

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY

OVERVIEW

This week’s policy pulse addresses significant developments in Pakistan’s climate resilience, judicial reform, urban planning, and international cooperation, each reflecting the country’s evolving policy landscape and strategic priorities. Pakistan is in dire need of stability and unity. A noticeable step in this direction was, after a lot of hullabaloo of guesstimates, Justice Yahya Afridi’s appointment as Chief Justice by a new parliamentary panel marks the first application of the 26th Amendment, which transfers appointment power from the judiciary to the legislature.

It is good to see that the government, despite all political challenges, did not ignore Pakistan’s vulnerability to climate-induced floods. JICA funded initiative was taken to improve water management, enhance public safety, and support sectors like agriculture and hydropower. Closely linked to this aspect is the need for structured urban planning to address Pakistan’s rapid, unplanned city growth. ADB’s Urban Assessment Report recommends zoning, infrastructure updates, and sustainable urban policies.

Pakistan’s foreign policy is taking the right strides. After successful SCO conference, the renewal of Kartarpur Corridor with India symbolizes Pakistan’s desire and efforts for regional peace and cooperation. This cooperation will help Pakistan to pursue BRICS membership with Indian support and explore enhanced trade ties. Tangible moral and material support for the victims of Israeli aggression in Gaza speaks volumes of Pakistan’s firm stand on Palestine issue.

On the economic front, Pakistan is taking reasonable and resilient measures. China’s positive response on debt restructuring emphasizes the importance of structural economic reforms, also, collaborative efforts between the FBR and provinces are needed to address the limited success of the Tajir Dost Scheme and improve tax collection efforts. To top all, the glaring internal and external security challenges faced this week demand proactive security strategies to preempt the impending dangers of terrorism and regional conflicts. Additionally, collaboration with the regional countries can pay dividends in this regard.

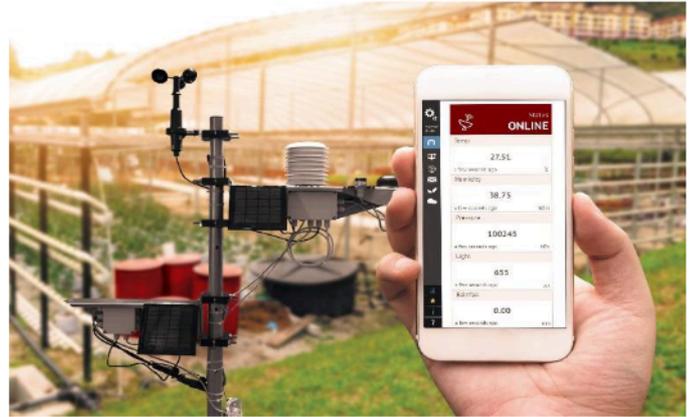
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Pact with Japan for Enhanced Weather Monitoring

The government has finalized an agreement with Japan to install 45 telemetry and five automatic weather stations for flood forecasting and monitoring, costing an estimated Rs5.2 billion over two and a half years. These stations may later expand to 110, with 84 planned for Punjab and 26 for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) will finance approximately Rs4.11 billion (80% of the project), with the remaining Rs1.01 billion provided by WAPDA, the Federal Flood Commission (FFC), the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), and provincial irrigation departments. JICA's funding will also support a data center to strengthen the PMD's early flood warning system and improve flood protection infrastructure in KP.



Analysis

Pakistan has suffered due to catastrophic floods and calamities. It is essential to enhance the early warning system and ensure more effective water management in reservoirs. This project will improve the operation of hydropower projects and aid future projects within the Indus Cascade. The telemetry stations will provide real-time data on flood flows. Procuring this system will boost public safety, aid agriculture, and support data-driven decision-making across sectors. It will also help communities prepare for severe weather events and support climate research, fostering resilience and minimizing economic losses.

Way Forward

- Strategic Placement: Locate weather monitoring stations in high-impact areas to maximize efficiency.
- Training and SOP Compliance: Ensure staff follow standard data collection practices for temperature, humidity, precipitation, etc.
- Coordination with Emergency Services: Collaborate with disaster management agencies for timely and effective response to weather data.

Parliamentary Panel Selects Chief Justice of Pakistan for First Time

Justice Yahya Afridi was selected by a newly formed parliamentary panel, and he took oath as the next Chief Justice of Pakistan on 26 October 2024. Qazi Faez Isa retired as the top judge on October 25. This selection panel, composed of both government and opposition members, elected him as CJP with a two-thirds majority. After nomination by the Parliamentary Special Committee, the selected judge's name was forwarded



to the Prime Minister. The amendment empowers the prime minister to appoint the next CJP from among the three most senior SC judges. PM then sends it to the President for formal appointment. President Asif Ali Zardari appointed Justice Afridi as the CJP under clause 3 of Article 175A read with Articles 177 and 179 of the Constitution, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice today. The next two most senior apex court judges after the CJP are Justices Mansoor Ali Shah and Munib Akhtar.

Analysis

It was the first display of parliament's supremacy under the new constitutional amendment. Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said the nomination had been made in an "extremely transparent and democratic manner." He added that Saqib Nisar did not elevate Justice Yahya Afridi to the Supreme Court even though he was senior to Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Munib Akhtar.

The 26th Amendment is set to influence governance and the legal framework significantly. These changes reflect Pakistan's evolving political landscape and the ongoing efforts to keep the constitution responsive to the needs of its citizens.

Way Forward

- **Enhance Capacity:** Strengthen constitutional and legal institutions to effectively implement and uphold the amendments.
- **Bipartisan Support:** Secure bipartisan support within legislative bodies to ensure smooth implementation.
- **Citizen Engagement:** Establish avenues for citizens to provide feedback on the amendments' implementation.

Planning & Development

ADB Report Highlights Need for Urban Expansion Plans

The Asian Development Bank's Urban Assessment Report emphasizes that Pakistan must create short, medium, and long-term strategies to address urbanization challenges and ensure cost recovery for service providers. Rapid urban expansion without proper planning has led to hazardous sprawl, with populations in Balochistan's cities growing by 137% from 1998 to 2017, and significant increases in Sindh, Punjab, and KP.



Analysis

Each major city requires a regularly updated master plan and zoning regulations to guide growth. Offering financial incentives to local governments can promote compliance and effective implementation of these plans. Notably, cities like Lahore, Peshawar, and Islamabad have all experienced population surges exceeding 50%.

ADB recommends strengthening municipal authorities to enforce risk-informed development and urban services, encouraging local governments to enhance revenue sources, implement gender-responsive budgets, and improve maintenance systems. Regular updates and accountability in urban planning are essential at local and federal levels.

Way Forward

- Promote climate-resilient infrastructure for quality municipal services in mid-sized cities.
- Bridge policy-practice gaps between provincial and local governments.
- Develop integrated urban plans covering housing, transportation, and environmental impacts.
- Employ smart technologies for better urban management, including energy-efficient buildings, traffic control, and waste management systems.

Diplomatic Relations

Pakistan and India Renew Visa-Free Kartarpur Corridor

The Kartarpur Corridor agreement, initially signed on October 24, 2019, and valid until October 24, 2024, has been renewed, emphasizing Pakistan's commitment to interfaith harmony. This corridor allows Indian pilgrims visa-free access to the sacred Gurudwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur, where Baba Guru Nanak spent his last days, facilitating thousands of pilgrimages since its opening.



The renewal follows Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar's recent visit to Islamabad for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, the first by a senior Indian diplomat in nearly a decade. While his visit focused on SCO matters, it also created momentum for renewing the corridor agreement.

Analysis

The corridor is a rare cooperation symbol between Pakistan and India, promoting peace and bridging historical divides, especially in Punjab, the birthplace of Sikhism. Such diplomatic gestures support regional stability and can foster dialogue, helping both nations manage conflicts and collaborate on trade, environmental sustainability, and health. Pakistan's Foreign Office reaffirmed its dedication to interfaith unity, expecting reciprocal cooperation from India for peace in the region.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen diplomatic ties with neighboring countries to bolster Pakistan's global reputation and reduce border tensions.
- Pursue India's support for Pakistan's BRICS membership.
- Engage in bilateral talks to enhance trade relations with India.

National Security

25 Security personnel martyred across KP

25 security personnel were martyred in militant attacks across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in two days. The deadliest incident occurred in the Darazinda area of Dera Ismail Khan district, where 10 Frontier Constabulary (FC) men embraced martyrdom, and three others were injured in this incident. Army cadet gunned down trying to save people in Lakki Marwat mosque. In another incident, one soldier and three cops were targeted in Bannu, Waziristan and Khyber.



The banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was mainly involved in these incidents. It termed the attack “revenge” for the operation where nine militants were killed by security forces in Bajaur.

Analysis

Clash between militants and security forces in Pakistan has intensified, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Militants, who are affiliated with various extremist groups, have escalated attacks on security personnel and infrastructure, aiming to assert their influence and challenge state authority. In response, the Security Forces of Pakistan have ramped up counter-terrorism operations.

This ongoing struggle is marked by a complex interplay of local grievances, tribal dynamics, and the broader geopolitical context, complicating efforts for lasting peace and stability in the region. The security forces face not only the immediate threat of violence but also the challenge of addressing the underlying socio-political issues that fuel militancy.

Way Forward

- Improve intelligence and networking among local, national, and international agencies.
- Invest in advanced surveillance technologies and data analysis to detect threats early.
- Implement grassroots programs that involve community leaders in counter-radicalization efforts.
- Strengthen laws against hate speech and incitement to violence while ensuring fair trials for those accused of terrorism.

International Affairs

Israel hits targets in Iran, putting regional peace at stake

Israel launched direct strikes against Iran to hit targets which did not include energy infrastructure. Israel bombed military sites in Tehran and four members of Iran’s military were killed in the attack. Israel’s attack was anticipated following a missile barrage from Iran earlier in October. Iran said the strikes around Tehran and in the provinces of Khuzestan did limited damage to radar systems. In response, Iran is straining on the leash to strike back.

Analysis

The tensions between Israel and Iran have escalated during last few weeks. Both countries have launched calculated attacks on each other. The situation is going from bad to worse. There is a fear that escalation might snowball into a grave and ugly situation leading to conflicts in the entire region. This complex interplay of military posturing, geopolitical alliances, and historical hostilities continues to shape the volatile dynamics of the Middle East, with both nations remaining on high alert for potential confrontations.



Way Forward:

- Pakistan should keep its guards up and watch the situation carefully and be prepared to respond to any situation.
- Pressure should be developed on Israel to stop brutal aggression in Gaza and Lebanon.
- Solidarity should be shown with Iran against Israeli belligerence.

Policy Nuggets

Incident/ News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
US imposes curbs on Pakistani, Chinese and Emirati firms.	The US is watching its interests at the cost of other countries' vital interests. <i>"The purpose of foreign policy is to influence other countries' policies in a way that serves one's own national interests."</i> – John F. Kennedy	US should realise that Pakistan's ballistic missile programme is essential for its security.	Highest
Chinese response on debt flexibility positive, Finance Minister.	Tangible relief on debt maturities related to Belt and Road Initiative.	Comprehensive structural reforms are necessary to avoid further burden of borrowing. <i>"Reforms are critical to sustaining growth; without them, we only burden the future with our present shortfalls."</i> – Paul Romer	Highest

<p>i. Retailers cold-shoulder Tajir Dost Scheme.</p> <p>ii. FBR to work with provincial law enforcement agencies over action against tax evaders</p>	<p>Only Rs.1.3 million collected against a target of Rs. 25billion.</p> <p>FBR's rules would be amended for sharing powers with the provinces</p>	<p>Swift, sustained, and collaborative actions are essential to handle the tax evaders.</p> <p><i>"Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society."</i> – Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr</p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>Pakistan demolish England to win first home series in three years</p>	<p>Spinner duo of Noman and Sajid has infused new life in the cricket team.</p>	<p>Merit based selection of team should be ensured for ICC Champions Trophy 2025.</p> <p><i>"Excellence is not an act, but a habit."</i> – Aristotle</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Sharp rise in anti-Muslim bias in Europe.</p>	<p>Even more racism and discrimination after Hamas attack against Israel.</p> <p><i>"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."</i> – Martin Luther King Jr.</p>	<p>Pakistanis in Europe must be warned and guided for their safety and security.</p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>No let-up in Israeli strikes on Lebanon.</p>	<p>UN and rest of the world have failed to stop brazen Israeli attacks in Lebanon.</p> <p><i>"Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding."</i> – Albert Einstein</p>	<p>Only united forceful measures can pressurize Israel to stop its genocidal belligerence.</p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>Defiant Iran says will defend itself after Israeli strikes.</p>	<p>Iran-Israel tit for tat can escalate into third world war.</p>	<p>Pakistan must keep its guards up.</p> <p><i>"The price of freedom is eternal vigilance."</i> – Thomas Jefferson</p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>No trade with neighbours 'illogical': Aurangzeb.</p>	<p>Increase in regional trade, particularly with India, is on the cards.</p>	<p>Pakistan must join BRICS alliance enhance trade.</p> <p><i>"Trade can create relationships that last longer than peace treaties."</i> – Deng Xiaoping</p>	<p>High</p>



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