



OVERVIEW

In this issue of the Policy Pulse, the developments in Pakistan underscore a complex interplay of governance, economic reform, and socio-environmental challenges.

In Kurram, the KP government's peace plan seeks to address long-standing tribal and sectarian conflicts, intensified by recent violence that left over 130 dead and exacerbated humanitarian crises. Blocked roads and severe shortages, particularly in medical supplies, resulted in tragic infant deaths.

Just nearby, across the border, TTP terrorists' hide-outs were bombed by PAF fighter jets which resulted in effective annihilation of the wanted terrorists and their facilitators.

Meanwhile, climate disasters in 2024 have laid bare Pakistan's vulnerability to global warming which highlight the need for proactive resilience-building, including investments in flood defenses, climate-smart agriculture, and sustainable urban planning.

On the economic front, recent initiatives reflect efforts to balance immediate revenue generation with long-term reforms. Plans to increase taxation on banking profits and curb power theft through smart meters aim to strengthen public finances. However, these measures must be accompanied by transparent governance to maintain public trust. Improvement in economy has generated hope in majority of the youth in Pakistan. Education also remains a pivotal sector, while terrorists' attack girls' schools in KP, emulating the Taliban across the border, the government is bent upon bridging the learning gaps evident from launching of innovations like Khan Academy's AI-powered "Khanmigo."

It appears that the ailing PIA is straining on the leash to fly high again as more aircrafts are being added to the fleet.

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KP Government Forms Roadmap for Peace in Kurram

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has formulated a comprehensive peace plan involving the establishment of a special force, security checkpoints, a deweaponization campaign, and a crackdown on inflammatory social media content. Violence in KP has persisted over recent months, with a convoy attack last month resulting in 130 deaths. The main road to Peshawar has been blocked for over two months, causing severe shortages in Kurram.



The most tragic outcome of this blockade has been the lack of medical supplies, leading to the deaths of approximately 50 infants due to lack of treatment—an unacceptable situation in any civilized society. The government also decided to launch a crackdown on individuals using social media for incitement. A Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) cell will be established to block accounts spreading sectarian hatred.

Analysis

The Kurram issue, rooted in longstanding tribal and sectarian conflicts and compounded by geopolitical factors, requires more than statements to resolve. The KP cabinet's plan outlines necessary measures, including road protection, deweaponization, and action against online hate speech. However, the success of these measures depends on effective implementation.

Reopening Kurram's roads permanently, with guaranteed safety for travelers, is essential to alleviate the district's suffering. The deweaponization of armed groups is also critical, as both Shia and Sunni communities in Kurram possess heavy weapons due to militant group presence. However, disarming local tribes without addressing their security concerns risks leaving them vulnerable to terrorist threats from Afghanistan and local militants.

Way Forward

- Strengthen security and counter-terrorism measures to prevent exploitation by terrorist groups.
- Launch a comprehensive deweaponization campaign targeting all armed groups while ensuring security through strengthened local law enforcement.
- Prioritize the permanent reopening of Kurram's main thoroughfares with adequate protection for travelers and the free flow of goods and services.

Airstrike Against Terror Camps in Afghanistan



The Afghan government protested Pakistan's airstrikes on suspected terrorist camps in Afghanistan's eastern Paktika province. Pakistan's foreign office stated that the strikes targeted banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) elements to protect its citizens from cross-border terrorism. The strikes neutralized several suspected terrorists, but the Afghan Taliban regime lodged a strong protest, emphasizing its sovereignty.

Analysis

Pakistan-Afghanistan relations remain strained due to frequent border skirmishes and accusations of cross-border terrorism. While Pakistan maintains its right to protect its citizens, Afghanistan denies hosting TTP militants. Ironically, after this airstrike the Afghan Taliban official declared to protect TTP as it was their moral and religious obligation.

Way Forward

- Strengthen security measures to combat terrorism while ensuring the protection of citizens.
- Engage in diplomatic dialogue with Afghan authorities to address mutual concerns while maintaining zero tolerance for terrorist activities.
- Continue campaigns against the misuse of social media for terrorist purposes, with stringent penalties for offenders.

Economy

74% of Pakistan's Youth Unwilling to Leave the Country: Survey

A recent survey of over 1,600 participants aged 18 to 34 conducted in September 2024 revealed that 74% of Pakistani youth are unwilling to leave the country permanently. When asked, "Do you think of leaving Pakistan and moving abroad permanently?" the majority expressed a desire to stay and contribute to the country's development. However, 26% said they would move abroad if given the opportunity.



Among the 26%, most preferred destinations were the Middle East (30% to Saudi Arabia, 20% to Dubai), followed by the UK (9%), Canada (8%), the U.S. (8%), and other countries like Europe, Turkey, and Australia.

Analysis

While 800,000 people left Pakistan in 2023—a 3.6% increase from 2022—the survey highlights a shift in the mindset of Pakistani youth, with 74% choosing to stay.

This decline in brain drain reflects an opportunity for the government to leverage the potential of youth for national development. Many of those emigrating are seeking blue-collar opportunities, emphasizing the need for domestic job creation.

Way Forward

- Expand programs like Honihar Scholarships and the National Internship Programme to motivate youth to stay and contribute locally.
- Increase international partnerships and exchange program quotas to offer global exposure without permanent migration.
- Develop the digital economy and promote online job opportunities to retain talent within Pakistan.

Five-year Transformation Plan for Economy to be unveiled



Minister Planning Ahsan Iqbal announced that the National Economic Transformation Plan 2024-29 to be unveiled on December 31 2024. He stated that Govt has examined the key challenges Pakistan has faced in the past 16 months and identified the priorities required to establish a stable foundation. This led to the development of the Five E's Framework to address core challenges faced by economy.

Analysis

The National Economic Transformation Plan, aimed at reshaping Pakistan's economic future over the next five years, will be officially launched on 31st December 2024. The plan focuses on fostering an export-driven economy and prioritising emerging fields like e-commerce, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence. Pakistan should complement with its human resources and available technologies to thrive in the future global economy. The plan also adhered to the 5 E Framework devised by Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives. The 5Es Framework is a Roadmap for achieving 1 Trillion Economy by 2035. 5Es are the focused areas included Export Growth, Environmental Sustainability, Energy Security, Equity & Empowerment and E-Pakistan. These 5Es are the vital factors necessary for Pakistan's economic progress and prosperity.

Way Forward

- Ensure sufficient financial resources have been allocated to key sectors and initiatives, with effective budgeting and oversight.
- Effective governance structures and institutions to oversee and implement policies, ensuring accountability and transparency.
- Regular updates on progress, challenges, and adjustments to build public trust and maintain momentum.

Education

AI-Powered Tool Launched to Enhance Student Learning and Support Teachers

Khan Academy Pakistan (KAP) has launched an AI-powered tool, Khanmigo, to revolutionize education in the country. The tool acts as a personalized tutor, helping students grasp complex concepts at their own pace while supporting teachers in improving educational outcomes. KAP is an offshoot of the globally renowned Khan Academy, founded by Salman Amin Khan, with the mission of providing free, world-class education for all.



Analysis

AI tools like Khanmigo have transformative potential, enabling personalized learning and addressing diverse educational challenges. Beyond education, AI enhances productivity, decision-making, and innovation in sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and transportation. The launch of such tools signifies a step toward modernizing education in Pakistan, aligning with the demands of a digital society.

Way Forward

- Invest in digital infrastructure to support the integration of AI across industries and educational institutions.
- Encourage AI adoption in critical sectors like agriculture, finance, and public services.
- Develop reskilling programs to prepare the workforce for AI-driven jobs.
- Establish clear policies and ethical guidelines for AI deployment to ensure its positive societal impact.

Environment

2024: A Year of Devastating Climate Disasters



The year 2024 witnessed catastrophic climate disasters across the globe, driven by record-breaking temperatures and escalating climate change. Extreme heatwaves claimed thousands of lives, including during Saudi Arabia's Hajj pilgrimage, while floods displaced millions in Pakistan, Kenya, and Spain. Cyclones, droughts, and wildfires left trails of destruction, with major hurricanes battering the U.S. and Southeast Asia, and fires ravaging the Amazon rainforest.

The global economic toll exceeded \$310 billion, with vulnerable populations suffering the most—facing displacement, food insecurity, and deepening poverty. Experts highlight global warming as a key driver of these intensifying disasters, calling for immediate and coordinated climate action.

Analysis

The climate disasters of 2024 underscore the critical need to combat global warming and build resilience to its impacts. Pakistan, already one of the most climate-vulnerable nations, suffered severely from extreme heat and devastating floods, exposing gaps in urban infrastructure and rural livelihood resilience. These disasters are part of a larger global pattern of rising temperatures, shifting rainfall, and escalating extreme weather events. The economic consequences, particularly for agriculture-dependent regions, have exacerbated food insecurity and poverty, leaving communities more vulnerable to future crises. Addressing these challenges requires urgent policy responses, both nationally and through strengthened international cooperation.

Way Forward

- Invest in **climate-resilient infrastructure** for cities, focusing on flood defenses, cooling systems, and sustainable urban planning.
- Promote **climate-smart agriculture** by introducing drought-resistant crops, efficient irrigation techniques, and sustainable farming practices.
- Advocate for increased **climate financing** from developed nations to support vulnerable countries like Pakistan in mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- Push for **technology transfers** to enhance local capabilities in renewable energy, water management, and disaster resilience.

Livestock

Punjab CM announces Rs2bn livestock card scheme for rural women

Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif opened the doors of dignified employment for rural women of Punjab on Sunday by introducing a record livestock package of Rs2 billion to ensure economic independence of 11,000 destitute rural women of 12 districts of south Punjab. Under this initiative, cows and buffaloes will be provided free of cost to the rural women so that they could raise them and earn decent income for their families.



Analysis

Livestock is of immense importance for its contribution to Agriculture sector and GDP. The sub-sector of livestock solely accounts for 60% of Agriculture and 14.6% of GDP (Economic Survey, 2023-24). Therefore, livestock sector face enormous challenges that hinder substantial growth of the sector. Among various challenges faced by the sector few are e.g. sub-standard quality feed, disease outbreak, inadequate infrastructure, lack of financing and inadequate research and innovation facilities. Allocation of sizeable budget for rural women would have catalytic effect for the growth of area as well as sector.

Way forward

- To eradicate the biggest challenge of FMD faced by livestock sector, the budget may be utilised for vaccination of the cattle.
- Pakistan imports FMD vaccine much less than the need for the sector, there is need to develop advanced laboratories where FMD vaccine may be formulated, and experiments could be performed.
- Specified budget allocation for the sector can be helpful in building necessary infrastructure and R&D facilities in areas where livestock farming is being held majorly.

POLICY NUGGETS

Incident/News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
UN rapporteurs alarmed by attacks on girls' schools in Pakistan.	TTP and likes emulate Afghan Taliban to discourage women education in KP and erstwhile tribal areas. Girls have not been deterred.	Government must rebuild the schools destroyed by the terrorists. Make stringent laws to penalize the elements trying to undermine education for girls. <i>"The terrorists thought that they would change my aims and stop my ambitions, but nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear, and hopelessness died. Strength, power, and courage were born."</i> — Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Laureate	Highest
PM for swift installation of smart meters to curb overbilling	Improved transparency in billing; reduced electricity theft and losses.	Expedite procurement and installation of smart meters nationwide, starting with high-loss areas; strengthen oversight of DISCOS to ensure merit-based hiring and consistent policy enforcement. <i>"You can't manage what you can't measure."</i> — Peter Drucker, The Practice of Management.	Highest
2024 worst year in history for children in conflict, UNICEF says	Record displacement and violations against children; disrupted education, health, and security.	Develop a comprehensive national policy to integrate displaced and conflict-affected children into safe schools; strengthen partnerships with international organizations to ensure access to vaccines and nutrition; advocate for peacebuilding and inclusive growth. <i>"Children do not start wars, but they are the ones who suffer most from them."</i> — UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore	Highest
Maryam unveils initiatives for farmers	Enhanced farmer empowerment; increased agricultural productivity and innovation.	Expand the Kisan Card program to include digital literacy for farmers; fast-track solarization of tubewells to reduce energy costs and improve sustainability. <i>"Agriculture is the backbone of our economy."</i> — John Salazar, former U.S. Congressman	High
Govt eyes additional Rs70bn in taxes from	Increased revenue through optimized taxation of banking sector profits.	Ensure transparency and public trust in the taxation process to prevent undue burden on banks and encourage investment in government securities; use additional revenue to bolster social	Highest

banks under new formula Earlier Govt eyes 13.5pc tax-to-GDP ratio in three years		programs like health and education. <i>"In this world, nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."</i> — Benjamin Franklin.	
Aurangzeb sees IMF bailout continuing despite 'slippages'	Risk of dependency on external financing with limited domestic reforms.	Accelerate implementation of structural reforms to broaden the tax base; diversify revenue streams to reduce reliance on loans; create contingency plans to mitigate fiscal risks from future IMF conditions. <i>"No nation can prosper long that fails to put its own economic house in order."</i> — Margaret Thatcher	Highest
French envoy emphasizes commitment to better trade with Pakistan	Potential boost in trade and cultural exchange.	Facilitate French investments in high-potential sectors like dairy, IT, and renewable energy; strengthen bilateral academic exchange programs for skill development; simplify trade regulations to enhance business collaboration. <i>"Commerce changes the fate and genius of nations."</i> — Thomas Gray	High
PIA to add eight more aircraft by next year, says CEO	Expansion of fleet may enhance international operations, but operational inefficiencies persist.	Invest in staff training and service quality improvement to regain customer trust; develop partnerships with international carriers for broader market access; establish strict monitoring systems and ensure transparency and accountability in operations. <i>"Great people to fly with."</i> — PIA	High
TA unveils new regime to 'localise' VPN services	Risk of privacy violations and reduced trust in local VPN services.	Ensure data privacy and transparency through independent audits of VPN providers; establish clear legal safeguards against misuse of surveillance powers; engage stakeholders, especially freelancers and IT professionals, in designing user-friendly regulations. <i>"The advance of technology is based on making it fit in so that you don't really even notice it, so it's part of everyday life."</i> — Bill Gates, The Road Ahead	High
Fiery plane crash kills 179 in South Korea	Two successive plane crashes, one of the Azerbaijani plane last week, has created scare and concerns about flight security.	Pakistan must investigate the causes of these incidents and refresh its SOPs accordingly to ensure greater security. <i>"Aviation safety is not just about preventing accidents; it's about fostering a culture where every possible risk is anticipated and addressed before it becomes a tragedy."</i> — Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, aviation safety expert.	High

2024 was deadliest year for Pakistan's Security Forces	685 security personnel laid down their lives amid 444 terror attacks across the country	Fool proof security system should be devised to combat terrorism in the country. Protection of citizens and security personnel should be prioritized. Provincial and Federal Govt can take collective measures to ensure peace in the country.	Highest
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