



## NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY

### OVERVIEW

The period under review provides a brief overview of Pakistan's domestic and international developments. Key highlights include the much-anticipated constitutional package, aimed at redefining the balance of power, being put on hold, with an ordinance promulgated instead—earning sharp reactions from various quarters.

The health situation in Pakistan remained concerning, with an alarming increase in HIV cases, marking the second-fastest growth rate in the Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, rising cases of Chikungunya and Dengue in Karachi created panic, while the polio vaccination program encountered setbacks in certain areas. Furthermore, concerns over hepatitis B and C have led to a decrease in Pakistan's workforce in the Middle East.

Several incidents highlight ongoing terrorism and urban security challenges across Pakistan. Six soldiers were martyred in Bannu; the IG. KP expressed concern over terrorists using abandoned U.S. arms in KP and Balochistan. Karachi has witnessed a noticeable rise in crime rates; Israel's tech-terrorism in Lebanon served as a warning for the growing threat of cyber warfare.

In economic developments, IMF program negotiations are scheduled for September 25th, and Saudi Arabia has offered a 15% investment in the Reko Diq mining project. Provincial governments made strides in public welfare.

The Sindh Cabinet approved a contributory pension scheme for public sector employees, and federal and provincial ministers emphasized the need for education reforms, particularly to address the 26 million out-of-school children. The Punjab government took advantage of fuel price reductions by lowering public transport fares, and Chief Minister Maryam launched a children's heart surgery program. Education experts also called for urgent reforms in Gilgit-Baltistan

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### Constitution Package goes into Cold Storage

The much-trumpeted Constitution Package has not been finalised yet. The government has not submitted the desired amendments to Parliament, stating that this will be done only after a consensus is reached. Despite the government's confident assertions of securing the necessary numbers to pass a constitutional amendment, the primary reason for hesitating to present the amendments is the reluctance of JUI-F to vote in favor of the government. Meanwhile, the Government has promulgated an Ordinance in this regard.



### Analysis

The incumbent government has clarified that the circulated draft of the constitutional package is not final, and amendments proposed by opposition parties will be included before presenting it to the Parliament. The package will not be tabled until a consensus is built among political parties. Political parties such as JUI-F and PTI have agreed to most of the clauses in the proposed package, including the formation of a constitutional court. However, they have rejected the proposal regarding the extension of the service of the chief justice and other judges of the Supreme Court.

The constitutional package reportedly includes more than 50 proposals, most of which concern the judiciary. The primary point of contention between the government and opposition parties is the proposed allocation of more powers to the judiciary. A key proposal is to establish a new Federal Constitutional Court alongside the Supreme Court, which would exclusively handle petitions related to constitutional interpretations. Approximately, 15,000 petitions are pending in Supreme Court of this nature.

Around 85 countries worldwide have dedicated constitutional courts, and Pakistan may follow this model. The amendments also propose increasing the retirement age for judges of the Constitutional Court to 68, compared to 65 for other judges. Additionally, the tenure of a judge in the Constitutional Court would be limited to a maximum of three years.

### Way Forward

- Establishing a Federal Constitutional Court dedicated to constitutional interpretation can promote judicial independence. The selection process for judges must be transparent and free from political influence.
- This court should be empowered to act as a neutral arbiter in matters related to the constitution, safeguarding democratic principles and the rule of law.
- A specialized Constitutional Court could relieve pressure on the Supreme Court, allowing the latter to focus on a broader range of legal issues.

- The establishment of the new court should prioritize constitutional protections and ensure that reforms do not undermine judicial autonomy.

## Foreign Direct Investment

### Saudi Arabia offers Investment in Reko Diq

Reko Diq in Pakistan's southwest is considered one of the world's largest undeveloped copper and gold resources. Saudi Arabia has offered a 15 percent investment in the Reko Diq copper and gold mine project in Balochistan province.

Canada's Barrick Gold holds a 50% stake in its operations. Remaining shares are owned by three state-owned enterprises and Balochistan provincial government. Additionally, Pakistan has extended an invitation to Saudi Arabia to invest in the project.



### Analysis

Reko Diq has been in the eye of storm since long. A maze of suspicions and allegations has surrounded it, mainly due to lack of transparency. Now it is a good opportunity for cash-strapped Pakistan to fetch up to \$5 billion in Saudi investment in mining by June 2025. The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has approved Saudi Arabia's offer to invest 15% in the Reko Diq mining project. While the structure of the offer has been approved, the final decision rests with the Cabinet Committee on Intergovernmental Transactions.

To ensure transparency, Pakistan has formed a negotiation committee to evaluate the proposal and recommend a final price for cabinet approval. A formal announcement is expected in the coming days. The Manara Minerals Investment Company, a joint venture between Ma'aden and the Public Investment Fund (PIF), will drive this investment, aiming to strengthen global supply chains. The Reko Diq Mining Company (RMDC) has been tasked with hiring local levies, and payment mechanisms for Balochistan have been defined.

### Way Forward

- Pakistan should negotiate terms to not only attract substantial investment but also fostering long-term partnerships that can enhance expertise in mining and resource management with Saudi Arabia.
- Ongoing collaboration with Barrick Gold and synergies between Saudi investors, federal enterprises, and the Balochistan government should be maintained to maximize efficiency.
- The phased approach to investment dispute resolution is a positive step. This mechanism should be clear, transparent, and enforceable to ensure investor confidence.
- It is essential that Balochistan benefits equitably from the project, given its direct impact on the region.

## Human Rights

### Alarm over rise in bringing kids to Balochistan sit-ins

The Balochistan Child Protection Commission has expressed serious concerns over the increasing trend of “using children as human shields” in political protests and sit-ins. The commission said the exploitation of children in this manner constitutes a grave violation of their rights, putting their safety and protection at serious risk.

The commission asks government to take strict action against those responsible, in accordance with the relevant laws, to safeguard the protection and well-being of children.



### Analysis

This propensity to use children for political purposes is condemnable. Child Protection Commission has rightly taken notice and sought Government’s attention towards the matter. It stated that involving children in protests is also exploitation of their right to protection and security, as outlined in national legislation and Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This practice should be discouraged. Protection of children's rights must remain a priority, and all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and political actors, should collaborate to ensure that children are not placed in harm's way for political purposes.

### Way Forward

- Government should ensure compliance of existing laws that safeguard children’s rights, particularly those prohibiting their involvement in protests or any activities that compromise their safety.
- Role of the Child Protection Commission and other relevant bodies may be extended to monitor and prevent the exploitation of children in political or social movements.
- Launch a nationwide public awareness campaign emphasizing the importance of child welfare and the negative consequences of using children in protests.

## International Relations

### Pakistan, US Explore Ways to Bolster Partnership

US Acting Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs John Bass, visited Pakistan and met Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, and Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir. The talks focused on expanding bilateral cooperation in economic and security areas, counterterrorism, and fostering regional stability.

Bass, accompanied by Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Elizabeth Horst, addressed Pakistan’s concerns over terrorism.



He also pointed other issues especially threats from the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and its reliance on US support at the IMF, particularly regarding the delayed approval of the \$7bn Extended Fund Facility. Bass thanked Pakistan for its cooperation in assisting Afghan refugees. Additionally, the US expressed interest in close cooperation with Pakistan during its upcoming tenure as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2025-26.

## Analysis

Recently the US black-listed Chinese companies for transfer of missile technology to Pakistan. Pakistan's closeness to China is a perennial irritant for the US. Nevertheless, historically, Pakistan has managed to keep good relations with both the powers. As the stakes in these relationships grow higher, Pakistan must navigate its partnerships with greater finesse, ensuring it does not alienate either side.

## Way Forward:

- Pakistan must walk the tight rope of foreign relations with dexterity, underscoring how stability in these relationships benefits all parties.
- Actively participating in multilateral forums like the UN, IMF, and World Bank can help Pakistan maintain a balanced international presence.
- Close engagement in peacekeeping, regional stability efforts, and economic development initiatives can showcase Pakistan as a responsible global actor.

## National Security

### Pakistan asks India to stay committed to IWT

Pakistan said it expected India to remain committed to the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) and if there was any issue, then the mechanism of Indus Commissioners was where all issues pertaining to this Treaty could be discussed.

## Analysis

Pakistan's response comes after India demanded a "reassessment" of the Treaty, citing increased water demands. Pakistan maintains that the IWT is a stable framework for water sharing and expects India to remain committed to its terms.



## Way Forward:

- Pakistan should continue emphasizing the importance of the IWT as a stable water-sharing framework.
- If India pushes for a reassessment, Pakistan should seek international mediation from the World Bank or other neutral parties.
- Legal preparations should be in place to defend Pakistan's position effectively.

## Policy Nuggets

Incident/ News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
Over 50pc of federal decisions delayed due to excessive bureaucracy: PIDE	It highlights inefficiency in the bureaucracy.	Immediate reforms are essential for efficient bureaucracy & better governance.	Highest
Steps to speed up work on Quetta Safe City ordered	Enhanced security and surveillance will curb crime and terrorism.	All possible measures should be adopted to make Quetta a safe city.	High
Pakistan succeeded in eliminating CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons)	Significant environmental achievement.	Sustainability is the key to lasting success in this regard.	High
Jacobabad DC, DHO and SSP removed in wake of sexual assault on polio worker	This assault had severely undermined the polio campaign.	Accountability is crucial to restoring trust.	High
Israel's tech-terrorism through pager explosives kills 40 and injures 3000 in Lebanon	Indo-Israel proximity and transfer of techniques/ technology is a threat to Pakistan.	Pakistan must monitor them; develop electronic warfare, cyber defense capabilities.	High
Pakistan warns UN of global threat posed by TTP	A belated but pertinent Global recognition of the TTP threat.	All should pressurize Afghanistan to do not let TTP use its soil.	Highest
Promulgation of an ordinance to amendment in the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act 2023	The federal government feels justified; several quarters criticise it.	Consensus creates harmony. Reforms are essential to lift Pakistan's judiciary from the abyss of Rule of law Index (130/142).	Highest
Six soldiers and one IB officer were martyred in KP	The uptick in terrorism against LEAs in KP & Balochistan is worrisome.	More planned and sustained intelligence operations are essential.	Highest
Blasphemy suspect killed in 'Police encounter'	The matter has gone from lynching to police encounters and custodial killings of blasphemy suspects.	Educative and punitive measures are needed to arrest this lawlessness.	Highest
Positive outcome of negotiations with independent power producers (IPPs) soon	Efforts are in motion for a gradual reduction in electricity prices, but it might take time.	Consultations with the IPPs should be made public.	High

### Editorial Team

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