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OVERVIEW

This week's *Policy Pulse* captures a critical juncture in Pakistan's policy landscape, marked by intersecting challenges such as climate-induced floods, security threats, healthcare gaps and diplomatic engagements. The document underscores the government's efforts to balance immediate crisis response with long-term strategic initiatives, emphasizing collaboration, innovation, and reform. It serves as a timely reminder of the complex, often urgent, decisions facing public sector leaders today.

Key insights reveal a multi-faceted approach to governance. The declaration of a federal climate and agriculture emergency signals heightened recognition of systemic risks, while provincial initiatives, such as Punjab's drone-based flood rescue operations and Sindh's AI-driven teacher training, demonstrate localized innovation. Internationally, partnerships with the US on critical minerals and with China on flight routes reflect a strategic pivot toward economic diversification and global integration. Moreover, Pakistan is leveraging its diplomatic position as it joins the emergency Arab-Islamic summit in Doha to deliberate a draft resolution condemning Israel's attack on Qatar and broader threats in Palestine. However, persistent issues like medicine price deregulation, militant activity in Dir, and crop devastation in Narowal highlight enduring vulnerabilities in regulatory enforcement, security, and rural resilience.

Recent developments highlight the need for proactive and inclusive public policies, as seen in areas like disaster response, economic deals, and healthcare reforms.

The Policy Nuggets offer guidance on intensifying flood relief through AI-enhanced monitoring and inter-agency coordination; expanding on digital skills training to boost youth employability; strengthening agricultural resilience with insurance schemes and emergency support; and promoting interfaith harmony through inclusive messaging. In summary, this *Policy Pulse* edition reinforces that effective governance requires both innovation and accountability, turning crises into opportunities for transformative change.

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Plantation drive under PM's initiative launched



A plantation drive under the PM's 'Aik Beti, Aik Shajar' initiative was launched on Trail 7 of Margalla Hills National Park, where 100 indigenous trees were planted with participation from government bodies, NGOs, academia, and development organisations.

Analysis

The campaign reflects strong public-private collaboration for habitat restoration, but consistent follow-up and survival monitoring of planted trees will be key to achieving lasting ecological impact.

Way Forward

- Develop a digital monitoring system (GIS-based) to track tree survival rates and replant where mortality is high.
- Collaborate with environmental researchers to study the ecological impact of these drives over time.
- Publish yearly reports on survival rates, coverage area, and biodiversity improvements for transparency.

Pakistan, US ink critical minerals investment deal



Pakistan and the US signed two landmark MoUs to develop and process critical minerals, establish value-addition facilities, and enhance logistics, with an initial \$500 million investment aimed at boosting mining, infrastructure, and technology transfer.

Analysis

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Way Forward

- Launch training programs to build skilled labor capacity for mining, refining, and logistics operations.
- Establish joint committees to oversee project progress and ensure transparency and continuity beyond initial phases.
- Simplify mining laws, licensing, and taxation policies to create a business-friendly environment.

New direct flight routes planned between Pakistan, China



Pakistan and China have agreed to launch new direct flight routes and increase existing ones under the China-Pakistan Action Plan (2025-2029) to boost business, education, tourism, and cultural exchanges.

Analysis

Enhanced air connectivity will strengthen people-to-people ties and support CPEC-related cooperation, but success will require competitive pricing, reliable schedules, and efficient visa facilitation.

Way Forward

- Prioritize launching direct flights between major business hubs, educational cities, and tourist destinations in both countries.
- Engage both state-owned and private airlines to widen coverage and enhance competition.
- Upgrade airport facilities and streamline customs/immigration to handle increased passenger flow smoothly.

Senate committee shows annoyance over deregulation of medicine prices



The Senate Standing Committee on NHS expressed concern over deregulated medicine prices, rising C-sections, counterfeit drugs, and dengue cases, while urging postponement of the MDCAT exam due to floods.

Analysis

The discussion highlights urgent gaps in drug price control, healthcare regulation, and disaster-sensitive education policies, calling for immediate government action and stronger oversight mechanisms.

Way Forward

- Conduct a comprehensive review and introduce a balanced pricing mechanism to keep medicines affordable while ensuring industry sustainability.
- Strengthen drug regulatory authority operations, increase market inspections, and impose strict penalties on counterfeit manufacturers.
- Collect data on C-section rates across hospitals and implement guidelines to curb unnecessary procedures.

Terrorism has no place in religion or nationalism: CM Bugti



Balochistan CM Sarfraz Bugti condemned terrorism in the name of religion or nationalism, reaffirmed unity against militants, and announced development projects including roads, a Danish School, and sports facilities for Qila Saifullah.

Analysis

His stance reinforces the province's zero-tolerance policy on terrorism while pairing it with socio-economic initiatives, aiming to address both security challenges and local development needs.

Way Forward

- Enforce laws against violent protests while protecting citizens' right to peaceful demonstration.
- Ensure timely completion of road, education, and sports infrastructure to address socio-economic grievances.
- Enhance intelligence-sharing, border security, and law enforcement coordination to curb extremist activities.

19 killed as Gen Z anti-corruption protesters oust Nepal PM



Nepal's PM K.P. Sharma Oli resigned after Gen Z-led anti-corruption protests turned violent, leaving 19 dead and forcing the government to lift a social media ban amid escalating unrest.

Analysis

The protests highlight deep frustration over corruption, unemployment, and political stagnation, signaling urgent need for reforms, youth engagement, and credible governance to restore stability.

Way Forward

- Seek assistance from trusted international partners for democratic strengthening, economic recovery, and institutional reforms.
- Keep citizens informed about government decisions, reforms, and timelines to reduce mistrust and misinformation.
- Ensure the selection of a new prime minister follows the constitution and reflects the will of the people to prevent further instability.

Punjab gets drones to airlift those trapped in floodwaters



Punjab has acquired two drones capable of airlifting people or relief supplies up to 100-200 kg, to rescue those trapped in floodwaters and deliver aid; more drones are planned to expand coverage.

Analysis

This represents an innovative shift toward aerial rescue in areas where boats and ground access are impeded, increasing response speed; but challenges remain in scale, logistical coordination, drone maintenance, and ensuring drones can safely land or hover in flood-affected, unpredictable terrain.

Way Forward

- Train local disaster response teams in drone-operation and maintenance, along with safety protocols, so aerial rescue becomes sustainable and rapid.
- Pre-map flood-prone zones with GPS coordinates and landing/refueling/relay stations so drones can be deployed efficiently even in remote or rural Punjab.
- Develop regulations and guidelines for drone usage in disasters and establish emergency funding to scale up the fleet rapidly when needed.

Federal cabinet declares climate, agriculture emergency



Pakistan's federal cabinet has formally declared a climate and agriculture emergency following devastating floods across several provinces, and has set up a special committee to develop mitigation strategies and assess agricultural damage.

Analysis

This move signals recognition at the highest level of the intertwined risks of climate change, infrastructure degradation (like encroached waterways), and food insecurity. However, declaring an emergency is only a first step; effectiveness will depend on implementation, inter-provincial coordination, and timely resource allocation.

Way Forward

- Launch a nationwide afforestation programme particularly in river basins and upland catchments to restore forests and reduce flood flow.
- Establish a farmer compensation and crop insurance scheme to support agriculture recovery and guard against future climate shocks.
- Invest urgently in waterway de-silting, drainage infrastructure and river-channel rehabilitation with strong enforcement against encroachments.

Seven FC men martyred, one missing in Dir



In Maidan, Lower Dir, a search-and-strike operation against militants resulted in the deaths of at least seven Frontier Corps personnel, 13 wounded, and one soldier missing; security forces say they inflicted heavy losses on militants. The wounded were shifted to Lal Qila Hospital, and later referred to District Headquarters Hospital Timergara. President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif praised the security forces for the successful operations.

Analysis

This clash underscores how militant elements are still active in remote mountainous areas despite previous operations, revealing persistent gaps in border control, intelligence gathering, and securing local populations.

Way Forward

- Enhance border surveillance in Maidan and along the Pak-Afghan frontier via drones, ground sensors and joint patrols to prevent militant transit.
- Boost local community engagement and intelligence networks which may be paired with incentive-based protection programs for informants.
- Accelerate development of infrastructure to ensure rapid response capacity of security and rescue services in mountain terrain.

Floods destroy rice, other crops on 140,000 acres in Narowal



Floods in Narowal have destroyed rice and other crops on about 140,250 acres, causing losses exceeding Rs10billion. Moreover, large tracts of land—especially in Shakargarh, Narowal, and Zafarwal tehsils—are severely submerged. Narowal Deputy Commissioner Syed Hassan Raza said that teams from the revenue and agriculture departments were assessing the losses suffered by farmers. He further informed that financial assistance would be provided to the farmers as per the government's policy.

Analysis

This damage exacerbates local food insecurity and the debt burden on farmers who took out loans for seeds, fertilisers, and machinery. It also undermines future crop seasons, as many farmers will lack resources for wheat cultivation without government aid.

Way Forward

- Immediately disburse compensated payments and low-interest or grant-based credit to affected farmers to ensure they can plant upcoming wheat crops.
- Implement flood-resilient agricultural infrastructure in river basin areas like Narowal to reduce vulnerability in future monsoons.
- Expand crop insurance schemes tailored for districts prone to river flooding, to protect farmers' investments and stabilise rural incomes.

World powers issue rare censure as Pakistan, Israel clash at Security Council



During an emergency UN Security Council session, Western powers (US, UK, France) joined all 15 members in condemning Israel's airstrike on a residential compound in Doha, which was hosting negotiating teams. Israel, on the other hand, drew a parallel to the US operation that killed Osama bin Laden in Pakistan as it defended its attack. Pakistan, in response, fiercely denounced both the strike and attempts to justify it. The Qatari PM condemned the attack and stated that Israel is being "led by bloodthirsty extremists".

Analysis

The rare unified censure reflects growing international criticism of Israel revealing that even US which has historically shielded Israel from statements of condemnation by not endorsing them, opted not to veto the joint statement. Moreover, Pakistan is leveraging diplomatic platforms to highlight double standards and appeal for consistent international norms.

Way Forward

- Use this diplomatic momentum to push for stronger UN mechanisms ensuring the protection of mediators and diplomatic zones in conflict settings.
- Build alliances with other states to campaign for binding norms on cross-border strikes targeting negotiation venues.
- Increase diplomatic engagement with Gulf states and international bodies to support accountability for violations of sovereignty.

PM Shehbaz leaves for Doha as Arab-Islamic summit to mull response to Israel's attack in Qatar



PM Shehbaz Sharif is attending an emergency Arab-Islamic summit in Doha, convened under the OIC by 57 Muslim states, to deliberate a draft resolution condemning Israel's attack on Qatar and broader threats in Palestine. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Iraqi PM Mohammed Shia al-Sudani and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan are also expected to participate. However, it remains to be seen whether Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will attend or not. Earlier, Deputy PM/Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar during the ministerial meeting called for urgent steps to be taken against Israel to "safeguard the global order".

Analysis

Pakistan is reaffirming its diplomatic alignment with the Muslim world by co-sponsoring the resolution, signaling both solidarity and regional ambition. The summit also tests the coherence and effectiveness of the OIC as states consider stronger collective responses.

Way Forward

- Pakistan should take lead in calling for peace talks between Israel and Palestine.
- Pakistan should strengthen ties with other Muslim countries to work together on the Gaza issue.
- Show public support for Palestine through aid and awareness campaigns at home.

Policy Nuggets

1 PM orders NDMA to intensify flood relief

Impact

Strengthens disaster preparedness; ensures timely evacuation; and improves coordination in flood-hit areas.

Recommendation

Enhance early warning systems; deploy AI-based river monitoring; establish evacuation shelters; and ensure seamless coordination between NDMA and provincial authorities.

“Investing in early warning systems and disaster preparedness is not a cost, but a life-saving investment that protects communities and economies from avoidable losses.” – Mami Mizutori, UNDRR

4 Sherry Rehman warns of collapsing agricultural system

Impact

Destroys major crops; displaces millions; triggers food inflation; and exposes small farmers to climate-induced destitution.

Recommendation

Launch a national crop insurance policy covering smallholders; provide emergency seeds, fertilizers, and cash assistance; and deploy satellite technology for damage mapping and smarter disaster response.

“Without food, man can live at most but a few weeks; without it, all other components of social organization are meaningless.” – Norman Borlaug

7 Pakistan, UAE vow stronger anti-narcotics cooperation

Impact

Enhances regional coordination to combat drug trafficking; strengthens joint operations and information sharing; safeguards future generations from narcotics threats.

Recommendation

Establish permanent joint task force; expand intelligence-sharing mechanisms; and intensify crackdowns on synthetic drugs through regional and international partnerships.

“The war against drugs is a war for our children’s future.” – Kofi Annan

2 Pakistan-Kazakhstan sign Action Plan of Cooperation

Impact

Institutionalises regular consultations; strengthens political, economic, defence, and cultural cooperation for peace and prosperity.

Recommendation

Expand trade corridors through Central Asia; enhance joint ventures in IT, agriculture, and energy; and promote cultural exchanges and tourism to build long-term trust.

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” – Henry Ford

5 KP Assembly reforms Rules of Business after 37 years

Impact

Strengthens parliamentary democracy; promotes transparency by opening proceedings to citizens; enhances inclusivity through recognition of five assembly languages.

Recommendation

Institutionalise citizen participation in lawmaking; ensure digital access to assembly proceedings; and conduct regular reviews of rules to adapt to evolving democratic needs.

“The strength of a democracy is measured by the extent to which it allows the voice of its people to be heard.” – Franklin D. Roosevelt

8 Sindh launches AI-based teacher training programme

Impact

Modernises teaching practices; equips 3,500 educators with AI tools; and enhances classroom engagement in remote districts.

Recommendation

Scale up AI training province-wide; integrate Khanmigo with national curriculum; and provide continuous professional development to sustain innovation in education.

“The future belongs to those who prepare for it today.” – Malcolm X

3 WHO warns of post-flood disease outbreak

Impact

Escalates humanitarian crisis; increases mortality risks from epidemics beyond direct flood casualties.

Recommendation

Deploy mobile health clinics and disease surveillance units; restore damaged health facilities; and ensure clean water, sanitation, and vaccination drives in relief camps.

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.” – Martin Luther King Jr.

6 Govt forms National Peace Message Committee

Impact

Builds unified national narrative against terrorism, extremism, and sectarianism; promotes interfaith harmony by including minority representation.

Recommendation

Develop TORs ensuring inclusivity; integrate peace messaging into education and media; and counter extremist propaganda with digital literacy and community engagement.

“Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.” – Albert Einstein

9 KP launches Digital Skills Initiative

Impact

Enhances youth employability; strengthens digital economy; and boosts participation in the global freelance market.

Recommendation

Expand training hubs across districts; integrate AI-driven career counseling; and foster public-private partnerships to align skills with industry demand.

“Digital skills are the currency of the future economy. By equipping youth with the right training, we not only improve employability but also enable countries like Pakistan to compete in the global digital marketplace.” – Houlin Zhao, former Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)



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