



Weekly



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OVERVIEW

This week's *Policy Pulse* sums up Pakistan's multifaceted governance, economic, and security landscape, revealing a consistent pursuit of reform, resilience, and regional stability. In governance, the Sindh cabinet's waiver of death certificate fees and introduction of digital inheritance documentation reflect citizen-centred reforms promoting transparency, while federal initiatives to ensure food security and climate-resilient infrastructure highlight a coordinated national response to environmental and agricultural vulnerabilities. Efforts such as Karachi's e-ticketing system and Punjab's tourism revival plan represent the country's gradual shift toward digital transformation and cultural revitalization as tools for sustainable urban and economic development.

Health and education updates expose growing regulatory and public health challenges, from the surge in youth vaping to rising private school fees. These issues underscore Pakistan's urgent need for stronger enforcement mechanisms and holistic reforms in education governance and public health regulation. On the security front, intensified counterterrorism operations in Orakzai and renewed warnings to Kabul reflect Islamabad's evolving approach, balancing assertive defense with calls for cross-border cooperation. Regionally, diplomatic engagements with the US, Malaysia, and Middle Eastern partners reveal Pakistan's strategy of diversifying alliances, expanding trade, and strengthening humanitarian diplomacy amid complex geopolitical dynamics.

Collectively, these developments depict Pakistan's attempt to stabilize its internal governance while maintaining an active regional and global presence. This implies a shift from reactive governance toward integrated, evidence-based, and technology-driven decision-making aligned with long-term sustainability goals. This is further operationalized through key policy actions: the LESCO-FBR collaboration to digitally broaden the tax base, the reopening of the Katager border with Iran to revive regional trade, and the declaration of a water emergency in Gwadar. In addition, a halt in development projects to enforce fiscal discipline and a proposed national ban on single-use plastics illustrate a governance model focused on inter-agency coordination, fiscal accountability, and strategic regional engagement to bolster national resilience.



Pakistan's latest policy developments reflect a shift toward integrated, citizen-focused, and technology-driven governance, balancing internal reforms with strategic regional and global engagement for long-term resilience and sustainability.

GOVERNANCE

Sindh cabinet approves waiver of death certificate fee



The Sindh cabinet approved a waiver of the death certificate registration fee across the province and introduced reforms to make inheritance documentation more transparent and citizen-friendly. It also endorsed a surrender policy for dacoits in riverine areas, a wheat release policy to stabilize flour prices, and a province-wide ban on tyre pyrolysis plants to curb pollution.

Analysis:

These measures reflect Sindh's focus on improving governance, ensuring social welfare, promoting environmental protection, and strengthening administrative transparency and peace-building across the province.

Way Forward:

- Ensure effective implementation of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system by training local officials and integrating NADRA data for real-time updates.
- Digitize the process for succession certificates to minimize delays and corruption.
- Establish transparent monitoring and audit mechanisms for all new policies to ensure funds are used effectively and reforms deliver intended public benefits.

Minister asks task forces to ensure food security, strengthen infrastructure



Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal directed the formation of three task forces to ensure food security, provide agricultural relief, and develop climate-resilient infrastructure in collaboration with provinces. He emphasized urgent support for flood-affected farmers, crop diversification toward high-value crops like canola, and the introduction of insurance mechanisms for climate protection.

Analysis:

The initiative reflects a proactive, multi-level approach to tackling Pakistan's agricultural vulnerability to climate change by combining short-term farmer relief with long-term structural reforms for resilience and sustainable food security.

Way Forward:

- Develop an integrated national food security strategy involving federal and provincial coordination to ensure sustainable agricultural production.
- Invest in rebuilding irrigation, flood protection, and rural road systems using climate-resilient designs to reduce future disaster risks.
- Conduct awareness programs and farmer training on modern, climate-smart agricultural practices to promote sustainability and self-reliance.

GOVERNANCE

E-ticketing system to end Karachi traffic police-public interaction, moot told



DIG Traffic Syed Pir Muhammad Shah announced that Karachi's new e-ticketing system aims to eliminate direct interaction between police and the public to curb corruption and improve discipline, as 5,000 officers manage around seven million vehicles. The system, launched on October 1, also targets accident reduction through automated monitoring and vehicle tracking.

Analysis:

The initiative marks a major step toward transparent, technology-driven traffic management in Karachi, but its success will depend on consistent enforcement, public awareness, and integration with broader urban infrastructure reforms.

Way Forward:

- Extend the automated challan system across all city zones to ensure uniform enforcement and eliminate opportunities for on-road bribery.
- Launch awareness drives through media and schools to educate citizens about new traffic rules, e-ticketing procedures, and safe driving practices.
- Establish a multi-stakeholder review board, including urban planners and civil society, to assess the impact of e-ticketing and recommend improvements.

'Gujranwala set to become Punjab's next tourism powerhouse'



Under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's cultural revival vision, the Punjab government has launched a comprehensive plan to transform Gujranwala and its surrounding districts into a Northern Heritage Corridor through restoration of key historical sites and promotion of community-based tourism. Major projects include the revival of Sikh-era monuments and the establishment of the Ranjit Singh Museum by June 2026.

Analysis:

This initiative signifies a strategic move to boost regional tourism, preserve Punjab's cultural legacy, and create economic opportunities through heritage-driven development and sustainable urban revitalization.

Way Forward:

- Encourage collaboration with private investors for café setups, cultural festivals, and eco-tourism ventures to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- Involve local communities in tourism operations to generate sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- Strengthen the Northern Heritage Corridor linking Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Sialkot, and Gujrat to promote regional connectivity and tourism flow.

HEALTH AND EDUCATION

WHO warns of rising vaping among Pakistani youth as global smoking rates fall



The WHO reports a sharp rise in vaping among Pakistani youth despite a global decline in smoking rates, driven by weak regulations and aggressive marketing by the tobacco industry. Around 30 million adults in Pakistan use tobacco, with e-cigarettes now targeting teenagers through attractive packaging and social media.

Analysis:

Pakistan's failure to regulate new nicotine products and enforce tobacco control laws risks reversing years of progress in public health. Without swift policy action such as taxation, advertising bans, and regulation of e-cigarettes the country may face a new epidemic of nicotine addiction among its youth.

Way Forward:

- Introduce uniform and higher taxes on all tobacco and nicotine products, including vapes, to make them less accessible especially to youth.
- Launch nationwide campaigns highlighting the health risks of vaping and smoking, targeting schools, universities, and urban centers.
- Fulfill obligations under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Senate body concerned over 'uncontrolled' school fee hike in Islamabad



The Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education raised serious concerns over uncontrolled private school fee hikes in Islamabad, violations of Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (PEIRA's) fee policy, and internal corruption allegations within PEIRA. The committee also reviewed crises in higher education institutions, including protests at the Pakistan Institute of Fashion Design and severe financial distress at the Federal Urdu University.

Analysis:

The situation highlights weak regulatory enforcement in Islamabad's education sector, internal mismanagement within oversight bodies, and the urgent need for financial and administrative reforms to protect students, faculty, and parents from systemic exploitation.

Way Forward:

- Ensure all private schools in Islamabad strictly comply with the PEIRA Fee Determination Policy, limiting annual fee hikes to 5-8%.
- Establish an independent oversight mechanism to monitor school fee structures and take swift action against violators.
- Conduct an impartial third-party investigation into corruption allegations among PEIRA officials to restore institutional credibility and accountability.

SECURITY AND LAW & ORDER

Two officers among 11 martyred in Orakzai



The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) issued a statement that an intelligence-based operation in Orakzai that took place on the night between October 7 and 8. During the said operation, 11 Pakistani security personnel, including a lieutenant colonel and a major, were killed in a firefight with TTP militants. Moreover, 19 "Indian-sponsored" terrorists were also killed. According to another ISPR statement, funerals for Lt Col Tariq and Major Rahat were held at the Chaklala Garrison in Rawalpindi. PM Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Asim Munir, federal ministers, and military and civil officers also attended the funeral. A statement from President Asif Ali Zardari also paid tributes to the martyred soldiers.

Analysis:

The deadly ambush in Orakzai reflects the evolving tactical sophistication of militant groups like the TTP, capable of striking even during intelligence-led operations. This signals not just a security lapse but also the need to reassess counterinsurgency strategies in volatile border regions.

Way Forward:

- Enhance real-time intelligence sharing between civil and military agencies to preempt militant movements in tribal regions.
- Invest in advanced protective gear and tactical training for officers involved in counterterrorism operations.
- Launch community engagement initiatives in border areas to build local support networks against extremist infiltration.

Pakistan fed up with terrorism, Asif tells Kabul



During a session in the National Assembly, the Defence Minister Khawaja Asif stated that there is a proposal to send a delegation to Kabul in coming days to inform the Taliban government that cross-border terrorism is not going to be tolerated anymore. He also warned Afghanistan, as well as 'facilitators' of terrorists, that there will be severe consequences. He further stated that if security forces come under attack from a place where militants are taking shelter, then "collateral damage" in response to that attack cannot be ruled out.

Analysis:

The statement reflects growing frustration in Islamabad with Kabul's inaction on cross-border militancy, signaling a possible shift toward more assertive policies or operations. Whilst the cross-border terrorism has implications on Pakistan's internal stability, it also reflects the fragile diplomatic relationship between the two countries.

Way Forward:

- Reinforce diplomatic pressure by forming a multilateral coalition with neighbouring countries to hold safe-haven providers accountable.
- Enhance border surveillance and rapid response capabilities in frontier districts to intercept militants before they exploit cross-border sanctuaries.
- Accelerate socio-economic development and governance reforms in tribal and border regions to reduce local support for militancy.

SECURITY AND LAW & ORDER

Status quo no longer an option: army



The Director General of ISPR, Lt-Gen Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry, during a press conference in Peshawar, said that the security of the country would never be ‘mortgaged’, and appeasement of terrorist was and is not the policy of the state. He criticized politicization of counterterrorism and emphasized that persistent security lapses are rooted in “governance gaps”. He also stated that engagement with the Afghan Taliban have not been fruitful. He also informed that from Jan to Sept 2025 over 10,115 intelligence-based operations have taken place in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with 970 militants eliminated. However, these operations also caused heavy casualties amongst security personnel and civilians.

Analysis:

This tough rhetoric reflects Pakistan’s growing impatience with persistent cross-border militancy and suggests a shift from reactive counterterrorism to a more proactive and zero-tolerance strategy. However, without parallel political consensus and improved governance, purely military measures may struggle to achieve lasting peace.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen oversight and transparency in military operations to build public trust and legitimacy.
- Coordinate more closely with provincial governments to fill governance gaps that militants exploit.
- Expand the legal and prosecutorial capacity to convert military gains into lasting justice against terrorists and their networks.

Rangers, police surround TLP camp in Muridke as ‘operation looms’



Rangers and police forces have surrounded a Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) camp in Muridke, sealing off routes and preparing for a possible large-scale operation, amid attempts by protesters to advance toward Islamabad.

Analysis:

The deployment signals the state’s readiness to use force against the TLP if negotiations fail, reflecting a tension between maintaining law and order versus risk of escalation and public backlash. The situation also tests the government’s political resolve and its capacity to manage protests without triggering greater unrest.

Way Forward:

- The Punjab government should open more dialogue channels with TLP leaders to avert violent confrontation.
- Deploy independent monitors to observe any operation to ensure civilian safety.
- Use targeted de-escalation, such as curfews and buffer zones, to contain confrontation and protect surrounding communities.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

NIPP holds book talk on 'Dekha Jinhein Palat Ke'



National Institute of Public Policy (NIPP), in Lahore, hosted a book talk on Dr. Farooq Adil's latest work *Dekha Jinhein Palat Ke* on October 9. The event brought together journalists, literary figures, and academics to explore its social, political, and cultural themes.

Analysis:

The event underscores how public institutions in Pakistan are using literary forums to encourage reflective discourse on national identity and collective memory, bridging policy, journalism, and literature. The participation of prominent thinkers highlights the potential influence of such dialogues in shaping public mindset and policy narratives.

Way Forward:

- Encourage public policy institutes to host similar events to foster local intellectual and literary engagement.
- Integrate such literary-discussion forums into university public policy or journalism curricula across Pakistani universities.
- Document and disseminate video/audio recordings of such events through digital platforms for broader public access.

Roundtable discussion on Pak-Afghan relations at NIPP



NIPP held a high-level round table on Pakistan-Afghanistan relations on "Quest for Regional Peace: Sour Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations and Way Forward" on October 10. The event was policymakers, diplomats, academics, and journalists. The event emphasized the importance of strategic cooperation, consistent dialogue, media responsibility, and historical understanding to promote regional peace and stability.

Analysis:

The roundtable reflects Pakistan's growing recognition of the complex, multi-dimensional nature of its relationship with Afghanistan, balancing security concerns with diplomatic, media, and socio-political strategies. The inclusion of diverse voices suggests a positive shift toward holistic policymaking, though implementation and institutional continuity remain critical challenges.

Way Forward:

- Establish a permanent Pakistan-Afghanistan dialogue forum under NIPP involving cross-sector experts to maintain policy continuity beyond political cycles.
- Integrate media literacy and conflict-sensitive reporting training for journalists covering Pakistan-Afghanistan issues to reduce misinformation and inflammatory narratives.
- Launch joint academic and research initiatives between Pakistani and Afghan institutions to foster people-to-people trust and policy-based collaboration.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

A

fter two years of ‘living hell’, Gaza awaits peace



After two years of conflict, indirect talks between Hamas and Israel have begun in Egypt, with US President Donald Trump pushing for a swift ceasefire and hostage deal. Key sticking points include Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza, Hamas’s disarmament, and prisoner exchanges.

Analysis:

While Trump seeks a rapid resolution, deep mistrust and complex demands make a breakthrough unlikely in the short term. The US hint at possibly recognizing a Palestinian state marks a significant diplomatic shift but remains contingent on fragile negotiations.

Way Forward:

- Reiterate Pakistan’s firm stance that sustainable peace in the Middle East depends on the creation of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif (Jerusalem) as its capital.
- Expand Pakistan’s humanitarian aid to Gaza through coordination with UN agencies and international relief organisations to support reconstruction, healthcare, and displaced civilians.
- Raise the issue in the UN, OIC, and other global forums to highlight Israel’s occupation and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

U

S firm to supply Pakistan with advanced air-to-air missiles



The US defense firm Raytheon has added Pakistan to its AMRAAM missile contract, allowing the Pakistan Air Force to acquire advanced air-to-air weapons for its F-16 fleet amid improving US-Pakistan ties. Simultaneously, Pakistan praised the performance of Chinese J-10C jets and PL-15 missiles during its May 2025 conflict with India.

Analysis:

This development reflects Pakistan’s balanced defense diplomacy strengthening military cooperation with both the US and China. It enhances Pakistan’s aerial capabilities while signaling strategic diversification in its defense partnerships amid ongoing regional tensions with India.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan should continue balancing its defense relations with both the US and China, using cooperation with both powers to diversify technology and avoid overreliance on a single partner.
- With upgraded missile capabilities and improved air defense systems, Pakistan should emphasize deterrence to avoid escalation.
- Even amid heightened tensions, Pakistan should advocate for dialogue-based conflict prevention mechanisms to reduce the risk of future aerial confrontations.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

US-Japanese trio win medicine Nobel for immune system research



The 2025 Nobel Prize in Medicine was awarded to Mary E. Brunkow, Fred Ramsdell, and Shimon Sakaguchi for discovering how the immune system maintains balance and prevents autoimmune diseases through “peripheral immune tolerance.” Their findings led to breakthroughs in treating cancer, autoimmune disorders, and improving transplant success.

Analysis:

This recognition highlights the critical role of sustained scientific investment and global collaboration in advancing medical innovation. However, US budget cuts to research may threaten its leadership in science, underscoring the need for continued funding to preserve global progress in biomedical discoveries.

Way Forward:

- Update medical curricula in Pakistani universities to include recent breakthroughs in immune system regulation and biotechnology.
- Pakistan should increase funding for biomedical research as consistent investment is vital for innovation and discoveries.
- Foster collaborative research partnerships between Pakistani institutions and global immunology labs to bring cutting-edge technology and know-how.

Pakistan, Malaysia sign six accords, raise halal meat quota to \$200m



Pakistan and Malaysia signed six accords to boost cooperation in education, halal certification, tourism, anti-corruption, and SME development, while raising Pakistan’s halal meat export quota to \$200 million. Both leaders discussed expanding collaboration in trade, technology, climate change, and ASEAN engagement.

Analysis:

The agreements mark a strategic step for Pakistan to diversify exports, attract investment, and strengthen ties with Southeast Asia. Enhanced cooperation, especially in the halal industry and SMEs, could support Pakistan’s economic revival and reduce dependence on external financial aid.

Way Forward:

- Develop Pakistan as a regional halal production hub using Malaysia’s expertise in certification and quality standards.
- Use Malaysia’s successful tourism model to promote Pakistan’s northern and heritage destinations internationally.
- Seek Malaysian investment in Pakistan’s green energy, digital transformation, and telecommunications sectors.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Hamas, Israel sign ceasefire, prisoner deal



Israel and Hamas have agreed to the first phase of a US-brokered ceasefire and hostage-prisoner exchange deal. Under the deal, fighting will cease, Israel will partially withdraw from Gaza and Hamas will free all remaining prisoners in exchange for hundreds of prisoners held by Israel. However, Israel has said that Marwan Barghouti, a leader from Fatah movement, will not be part of this exchange. The announcement sparked cautious optimism among Palestinians, though questions remain about the fragility of peace.

Analysis:

This deal represents a fragile but potentially pivotal shift toward easing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and opening space for diplomacy, yet its success depends heavily on both parties honoring the terms amid mutual distrust.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan should support ceasefire diplomacy and call for international pressure on Israel to implement the deal in full.
- Leverage the ceasefire to renew Pakistan's advocacy for a two-state solution at international forums like the OIC and UN.
- Encourage intra-Palestinian unity efforts by promoting dialogue between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority to strengthen Palestinian representation.

Intense fighting along Pak-Afghan border; friendly countries urge restraint



Intense clashes erupted along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in late night of October 11. The Afghan Taliban termed it as 'successful retaliatory operations' against Pakistani posts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, marking it as one of the rare occasions when Afghanistan has claimed officially sanctioned military action against Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan's Interior Ministry condemned the unprovoked firing by Afghan forces on civilian populations and called it a violation of international law. Whilst Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Iran urged both sides to exercise restraint and prioritize dialogue.

Analysis:

This escalation marks a significant shift in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, with Kabul acknowledging direct military action against its neighbour. The incident underscores the fragility of border security and the complex dynamics involving the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and cross-border militancy.

Way Forward:

- Enhance diplomatic engagement with Afghanistan to establish clear communication channels and de-escalation protocols.
- Strengthen border security infrastructure and intelligence-sharing mechanisms to prevent cross-border militant activities.
- Initiate regional dialogues involving neighbouring countries to address shared security concerns and promote stability.

POLICY NUGGETS

1 Govt allows sugar exports amid surplus stocks

Impact

Balances domestic supply with export potential; stabilises market through adaptive trade policy.

Recommendation

Strengthen crop yield forecasting systems; enforce transparent quota management; incentivise sustainable sugarcane cultivation to cushion climate impacts and avoid future shortages. *“Sustainable agriculture begins with smart policies that balance production, people, and the planet.”* – Gro Harlem Brundtland

4 US approves missile sale, strengthens defence and economic ties with Pakistan

Impact

Marks renewed strategic engagement between Washington and Islamabad; enhances Pakistan’s aerial defence capabilities and promotes broader cooperation in trade, energy, and infrastructure, signaling a shift toward stability and mutual trust.

Recommendation

Prioritise transparent defence procurement and oversight mechanisms; leverage improved bilateral ties to attract sustainable investment in critical minerals and technology sectors; institutionalise defence diplomacy for long-term regional security cooperation. *“True security is achieved not through arms alone, but through partnerships that build trust and progress.”* – Javier Pérez de Cuéllar

7 Balochistan declares water emergency in Gwadar amid severe shortage

Impact

Responds to Gwadar’s worsening water crisis; aims to restore supply through emergency measures and control exploitative practices.

Recommendation

Ensure transparent utilisation of emergency funds; prioritise restoration of desalination plants; strengthen regulation of tanker operations; and establish long-term water management strategies through sustainable infrastructure and community monitoring. *“Water scarcity is not just an environmental issue; it is a governance and equity challenge.”* – Peter H. Gleick

2 Violence surges amid intensified militant attacks

Impact

Escalating militant violence and expanded counter-terrorism operations have heightened security risks and civilian casualties, undermining internal stability and regional peace efforts.

Recommendation

Strengthen intelligence-sharing with Afghanistan under UN oversight; enhance civilian protection protocols during operations; launch community resilience programs to counter extremist narratives and support post-conflict rehabilitation. *“Violence diminishes when communities are empowered, justice is served, and dialogue replaces fear.”* – Dr. Hina Jilani

5 Govt halts DDWP project approvals under IMF conditions

Impact

Aims to ensure fiscal discipline and transparency in public spending; centralises project evaluation to prevent misuse of funds and strengthen accountability in development planning.

Recommendation

Establish stronger appraisal mechanisms within the Planning Commission; introduce digital project-tracking systems; and promote capacity building in ministries to align development initiatives with fiscal sustainability and IMF compliance. *“Fiscal discipline is not a constraint—it is the foundation of sustainable growth.”* – Mario Draghi

8 Pakistan faces rising plastic waste crisis, recycling remains minimal

Impact

Highlights poor waste management and regulatory inconsistency; underscores urgent need for coordinated national action to curb plastic pollution harming land, water, and ecosystems.

Recommendation

Enforce uniform nationwide ban on single-use plastics; strengthen inter-provincial coordination and import controls; formalise recycling through public-private partnerships; and incentivise sustainable alternatives to reduce plastic dependency. *“We are the first generation to feel the impact of climate change and the last generation that can do something about it.”* – Barack Obama

3 LESCO to assist FBR in achieving tax collection targets

Impact

Strengthens inter-institutional collaboration between power and revenue authorities; enhances fiscal transparency and accountability; supports national revenue generation through improved data sharing and efficient bill recovery mechanisms.

Recommendation

Develop integrated digital systems for consumer data exchange between Iesco and FBR; ensure data privacy safeguards; expand KYC initiatives nationwide to broaden the tax base and curb evasion through institutional coordination. *“A fair and efficient tax system is the foundation of national trust and sustainable development.”* – Christine Lagarde

6 Pakistan reopens Katager border with Iran after four years

Impact

Revives cross-border trade and mobility; restores livelihoods of border communities; strengthens socio-economic ties between Pakistan and Iran while promoting regional stability and local economic recovery.

Recommendation

Ensure sustainable border management with modern trade facilities; expedite reopening of the Guzzar point; implement joint development initiatives to enhance connectivity, employment, and regional cooperation. *“Trade and cooperation across borders are the strongest bridges for peace and prosperity.”* – Angela Merkel

9 Army vows decisive response to Indian aggression

Impact

Reaffirms Pakistan Army’s commitment to national defence and regional stability; strengthens deterrence posture against external threats while emphasising counterterrorism, diplomatic engagement, and strategic cooperation with allies.

Recommendation

Enhance intelligence coordination and hybrid warfare readiness; deepen defence partnerships with regional allies; and sustain diplomatic efforts to promote peace, stability, and conflict de-escalation in South Asia. *“Lasting peace is not achieved through power, but through cooperation and trust.”* – Jimmy Carter



Editorial Team

**Dr. Naveed Elahi
Naeema Naem
Jahanzeb Waheed
Sadia Pirzada**

Editorial Assistants

**Maira Jamal
Saffa Amjad**

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

Email: polycypulse.nipp@nspp.gov.pk