



Weekly



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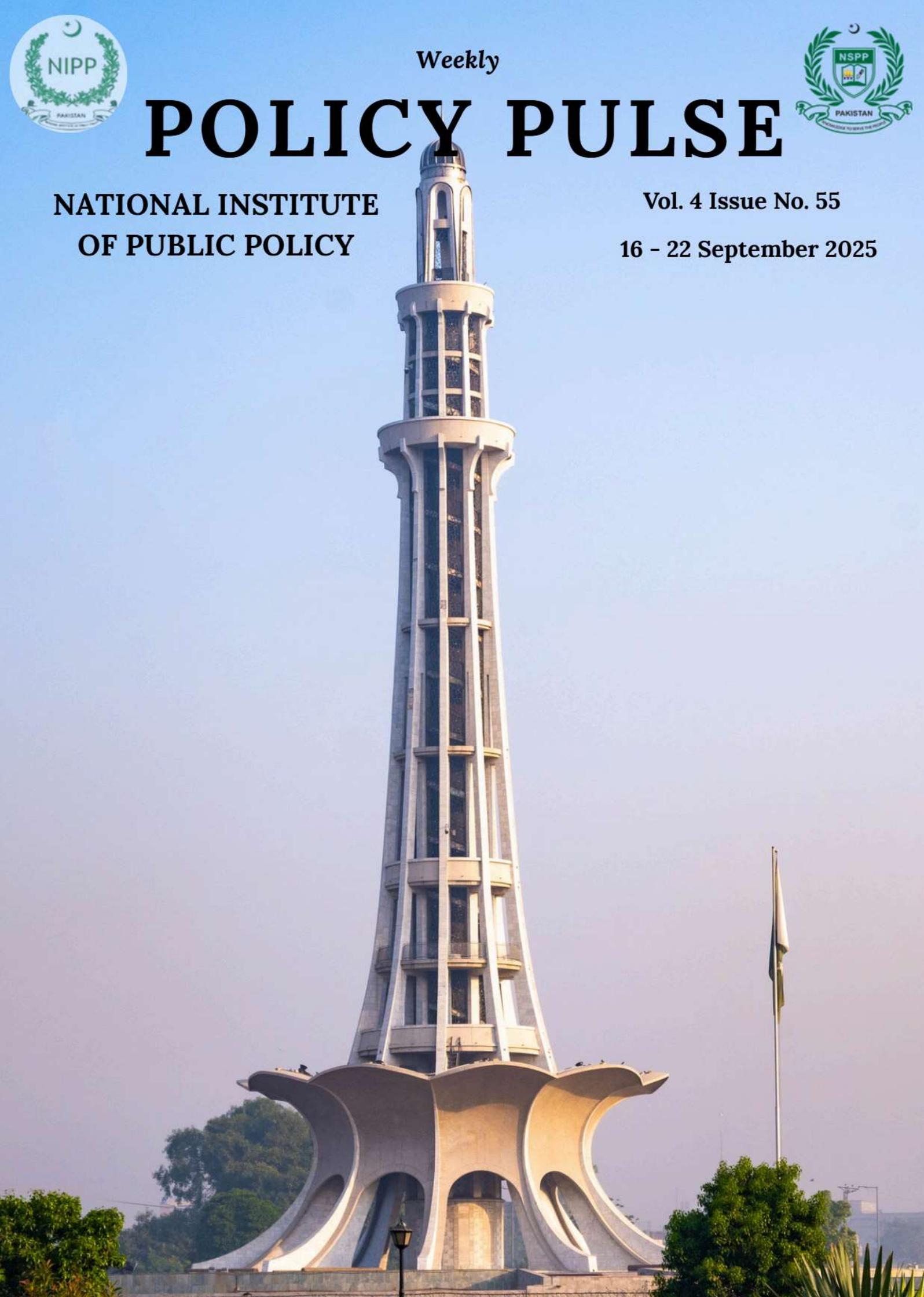


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Policy Nuggets



OVERVIEW

This week's Policy Pulse presents a comprehensive outlook on Pakistan's pressing governance, security, and diplomatic challenges, while highlighting practical reforms and policy directions. From climate resilience to counter narcotics initiatives and strategic foreign policy developments, the issue captures the interlinkages of domestic imperatives with shifting regional and global dynamics.

At the national level, climate action emerges as a central theme. Sindh and the federal government's agreement on a 300-day Climate Action Plan underscores growing urgency to modernize flood forecasting, reinforce embankments, and rehabilitate critical waterways. Simultaneously, the Prime Minister's directive for a full flood-damage assessment signals a pivot toward disaster preparedness and rehabilitation, with calls for climate resilient agriculture and infrastructure. These measures combine recovery with systemic innovation.

On the governance front, Pakistan's engagement with the IAEA strengthens its image as a responsible nuclear state, with nuclear energy positioned as a key tool for clean power and climate mitigation. Domestically, the approval of RLNG based gas connections and Islamabad–Rawalpindi's planned high-speed train service indicate shifting priorities toward energy security and sustainable urban mobility, albeit with affordability and implementation challenges. However, the terrorist attack in Balochistan and AC Ziarat reportedly being found killed after being in captivity, underscores challenges to security.

In social and institutional spheres, parliamentary committees' assertiveness against hate speech, beggary, and campus drug trafficking reflect a stronger drive for accountability. Similarly, Punjab's roadmap against organized beggary highlight innovation in social policy and transparency.

On the security and diplomatic front, Pakistan's landmark mutual defence pact with Saudi Arabia marks a strategic shift, binding Islamabad into the Gulf's evolving security architecture while complicating its foreign policy calculus. Parallely, Israel's escalating assault on Gaza and Pakistan's robust UN diplomacy reaffirm Islamabad's advocacy for humanitarian protection and multilateral accountability.

Finally, the Policy Nuggets spotlight key interventions: Bajaur's clearance of militants ensuring safe returns, ADB's \$80.75m flood recovery funding, Sindh's wheat crisis warning, and HPV vaccination coverage in Sindh. Each nugget blends immediate impact with forward looking recommendations—ranging from agro-processing incentives to digital transparency reforms—emphasizing evidence-based policymaking. These concise insights illustrate how localized actions and strategic foresight can together shape Pakistan's resilience and reform trajectory.



Pakistan's multi-faceted approach to governance and reform, with a strong focus on climate resilience, security challenges, and strategic foreign policy shifts all reflect an evolving policy landscape shaped by both domestic needs and global dynamics.

GOVERNANCE

Sindh, Centre agree to formulate climate plan before next monsoon



Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah and Federal Climate Change Minister Dr Musadik Malik agreed to formulate a 300-day Climate Action Plan before next monsoon, focusing on modernising forecasts, restoring waterways, and enhancing Sukkur Barrage's capacity.

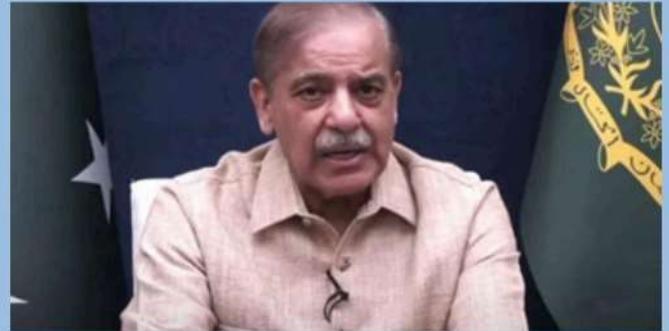
Analysis:

Murad Ali Shah's push for embankment reinforcement and Dr Malik's assurance of federal and global support mark a crucial step toward climate resilience, though timely execution and coordination remain key challenges.

Way Forward:

- Deploy AI-based weather forecasting and ensure early warnings reach communities through SMS, radio, and local networks.
- Engage all four provinces for input and align efforts for a unified national climate response.
- Conduct urgent engineering assessments, reopen closed gates, and restore capacity to handle peak flows.

PM orders assessment of rain, flood damages



PM Shehbaz directed a full assessment of flood damages to plan rehabilitation, launched Mashreq Digital Bank to promote a cashless economy, and will visit Saudi Arabia, UK, and US for major diplomatic meetings.

Analysis:

The steps show a focus on disaster recovery, digital transformation, and international engagement to boost Pakistan's stability and global presence.

Way Forward:

- Prioritize immediate restoration of communication infrastructure, protection of crops from post-flood diseases, and re-cultivation of suitable crops in affected areas.
- Invest in climate adaptation infrastructure such as flood barriers, early warning systems, and climate-resilient farming techniques.
- Speed up satellite-based and ground surveys of crop, livestock, and infrastructure losses, ensuring transparent data collection for an effective rehabilitation plan.

GOVERNANCE

Pakistan assures IAEA of further strengthening partnership



Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) Chairman Dr Raja Ali Raza Anwar, at the 69th IAEA General Conference in Vienna, reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to peaceful nuclear technology, highlighting its role in clean energy, health, agriculture, water security, and climate change mitigation.

Analysis:

Pakistan's proactive stance strengthens its global image as a responsible nuclear state, but sustained investment, fair technology access, and timely completion of projects like C-5 will be key to meeting future energy and climate goals.

Way Forward:

- Fast-track completion of Chashma-5 (C-5) and plan additional nuclear power plants to reduce dependence on expensive fossil fuels and ensure affordable electricity for citizens.
- Actively seek international funding and technology transfer for nuclear and climate-related projects to reduce Pakistan's climate vulnerability.
- Offer more scholarships through PIEAS and partner universities to build Pakistan's next generation of nuclear scientists and engineers.

Govt orders new domestic gas connections only on RLNG



The Pakistani government has directed that all new domestic gas connections must be made using imported re-gasified liquefied natural gas (RLNG), following a decision by the federal cabinet to partially lift a ban on new connections. Existing indigenous-gas customers will continue receiving supply but will be subject to future tariff revisions, and all pending applications for connections using the old "system gas" are now void.

Analysis:

This policy shift indicates that Pakistan is prioritizing RLNG to meet demand, even though RLNG is significantly more expensive (about 65% higher cost than indigenous gas). Whilst it may help alleviate gas shortages and expand access, it risks increasing costs for both utilities and consumers.

Way Forward:

- The government should launch a targeted subsidy program to protect low-income households from the higher RLNG tariffs.
- Public awareness campaigns are needed to inform citizens about the switch to RLNG and promote energy conservation.
- Investments in domestic gas exploration and renewable energy should be accelerated to reduce long-term reliance on expensive imported fuels.

CDA, Pakistan Railways finalise draft MoU for Islamabad-Pindi train service



The CDA (Capital Development Authority) and Pakistan Railways have finalised a draft Memorandum of Understanding to operate a high-speed electric train service between Margalla Station (Islamabad) and Saddar Rawalpindi, along with feeder-bus integration. The service aims to improve connectivity, reduce traffic congestion in the twin cities, and is planned to launch by around March 23 next year.

Analysis:

The Islamabad-Rawalpindi train project signals a positive step toward sustainable urban mobility.

However, its success will hinge on effective integration with feeder transport, public affordability, and lessons learned from past failures.

Way Forward:

Ensure the feeder bus network is extensive, frequent, and affordable so that passengers can conveniently access train stations, boosting ridership.

Set fare levels strategically to balance cost recovery with affordability to encourage regular commuting rather than only premium users.

Conduct robust public awareness campaigns and commuter feedback mechanisms during a pilot phase to adapt operations to actual demand.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Senate panel vows to defend citizens' dignity against hate speech



The Senate Standing Committee vowed to defend citizens' dignity by recommending a social media ban on Rizwan Razi for hate speech, investigating QAU hostel drug trafficking, addressing governance failures in Balochistan, and warning CDA officials over absenteeism and property fraud.

Analysis:

The committee's strong stance reflects growing parliamentary assertiveness against hate speech, institutional misconduct, and governance lapses, signaling a push for accountability and stricter oversight across state institutions.

Way Forward:

- Develop ethical guidelines for media personnel previously penalized for misconduct to prevent misuse of public platforms.
- Ensure that all government transfers, especially in customs and other sensitive institutions, follow merit and remain subject to parliamentary oversight.
- Launch a joint investigation into illegal hostel occupants and drug trafficking, install surveillance systems, and strengthen campus security protocols.

Punjab plans to eliminate organised beggary



Punjab's anti-beggary sub-committee approved a detailed roadmap to eliminate organised vagrancy through legal reforms, divisional and district task forces, coordinated rescue-rehabilitation efforts, awareness campaigns, and strict enforcement measures.

Analysis:

The plan reflects a shift from ad hoc crackdowns to a structured, multi-stakeholder strategy, combining legal, social, and educational interventions to address the root causes of beggary and ensure sustainable reintegration.

Way Forward:

- Traffic police and law enforcement drives at markets, intersections, and public places should continue to discourage alms-giving and dismantle beggary networks.
- Require all stakeholders to submit monthly progress reports and conduct regular review meetings to track results and adjust strategies.
- Prepare standard procedures for rescuing beggars, providing shelter, healthcare, vocational training, and reintegration into society.

SECURITY AND LAW & ORDER

Riyadh-Islamabad defence becomes a shared concern



Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed a landmark 'Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement' under which any aggression against one will be considered as an attack on both. The pact not only strengthens Islamabad's strategic ties and enhances Saudi Arabia's security from threats from Israel, Iran and Houthis militias. It but also reflects emerging regional dynamics where collective security is becoming more central.

Analysis:

This agreement marks one of the most significant defence pacts Pakistan has made in decades, moving beyond informal cooperation toward legally binding mutual defence — a shift that binds Islamabad into the Gulf's evolving strategic security architecture. While it gives Pakistan leverage in terms of regional influence and potential economic benefits (especially from Saudi investment), it also carries risk of complicating its foreign policy and security calculus.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan should diversify its security partnerships (regionally and globally) so that it is not overly dependent on any single country.
- The government ought to align diplomatic messaging and public communication to manage domestic perceptions and international expectations of Pakistan's role under the new mutual defence framework.
- The agreement should be used to boost Saudi investments into Pakistan.

National Counter Narcotics Coordination Centre to be established: ANF



ANF, in collaboration with UNODC and INLP, has launched the National Counter Narcotics Coordination Centre (NCNC2) to unify inter-agency efforts, enhance data sharing, and strengthen Pakistan's intelligence-driven response against drug trafficking, alongside multiple successful drug seizures nationwide.

Analysis:

The initiative signals a strategic shift toward a coordinated, technology-backed national narcotics control framework, crucial for dismantling drug networks and protecting vulnerable communities, especially students.

Way Forward:

- Train law enforcement agencies on modern counter-narcotics techniques, cyber-surveillance, and forensic investigation tools.
- Launch special anti-drug awareness and enforcement campaigns targeting schools, colleges, and universities to protect students.
- Ensure the centre becomes fully functional with 24/7 monitoring, real-time intelligence sharing, and quick response mechanisms.

SECURITY AND LAW & ORDER

Six lives lost as bomb rips through taxi stand at Balochistan's Chaman border



A bomb exploded at a busy taxi stand near makeshift shops in Chaman, Balochistan, killing six people and injuring others. Police said initial investigations suggested that the explosives were planted outside the shops. Meanwhile, a convoy travelling from Gwadar to Turbat also came under attack in Kech district. Whilst there has been no official word from the local administration or Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) about the incident, the banned Baloch Liberation Army has claimed responsibility for the attack. Separately, ISPR stated that security forces killed four militants linked to the "Indian proxy" group Fitna al-Hindustan during an intelligence-based operation in Khuzdar.

Analysis:

This tragic attack underlines the persistent security vulnerabilities in border areas which remain susceptible to militant violence and bombings especially in public gathering spots. It also illustrates challenges in intelligence, surveillance, and preventive measures.

Way Forward:

- Increase deployment of surveillance and bomb-detection units around taxi stands and other public crowded spots in border towns.
- Strengthen intelligence gathering and community policing to spot planted devices before they can detonate.
- Improve emergency medical response infrastructure in border districts to reduce casualties in post-blast scenarios.

PM Shehbaz to attend meeting of 'select' Muslim leaders with US President Trump in New York: FO



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will attend a meeting of "select" Muslim leaders with U.S. President Donald Trump during the 80th UN General Assembly in New York. This could be the first instance of PM Shehbaz directly interacting with the US president since the latter assumed office in January. The PM would lead Pakistan's delegation to the "high-level segment" of the UNGA from 22 September 2025, where he'll discuss issues including Kashmir, Palestine, regional security, Islamophobia, climate change, and sustainable development.

Analysis:

This meeting represents Pakistan's attempt to amplify its voice on international crises—especially Kashmir and Gaza—through high visibility diplomacy, using multilateral platforms to push for global attention and action.

Way Forward:

- Use the meeting to advocate for international accountability mechanisms on Islamophobia and hate speech targeting Muslims.
- Leverage the platform to highlight Pakistan's climate vulnerability and seek global support for green financing and climate resilience.
- Initiate bilateral sideline meetings with key Muslim and Western leaders to strengthen strategic partnerships beyond the symbolic group setting.

Kidnapped Ziarat AC 'found dead in Harnai'



Muhammad Afzal Baqi, the Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Ziarat who had been kidnapped along with his son in August, has reportedly been found dead in Harnai. His son's fate remains officially unconfirmed.

Analysis:

This incident underscores serious security and intelligence gaps in Balochistan, especially in remote areas, as well as risks faced by public officials.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen rural and provincial security forces' capacity with better surveillance, rapid-response units, and coordination.
- Establish a robust legal/operational framework mandating quick and transparent investigations of kidnappings, with fixed timelines for recovering victims and public disclosure.
- Enhance communication infrastructure and intelligence sharing between local communities, law enforcement, and provincial governments.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

US faces strategic dilemma after Pak-Saudi defence pact



Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's new mutual defence pact deepens their military ties, surprising allies and critics, and raising questions about its regional and global implications.

Analysis:

The agreement boosts Pakistan's strategic leverage and signals shifting Gulf dynamics, leaving the US to navigate a more complex security landscape amid India's concerns and Israel's silence.

Way Forward:

- Avoid over-reliance on any single power bloc by balancing relations with the US, China, and other partners.
- Maintain strong diplomatic messaging that the pact is defensive, not offensive, to prevent escalation with India.
- Engage proactively with the US, China, Turkey, and Gulf states to reassure them of Pakistan's constructive role in regional stability.

70 killed as Israel unleashes ground assault on Gaza City



Israel's ground assault on Gaza City killed at least 70 people, triggering global condemnation, a UN genocide report against Israel, and calls from Pakistan and other nations to protect aid flotillas and demand an unconditional ceasefire.

Analysis:

The assault deepens Gaza's humanitarian catastrophe and heightens regional instability, while Pakistan pushes for Muslim unity, UN action, and stronger diplomatic pressure to halt Israel's aggression and protect Palestinian civilians.

Way forward:

- Work with international partners to ensure the safety of the Global Sumud Flotilla and highlight any attacks on it as violations of international law.
- Build stronger coalitions with Muslim-majority and like-minded countries (e.g., Türkiye, South Africa, Brazil) to collectively pressure Israel and its allies to stop the assault.
- Intensify efforts at the UN and OIC to secure an immediate ceasefire, demand accountability for war crimes, and push for implementation of the UN genocide report findings.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

US revokes waiver of curbs on India for Chabahar Port



The US has revoked India's sanctions waiver for Iran's Chabahar Port, jeopardizing New Delhi's plans to use it as a key trade route to Central Asia and potentially exposing operators to sanctions.

Analysis:

This move aligns with Washington's maximum-pressure policy on Iran, creating a strategic and economic setback for India while reshaping regional trade and power dynamics in favor of alternatives like Pakistan's Gwadar Port.

Way Forward:

- Position Gwadar Port as the most viable, sanctions-free trade route for Central Asia, offering faster connectivity through CPEC.
- Accelerate infrastructure development, road and rail connectivity, and security measures to make Gwadar fully operational and attractive for international investors.
- Use diplomatic channels to present Gwadar as a stabilizing economic hub that complements global trade interests, reducing resistance from Washington.

India to 'study implications' of Pak-Saudi defence pact



India has responded cautiously to the Pakistan-Saudi defence pact, saying it will study its security implications, while analysts note Riyadh is unlikely to jeopardize its strong economic ties with New Delhi.

Analysis:

The pact appears aimed at regional balance and signaling to Israel rather than targeting India, giving Pakistan strategic reassurance without severely straining Saudi-India relations.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan's needs to clearly communicate that the pact is defensive, not offensive, to reduce misinterpretation and avoid escalation with India.
- Use the pact to strengthen Pakistan's regional standing and bargaining power in multilateral forums, including the UN and OIC.
- Pakistan's should highlights this pact internationally as part of a collective security approach to ensure regional stability, not conflict.

POLICY NUGGETS

1 ADB commits \$80.75m to Sindh's flood recovery

Impact

Boosts post-flood reconstruction, enhances climate resilience, and strengthens irrigation and drainage systems to safeguard livelihoods in flood-prone districts.

Recommendation

Accelerate project implementation by resolving contractual disputes, ensuring timely land acquisition, and enhancing coordination with local authorities; embed climate adaptation strategies into all reconstruction efforts for long-term sustainability.

"Disasters are an opportunity to transform society and build resilience, not just to recover what was lost." – Margareta Wahlström

2 Four more Bajaur villages cleared of terrorists

Impact

Facilitates safe return of displaced families and restores normalcy in conflict-affected areas.

Recommendation

Strengthen community policing; accelerate rehabilitation efforts; and expand socio-economic programs to prevent re-emergence of militancy. *"Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means."* – Ronald Reagan

3 Balochistan launches first digital e-filing system

Impact

Promotes transparency, reduces bureaucratic inefficiencies, and empowers citizens with real-time access to financial and development data.

Recommendation

Ensure capacity-building of officials for smooth adoption; safeguard data security and privacy; and expand digital governance reforms to all sectors for sustainable transparency and accountability.

"Digital technology can be a powerful force for transparency, accountability and citizen empowerment." – Helen Clark

5 Pakistan's textile exports fall 7.3% in August 2025

Impact

Declining textile and food exports weaken foreign exchange earnings, while rising machinery and transport imports add pressure to the trade balance.

Recommendation

Diversify export markets and product base; invest in modernising textile technology; incentivise value-added exports; and implement policies to balance rising imports with sustainable export growth.

"A nation's competitiveness depends on the capacity of its industry to innovate and upgrade." – Michael Porter

6 HPV vaccination drive reaches 60% coverage in Sindh

Impact

Protects over 550,000 girls from cervical cancer in four days; addresses women's health but faces vaccine hesitancy and misinformation.

Recommendation

Strengthen awareness campaigns, engage trusted community leaders, and integrate HPV vaccination into Pakistan's national immunisation programme.

"Vaccines are the most powerful tool we have to prevent disease and protect future generations." – Dr. Tedros Adhanom

8 Nepra grants industrial tariff to value-adding cold storages

Impact

Supports agro-processing, exports, and supply chain efficiency by recognizing modern cold storages as industrial units, but raises concerns over subsidy costs and tariff precedents.

Recommendation

Ensure clear classification criteria to prevent misuse; conduct periodic audits of facility usage; balance tariff incentives with fiscal sustainability; and align energy pricing with broader food security and industrial growth strategies.

"Food security is not only about production, it is also about storage, distribution, and affordability." UNDP

9 Senate panel urges child protection at seminaries and schools

Impact

Addresses child abuse, corporal punishment, and lack of oversight at educational institutions; promotes accountability, transparency, and child safety.

Recommendation

Enforce regular inspections, mandatory registration of seminaries, ban corporal punishment, strengthen prosecution of abuse cases, integrate madressahs into mainstream education, and ensure teacher training on child protection and mental health.

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." – Nelson Mandela

4 Sherry urges BISP support for flood-hit families

Impact

Highlights urgency of directing cash transfers to three million flood-affected people, while exposing governance delays in relief, water safety, and glacial risk management.

Recommendation

Mobilize immediate BISP disbursements to frontline communities; strengthen early warning systems and ground-level capacity; enforce transparency in water quality reporting; and accelerate climate adaptation projects to protect vulnerable populations.

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have little." – Franklin D. Roosevelt

7 Sindh CM warns of wheat crisis, urges farmer incentives

Impact

Wheat output dropped by 1.05 MMT, raising food security risks and potential import reliance.

Recommendation

Introduce robust wheat support prices, declare an agricultural emergency, and launch farmer rehabilitation with international cooperation to secure long-term food security.

"Hunger is not an issue of charity. It is an issue of justice." – Jacques Diouf



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