



## NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY

### OVERVIEW

The Policy Pulse covers the last week’s key themes including diplomacy, economic reforms, counter-terrorism, environmental management, and socio-economic initiatives.

Diplomatic engagements with Afghanistan and China signify Pakistan's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and tackling pressing issues such as terrorism, economic challenges, and poverty alleviation. The Afghan Chargé d’Affaires and FM Ishaq Dar emphasized addressing terrorism from Afghan soil, while China's ambassador pledged targeted interventions to uplift South Punjab’s marginalized communities. The spirit is to bridge divides, tackle shared challenges, and build a foundation for mutual prosperity.

Domestically, the document sheds light on the controversy over seminary registration reforms, showcasing the tensions between government policy and religious stakeholders. It also highlights PM Shehbaz Sharif’s reform agenda for governance and CM Maryam Nawaz’s collaboration with China to combat environmental hazards.

The document also touches on CPEC’s contributions, remittance surges, and intensified counter-terrorism operations in North Waziristan. It also critiques systemic issues, such as tax evasion in the sugar industry and gaps in health indicators due to polio resurgence. The analysis underscores the importance of transparent governance and robust policy implementation to maximize national gains and address vulnerabilities.

The way forward emphasizes strengthening governance, fostering regional cooperation, enhancing socio-economic development, and leveraging international partnerships. Strategic focus areas include climate resilience, border security, trade agreements, etc. This multi-dimensional approach highlights the interconnected nature of Pakistan’s challenges and opportunities.

### Inside This Issue

 <b>Afghan Diplomat, FM Dar Discuss ‘Deep-Rooted Relations’</b>	<b>2</b>
 <b>China to Empower People of South Punjab</b>	<b>2</b>
 <b>Spat over Registration of Seminaries Escalates</b>	<b>3</b>
 <b>PM Pledges Reforms Agenda for Good Governance in all Sectors</b>	<b>4</b>
 <b>Maryam Launches Joint Environmental Initiatives with China</b>	<b>5</b>
 <b>Policy Nuggets</b>	<b>6</b>

### Afghan Diplomat, FM Dar Discuss 'Deep-Rooted Relations'

Afghan Chargé d'Affaires Sardar Ahmad Shakeeb met Foreign Minister Mr. Ishaq Dar to discuss bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. During the meeting, both sides highlighted the 'deep-rooted ties' between the two nations and agreed to strengthen mutually beneficial relations. This was the second meeting between the two leaders in recent days. The discussions reflected efforts to repair strained relations, primarily caused by the use of Afghan territory by terrorists to launch attacks on Pakistan. FM Dar raised the critical issue of terrorism emanating from Afghan soil, particularly activities of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISKP.



### Analysis

Pakistan and Afghanistan have experienced limited interaction in recent months due to recurring tensions. However, both sides are making efforts to restore diplomatic relations and enhance bilateral cooperation. This meeting signifies Pakistan's pragmatic approach: addressing security concerns while fostering collaboration with Afghanistan. Sources indicate that China played a key role in mediating and breaking the deadlock between the two nations. Last month, China's special envoy for Afghanistan visited Pakistan before heading to Kabul to discuss the tense bilateral ties.

### Way Forward

- Diplomatic Engagement and Dialogue: Maintain continuous, open communication to foster trust and prevent escalation of conflicts.
- Economic Cooperation and Trade: Strengthen economic ties through trade agreements, infrastructure development, and regional connectivity projects for mutual benefit.
- Border Security: The treacherous border should be fully secured to avoid infiltration of terrorists and illegal elements. Visa and passes system should be strictly implemented.

### China to Empower South Punjab People



Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong stated that China is ready to work with Pakistan to "actively implement" its Global South initiative, emphasizing common development and shared cooperation. He reiterated China's firm support for Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and pursuing a development path aligned with its national conditions. To combat poverty and reduce extremist tendencies in marginalized regions like South Punjab, China has devised a comprehensive plan to educate

out-of-school children in this neglected area of Pakistan's largest province. This initiative involves targeted, "small yet impactful" projects to enhance livelihoods and uplift the community.

## Analysis

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to China primarily centered on strategic and security cooperation, along with advancing an upgraded version of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These measures are expected to inject new momentum and expand the scope of practical cooperation between the two nations. The Chinese ambassador highlighted the visit's "expected goals and fruitful outcomes," providing a roadmap for enhancing the all-weather strategic partnership. The bilateral engagement has charted a blueprint for China-Pakistan relations, setting clear goals and measures to navigate the challenges of the global economy.

## Way Forward

- Security of Chinese in Pakistan: Foolproof security of the Chinese working in Pakistan must be ensured.
- Counter-Terrorism Cooperation: Enhance intelligence sharing and joint initiatives to counter global security threats, including terrorism and cybercrime.
- Language and Media Partnerships: Promote language learning programs, media collaborations, and broadcasting exchanges to foster cultural and informational integration.

## Institutional Framework

### Spat over Registration of Seminaries Escalates



A controversy has emerged over the recently passed bill on seminary registration, as Maulana Fazlur Rehman demanded the president's assent for its implementation. In contrast, the government, backed by members of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), opposed the legislation, citing flaws in the proposed framework. At a conference on "Madrassah Registration and Reforms," religious scholars and government ministers advocated for retaining the current registration system, urging the federal government to reject any changes.

A resolution presented by CII member Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi to maintain the status quo was unanimously approved. Meanwhile, the Wafaq-ul- Madaris Al Arabia chief criticized the politicization of seminaries and assured support for the government's stance.

## Analysis

The disagreement over the seminary registration bill highlights a deep divide between political, religious, and governmental stakeholders. While Maulana Fazlur Rehman's push reflects alignment with seminaries, the government's opposition underscores concerns about flaws in the proposed reforms. The unified resistance among religious scholars signals a strong preference for preserving the existing framework. This debate reveals the challenge of reconciling educational reforms with the sensitivities of influential religious institutions, risking further politicization and delays in implementing meaningful changes.

## Way Forward

- **Consensus Building:** Engage ulema, political leaders, and education experts in dialogue to address concerns and create a shared framework for reforms.
- **Legislative Review:** Form a joint committee to refine the proposed bill, ensuring alignment with both legal standards and religious sensitivities.
- **Public Awareness:** Educate stakeholders about the benefits of reforms to build trust and mitigate resistance.
- **Capacity Building:** Enhance the Education Ministry's ability to oversee seminaries, ensuring quality education while fostering cooperation with religious boards.

## PM Pledges Reforms Agenda for Good Governance in all Sectors



In a meeting with experts of various fields, PM stressed effective implementation of governance reforms in all sectors of economy. He emphasized the benefits of informed and prudent decision making to bring desirable outcomes of reforms. PM delegated responsibilities to experts related to their respective fields who will provide specialised advice on various governance challenges, helping the government make more informed decisions across key sectors.

## Analysis

Structural reforms in economic sectors are crucial for fostering long-term growth, addressing inefficiencies, and adapting to changing global dynamics. PM has once again launched the reform agenda focusing on improving the regulatory framework and modernizing key industries. However, the implementation of such reforms would be challenging due to political resistance, vested interests, and the risk of short-term disruptions, particularly for domestic communities of Pakistan.

Structural reforms are essential for developing countries like Pakistan in fostering sustainable economic growth, improving efficiency, and addressing systemic challenges that hinder development. These reforms, which can span sectors such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and governance, help create a more dynamic and competitive economy. Prime Minister's has set the new reform agenda with help of area experts likely to yield impactful outcomes aimed at betterment of economy in the long run.

## Way Forward

- **Set Clear Goals with Timeline:** Strengthen collaboration on tackling global challenges such as climate change, renewable energy, and environmental conservation.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track the progress of reforms and measure outcomes.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Involving key stakeholders, including local communities, businesses, and civil society to effectively implement the reforms.

### Maryam Launches Joint Environmental Initiatives with China

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz spoke in high-profile meetings with Chinese officials and advocated for enhanced collaboration in environmental management, governance and cultural exchange. By mutual cooperation and consensus, a Beijing-Punjab Clean Air Working Group has been established to combat smog, promote biodiversity and improve air quality. CM expressed her appreciation for China's visionary leadership and its commitment to fostering Pakistan-China ties.



Both parties engaged in discussions on extensive environmental collaboration, covering topics such as biodiversity conservation, afforestation, smog reduction, and waste management. They also explored plans to create a model city in Punjab focused on environmental enhancement.

### Analysis

CM has represented country on significant fora and her visit to China is one step in escalation of Pakistan's diplomatic relations. Cooperation with China in combating environmental hazards and launching joint initiatives is wise decision as Beijing fought with the same challenges. In past Beijing was most polluted city in the world and it has been totally transformed to a cleanest city now. Pakistan may learn from it and can follow the strategies opted by China to get rid of bad air quality and smog issues setting Beijing as benchmark.

Countries across the globe are adopting various strategies to tackle environmental challenges. Environmental safety has become a global priority as countries increasingly recognize the urgent need to address climate change, pollution, and resource depletion. In Japan, advanced technology is being used to reduce waste through recycling and waste-to-energy systems, while Norway is a leader in electric vehicle adoption. Pakistan may also improve its environmental situation by joining hands with China and utilizing expertise offered by China, current scenario is expected to become far better than now.

### Way Forward

- **Strict Industrial Regulations:** Enforcing stricter regulations on industrial emissions and incentivizing green technologies can reduce pollution from manufacturing processes.
- **Development of Green Transportation Strategies:** In consultation with Chinese experts, green transportation strategies may be developed and implemented accordingly.
- **Invest in Clean Technology Research:** Governments should invest in research and development of innovative technologies for pollution control, such as carbon capture and storage (CCS), air purification systems, and waste-to-energy technologies.

# POLICY NUGGETS

Incident/News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
Bangladeshi experts stress unity to fight Hindutva	Regional tensions could rise, impacting bilateral relations.	Strengthen Islamabad-Dhaka ties through cultural diplomacy and shared counter-Hindutva narratives; collaborate on multilateral platforms for inclusive regional development.  <i>"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." — Martin Luther King Jr.</i>	High
\$300m ADB loan secured to strengthen social protection	Tangible and timely support for poverty alleviation programs.	Ensure transparent and efficient utilization of ADB funds for poverty alleviation programs; strengthen accountability mechanisms to avoid fund misuse.  <i>"Funds are a means, not an end; their true value lies in how they uplift the lives of the most vulnerable." — Kofi Annan</i>	Highest
PM orders 'drastic measures' to cut power tariff	The realization and corresponding call for action from the highest seat is a good omen.	Enhance renewable energy investments to diversify energy mix; renegotiate terms with IPPs to ensure equitable cost-sharing and tariff reductions; implement demand-side management.  <i>"Energy independence is the best protection against future price shocks." — Daniel Yergin</i>	Highest
Primary factors behind polio resurgence	Threatens health indicators and global health partnerships.	Strengthen vaccination campaigns in high-risk regions; address misinformation; enhance inter-agency coordination for effective polio eradication.  <i>"Health is a state of complete harmony of the body, mind, and spirit." — B.K.S. Iyengar</i>	Highest

Incident/News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
Hiding genuine production: FBR launches operation against sugar mills	Tax evasion hinders revenue collection.	Ensure FBR's operations are backed by comprehensive audits and legal frameworks; incentivize transparent business practices in the sugar sector through tax credits and recognition.  <i>"Taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society." — Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.</i>	High
43 projects of \$24.7bn completed under CPEC, NA told	Positive economic contributions, but limited transparency.	Enhance transparency in CPEC projects to ensure public accountability; prioritize local workforce training and technology transfer to maximize socio-economic benefits.  <i>"Development is about transforming the lives of people, not just transforming economies." — Joseph Stiglitz</i>	High
Seven terrorists killed in North Waziristan: ISPR	Highlights ongoing security challenges in tribal areas.	Enhance border management and counter-terrorism measures; invest in socio-economic development of tribal regions to address root causes of insurgency.  <i>"Peace and progress are interwoven; lasting security comes from addressing both immediate threats and their underlying causes." — Ban Ki-moon</i>	Highest
Team including Pakistani researcher wins supercomputing 'Nobel'	Positions Pakistan in global research and innovation.	Establish national innovation hubs to foster STEM education and research; provide grants and scholarships to retain local talent; celebrate such achievements to inspire the youth.  <i>"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower." — Steve Jobs</i>	High
Remittances surge 33.6pc to \$14.8bn in 5 months	Bolsters foreign reserves and supports the economy.	Introduce policy incentives for overseas workers to encourage sustained remittance flows; partner with banks and digital platforms for streamlined transfers; use in productive sectors.  <i>"Remittances are not just financial lifelines; they are investments in a nation's future prosperity." — Muhammad Yunus</i>	High



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