



WEEKLY

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OVERVIEW

This week, Pakistan’s policy landscape reflects a confluence of challenges and opportunities, underscoring governance, security, economic stability, and international cooperation. The tragic loss of 16 Pakistani lives in a Libya boat accident serves as a grim reminder of the perils of illegal migration, necessitating stricter anti-trafficking measures and international coordination. Meanwhile, the country’s persistent struggle with polio, as evidenced by the 74th case of 2024, highlights the urgency of addressing vaccine hesitancy and strengthening immunization efforts to eradicate the disease once and for all.

On the diplomatic front, Turkish President Erdogan’s visit to Pakistan reaffirmed the strategic depth of Pak-Turkiye relations, with both nations pledging to enhance trade, defense collaboration, and investment. Similarly, Russia’s offer to share AI technology with Pakistan presents a vital opportunity to modernize defense and maritime security, reinforcing technological self-sufficiency. However, on the global stage, U.S. President Donald Trump’s freeze on overseas aid threatens critical health initiatives, including HIV treatment programs in Africa, raising concerns about the broader implications of shifting geopolitical policies.

A policy study on governance and economic performance sheds light on the intricate link between effective public administration and economic prosperity. Drawing lessons from regional counterparts, Pakistan must focus on institutional reforms, digital governance, and public-private partnerships to bridge governance gaps. As the country charts its course forward, long-term strategies must align with sustainable economic policies, technological advancement, and strengthened diplomatic ties.

Policy Nuggets for this week stressed the need for economic diplomacy, trade and growth, strengthened crime control and internal security, and improved food security to sustain long-term economic and governance stability. In a rapidly evolving geopolitical and economic climate, Pakistan’s resilience will hinge on proactive governance, investment in human capital, and the strategic leveraging of global partnerships.

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Law & Order

16 dead, 10 missing after latest Libya boat tragedy

The Foreign Office has confirmed that 16 Pakistani nationals lost their lives in a boat accident off the coast of Libya, with at least 10 others still missing. This confirmation followed a visit by a team from the Pakistani embassy in Tripoli to the city of Zawiya, where they coordinated with local officials and hospital authorities to verify the details. Reports indicate that a vessel, carrying around 70 passengers, mostly Pakistanis, capsized off the Libyan coast.



It is stated that a total of 63 Pakistanis were on board the vessel when it capsized. So far, the bodies of 16 individuals have been recovered, with their Pakistani nationality confirmed through their passports, the Foreign Office stated. According to the Foreign Office, 37 survivors have been identified, including one who remains hospitalized and 33 others in police custody. Three survivors are in Tripoli, where they are receiving care from the Pakistani embassy.

Analysis

In recent months, this incident marks the third tragedy with migrants trying to reach other countries illegally across waters. In January, approximately 13 Pakistani nationals lost their lives when a boat carrying 80 passengers capsized near the Moroccan port of Dakhla. In December, 47 Pakistanis were among those rescued after a boat incident south of Crete, Greece, while five Pakistani nationals tragically perished in the accident. In 2023, over 350 Pakistanis died when an overcrowded boat carrying hundreds of migrants sank while traveling from Tobruk, Libya, to Greece.

Illegal voyages, often undertaken in overcrowded and unsafe vessels, pose severe risks, including shipwrecks, drowning, and exploitation by human traffickers. These perilous journeys frequently result in loss of life, prolonged detention, and immense suffering for migrants seeking better opportunities.

Way Forward

- Enhance law enforcement efforts to dismantle human trafficking networks and impose stricter penalties on those involved in illegal migration.
- Work with destination and transit countries to enhance coordination on migration policies, rescue operations, and repatriation processes.
- Provide assistance to survivors and families of victims through financial aid, counseling, and reintegration programs.

Health

74th polio case of 2024 surfaces

The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health (NIH) has confirmed 74th case of wild poliovirus type 1 of 2024. Health authorities have reported the latest polio case in Shikarpur, Sindh, with paralysis symptoms emerging on December 15, 2024. This is the second

confirmed case from Shikarpur in the past year. Pakistan recorded 74 polio cases in 2024, with the highest number reported in Balochistan (27), followed by Sindh (23), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (22), and one case each in Punjab and Islamabad. In 2025, two polio cases have been confirmed originating from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Badin.



Analysis

The Pakistan Polio Programme conducts multiple mass vaccination drives each year, bringing the vaccine directly to children's doorsteps. Despite ongoing vaccination campaigns, polio cases continue to be reported. Globally, polio has been nearly eradicated, with only a few countries, including Pakistan and Afghanistan, still reporting cases. Most nations have successfully eliminated the virus through rigorous immunization and surveillance programs.

In contrast, Pakistan continues to face challenges due to vaccine hesitancy, logistical issues, and resistance in certain communities, leading to persistent outbreaks despite extensive vaccination efforts. Strengthening immunization coverage and addressing misinformation remain crucial for Pakistan to achieve polio eradication.

Way Forward

- Ensure vaccination drives in high-risk areas, with improved monitoring to track unvaccinated children.
- Launch targeted awareness campaigns using community influencers, religious leaders, and social media to counter myths and misconceptions about polio vaccines.
- Provide better security and incentives for vaccination teams, particularly in regions where they face threats and resistance.

International Relations

Turkish President Erdogan welcomed in Islamabad

President and Prime Minister Pakistan welcomed Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on his arrival. Turkish President was welcomed warmly with a guard of honor at the Prime Minister's House in Islamabad. Pakistan and Turkiye reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties during Turkish President Erdogan's visit to Islamabad. He was warmly received with a guard of honor at the Prime Minister's House. Both nations pledged to achieve a \$5 billion trade target and expand military and defense cooperation.



Erdogan highlighted growing trade and investment relations, encouraging Turkish investors to engage in flagship projects in Pakistan. The visit resulted in 24 mutual agreements, focusing on procurement, sales, joint manufacturing, and other potential areas of collaboration.

Analysis

Pakistan and Turkiye have consistently supported each other on key regional and international issues, including Kashmir and Northern Cyprus. Their cooperation spans defense, trade, and infrastructure, with increasing collaboration in joint military production and technological advancements. Economic ties have strengthened through agreements like the Trade in Goods Pact, aiming to boost bilateral trade. Despite challenges in fully realizing economic potential, political will remains strong, with leadership on both sides committed to enhancing strategic and trade partnership. Moving forward, expanding economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges will be crucial in further cementing this alliance.

Way Forward

- Extend trade in goods with Turkiye and explore new avenues in textiles, agriculture, and technology to boost bilateral trade beyond the \$5 billion target.
- Expand joint military production, technology transfer, and defense procurement agreements to strengthen security ties with Turkiye.
- Leverage Turkiye's expertise in construction and energy sectors to initiate large-scale joint projects, including renewable energy and smart infrastructure.

Russia ready to give AI technology to Pakistan



Russian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Alexei Sisoyev has said that Russia is closely monitoring all peacekeeping operations in Pakistan. Alexei highlighted the growing participation in peace exercises, emphasizing the universal nature of maritime security challenges. He stressed the importance of global collaboration through dialogue to address these threats effectively. When asked about AI cooperation, the Russian Navy commander affirmed Pakistan's potential to benefit from AI advancements.

He also expressed that AI is a global phenomenon, not confined to Russia and Ukraine, and expressed Russia's willingness to share expertise with Pakistan to enhance its capabilities in this field.

Analysis

AI technology has revolutionized maritime security by enhancing threat detection, surveillance, and response mechanisms. AI-driven systems, such as autonomous drones and smart surveillance networks, improve real-time monitoring of ocean territories, helping detect illegal activities. Pakistan can benefit from AI collaboration with nations like Russia to strengthen its maritime security, defense, and cybersecurity. Access to advanced AI-driven systems can enhance monitoring capabilities, while joint research and development can improve strategic decision-making and modernize key sectors like defense, trade, and intelligence.

Way Forward

- Establish formal agreements with technologically advanced country of Russia for AI knowledge transfer, research partnerships, and training programs.

- Develop indigenous AI capabilities in defense, cybersecurity, and maritime security to reduce reliance on foreign technology.
- Deploy AI-driven surveillance, predictive analytics, and autonomous systems for enhanced threat detection, border control, and crisis management.

International Affairs

Trump Aid freeze could cause millions of deaths: UN



President Donald Trump's decision to suspend US overseas funding could result in millions more deaths from AIDS, the head of the UN's programme for the illness warned. The United States is the leading global contributor of official development aid, primarily channeling funds through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Upon resuming office in January, Trump halted the majority of US foreign aid for three months, causing significant disruption for international humanitarian efforts.

Global health specialists have voiced deep concern over the unraveling of USAID, an organization responsible for distributing billions of dollars in foreign aid annually supporting more than 20 million HIV patients and 270,000 health workers, according to an analysis from the Foundation for AIDS Research. The United States passed statement that "life-saving treatments" would be exempt from the freeze, whereas front-line workers in Africa say facilities have already closed.

Analysis

President Donald Trump's suspension of U.S. overseas funding has sparked alarm among global health experts, as it threatens to undermine critical humanitarian efforts, particularly in the fight against AIDS. The U.S., through USAID, has historically played a vital role in providing life-saving treatments to over 20 million HIV patients worldwide. Despite assurances that essential treatments would be exempt from the freeze, reports from frontline workers indicate that healthcare facilities have already shut down, signaling severe disruptions. The move not only jeopardizes ongoing progress in global health but also raises ethical concerns over the potential loss of millions of lives due to funding instability.

Way Forward

- Apart from reliance on donor agencies, strategies to attract foreign FDI should be implemented.
- Promote entrepreneurship and small businesses to increase economic activity.
- Strengthen domestic healthcare systems to reduce dependence on foreign aid.
- Establish emergency funds or sovereign wealth funds for crisis management.

The Intertwined Fate of Governance and Economic Performance: A Comparative Analysis of Five Asian Economies- Lessons for Pakistan in the context of Oxford Public Administration Index (OPAI) 2024

Dr Muqem ul Islam, Chief Instructor NIPA, Peshawar,

The study examines the relationship between public administration effectiveness and economic performance in five Asian economies: Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Singapore. Using data from the Oxford Public Administration Index (OPAI) 2024 and key economic indicators (GDP per capita (PPP) and total exports), the study explores how governance impacts economic outcomes.

The methodology includes a descriptive analysis of governance and economic performance, followed by a correlation analysis using Pearson coefficients. The findings indicate a strong positive correlation (0.96) between the OPAI score and GDP per capita, highlighting that countries with more effective governance tend to have higher economic output. Singapore leads in both governance and economic performance, while Pakistan lags behind. A positive correlation (0.72) is also found between OPAI scores and total exports, suggesting that effective governance fosters trade and investment. Additionally, GDP per capita and total exports show a strong correlation (0.74), reinforcing the link between economic prosperity and export performance.

The study concludes that effective public administration is crucial for economic growth and trade expansion. Countries with stronger governance structures tend to have higher GDP per capita and better export performance, reinforcing the link between governance and economic success. The findings highlight the importance of strategic leadership, policy coherence, and efficient public service delivery in fostering economic stability. Moving forward, governments, particularly in lower-performing countries like Pakistan, should prioritize reforms in governance by enhancing institutional capacity, improving transparency, and ensuring efficient service delivery.

While correlation does not equal causation, these results provide compelling evidence for the crucial role of governance in driving economic outcomes. Countries seeking to improve their economic performance should prioritize strengthening their public administration systems. This includes focusing on the key areas captured by the OPAI, such as strategic leadership, policy coherence, efficient service delivery, and effective human resource management.

Strengthening regulatory frameworks, investing in digital governance, and fostering public-private partnerships can also contribute to better economic outcomes. Additionally, further research is needed to explore causal mechanisms and develop targeted policy interventions that bridge governance gaps and promote sustainable economic growth.

POLICY NUGGETS

| Incident/News | Impact | Recommendation | Priority |
|---|---|--|----------|
| Aurangzeb participates in key debate at Saudi Arabia's Al-Ula moot | Strengthening Pakistan's economic diplomacy and regional economic ties through high-level engagement. | Expand diplomatic outreach to attract investment and strategic partnerships; leverage regional platforms to boost trade and energy cooperation. <i>"Diplomacy is fundamentally working together with people." – John Roos</i> | High |
| To tackle serious crimes: Punjab govt to establish new crime control department | A specialized department aims to enhance crime prevention and law enforcement effectiveness in Punjab. | Implement intelligence-led policing and integrate technology in crime control; ensure inter-agency coordination for tackling organized crime. <i>"The fight against crime is not just about arrests; it's about prevention, intelligence, and collaboration." – Former FBI Director Robert Mueller.</i> | Highest |
| Ambitious project launched to turn Cholistan green | Aims to combat desertification and improve food security through afforestation and sustainable agriculture. | Expand afforestation projects using climate-resilient plant species; introduce smart irrigation and renewable energy solutions to sustain green cover. <i>"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now." – Chinese Proverb</i> | High |
| PSO, Azerbaijan's SOCAR to set up joint company in Singapore | Strengthens Pakistan's footprint in global energy trade, diversifying revenue streams. | Ensure transparency and efficiency in the joint venture to optimize financial gains; expand energy cooperation with Azerbaijan to secure long-term supply contracts. <i>"Energy and persistence conquer all things." – Benjamin Franklin</i> | High |

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| <p>PM lauds International Finance Corporation's role in fostering investment;</p> <p>Earlier</p> <p>All eyes on IFC chief visit amid \$20bn boost for Pakistan's private sector</p> | <p>Strengthened partnership with the IFC could unlock \$20 billion in private sector investments, boosting economic growth and job creation.</p> | <p>Leverage IFC funding to enhance SME financing, renewable energy, and digital economy projects; ensure transparent regulatory frameworks to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and maximize economic impact; streamline public-private collaboration to facilitate sustainable industrial expansion.</p> <p><i>"Investment in infrastructure is a long-term requirement for growth and a long-term factor that will make growth sustainable."</i> – Chanda Kochhar</p> | <p>Highest</p> |
| <p>PSO, Azerbaijan's SOCAR to set up joint company in Singapore</p> | <p>Strengthens Pakistan's footprint in global energy trade, diversifying revenue streams.</p> | <p>Ensure transparency and efficiency in the joint venture to optimize financial gains; expand energy cooperation with Azerbaijan to secure long-term supply contracts.</p> <p><i>"Energy and persistence conquer all things."</i> – Benjamin Franklin</p> | <p>High</p> |
| <p>Terrorists blow up house of PAF official in Lakki</p> | <p>Rising security threats demand reinforced counterterrorism measures in volatile regions.</p> | <p>Strengthen intelligence operations to preempt terrorist activities; enhance security infrastructure and local engagement to prevent extremist infiltration.</p> <p><i>"The best way to stop terrorism is through intelligence, prevention, and unity."</i> — Former CIA Director George Tenet.</p> | <p>Highest</p> |
| <p>Power bills set to drop as capacity charges, fuel costs, interest rates fall</p> | <p>Lower power tariffs could provide economic relief and boost industrial competitiveness.</p> | <p>Maintain energy sector reforms to sustain lower costs; promote renewable energy investment to reduce reliance on costly imports.</p> <p><i>"Energy efficiency is not just a cost-saving measure; it's a competitive advantage."</i> – Ban Ki-moon</p> | <p>High</p> |
| <p>Pakistan aims for 30pc electric vehicle adoption by 2030: Shehbaz</p> | <p>A transition to EVs could reduce fuel imports, cut emissions, and modernize the transport sector.</p> | <p>Provide policy incentives for EV production and charging infrastructure; strengthen research and innovation in battery technology and local manufacturing.</p> <p><i>"The future of mobility is electric, and the nations that invest in EV technology today will lead the world tomorrow."</i> — John Kerry</p> | <p>High</p> |
| <p>KP plans fresh op after Kurram convoy attacks</p> | <p>Another bid to curb the new wave of violence in Kurram</p> | <p>Deliberate, planned and sustained efforts should be made for lasting peace in the area; eliminate militant safe havens.</p> <p><i>"Sustainable peace is not achieved through force alone; it requires strategic intelligence, community trust, and economic development."</i> — General (Retd.) David Petraeus, Former Commander of U.S. Central Command</p> | <p>Highest</p> |



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