growth. However, transparency concerns remain, especially regarding military and SOE obligations. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Ceasefire Talks Collapse Amid Hormuz Tensions** — Iran has ruled out extending the **60-day ceasefire with the US**, insisting Washington must return to the interim pact and define a timeframe for commitments. Iranian Foreign Minister **Abbas Araghchi** said Tehran will not engage in talks while the US breaches agreements, noting that messages are only exchanged via **Pakistan and Qatar**. Meanwhile, President **Donald Trump** claimed: “*The USA has total control over the Strait of Hormuz. I THINK WE WILL KEEP IT!*” Iran counters that it effectively controls much of the waterway and plans to impose tolls. In Tehran, **Mohsen Rezaei** stressed the “strategic depth” of Iran–Pakistan ties, praising PM **Shehbaz Sharif** and COAS **Asim Munir** for their regional role. Turkish President **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** urged more countries to join the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement**, saying regional actors must resolve regional issues. (*The News*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Punjab–US Cooperation on Climate and Innovation** — Punjab Chief Minister **Maryam Nawaz Sharif** and US Chargé d’Affaires **Natalie Baker** agreed to expand **security cooperation, artificial intelligence, digital assets and energy**, while engaging US experts to help Punjab tackle **floods and smog**. Baker praised the **Basant festival** and lauded Maryam’s initiatives for **women’s empowerment**, including electric scooters, electrobus services, interest-free loans and digital protection tools. Maryam emphasised reforms in education, mobility and environmental management, noting that “**Punjab is changing, and its cities and villages are being reformed.**” A

Punjab–US Business and Investment Forum was also proposed to deepen ties. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **California Senate Recognises Pak–US Ties** — The **California State Senate** unanimously passed a resolution celebrating the **enduring relationship between Pakistan and the US**, highlighting the contributions of the **Pakistani-American diaspora** to California's economy, culture and society. Introduced by **Senator Melissa Hurtado**, the resolution commended achievements across diverse fields and urged Californians to celebrate bilateral friendship. Pakistan's Ambassador **Rizwan Saeed Sheikh** praised the initiative, reaffirming commitment to stronger people-to-people ties. The **California State Assembly** also resolved to promote Pakistani-American businesses and investors, coinciding with Ambassador Sheikh's visit to California to deepen engagement. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **PAC Flags Overstaying Officials Abroad** — The **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** raised concern over **46 passport section officials** still serving at Pakistani missions abroad despite completing their three-year postings. Missions include **Dubai, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, the UK, Washington, Denmark and Canada**. Chaired by **Shahida Akhtar Ali**, the PAC directed the **Interior Ministry** to present a solution within three weeks. The Interior Secretary cited a new policy, but the explanation was deemed unsatisfactory. The **DG Passports** requested more time to resolve the issue. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Norwegian FM Visits Islamabad** — Norwegian Foreign Minister **Espen Barth Eide** arrived in Islamabad on Thursday, marking the **first official visit in a decade**. He was received by **Ambassador Ayesha Ali** at the airport and later welcomed by Deputy PM and Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar**. The two will hold delegation-level talks on **trade, investment, climate change, renewable energy, education, and people-to-people contacts**. The visit builds on recent high-level exchanges, including Dar–Eide phone calls and the May visit of Norway's State Secretary **Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik**. The Foreign Office said the trip aims to **strengthen longstanding ties and explore new areas of cooperation**. (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan, Belarus Agree to Boost Trade** — Pakistan and Belarus concluded a two-day **Joint Ministerial Commission** meeting, co-chaired by **Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan** and Belarusian Energy Minister **Dzenis Maroz**, committing to enhance **bilateral trade and investment**. Both sides agreed to hold **online B2B sessions** in seafood, fruits, vegetables, seeds and dairy, and expand participation in **agricultural exhibitions, food fairs and reciprocal delegations**. Pakistan proposed a **mutual recognition agreement** on standards, while Belarus suggested cooperation in **emerging technologies** like water conservation and waste management. A **Joint Working Group on Trade** was established to identify opportunities and strengthen coordination. (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Harnessing Self-Interest for Collective Good** — In his column, **Khurram Husain**, **business and economy journalist**, argues that democracy and the market share a foundational principle: both

assume leaders and participants act out of **self-interest, ambition and greed**, yet channel these motivations towards the **common good**. Citing Hamilton, Hume, Montesquieu and Kant, he notes that democracy is built on checks and balances, while markets harness competition. He warns that non-democratic rulers lack accountability, giving their self-serving impulses unchecked rein. Husain concludes that restructuring the federation must arise from genuine grassroots demand, not elite imposition. “Both democracy and the market are designed to harness the worst motivations of individuals — towards the pursuit of the common good of all.” (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan Launches First Youth Employment Policy** — Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** unveiled Pakistan’s **first National Youth Employment Policy** on **World Youth Day**, pledging new opportunities for skills, entrepreneurship and innovation. The policy mandates a **35% quota for women** across the labour force and reserves **10% for startups**, encouraging youth to become job creators rather than job seekers. The PM emphasised equal access to education, citing **Daanish Schools** as a model, and announced plans for a **technology-focused Daanish University in Islamabad**. He highlighted scholarships, IT and AI training in China, and distribution of laptops and Chromebooks. Awards were presented to outstanding students and youth leaders, including **Shaheryar Memon**, recognised for promoting entrepreneurship. (*The News*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Automatic Weather Station for DG Khan** — Ghazi University will host an **Automatic Weather Station (AWS)** under a **World Bank-supported project** led by the **Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD)**. The initiative aims to modernise hydrometeorological observation and strengthen **early warning systems** for extreme weather. The AWS will provide **real-time, high-resolution data** to monitor **hill torrents in Dera Ghazi Khan**, a region highly vulnerable to flash floods. Under Phase I, **110 AWS units** are being installed nationwide, including **25 in Punjab**. Vice Chancellor **Dr Ashfaq Ahmad** said the facility will enhance forecasting, disaster preparedness and community protection. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Punjab’s Rs5b Safe Jail Project** — The Punjab government has launched a **Rs5 billion Safe Jail initiative** to modernise prison security with **AI-enabled surveillance**. The first phase covers **10 central jails, District Jail Lahore, and 10 command centres**. Plans include **12,000+ cameras, 615 panic buttons, 369 body cameras, 41 X-ray scanners, and 787 facial-recognition devices**. Control rooms will enable **centralised monitoring**, with violations triggering **automatic alerts**. Officials confirmed **80% of equipment procured**, with **Central Jail Lahore** set for completion this month and province-wide rollout by **March 2027**. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **SC Halts Re-polling in PB-9 Kohlu** — The **Supreme Court** has suspended the **Election Commission’s decision** to hold re-polling at four polling stations in **PB-9 Kohlu** scheduled for August 27. A three-member bench led by **Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan** restored the membership of **PML-N candidate Mir Chingez Khan Marri**. Notices were issued to the parties, with further proceedings adjourned until the last week of August. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **NA Committee Challenges 4-Year Hajj Policy** — The **National Assembly Standing Committee on Religious Affairs**, chaired by **Shagufta Jumani**, objected to the **2027–30 Hajj policy**, questioning why it was approved by the **federal cabinet** before being presented to parliament. Minister **Sardar Muhammad Yousaf** said cabinet approval followed Saudi timelines and

incorporated committee recommendations, including third-party selection of Hajj assistants. However, **Ejaz-ul-Haq** criticised the process, arguing the committee was sidelined. Concerns were also raised over repeated extensions for the **DG Hajj** and large quotas for private operators. A subcommittee will now examine the policy in detail. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Talal Blames PTI for Pindi Attack** — Minister of State for Interior **Talal Chaudhry** accused **PTI leadership** of responsibility for Tuesday's Rawalpindi incident, where party worker **Muhammad Hussain** allegedly opened fire on security forces, injuring an officer before being killed in retaliatory fire. Chaudhry argued leaders must answer for the "hatred and division" instilled in supporters, linking the attack to **May 9 violence** and other confrontations. He rejected claims Hussain was mentally unstable, citing recovery of PTI material. PTI's **Aamir Mughal** dismissed the allegations, insisting the party pursues a "peaceful and unarmed struggle" and demanded an **independent investigation**. (*The Express Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))

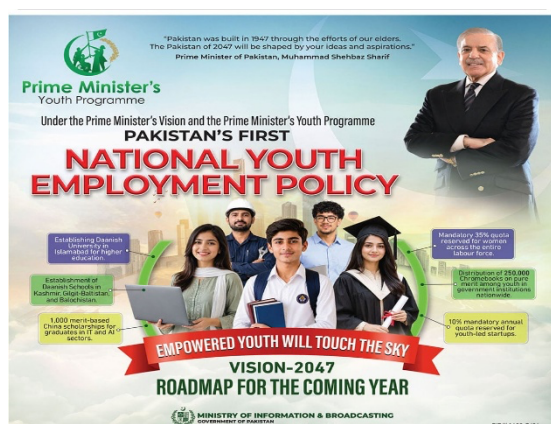
- ◆ **Democracy and the Market** — In his column, journalist **Khurram Husain** argues that democracy, like the market, is built on the assumption that human beings are inherently selfish, ambitious and self-serving. Drawing on thinkers such as **Hamilton, Hume, Montesquieu and Kant**, he notes that both systems harness these "worst motivations" to produce collective good through checks, balances and competition. Husain warns that non-democratic rulers lack accountability and separation of powers, often causing lasting damage. He cautions against top-down demands to restructure the federation, stressing that such moves must originate from the people, not imposed from above. (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Govt Considers Converting Secretariat into Hotel** — The federal government is weighing a proposal to convert the **Shaheed-i-Millat Secretariat** in Islamabad into a **five-star hotel** ahead of the **2027 SCO summit**. Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** has formed a committee of ministers and secretaries to examine the plan. The building, located in **Sector F-6/1**, covers **251,774 sq ft** and could be retrofitted to house **128 guest rooms, 64 suites, and a rooftop restaurant**. Officials say the move aims to address a shortfall of luxury rooms, with CDA already working to expand hospitality infrastructure for upcoming international events. (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **AJK Outlook** — As staggered polls for the **AJK Legislative Assembly** near completion, the **PML-N** appears in a strong position, already preparing a governance plan. However, the process has been marred by **violence** and **rigging allegations** from the **PPP**, its coalition partner at the centre. Re-polling is scheduled in **Bagh**, while voting in seven **Poonch constituencies** will take place on Aug 20–21 after postponement due to law-and-order concerns. The editorial stresses that government formation should only follow the conclusion of all polling, and the **Election Commission** must investigate irregularities to ensure legitimacy. With ongoing **protests led by the banned JAAC**, the next administration must address demands for **good governance**. Transparency and inclusivity will be vital for stability in the region. (*Dawn*, [13 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Right to Justice** — The editorial stresses that judicial relief for former PM **Imran Khan** is overdue. His **solitary confinement for over eight months**, without access to family, lawyers, or doctors, violates fundamental rights and fuels concerns about his health. International media and Khan's sons have raised alarms over his treatment despite court orders. The government must allow medical care and family access, while the **judiciary** must expedite pending appeals to uphold the

Constitution. The release of political prisoners and dialogue with the opposition are essential for **political stability** amid economic and regional volatility. (*The Tribune*, [13 August 2026](#))



The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of Pakistan, published a poster in several national newspapers highlighting the country's first **National Youth Employment Policy** under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme. The policy sets out a vision to empower young people, expand employment opportunities, and support the achievement of **Vision 2047**.



The Government of Punjab, Pakistan, published a poster in several national newspapers highlighting the country's journey **from the Freedom Movement to the creation of Pakistan and from the achievement of independence to its preservation**. The poster highlights the Pakistan Armed Forces' sacrifices, determination, and courage in **Marka-e-Haq**, particularly their role in safeguarding Pakistan's sovereignty, independence, and national security. It also acknowledges the contribution of Pakistan's political leadership to the country's independence and its continued defence.

*[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**].*