

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

14 August 2026

Security

- ◆ **Every Drop of Water Our Red Line** — On Pakistan's **79th Independence Day**, Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** warned India of a *direct response* if it violates the **Indus Waters Treaty**, declaring: "Every drop of water is a red line for us." At the inauguration of **Yadgar-e-Fatah**, attended by **President Asif Ali Zardari** and **Field Marshal Asim Munir**, he praised Pakistan's role as a **guarantor of peace** through mediation in the Middle East, while condemning India as an "enemy of peace." The ceremony celebrated Pakistan's military victory in **Marka-e-Haq**, reaffirmed support for **Palestine** and **Kashmir**, and highlighted the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement** as a symbol of unity. Leaders emphasised resilience, national cohesion, and the armed forces' resolve to defend sovereignty. (*The News*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Operationalising the Makkah Defence Pact** — Turkiye's defence ministry has outlined steps to implement the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (MJDA)** signed on 7 August 2026 with **Saudi Arabia and Pakistan**. The pact, modelled on NATO's collective defence principle, stipulates that "an armed attack against any member would be regarded as an attack on all." Ankara announced that strategic mechanisms will be established involving defence and foreign ministers, as well as chiefs of armed forces. Plans include **joint land, naval and air exercises**, enhanced cooperation in **defence industry production**, and prioritisation of **AI, electronic warfare and unmanned systems**. Turkiye also confirmed participation in Jeddah meetings to form an international coalition for **Red Sea shipping protection**. (*The News*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **From Jinnah's Vision to Sidhu's Renaissance** — Pakistan's Independence Day is portrayed as a renewal of the nation's oath to remain **Secure, Sovereign and Second to None**. The article highlights the transformation of the **Pakistan Air Force (PAF)** under **Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu**, who since 2021 has led a doctrinal and technological renaissance. Moving beyond prestige platforms, PAF now pursues a **Kill Chain-centric doctrine** to "See First, Decide First and Strike First." Modernisation includes the **JF-17 Block III**, **J-10C**, and future stealth project **PFX**, alongside force multipliers in **electronic warfare, cyber, UAVs and AI**. The creation of **National Aerospace Science and Technology Parks (NASTP)** marks a shift from import dependency to indigenous innovation. Operational maturity, demonstrated in **Operation Swift Retort (2019)**, underscores credibility. As warfare evolves with hypersonics, drones and space assets, PAF aims not to catch up but to leapfrog, ensuring Pakistan's skies remain inviolable. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Terrorist Commander Killed in Bannu Operation** — Security forces eliminated three terrorists, including **Naseer Mohammad alias Geedar**, a highly wanted commander with a **Rs6 million bounty**, during a joint **intelligence-based operation (IBO)** by police and the **Counter-Terrorism**

Department (CTD) in Bannu's Domel area. According to **DPO Capt (retd) Mohammad Furqan Bilal**, Geedar and two associates were killed as teams searched hideouts based on intelligence reports. Security was tightened across Domel and Bannu Township. Meanwhile, two bullet-riddled bodies were recovered in Sadakhel, sparking protests by locals who alleged unlawful detentions and demanded an impartial investigation. Police confirmed the IBO was ongoing in multiple areas to dismantle terrorist networks. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Sindh CM Orders Stronger CTD Response** — At a high-level meeting in Karachi, **Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah** directed the **Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD)** to intensify **intelligence-led operations** and bolster security against evolving threats. The meeting reviewed CTD performance, noting that terrorist incidents in Sindh had dropped sharply in 2026, with **nine attacks compared to 37 last year — a 76% decline**. CTD reported **918 intelligence-based operations**, arresting 87 suspects and killing four militants. Networks linked to the **TTP** and insurgent groups targeting police and infrastructure were dismantled, with over **2,000 kg of explosives recovered**. Officials also highlighted foiled sabotage attempts on railway tracks and progress in investigations into attacks on Karachi's transport system. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **AJK Police Warn JAAC Over Abduction of Personnel** — The 'Azad' Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Police accused the proscribed **Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC)** of abducting **eight highway police personnel** deployed on election duty in Domel. According to **SSP Khawar Ali Shaukat**, the abducted officers were tortured and remain in JAAC custody. He warned the group's leadership that **"the state will show no leniency"** if its personnel are harmed, pledging "decisive and the harshest possible action" against those challenging the state's writ. Shaukat displayed pictures of the abducted officers and stressed that the public had rejected JAAC's violent agenda by participating in elections. Authorities vowed to uphold law, order and public safety. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **The Strategic Shift of the Makkah Agreement** — Geopolitical analyst **Aneela Shahzad** explains that the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement**, signed by **Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye**, declares that *"an armed attack on any one of the three states will be regarded as an attack on all three."* She argues this pact unites Muslim states by combining Saudi energy wealth, Türkiye's conventional military power and NATO membership, and Pakistan's nuclear capability. The agreement signals a **move away from US security guarantees**, especially after the Gaza War and Iran War exposed Washington's prioritisation of Israel. Shahzad notes Pakistan's 2025 victory over India, aided by China's Beidou system, demonstrated the strength of a **Global South security architecture**. She concludes that the pact could expand into a wider collective defence network across the Muslim world, reshaping regional power balances. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Understanding Terrorism's Complexity** — Writer **Faisal Ali Raja** outlines four pivotal elements shaping terrorism: **domestic conditions** that nurture extremist recruitment, **regional dynamics** enabling external intervention, **securitisation of society** that blurs local and national issues, and **institutional disharmony** that hampers counter-terrorism capacity. He stresses that recruitment stems from structural factors like governance failures, poverty and grievances, not a single cause. Effective counter-terrorism requires **layered border security, real-time intelligence sharing and institutional harmony**. Over-securitisation risks ignoring root drivers such as unemployment and

exclusion. Raja concludes that **durable peace demands integrating military action with governance reform, economic opportunity, judicial strengthening and public trust.** (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Türkiye–Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Pact Reinforces Defence Cooperation** — The **Turkish Defence Ministry** clarified that the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement**, signed on 7 August 2026, is **defensive in nature** and does not identify any country as a common enemy. Spokesperson **Rear Adm Zeki Akturk** said the pact aims to **boost joint military capabilities**, enhance regional stability and institutionalise defence ties among the three nations. Planned cooperation includes **command-post and field exercises**, later expanding to joint land, naval, air and unmanned systems operations. Defence industry collaboration will focus on **joint development, technology sharing and AI-supported capabilities**. Akturk stressed the pact complements, rather than rivals, NATO, and may expand to include other states. He also condemned Israel's ongoing attacks in Gaza and Lebanon, urging stronger international action. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Taliban's Enduring Support for TTP** — A recent **UN monitoring report** confirms that the **Afghan Taliban** “**have continued their support**” to the **banned TTP**, despite issuing warnings to halt attacks in Pakistan. The report highlights that Afghanistan remains a safe haven for multiple terrorist groups, including **IS-K, Al Qaeda (and AQIS), and ETIM**, posing grave regional security challenges. Alarming, IS-K and the **BLA may be collaborating**, while the TTP has expanded operations into **Balochistan, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan**. Though Kabul relocated 2,000 militants away from the border, these steps are seen as cosmetic. The editorial insists that the Taliban cannot “pick and choose” which groups to confront, urging a **multilateral regional approach** to pressure Kabul into ending support for terrorism. (*Dawn*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Swat Jirga Demands Peace, Not Military Operations** — The **Swat Loya Jirga**, comprising political leaders, traders, lawyers and civil society, has **rejected any new military operation** in the region, instead demanding that militants be eliminated from **Malakand division within one month**. The jirga warned that failure to restore peace would trigger protests, sit-ins and a long march to Islamabad. Speakers stressed that Swat has already suffered from terrorism, operations and disasters since 2007, devastating tourism and the economy. “People of Swat and Malakand division want permanent and sustainable peace.” They also demanded withdrawal of new taxes and restoration of Malakand's separate status. (*Dawn*, [14 August 2026](#))

Economy

- ◆ **Pakistan Seeks Major Revision of Iran Gas Deal** — Islamabad has asked Tehran for a **50% reduction in the price of gas** under the stalled **Iran–Pakistan (IP) pipeline project**, alongside a cut in planned volumes. Officials argue that domestic sectors cannot absorb supplies at the current high rates, with power producers refusing gas above **Rs2,000/mmBtu (\$7.14)**. Pakistan has proposed recalculating the tariff at **6.11% of Brent plus \$1**, lowering costs to between **\$4.67 and \$5.89/mmBtu**, making it cheaper than LNG imports. The government also seeks a **US waiver** to proceed with the project, estimated at **\$2.5 billion**. Iran had earlier pushed Pakistan into arbitration over delays, but both sides now aim for an amicable solution. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Exporters Warn of Rising Cost Pressures** — The **Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PRGMEA)** has urged the government to act swiftly against mounting challenges in the apparel sector. According to **PRGMEA North Zone Chairman Imran Salahuddin**, exporters face **unpredictable fuel prices, costly electricity and gas tariffs, expensive financing, delayed refunds and cargo disruptions**, making them uncompetitive internationally. He criticised the new daily petroleum pricing mechanism, noting that “**Pakistani exporters cannot simply pass every increase in energy and transportation costs on to international buyers.**” The crisis has been worsened by a nationwide **transporters’ strike**, now in its fifth day, leaving export containers stranded and risking missed shipments, demurrage and loss of buyer confidence. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan’s FX Reserves Edge Up Slightly** — The **State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)** reported that total liquid foreign exchange reserves rose by **\$23.7 million** in the week ending **7 August 2026**, reaching **\$22.5 billion**. SBP holdings increased by **\$14 million to \$17.06 billion**, while commercial banks’ reserves rose by **\$9.7 million to \$5.44 billion**, according to **Arif Habib Limited**. Import cover remained steady at **2.51 months**. On a fiscal year-to-date basis, reserves are down **\$735 million**, though they have gained **\$1.76 billion** in calendar year 2026. The **Pakistani rupee** closed marginally stronger at **277.65 per dollar**, while local **gold prices fell Rs3,500 per tola** to Rs460,436, tracking global declines. Silver also dropped by Rs175 per tola. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Sindh CM Endorses \$100 Billion Export Vision** — At the **Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry’s Independence Day** ceremony, **Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah** backed the business community’s ambitious plan to raise Pakistan’s exports from **\$30 billion to \$100 billion**, calling it “absolutely achievable” if energy costs are reduced. He stressed that Pakistan’s next battle must be won on the **economic front**, highlighting Sindh’s potential as the country’s **energy basket** with **Thar coal, solar, wind and indigenous gas**. Shah argued that inexpensive electricity from local resources could lower production costs, boost competitiveness and enable exporters to thrive globally. He urged unity between government and business, noting that overseas Pakistanis already send **\$40 billion in remittances**, and exports could match this with supportive policies. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Fiscal Discipline Delivers IMF Surplus** — Pakistan recorded a **primary budget surplus of Rs3.63 trillion**, exceeding the IMF’s target by Rs464 billion, marking the third consecutive surplus. The **federal deficit narrowed to Rs4.8 trillion**, Rs1.7 trillion below target, largely due to **Rs1.3 trillion lower interest payments**, higher petroleum levy collection and reduced development spending. Provinces generated Rs1.45 trillion in cash surpluses, slightly below the IMF’s conditions. The **FBR collected Rs13 trillion**, nearly Rs1 trillion short, keeping the tax-to-GDP ratio stagnant at 10.3%. Public debt growth slowed to 7% after early retirement of Rs1.9 trillion in domestic debt. An IMF mission will review performance in September before releasing the next loan tranche. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Gwadar’s Donkey Export Venture Gains Ground** — A **Pak-Sino joint venture, Shahzad and Shao (Private)**, has secured **four acres of land in Gwadar North Free Zone** to establish a donkey slaughterhouse and processing factory. The facility, backed by all required licences and quotas, will

export **150,000 donkeys annually** to China, where hides are in high demand for **Ejjiao, a traditional medicinal product**. Initial soil testing has been completed, and donkey farms are being developed in **Sindh and Punjab**. This follows Hangeng company's recent exports worth **\$195,425**, after Pakistan lifted its ban on donkey hide exports. With Pakistan's **5.8 million donkey population**, officials say Gwadar's new plant could catalyse further investment, with firms like **MLG Farms, Sang Yang Global Limited and Foshan Brothers and Sisters Trading Company** applying for land. (*The Nation*, [14 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan's Hidden Financial Picture** — Syed Asad Ali Shah, former managing partner of a leading professional services firm, argues that Pakistan's fiscal debate is dangerously one-sided, focused only on debt while ignoring assets. He notes that while public debt stood at **Rs83.3 trillion in March 2026**, liabilities such as pensions (estimated at Rs40–45 trillion) remain unmeasured, and assets like land, infrastructure and mineral wealth are undocumented. Examples include **Reko Diq's reserves valued at over \$130 billion gross** and **Thar coal's potential \$20 billion economic value**. ["Pakistan's fiscal debate is dominated by what it owes because that is what it measures. The answer is not to minimise the debt but to measure the other side with equal seriousness."] He calls for audited balance sheets, actuarial valuations and accrual accounting to reveal the state's true financial position. (*Dawn*, [14 August 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan–Norway Relations Deepen with Energy and Trade Focus** — Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** invited Norwegian firms to invest in Pakistan's **oil and gas exploration sector**, while urging stronger bilateral trade during talks with Norway's Foreign Minister **Espen Barth Eide**, the first such visit in a decade. Shehbaz praised Norway's cooperation in education, skilled labour, climate resilience and technology, and welcomed its principled stand on **Palestine**. Eide commended Pakistan's mediation efforts in the **US–Iran conflict**, calling them "a service to the world." Deputy PM **Ishaq Dar** highlighted growing IT exports, maritime opportunities, and joint ventures such as Yara International's fertiliser project. Both sides agreed to expand cooperation in **defence, climate change, IT and maritime affairs**, while reaffirming support for **Kashmir** and regional peace. (*The News*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan Names First Lunar Rover 'Jinnah-1'** — The **Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco)** has officially named the country's first lunar rover "**Jinnah-1**." Scheduled to join China's **Chang'e-8 mission in 2029**, the rover will conduct scientific research at the **lunar south pole**. Suparco revealed that the name was chosen from over **4,000 proposals** submitted in a nationwide competition, with seven participants suggesting "Jinnah-1." The final selection was made through a lucky draw. This marks a historic step for Pakistan's space programme, symbolising national pride and ambition in advancing scientific exploration beyond Earth. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan–Kazakhstan Agricultural Cooperation Strengthens** — Pakistan and **Kazakhstan** agreed to accelerate implementation of existing agreements to convert them into concrete **trade and investment opportunities**, according to the Ministry of National Food Security. In a meeting between **Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain** and Ambassador **Yerzhan Kistafin**, Kazakhstan offered

to explore **wheat supply** to Pakistan, while Pakistan showcased its export potential in **mangoes, potatoes, guava, dates, bananas and onions**. Both sides discussed **affordable tractors and mechanisation** for small farmers, highlighting connectivity through rail and regional transport links as key to reducing freight costs. They agreed to convene the next **Joint Working Group on Agriculture** in Kazakhstan. Separately, **Kyrgyzstan** backed the creation of a **Pakistan–Kyrgyzstan Joint Business Council** to boost B2B trade and investment. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

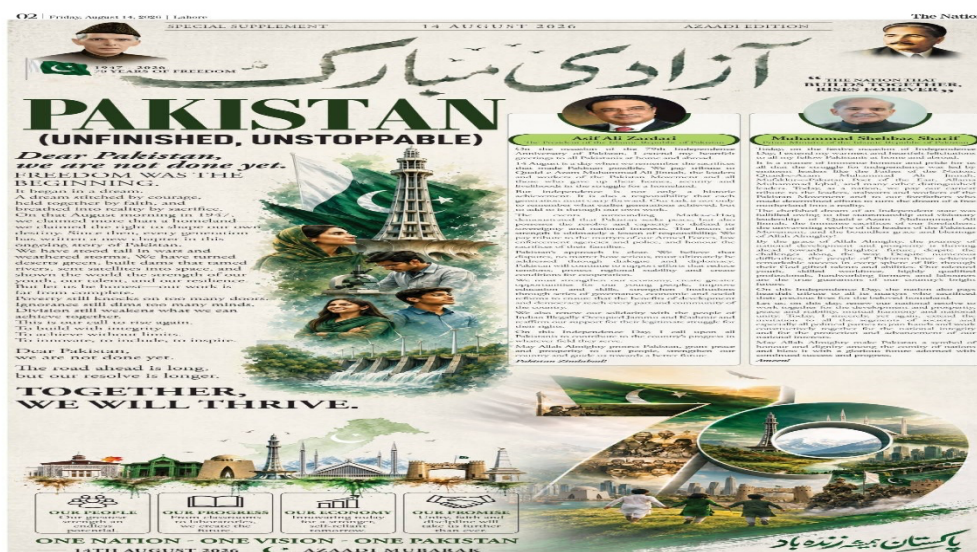
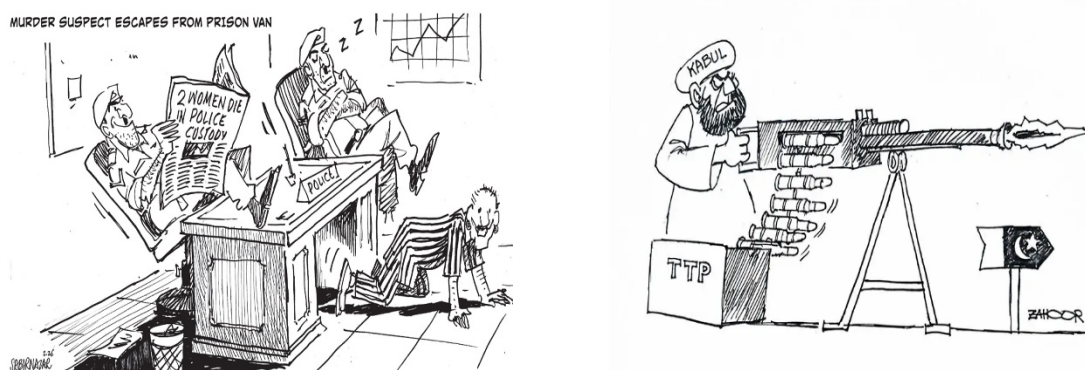
- ◆ **CII Rejects Father's Responsibility for Children Born Out of Wedlock** — The **Council of Islamic Ideology (CII)** informed the **Senate Standing Committee on Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony** that it opposed a proposed legal provision requiring fathers to maintain children born outside wedlock. According to its interpretation, **“the father is responsible for legitimate children, while responsibility for children born outside wedlock rests with the mother and specified maternal relatives.”** Senator Waqar Mehdi suggested examining the issue from the perspective of legal identity and registration, with **NADRA** invited for a briefing. The committee decided to reconsider the provisions after reviewing CII's recommendations, alongside other family law amendments and Hajj-related matters. (*The News*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Supreme Court to Hear Petitions on Imran Khan's Access** — The **Supreme Court of Pakistan** has fixed five petitions concerning access to former Prime Minister and PTI founder **Imran Khan** for hearing on **18 August 2026**. A three-member bench led by **Justice Shahid Waheed**, with **Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan** and **Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim**, will preside. Lawyers note this is perhaps the first time PTI faces a bench whose outcome “cannot be predicted,” given the judges' reputations for integrity. The petitions seek access for Khan's family, lawyers and physicians, and his transfer to hospital for treatment. Observers argue the justice system has failed to uphold **Article 10-A's guarantees of due process and fairness** over the past two years. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan's Heritage Footprint Expands Globally** — In 2026, Pakistan's cultural and civilisational legacy gained new recognition as **UNESCO** added **12 historic sites** to its **World Heritage Tentative List**, raising the total to **37**. The new entries include **Gor Khatri, Bazira-Barikot, Bhamala Buddhist Complex, Sethi House, Mai Qamro Mosque** in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa; **Pharwala Fort, Rewat Fort, Tomb of Sultan Muqarrab Khan** in Punjab; **Kot Diji, Naukot and Umerkot Forts** in Sindh; and the **Kalasha Valley Cultural Landscape** in Chitral. These sites reflect Pakistan's diverse heritage — from **Gandharan and Buddhist traditions to Islamic architecture, Mughal-era fortifications and living cultural landscapes**. Bazira-Barikot, for instance, links to **Alexander the Great's campaign** and Gandharan civilisation, while Bhamala showcases the fusion of **local and Hellenistic art**. (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Dissent as Democracy's Lifeblood** — Barrister **Benazir Jatoi** argues that dissent is essential to democracy, drawing parallels between **Socrates' trial in 399 BC Athens** and Pakistan today. Socrates, who described himself as a “small stinging insect” keeping Athens awake, became the **“infamous, consistent and loudest voice of dissent”**. Jatoi stresses that democracy is not static

but requires “**more participation, more scrutiny, more diverse voices, more collective decision-making.**” She warns that in Pakistan dissent is increasingly criminalised, from Balochistan’s silent protests to the harassment of activists like Sheema Kermani. “Contrary to what the ruling elite believe, the function of dissent is not to discredit democracy but to improve it, renew it and make it so that it serves all people.” (*The Express Tribune*, [14 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **The Unfinished Independence** — Former Supreme Court judge **Syed Mansoor Ali Shah** reflects on Pakistan’s fragile journey since 1947, arguing that independence remains incomplete. He recalls **Faiz’s lament of a “stained, night-bitten dawn”**, noting that while rulers changed, the colonial mindset endured. Institutions like the **army, civil service and judiciary** inherited colonial instincts, with courts legitimising usurpers through the **doctrine of necessity**, turning guardians of the Constitution into “notaries of its breach.” Shah stresses that true independence requires citizens and judges with the courage to say no to power. “The second independence will begin not in a courtroom or a parliament but in a classroom.” He urges a revival of **humanities, conviction and character** to build fearless citizens and judges, reminding that Pakistan was dreamed by a poet and argued into being by a lawyer. (*Dawn*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Unity and Reform Messages Mark Independence Day** — As Pakistan celebrates **79 years of independence**, civilian and military leaders emphasised unity, reform and responsibility. The day began with **gun salutes** and a **change of guards ceremony** at Quaid-i-Azam’s mausoleum. President **Asif Ali Zardari** urged citizens to carry forward the democratic will of the people, stressing that “*independence is not only a historic achievement. It is also a responsibility that each generation must carry forward.*” He highlighted Pakistan’s role in promoting dialogue and warned Afghanistan’s interim regime against supporting terror groups. Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** praised economic stabilisation, rising remittances and strategic defence cooperation, citing the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement**. Military chiefs reaffirmed their resolve to defend sovereignty, stressing that “**Pakistan’s strength lies in the unity and collective resolve of its people.**” (*Dawn*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Senate Panel Warned on Flood Preparedness** — Officials told the **Senate Standing Committee on Water Resources** that **large dams are not effective in stopping major floods**, noting last year’s devastation was caused by heavy rainfall downstream of Indian dams. They highlighted that countries like **China, Australia and the US rely on small dams** and urged Pakistan to adopt similar localised water storage solutions. The committee was briefed on **Disaster Lens – 2026**, an integrated risk assessment system, and informed that **water security will be a major challenge** due to population growth and climate change. The **NDMA** reported 155 deaths and 460 injuries since the monsoon began, stressing the need for **interprovincial coordination, modern irrigation technologies and strict action against encroachments on waterways**. A draft **Flood Plain Regulations Act** has been shared with provinces to strengthen mitigation efforts. (*The Nation*, [14 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Foundations and Challenges of Pakistan’s Identity** — Dr **Shuja Ahmed Mahesar** explains that the **Two-Nation Theory** emerged from Muslim political consciousness after 1857, crystallised by **Sir Syed Ahmad Khan** and later transformed into a mass movement under **Jinnah’s leadership**. It asserted Muslims’ distinct culture, language and traditions, culminating in the **Lahore Resolution**

of 1940 and eventual independence. Yet Pakistan's post-1947 trajectory was marred by constitutional instability, martial laws and deviation from Jinnah's democratic vision. ["Pakistan's leadership must follow the Quaid's democratic vision and understand the primacy of Jinnah's thoughts in tackling constitutional, political, economic and security challenges."] Mahesar urges unity, inclusivity and respect for diversity to overcome extremism and governance failures. (*Dawn*, [14 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Remembering Pakistan's Overlooked Patriots** — Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, member of the National Assembly and patron-in-chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council, highlights the **unsung contributions of non-Muslims** to the Pakistan Movement. He recalls **Jogendra Nath Mandal**, Pakistan's first law minister; **Jagannath Azad**, who composed the first national anthem; **Dewan Bahadur S P Singha**, whose vote secured Punjab's inclusion; and figures like **Justice Cornelius** and **Sir Victor Turner**. Vankwani stresses that "the need of the hour is to give the contributions of patriotic non-Muslim Pakistanis due recognition in our curriculum, media and national narrative." He urges inclusivity, interfaith harmony and respect for diversity as true reflections of **Quaid-e-Azam's vision**. (*The News*, [14 August 2026](#))



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