

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

20 August 2026

Security

- ◆ **Pakistan Extends Airspace Ban on India** — Pakistan has prolonged its **closure of airspace to Indian aircraft** until **24 September**, according to a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) issued by the Pakistan Aviation Authority. The restriction applies to **all civil and military aircraft registered in India**, including those taken on lease. The authority had earlier extended the ban until 24 August, but the latest decision continues the prohibition for another month. This measure underscores ongoing tensions, with Pakistan making clear that **no Indian-registered aircraft can use its airspace** during the extended period. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **CTD Foils Plot Behind Karachi Flag Stall Attack** — The **Counter Terrorism Department (CTD)** announced the arrest of three suspects linked to the banned **Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA)**, accused of opening fire on a stall selling Pakistani flags and Independence Day decorations in DHA Phase II on 12 August. CTD SSP **Irfan Bahadur** said the suspects — Sajjad Mallah, Faraz and Zafar — were funded by **Arsalan Shah from abroad** and tasked with disrupting Independence Day celebrations. Police recovered grenades and a pistol, alleging reconnaissance preceded the attack that killed **35-year-old vendor Aman**, who later succumbed to injuries. Authorities vowed to dismantle the wider network, citing alleged Indian backing of the SRA. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **US-Iran Conflict Exposes Limits of American Military Reach** — Retired Major General **Inam Ul Haque** analyses how the war against Iran has strained US global military capacity. He notes that while the US Navy is legally required to maintain **11 active carrier groups**, three are currently deployed to the Middle East under Operation Epic Fury, leaving East Asia without a **carrier presence**. Carriers such as the **USS Abraham Lincoln** have faced prolonged deployments, low morale and damage from Iranian drones. Iran has struck **over 20 US military sites in eight countries**, causing \$13 billion in damages and exposing vulnerabilities in America's regional infrastructure. Haque concludes that Washington may be forced to **permanently reduce its Gulf footprint**, a significant shift in US power projection. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Somali Pirates Demand Ransom for Pakistani Hostages** — Minister for Parliamentary Affairs **Tariq Fazal Chaudhry** told the National Assembly that Somali pirates have demanded **\$3 million for the release of 10 Pakistani sailors** held since April aboard the hijacked MT *Honour 25*. He warned that paying ransom could have negative consequences given Somalia's weak governance. The opposition staged a protest over ministers' absence, with PTI's **Amir Dogar** announcing a boycott and pointing out quorum. Former Speaker **Asad Qaiser** raised concerns over urea transport restrictions affecting 300,000 farmers, while **Rana Tanveer Hussain** said a track-and-trace system was being developed. PPP's **Sharmila Faruqi** highlighted the seizure of 5,000 illegal Pakistani passports in Saudi Arabia. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **India's Revisionist Narrative and the Need for Dialogue** — In its editorial, *Dawn* critiques India's attempt to portray the **May 2025 hostilities with Pakistan** as a victory through the documentary *Declassified: Operation Sindoor*, calling it **"Bollywood-style"** and a **"mutilation of history"** (Pakistan military spokesman). The paper notes that Indian media had indulged in **high-pitched jingoism**, claiming Pakistani cities were conquered, despite neutral observers pointing to Pakistan's successes in countering Indian air attacks. It stresses that **"New Delhi's toxic jingoism and military misadventures have backfired"**, urging India to return to diplomacy. The editorial calls for steps towards normalisation, including reinstating high commissioners and restarting dialogue, as poverty, disease and climate change remain shared challenges. (*Dawn*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Night Curfew Imposed in Maidan Amid Militant Concerns** — Security forces have enforced a **night curfew from 9 pm to 7 am** in four villages of Bishgram union council, **Maidan tehsil, Lower Dir**, following reports of suspected militant presence. Announcements were made via mosques, urging residents of **Ashrogi, Khazana, Kolal Dheri and Awarai** to remain indoors and cooperate. The information on militant activity has not been independently verified. Meanwhile, the **Lower Dir deputy commissioner** ordered the long-dysfunctional welfare home in Chakdara to be made operational within a month, directing immediate repair, teacher appointments and strict supervision. The facility, completed six years ago, had remained unused until now. (*Dawn*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Please take note, the Umar Media Telegram account has been taken out/deleted and therefore, we are unable to provide you with regular updates on their attacks inside Pakistan.** We will resume it once we get to access Umar Media daily inputs from any social media platform, they propagate from, in future.

Economy

- ◆ **Pakistan Seeks \$10b US Support Facility** — Finance Minister **Muhammad Aurangzeb** confirmed that Pakistan has formally requested a **\$10 billion Exchange Stabilisation Support Facility** from the United States, with a response expected by September. He clarified that this is **"not about a credit line or a loan... this is a signal about our currency stability"**, aimed at bolstering reserves, easing pressure on the rupee and reducing reliance on multilateral financing. Aurangzeb said Pakistan is shifting away from short-term bilateral rollovers towards **market-based financing**, targeting longer maturities of five to ten years. He noted Pakistan's sovereign credit rating has remained stagnant since 2003-04, but efforts are underway to improve it to at least **B+**, enabling access to international capital markets. Recent issuances of **Eurobonds, Sukuk and rupee-linked bonds** are part of rebuilding investor confidence. (*The Nation*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan and Ethiopia Explore Agricultural Partnership** — Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research **Rana Tanveer Hussain** met Ethiopian Ambassador **Dr Oumer Hussein Oba** in Islamabad to discuss strengthening cooperation in agriculture, livestock, food security, trade, investment and technology transfer. Hussain emphasised opportunities for promoting **Pakistani agricultural machinery, tractors, irrigation solutions and agro-processing expertise** in Ethiopia. The meeting reviewed the growing potential for collaboration between the two predominantly agrarian countries, highlighting shared interests in modernising farming practices

and boosting productivity. The talks are seen as a step towards deepening bilateral ties through agricultural innovation and mutual investment. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Govt Considers Fixed Farm Tax to Meet IMF Targets** — The federal government is weighing a **fixed agricultural tax scheme of up to Rs5,000 per acre** if provinces fail to meet revenue targets by **30 September**, as required under the IMF programme. Sources said consultations with provinces could begin in October, with the scheme designed to bring farmers and landowners under a fixed arrangement similar to other sectors. The IMF has repeatedly raised concerns over delays, noting that while agriculture contributes **24.5% to Pakistan's economy**, its share in tax revenues is just **0.3%**. Officials are working to persuade the IMF that implementation of agricultural income tax is underway. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Diesel Price Slashed After PM's Intervention** — The government announced a major relief as oil refineries agreed to cut the **diesel price by Rs32.63 per litre**, following Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif's** directive to negotiate with local refineries. Petroleum Minister **Ali Pervaiz Malik**, alongside Information Minister **Attaullah Tarar**, confirmed the new price at **Rs363.06 per litre**, down from Rs395.69. Petrol, however, rose slightly by Rs2.97 to Rs337.51. The PM stressed that since most diesel is produced locally, refineries must reduce costs to benefit consumers. Malik thanked refineries for cooperating “during the war” and pledged further relief, while also discussing long-delayed refinery upgrades. The government reiterated its commitment to protecting consumers amid global supply disruptions. (*The News*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Mangla Reservoir Lags Behind Despite Strong National Storage** — Pakistan's water storage has reached **10.970 MAF (83.43% of capacity)**, but the **slow filling of Mangla Reservoir** is worrying water managers ahead of the Rabi season. While **Tarbela is at full capacity** (1,550 feet) and **Chashma nearly full**, Mangla holds only **5.105 MAF (70.34%)** against its 7.258 MAF capacity, due to weaker inflows from the **Jhelum River** and below-average monsoon flows in the Jhelum and Chenab systems. Officials of **IRSA** noted inflows this year are below the 10-year monsoon average, stressing that the key issue is how much stored water will be consumed before Rabi begins on **October 1**. Prolonged irrigation releases for delayed Kharif crops could reduce reserves for Rabi. (*The News*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Sugar Mills Push for Exports to India** — The **Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA)** has urged the government to allow the export of **1.2 million tonnes of surplus sugar to India**, citing risks to the industry from high carryover stocks and looming bumper production. Senior PSMA member **Ch Muhammad Waheed** explained that India is considering importing one million tonnes to curb rising domestic prices, and Pakistan offers the lowest freight option. He outlined benefits including **earning \$600 million in foreign exchange**, faster payments to farmers, reduced storage costs, and improved mill liquidity. Waheed warned that without clearing surplus stocks, mills may struggle to start the upcoming crushing season, as **ex-mill sugar prices have fallen below production costs**. The PSMA also called for complete deregulation of the sector to operate on free market principles. (*The News*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Towards a Unified Energy Future** — Pakistan's Cabinet Committee on Energy has approved the high-level design of a **National Integrated Energy Plan (2027–2060)**, marking a shift from fragmented policymaking to a unified roadmap. Built on four pillars — **energy, economics, equity**

and environment — the plan aims to ensure a secure, resilient system, financial sustainability, inclusivity, and a low-carbon future. While the long-term vision is promising, immediate relief remains elusive: consumers face a **Rs33.78 billion quarterly tariff adjustment**, circular debt has risen to **Rs61 billion**, and RLNG generation costs surged to **Rs47.4 per unit** amid the Middle East conflict. The editorial stresses that Pakistan must reduce reliance on costly imports and move towards **renewables and indigenous fuels**, ensuring bureaucratic disconnects do not stall the energy transition. (*The News*, [20 August 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan Protests US Envoy's Remarks on J&K** — Islamabad summoned the **US Chargé d'Affaires** after **US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor** referred to Jammu and Kashmir as a “part of India” during his visit to the region. The **Foreign Office lodged a strong demarche**, condemning and rejecting the remarks as factually incorrect. Pakistan underscored that **Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally recognised disputed territory**, awaiting resolution under **UN Security Council resolutions** and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The statement added that the envoy's comments contradicted the US's long-standing position and commitment to international law. Pakistan also reminded Washington of **President Donald Trump's mediation offer** after *Marka-e-Haq*, urging consistency in US public statements. (*The Nation*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Reviving Ties: Syrian FM's Landmark Visit to Pakistan** — Syrian Foreign Minister **Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani** has arrived in Islamabad for a two-day official visit, the first by a Syrian foreign minister in nearly two decades and the first since the political transition in Damascus in 2024. Invited by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar**, al-Shaibani is accompanied by a high-level delegation. He will hold talks with Dar, meet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other senior officials to review the full spectrum of bilateral relations. The visit aims to **revitalise political, economic and security cooperation**, with discussions also covering regional and international developments. Pakistan and Syria established diplomatic ties in 1949, and Islamabad maintained its embassy in Damascus even after the fall of Bashar al-Assad. (*The Nation*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Dar Urges Swift Preparations for SCO Summit** — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Senator Ishaq Dar** has directed all stakeholders to ensure the **timely completion of arrangements** for Pakistan's hosting of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State summit** next year. Chairing a meeting in Islamabad, Dar expressed satisfaction with ongoing preparations but emphasised that Pakistan is “**fully committed to successfully hosting the SCO meetings and ensuring arrangements of the highest standard.**” He called for close coordination among institutions to guarantee smooth proceedings. The **CDA Chairman** briefed on infrastructure projects, while senior officials including **Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch** and **Interior Secretary Ahmad Raza Sarwar** attended. (*The Nation*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Security Council Paralysis and the Case for Reform** — Public policy analyst **Durdana Najam** argues that the UN Security Council has repeatedly failed to prevent atrocities, from **Rwanda's genocide** to **Srebrenica's massacre**, Iraq's collapse, Libya's regime change, and most recently Gaza, where “**the Council was paralysed, its authority undermined by its own paralysis**”

(Secretary-General António Guterres). She highlights how veto power held by five permanent members perpetuates a “colonial hangover”, blocking meaningful intervention. Reform proposals include the **G4’s push for permanent seats**, Africa’s demand for veto rights, and Pakistan’s **Uniting for Consensus** coalition advocating more elected seats. Najam concludes that expanding elected representation offers the most feasible path to restoring credibility, even if it cannot undo past failures. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 August 2026](#))

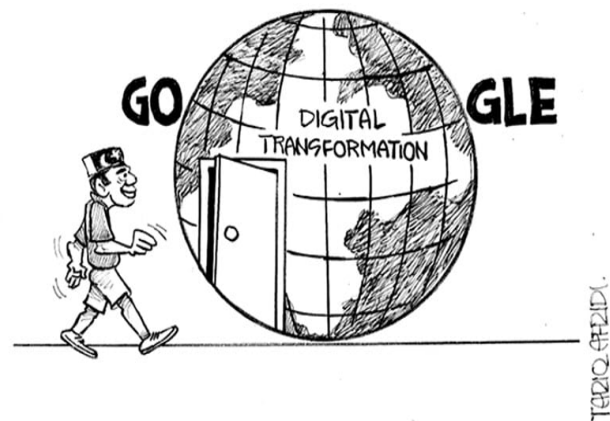
- ◆ **Dar Heads to Istanbul for Quartet Talks** — Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Ishaq Dar** will travel to Istanbul later this month for high-level consultations with his counterparts from **Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Egypt**. The meeting, hosted by Turkish Foreign Minister **Hakan Fidan**, is part of the **R-4 framework** launched earlier this year to intensify coordination on regional crises, including the US-Iran conflict. The Istanbul talks are particularly significant, as they follow the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, signed on 7 August by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, which commits to collective defence. Egypt’s role in the evolving security architecture will be a key focus, alongside efforts to strengthen political and diplomatic cooperation. (*The Nation*, [20 August 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

- ◆ **Government Challenges Supreme Court’s Interim Relief for Imran Khan** — The federal government has filed a **review petition** against the Supreme Court’s 18 August order directing the transfer of former prime minister Imran Khan to **Shifa International Hospital** for medical treatment. The petition, submitted by the Islamabad Chief Commissioner under Article 188 of the Constitution, argues the order is “**without jurisdiction, ignores mandatory prison rules, and grants final relief at the interim stage without proper notice.**” It cites Rule 197 of the Pakistan Prison Rules 1978, which requires government authorisation for hospital transfers, and invokes **Article 25 on equality before law**, warning of discriminatory treatment. The petition seeks recall or review of the interim order. (*The Nation*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Nawaz Sharif Approves PML-N Tickets for AJK Reserved Seats** — PML-N President and former prime minister **Muhammad Nawaz Sharif** has formally approved party nominees for reserved seats in the **Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly**, with tickets issued on the recommendations of the Parliamentary Board and carrying his signature. For women’s reserved seats, the party nominated **Maryam Zaman, Maryam Idrees, Sheharish Qamar and Riffat Abid**, while **Abdul Rehman**, son of Muhammad Bashir, was awarded the ticket for the overseas Kashmiris’ reserved seat. The announcement follows the PML-N’s recent electoral victory in AJK, where it secured a significant mandate and formed the government. Nawaz also inspected ongoing **infrastructure projects in Lahore**, including the Bhati Chowk underpass. (*The Nation*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Bilawal Insists on Consensus for New Provinces** — PPP Chairman **Bilawal Bhutto Zardari** stressed in Islamabad that political and public issues must be resolved through dialogue, reaffirming his party’s belief in the **supremacy of Parliament**. Responding to questions, he said “**new provinces should be created through consensus**”, ruling out PPP support for the government’s proposed legislation in the Senate and National Assembly until its grievances are addressed. Bilawal warned

that no PPP member would vote on bills until concerns over the ‘Azad’ Jammu and Kashmir elections were resolved, adding: “My party has decided that there will be no cooperation with the PML-N in coordination and legislation until the reservations are removed.” (*The Nation*, [20 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Seven Bills Introduced in National Assembly** — The National Assembly on Wednesday saw the introduction of **seven bills**, all referred to relevant committees for further deliberation. These included the **Hyderabad Institute for Technology and Management Sciences (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, the **Seed (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, and the **Employees’ Old-Age Benefits (Amendment) Bill, 2026**. Other legislation comprised the **Natural Gas (Development Surcharge) (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, the **National University of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, the **Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, and the **Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) (Repeal) Bill, 2026**. These measures reflect ongoing parliamentary activity to update and streamline laws across education, labour, and energy sectors. (*The Express Tribune*, [20 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Resetting Governance: Provinces or Local Governments?** — Former deputy secretary of the One Unit Reorganisation Committee **Ishrat Husain** critiques Interior Minister **Mohsin Naqvi**’s proposal to create 12 or 32 provinces, warning it could derail fiscal consolidation and impose heavy administrative costs. He stresses that “**Pakistan should avoid experiments in political and economic fragmentation**”, noting new provinces would complicate the **National Finance Commission Award**, divert political attention, and worsen coordination failures already evident since the 18th Amendment. Husain argues instead for **empowered, directly elected local governments**, which previously achieved 58% citizen satisfaction, to deliver services and stimulate private enterprise. He concludes that the real reset lies in governance reform, not boundary changes. (*Dawn*, [20 August 2026](#))



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