



## NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY

### OVERVIEW

The Policy Pulse highlights key domestic and international events from the period under review, addressing political clashes, international diplomacy, and policy issues across various sectors.

Domestically, intense clashes in Islamabad between PTI protesters and police/Rangers led to violence and disruptions, emphasizing the need for enhanced riot control measures and political dialogue. Fake news and propaganda on social media created dissatisfaction and demoralization which call for stringent regulations to bridle this propensity. Albeit VPNs will continue working, Pakistan can emulate Australia's landmark social media legislation aimed at protecting youth. The rising death toll in Kurram remained a matter of grave concern for the federal and provincial governments.

Amidst the tussle and turmoil President Belarus visited Islamabad and signed a three-year roadmap with Pakistan which marks a significant step for economic ties, focusing on trade, education, and technology, though effective implementation will be critical. Another positive development was PIA's reinstatement of European flights which signifies recovery in Pakistan's aviation sector but underlines the necessity for sustained safety and financial reforms.

Internationally, the ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah offers temporary relief in Lebanon, though violations by Israel and continued displacement challenge the stability of the truce. Pakistan must closely watch the threatening tone and tenor of the incoming US President Trump to tackle BRICS, China, Canada and Mexico through tariffs and trade. Pakistan-China military talks point to evolving regional dynamics requiring strategic engagement and partnerships.

In agriculture, the FAO underscores systemic weaknesses in Pakistan's innovation systems, calling for policy-driven solutions and modernized infrastructure.

The overall analysis stresses the importance of proactive governance, effective diplomacy, and sustainable reform across sectors to address Pakistan's challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

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## Foreign Direct Investment

### Pakistan, Belarus Sign 3-Year Roadmap to Boost Economic Ties

Pakistan and Belarus have signed a Roadmap for Comprehensive Cooperation for 2025-27, marking a key outcome of the Belarusian delegation's visit. Alongside the roadmap, 15 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements were finalized during talks between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko. A subsequent delegation-level meeting aimed to strengthen networking, mutual cooperation, and bilateral ties between the two governments.



The agreements encompass e-commerce, science and technology, vocational education, health services, and bilateral trade. Both sides also committed to collaborating on intelligence sharing related to money laundering and terrorism financing, customs statistics, international road transport, and disaster management. Additional agreements focus on environmental cooperation, climate change, and an extradition treaty to enhance legal frameworks.

### Analysis

The visit of Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko and the signing of agreements in critical economic sectors reflect a promising step for Pakistan's economic development. Belarus's offer of cooperation presents an opportunity for Pakistan to strengthen underperforming sectors such as energy, counterterrorism, climate resilience, and industry. However, effective implementation requires a clear communication strategy and strong confidentiality protocols, particularly for sensitive data related to national security and trade.

### Way Forward

- Establish Joint Economic Forums and Business Councils to organize trade fairs, roadshows, and conferences, fostering collaboration among entrepreneurs, industry leaders, and policymakers.
- Promote public-private sector collaboration to address economic and social challenges, with both governments facilitating business growth.
- Encourage joint academic programs and research initiatives between universities and research institutions to address shared global challenges and enhance knowledge exchange

## National Security

### Day of Clashes Ends in Islamabad

A day of intense clashes between security forces and PTI protesters across the federal capital ended with the rapid withdrawal of the party's leadership and supporters from the Red Zone. Over three days of protests, at least six people lost their lives, including a policeman and three Rangers officials who were struck by a speeding vehicle.

The crowd that managed to reach the heart of Islamabad was forced to retreat in the dead of night, accompanied by the party's leadership. The area was cleared, and routine life resumed after PTI announced the end of the protest movement.

## Analysis

Charged and armed protestors clashed with the police and rangers in Islamabad. It resulted in violence and casualties. The roads and highways were shut down, which caused great inconvenience to the citizens. Businesses also suffered. The President of Belarus was in the city when the violent protestors forced their way into Islamabad.



## Way Forward

- Political parties, in the government and in the opposition, should iron out differences through parleys and dialogue.
- Anti-riot police should be raised, trained and equipped to face violent protests.
- A foolproof plan should be devised to make Islamabad impenetrable.
- The anarchists and vandalizers should be identified and penalized as per law.

## International Affairs

### Ceasefire in Israel-Hezbollah War



A ceasefire between the Israeli armed forces and Hezbollah was announced, leading to Lebanese citizens returning to their homes. Unfortunately, many are returning to destroyed homes, lacking access to food, shelter, and electricity. Ironically, Israel kept violating the ceasefire and targeted some buildings in Lebanon which resulted in deaths of many people.

## Analysis

The ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah has temporarily halted the ongoing conflict in Lebanon. Under the terms of the agreement, Hezbollah has been given 60 days to end its armed presence in southern Lebanon, while Israeli forces are required to withdraw from the area within the same timeframe. Many Beirut's residents remain displaced, facing devastating losses of homes, infrastructure, and basic services, including electricity, water, and food. Nevertheless, the peace seems fragile as Israel keeps violating the terms of truce. Hezbollah strikes back.

## Way Forward

- Provide humanitarian assistance, including food, medical aid, and refuge, to the people of Lebanon and Gaza, affected by the conflict.

- Muslim countries should pressure the UN and humanitarian organizations to enforce the ceasefire agreement and ensure peace across the region.
- Pakistan should stick to its stance over the Palestine issue and goad China, Russia and Turkey to play their role for cessation of Israeli brutalities in Gaza.

## Economy

### PIA Flights to Europe Restored After Four Years



After a four-year suspension due to safety concerns and alleged dubious pilot licenses, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has regained approval from the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) to resume flights to Europe. This milestone reflects improved safety standards and strengthened oversight by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA). Airblue has also received authorization for commercial flights to Europe. The lifting of the ban allows Pakistanis direct travel to European destinations once again.

### Analysis

The lifting of EASA's ban on PIA marks a critical recovery for Pakistan's aviation sector, helping address years of reputational damage and financial losses which was mainly caused due to unverified statement hurled by an irresponsible Minister Aviation in the previous regime. This restoration not only revitalizes PIA's lucrative European routes but also enhances investor confidence, a vital factor for the airline's ongoing privatization efforts. However, sustaining these safety improvements is essential to prevent future suspensions. PIA still faces challenges, including severe financial strain and the need for structural reforms to ensure long-term efficiency and global trust.

### Way Forward

- Establish a dedicated oversight body to ensure continuous compliance with international aviation regulations and maintain stringent safety measures.
- Introduce phased financial reforms, such as cost-cutting measures and enhanced revenue management, to stabilize PIA's financial health and attract potential investors.
- Capitalize on the restored European access by offering competitive pricing and partnerships with global airlines to diversify revenue streams and improve brand reputation.
- Retrenchment and right sizing are essential.

## Health & Safety

### Australia Passes Landmark Social Media Ban for Under-16

Australia's Senate has passed legislation requiring social media companies to prevent users under 16 from creating accounts, with potential fines of up to AU\$50 million for non-compliance. Critics, including social media firms and experts, have called the law vague and difficult to enforce.

The Centre-left government defended the measure, stating it aims to combat harmful algorithms, reduce anxiety, and protect youth from online predators while encouraging physical activities. However, young users have expressed dissatisfaction, claiming they will find ways to bypass the ban. With unclear enforcement mechanisms, the law's symbolic nature raises questions about its effectiveness. Other countries are closely monitoring Australia's approach as they explore similar measures.



## Analysis

The legislation reflects global concerns about social media's impact on youth mental health and safety. However, its vague enforcement framework and potential exemptions risk undermining its objectives. Critics have rightly emphasized the importance of balanced approaches, such as Finland's digital literacy programs, to empower young users. For Pakistan, the case illustrates the challenge of addressing online risks while preserving innovation and user rights. Protective policies are vital, but ensuring their enforcement without compromising privacy remains a complex issue. The law's symbolic nature and potential loopholes highlight the need for practical, evidence-based digital governance.

## Way Forward:

- Launch nationwide programs to educate youth about responsible social media use and online safety.
- Develop clear and enforceable rules for platforms to safeguard young users and establish robust compliance mechanisms.
- Support the development of domestic platforms with built-in child safety features and parental controls.

## Agriculture

### Lack of Policy Support Hampering Agriculture Innovation: FAO



Pakistan's agriculture innovation system (AIS) faces major hurdles due to insufficient policy support, outdated techniques, and limited access to modern technologies, according to the FAO's assessment under the EU-funded Tropical Agriculture Platform project. Farmers are constrained by low yields, pest management challenges, and weak market linkages, exacerbated by overreliance on middlemen. The report urges fostering demand-driven innovations, enhancing public-private collaboration, and promoting sustainable practices to improve productivity and address critical issues like water security and resource management.

## Analysis

The FAO assessment underscores systemic flaws in Pakistan’s AIS, stemming from fragmented collaboration and limited market-oriented solutions. Outdated farming practices and inadequate access to modern tools deepen farmers’ vulnerabilities. Policymakers must prioritize demand-driven innovations and effective resource allocation while strengthening public-private partnerships to enhance the sector's resilience to climate challenges.

## Way Forward

- Promote collaborative solutions that link policymakers, private sectors, and farmers to address specific market demands.
- Expand extension services, provide access to digital tools, and improve direct market access for farmers.
- Focus on scalable R&D, modern irrigation systems, and climate-smart infrastructure to ensure long-term resilience.

## Policy Nuggets

Incident/ News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
Kurram death toll rises to 136.	Despite a ceasefire, bloodletting continued.	Talks, truce and tough tackling by the security forces can permanently end bloodshed in Kurram.  <i>"Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means." – Ronald Reagan</i>	Highest
Social media, AI fueling ‘worst human impulses’, says UN chief	It spreads hate speech like wildfire and ignites violence.	Effective regulations required to rein in hate speech and disinformation spreading online.  <i>"Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master." – Christian Lous Lange</i>	Highest
Trump threatens trade war on Mexico, Canada, China.	Trump’s old strategy of “threaten, and then negotiate.”  It would spark disruption across the global economy, deepening tensions with China and other US neighbors.	Pakistan should watch its interests.  Stand with China as it has huge investment in Pakistan.  <i>"In international trade, the goal is not war but mutual benefit." – Milton Friedman</i>	High

<p>Trump threatens 100pc tariff on BRICS states over currency plans.</p>	<p>It smacks of threat and arrogance and fear of erosion of the strength of so-called ‘mighty US Dollar.</p>	<p>Pakistan to step up the efforts to join BRICS.</p> <p><i>"Economic interdependence is the foundation of peaceful global relations." – John F. Kennedy</i></p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Govt fed up with capital onslaught, vows ‘never again.’</p> <p>PM wants plan made to avert any ‘invasion’ of capital</p>	<p>Protests caused losses of Rs 190 billion daily.</p> <p>Civil and military leadership to formulate a strategy to avert the repeat of PTI’s invasion of Islamabad aimed at sabotaging the hard-earned peace and macroeconomic stability</p>	<p>Timely talks and strong measures to preempt and prevent violent protests.</p> <p><i>"Anarchy is the antithesis of progress; dialogue is its antidote." – Anonymous</i></p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>Pak-China military talks focus on terrorism, security.</p>	<p>Terrorism, Afghanistan and India remained three main concerns for both the countries.</p>	<p>Greater cooperation is needed to strengthen strategic partnership.</p> <p>Mutual respect for each other’s sovereignty is essential.</p> <p><i>"Strategic partnerships are not built on convenience but on shared values and mutual respect." – Henry Kissinger</i></p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>SC disposes of over 4,000 cases in one month.</p>	<p>A significant milestone in SC’s efforts to expedite justice.</p>	<p>SC must remain steadfast in its resolve to deliver justice promptly and uphold the rule of law.</p> <p><i>"Justice delayed is justice denied, but timely justice is the foundation of a strong society." – William E. Gladstone</i></p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>PTA decides not to ban VPNs over ‘lack of legal grounds’</p>	<p>VPNs will continue working after Nov 30</p>	<p>Effectively use Section 34 of PECA to remove or block ‘Unlawful online content.’</p> <p><i>The internet is a double-edged sword; how we wield it defines its impact." – Anonymous</i></p>	<p>Highest</p>



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