

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

18 September 2026

Security

- ◆ **Pakistan reiterates support for Makkah defence accord and regional diplomacy** — Sajjad Haider Khan, Foreign Office Spokesperson, said Pakistan remains committed “in intent and spirit” to implementing the **Makkah Joint Defence Agreement** signed with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, while stressing that the pact is **purely defensive, not directed against any country, and does not constitute a new bloc**. He reaffirmed Islamabad’s support for dialogue and diplomacy, highlighting Pakistan’s role in facilitating US-Iran engagement and expressing hope that implementation of the Islamabad MoU would promote Middle East stability. **Khan also condemned Houthi attacks and the attempted drone attack on Makkah, reiterating Pakistan’s unwavering support for Saudi Arabia’s sovereignty and the security of the Haramain Sharifain.** He further addressed tensions with India, Afghanistan, and regional security challenges. (*The Nation*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Ten militants killed as IED blast claims six soldiers’ lives** — Pakistan’s security forces killed **10 militants belonging to the banned Fitna al-Khwarij** during separate operations in **North Waziristan** and **Hangu** between 15 and 17 September. Six militants were killed in an intelligence-based operation in North Waziristan, while four others were neutralised in Hangu, with weapons and ammunition recovered. **On 17 September, an improvised explosive device struck a security forces convoy, resulting in the death of six soldiers.** Security forces have launched sanitisation operations to clear the area of any remaining militants and prevent further terrorist activity. (*The News*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan and China launch joint border management mechanism** — Pakistan and China have formally operationalised the **Pakistan-China Boundary Joint Commission (BJC)**, a dedicated mechanism aimed at strengthening border management, facilitating cross-border movement and enhancing bilateral cooperation. The inaugural meeting, held in Islamabad on 16-17 September, brought together officials from foreign affairs, defence, interior, commerce, communications and border-management authorities of both countries. **The two sides discussed cross-border coordination, movement of goods and people, joint border surveys and the promotion of people-to-people linkages, describing the Commission as a significant milestone in deepening the Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.** Both countries signed the meeting minutes and agreed to hold the next session in China. (*The Nation*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **PAEC chief showcases Pakistan’s peaceful nuclear achievements at IAEA forum** — Dr Raja Ali Raza Anwar, Chairman of the **Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC)**, highlighted Pakistan’s contributions in the peaceful application of nuclear science and technology while addressing the 70th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna. He said Pakistan’s six nuclear power plants generate **3,530 MW of electricity and help avoid around 15 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually.** He also outlined

achievements in healthcare, agriculture, water resource management, nuclear safety and human resource development. **Dr Anwar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to nuclear safety and security and announced that Pakistan will host the 4th International Nuclear Science Olympiad in 2027.** (*The Nation*, [18 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **SAT report paints bleak picture of Taliban rule after five years** — A report titled “**Taliban 2.0: The Five Year Ledger**”, released by research organisation **South Asia Times (SAT)**, claims the Taliban government has failed politically, economically, socially and in terms of security since returning to power in 2021. **The report alleges that more than 20 militant groups and nearly 13,000 foreign fighters are active in Afghanistan, with the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) maintaining an estimated strength of 6,000 to 6,500 fighters.** It also cites human rights concerns, restrictions on girls' education, declining media freedom and economic contraction, concluding that the regime poses continuing risks to Afghanistan, the region and wider international peace. (*The Nation*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Turkish intelligence chief holds Islamabad talks amid regional tensions** — **Ibrahim Kalin**, head of Türkiye's National Intelligence Organisation (MIT), held meetings in Islamabad with **Field Marshal Asim Munir**, Chief of Defence Forces and **Chief of Army Staff**, **Lt Gen Muhammad Asim Malik**, Director General ISI, and Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** to discuss bilateral relations and the deteriorating security situation in the Middle East. **According to Türkiye's Anadolu Agency, discussions focused on Yemen, continuing Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia, the attempted drone strike targeting Makkah, and the regional implications of the conflict, including the significance of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement.** Kalin's visit followed talks in Kabul, where he also discussed security and regional developments with Taliban officials. (*The Express Tribune*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan pledges unwavering support for Saudi Arabia's security** — **Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry**, Director General ISPR, declared that Pakistan would go “to any extent” required for the security of the **Haramain Sharifain and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**, describing Islamabad's commitment as unconditional and rooted in longstanding ties between the two nations. **He confirmed Pakistan's physical presence in the Kingdom and reiterated readiness to support Saudi Arabia against any aggression under existing defence arrangements.** Separately, **Sajjad Haider Khan**, Foreign Office Spokesperson, reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement and the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement, while stressing that operational matters remained confidential and that the pact was purely defensive in nature. (*The Express Tribune*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **US drone manufacturer signs cooperation deal with Pakistan Army** — **Brett Velicovich**, co-founder of US drone company **Powerus**, told Reuters that the firm has signed a **memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Pakistan Army**, including an initial order related to unmanned aerial systems. While citing security sensitivities and confidentiality, he declined to disclose details of the order or its value. **Powerus officials said the partnership aims to combine advanced US drone technology with Pakistan's capabilities, potentially fostering joint technological development in the defence sector.** The company, which produces aerial and maritime drones, is

expected to merge with Aureus Greenway Holdings next month. (*The Express Tribune*, [18 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Need to counter competing narratives in Balochistan** — In an opinion article, **Omay Aimen** argues that the conflict in Balochistan is increasingly a battle of perceptions as well as security, with hostile actors exploiting information gaps to shape public opinion. The writer contends that limited media access and inadequate ground reporting have enabled competing narratives to flourish, stressing the importance of credible journalism, transparency and evidence-based reporting. **According to Omay Aimen, lasting stability requires a combination of security, political dialogue, development, accountability and a stronger information strategy based on openness rather than censorship, because “peace in Balochistan ultimately depends on winning both the security battle and the battle for truth”.** (*The Nation*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Regional Security Challenge Demands Global Response** — In an editorial, the **Editorial Board** argues that cross-border terrorism originating from Afghanistan has evolved into a major regional security threat, not merely a bilateral dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Citing remarks by **Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan’s Permanent Representative to the UN**, the piece notes that more than 4,700 Pakistanis have been killed in attacks linked to militants operating from Afghan territory over the past three years. **The editorial highlights UN findings that the Taliban’s claim that no terrorist groups operate from Afghanistan is “not credible”, pointing to the presence of the TTP, Daesh Khorasan and Al-Qaeda.** Stressing that **(the world now needs to do more than listen)**, it calls for international action against terrorist sanctuaries and financing networks. (*The News*, [18 September 2026](#))

Economy

- ◆ **Government releases Rs25 billion for PM’s fuel relief initiative** — **Ali Pervaiz Malik, Minister for Petroleum**, informed petroleum dealers and pump associations that **Rs25 billion has been released to the State Bank of Pakistan for the first month of the Prime Minister’s fuel relief scheme**, with funding allocated for an initial three-month period. During a meeting in Islamabad, dealers assured the government of their full cooperation in implementing the programme. **The State Bank pledged to process reimbursement claims within 48 hours, while the Ministry of IT established a special control room to address operational issues and grievances.** Petroleum dealers described the scheme as a significant step towards providing relief to consumers. (*The Nation*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Karachi Port records highest shipping connectivity level on record** — **Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs**, said Karachi Port’s **Port Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (PLSCI)** reached a record high of 343.02 in the second quarter of 2026, up from 309.81 in the previous quarter. He said the improvement reflects stronger connections between Pakistan’s principal seaport and international liner shipping services. **According to the minister, enhanced maritime connectivity will support trade flows, improve access to global markets and create greater opportunities for exporters and importers, while Pakistan’s overall Liner Shipping Connectivity Index ranking has improved from 35th to 34th.**

He added that the government remains focused on upgrading port services and facilitating trade and investment. (*The Nation*, [18 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves approach \$27 billion milestone** — Pakistan's total liquid foreign exchange reserves rose to **\$26.8 billion** as of 11 September 2026, the highest combined level since September 2021. The **State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) held a record \$21.4 billion**, while commercial banks accounted for \$5.4 billion. The reserves increase, driven largely by the receipt of Eurobond proceeds, lifted Pakistan's import cover to **3.03 months, surpassing the three-month benchmark for the first time since August 2020**. The rupee remained broadly stable against the US dollar, while the SBP also dismissed social media reports regarding the discontinuation of the Rs10 banknote, calling them baseless. (*The Express Tribune*, [18 September 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan pushes diplomacy on Iran, urges action on Kashmir** — Pakistan abstained from a UN Security Council vote concerning Iran-related sanctions, arguing that confrontation over Tehran's nuclear programme has complicated prospects for a peaceful settlement. **Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, stressed that "Diplomacy and dialogue remain the guiding principle" and called for renewed engagement through negotiations and cooperation.** He also emphasised the independent role of the IAEA in addressing nuclear concerns. Referring to Pakistan's facilitation of US-Iran contacts under the Islamabad MoU, he urged all parties to return to the negotiating table. Separately, **he called on the Security Council to implement its resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir**, warning of the risks posed by an unresolved dispute between two nuclear-armed states. (*The Nation*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Chinese envoy hails growing Pakistan-China cooperation** — **Sun Yan, Chinese Consul General in Lahore**, said Pakistan and China have continued to deepen their traditional friendship and all-round cooperation, with collaboration in Punjab yielding "fruitful results". Speaking at a reception marking the **77th anniversary of the People's Republic of China**, he highlighted progress under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), including developments in agriculture, industry, mining, energy and transport. **Sun Yan said political trust between the two countries had strengthened further and that CPEC 2.0 would focus on growth, livelihoods, innovation, green development and openness.** He also pledged continued cooperation in multilateral forums and support for building an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future. (*The News*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Muslim nations condemn attempted drone attack on Makkah** — The **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**, the **Arab League** and several Arab and Islamic countries strongly condemned an alleged Houthi drone attack targeting the holy city of Makkah. The OIC said the attack endangered civilians, violated the sanctity of Islam's holy sites and provoked the sentiments of Muslims worldwide. **Nabil Fahmy, Secretary General of the Arab League, condemned the attempted UAV attack, stating that compromising the sanctity of Islamic holy sites threatens the safety of citizens, residents and pilgrims and constitutes a grave provocation to Muslims across the world.** He also described the incident as part of a dangerous escalation undermining regional stability. (*The Nation*, [18 September 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan reports sharp decline in illegal migration to Europe** — Mohsin Naqvi, Interior Minister, said Pakistan has achieved a **64% reduction in illegal migration towards Europe** and is working to eliminate the problem entirely through stronger border controls and international cooperation. Speaking during meetings with **Susanne Raab, Director General of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)**, and **Hans Leijten, Executive Director of Frontex**, he emphasised the importance of legal migration pathways, modern technology and officer training. **The minister announced plans to install advanced cameras at 500 immigration counters at airports nationwide to help identify and act against human smugglers and illegal migrants.** ICMPD and Frontex officials praised Pakistan's progress and pledged continued cooperation. (*The Express Tribune*, [18 September 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

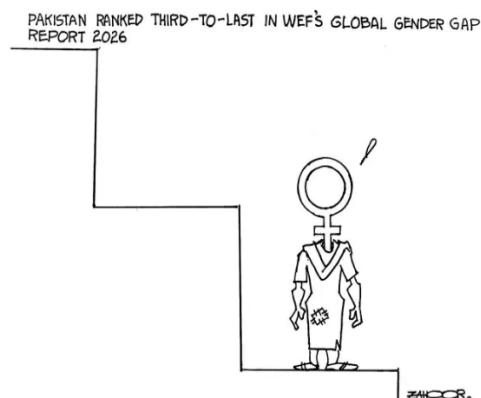
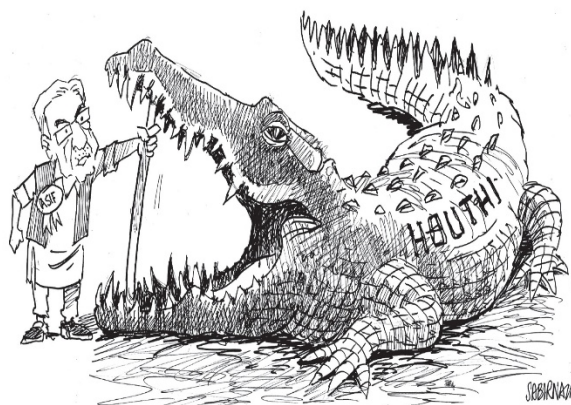
- ◆ **Archbishop revokes interfaith honour awarded to Ashrafi** — The office of the Archbishop of Canterbury withdrew an interfaith award presented to **Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi**, chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council, after past remarks praising **Osama bin Laden** resurfaced. The award had recognised contributions to reconciliation and interfaith cooperation. Lambeth Palace stated that previously unknown comments had prompted a review and subsequent withdrawal of the honour. In response, **Ashrafi** said the Archbishop's office had raised concerns about his stance on Pakistan's blasphemy laws, which he defended while calling for measures against misuse. He also rejected allegations of supporting suicide attacks and argued that his 2007 remarks about bin Laden were intended to highlight Muslim anger over the British knighthood awarded to **Salman Rushdie**. (*The News*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **SC grants bail to Imaan Mazari and Hadi Chatha, but couple re-arrested** — The Supreme Court suspended the sentences of lawyer **Imaan Zainab Mazari** and her husband, **Advocate Hadi Ali Chatha**, in the controversial tweets case and ordered their release on bail pending a final decision by the Islamabad High Court. The apex court expressed concern over repeated adjournments and suspended the operation of their convictions under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act. **However, the couple were re-arrested outside Adiala Jail shortly after their release under the Anti-Terrorism Act in connection with a separate case registered at Kohsar Police Station.** They were later remanded to judicial custody and returned to jail. (*The News*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Punjab Assembly launches South Asia's first AI governance committee** — The Punjab Assembly has constituted a special committee on artificial intelligence and digital governance, described as the **first parliamentary body of its kind in Pakistan and South Asia**. Chaired by **Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan**, the committee will examine the benefits, risks and governance of AI, with a focus on citizen rights, transparency, accountability and human oversight. **Its initial inquiries will review the Punjab Safe Cities Authority's AI-assisted e-challan system and PSER-linked welfare assistance mechanisms, assessing issues such as accuracy, data governance, eligibility decisions and avenues for redress.** The committee will also explore safeguards for limited AI applications in parliamentary work. (*The News*, [18 September 2026](#))
- ◆ **Body of Indian fisherman to be repatriated via Wagah** — The body of **59-year-old Indian fisherman Hichal, son of Krishan**, who died while serving a sentence in Karachi's Malir Jail, was

transported by air to Lahore on Thursday. According to an **Edhi Foundation spokesperson**, the deceased had been imprisoned in a case related to the alleged violation of maritime boundaries. **His body will be taken to the Wagah Border in an Edhi ambulance and handed over to India's Border Security Force (BSF) for repatriation.** The transfer forms part of established humanitarian procedures for returning deceased foreign nationals to their home country. (*The News*, [18 September 2026](#))

◆ **PTI chief calls for united opposition participation in 'Insaf March'** — Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), urged all opposition parties to join the party's planned **27 September long march**, describing it as an "Insaf March" aimed at seeking justice and accountability. He said the protest would remain peaceful, with participants unarmed and no roads blocked. **Barrister Gohar criticised restrictions imposed on PTI activities in Punjab and condemned the treatment of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi, arguing that political and economic stability required equal opportunities for all citizens.** He also noted ongoing contacts with opposition parties, including JUI-F, and voiced support for Jamaat-e-Islami's campaign against inflation and levies. (*The News*, [18 September 2026](#))

◆ **Pakistan remains near the bottom of global gender parity rankings** — The World Economic Forum's **Global Gender Gap Index 2026** ranked Pakistan **143rd out of 145 economies**, making it the third-lowest-ranked country globally despite modest improvements in gender parity. The report noted that Pakistan has closed 59.5% of its overall gender gap, driven largely by gains in educational attainment, where parity rose to a record 91.7%. **However, Economic Participation and Opportunity remained Pakistan's weakest area, with a score of 36.4%, placing it last in South Asia and highlighting one of the world's largest workforce gender gaps.** Pakistan ranked behind all other South Asian countries, despite registering progress compared with previous years. (*The Express Tribune*, [18 September 2026](#))

◆ **Law minister defends constitutional court's defined role** — Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Federal Minister for Law and Justice, said the powers and jurisdiction of the **Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)** and the Supreme Court are clearly defined under the Constitution, leaving no room for ambiguity. Speaking at a ceremony of the Lahore High Court Bar Association's Rawalpindi Bench, he said the FCC was established through the **27th Constitutional Amendment** to centralise constitutional interpretation and ensure uniformity in judicial decisions. **Tarar stated that lessons learned over the past two decades had been incorporated into the 26th and 27th constitutional amendments, adding that constitutional interpretation in a federal system has now been entrusted to the FCC.** (*The Express Tribune*, [18 September 2026](#))



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