

OVERVIEW

During the period under review the successful SCO summit at Islamabad was a feather in Pakistan's cap as it pulled off diplomatic success and helped strengthen ties with regional partners, particularly China and Russia. Despite being immersed in the proceedings of SCO conference, the government displayed appreciable acumen to balance the important tasks at the same time as it managed to work on the 26th Constitutional Amendment Bill on October 20, 2024, which was passed by securing a two-thirds majority. Simultaneously, it took a decisive step of down-sizing to improve efficiency and cutting down on wasteful expenditures.

On the international front, Pakistan remained mindful of raising concerns over Israel's genocidal war and drawing attention to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The recent tensions between India, Canada, and the United States over allegations of Indian intelligence operations targeting Sikh separatists highlight the delicate geopolitical landscape. Pakistan should monitor these developments closely and pursue diplomatic measures to ensure that its own concerns.

Policy nuggets highlight eight issues of the week including Pakistan's growing vulnerabilities due to climate change and water scarcity which remain pressing issues that require immediate attention. The FBR's crackdown on tax evaders is seen as a strong message to enforce compliance. It was a good omen that Pakistan and Russia agreed to bolster cooperation in areas such as trade, industry, and technology. Omar Abdullah's swearing-in as Chief Minister of held Kashmir is perceived as a backlash to Indian policies, with a recommendation to restore Article 370. Rising crime in Islamabad due to police being occupied with law and order duties calls for a separate anti-riot force, while the alarming statistic of women and girls making up 70% of trafficking victims emphasizes the need for more resources for the FIA. Pakistan's textile export growth stresses the importance of focusing on value-added goods, while Pakistan's cricket team victory highlights the role of meritocracy and talent development. The resurgence of polio, with 39 cases reported, signals the need for sustained countermeasures to reverse setbacks in eradication efforts. Each issue is given a priority level, with crime control, human trafficking, and public health being the most urgent.

Inside This Issue

✚ SCO Ends Peacefully	2
✚ Right-sizing is Underway	3
✚ Israel rains Bombs on Gaza	4
✚ Canada – US tightens noose	4
✚ Senate Passes 26th Constitutional Amendment Bill	5
✚ Climate Change and Water Scarcity	6
✚ Policy Nuggets	6

SCO Ends Peacefully with a Positive Impact

The 23rd Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government was held in Islamabad in a successful manner. Pakistan made elaborate arrangements to ensure smooth and secure environment for the high-profile foreign dignitaries. High-level participation, including leaders from China and Russia, underscored Pakistan's importance in regional geopolitics and strengthened its diplomatic standing. The meeting also revitalized bilateral relations, particularly with China and Russia, with both countries reaffirming their commitment to cooperation in trade, energy, and security.



Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's presence, despite the absence of bilateral talks, was significant. While subtle tensions with India remained, Pakistan's focus on regional collaboration, particularly regarding Afghanistan and counterterrorism efforts, reinforced its strategic importance.

At the SCO forum, Pakistan and China expressed satisfaction with their growing strategic partnership based on mutual trust and shared interests. During a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese Premier Li Qiang, both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The two countries signed 13 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to strengthen cooperation in security, counterterrorism, information and communication technology, water management, and disaster mitigation.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized the expansion of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), calling for increased focus on road, rail, and digital infrastructure to boost regional integration. He also highlighted key global issues such as poverty, climate change, and regional stability, stressing the need for a stable Afghanistan and addressing the ongoing crisis in Gaza. As SCO chair, PM Shehbaz Sharif launched a working group on poverty and proposed an energy cooperation plan for 2030 to benefit SCO member states.

Analysis

It was a diplomatic success for Pakistan, showcasing its ability to manage crises and position itself as open for business. Despite political instability, economic challenges, and security threats, the event allowed Pakistan to present itself as resilient and functional. The summit highlighted Pakistan's growing role within the SCO, with leaders recognizing its contributions to regional stability and cooperation.

It provided a platform for member nations to discuss regional economic development. The MoUs signed between Pakistan and China highlight continued strategic cooperation, especially in areas like communication, water management, and digital transformation. The formation of a working group on poverty under the SCO and energy cooperation agreements also offer opportunities for Pakistan to tackle key challenges, including energy shortages. Indian Foreign Minister's participation indicated the beginning of thaw in Pak-India relations.

Way Forward

- Pakistan should capitalise on the good will created by this diplomatic success and engage with the members of SCO more fervently to enhance trade, business and security.
- Government should leave no stone unturned to fully implement the signed agreements with China to maximize benefits.
- Leverage China's cooperation in technology, security, water conservation, and poverty alleviation.
- Maintain strong diplomatic ties with China and other regional partners for peace and stability in the region.

Economy

Right-Sizing is Underway

The government has planned to downsize low-performing units and has initiated this mission by forming a committee for the purpose. The committee will recommend whether a department should be closed or merged with others. The Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) is undergoing an overhaul after a subcommittee recommended to the higher-powered committee on federal government right-sizing that several low-performing entities should either be abolished or merged with other departments.



These recommendations include the closure of the Pakistan Council for Science and Technology (PCST) and the Council for Works and Housing Research (CWHR); the merger of the Pakistan Council for Renewable Energy Technologies (PCRET) with another institution; and the transfer of universities currently functioning under the supervision of the MoST to the Ministry of Education.

Analysis

The government is making bold decisions to cut down non-functional and low-performing units as part of its right-sizing initiative. This step was long-awaited to save wastage of large amounts of precious exchequer money. The right-sizing committee has taken into consideration many aspects and angles to ensure targeting the correct units and departments.

Way Forward

- Careful evaluation should be conducted to identify departments where right-sizing is necessary.
- Employees and stakeholders should be informed about the need for downsizing, the process, and expected outcomes to avoid undesirable circumstances such as strikes, protests, or violence.
- After right-sizing, the effectiveness of the approach should be ensured, and departmental operations should be analyzed to identify any gaps or challenges.

Israel Rains Bombs, Artillery on Gaza: Sinwar and Dozens of Others Killed

Despite the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, Israel has continued its attacks in Gaza and Lebanon. Several people have been killed and wounded by Israeli airstrikes and artillery in these areas during the period under review. Israel has accused Sinwar of backing the initial attacks and has been pursuing him since the start of the Gaza conflict. The ongoing military offensive by Israel has resulted in the deaths of over 42,000 Palestinians, including women and children.



Analysis

It was initially thought that the death of Yahya Sinwar would weaken the strength and morale of Hamas. However, Hezbollah's targeting of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's residence dispelled this assumption. On the other hand, Israel has not stopped its attacks on Gaza and Lebanon, creating a tense and restless situation in the Middle East, with further escalation of the conflict likely. The United Nations and the United States have been unable to stop the ongoing violence. It is estimated that 345,000 Gazans will face "catastrophic" levels of hunger this winter, with the persistent risk of famine. Gaza's population lives in extreme poverty, with an unemployment rate of 80% (according to the ILO).

Way Forward

- Pakistan should continue raising concerns about the plight of the Palestinian people on both national and international forums.
- It must provide aid to displaced people in the form of food, medicines and necessities.
- The issue should be raised in the United Nations to stop the ongoing violence by Israel.

Canada-US Tighten Noose Around Indian Spies

The United States has charged Vikash Yadav, a former officer in India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) intelligence service, for allegedly orchestrating a foiled plot to murder a Sikh separatist in New York City last year. At the same time, Canada has reportedly named High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma, along with some unnamed officials, as persons of interest in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar by assassins allegedly acting on behalf of Indian intelligence.



Canada announced the expulsion of six Indian diplomats after police gathered evidence indicating they were part of an Indian government "campaign of violence." Prime Minister Trudeau made the accusation of India's complicity in the murder during a parliamentary session. In response, India expelled Canadian diplomats from New Delhi.

Analysis

Although India has denied the charges, the U.S. investigation into the plot to kill its Sikh citizen has strengthened Canada's case. India's attempts to exert its influence have backfired due to the unprofessional actions of its intelligence officers and the unethical strategies of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. RAW has reportedly targeted at least twenty individuals—former Kashmiri freedom fighters and Khalistani Sikhs—in Pakistan over the past year. This spree of unrestrained killings has exposed India's aggressive plans and compromised its international standing.

Way Forward:

- Canada should pursue this matter to its logical conclusion, ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to justice.
- The U.S. should facilitate the extradition of the RAW operative and his handlers, who are currently hiding in India.
- Pakistan must raise its own concerns and demand that India hold the responsible individuals accountable.

Law & Order

Senate Passes 26th Constitutional Amendment Bill



After multiple delays, the Senate finally passed the 26th Constitutional Amendment Bill on October 20, 2024, securing a two-thirds majority. Known as the Constitutional Package, the bill introduces a series of amendments, following weeks of political maneuvering. Introduced by Law Minister Azam Tarar, the bill "revived" the spirit of the 18th Amendment, including parliamentary representation in the judicial commission.

Key Amendments:

- The Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) will be selected from the top three most senior judges.
- A 12-member parliamentary committee will appoint the CJP from the top three senior judges.
- The CJP's tenure is limited to three years.
- Supreme Court benches will be established for constitutional cases, with the senior-most judge presiding.
- The apex court's suo motu powers have been revoked.
- The Judicial Commission will include four senior judges and four parliament members for judicial appointments.

Way Forward:

- Establish mechanisms to monitor the amendments' impact and assess future adjustments.
- Launch public education campaigns to explain the amendments and their significance for constitutional governance.
- Take all measures to uphold the sanctity of the parliament, judiciary and the constitution.

Climate Change and Water Scarcity: Deeply Interconnected Issues

During the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments' (ASGP) Autumn Session in Geneva, Hafeezullah Sheikh (Special Secretary of Senate, Pakistan) highlighted the deep interconnections between climate change, food security, water scarcity, and energy transitions. He emphasized that these issues span multiple policy domains, contributing to their complexity.



Analysis

Pakistan faces severe risks from climate change, including extreme weather events that threaten its economy, ecosystems, and vulnerable communities. The nation is highly susceptible to floods, droughts, and heatwaves, which impact agriculture, a key economic sector, and lead to food insecurity and displacement.

Water scarcity is a pressing challenge, with 90% of the country's freshwater allocated to agriculture. Climate change, over-extraction of groundwater, and population growth strain water resources, leading to severe shortages and risking conflict over water. Inadequate infrastructure and planning worsen the situation, especially in urban areas facing rapid population growth.

Way Forward

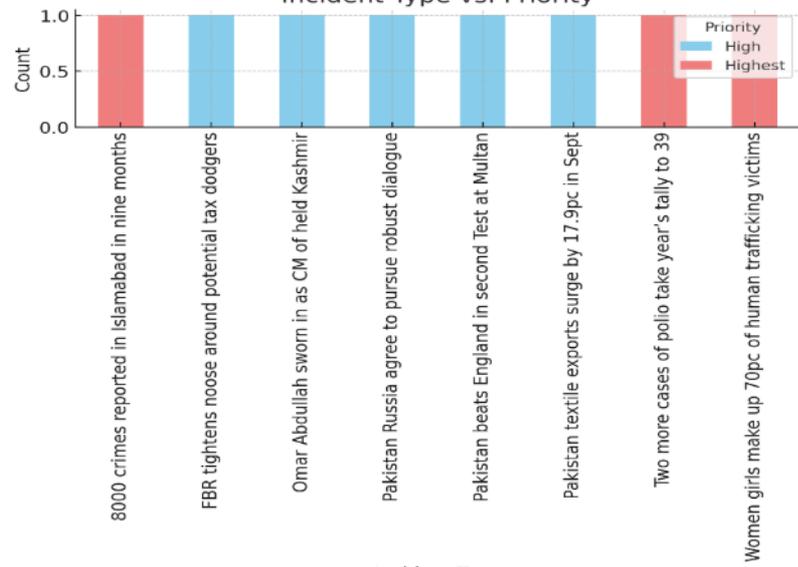
- Implement Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) for efficient water use across all sectors.
- Invest in wastewater treatment infrastructure for irrigation and industrial reuse.
- Promote drip and sprinkler irrigation systems to reduce water waste.
- Develop climate-resilient urban planning with green spaces and proper drainage to mitigate flooding.

Policy Nuggets

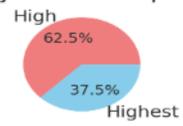
Incident/ News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
FBR tightens noose around potential tax dodgers	Crackdown across the country sends a strong message to tax evaders.	Sustained efforts are needed to meet the targets.	High
Pakistan, Russia agree to pursue robust dialogue, cooperation in diverse areas	PMs met and vowed to further bolster the existing cooperation between Russia and Pakistan to the next level	Should pursue robust dialogue and cooperation in areas of trade, industry, energy, connectivity, science, technology and education.	High

Omar Abdullah sworn in as CM of held Kashmir.	His victory is being seen as backlash against PM Narendra Modi's decision and policies in Indian Held Kashmir.	He should work to restore Article 370 of the Indian constitution which gave the state special status.	High
8,000 crimes reported in Islamabad in nine months	Officials said as the police remained pre-occupied with law and order duties, the criminals took advantage in the capital.	Separate anti-riot force should be maintained so that regular police could focus on crime control.	Highest
Women, girls make up 70pc of human trafficking victims, NA told	Being a provincial subject, more onus is on the provinces to ensure protection to women and girls.	Federal govt should not restrict itself to launching awareness campaigns only. More sources should be allocated to FIA to bridle this menace.	Highest
Pakistan textile exports surge by 17.9pc in Sept	ready-made garments were the standout category, witnessing growth of 35 percent	Export of value-added textile goods, rather than raw material, is key to profitability.	High
Pakistan beats England in second Test at Multan	Substantial changes in the team helped pulled off the feat after three years of drought of victory at home grounds.	Meritocracy and development of talent can ensure bright future for cricket and other sports in the country.	High
Two more cases of polio take year's tally to 39.	Back to square one. Targets achieved after years of eradication efforts have been reversed.	The main reasons of this revival of polio should identified to address them with sustained counter measures	Highest
FBR tightens noose around potential tax dodgers	Crackdown across the country sends a strong message to tax evaders.	Sustained efforts are needed to meet the targets.	High

Incident Type vs. Priority

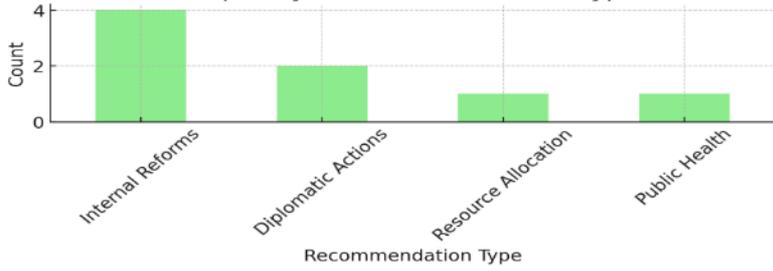


Priority Levels Proportion

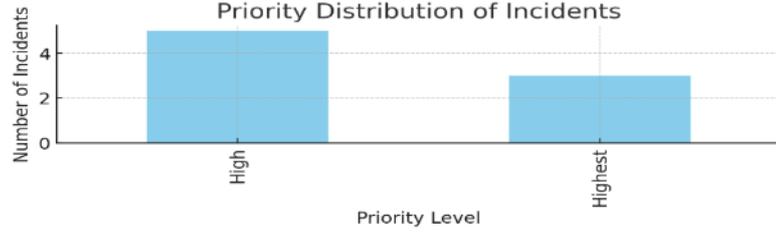


Incident Type

Frequency of Recommendation Types



Priority Distribution of Incidents



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