

DAILY PAKISTAN WATCH

26-27 August 2026

Security

- ◆ **Violence in Balochistan Leaves Eight Dead** — The death toll from the **Pishin labourers' attack** rose to six after an injured worker succumbed to his wounds, police confirmed. Armed men had opened fire on labourers in **Saranan**, killing five instantly. The deceased were later sent to Fort Munro for handover to Punjab authorities. In **Chagai district**, attackers abducted five people, killed two, and took three to an undisclosed location, with police investigations under way. Meanwhile, in **Quetta**, two Afghan nationals were shot dead near Sheikh Zayed Hospital by unidentified assailants. Authorities have launched inquiries into all incidents, highlighting the persistent challenge of militancy and lawlessness in Balochistan. (*The Express Tribune*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **May 9 Riots: 47 PTI Leaders Sentenced to 10 Years** — An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in **Rawalpindi** has sentenced **47 PTI leaders and workers to ten years' imprisonment** each for their alleged involvement in the **May 9, 2023 GHQ attack case**. The court also ordered the **confiscation of their properties** and imposed a fine of **Rs500,000**. ATC Judge **Syed Amjad Ali Shah** delivered the verdict after a separate trial under the **Anti-Terrorism Act (1997)**. Those convicted include senior PTI figures such as **Omar Ayub, Zartaj Gul, Murad Saeed, Shibli Faraz, Hammad Azhar, and Shahbaz Gill**. The prosecution presented 19 witnesses, while the court noted the accused had failed to appear despite repeated notices. (*The Express Tribune*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Bangladesh Considers Joining Makkah Defence Pact** — Junior foreign minister **Humayun Kabir** said Dhaka is viewing positively an invitation to join the **Makkah pact**, a mutual defence agreement signed earlier this month by **Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan**. The pact, modelled on NATO's collective defence principle, pledges that an attack on one member will be treated as an attack on all. Analysts warn that joining could test Bangladesh's long-standing policy of avoiding rival geopolitical blocs, potentially complicating ties with **India, China, Iran, the US and others**. Prime Minister **Tarique Rahman** has yet to decide, as Dhaka weighs the economic and strategic consequences. (*The Express Tribune*, [26 August 2026](#))

Economy

- ◆ **Saudi Delegation Explores Strategic Investment in Pakistan** — A high-level Saudi business delegation led by **Prince Mansour bin Mohammad Al Saud**, Chairman of the Saudi-Pak Joint Business Council, met Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** in Islamabad to discuss expanding economic cooperation. The prime minister conveyed his regards to King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, emphasising Pakistan's keenness to elevate ties into a **mutually beneficial strategic economic partnership**. The Saudi side expressed interest in investments across **agriculture, ports, highways, airport outsourcing, real estate, energy, power distribution and**

IT. Prince Mansour reaffirmed Riyadh's commitment to deepening **business-to-business engagement**, while Shehbaz Sharif welcomed the timing as "the most opportune moment" for collaboration. The delegation will meet senior officials and private-sector stakeholders during its stay. (*The News*, [26 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Pakistan to Introduce New Currency Notes in 2027** — The **Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue**, chaired by **Senator Saleem Mandviwalla**, was informed that new currency notes will take about **one year to enter circulation**. The federal cabinet has approved the initiative, but designs remain at the preparatory stage and must be resubmitted for final approval. The **State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)** deputy governor explained that the existing Rs5,000 note, introduced in 2005, is increasingly vulnerable to counterfeiting. A consulting firm has been tasked with designing the new notes, with printing costs estimated at **Rs14 per note**. Senators raised concerns about counterfeit currency and delays in verification, while **Senator Anusha Rahman** urged streamlining the approval process to avoid unnecessary delays. (*The News*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Moody's Upgrade Masks Deeper Stagnation** — In its editorial, *Dawn* notes that while Moody's latest rating upgrade suggests Pakistan is "**marginally less likely to default than before**", the economy remains stuck in a cycle of weak fundamentals. The agency highlights a **narrow export base, negligible FDI, reliance on remittances and borrowing**, and governance failures including **weak rule of law, poor control of corruption and limited government effectiveness**. Even reduced interest payments leave little fiscal space for social or infrastructure investment. The editorial stresses that stabilisation is only technical, not structural, warning that "*standing still while the rest of the world advances is nothing but a quiet form of decline.*" (*Dawn*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **CPEC's Expanding Role in Pakistan's Development** — Columnist **Muhammad Zahid Rifat** highlights that the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, conceived in 2013 and launched in 2015, has evolved from a connectivity initiative into a **comprehensive development framework**. Initially worth US\$46 billion, it now spans **industrialisation, trade facilitation, poverty alleviation, Gwadar Port operations, and science and technology cooperation**. With **15 of 17 projects completed**, Phase-II focuses on inclusive socio-economic growth aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals**. Priority corridors include **Growth, Innovation, Green Development, Livelihood Improvement and Regional Openness**. Strategic projects such as the **ML-1 railway upgrade** and Gwadar's expansion remain central. Rifat stresses that future success depends on **timely implementation, stronger industrial cooperation and tangible benefits for ordinary Pakistanis**. (*The Nation*, [26 August 2026](#))

Foreign Policy

- ◆ **Pakistan's Mediation and Strait of Hormuz Stability Efforts** — Pakistan and Iran reported "**significant progress**" in peace talks, with Interior Minister **Mohsin Naqvi** noting a constructive exchange during his visit to Tehran alongside **Field Marshal Asim Munir**. Discussions centred on the **US-Israeli war on Iran**, regional tensions, and reviving the **Islamabad MoU**. Iranian President **Masoud Pezeshkian** told Munir that "*relying on coercion and bullying will only complicate the processes.*" Meanwhile, **Oman and Iran proposed a temporary joint shipping lane and demining project** to

reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy corridor disrupted by conflict. Technical talks will continue to establish a permanent navigational corridor and security framework, as sanctions and threats of retaliation heighten regional risks. (*The News*, [26 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Committee to Address Pak–Iran Gas Pipeline Dispute** — The Senate was informed that Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** has constituted a **high-powered panel** to resolve the decades-old Pak–Iran gas pipeline impasse. Petroleum Minister **Ali Pervaiz Malik** explained that the committee will examine the project’s **legal, financial and energy dimensions** and recommend a way forward. He noted that under the 2009 Gas Sales Purchase Agreement, Pakistan was to complete its 781-km pipeline by 2014, but US sanctions and financing constraints stalled progress, while Iran finished its section. In 2023, Tehran served notice seeking damages, now under arbitration in Paris. Malik stressed that Pakistan seeks a **negotiated settlement with Iran**, calling it a “brotherly country,” while also addressing gas supply issues in Balochistan. (*The News*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Saudi Delegation Explores Strategic Partnership with Pakistan** — Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif** emphasised Pakistan’s keenness to elevate its economic relationship with Saudi Arabia into a **mutually beneficial strategic economic partnership**, aligned with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s vision. Meeting a high-level Saudi business delegation led by **Prince Mansour bin Mohammad Al Saud**, Chairman of the Saudi-Pak Joint Business Council, the prime minister recalled longstanding ties and expressed hope that the visit would culminate in MoUs and agreements across multiple sectors. The Saudi side conveyed interest in **agriculture, ports, highways, airport outsourcing, real estate, energy, power distribution and IT**, while Sharif welcomed the timing as “the most opportune moment” for collaboration in both **G2G and B2B cooperation**. (*The Nation*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan Dismisses Indian Media Claims on Mosque Reconstruction** — The **Federal Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** has rejected what it termed “**delusional reports**” by Indian media alleging that the **Subhanallah Mosque in Bahawalpur** was rebuilt at state expense after being damaged in last year’s **May conflict between Islamabad and New Delhi**. In a statement posted on X, the ministry said Indian outlets were living in a “**delusional world where concocted stories are spewed**.” The mosque was among several sites affected during the fighting, but officials confirmed no government-funded reconstruction had taken place. (*The Express Tribune*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan Calls for Renewed Russia–Ukraine Peace Talks** — At the **UN Security Council**, Pakistan urged an “**immediate and complete cessation of hostilities**” in the Russia–Ukraine war, stressing the need to revert to diplomacy. Ambassador **Asim Iftikhar Ahmad**, Pakistan’s permanent representative to the UN, deplored the escalation of drone and missile attacks, warning that strikes on **critical energy and food infrastructure** worsen global insecurity. He emphasised that protecting civilians and humanitarian personnel is a fundamental obligation under **International Humanitarian Law**. The conflict, which began with Russia’s invasion in February 2022, continues to destabilise the region, while Pakistan reiterated its support for dialogue and peaceful resolution. (*The Express Tribune*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Pakistan–Nepal Push for Direct Flights** — At a meeting of the **Pakistan–Nepal–Bhutan Parliamentary Friendship Group** in Islamabad, Federal Parliamentary Secretary **Barrister Danyal**

Chaudhry called for the **restoration of direct flights between Pakistan and Nepal**. He stressed that improved air connectivity would open new avenues for **trade, tourism, education, and people-to-people contact**, making routes economically viable. The session, chaired by **MNA Dr Mahesh Kumar Malani**, highlighted the importance of stronger bilateral cooperation. Danyal noted that direct air links are essential for deepening relations and facilitating greater exchange between the two countries, positioning connectivity as a cornerstone of future collaboration. (*The Nation*, [26 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz Begins China Visit** — Chief Minister **Maryam Nawaz Sharif** has embarked on a **four-day official visit to China**, starting in **Xinjiang**, where she held high-level meetings focused on **agriculture, irrigation, livestock, mechanisation, and emerging technologies**. Welcomed by senior Chinese officials at **Urumqi International Airport**, she met **Chen Xiaojiang**, Secretary of the CPC Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Regional Committee, to discuss cooperation in **water-efficient irrigation, livestock development, aerial vehicles, modern water-levelling techniques, and digital crop-monitoring systems**. Both sides agreed to explore the use of **tested Chinese seeds in Punjab** and promote delegation exchanges. Maryam emphasised Punjab's role as Pakistan's largest agricultural producer and expressed interest in **corporate farming** and expanding cooperation in **industry, minerals, and new technologies**. (*The Nation*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Global Silence on India's Human Rights Decline** — The editorial warns that **India's worsening treatment of minorities** can no longer be dismissed as partisan grievance, as even the **UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** has raised alarm over **extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, racial profiling and violence**. It stresses that Hindutva under the **RSS-BJP project** has moved from rhetoric into state machinery, making “*every group outside the dominant identity vulnerable*.” The piece insists that India's constitutional claims make this deterioration more troubling, and cautions that **strategic partnerships cannot excuse selective morality**. [“Human rights standards lose their meaning when enforced against weaker states but softened for powerful friends.”] (*The Nation*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **An Open Letter to India's Chargé d'Affaires** — In his open letter, senior journalist **Ishtiaq Ali Mehkri** welcomes **Dr Satyanjal Pandey**, India's chargé d'affaires in Islamabad, and urges a humane approach to visa policies between Pakistan and India. He recounts the struggles of families divided by Partition, noting that “**sorrow and happiness should not be subjected to the litmus tests of Machiavellianism**”. Mehkri highlights the plight of spouses, relatives and especially female applicants, who face **gruelling documentation, lengthy timelines and arbitrary bans**. He calls for the resumption of “essential” visas, stressing that **divided families form a natural peace constituency** and must not be penalised for political animosity. (*The Express Tribune*, [26 August 2026](#))

Politics, Culture, Etc.

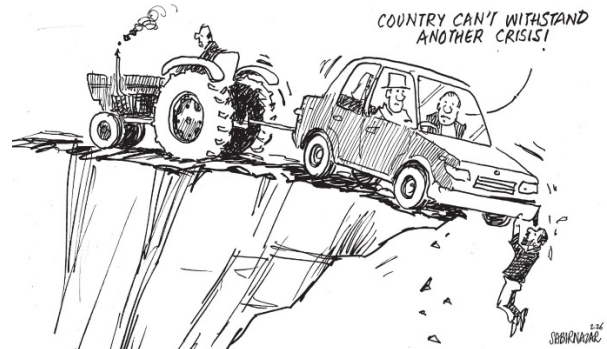
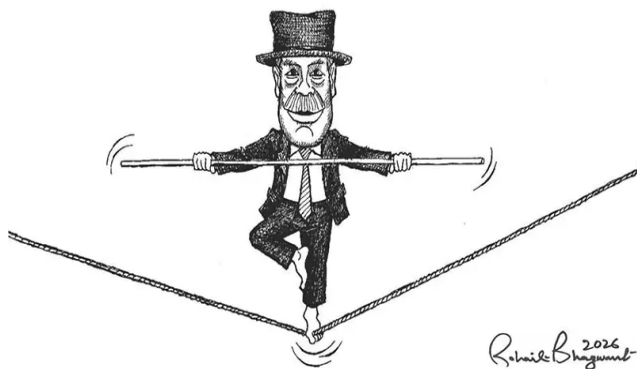
- ◆ **Opposition Alliance Demands Parliamentary Oversight** — The **united opposition** has urged the government to brief parliament fully on **national security, foreign policy, economy and**

constitutional matters. In a joint statement, the alliance demanded the release of all political prisoners, including **Imran Khan**, withdrawal of legislation undermining judicial independence, and an end to politically motivated cases. Rejecting the drive to establish new provinces, it called for **national consensus after consultation with all parties and stakeholders.** The opposition pledged to adopt a common parliamentary position, emphasising the **supremacy of the Constitution, rule of law and independence of parliament.** It also vowed to address law and order, inflation, provincial rights, and promote trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia. (*The News*, [26 August 2026](#))

- ◆ **Blasphemy Bill Stalled Amid Presidential Objections** — Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf parliamentarian **Ali Muhammad Khan** revealed that the **Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023**, which sought to enhance punishment for derogatory remarks against revered Islamic figures, remains unsigned by the president more than three years after passage. The bill, cleared by both houses, proposed raising punishment under **Section 298-A of the Pakistan Penal Code** from three years to **life imprisonment, with a minimum of 10 years.** Former President **Arif Alvi** had returned the bill in August 2023, objecting to provisions making the offence non-bailable and authorising warrantless arrests, warning these powers could be abused. He did not oppose the increased sentence itself, but urged parliament to reconsider the broader implications. (*The News*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Conditional Relief for Imran Khan's Family Meetings** — According to informed sources, the continuation of family meetings with incarcerated PTI founder **Imran Khan** is tied to strict compliance with agreed **standard operating procedures (SOPs).** Relatives must refrain from holding press conferences or issuing political statements after meeting him. His sister **Noreen Khanum** was allowed a second meeting this week, seen as an encouraging sign. However, past breaches — such as statements by **Dr Uzma Khan** and **Aleema Khan** — had complicated matters, as remarks critical of the establishment were attributed to Imran Khan. Authorities now signal that meetings may continue routinely if SOPs are respected, providing relief to Khan's family while preventing political confrontation. (*The News*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **PML-N Gains Control of AJK Assembly Leadership** — In Muzaffarabad, **Chaudhary Tariq Farooq** of the PML-N was elected the 16th Speaker of the 'Azad' Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, while his colleague **Muhammad Ahmed Raza Qadri** became Deputy Speaker. Outgoing Speaker **Chaudhry Latif Akbar** of the PPP chaired the session, with all 46 legislators participating. Farooq won with **32 votes against PPP's 13**, while Qadri secured the same margin. One PPP vote was rejected in both contests, sparking speculation within the party. Farooq pledged impartiality, stressing that *"all members carry equal importance regardless of their affiliations"* and vowed to uphold the dignity of the House. He will also serve as **acting president** until a new AJK president is elected. (*Dawn*, [26 August 2026](#))
- ◆ **Shah Ghulam Qadir Nominated as AJK Prime Minister** — **Shah Ghulam Qadir** has been nominated as the **prime minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)** by PML-N President **Nawaz Sharif**, following consultations with **Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif** and **Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.** The AJK elections, held between **July 27 and August 10**, saw the **PML-N secure 25 seats**, while the **PPP won 12.** Qadir, a seasoned politician with a master's in political

science, has served as **Speaker of the AJK Legislative Assembly, Minister for Finance, and Leader of the Opposition**. His long career includes advocacy for **displaced Kashmiris** and support for **constitutional reforms**, notably the **13th Amendment** transferring powers to the AJK government. (*The Express Tribune*, [26 August 2026](#))

STABILITY PROMPTS MOODY'S TO LIFT
PAKISTAN'S CREDIT RATING



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