



Weekly



# POLICY PULSE

NATIONAL INSTITUTE  
OF PUBLIC POLICY

Vol. 7 Issue No. 84

6- 12 April 2026



# CONTENTS

## Overview

## Governance

IMF assured on civil servants' asset declarations, NAB autonomy

Federal govt approves child-friendly curricula to ease early schooling burden

## Socio-Economic

PM suggests nationwide shift to EVs

Call to establish inclusive social security system to protect the most vulnerable

'Fuel price hike threatens tourism industry': Pakistan Association of Tour Operators

Sindh flags Tarbela delays, warns of Kharif water crisis

## Security and law & Order

Border post attack foiled in KP; 37 terrorists killed: Tarar

FIA to use AI for tracking down 'most wanted criminals'

## Health

'80pc provincial population lack primary healthcare': Balochistan Health Secretary

Mpox cases rise in Sindh, other provinces

## International Affairs

Trump's ultimatum: threat or tactic?

Israeli strikes target Iran's petrochemical facilities

Bangladesh's FM arrives in India as neighbours start resetting ties

Russia, China veto UN resolution on Hormuz

Iran war live: Vance says no deal reached, US has made 'best, final offer'

Taiwan opposition leader to make 'peace' visit to China, first in 10 years

## Policy Nuggets

### KEY SECTIONS SUMMARY



#### GOVERNANCE

Governance Reform

#### SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES



Energy Transition



#### SECURITY AND LAW & ORDER

Counterterrorism Operations

#### HEALTH



Healthcare Access



#### INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Geopolitical Brinkmanship

#### POLICY NUGGETS



Diplomatic Leverage



# OVERVIEW



This week's Policy Pulse reflects a policy landscape shaped socio-economic pressures, governance reforms and security modernization amidst evolving geopolitical dynamics. The central theme is resilience –addressing structural gaps while adapting to both domestic challenges and external shocks.

Stark disparities persist as over 80% of Balochistan's population lacks primary healthcare, reflecting deep infrastructural and resource gaps. Rising mpox cases and weak data transparency expose deficiencies in disease surveillance and coordination, underscoring the need for real-time systems and unified responses.

Socio-economic developments reflect mounting strain; the proposed shift to electric vehicles aims to reduce fuel dependence and protect reserves, though implementation challenges remain. Calls for an inclusive social security system highlight gaps in protecting vulnerable populations amid inflation.

In governance, commitments to the IMF on civil servants' asset declarations and institutional autonomy signal efforts to enhance transparency and accountability. Education reforms introducing a child-friendly curriculum reflect a shift toward skill-based learning, though effective implementation remains key.

Security developments highlight the adoption of AI-based tools by FIA, signaling modernization alongside persistent cross-border threats.

Internationally, escalating Middle East tensions, US-Iran negotiations, and great power divisions at the UN underscore a volatile global environment. Pakistan's diplomatic engagement, including mediation efforts and balanced positioning, reflects a pragmatic foreign policy approach.

The policy nuggets reinforce priorities of economic stability, public health, environmental cooperation, and proactive diplomacy. Overall, the week underscores the need to align institutional reform, economic resilience, and strategic diplomacy in an increasingly uncertain global context.

**Pakistan's diplomatic engagement, including mediation efforts and balanced positioning, reflects a pragmatic foreign policy approach.**

# GOVERNANCE

**I**MF assured on civil servants' asset declarations, NAB autonomy



Pakistan assured the International Monetary Fund of key anti-corruption reforms, including public asset declarations of civil servants by Dec 2026 and granting autonomy to National Accountability Bureau by Jan 2027. These steps are part of commitments under the \$7bn EFF programme to improve governance and transparency.

#### Analysis:

The reforms signal a serious attempt to strengthen accountability and attract investment by ensuring transparency. However, their success depends on effective implementation, political will, and independence of institutions, which have historically been major challenges in Pakistan.

#### Way Forward:

- Develop a robust digital platform for civil servants' asset disclosures with public access and strong verification mechanisms.
- Improve collaboration between FBR, SBP, FMU, and other bodies for effective monitoring of corruption and financial crimes.
- Ensure swift prosecution and meaningful penalties to create deterrence against corruption in Pakistan.

**F**ederal govt approves child-friendly curricula to ease early schooling burden



The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has approved a child-friendly national curriculum to reduce academic burden on early-grade students (nursery to grade 2) and promote activity-based learning. The reform also introduces subjects like civic education, climate awareness, and financial literacy, with consensus across provinces.

#### Analysis:

This shift reflects a move toward modern, skill-based education but its success depends on effective implementation and teacher training. Reducing early academic pressure can improve learning outcomes, yet challenges like resource gaps and uniform adoption across provinces may hinder impact. Strong coordination and monitoring will be key to achieving meaningful reform.

#### Way Forward:

- Ensure uniform adoption of the new curriculum across all provinces through strong coordination led by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.
- Properly integrate civic education, climate awareness, financial literacy, and safety skills to prepare students for real-life challenges.
- Ensure rural and underprivileged schools receive resources, so reforms benefit all children equally.

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

---

**P**M suggests nationwide shift to EVs



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif proposed a nationwide shift to electric vehicles (EVs) to reduce fuel costs and protect foreign reserves amid rising global oil prices. An initial batch of EVs was introduced for Islamabad Traffic Police, highlighting cost efficiency and environmental benefits.

### **Analysis:**

The move reflects a strategic push toward energy efficiency and reduced dependence on imported fuel. However, large-scale success depends on charging infrastructure, policy consistency, and public adoption, which remain key challenges for Pakistan.

### **Way Forward:**

- Install EV charging stations across urban and highways in Pakistan to support large-scale adoption.
- Offer subsidies, tax reductions, and easy financing options to make EVs affordable for the public.
- Link EV charging with solar and wind energy to maximize environmental benefits and reduce electricity burden.

**C**all to establish inclusive social security system to protect the most vulnerable



A seminar at the Urban Resource Centre highlighted that Pakistan's social protection system remains inadequate, leaving millions of poor citizens excluded despite programs like the Benazir Income Support Programme. Experts warned that rising inflation linked to global tensions has disproportionately affected low-income groups, especially in Karachi.

### **Analysis:**

The discussion reveals structural weaknesses in targeting the most vulnerable, with relief often missing the poorest segments. Without expanding and reforming social security, economic shocks and global crises will deepen inequality. A shift from short-term relief to a comprehensive, inclusive welfare system is essential for long-term stability.

### **Way Forward:**

- Develop a single national database to accurately identify the poorest households, ensuring benefits reach the most deprived rather than relatively better-off groups.
- Strengthen schemes like Benazir Income Support Programme by improving targeting, increasing coverage, and linking cash support with health and education services.
- Ensure better data sharing and joint implementation across provinces to avoid duplication and exclusion gaps.

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

## Fuel price hike threatens tourism industry': Pakistan Association of Tour Operators



The Pakistan Association of Tour Operators warned that sharp fuel price hikes (40-50% surge) threaten the tourism industry, raising travel costs and discouraging domestic and international tourists. The association noted tourism heavily depends on road travel to northern areas, with cascading effects on accommodation, food supply, and related services. Thousands of businesses and workers could suffer as a result.

### Analysis:

Pakistan's tourism sector remains highly vulnerable to external shocks given the country's dependence on imported fuel and road-based destination access. The war-driven global oil price spike creates an immediate demand-suppression effect as travel becomes less affordable. Without targeted support, the sector, still recovering from previous crises, faces business closures and job losses across the value chain, particularly in the northern areas.

### Way Forward:

- Introduce targeted fuel subsidies or price caps specifically for tourism transport vehicles operating on designated tourist routes
- Provide temporary tax relief and reduced toll taxes for registered tour operators to lower package costs.
- Explore public-private partnerships for conversion of tourist transport fleets to more fuel-efficient or alternative energy vehicles.

## Sindh flags Tarbela delays, warns of Kharif water crisis



Sindh Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro warned that delays in Tarbela Dam infrastructure works by Wapda threaten the upcoming kharif crop season. Outflows have been restricted to 150,000 cusecs due to constraints in Tunnel-4 and Tunnel-5, with repairs potentially reducing flows to 45,000 cusecs. A cumulative 75,000 cusecs may be unavailable during the 2026 kharif season.

### Analysis:

The delays highlight persistent interprovincial water management tensions, with Sindh facing potential shortages despite adequate reservoir levels. Wapda's failure to meet the 33-month deadline (expired June 2025) and deferred testing of low-level outlets undermine Irsa's ability to ensure equitable water distribution under the 1991 Accord. The situation could severely impact Sindh's farm sector, where kharif sowing is already underway.

### Way Forward:

- Direct Wapda to submit a firm, time-bound completion plan with monthly progress reports to Irsa and provincial stakeholders.
- Convene an emergency Irsa meeting to develop alternative water allocation mechanisms for kharif season given reduced outflow capacity.
- Explore temporary operational adjustments to maximize available flows while ensuring dam safety protocols are maintained.

# SECURITY AND LAW & ORDER

**B** order post attack foiled in KP; 37 terrorists killed: Tarar



Security forces foiled an attack on a border post in KP's Ghulam Khan Sector, killing 37 attackers and injuring over 80. The incident occurred during Operation Ghazab lil-Haq, which resumed on March 26 after a temporary pause. Overall, 796 terrorists and Afghan Taliban operatives have been killed and 286 posts destroyed since operations began.

### Analysis:

The foiled attack demonstrates continued cross-border militant activity despite Pakistan's military pressure and diplomatic engagement. The high casualty ratio (37 killed vs no reported security force deaths) indicates effective defensive preparedness. Operation Ghazab lil-Haq's resumption after a brief pause suggests Pakistan remains committed to its counterterrorism objectives regardless of international mediation efforts.

### Way Forward:

- Continue intelligence-based operations to pre-empt future attacks before they reach border posts.
- Coordinate with Afghan authorities through established military communication channels to demand action against terrorist sanctuaries.
- Document cross-border attacks for presentation at international forums to build pressure for Afghan compliance.

**F** IA to use AI for tracking down 'most wanted criminals'



The FIA has developed an AI-based system to track criminals by visualizing their current appearance from old photographs, accounting for changes like baldness or beards. The updated digital "red book" will be accessible online to officers and the public, containing details on CNICs, passports, bank accounts, FIRs, and modus operandi. The system targets 143 most wanted human traffickers initially.

### Analysis:

The AI integration represents a significant leap in Pakistan's law enforcement capabilities, addressing the long-standing challenge of criminals evading identification through physical changes. Public access to the red book could enhance citizen vigilance but raises privacy and data protection concerns. The move toward digitized investigations and e-governance within FIA aligns with broader institutional modernization efforts.

### Way Forward:

- Establish clear data protection protocols and access controls to prevent misuse of sensitive criminal information.
- Regularly update the AI model with new criminal data and validate accuracy through field testing
- Coordinate with provincial police and Interpol to share AI-generated visuals for cross-jurisdictional criminal tracking.

# HEALTH

## 8 '80pc provincial population lack primary healthcare': Balochistan Health Secretary



The Health Secretary of Balochistan stated that over 80% of the population lacks access to primary healthcare due to poor infrastructure, limited resources, and geographical challenges. Despite reforms like promoting doctors, digitisation, and planned telemedicine with SUPARCO, major gaps still exist.

### Analysis:

This highlights severe inequality in healthcare compared to provinces like Punjab, mainly due to budget constraints and weak infrastructure. While reforms are a positive step, without sustained investment and human resource development, improvements may remain limited.

### Way Forward:

- Build and upgrade Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural Health Centres (RHCs) in remote areas to ensure wider access.
- Effectively utilize satellite connectivity with SUPARCO to deliver healthcare services in hard-to-reach areas.
- Introduce strict monitoring systems and performance-based evaluation for healthcare staff.

## M mpox cases rise in Sindh, other provinces



A suspected outbreak of Mpox in Sindh (especially Khairpur and Sukkur) has triggered a federal investigation led by National Institute of Health, after confirmed cases including among newborns and at least seven neonatal deaths. Tensions have arisen as federal authorities accuse the provincial government of underreporting despite lab confirmations and growing transmission.

### Analysis:

The situation highlights serious gaps in disease surveillance, coordination, and transparency, which could worsen outbreak control. Delayed acknowledgment risks wider community spread and weakens Pakistan's compliance with World Health Organization reporting standards. Immediate unified response, data sharing, and strict containment measures are critical to prevent escalation into a larger public health crisis.

### Way Forward:

- The Sindh government should formally acknowledge the Mpox outbreak and ensure real-time data sharing with federal authorities to enable coordinated action.
- Expand diagnostic capacity through the National Institute of Health and provincial labs, with active case finding, contact tracing, and genomic sequencing to understand transmission patterns.
- Special focus on newborns and healthcare settings by enforcing strict infection prevention protocols, isolating suspected cases, and training medical staff.

# INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

---

## T rump's ultimatum: threat or tactic?



Donald Trump issued an ultimatum to Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz or face potential strikes on key infrastructure. While the threat signals urgency, analysts remain divided on whether it indicates imminent military action or a pressure tactic.

### Analysis:

The situation reflects high geopolitical risk, as any conflict could disrupt global oil supply and trigger economic instability. However, given past patterns, the ultimatum is likely a coercive strategy to force negotiations, though miscalculation could still escalate tensions.

### Way Forward:

- Pakistan should avoid taking sides between United States and Iran, while advocating peaceful resolution through dialogue.
- Develop contingency plans for oil supply disruptions due to tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, including strategic reserves and alternative suppliers.
- Coordinate with Gulf countries and regional partners to maintain stability and safeguard economic interests.

## I sraeli strikes target Iran's petrochemical facilities



The conflict between Israel and Iran escalated as US-Israeli strikes hit Iran's petrochemical facilities, airports, and residential areas, causing civilian casualties and killing key military officials. Iran and its allies responded with coordinated missile and drone attacks on Israeli cities and US bases in the Gulf, leading to further deaths and regional instability.

### Analysis:

The strikes on energy infrastructure (like South Pars) signal a shift toward economic warfare, increasing the risk of prolonged conflict. Iran's multi-front retaliation (via allies) shows widening regional involvement, raising chances of a broader Middle East war. The targeting of US bases indicates direct escalation beyond proxy conflict, making de-escalation more difficult.

### Way Forward:

- Heighten monitoring along western borders to prevent spillover of militancy or refugee influx, especially given proximity to Iran.
- Advocate dialogue over military escalation, emphasizing regional stability, as prolonged conflict threatens trade routes and economic recovery for Pakistan.
- Maintain a careful diplomatic balance between Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States to avoid entanglement while protecting national interests.

# INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**B**angladesh's FM arrives in India as neighbours start resetting ties



Khalilur Rahman visited India, marking the first high-level engagement under the new Bangladeshi government led by Tarique Rahman. The visit aims to reset strained ties following tensions after the ousting of Sheikh Hasina and policy disputes between the two neighbors.

## Analysis:

The visit signals cautious normalization, with both sides recognizing mutual dependence despite political mistrust. However, unresolved issues like Hasina's presence in India and shifting public sentiment in Bangladesh may limit rapid progress. Sustainable ties will depend on pragmatic cooperation and addressing past diplomatic grievances.

## Way Forward:

- Pakistan should welcome improved ties between Bangladesh and India, as reduced tensions contribute to overall South Asian peace and economic stability.
- Expand trade opportunities with Bangladesh in textiles, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture to build mutually beneficial ties independent of India-centric dynamics.
- Pakistan should assess how shifts in Bangladesh's foreign policy impact regional alignments and adapt its diplomatic strategy accordingly.

**R**ussia, China veto UN resolution on Hormuz



At the UN Security Council, Russia and China vetoed a Bahrain-drafted resolution aimed at securing and reopening the Strait of Hormuz amid escalating regional tensions. The vote was 11 in favour, 2 against, and 2 abstentions, with Pakistan and Colombia abstaining while Western states largely supported the resolution.

## Analysis:

The outcome highlights deep geopolitical divisions, with Russia and China opposing Western-led maritime security efforts while the US and allies maintain broad international support. Pakistan's abstention reflects its balancing diplomacy between competing blocs. The failure of the resolution may push key powers toward unilateral or coalition-based security arrangements outside the UN framework.

## Way Forward:

- Maintain a neutral and balanced position between Western bloc countries and China and Russia, avoiding alignment with any single power bloc.
- Maintain a neutral and balanced position between Western bloc countries and China and Russia, avoiding alignment with any single power bloc.
- Prepare for potential oil price shocks by diversifying energy imports and strengthening strategic reserves.

# INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

**I**ran war live: Vance says no deal reached, US has made 'best, final offer'



US Vice President JD Vance left Islamabad after face-to-face talks with Iran ended without a deal, stating the US had made its "best and final offer." Iran's Foreign Ministry acknowledged agreement on several points but noted that no deal was expected in a single day. Iranian media suggested the US was seeking an excuse to exit the talks.

## Analysis:

The absence of a breakthrough after historic direct talks in Islamabad highlights the deep gaps between US and Iranian positions despite Pakistan's mediation efforts. While Iran signals willingness for continued negotiations, the US "final offer" framing suggests Washington may be losing patience. Pakistan's role as host remains diplomatically significant even without an immediate deal.

## Way Forward:

- Continue facilitating communication between parties to prevent collapse of diplomatic channels.
- Coordinate with China and other regional partners to sustain momentum toward de-escalation.
- Prepare for a potential next round of talks while prioritising Lebanon's inclusion in the ceasefire.

**T**aiwan opposition leader to make 'peace' visit to China, first in 10 years



Cheng Li-wun, the chairwoman of Taiwan's opposition Kuomintang (KMT) party, will embark on a high-profile "journey for peace" to China, marking the first such visit in a decade. During her trip, she will meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, emphasizing the importance of maintaining peace and avoiding conflict across the Taiwan Strait.

## Analysis:

The visit signifies a strategic attempt by the KMT to position itself as the only party capable of maintaining a functional dialogue with Beijing to avert military conflict. However, the move risks alienating younger, sovereignty-minded voters who view such high-level engagements as a potential compromise of Taiwan's autonomy. Ultimately, the visit underscores the deep internal polarization in Taiwan over how to balance economic and security interests with its powerful neighbor.

## Way Forward:

- The visit may lead to the reopening of lower-level technical and economic dialogues potentially easing trade restrictions on Taiwanese goods.
- Pressurise the ruling party to refine its own strategy for managing cross-strait relations without appearing weak.
- The visit places Washington in a delicate position; it will closely monitor these engagements to ensure they do not result in "behind-the-scenes" agreements that undermine the U.S.-led security framework in the Indo-Pacific.

# POLICY NUGGETS

## 1 Pakistan repays \$1.4 billion Eurobond amid rising external pressure

### Impact:

Adds strain on foreign exchange reserves and may challenge exchange rate stability amid rising global fuel prices.

### Recommendation:

Strengthen export performance, sustain remittance inflows, and ensure prudent reserve management.

*“Stability in finance depends not on avoiding debt, but on managing it wisely.” – John Maynard Keynes*

## 4 PSX surges over 9% after US-Iran ceasefire optimism

### Impact:

Boosts investor confidence and signals improved economic outlook amid easing geopolitical tensions.

### Recommendation:

Maintain macroeconomic stability and investor-friendly policies to sustain market momentum and attract long-term investment.

*“The stock market is filled with individuals who know the price of everything, but the value of nothing.” – Benjamin Graham*

## 7 Visas Issued to Indian Sikh Pilgrims for Baisakhi

### Impact:

Religious diplomacy strengthens people-to-people ties and fosters cross-border goodwill despite strained relations.

### Recommendation:

Institutionalize faith-based exchanges to sustain soft diplomacy and regional trust-building.

*“Peace is not merely the absence of war; it is the presence of justice.” – Martin Luther King Jr.*

## 2 Pakistan monitors remittances amid Middle East conflict

### Impact:

Heavy reliance on Gulf remittances, exposes Pakistan to external shocks and prolonged economic uncertainty.

### Recommendation:

Diversify remittance sources and strengthen domestic economic resilience to reduce dependence on volatile regions.

*“Economic resilience requires diversity, not dependence.” – Christine Lagarde*

## 5 Global leaders praise Pakistan’s mediation in US-Iran ceasefire

### Impact:

Enhances Pakistan’s diplomatic standing and highlights its role as a key peace broker in regional and global conflicts.

### Recommendation:

Leverage this diplomatic momentum to strengthen international partnerships and promote long-term regional stability initiatives.

*“Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal.” – Martin Luther King Jr.*

## 8 Pakistan-Afghanistan Talks in China Show Diplomatic Progress

### Impact

Constructive dialogue signals cautious improvement in bilateral ties, linking trade normalization with security cooperation.

### Recommendation:

Sustain structured engagement with verifiable commitments to build long-term regional stability.

*“Jaw-jaw is better than war-war.” – Winston Churchill*

## 3 World Bank to fund \$300m rural water project in Sindh

### Impact:

Improved access to safe drinking water and hygiene services, addressing widespread water contamination and public health risks.

### Recommendation:

Ensure strong local governance, maintenance systems, and community awareness to sustain long-term WASH outcomes.

*“Access to safe water is a basic human right, not a privilege.” – Ban Ki-moon*

## 6 National Assembly unites over Pakistan’s diplomatic success in US-Iran ceasefire

### Impact:

Reflects rare political consensus, strengthening national unity and boosting Pakistan’s global diplomatic credibility.

### Recommendation:

Capitalise on this unity to build long-term consensus on foreign policy and internal governance reforms.

*“Unity is strength, when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved.” – Mattie Stepanek*

## 9 Pakistan and Türkiye Deepen Judicial and Defence Cooperation

### Impact

Expanding institutional and defence ties enhances strategic alignment and capacity-building between both states.

### Recommendation:

Translate agreements into joint training, legal cooperation, and defence production initiatives.

*“The best weapon against an enemy is another enemy.” – Friedrich Nietzsche*



## **Editorial Team**

**Dr. Naveed Elahi  
Naeema Naeem  
Jahanzeb Waheed**

## **Editorial Assistants**

**Saffa Amjad  
Barraaq Sohail  
Laiba Tanveer  
Abdul Wakeel**

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

**Email: [polycypulse.nipp@nspp.gov.pk](mailto:polycypulse.nipp@nspp.gov.pk)**