



Weekly



# POLICY PULSE

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# CONTENTS

## Overview

## Governance

Forbes hails ‘Suthra Punjab’ initiative

Sindh police to be modernised with Rs189.7bn budget: Murad

NSPP holds a book talk on Hussain Naqi’s Biography

In consolidation act, army chief dons another hat

## Environment

Oak forest depletion in South Waziristan raises alarm bells

Sherry seeks urgent action on worsening pollution crisis

## Socio-Economic Issues

How many more mouths can Pakistan afford to feed?

No compromise on citizens’ jobs, rights: SC

Govt taking steps to enhance exports: PM



PIA will be auctioned on Dec 23, says PM

## Security and Law & Order

Three cops martyred in D.I. Khan attack

7 militants shot dead in KP

## International Affairs

\$1bn music piracy case in US SC could affect internet users

Asia floods death toll tops 1,100 as troops aid survivors

Pakistan, Turkish firm sign five petroleum agreements worth \$300m

Pakistan sends aid to Sri Lanka via sea after India denies airspace access

## Policy Nuggets

Contd



# OVERVIEW



The *Policy Pulse* captures Pakistan's most pressing governance, environmental, security, and socio-economic challenges alongside emerging reform opportunities. This edition highlights developments from Punjab's globally-recognized waste management success to alarming air pollution statistics, military restructuring, and demographic pressures threatening national stability. For policymakers, it blends rigorous analysis with actionable insights, reflecting both progress and persistent institutional gaps.

This edition features transformative governance initiatives demonstrating how technology and political will drive large-scale reform. Punjab's Suthra Punjab programme, lauded by Forbes as the world's largest waste-management model, collects 50,000 tonnes daily while converting waste into energy and carbon credits. Sindh's Rs189.7 billion police modernization deploys facial recognition and digitized operations to combat crime. On the contrary, systemic failures persist: Pakistan's air pollution crisis claims 256,000 lives annually and costs \$22 billion, while institutional response remains weak. The Supreme Court's protection of 41 wrongfully dismissed KP teachers underscores judicial vigilance but exposes troubling reliance on AI-generated legal precedents, threatening judicial integrity.

These insights carry profound real-world implications. The appointment of Pakistan's first Chief of Defence Forces consolidates tri-service command, raising concerns about institutional checks and balances. The Pakistan Population Summit projects 370 million people by 2050, positioning demographic growth as a structural threat straining health, education, and employment systems. The planned PIA privatization on December 23, signals commitment to divesting loss-making enterprises, though success hinges on bidder credibility and modernization commitments.

The Policy Nuggets offer actionable insights: the Ehsaas Umeed Programme improves support for persons with disabilities; the Premarital and Marital Counselling Bill promotes informed family planning; the Honorarium Card for over 62,000 Imams ensures transparent payments; and the 200% surge in HIV infections demands urgent scaled-up testing and treatment access.

As Pakistan navigates these multifaceted challenges, the *Policy Pulse* underlines the imperative for evidence-based policy, cross-sectoral coordination, and sustained political commitment to translate promising initiatives into durable, equitable outcomes for all citizens.

**Amidst notable reform efforts and technological advances, escalating environmental, demographic, and institutional challenges underscore the urgent need for coordinated, evidence-based action.**

# GOVERNANCE

## Forbes hails ‘Suthra Punjab’ initiative



Forbes has praised Punjab’s ‘Suthra Punjab’ initiative as the world’s largest and highly successful waste-management model. The programme collects 50,000 tonnes of waste daily, covers urban and rural areas, employs over 14,000 sanitation workers, and uses AI, IoT, and GPS technologies. It also converts waste into energy, produces carbon credits, creates green jobs, and improves public health and environmental standards.

### Analysis:

Suthra Punjab demonstrates how political commitment, public-private partnerships, and technology-driven management can transform sanitation on a massive scale. By integrating waste-to-energy and recycling, the initiative not only addresses environmental challenges but also generates revenue and jobs, positioning Punjab as a global model for climate-resilient urban and rural waste management.

### Way Forward:

- Promote citizen participation via apps and awareness campaigns to improve reporting, compliance, and ownership of sanitation efforts.
- Focus on skill development for women and youth, ensuring long-term socio-economic benefits from the initiative.
- Continue using escrow accounts and revenue from carbon credits and energy generation to fund operations and future expansions.

## Sindh police to be modernised with Rs189.7bn budget: Murad



Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah announced a Rs189.7 billion budget to modernise the Sindh police, focusing on technology-driven initiatives like the Safe City project, which uses CCTV, facial recognition, and automatic number plate recognition. Operations have already resulted in the surrender of 71 dacoits in Kutcha, while police station digitisation, smart surveillance integration, and welfare measures aim to improve efficiency, transparency, and officer well-being.

### Analysis:

The modernisation plan positions Sindh police as a technologically advanced force, enhancing urban security and tackling organised crime. By combining real-time monitoring, digitisation, and welfare programs, the initiative aims to strengthen public trust and operational effectiveness. Expansion of Safe City infrastructure across Karachi could serve as a model for other provinces seeking integrated, tech-driven policing solutions.

### Way Forward:

- Deploy intelligent traffic systems and e-challan mechanisms citywide to improve road safety and law enforcement.
- Increase citizen reporting and feedback mechanisms through apps and community liaison programs to build trust.
- Regularly assess the impact of modernisation measures and adapt strategies for continuous improvement in policing standards.

# GOVERNANCE

## N SPP holds a book talk on Hussain Naqi's Biography



A book talk was held at National Institute of Public Policy, National School of Public Policy, Lahore on the autobiography 'Mujh Se Ho Saka' by veteran journalist and human-rights activist Hussain Naqi — attendees included senior journalists, analysts, and social-activists who praised Naqi's decades-long commitment to press freedom, human rights and democratic values. Naqi recounted experiences and reflections from his long journalistic career, offering not only a personal story, but also a living chronicle of Pakistan's sociopolitical history.

### Analysis:

The event underlines the enduring relevance of first-hand narratives like Naqi's autobiography in preserving institutional memory of press-freedom struggles and human-rights activism — especially in a country where such histories are often overshadowed or erased. At a time of shrinking civic space and historical amnesia, this kind of public documentation and reflection helps reaffirm the role of journalism and civil society in safeguarding democracy and accountability.

### Way Forward:

- Hold more public talks and discussions in universities so young people can learn from veteran journalists like Hussain Naqi.
- Add such autobiographies to journalism and social-studies courses to teach students about press freedom and human rights.
- Translate and distribute the book widely so people across Pakistan, not just in big cities, can access these stories.

## I n consolidation act, army chief dons another hat



Asim Munir has been appointed as Pakistan's first Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), while continuing as Chief of Army Staff (COAS). The constitutional change abolishes the old tri-service coordination post and consolidates operational, administrative and strategic control of army, navy and air force into one office.

### Analysis:

This restructuring centralizes significant military power in a single individual, effectively merging command of all three services — a major shift in Pakistan's civil-military balance and institutional design. While proponents argue it streamlines coordination among services, critics see it as a consolidation of power that may weaken checks and balances and concentrate authority in the hands of one person.

### Way Forward:

- Strengthen civilian oversight by letting parliament review major military decisions.
- Maintain transparency by publicly documenting and reviewing institutional reforms, command changes and the roles/responsibilities of the new CDF post, so citizens can track accountability.
- Involve political parties in setting national security rules to prevent consolidation of power by one institution.

# ENVIRONMENT

## Oak forest depletion in South Waziristan raises alarm bells



Unchecked deforestation of oak forests in Lower South Waziristan is causing severe ecological disruption, including soil erosion, altered weather patterns, and threats to biodiversity. Illegal timber operations and charcoal kilns, often linked to well-connected actors, have devastated decades-old forests, while local communities suffer economic losses without compensation. Authorities have initiated investigations, imposed partial bans on chainsaws and kilns, and engaged community leaders to halt illegal activities, despite limited manpower and resource constraints.

### Analysis:

The rapid depletion of oak forests highlights gaps in forest governance, law enforcement, and community engagement, threatening both environmental sustainability and local livelihoods. Effective long-term solutions require stricter monitoring, legal protection for private and communal forests, community-based forest management, and economic support for affected residents to balance conservation with social needs.

### Way Forward:

- Strictly enforce bans on chainsaws, charcoal kilns, and illicit timber operations, with regular inspections and penalties for violators.
- Involve local elders and communities in forest management, promoting sustainable firewood use and halting charcoal production.
- Implement satellite and ground-based monitoring systems to track deforestation, forest health, and compliance with conservation regulations.

## Sherry seeks urgent action on worsening pollution crisis



Sherry Rehman has called for urgent action to address Pakistan's dire air-pollution crisis, criticising Pak-EPA for failing to provide credible and up-to-date data. She stated that according to recent World Health Organization statistics, air pollution causes about 256,000 deaths per year in Pakistan, reduces life expectancy by up to 4.6 years, and costs the economy roughly US\$22 billion annually.

### Analysis:

The article highlights that despite the severity of the crisis — massive health toll, economic losses, and long-term impacts on children — institutional response remains weak, with insufficient monitoring, data transparency, and enforcement. The gap between the scale of the problem and actual policy or regulatory action suggests systemic failure, increasing the risk that vulnerable populations (especially children) will disproportionately bear long-term consequences.

### Way Forward:

- Enforce strict emissions standards for vehicles, industries, brick kilns, and waste burning — especially in high-pollution provinces like Punjab.
- Expand and fully deploy real-time air-quality monitoring (e.g. sensors, live monitoring), and mandate annual publication of air-pollution data by agencies so that policymakers, media, and citizens can hold institutions accountable.
- Promote cleaner public-transport systems, incentivise electric or low-emission vehicles, and discourage open burning of agricultural and municipal waste, to reduce the seasonal smog burden especially in winter.

# SOCIO- ECONOMIC ISSUES

## How many more mouths can Pakistan afford to feed?



Pakistan's Population Summit warned that unchecked growth projected to reach 370 million by 2050 is overwhelming resources and undermining development. Experts noted nearly half of pregnancies are unwanted or mistimed, urging stronger population management, wider contraceptive access, and investment in education and human capital. Speakers stressed that rapid growth strains health, education, jobs, and basic services, and is already contributing to economic stagnation.

### Analysis:

Pakistan's demographic trajectory is now a structural threat to economic recovery and social stability, with rising population outpacing both resource capacity and human-development investment. Effective policy must focus on reducing unwanted pregnancies, normalising birth spacing, and scaling education and skills training. Without aligning population trends with resources, economic indicators and living standards risk further deterioration.

### Way Forward:

- Launch national-language awareness campaigns, backed by religious rulings permitting birth spacing, to remove cultural taboos and raise the Contraceptive Prevalence Rate beyond 34%.
- Address economic impacts directly by improving the capital-labour ratio, increasing productivity, and preventing further decline in per-capita income.
- Promote a cultural shift toward responsible family planning, leveraging religious guidance (e.g., Council of Islamic Ideology's approval of birth spacing) to counter taboos.

## No compromise on citizens' jobs, rights: SC



The Supreme Court ruled that citizens' employment and fundamental rights cannot be compromised, overturning the dismissal of 41 KP teachers whose appointments were wrongly labeled "fake." An inquiry confirmed the teachers had valid credentials and that missing documents were due to departmental failures, not fraud. The Court also criticised the KP Service Tribunal for relying on non-existent or AI-generated precedents.

### Analysis:

The judgement underscores growing judicial vigilance against arbitrary dismissals and administrative negligence, especially where livelihoods are at stake. It also highlights a serious issue: tribunals using unverifiable or AI-fabricated case law, which threatens judicial integrity. The ruling reinforces due process, demanding that state authorities not employ employees bear responsibility for procedural lapses.

### Way Forward:

- No termination should occur without thorough verification of credentials and proper documentation.
- Establish clear policies to prevent recurrence of wrongful dismissals and strengthen public trust in administrative and judicial processes.
- Judicial bodies should rely only on verified, authentic legal precedents and avoid unverified or AI-generated references.

# SOCIO- ECONOMIC ISSUES

## G

### ovt taking steps to enhance exports: PM



PM Shehbaz Sharif announced that the government is implementing practical measures to promote export-led economic growth, following recommendations from private-sector working groups on tax reforms and investment competitiveness. The meeting reviewed tax rates across sectors, and proposals aimed at boosting exports, private sector development, and regional competitiveness were discussed. A committee headed by the finance minister is expected to make these proposals actionable.

#### Analysis:

The initiative reflects Pakistan's strategic focus on strengthening exports and private sector performance as key drivers of economic growth. By involving experts and linking tax reforms with investment and competitiveness, the government aims to create a more business-friendly environment, increase revenue generation, and enhance the country's position in regional and global markets.

#### Way Forward:

- Regularly consult private-sector experts to ensure policies address real challenges and opportunities.
- Align export strategies with broader economic reforms for sustainable growth and revenue generation.
- Support industries with infrastructure, technology adoption, and market access programs to boost regional and global trade.

## P

### IA will be auctioned on Dec 23, says PM



During a meeting at the PM House with all business owners and company representatives participating in the PIA privatisation process, the PM announced that PIA will be auctioned on 23 December, 2025 and the bidding process will be broadcasted live to ensure transparency and credibility. The aim is to restore PIA's reputation, align the airline with modern aviation standards, and revive its global routes — which could benefit overseas Pakistanis and boost Pakistan's tourism sector. The participants praised the transparent and professional mechanism being adopted for the privatisation process.

#### Analysis:

This auction represents a critical push in the government's privatisation drive under economic reform mandates — suggesting the state is prepared to fully divest from its loss-making national airline. The live-televised bidding and public commitment to transparency may help rebuild public trust, but success depends heavily on the credibility of bidders and their long-term commitment to modernise and revive the carrier.

#### Way Forward:

- Ensure that post-sale, regulators enforce rigorous safety, maintenance and service standards so the new owner cannot cut corners to reduce costs.
- Mandate clear policies for severance, rehiring or retraining, to avoid sudden job losses and mitigate social backlash.
- Encourage bidders with strong international-aviation credentials to restore PIA's global connectivity, especially profitable routes.

# SECURITY AND LAW & ORDER

## Three cops martyred in D.I. Khan attack



Three police officers — an assistant sub-inspector (ASI), a constable and a driver — were killed when their patrol van was hit by an improvised explosive device and gunfire in the Paniyala area of Dera Ismail (D.I.) Khan, KP, while another constable was seriously injured. In response, security forces launched a search-and-strike operation, during which they reportedly killed two militants associated with the attack.

### Analysis:

The attack reveals militants' continued capability — and willingness — to target routine police patrols, indicating serious security vulnerabilities in the district. Although the immediate counter-operation neutralised some attackers, the pattern underscores broader gaps in intelligence, route security, and protection of law-enforcement personnel.

### Way Forward:

- Increase route-security for police patrols in high-risk areas like D.I. Khan — use mine-resistant vehicles and vary patrol timings/routes to reduce predictability.
- Strengthen local community-level intelligence networks to help pre-empt attacks.
- Conduct systematic clearance operations in known militant hideouts and enhance area surveillance to restrict terrorists' ability to plan and execute such attacks.

## 7 militants shot dead in KP



Security forces in Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and other agencies killed seven militants linked to Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in two separate operations in KP (one in Mardan/Nowshera and another in Tank district).

### Analysis:

The operations show that when backed by credible intelligence, security forces can still strike at militant networks — but given persistent militant activity in the region, such successes must be sustained and followed up by deeper efforts to dismantle associated infrastructure and recruitment pipelines.

### Way Forward:

- Expand intelligence-driven operations and surveillance in militant-prone districts of KP to pre-empt attacks rather than react post-incident.
- Combine security operations with community outreach — work with local populations to build trust and gather grassroots intelligence against militants.
- After militant removal, initiate rehabilitation and development programs in affected areas (roads, schools, jobs) to reduce the chance of militant re-emergence.

# INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**\$1** bn music piracy case in US SC could affect internet users



The U.S. Supreme Court is set to hear a high-stakes \$1 billion music piracy case involving Cox Communications, accused of enabling widespread copyright infringement by its customers. While the music industry warns that a ruling favoring Cox could harm creators financially, the company argues that holding Internet Service Providers (ISPs) strictly liable could threaten internet access for all Americans. The case focuses on whether Cox "materially contributed" to piracy or merely failed to prevent it.

## Analysis:

The outcome could reshape copyright enforcement and ISP responsibilities, balancing the protection of creative works against public access to the internet. A ruling against Cox may strengthen accountability for platforms, while a ruling in its favour could limit liability for service providers, potentially complicating efforts to curb online piracy.

## Way Forward:

- Ensure enforcement mechanisms protect copyright holders without unduly restricting public internet access.
- Use digital fingerprinting, content ID systems, and AI-based detection to identify and limit illegal sharing while respecting user rights.
- Increase public awareness campaigns on copyright law, legal streaming options, and the consequences of piracy.

**A** sia floods death toll tops 1,100 as troops aid survivors



Severe flooding and landslides across parts of Asia, including Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Malaysia, have killed over 1,100 people, with hundreds still missing. Governments have deployed military personnel, ships, and helicopters to aid stranded residents, while international assistance has been requested in Sri Lanka. The disasters, worsened by climate change and rare tropical storms, have disrupted communities, infrastructure, and daily life.

## Analysis:

The scale and intensity of these floods highlight the increasing vulnerability of South and Southeast Asia to climate-driven extreme weather. Slow disaster response and inadequate preparedness, especially in Thailand and parts of Indonesia, have sparked public criticism, underscoring the need for stronger early-warning systems, emergency planning, and regional climate resilience strategies.

## Way Forward:

- Develop comprehensive emergency response plans, pre-position supplies, and conduct regular drills for civilians and first responders.
- Governments should incorporate climate-resilient planning in urban development, land management, and agriculture to reduce future vulnerability.
- Build flood-resistant roads, bridges, drainage systems, and housing, particularly in high-risk areas.

# INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

## Pakistan, Turkish firm sign five petroleum agreements worth \$300m



Pakistan and Turkey have signed five petroleum concession agreements worth \$300 million, marking Turkish Petroleum Overseas Company's entry into Pakistan's oil and gas exploration sector. The agreements cover three offshore and two onshore blocks, alongside plans for joint ventures in energy infrastructure, oil and gas exploration, and mining. Both countries aim to attract Turkish investment in upcoming power distribution company privatisations and deepen technical and commercial cooperation.

### Analysis:

The agreements strengthen bilateral energy ties and signal Pakistan's push to attract experienced foreign investors to modernise and expand its energy sector. Turkish participation brings technical expertise, investment capital, and potential knowledge transfer, supporting Pakistan's energy infrastructure development and its broader economic and trade objectives.

### Way Forward:

- Maintain clear governance in joint ventures and petroleum agreements to build investor confidence and public trust.
- Train Pakistani engineers and managers alongside Turkish experts to build long-term human capital in the energy sector.
- Integrate Turkish participation in upcoming power distribution privatisations to strengthen efficiency, competitiveness, and private-sector involvement.

## Pakistan sends aid to Sri Lanka via sea after India denies airspace access



Pakistan sent 200 tonnes of humanitarian aid to Sri Lanka via sea after India initially denied airspace access, delaying the relief mission. The aid supports recovery efforts following Cyclone Ditwah, which killed at least 465 people and left hundreds missing. Pakistan Navy also conducted rescue operations, evacuating stranded residents, including a family trapped for five days.

### Analysis:

The situation highlights Pakistan's swift humanitarian response despite logistical challenges and diplomatic tensions over airspace access. It underscores the importance of regional cooperation in disaster relief, while demonstrating Pakistan's capacity to provide rapid assistance through naval and logistical resources when traditional air routes are unavailable.

### Way Forward:

- Establish formal protocols with neighboring countries to streamline cross-border humanitarian operations and minimize delays.
- Use satellite imagery, real-time monitoring, and communication systems to identify affected areas and optimize relief deployment.
- Highlight Pakistan's contributions to regional disaster management to strengthen goodwill and regional influence.

# POLICY NUGGETS

## 1 CM formally launches Ehsaas Umeed Programme

### Impact

The Ehsaas Umeed Programme and new transport facilities significantly improve financial support, mobility, and access to essential services for persons with disabilities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### Recommendation

Ensure transparent beneficiary selection, expand coverage to merged districts promptly, and strengthen monitoring to guarantee timely delivery of stipends and assistive devices.

*"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."* – Helen Keller

## 4 A smartphone before age 12 could carry health risks, study says

### Impact

Early smartphone ownership (before age 12) is linked to higher risks of depression, poor sleep, and obesity, indicating significant mental and physical health concerns in children.

### Recommendations

Delay smartphone ownership, set strict screen-time limits, and encourage healthier routines including sleep, physical activity, and supervised digital use to reduce these risks.

*"Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master."* – Christian Lous Lange

## 7 Premarital, marital counselling bill a key social reform step

### Impact

The Premarital and Marital Counselling Bill promotes informed decision-making among couples, improves maternal and child health, and fosters healthier family communication, contributing to broader social reform.

### Recommendation

Implement widespread awareness campaigns, ensure trained counsellors are available nationwide, and monitor the program's effectiveness in reducing high-risk pregnancies and improving family planning practices.

*"Family is the first essential cell of human society."* – Pope John XXIII

## 2 Airbus faces 'new quality problem' on dozens of A320 jets

### Impact

The newly discovered quality issue in A320 fuselage panels threatens Airbus's delivery targets, potentially affecting revenue, airline schedules, and market confidence.

### Recommendation

Conduct immediate root-cause analysis, enhance supplier quality controls, and communicate transparently with airlines to minimize delays and safeguard operational trust. *"Safety in aviation is not expensive; it's priceless."* – Jerry Crawford

## 5 All asylum cases on hold after US freezes benefits

### Impact

The nationwide freeze on asylum and immigration benefits has created immediate legal and humanitarian limbo for hundreds of thousands, while escalating political, diplomatic, and civil-rights tensions over security-driven policy reversals.

### Recommendation

Establish transparent security-review criteria, prioritize due-process protections, and implement phased screening reforms to avoid system paralysis while addressing legitimate vetting concerns.

*"No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark."* – Warsan Shire, poet

## 8 Smog in Punjab threatens 11M children; pollution kills 256K annually

### Impact

Air pollution in Pakistan, particularly smog in Punjab, poses severe public-health risks, affecting 11 million children and contributing to 256,000 deaths annually, while significantly reducing life expectancy and economic productivity.

### Recommendation

Implement comprehensive, data-driven air-quality monitoring, enforce strict emissions controls on transportation and industry, and transition polluting sectors to cleaner technologies with community support and public health safeguards.

*"Clean air is a fundamental human right."* – Mary Robinson

## 3 New HIV infections in Pakistan rise by 200pc in 15 years: WHO, UNAIDS

### Impact

Pakistan's 200% surge in new HIV infections, low awareness, and insufficient treatment coverage signal a rapidly expanding public-health crisis, particularly endangering children and vulnerable communities.

### Recommendation

Scale up nationwide testing, regulate unsafe medical practices, expand treatment access especially for pregnant women and children and intensify community-led awareness to halt transmission.

*"AIDS is not over. We cannot become complacent."* – Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General

## 6 Punjab lifts ban on Basant under new safety ordinance

### Impact

The revival of Basant under strict safety regulations promotes cultural heritage while mitigating past risks of accidents and injuries associated with the festival.

### Recommendation

Ensure rigorous enforcement of safety measures, public awareness campaigns, and monitoring of vendors to prevent violations and protect participants, especially minors.

*"Celebration is not just about joy; it is about remembering who we are."*

– Maya Angelou

## 9 Maryam okays launch of honorarium card for imams

### Impact

The launch of the Honorarium Card ensures timely, transparent, and accountable payments to over 62,000 Imams in Punjab, strengthening financial management and religious institution governance.

### Recommendation

Maintain strict verification to prevent misuse, implement regular monitoring of disbursements, and continue capacity-building for Mosque and Tehsil Management Committees to ensure efficient administration.

*"Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth."* – Muhammad Ali



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