



## NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY

### OVERVIEW

This week’s Policy Pulse highlights key political, social, and economic developments in Pakistan, alongside significant international events. The approval of the National Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy 2024 underscores the government’s commitment to maintaining order and supporting economic growth amidst challenges like recent protests that disrupted markets. It is further augmented by the government’s move to curb terrorist groups’ use of social media under the National Action Plan, aiming to enhance national security while balancing civil liberties. Meanwhile, the resurgence of polio cases and gender-based violence underscores systemic challenges requiring urgent action.

The Supreme Court’s decision to allow the privatization of PIA marks a crucial step in reforming the struggling airline, signaling opportunities for financial recovery and operational efficiency.

On the international front, UNICEF’s appeal for \$141 million highlights Pakistan’s vulnerabilities to climate change, malnutrition, and the Afghan refugee crisis. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s participation in the One Water Summit emphasized Pakistan’s water scarcity challenges and deepened ties with Saudi Arabia and France, strengthening Pakistan’s diplomatic standing. Moreover, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Ministerial Meeting in Iran explored regional collaboration opportunities, though Afghanistan’s absence reflected ongoing geopolitical complexities.

Policy recommendations include fostering regional cooperation, enhancing climate resilience, addressing social inequities, and implementing reforms in sectors like aviation and agriculture. The document also emphasizes the importance of meritocracy, rule of law, and strategic diplomacy to address national and regional challenges effectively.

By tackling these multifaceted issues with focused strategies, Pakistan can pave the way for sustainable growth, stability, and strengthened international partnerships.

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### Cabinet Approves National Policy to Prevent Violent Extremism

The federal cabinet has approved the National Prevention of Violent Extremism Policy 2024, proposed by the Ministry of Interior. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced the policy, citing the recent protests in Islamabad that led to a 3,000-point drop in the stock exchange and economic instability. He emphasized the policy's role in tackling violence and maintaining economic growth. While noting progress in sectors like exports and inflation reduction, the Prime Minister highlighted the policy's necessity for sustaining economic momentum.



#### Analysis

Peaceful protest is a democratic right, but actions inciting chaos and extremism must be curbed to safeguard national sovereignty. Security and order are especially critical during visits by international delegations. Following the recent unrest, the government approved the Interior Ministry's recommendation to implement this policy, aiming to address violent extremism and maintain stability.

#### Way Forward

- Ensure Rule of Law: Uphold and enforce laws to bridle unrest and address disruptive elements effectively.
- Implement Policy Effectively: Focus on rigorous enforcement of the policy to achieve tangible results.
- Combat Misinformation: Develop strategies to counter false or misleading information that can exacerbate unrest and social divisions.

### Govt Moves to Curb Social Media Use by Terror Outfits



The government, under the National Action Plan (NAP), has decided to curb the use of social media by terrorist groups. Measures include blocking accounts of banned outfits, with Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) ensuring compliance and provinces tackling illegal SIMs.

#### Analysis

This overdue initiative aims to combat the propaganda and recruitment tactics of banned groups. While it enhances national security, the measures raise concerns about potential overreach and the suppression of free speech. Terrorist groups may adopt covert communication methods, complicating surveillance efforts. Balancing security and civil liberties remains a key challenge.

## Way Forward

- **Clear Regulations:** Develop rules to ensure an effective crackdown on extremist content without curbing legitimate expression.
- **AI Monitoring:** Deploy advanced tools to identify and remove extremist content in real-time.
- **Platform Collaboration:** Work with social media companies to ensure rapid removal of harmful content.
- **Stricter Legislation:** Mandate content moderation standards for platforms to prevent extremist propaganda.

## International Affairs

### ECO Ministerial Meeting Held in Iran

The 28th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) meeting took place in Iran, with ministers from member countries participating. Discussions highlighted regional challenges and opportunities, emphasizing the need for enhanced collaboration to unlock development potential. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi held bilateral talks, discussing regional and global issues. Notably, no representative from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan attended the meeting.



### Analysis

Established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, the ECO expanded in 1992 to include Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and Central Asian states, forming a 10-member bloc. Its goals include fostering economic and trade cooperation, addressing poverty, and enhancing regional connectivity. The Tajik Foreign Minister's remarks on the pivotal role of ECO countries in regional integration highlight the potential for multilateral projects and strategic cross-border investments.

## Way Forward

- **Trade Agreements:** Negotiate multilateral trade deals to remove barriers and boost trade and investment flows.
- **Joint Investments:** Initiate regional projects like industrial parks and shared research centers.
- **Security Cooperation:** Strengthen alliances through joint exercises and counter-terrorism initiatives.

## Diplomatic Relations

### PM Meets Saudi Crown Prince at One Water Summit

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman during the 'One Water Summit' in Riyadh, where he stressed global water scarcity challenges and proposed a six-point agenda to combat water shortages. Highlighting the 2022 floods in Pakistan, he emphasized the need for more dams to prevent water wastage. The visit also strengthened Pakistan-Saudi relations, with multiple MoUs signed to boost economic ties and job creation.

## Analysis

Pakistan's engagement at such forums reflects its improving diplomatic relations. Agreements with Saudi Arabia, including billions in investments, signify economic opportunities. Meetings with leaders like French President Emmanuel Macron further underscore Pakistan's commitment to fostering international cooperation in key sectors such as agriculture, IT, and water management.



## Way Forward

- **Effective Implementation:** Expedite the execution of agreements signed with Saudi Arabia.
- **Sustained Diplomacy:** Continue fostering ties with Saudi leadership for strategic unity and international support.
- **MoU Actualization:** Ensure timely implementation of agreements to maximize economic benefits.

## Environment

### UNICEF Seeks \$141m for Pakistan Amid Shared Climate Challenges



Pakistan faces mounting challenges from climate change, malnutrition, and humanitarian strains, including hosting Afghan refugees. UNICEF's \$141 million appeal aims to address urgent needs such as nutrition, disaster resilience, and gender-equitable adaptation. Meanwhile, Pakistan and India grapple with similar environmental crises—smog, extreme heat, and floods—amplified by climate change. However, political mistrust prevents collaboration, leaving both nations to tackle shared vulnerabilities independently.

The absence of joint solutions limits the effectiveness of efforts to mitigate climate impacts on marginalized populations. Addressing these crises requires urgent policy reforms, regional cooperation, and investment in sustainable solutions.

## Analysis

Pakistan's climate and humanitarian crises reveal systemic weaknesses in disaster preparedness and social services. UNICEF's appeal highlights the critical need for resilience-focused programs, especially to combat malnutrition, which perpetuates poverty and stunted growth. While India and Pakistan share climate challenges, deep political distrust obstructs regional cooperation, undermining efforts to manage smog, flooding, and water resources effectively. This disjointed approach heightens vulnerabilities on both sides and demands integrated strategies that prioritize shared goals over geopolitical rivalries.

## Way Forward

- **Regional Climate Diplomacy:** Develop a collaborative framework for tackling shared challenges like smog, floods, and resource management through joint strategies and data sharing.
- **Strengthen Resilience:** Expand investments in disaster preparedness, nutrition, and adaptive infrastructure to support marginalized communities and Afghan refugees.
- **Sustainable Solutions:** Foster trust and collaboration by promoting climate-smart agriculture, green technologies, and cross-border economic opportunities to enhance food security and mitigate malnutrition.

## Economy

### Apex Court Withdraws Order Barring PIA Privatization Without Approval



The Supreme Court of Pakistan has overturned a six-year-old restriction requiring its approval for the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), giving the government greater flexibility to privatize the struggling carrier. This decision comes after the European regulator's recent approval for PIA to resume flights to Europe, ending a four-year suspension.

Previous privatization attempts failed due to bids not meeting the minimum price set by the Privatisation Commission. Meanwhile, Khurram Mushtaq has been appointed as interim CEO, bringing significant aviation experience to support ongoing restructuring efforts.

## Analysis

The Supreme Court's decision opens the door for critical reforms in PIA's operations. Despite progress, such as the reinstatement of European routes, the airline continues to struggle with financial liabilities, operational inefficiencies, and governance challenges. Past privatization failures highlight the difficulty of attracting credible investors. The appointment of an experienced interim CEO is a step forward, but systemic reforms are necessary to ensure PIA's viability. Addressing liabilities, improving governance, and fostering investor confidence are essential to revive the national carrier.

## Way Forward

- **Develop a Liability-Free Privatization Model:** Restructure PIA's financial liabilities to attract credible investors and ensure transparency in the privatization process.
- **Enhance Operational Efficiency:** Empower the interim CEO to implement reforms in management, cost controls, and service quality to improve market competitiveness.
- **Engage Strategic Partners:** Collaborate with global aviation stakeholders to bring in expertise, investment, and market access for sustainable growth.

# POLICY NUGGETS

Incident/ News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
<p>Three more polio cases take tally to 59.</p> <p>Poliovirus detected in samples from 14 districts</p>	<p>Polio cases continue to rise.</p>	<p>Polio campaign should be reviewed and revitalized.</p> <p><i>"The future of our children lies in the eradication of diseases like polio. A healthy child grows into a nation's strength."</i> – Nelson Mandela</p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>Incentives to be given to farmers cultivating wheat on large areas.</p>	<p>It will help achieve a target of cultivating wheat on 16.5 million acres in the province.</p>	<p>Proactive measures ought to be adopted to encourage farmers and ensure food security.</p> <p><i>"Agriculture is the foundation of national development, and supporting our farmers ensures food security for all."</i> – Norman Borlaug</p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>Pakistan clinch T20 Blind World Cup</p>	<p>Good news for Pakistan cricket and sports.</p>	<p>Meritocracy in sports can pay dividends.</p> <p><i>"Meritocracy is the heartbeat of progress; talent must be nurtured to achieve greatness."</i> – Malcolm Gladwell</p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>President Bashar al-Assad's regime ends in Syria</p>	<p>Rebels of Hayat Tahrir al-Shams seize power.</p> <p>Bashar gets asylum in Russia.</p> <p>Israel, US carry out air strikes in Damascus after regime change.</p>	<p>Pakistan must watch the developments minutely and check any fall-out on local sectarian scenario.</p> <p><i>"In an interconnected world, one nation's instability often ripples across borders, demanding vigilance and readiness."</i> – Henry Kissinger</p>	<p>High</p>

<p>13 terrorists killed in N. Waziristan operation.</p> <p>Earlier, nine security men martyred in KP, Balochistan</p>	<p>It was a successful attack on TTP hideout near Afghan border.</p>	<p>Relentless efforts must be made to annihilate the terrorists in KP and Balochistan.</p> <p>Pak-Afghan border should be secured.</p> <p>Collateral damage should be avoided at any cost.</p> <p><i>"Terrorism anywhere threatens peace everywhere; relentless action is essential to uproot it."</i> – Kofi Annan</p>	<p>Highest</p>
<p>Mass protests force AJK govt to withdraw controversial law</p>	<p>The protestors had demanded the abrogation of the 'Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Ordinance, 2024'.</p>	<p>Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action committee must be tackled wisely through dialogue.</p> <p><i>"Effective governance is a dialogue between the rulers and the ruled; listening is the first step to resolution."</i> – Barack Obama</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Gender-based violence continues to be pervasive in Pakistan: HRCP</p>	<p>GBV is pervasive in Pakistan, manifesting in various forms such as domestic violence, honour crimes, sexual assault, and forced marriages.</p>	<p>Collaborative efforts across gender lines in legislative bodies are crucial for creating an inclusive society.</p> <p><i>"Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world."</i> – UN Women</p>	<p>High</p>
<p><b>PIA to resume flights to Europe from Jan 10</b></p>	<p>EU aviation regulator lifted a ban on the national flag carrier after four years.</p>	<p>Flights to London and Manchester must be started asap.</p> <p><i>"Rebuilding trust is a step-by-step journey; each success lays the foundation for the next."</i> – Stephen Covey</p>	<p>High</p>



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