



NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY

OVERVIEW

This issue highlights and discusses crucial matters of the period under review, with broad implications, both domestically and internationally. Effective statecraft and governance require patience, prudence, and persistence to address multifaceted issues, from domestic concerns like petrol prices to international conflicts. The escalation of Israel’s war in the Middle East has the potential to spill over into other regions. Pakistan’s diplomatic stance, aligning with Muslim countries and advocating for the Palestinian cause, becomes increasingly critical considering these rising tensions. There is an urgent need for a ceasefire and international pressure to stop the growing death toll.

On the domestic front, a sigh of relief comes with the marked reduction in inflation, the seventh consecutive petrol price cut, and a 15% surge in textile exports. The challenge, however, lies in ensuring strict enforcement of government-mandated prices to prevent overcharging and addressing exporters’ liquidity and taxation issues. Strengthened trade ties with Russia have come at an opportune time for boosting investment and cooperation.

Policies and strategies must remain adaptive. The 7% decline in militant attacks in the third quarter of 2024, juxtaposed with the recent spike in violence, calls for a return to the drawing board for reassessment of security strategies.

The growing threat of cyberattacks, highlighted by Israel’s operations in Gaza and Beirut, underscores the need for Pakistan to develop robust cybersecurity defenses. With the upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, ensuring foolproof security is paramount to safeguard the event and the country’s digital infrastructure. It was a correct decision to deploy army for the security of this vital event.

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Heart Diseases on the Rise Among Working Women

Heart disease among Pakistani working women in urban areas is on the rise due to higher stress levels from balancing family and professional responsibilities, shared at a symposium in Karachi. Experts highlighted that heart disease has been increasing in the Pakistani population, particularly among young people, due to factors like obesity, sedentary lifestyles, and unhealthy eating habits.



However, the impact on women has been largely overlooked. Globally, one in three women suffers from high blood pressure, with the rate even higher in Pakistan. In urban areas, working women are particularly affected, with many struggling with hypertension and heart disease due to the pressure of managing multiple roles. Health specialists noted that one in five women experiences anxiety or stress, which is a significant symptom of cardiovascular disease. The incidence of heart disease is rising among women aged 35 to 54.

Analysis

The increasing rate of heart disease, especially among women, highlights the need for proactive measures. Heart attacks are now a common cause of death in both men and women, but they affect each gender differently due to variations in anatomy, blood cells, and hormones. Many individuals fail to recognize heart problems in the initial stages, leading to chronic heart failure.

Way Forward

- Set up counseling desks in medical centers and arrange stress management sessions.
- Encourage women to engage in healthy social activities and build supportive relationships.
- Promote regular exercise to reduce stress, anxiety, and improve sleep for better heart health.

Dengue Outbreak Intensifies in Rawalpindi

The dengue outbreak in Rawalpindi has worsened, with another life claimed in the last 24 hours, raising the total number of deaths to six. In the past 48 hours, 186 more patients tested positive, bringing the total confirmed cases to 1,358 in the district this year.



Analysis

Weather conditions in Rawalpindi remain conducive to the spread of dengue and the growth of 'Aedes aegypti' mosquitoes until mid-November, making the situation more concerning. Recent heavy rains have hindered many preventive

efforts, causing a significant rise in cases. Health teams are working to eliminate breeding sites, and fogging operations are being carried out to control the mosquito population.

Way Forward

- Launch regular awareness campaigns on dengue symptoms and early medical consultation.
- Increase fogging operations in high-risk areas and ensure fumigation of homes and offices.
- Invest in innovative vector control methods like biological control agents and genetically modified mosquitoes.

Economy

Govt. Calls Pakistan Army for SCO Summit 2024

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit is scheduled for 15-16 October in Islamabad, and the government has called upon the Pakistan Army to provide security for the event. Preparations to host delegations from the eight member states are complete.



Analysis

Established in 2001, the SCO promotes political, economic, and security cooperation among its members, which include China, Russia, Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar will attend, marking the first high-level visit from India to Pakistan since 2015. Despite high hopes for easing tensions, Jaishankar emphasized that the visit is focused on the multilateral agenda and not Pak-India relations.

Way Forward

- Pakistan should use the summit as an opportunity for diplomatic dialogue on trade and counterterrorism.
- Exploring trade and economic collaboration could foster peaceful relations.
- Collaborating on mutual concerns like terrorism and climate change can promote cooperation.

Textile Exports Surge 15%

Textile exports saw a 15% month-on-month growth in August, though this could have been 25% if liquidity and taxation issues faced by exporters had been resolved. Exporters continue to struggle with financial constraints due to advance tax payments and complications in the General Sales Tax (GST) regime.



Analysis

Increased taxes and liquidity issues are limiting exporters' ability to reinvest, though the sector's growth is still promising. The textile industry is crucial to Pakistan's economy, contributing 8.5% to GDP, 54% of export earnings, and employing 38% of the workforce. Recent price hikes in electricity and gas have strained the sector, but government support is crucial to alleviate these pressures and capitalize on global market opportunities.

Way Forward:

- Invest in machinery upgrades and advanced manufacturing to boost productivity.
- Provide tax incentives to sustain export growth and foster competitiveness.
- Review the tax structure to identify areas where relief can benefit exporters.
- Offer tax rebates and temporary exemptions through a framework developed in consultation with industry stakeholders.

International Relations

Pakistan, Russia Begin New Chapter

A significant breakthrough in trade relations between Pakistan and Russia occurred at the first-ever Pakistan-Russia Trade and Investment Forum. During the 3-day forum in Moscow, mutual investment agreements were signed to boost imports and exports. Pakistan's Federal Minister for Investment, along with CEOs of over seventy companies, attended the event, while one hundred Russian companies participated.



Analysis

It is a breakthrough in the trade and business sector between the two countries. This diversification was long awaited. Pakistan-Russia relationship is evolving, with opportunities for collaboration in defense, energy, and regional stability despite past tensions. Given Pakistan's economic challenges, establishment of the Pak-Russian Business Forum is a positive step toward stronger ties, particularly in the energy and petroleum sectors.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen diplomatic ties, cultural relations and pursue bilateral trade agreements.
- Focus on joint ventures in energy, especially the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline.
- Explore collaboration in agriculture, technology, and food processing for mutual benefit.

Policy Nuggets

Incident/ News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
65 killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza orphanage schools; 105 killed in Beirut; Hezbollah: diminished but not vanquished; Iran responds with ballistic missiles' salvo.	War that started one year ago, on 7 Oct, is expanding. Resistance by Hamas, Houthis, and Hezbollah, backed by Iran, will be the deciding factor.	Pakistan stands with the Muslim countries and the Palestinian cause; must forcefully support worldwide demand for immediate ceasefire.	Highest
7 th reduction in petrol prices in a row; reduced by Rs. 2.07 per liter.	A good overall impact on the pocket and morale of people and businesses.	Relentless and stringent enforcement of govt-notified prices must continue to curb overcharging.	High
Militant attacks drop 7pc, fatalities up in 3 rd quarter of 2024	A good omen and a matter of satisfaction but the later days of the week witnessed marked increase in terrorists' activities.	Sustained multi-pronged counterterrorism measures will pay dividends.	Highest
Security forces kill six BLA militants in Harnai; Mahrang Baloch makes it to Time's 'most influential' list.	A constant tug of war between the state and the separatists continues.	Prudence demands different sets of treatments for BLA militants and their sympathiser political opponents.	Highest
FBR implements restructuring plan	It has resulted in major re-designations, mergers, and reporting lines of posts at the board's headquarters.	New changes must be monitored minutely to gauge the performance and desired results.	High
Votes cast by 'defectors' will now be counted CJP-led bench unanimously sets aside 2022 judgement on Article 63A.	Constitution restored to original shape. Members of Parliament get freedom to think and act consciously and conscientiously.	Sanctity of constitution should be upheld in any case.	Highest

SCO summit: Indian Foreign Minister to visit Pakistan in rare trip	A good sign of thaw in Pak- India relations but much can't be expected at this stage.	Pakistan must reiterate offer of bilateral talks on Kashmir.	High
Israel advances cyber offences in Gaza and Beirut; Dubai Emirates Airlines bans pagers, walkie- talkies.	Cyber terrorism by nation states is becoming a norm. Pakistan cannot be an exception.	Pakistan must devise strategies to counter such cyber-attacks and crimes.	Highest
Terrorist attacks on Chinese (3 killed) in Karachi.	The target is Pakistan's economy and stability. Internal and external forces are at work.	More intense intelligence work is needed to preempt the terrorist attacks and neutralize the terrorists beforehand.	Highest



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