

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

15-17 August 2026

Security

- ◆ **Security Forces Intensify Operations Against TTP** — Seven members of the outlawed **Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)** were killed in an intelligence-based operation in **Kharan, Balochistan**, under *Operation Radd-ul-Fitna 3*. Their hideouts were destroyed, and a large cache of weapons, vehicles and explosives was recovered. According to ISPR, the terrorists were involved in extortion, kidnappings, target killings and suicide attacks. President **Asif Ali Zardari** praised the forces, stating, “operations against terrorist elements operating under external patronage are indispensable for the protection of national security”. Interior Minister **Mohsin Naqvi** also lauded their professionalism. Separately, Rangers and CTD arrested a TTP operative in Karachi, accused of fundraising and planning attacks. Raids continue to dismantle his network. (*The Express Tribune*, [17 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan Honours Armed Forces with Military Awards** — On **15 August 2026**, the President announced a wide range of military honours for officers and soldiers of the **Army, Navy and Air Force**. These included **23 Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military)**, **112 Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military)**, **128 Tamgha-i-Imtiaz (Military)**, **6 Tamgha-i-Basalat** and **32 Imtiaz-i-Asnad**. Senior officers such as **Maj Gen Saad Al Abd, Rear Admiral Muhammad Shahnawaz Khan, and Air Vice Marshal Farooq Zamir Afridi** were among those recognised with the Hilal-i-Imtiaz. The Sitara-i-Imtiaz list featured numerous brigadiers, colonels, commodores and air commodores, while the **Tamgha-i-Basalat** honoured Navy personnel for acts of valour. The awards underscore Pakistan’s tradition of recognising **professional excellence, courage and service to the nation** across its armed forces. (*The Nation*, [15 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Attack on Balochistan Home Minister’s Convoy** — On **15 August 2026**, unidentified gunmen ambushed the convoy of **Balochistan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langau** in Mastung district, injuring **nine people, including seven security personnel and two civilians**, though the minister himself escaped unharmed. The attackers fired from orchards near Kund Umarani, prompting a **20-minute exchange of gunfire** with Langau’s security detail. The minister, seated in a bulletproof vehicle, said five bullets struck the driver-side window, adding, “I cannot be intimidated by such firecrackers... Pakistan was, is and will remain alive.”] He vowed continued operations against anti-state elements. Interior ministry officials condemned the attack, blaming militants affiliated with **Fitna al-Hindustan**, and praised police for repelling the assault. (*The News*, [15 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Afghan Taliban at Five Years: Between Security and Legitimacy** — Writing in *The News* on **15 August 2026**, former ambassador **Asif Durrani** argues that while the Taliban have delivered relative peace compared to decades of war, Afghanistan remains mired in **economic collapse, diplomatic isolation and ideological rigidity**. He stresses that “peace without accountable governance, economic opportunity, political participation and respect for basic rights remains

fragile”. Women’s exclusion from education and employment is described as a fundamental threat to Afghanistan’s viability. Durrani notes that only Russia has recognised the Taliban government, limiting investment and integration. For Pakistan, the unresolved issue of **TTP sanctuaries inside Afghanistan** has eroded trust and disrupted trade. He urges structured dialogue, regional cooperation, and clear UN benchmarks for recognition, warning that Afghanistan risks exporting insecurity unless it builds inclusive institutions and legitimacy. (*The News*, [15 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Afghanistan’s Terror Nexus and Pakistan’s Security Challenge** — The *News* editorial highlights the **UN Monitoring Team’s 38th report**, which confirms escalating cross-border attacks provoked by **TTP operations against Pakistan**. It states that the **Afghan Taliban continue to support the TTP while denying harbouring terrorist groups**, and notes growing linkages between the **BLA, ISIL-K and Al-Qaeda**. The report warns that Afghanistan’s role as a safe haven poses an enduring threat to neighbours and Central Asia. Interestingly, Taliban leader **Hibatullah Akhundzada** has reportedly warned the TTP to halt attacks or risk losing support, relocating 2,000 fighters away from the border. The editorial stresses that while diplomatic pressure may be working, Pakistan must also improve its **domestic security in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan**, where most attacks occur. It concludes that national authorities must act cohesively, rather than resorting to political marches, to eradicate terrorism. (*The News*, [15 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Opening Defence to Private Investment** — Barrister **Raza Rashid** explains Pakistan’s creation of the **Defence Industrial Production and Regulatory Authority (DIPRA)**, which merges the Ministry of Defence Production with private firms under one regulator to spur indigenisation and exports. He warns that success depends on rules yet to be written. Three issues stand out: **intellectual property ownership**, where current provisions risk deterring investors; **dispute resolution**, which must be independent and efficient; and **licensing**, which requires clarity to build trust. As Rashid notes, “the most consequential institutional opening in its history... needs certainty, not exhortations”. (*Dawn*, [15 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan’s Role in the Makkah Defence Pact** — Writing in *Dawn*, Professor **Sikander Ahmed Shah** analyses the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (MJDA)** signed by **Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkiye**. The pact, akin to a Middle Eastern NATO, commits each state to collective defence under **Article 51 of the UN Charter**. Shah notes that while the agreement may bring economic and diplomatic benefits, it raises serious costs for Pakistan. “The new trilateral security agreement raises questions about its costs for Pakistan.” Risks include confrontation with Israel, strained ties with Iran, sectarian tensions at home, and overstretched military resources. (*Dawn*, [15 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Security Forces Strike in Khuzdar** — On **16 August 2026**, security forces carried out an **intelligence-based operation in Shor Pard, Khuzdar**, killing **10 terrorists and injuring several others** after engaging three hideouts. A clearance operation is underway to track those who escaped. Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** praised the forces, stating [“successful operations against terrorists who are enemies of humanity are a manifestation of the expertise of our security forces”]. The strike follows recent attacks, including an armed assault on Balochistan Home Minister **Mir Ziaullah Langove’s convoy** and earlier operations in Surab where **18 terrorists affiliated with Fitna al-Hindustan were eliminated**. Security forces reaffirmed their determination to eradicate terrorism nationwide. (*Dawn*, [16 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Strategic Implications of the Makkah Agreement** — Former foreign secretary **Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry** describes the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (MJDA)**, signed by **Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye on 7 August 2026**, as a landmark in regional security. Its key clause declares that “**an attack on any of the three countries is an attack on all**”, signalling collective deterrence rather than a military bloc. Anchored in Turkiye’s defence industry, Saudi Arabia’s financial strength and Pakistan’s military capabilities, the accord reduces reliance on the US security umbrella and challenges Israel’s regional ambitions. Chaudhry stresses, “the accord shouldn’t be seen as a military bloc”, noting its potential to expand into a broader regional security framework. He urges Pakistan to maintain constructive engagement with Iran and major powers, and to complement security cooperation with trilateral economic initiatives. (*Dawn*, [16 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Delhi-Kabul Axis and Pakistan’s Security Concerns** — Writing in *Dawn*, **Muhammad Ali Siddiqi**, the paper’s External Ombudsman, traces the troubled history of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, noting that Kabul opposed Pakistan’s UN membership in 1947 and later pursued the “Pakhtunistan stunt” with India’s backing. He argues that Afghan rulers, fixated on “lost territory,” have long aligned with Delhi against Islamabad. Today, despite Pakistan’s support for millions of Afghan refugees, Kabul allegedly backs **TTP and BLA militants**, with India believed to supply weapons. Siddiqi stresses [“the two capitals support terrorist strikes against Pakistan”], citing cross-border attacks and drone incursions. Former envoy **Asif Durrani** defended Pakistan’s strikes inside Afghanistan under **Article 51 of the UN Charter**, insisting they will continue until the TTP threat is eliminated. (*Dawn*, [17 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **TTP Attacks 14-15 August 2026:** The operational data provided details a series of claimed guerrilla attacks, retaliatory strikes, and sabotage operations carried out by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) across multiple regions in Pakistan on 14 and 15 August 2026. (*Telegram*, 16-17 August 2026)

On **14 August 2026**, TTP claimed a total of **74 operations**, heavily concentrated in North Waziristan (15) and South Waziristan (14), followed by Peshawar (12). These actions primarily targeted security posts, military positions, police checkpoints, and critical infrastructure using snappers, grenade launchers (GL), mortars, and explosive devices. Significant incidents included retaliatory strikes on military posts, the injury of senior officers (e.g., Captain Zaryab and Captain Rizwan in Shewa), and the systematic destruction of surveillance equipment and police checkpoints.

On **15 August 2026**, TTP reported **25 operations**, with Khurram (7) emerging as the primary operational area, alongside South Waziristan (4) and Khyber (4). Operations on this day included mortar and grenade launcher attacks against Frontier Corps (FC) posts, military camps, and police checkpoints, alongside missile strikes in Ladha and targeted sniper operations against security infrastructure. See the **Summary of Operations presented in the table below**.

Date	Total Claims	Primary Operational Areas	Target Types & Methods	Key Reported Outcomes / Damage
14 August 2026	74	North Waziristan (15)	Retaliatory strikes, guerrilla raids, sniper	Destruction of multiple police checkpoints, security cameras, solar systems, and road machinery;

Date	Total Claims	Primary Operational Areas	Target Types & Methods	Key Reported Outcomes / Damage
		South Waziristan (14) Peshawar (12) Karak (5), Bajaur (5), Tank (5)	attacks, GL/Dushka fire, IEDs	multiple security personnel killed and wounded.
15 August 2026	25	Khurram (7) South Waziristan (4) Khyber (4) Tank (3)	Mortar barrages, BM missile launches, GL attacks, sniper fire	Damage to FC and police posts, destruction of security cameras, reported casualties among military and police forces.

Economy

- SBP Chief Sees Path to Sustainable Growth** — State Bank of Pakistan Governor **Jameel Ahmad** said the country is moving from stabilisation towards **sustainable growth**, projecting GDP growth of **3.5–4.5 per cent in FY27**. He noted that prudent fiscal and monetary policies had supported **3.7 per cent growth in FY26**, while inflation averaged **7.1 per cent** and is expected to remain within the **5–7 per cent target range**. Remittances reached a record **\$41bn in FY26** and are forecast to rise to **\$44bn in FY27**, helping reserves climb to **\$21bn**. Ahmad highlighted SBP's initiatives, including **PRISM+ for faster payments**, promotion of **digital transactions**, and efforts in **Islamic banking, green finance and financial inclusion**. He stressed that economic self-reliance, strong institutions and national unity are vital for transforming stability into sustainable development. (*Dawn*, [15 August 2026](#))
- Resilience Beyond Stabilisation** — Writing in *The News* on **15 August 2026**, Dr **Hafiz Muhammad Usman Rana** notes that Pakistan's economy has shown signs of stabilisation, with **growth at 3.7 per cent, easing inflation, stronger remittances and an S&P credit rating upgrade**. Yet he warns that ["Pakistan has repeatedly confused stabilisation with resilience"]. Stabilisation improves indicators today, but resilience ensures survival against shocks like floods, oil crises or geopolitical disruptions. He stresses that Pakistan's growth model underinvests in protecting productive assets, leaving households vulnerable — poverty rose to **28.9 per cent in 2024-25**. Insurance, he argues, must be treated as **economic infrastructure**, protecting farmers, exporters and the public balance sheet. Without risk-management institutions, every uninsured shock becomes a public liability. (*The News*, [15 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **KP Rejects Federal Deduction Plan** — The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government firmly rejected the Centre's proposal to deduct **Rs6.4 billion at source from federal transfers**, calling it unconstitutional. The KP Finance Department stressed that **“Article 164 of the Constitution did not authorise unilateral deductions”** and noted that no MoU had been signed or approved by the provincial cabinet. Chief Minister **Sohail Afridi** added that his government had already petitioned the Federal Constitutional Court to enforce KP's rights under the National Finance Commission, declaring “my government will not compromise on any of KP's constitutional, financial, and NFC rights”. The dispute underscores growing fiscal tensions between Islamabad and Peshawar. (*Dawn*, [16 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **ML-1 Railway Upgrade Set for January Launch** — Pakistan Railways has announced that civil work on the **\$2.5 billion first phase of the Main Line-1 (ML-1) project** will begin in **January 2027**, covering the **480km Karachi-Rohri section**. Railways Minister **Hanif Abbasi** confirmed that early market engagement, tendering and contract awards are being accelerated to meet the prime minister's deadline. The project, expected to take up to three years, will modernise infrastructure carrying **76 per cent of passenger and 98 per cent of freight traffic**, enabling trains to run at speeds of **160 km/h**. Financing is led by the **Asian Development Bank**, with co-financing from AIIB, World Bank and IsDB. Abbasi described ML-1 as the foundation for Pakistan Railways' future modernisation. (*Dawn*, [16 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Philippines-Pakistan Aim for \$500m Trade Boost** — On **16 August 2026**, Ambassador **Dr Emmanuel R Fernandez** of the Philippines reiterated his country's commitment to raise bilateral trade with Pakistan to **\$500 million**, up from the current **\$197 million**. He emphasised that **private sectors and chambers of commerce** could play a pivotal role in expanding economic ties. The envoy highlighted the Philippines as a gateway to the **\$4 trillion ASEAN market**, noting Pakistan's potential benefits from a future regional FTA. He identified opportunities in **halal products, blue and green economies, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, electronics, e-commerce, tourism and agriculture**. Dr Fernandez also underscored the importance of **direct air connectivity, youth-to-youth relations, and academic cooperation**, stressing that “new avenues for trade, investment and business-to-business linkages” must be explored. (*The Nation*, [16 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Gas Wealth Without Development in Balochistan** — In *The Express Tribune*, petroleum engineer **Shahbaz Khan** reflects on how **Dera Bugti once supplied 82% of Pakistan's gas needs**, yet remains among the country's least developed districts. Despite billions in royalties and bonuses, **“the areas are virtually as backwards as they were when the fields started”**, with Dera Bugti's HDI at 0.236 and Khuzdar at just 0.105. Khan argues that poor **community engagement** and neglect have fostered alienation and insecurity, deterring exploration in a province where 90% remains untapped. He urges using royalties for **skills-based education, scholarships, and community cooperatives**, alongside respectful engagement with local traditions, to transform resource wealth into sustainable development and build communities resilient against security challenges. (*The Express Tribune*, [17 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Crypto Needs Governance Before Growth** — In *The Express Tribune*, **Dr Ikramul Haq**, Advocate Supreme Court and academic, cautions against Pakistan's hasty embrace of cryptocurrency without first establishing constitutional, legal and regulatory foundations. He notes that while blockchain

and digital assets can modernise finance, “**sound governance requires the law, institutional mandates and risk controls to precede commercial commitments, not follow them.**” Pakistan’s institutions, he argues, have not developed at the same pace as policy ambitions, leaving gaps in licensing, taxation, consumer protection and anti-money laundering frameworks. Haq stresses that crypto affects monetary sovereignty, capital controls and national security simultaneously, and warns that without transparency and parliamentary debate, partnerships risk legitimising decisions rather than scrutinising them. (*The Express Tribune*, [17 August 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Global Leaders Congratulate Pakistan on Independence Day** — On **15 August 2026**, Pakistan’s 79th Independence Day was marked by warm greetings from world leaders and diplomats. **Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian** called it a “valuable opportunity to pay tribute to the achievements of the great Pakistani nation,” reaffirming Tehran’s commitment to stronger ties. **Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman** and **US Secretary of State Marco Rubio** extended congratulations, with Rubio noting cooperation in “regional mediation, critical minerals, energy, counterterrorism, cultural heritage, and trade.” **Russian President Vladimir Putin** praised Pakistan’s people and highlighted expanding bilateral cooperation. Leaders from **Bahrain, Turkiye, Turkmenistan, Indonesia, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, Egypt, Vietnam, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan** and **Russia’s envoy** also conveyed goodwill, stressing friendship, peace and prosperity. Collectively, these messages reflected the diplomatic community’s confidence in Pakistan’s future. (*The Nation*, [15 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan and Norway Strengthen Security Cooperation** — On **15 August 2026**, Pakistan and Norway agreed to deepen collaboration in **counterterrorism, police training, mutual legal assistance and prevention of illegal immigration** during high-level talks in Islamabad. Norwegian Foreign Minister **Espen Barth Eide** met Federal Interior Minister **Mohsin Naqvi**, who highlighted Pakistan’s **47 per cent reduction in illegal immigration to Europe** through targeted enforcement and reaffirmed a **zero-tolerance policy against human trafficking**. Naqvi also raised concerns about Afghan soil being used by banned groups for cross-border terrorism, stressing Pakistan’s role as a buffer against global terror. Eide praised Pakistan’s diplomatic efforts, including easing tensions between the US and Iran, and acknowledged the contributions of the Pakistani diaspora in Norway. Both sides expressed confidence that the visit would mark a milestone in expanding diplomatic and economic ties. (*The News*, [15 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan Reaffirms Islamabad MoU as Diplomatic Path Forward** — On **15 August 2026**, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar** told the **United States** and the **United Kingdom** that “implementation of the Islamabad MoU of 18 June in letter and spirit is the only way forward”. Meeting US Chargé d’Affaires **Natalie A Baker** in Islamabad, Dar emphasised dialogue and diplomacy for regional peace, while Washington appreciated Pakistan’s constructive role. Later, UK High Commissioner **Jane Marriott** also met Dar, with both sides agreeing on sustained high-level contacts. Dar further conveyed condolences to **Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong** over the death of a mountaineer in Gilgit-Baltistan, while reaffirming close ties. He also spoke with Egyptian Foreign Minister **Badr Abdelatty**, who extended Independence Day greetings and pledged deeper cooperation. (*The News*, [15 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Trump Threatens to Claim Strait of Hormuz** — On 15 August 2026, US President **Donald Trump** told supporters at a rally in New York that he would “soon” declare the **Strait of Hormuz** part of US territory after defeating Iran. His remarks come amid a war launched in February with Israel against Iran, which has retaliated by shutting down the strait, a vital global oil route. **Vice President JD Vance** admitted the war’s priority has shifted from Iran’s nuclear programme to lowering US gasoline prices, while **Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent** warned of new sanctions and “economic isolation like the world has never seen before.” Iran has demanded an end to the war, lifting of sanctions, and compensation before reopening the strait. Meanwhile, tanker attacks, environmental damage, and regional escalation — including Houthi drone strikes on Saudi facilities — highlight the conflict’s widening impact. (*The Nation*, [15 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Alliance of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey** — Former caretaker finance minister **Shahid Javed Burki** explains the significance of the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (MJDA)** signed on 7 August 2026 by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The pact commits each to collective defence, echoing earlier Cold War alliances like **CENTO** and **SEATO**, in which Pakistan and Turkey were members. Burki notes that the agreement is defensive, not a military bloc, and reflects regional doubts about US reliability after recent conflicts. Analysts such as **Asfandiyar Mir** of the Stimson Center see it as political signalling: [“three militarily capable states, in crucial geographies, with diverse relationships, are committing to one another’s defence”]. Anchored in Turkey’s defence industry, Pakistan’s large military and Saudi Arabia’s oil wealth, the alliance could reshape Middle Eastern security and deter aggression, while potentially expanding to include other Muslim nations. (*The Express Tribune*, [17 August 2026](#))

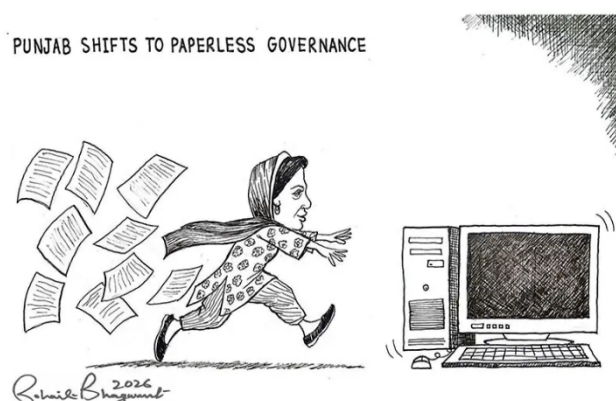
Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **AJK Assembly Prepares for New Government** — The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission (AJKEC) has announced polling for **eight reserved seats** in the Legislative Assembly on 24 August 2026, marking the fourth phase of the electoral process. These include **five seats for women, one for Ulema and Mashaikh, one for overseas residents, and one for technocrats/professionals**. Nomination, scrutiny and appeals will conclude by 23 August, with polling held in Muzaffarabad. **Elections for the speaker and deputy speaker are expected on 25 August, while the prime minister’s election is likely on 27 August.** With its majority, the **PML-N is projected to secure seven of the eight reserved seats**, raising its strength to 32, while the PPP will hold 13. This outcome positions the PML-N to form the new government in AJK. (*The Express Tribune*, [17 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Debate Over New Provinces in Pakistan** — The government is seriously considering the creation of **new administrative units**, potentially through a **28th Constitutional Amendment**. Proposals under discussion include bringing **Karachi and Gwadar under federal control**, splitting **Punjab into three provinces**, dividing **Balochistan into two**, and splitting **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into Pakhtun and Hazara regions**. A senior government functionary admitted consensus among political parties would be difficult. Interior Minister **Mohsin Naqvi** recently described new provinces as the “only solution” to Pakistan’s “collapsed” system. The **Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA)** endorsed the idea, citing better governance and equitable development, while the **Pakistan Bar Council (PBC)** insisted any move must strictly follow constitutional procedures.

Alternatives include strengthening local governments with direct federal funding. (*Dawn*, [15 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Bugti Urges Dialogue Over Violence in Balochistan** — Balochistan Chief Minister **Mir Sarfraz Bugti** called on violent groups in the province to abandon terrorism and return to the national mainstream through dialogue. Speaking at an Independence Day flag-hoisting ceremony, he rejected claims that Balochistan was drifting away from Pakistan, saying those who believed violence could break the country were living in “a fool’s paradise”. Bugti stressed that “no ideology can be imposed through the barrel of the gun”, urging militants to end the “futile conflict” and engage in legitimate political dialogue. He reaffirmed that while the government’s doors remain open for talks, negotiations cannot be held with those involved in killing innocent people. (*Dawn*, [15 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Governance Reform: Provinces or Local Governments?** — In its editorial, *Dawn* reflects on the debate sparked by the interior minister’s call for **smaller administrative units**. While some argue for new provinces to address unwieldy governance structures, the broader sentiment favours **effective local governments (LGs)** as the real solution. The editorial stresses that Pakistan’s problem is not a shortage of provinces but **excessive centralisation**, with provincial governments performing functions better handled at the local level. It warns that boundary changes without reforming political and institutional culture will replicate failures. “The aim should not be to redraw Pakistan’s map. It should be to redraw the relationship between the state and its citizens.” Genuine devolution, judicial and electoral reforms, and empowered LGs are identified as the true governance test. (*Dawn*, [15 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **AJK Repolling Confirms Party Strengths** — The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission has upheld **Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore’s victory in LA-17 (Haveli)**, while repolling across 23 polling stations confirmed wins for **PPP’s Sardar Ziaul Qamar** in LA-15 and **PML-N’s Sardar Mir Akbar** in LA-16. Qamar defeated Mushtaq Ahmed Minhas by 1,891 votes, securing his second consecutive victory, while Akbar triumphed by 3,833 votes, marking his fifth overall and third consecutive win. **Turnout remained low**, with some voters choosing not to cast ballots, though polling was peaceful. The commission dismissed petitions challenging Rathore’s win, noting that alleged discrepancies required examination by an Election Tribunal. The repolling results raised PML-N’s tally to 25 seats and PPP’s to 12. (*Dawn*, [16 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Government Moves to End Transport Strike** — With **ports facing congestion after eight days of strike by truckers and edible oil tankers**, the government has opted for high-level talks in Karachi to resolve the deadlock. **Federal Communications Minister Abdul Aleem Khan**, appointed as focal negotiator, will join Sindh Governor and provincial officials in discussions with the **All Pakistan Goods Transport Ittehad**. The strike centres on demands to reduce the **withholding tax on goods transport from 7pc to 2pc**, equal to fuel tankers, and grievances over Customs impounding vehicles carrying illicit goods. While the government has offered relief on parking facilities and axle-load limits, transporters insist on **“practical progress, not verbal assurances”** before ending the strike. (*Dawn*, [16 August 2026](#))

◆ **Development, Not Division, in AJK** — In its editorial, *The Nation* highlights former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's assertion that Azad Jammu and Kashmir requires “**development rather than division**”, marking a rare intervention in current national politics. The piece stresses that stability in the region depends on **tangible progress, not political manoeuvring**, and criticises the state's historic treatment of AJK as a strategic asset rather than a population in need of infrastructure and uplift. It warns that pledges of unity often remain ceremonial, with “**the gap between high-minded language and crumbling roads**” persisting. The editorial calls for a measurable framework of investment, transparent governance and administrative precision to transform rhetoric into real improvement for ordinary citizens. (*The Nation*, [16 August 2026](#))



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