



WEEKLY

# POLICY PULSE

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### OVERVIEW

This week's *Policy Pulse* offers a timely snapshot of Pakistan's pressing policy challenges and solutions, blending on-the-ground initiatives with strategic foresight. Against a backdrop of environmental crises, regional diplomacy, and governance reforms, the document underscores the interconnectedness of local action and global imperatives. From mangrove conservation in Sindh to high-stakes UNSC debates on Gaza, it captures Pakistan's multifaceted efforts to balance domestic priorities with international commitments, all the while navigating geopolitical complexities.

Key insights reveal a dual focus: *local empowerment* and *systemic innovation*. For instance, mangrove restoration efforts highlight the role of community-led conservation, while digital overhauls of the FBR aim to curb tax evasion through technology-driven transparency. On the diplomatic front, Pakistan leverages its UNSC presidency to advocate for Palestinian rights and reform global financial architectures. Security measures for Chinese nationals and counterterrorism operations in Balochistan reflect proactive risk management, albeit amid persistent challenges. The analysis balances optimism with caution—celebrating vaccination drives and cross-border collaborations while flagging unresolved disputes like PAC's criticism over soaring electricity bills, cotton data discrepancies, which undermine policy credibility.

These insights resonate with real-world shifts. The Sindh government's partnership with civil society on mangrove preservation mirrors global trends in ecological governance, while the FBR's digital pivot aligns with international best practices for tax compliance. Recent airdrops to Gaza, though insufficient, demonstrate Pakistan's humanitarian diplomacy in action. Meanwhile, proposals like Track-II dialogues with India or GIS-based vaccination tracking offer scalable models for regional stability and public health.

Key Policy Nuggets focus on regional diplomacy (launching crisis mediation teams and a "Peace Dividend Index"), counterterrorism (AI-driven content monitoring with tech firms), and governance reforms (civil service merit audits and SOE privatization dashboards). These measures combine strategic foresight with tech-enabled solutions to address Pakistan's complex challenges. This *Policy Pulse* bridges analysis and action, offering a roadmap for equitable, evidence-based policymaking.

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## Govt urged to ensure protection of mangrove forests



The Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) and the Mangrove Biodiversity Park organized a mangrove plantation campaign in the coastal areas in which young people from Rehri Goth and Ibrahim Hyderi actively participated. The importance of the preservation of mangrove forests were also highlighted during the campaign.

### Analysis

These plantation efforts organized with the collaboration of the provincial government and civil society show the growing awareness to preserve and restore the environment in Sindh.

### Way Forward

- Secure full legal protection for all Indus Delta mangrove areas and extend provincial oversight to eliminate loopholes.
- Empower and involve coastal communities, especially fishers and women, in community-based mangrove management to align livelihoods with conservation goals.
- Strengthen enforcement against industrial pollution and illegal land reclamation through stricter penalties and interagency coordination.

## Ishaq Dar meets UN secretary general



Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Foreign Minister (FM) Ishaq Dar met with UN Secretary-General António Guterres in New York during the sidelines of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. He urged for reforms to the international financial architecture, implementation of development financing commitments and strengthening the collaboration between the UN and OIC. He also discussed bilateral and regional concerns such as Kashmir, the Indus Waters Treaty violations, and Palestine.

### Analysis

DPM/FM's engagement reflects Pakistan's elevated diplomatic posture as UNSC President in July 2025. The presidency helps Pakistan shape global governance discourse and mobilize support according to its priorities and on longstanding disputes and climate finance challenges.

### Way Forward

- Leverage Pakistan's current UNSC presidency to push for actionable reforms in international financial architecture and SDG financing.
- Use multilateral forums to internationalize issues like Kashmir and Indus Waters Treaty concerns and link them to UN Charter dispute-resolution principles.
- Strengthen partnerships with the OIC and UN on climate adaptation and sustainable development to ensure Pakistani priorities are integrated into global agendas.

## Province-wide drive launched to immunise 1.5 million unvaccinated children in Sindh



Sindh's Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) has launched the third round of "Big Catch-up" campaign, targeting around 1.5 million children aged two to five who have missed routine vaccinations. The drive which was earlier postponed due to heavy monsoon rains, will run for 24 days during which thousands of vaccinators, assistants, and social mobilisers will be deployed across 1,128 union councils.

### Analysis

This large-scale intervention addresses critical immunization gaps aggravated by the COVID disruption. However, it's worth noticing that polio tally has risen to 17 with three new cases in KP and Sindh. There is a need to ensure effective outreach, overcoming hesitancy, and robust field coordination to reach the remaining missed children.

### Way Forward

- Integrate vaccination with child health camps to promote holistic child welfare in underserved areas.
- Digitize tracking of unvaccinated children using GIS-based dashboards to ensure follow-ups.
- Deploy female health workers in conservative or low-access areas to improve access and trust among mothers and caregivers.

## Four more terrorists killed in Kalat, says ISPR



Security forces in Balochistan's Kalat district eliminated four more terrorists affiliated with the Indian-backed Fitna al-Hindustan group during a follow-up sanitisation operation carried out on July 21. During the operation, a significant cache of weapons, ammunition and explosives was seized from the site. President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday commended the security forces for eliminating terrorists in Kalat.

### Analysis

This raid reveals that there is a continued militant presence which would require persistent sanitisation efforts to eliminate terrorists. To ensure that there is stability in the region, continued surveillance and intelligence would be required by the state.

### Way Forward

- Enhance surveillance and intelligence coordination to pre-emptively locate dormant terrorist cells.
- Accelerate community engagement and local policing initiatives to reduce militant recruitment in Balochistan's rural areas.
- Deploy regular sanitisation sweeps and weapons recovery operations in hotspot regions to sustain pressure on remaining terrorist networks.

## Premier reviews steps to secure Chinese nationals



Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif chaired a high-level meeting regarding security arrangements of Chinese nationals across the country, including in Islamabad. The special measures taken include the extension of Safe City Projects, escort services for travel, and airport facilitation to Chinese nationals. The PM also visited the National Police Academy and Islamabad Safe City Capital Command and Control Centre.

### Analysis

The enhancement of security being provided to Chinese citizens reflects Pakistan's aim to reassure China that Chinese nationals would be protected and to ensure that the bilateral relations remain strong.

### Way Forward

- Conduct monthly security SOP audits and joint coordination meetings with Chinese embassy officials to address gaps and reinforce trust in operational procedures.
- Integrate CPEC-related security into NACTA's counterterrorism framework.
- Launch community awareness and liaison programs in high-risk areas.

## Gaza is now a 'graveyard for innocents', Dar tells UNSC



Presiding over a debate at the UN Security Council on "Situation in Middle East including the Palestinian Question", the DPM/FM Ishaq Dar highlighted that a "genocide" is being carried out in Gaza and criticized UN as it "seems unable or unwilling to stop" it. He also proposed a six-point plan which included immediate ceasefire, aid access, and two-state solution. During the debate, Palestinian envoy highlighted deaths due to starvation, Israeli representative claimed that it is "doing the work of the United Nations" by eliminating terror networks and announced that UN officials will be denied visa renewals. Whilst US representative urged Hamas to accept ceasefire deal.

### Analysis

DPM/FM framed the Palestinian crisis as a litmus test for the UN's credibility and legal integrity and urged for urgent action to be taken via a six-point plan including a ceasefire, humanitarian access, reconstruction, and a two-state solution based on international law.

### Way Forward

- Pakistan should mobilize OIC and UN member states to endorse and support Pakistan's six-point ceasefire and reconstruction framework for Gaza.
- Pakistan should champion full implementation of existing UN resolutions with binding accountability measures for violations by Israel.
- Pakistan should lead a coordinated diplomatic push to elevate Palestine to full UN membership.

## PAC slams power division over soaring costs, loadshedding



The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) conducted a detailed review of audit objections related to the Ministry of Energy, with a focus on independent power producers (IPPs), rising electricity costs, incomplete development schemes and excessive load-shedding. The PAC criticized the billing structure, and the financial burden placed on consumers for using slightly more than 200 units of electricity. The PAC was informed that the government is working to shift to a direct subsidy model via BISP data.

### Analysis

PAC highlights systemic inefficiencies: capacity payments to IPPs have ballooned from Rs141 billion in 2015 to Rs1.4 trillion in 2024 without corresponding benefits, while billing practices and lack of transparency exacerbate consumer hardship and fiscal strain.

### Way Forward

- Mandate full public disclosure and renegotiation or audit of IPP contracts to reduce exorbitant capacity charges.
- Aggressively tackle line losses and electricity theft by deploying targeted transformer-level monitoring and enforce recovery from top defaulters.
- Reform DISCOs governance and privatize high-loss ones.

## Still ready for 'meaningful dialogue' with India: PM



During a meeting with British High Commissioner (BHC) Jane Marriott, the PM appreciated Britain's role in deescalating tensions between Pakistan and India during their armed stand-off in May 2025. He welcomed UK decision to resume PIA flights and appreciated the positive trajectory of the relations. BHC briefed about her extensive consultations in London on enhancing Pakistan-UK bilateral ties. The regional situation of South Asia and Middle East was also discussed wherein the PM reiterated that Islamabad was ready for meaningful dialogue with India.

### Analysis

This diplomatic overture follows sustained escalation since the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack and reflects Pakistan's intent to preserve peace, though government officials stress dialogue must be reciprocal and not one-sided.

### Way Forward

- Propose neutral third-party mediation through trusted international partners to ensure both sides agree on agenda and venue.
- Formalize a structured "composite dialogue" process, with defined tracks, timelines, and periodic confidence-building steps.
- Launch a bilateral Track-II initiative involving retired diplomats, academics, and civil society to build unofficial trust.

## Regional, global politics on the agenda for army chief in Beijing



According to ISPR, the army chief was in China on an official visit where he met Vice President Han Zheng and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, as well as key generals from the Peoples Liberation Army. Both countries agreed to deepen their partnership and military engagements. The Chinese side expressed its support for Pakistan's "resolute efforts" to combat terrorism whilst the Pakistani side stated that it will take all necessary measures to safeguard Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan.

### Analysis

The official visit to China comes weeks after the Field Marshal's invitation to the White House where he was praised by the US President Trump. But the visit to China underscores that Pakistan is keen on deepening its military ties with China. At the same time, the Chinese side is also interested in strengthening partnership across areas of mutual interests.

### Way Forward

- Strengthen CPEC security infrastructure by deploying dedicated Pakistani-Chinese joint security teams to protect high-risk zones.
- Elevate transnational threat coordination by institutionalizing a joint data-sharing command for real-time threat response.
- Diversify diplomatic partnerships beyond the China axis by launching multilateral confidence-building dialogues with India, Central Asia, and the US.

## PM approves digital overhaul of FBR to curb tax evasion



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved the development of a digital system in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) which would allow it to detect tax evasion across key sectors including tobacco and sugar. The PM has directed FBR to ensure that no member of business community is subjected to harassment.

### Analysis

The digital overhauling of FBR would allow Pakistan to improve its tax-to-GDP ratio and would potentially provide relief to manufacturing sector and salaried individuals which are currently bearing the brunt of taxes. However, strict implementation and enforcement of the digital system would be critical to ensure that potential benefits are reaped.

### Way Forward

- Start using digital billing and tracking first in big industries like cement and steel to stop fake invoices.
- Make all government systems coordinate with each other to make it easier to catch tax evasion.
- Help honest taxpayers by creating simple apps and issuing clear and concise instructions in Urdu.

## Dispute Erupts Over Punjab Cotton Output Data



A heated dispute has emerged between Punjab's Crop Reporting Centre (CRC) and the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) over sharply differing cotton production figures. The PCGA alleges that CRC inflates data, claiming the existence of two conflicting national datasets has damaged Pakistan's credibility in international cotton forums. The CRC defends its methodology, stating it is based on standardised field practices and attributes the variance to different data collection points: CRC at the picking stage, and PCGA at the ginning stage.

### Analysis

Conflicting figures undermine the credibility of national cotton statistics, weakening both policymaking and market confidence.

### Way Forward

- Deploy joint verification teams with third-party auditors, provincial experts, and PCGA members to reconcile district-level data.
- Implement a unified, real-time crop reporting system to ensure transparency and restore planning credibility.
- Link production incentives and support prices to independently verified yields for accurate, reliable policymaking.

## Aid finally arrives as starvation haunts Gaza



Jordan and the United Arab Emirates have airdropped 25 tonnes of aid into the Gaza strip as UN's World Food Programme warns that a third of the population of Gaza has not eaten for days, whilst 470,000 people are "enduring famine-like conditions". Similarly, the Egyptian Red Crescent has also announced that it was sending more than 100 trucks carrying over 1,200 metric tonnes of food to southern Gaza. Meanwhile, Israel has announced that it would 'pause' its military operations in parts of Gaza for 10 hours a day, and allow new aid corridors.

### Analysis

Whilst Jordan has clarified that airdrops are not a substitute for delivery by land, the small-scale aid so far received is woefully inadequate given Gaza's catastrophic collapse of food systems, infrastructure, and aid networks which have been deliberately destroyed by Israel.

### Way Forward

- Pakistan should push at the UN for restoration of UNRWA-led and impartial aid corridors into Gaza instead of GHF-run system.
- Pakistan should use its diplomatic influence to demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire.
- Pakistan should also air drop more aid to end starvation in Gaza.

# Policy Nuggets

## 1 Pakistan pitches itself as key player in regional peace dynamics

### Impact

Elevates diplomatic leverage in conflict-prone neighborhood.

### Recommendation

Launch a Track 1.5 dialogue forum with Afghanistan/Iran; develop rapid-response mediation teams for regional crises; and develop "Peace Dividend Index" to quantify stability gains.

*"Diplomacy is the art of letting others have your way." – Dag Hammarskjöld*

## 4 Pakistan, Bangladesh agree on visa-free entry for officials

### Impact

Accelerates bureaucratic and trade coordination.

### Recommendation

Extend agreement to business/commerce chambers; launch digital travel authorization portal with biometric pre-clearance; and institute joint anti-smuggling task forces at borders.

*"Open borders unlock shared prosperity." – Muhammad Yunus*

## 7 PM inaugurates 'Police Station on Wheels'

### Impact

Enhances community policing and emergency response.

### Recommendation

Equip units with telehealth and disaster relief kits; deploy in climate-vulnerable urban peripheries; and integrate with Safe City AI surveillance networks.

*"Justice must be seen, felt, and mobile." – Malala Yousafzai*

## 2 Pakistan urges global tech firms to block accounts linked to banned outfits

### Impact

Disrupts terror financing and recruitment networks.

### Recommendation

Establish 24/7 cyber liaison unit with Meta/Google/X; mandate AI-driven content fingerprinting for banned groups; and offer "Digital Patriot" incentives for citizen reporting.

*"In the digital age, vigilance is the first line of defense." – Elon Musk*

## 5 PM orders removing bottlenecks in SOE privatization

### Impact

Boosts investor confidence and fiscal space.

### Recommendation

Create 90-day divestment roadmap for PIA/steel mills; establish SOE Transition Council with private sector reps; and launch public dashboard tracking asset sales.

*"What is not transparent cannot be accountable." – Jacinda Ardern*

## 8 Future PSL schedules must account for 'extreme heat'

### Impact

Protects athlete health and commercial viability.

### Recommendation

Install IoT-enabled hydration stations at venues; shift matches to twilight hours Apr–Jun; and develop heat-stress predictive models with PMD.

*"Adapting to nature isn't surrender—it's evolution." – Sadhguru*

## 3 PM tasks Ahsan Iqbal with civil service overhaul

### Impact

Addresses bureaucratic inefficiency and service delivery gaps.

### Recommendation

Introduce merit-based performance audits with 30% salary bonuses; deploy AI tools for file tracking and public grievance resolution; and rotate elite officers through provincial hardship postings.

*"Good governance never depends upon laws, but upon the personal qualities of those who govern." – Frank Herbert*

## 6 Matters settled with China on B2B basis: PM

### Impact

Deepens strategic autonomy in CPEC partnerships.

### Recommendation

Develop sector-specific industry clusters (e.g., EV batteries, agri-tech); institute quarterly BRI compliance audits; and train 500 SMEs annually in Chinese contract protocols.

*"True partnership means walking together, not leaning." – Confucius*

## 9 PM launches digital licensing for medical devices

### Impact

Streamlines healthcare innovation and safety compliance.

### Recommendation

Integrate blockchain for supply-chain traceability; fast-track approvals for locally manufactured devices; and create regulatory sandbox for telemedicine startups.

*"Technology that heals is humanity's highest calling." – Bill Gates*



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