



WEEKLY

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OVERVIEW

The Policy Pulse under review covers recent developments in Pakistan, highlighting legislative advancements, social inclusivity measures, and critical reforms in sectors like energy, digital technology, and human trafficking. Pakistan's commitment to international partnerships was reinforced with initiatives like the \$20 billion World Bank framework and steps to modernize infrastructure and governance. Similarly, the introduction of the Digital Nation Pakistan Bill and amendments to cybercrime laws underscore Pakistan's digital transformation goals, albeit raising concerns about potential misuse of legislative powers.

The Policy Pulse also reflects on Pakistan's growing inclusivity, with Punjab's Minority Card initiative marking a transformational step toward social justice and harmony. The oil sector's digital transformation with the *Raahguzar* app significantly improves efficiency and accountability. However, the rise in human trafficking remains a stark reminder of the socio-economic challenges the country faces, demanding immediate and effective action.

The policy nuggets illuminate progress and challenges, underlining the need for strategic vision and inclusive governance. Pakistan's aspirations for economic growth, social equity, and digital advancement can only be realized through an unwavering commitment to transparency, justice, and innovation. These measures, coupled with a focus on human dignity and regional cooperation, will lay the groundwork for a resilient and forward-looking Pakistan.

As Pakistan moves forward, careful management of these developments is essential. Strengthening institutional capacity, ensuring transparency, and fostering community engagement are critical for sustainable progress. The country's legislative strides must balance innovation with individual freedoms, while partnerships like the World Bank's Country Partnership Framework should translate into tangible benefits for the people.

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Changes to cybercrime law unveiled amid protest

The National Assembly approved a contentious amendment to the country's cybercrime laws, despite a walkout by PTI lawmakers and journalists during the session. The "Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill, 2025" was introduced in the National Assembly by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar and subsequently sent to the standing committee for review. In National Assembly, journalists walked out of the press gallery in protest after Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain presented the bill, leading to its passage.



Section 26(A) of the amended Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) introduces strict penalties for those spreading "fake news" online. It states: "Anyone who intentionally disseminates, publicly exhibits, or transmits information via an information system, knowing or having reason to believe it is false or fake, and likely to incite fear, panic, disorder, or unrest among the public or in society, shall face imprisonment of up to three years, a fine of up to Rs. 2 million, or both." This provision marks a dramatic move to curb misinformation and its potential to destabilize societal order.

National Assembly took a groundbreaking step by passing "The Digital Nation Pakistan Bill, 2024," presented by Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima. This visionary legislation seeks to establish a unified digital identity for citizens, consolidating social, economic, and governance data into a central framework. Its ultimate goal is nothing short of revolutionizing Pakistan, paving the way for a fully digital society, a thriving digital economy, and innovative digital governance, transforming the nation into a true digital powerhouse.

Analysis

The passage of the new bills, including the Digital Nation Pakistan Bill, 2024, and amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), signals a transformative phase for Pakistan's digital economy and governance. While the Digital Nation Bill promises to centralize data and create a robust digital ecosystem fostering economic growth and innovation, the PECA amendments introduce stringent measures against online misinformation, aiming to safeguard societal order. However, these legislative steps raise critical concerns about potential misuse, censorship, and the stifling of free expression, posing challenges to balancing digital advancement with individual rights.

Way Forward

- Launch awareness campaigns to educate citizens regarding concepts of misinformation, disinformation and fake news.
- Invest in reliable and secure digital infrastructure to support the transformation envisioned under the Digital Nation Pakistan Bill.
- Introduce comprehensive data privacy legislation to protect citizens' personal information.

Social Affairs

Maryam launches the first-ever minority card in Punjab



Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz inaugurated Pakistan's first-ever Chief Minister Minority Card in a ceremony at Aiwan-e-Iqbal Complex. The initiative, designed to assist minority communities, will initially support 50,000 families, with plans to expand its reach to 75,000 families. CM stated that the initiative is not a political gesture but a pledge to uphold the equal rights of all Pakistanis she stated, calling for the discontinuation of the term "minority" when referring to non-Muslims.

Maryam Nawaz guaranteed unwavering commitment to the safety and dignity of minority communities, highlighting the government's transformative efforts to uplift their living standards. These initiatives include increased grants for religious festivals, upgraded infrastructure, and the establishment of a dedicated Christian cemetery. Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs Ramesh Singh Arora lauded these measures, expressing heartfelt gratitude for the government's steadfast dedication to fostering inclusivity and unity.

Analysis

The protection of minority communities is vital for fostering social harmony, ensuring justice, and upholding human rights. CM Punjab's initiative reflects a commitment to equality and inclusivity, which strengthens national unity and enhances global reputation of Pakistan as a state. This will result in social cohesion, reducing inequalities, and minimizing unrest by creating a stable environment conducive to economic growth. Furthermore, inclusive policies encourage minority participation in education, business, and governance, unlocking their potential to contribute to national progress.

Way Forward

- Enforce and expand laws that safeguard minority rights, ensuring strict penalties for discrimination, hate speech, and violence against minority groups.
- Allocate funds for more initiatives such as scholarships, housing, healthcare, and infrastructure development in minority-majority areas.
- Promote cultural events that facilitate the exchange of traditions between different cultures and minorities, fostering greater harmony and unity as a nation.

Industry

Pakistan modernizes oil sector with digital supply chain

In a striking leap towards modernization, Pakistan's oil industry is embracing innovative digital technologies to revolutionize its operations, slashing costs, boosting efficiency, and elevating customer satisfaction to new heights. In a significant step toward modernizing the oil sector, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), in collaboration with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the Oil

Companies Advisory Council (OCAC) introduced a mobile app called 'Raahguzar'. This innovative app, leveraging Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, aims to help users locate legitimate petrol stations while identifying and exposing illegal ones across the country. Viewed as a vital initiative, 'Raahguzar' is part of a broader strategy to digitize Pakistan's oil supply chain.



The app marks the first phase of a comprehensive track-and-trace system that aims to enhance accountability, prevent financial leakages, and combat illegal activities within the oil industry. Illegal petrol stations, colloquially known as “dabba stations,” have long been a drain on the economy, costing billions in lost revenue and undermining legitimate businesses. The app provides a platform for consumers, law enforcement agencies, and local governments to verify the legality of petrol stations. It also enables users to report issues such as overpricing, substandard fuel quality, or unauthorized outlets with just a few simple taps.

Analysis

The digitization of Pakistan's oil sector, through innovations like the *Raahguzar* app, is set to bring transformative changes. It will enhance transparency and accountability by providing real-time verification of petrol stations, curbing illegal operations and boosting tax revenue. The use of GIS technology will streamline monitoring, reduce inefficiencies, and ensure compliance with regulations. This shift towards a digital framework will also improve consumer confidence by making it easier to report issues like overpricing or substandard fuel. Overall, these advancements will modernize the sector, drive economic growth, and strengthen regulatory oversight.

Way Forward

- Expand digital infrastructure to support broader implementation of GIS technology across the entire oil supply chain, ensuring a seamless and efficient experience for both consumers and regulators.
- Ensure that the mobile app and other digital tools adhere to the highest standards of data security and privacy, protecting both consumer information and business operations from potential breaches.
- Ensure digital tools like Raahguzar are fully integrated into existing regulations, and that penalties for illegal petrol stations are strictly enforced.

Foreign Direct Investment

PM hails \$20bn World Bank partnership to boost growth

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has welcomed the World Bank's \$20 billion commitment under its first-ever 10-year Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Pakistan. The Prime Minister emphasized that the CPF prioritizes six key areas: child nutrition, quality education, clean energy, climate resilience, inclusive development, and private investment. He highlighted that these priorities are closely aligned with Pakistan's national goals, reflecting the country's dedication to sustainable development.

CPF demonstrates the World Bank's trust in Pakistan's economic strength and future prospects. The Prime Minister expressed optimism about deepening collaboration to align efforts and create enduring opportunities for the nation's people.

Analysis

CPF viewed as a high-budget project funded by the World Bank will not only improve economic situation of the country, yet it will also enhance Pakistan's financial reputation by signaling global confidence in its economic stability and governance. Such projects often attract further investment, improve infrastructure, and support sustainable development, showcasing the country's commitment to growth and reform. For a nation like Pakistan, such partnerships demonstrate accountability, bolster international credibility, and position it as a reliable player in global economic forums.

Way Forward

- To maximize benefits of financial support project given by World Bank, Government should build capacity of government institutions to efficiently plan, execute, and monitor projects.
- Strengthen anti-corruption measures to build investor confidence and sustain country partnership programme.
- Foster continuous engagement with World Bank representatives to identify funding opportunities and address any possible potential concerns.



National Security

PM forms task force to rein in human traffickers

A special task force, be led by the Prime Minister, has been established to combat human trafficking networks in Pakistan. This decision follows a tragic incident in which several Pakistani citizens lost their lives in an illegal migrant boat disaster. The Prime Minister addressed all relevant government agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to redouble their efforts in tracking down these traffickers, responsible for human trafficking crime.



Expressing his deep concerns over the tragic loss of Pakistani citizens' lives in boat disaster, he remarked that the heartbreaking incident had shaken the entire nation to its core. It was reported to PM that six human trafficking groups had been identified, 12 FIRs filed, 25 individuals identified, three key suspects arrested, and the names of 16 individuals had been added to passport control list.

Analysis

Hundreds of Pakistanis have perished in human trafficking during the last few years. The smugglers in connivance with corrupt officials play with the lives of innocent citizens. Despite many efforts these

resilient mafias are operating actively. FIA and other agencies will have to go after them in a deliberate, planned and sustained manner. PM's special task force is a ray of hope in this regard.

Way Forward

- Introduce stricter laws with severe penalties for human trafficking and ensure their robust implementation.
- Enhance capabilities of FIA to enable its teams to track down and neutralize the human smugglers.
- Deploy advanced surveillance technologies and increase security personnel at borders to prevent illegal migration and trafficking activities.
- Collaborate with other countries, international organizations, and NGOs to share intelligence, strengthen cross-border monitoring, and repatriate victims safely.

International Affairs

Trump floats plan to 'clean out' Gaza



US President Donald Trump stated that he was considering a plan to "just clean out" Gaza by calling on Jordan and Egypt to take an unspecified number of people living in the devastated enclave. He said he wants Egypt and Jordan to take Palestinians from the territory in a bid to create Middle East peace.

The vast majority of Gaza's 2.4 million people have been displaced, often multiple times. US President clued moving of Gaza's inhabitants could be "temporarily or could be long term". Hamas pledges to resist Trump's proposal to relocate Gaza civilians.

Analysis

U.S. President's statement about "cleaning out Gaza" reflects highly contentious stance that risks escalating an already volatile situation. Such rhetoric oversimplifies the complex realities of the region, potentially overlooking the humanitarian crises faced by millions of civilians. While the statement may aim to address security concerns, it risks being interpreted as support for heavy-handed actions that could lead to widespread displacement, loss of life, and further destabilization. A balanced approach that emphasizes dialogue, respect for international law, and the protection of innocent lives is crucial to be implemented in order to ensure long-term peace and stability in the region.

Way Forward

- Pakistan may call on other Muslim countries, through platforms like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), it can urge the need for dialogue and negotiations to prevent further violence.
- A united front in defense of Palestinian rights should be reflected. A cohesive stance can strengthen their influence in global decision-making processes.
- Prioritize immediate relief efforts by providing financial aid, medical supplies, food, and shelter to affected civilians in Gaza.

POLICY NUGGETS

Incident/News	Impact	Recommendation	Priority
CM's warning to field cops	Accountability drive targets police inefficiency and public complaints.	Enforce transparent performance evaluation mechanisms for police officers; establish a robust complaints redressal system accessible to the public; promote community policing initiatives to rebuild trust and improve law enforcement outcomes. <i>"Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are."— Benjamin Franklin</i>	Highest
Chahan Dam water supply project gains momentum	Improved water access for Rawalpindi residents.	Accelerate project implementation by enhancing resource allocation and monitoring; incorporate community engagement to address local water needs; adopt sustainable practices to ensure long-term water availability. <i>"Water is the driving force of all nature." — Leonardo da Vinci</i>	Highest
WB wants Pakistan to do more to put house in order	Economic reforms required for sustainable growth.	Prioritize structural reforms focusing on governance and transparency; enhance tax collection mechanisms to reduce fiscal deficits; engage stakeholders for effective policy implementation. <i>"Good governance is the art of putting wise thought into prudent action in a way that advances the well-being of those governed." — Diane Kalen-Sukra, Save Your City*</i>	Highest
Massive hike in rates: Salaried class pays three times more tax than exporters in the first half of the current fiscal	Tax inequity burdens salaried individuals.	Revise tax policy to ensure equitable contributions across sectors; introduce relief measures for salaried individuals to reduce economic pressure; increase transparency in tax collection. <i>"In the matter of taxation, every privilege is an injustice." — Voltaire</i>	Highest
Indian-made mobile phones, devices threat to Pak cybersecurity	Increased cybersecurity vulnerabilities.	Strengthen import regulations on foreign devices; develop indigenous cybersecurity infrastructure; raise public awareness about secure digital practices.	High
Criticism by the press is key to better	Acknowledgment of media's role in accountability.	Strengthen protections for press freedom; encourage dialogue between media and policymakers to improve governance; ensure access to accurate information for public empowerment.	High

governance, says PM		<i>"Freedom of the press is not just important to democracy, it is democracy." — Walter Cronkite</i>	
47 Pakistani varsities in 2025 world rankings	Improved higher education standards.	Expand funding for research and faculty development; incentivize international collaborations to raise academic standards; promote equitable access to quality education. <i>"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." — Nelson Mandela</i>	High



Editorial Team

Dr. Naveed Elahi

Faryal Maaz

Jahanzeb Waheed

Naeema Naeem

National School of Public Policy
87- Shahrah e Quaid e Azam, Lahore.

Email: policypulse.nipp@nspp.gov.pk