



Weekly



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OVERVIEW



This week's Policy Pulse's theme is institutional effectiveness strengthening enforcement, improving service delivery, and enhancing resilience to both domestic and external shocks.

In governance, weak regulatory enforcement in schools continue to violate scholarship quotas, undermining educational equity and accountability. Balochistan's introduction of digital monitoring for field officers signals shift toward transparency, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's approval of an AI Education Authority reflects efforts to modernize education through technology.

Socio-economic developments reveal that peak-hour power outages underscore ongoing inefficiencies in the energy sector, while the HIV outbreak in Taunsa exposes serious failures in healthcare governance and infection control. Simultaneously, Punjab's reassessment of air raid shelters signals growing emphasis on civil defence preparedness amid regional tensions.

In health, Pakistan's medical tourism initiative reflects a strategic attempt to position the country as a competitive healthcare destination, though quality assurance remains critical.

Internationally, geopolitical tensions intensify as US actions in the Gulf expose vulnerabilities in global energy and food security. Emerging multi-polar alignments, including China-Spain engagement and US-led Middle East talks, reflect a shifting global order. Pakistan's facilitation of US-Iran dialogue highlights its growing diplomatic relevance.

The policy nuggets reinforce priorities of governance reform, public health oversight, energy resilience, and proactive diplomacy.

Overall, the week underscores the need to align institutional reforms with economic and diplomatic strategies in an increasingly complex global environment.

Pakistan's medical tourism initiative reflects a strategic attempt to position the country as a competitive healthcare destination, though quality assurance remains critical.

GOVERNANCE

P rivate schools pocketing over Rs5bn by ignoring scholarship quota, Islamabad High Court informed



Private schools in Islamabad allegedly ignored the mandatory 10% scholarship quota under the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2012, depriving around 38,900 students of free education and retaining Rs5–6 billion annually. The issue surfaced in the Islamabad High Court, but the petition was withdrawn before a final ruling despite evidence of widespread non-compliance.

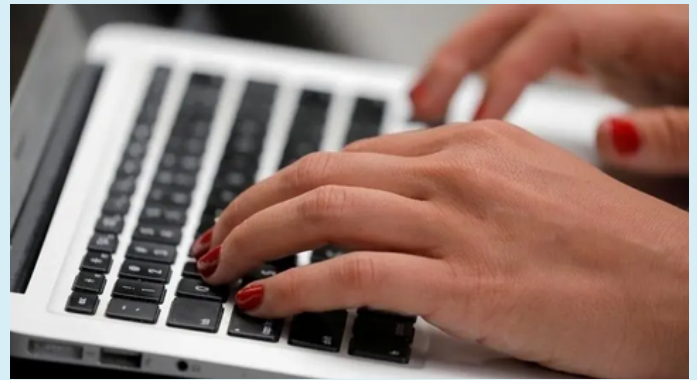
Analysis:

This reflects a serious gap between law and enforcement, highlighting weak regulatory capacity of Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority. The withdrawal of the case raises concerns about accountability, suggesting elite capture and regulatory failure that undermines educational equity and policy effectiveness.

Way Forward:

- Inform low-income families about their rights under the law so they can demand free seats.
- Align enforcement with initiatives like “No Child Left Behind” to maximize impact and reduce out-of-school children more effectively.
- Conduct third-party forensic audits of private schools under Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority to verify actual scholarship allocations and financial compliance.

B alochistan to begin digital monitoring for field officers



The Government of Balochistan has decided to introduce a digital, location-based monitoring system to track attendance and performance of field officers and oversee development projects in real time. Sarfraz Bugti also set a June deadline for project completion and warned of strict action against absent officers.

Analysis:

This move aims to improve governance through transparency and accountability, addressing long-standing issues of absenteeism and weak field supervision. However, its success will depend on consistent enforcement, technical capacity, and resistance from bureaucratic inertia.

Way Forward:

- Ensure the digital monitoring system is fully operational across all districts with proper infrastructure under the Government of Balochistan.
- Introduce a transparent dashboard showing project progress and officer attendance to strengthen public trust and oversight.
- Train field officers and administrative staff to effectively use digital tools, minimizing resistance and technical errors

GOVERNANCE

C M Afridi okays establishment of AI Education Authority



The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has approved the creation of an AI Education Authority to modernize learning through virtual schools and AI-based teaching systems. The initiative includes pilot projects in 46 schools and plans to expand digital education across the province.

Analysis:

This reform signals a major shift toward technology-driven education aimed at improving access in remote areas and reducing teacher workload. However, its success will depend on infrastructure readiness, teacher training, and ensuring equal digital access for all students.

Way Forward:

- Ensure the newly approved AI Education Authority in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is fully operational with clear governance, funding, and accountability structures.
- Upgrade internet connectivity, electricity supply, and digital devices in public schools, especially in remote and merged districts.
- Provide large-scale training programs to help teachers effectively integrate AI tools and virtual learning platforms into classrooms.

C op martyred as polio security team ambushed in Hangu



A police constable was martyred and four others injured in an ambush by terrorists targeting a security escort for polio teams in Thall tehsil, Hangu, during Pakistan's nationwide polio campaign (April 13–19). Police retaliated, killing two attackers, while the vaccination drive continued as scheduled across the country.

Analysis:

This incident highlights ongoing militant threats against polio workers and security forces in KP, despite a decline in poliovirus-affected districts from 82 in 2025 to 23 in 2026. It underscores persistent security challenges that continue to hinder eradication efforts in high-risk regions.

Way Forward:

- Enhance security protocols for polio teams in high-risk districts, including reinforced escorts and real-time threat intelligence sharing.
- Deliver awareness campaigns in far off areas to resolve the misunderstanding and conspiracies against polio.
- Strengthen community engagement initiatives in affected areas to build local trust and counter militant narratives against vaccination.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

2 .25-hour-long power outages introduced



Pakistan has introduced 2.25-hour peak-time electricity suspensions under a “Peak Hours Relief Strategy” to manage rising energy demand and avoid higher tariffs. The plan follows recent small tariff reductions and aims to reduce reliance on costly fuel-based power generation.

Analysis:

The policy shows short-term energy management to stabilize prices amid supply constraints and rising demand. However, it also reflects ongoing structural issues in Pakistan’s power sector, especially dependence on expensive fuels and weak peak-load planning.

Way Forward:

- Accelerate solar, wind, and hydropower projects in Pakistan to reduce dependence on furnace oil and imported fuels.
- Introduce smart metering and time-of-use tariffs to shift industrial and household consumption away from peak hours instead of relying on outages.
- Develop a consistent national energy policy to avoid reactive measures like scheduled power suspensions and ensure sustainable affordability.

B BC documentary links govt hospital to HIV outbreak in Taunsa



A BBC Eye Investigation documentary alleges serious infection control breaches at THQ Hospital Taunsa, claiming at least 331 children tested HIV-positive between November 2024 and October 2025 due to unsafe injection practices. Undercover footage reportedly shows nurses injecting through clothing, reusing syringes, and unqualified volunteers using blood-contaminated vials.

Analysis:

It exposes systemic failures in infection control protocols at public health facilities, with devastating consequences for vulnerable populations. The hospital’s initial denial and claim that footage was “staged” undermines public trust, while affected families face both medical and social consequences including stigma. The discrepancy between BBC findings and official claims highlights accountability gaps in Pakistan’s healthcare oversight mechanisms.

Way Forward:

- Launch an independent, transparent judicial inquiry into THQ Hospital Taunsa and hold Punjab govt responsible for inadequate management.
- Conduct immediate infection control audits at all government hospitals in Punjab, prioritizing high-risk facilities.
- Establish a permanent compensation and long-term medical care fund for HIV-affected children and families.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

A HPC Act: PMA warns new law can lead to ‘legalising’ quackery



The Pakistan Medical Association has expressed alarm over the government's unilateral enforcement of the Allied Health Professionals Council Act, warning it could create a legal loophole for unauthorised medical practice. With the June 30, 2026 registration deadline approaching, the PMA claims the Act allows technicians to open independent clinics without medical supervision, calling it "legalised quackery" that contradicts provincial healthcare commission laws.

Analysis:

The dispute highlights a fundamental tension between regulating allied health professionals and protecting clinical boundaries. Without clear scope-of-practice definitions, unsupervised technicians could perform procedures beyond their competence, undermining decades of anti-quackery efforts by provincial healthcare commissions.

Way Forward:

- Suspend the June 30 registration deadline immediately and establish a joint committee of PMA, PMDC, and allied health representatives to redefine scope of practice.
- Harmonise AHPC Act with provincial Healthcare Commission Acts to ensure allied professionals work only under medical supervision.
- Develop clear, legally enforceable guidelines distinguishing clinical practice (doctors only) from technical support roles.

P unjab launches reassessment of air raid shelters



The Directorate of Civil Defence Punjab has ordered a province-wide fresh survey of air raid shelters, deeming the May 2025 exercise inadequate in scope and safety standards. The directive requires identifying underground spaces including basements, malls, and parking areas, with capacity to cover at least 3% of urban population. All districts must complete surveys within seven days.

Analysis:

The renewed survey signals heightened civil defence preparedness amid escalating regional tensions. Stricter safety requirements include blast-resistant structures, multiple exits, ventilation, backup power, and sanitation. It suggests authorities are moving beyond nominal compliance toward functional readiness. The seven-day deadline indicates urgency, though implementation quality will depend on district-level capacity and coordination.

Way Forward:

- Prioritize high-population urban centres for shelter identification and public awareness of shelter locations
- Develop maintenance schedules and periodic drills to ensure shelters remain functional when needed
- Coordinate with provincial disaster management authorities to integrate air raid shelters into broader emergency response frameworks

HEALTH

Pakistan launches medical tourism initiative under Special Investment Facilitation Council



Pakistan has launched a national medical tourism initiative under the Special Investment Facilitation Council to promote the country as a hub for affordable, high-quality surgical care. The initiative was highlighted during an international plastic surgery conference, alongside progress in telemedicine services, improving access and reducing healthcare costs.

Analysis:

This reflects a strategic shift to attract foreign investment and boost the health sector's global competitiveness while improving domestic healthcare delivery. However, success will depend on maintaining quality standards, international accreditation, and strengthening healthcare infrastructure and trust.

Way Forward:

- Ensure hospitals meet global benchmarks (e.g., JCI-level standards) to build trust in Pakistan as a safe medical tourism destination.
- Strengthen coordination under the Special Investment Facilitation Council to align health, tourism, visa, and investment policies.
- Launch targeted international campaigns highlighting Pakistan's cost-effective, high-quality surgical services.

Mpox cases rise to 25 as two more test positive in Sindh



Mpox cases in Sindh have risen to 25 with nine deaths reported this year, with new local transmission cases identified in Karachi and Khairpur. Health officials confirm 122 suspected cases overall, with Khairpur emerging as the main hotspot.

Analysis:

The spread of locally transmitted mpox highlights gaps in infection control, surveillance, and hospital hygiene systems. Weak transparency and delayed response measures could further accelerate outbreaks unless isolation, contact tracing, and hospital preparedness are significantly strengthened.

Way Forward:

- Expand real-time disease monitoring across Sindh to quickly detect and contain new mpox cases.
- Enforce mandatory infection prevention protocols in all public and private hospitals, especially in neonatal and infectious disease units.
- Special focus on newborns and healthcare settings by enforcing strict infection prevention protocols, isolating suspected cases, and training medical staff.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Australia appoints woman to lead army for first time



Australia has appointed Susan Coyle as its first-ever female army chief, marking a historic leadership shift in the military. The move comes amid broader defence reshuffles and efforts to increase female representation within the armed forces.

Analysis:

The appointment signals progress toward gender inclusion and institutional reform in the Australian Defence Force, especially amid past allegations of harassment and discrimination. However, symbolic leadership change must be matched with structural reforms to ensure lasting cultural and gender equity improvements.

Way Forward:

- Learn from Australian Defence Force by gradually increasing women's representation in leadership roles within Pakistan Armed Forces.
- Create transparent promotion systems ensuring capable female officers can rise to senior command positions.
- Strengthen policies against harassment and discrimination to build a secure and inclusive environment.

US naval blockade sparks global energy, food fears



A reported US naval blockade of Iran has escalated Gulf tensions, disrupting global energy and fertilizer markets, with oil and urea prices sharply rising. The crisis threatens global food security, especially for import-dependent countries like Pakistan, amid warnings from China and Russia about escalation risks.

Analysis:

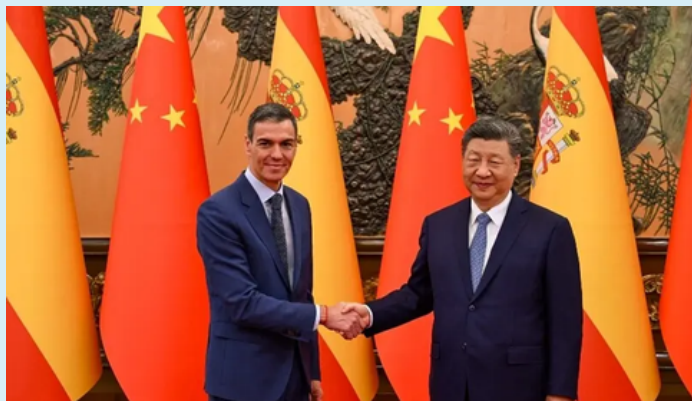
The situation highlights how geopolitical conflict in critical chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz can trigger a chain reaction—energy shocks → fertilizer inflation → food insecurity. For vulnerable economies, this exposes structural dependence on imports and the urgent need for energy and agricultural resilience policies.

Way Forward:

- Promote efficient fertilizer use, precision farming, and subsidies targeting small farmers to offset rising input costs.
- Build and maintain strategic petroleum and fertilizer reserves to manage short-term supply disruptions and price volatility.
- Maintain neutral, balanced diplomacy between United States, Iran, and China to safeguard economic and strategic interests.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

China, Spain call for closer ties amid ‘crumbling’ world order



China and Spain have called for stronger bilateral ties amid concerns over a “crumbling” global order, following talks between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. The discussions also covered trade cooperation and international conflicts including Gaza, Lebanon, and Ukraine.

Analysis:

The meeting reflects a broader shift toward multipolar diplomacy, where middle powers seek deeper engagement with China amid uncertainty in Western-led global structures. However, differing geopolitical alignments and trade imbalances may limit the depth of long-term strategic convergence.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan should continue a balanced diplomatic approach by strengthening ties with both Western countries and emerging powers like China while avoiding bloc politics.
- Actively engage in forums such as the UN, SCO, and OIC to support a rules-based international order and protect interests of developing nations amid global instability.
- Expand trade diversification by increasing exports to Europe, including countries like Spain, while reducing overdependence on limited markets.

US hosts ‘rare’ direct talks between Lebanon and Israel



The United States hosted rare direct talks in Washington between envoys of Israel and Lebanon, aimed at exploring ways to reduce tensions and address the ongoing conflict linked to Hezbollah. The meeting was supported by multiple countries, including European partners, calling for dialogue and stability in the region.

Analysis:

The talks mark a cautious diplomatic breakthrough in a decades-long state of hostility, but deep disagreements, especially over Hezbollah’s role and ceasefire conditions, limit immediate progress. Success depends on whether both sides can shift from security hardlines toward phased de-escalation.

Way Forward:

- Pakistan should continue supporting direct negotiations between Israel and Lebanon to reduce regional tensions and prevent wider conflict spillover.
- Encourage Pakistan’s role in facilitating indirect or multilateral diplomacy in Middle East conflicts, leveraging its credibility with various Muslim countries.
- Call for protection of civilians and increased humanitarian access in conflict-affected areas to reduce suffering and displacement..

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

T rump eyes round two of Islamabad talks within days



President Trump hinted at a possible second round of Iran-US talks in Islamabad within days, praising Pakistan's efforts and showing his satisfaction to return for the talks. The remarks follow the inaugural direct dialogue mediated by Pakistan which ended without an agreement after nearly 21 hours of talks. Trump contrasted Pakistan's role positively against "some country that has nothing to do with it".

Analysis:

Trump's public praise of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts signals Washington's appreciation for Islamabad's unique position as a trusted intermediary between the US and Iran. The suggestion of returning for further talks validates the country's diplomatic credibility and strategic relevance. It highlights Pakistan's diplomatic leadership in the global arena. However, the "naval blockade" escalation simultaneously applies military pressure, reflecting Washington's dual-track approach of diplomacy backed by force.

Way Forward:

- Leverage Pakistan's emerging mediator role to enhance diplomatic standing with both Washington and Tehran.
- Coordinate with Chinese, Saudi and other regional partners to support sustained dialogue rather than episodic negotiations.
- Ensure civilian and military leadership remain aligned on Pakistan's mediation objectives and messaging.

M exico, Spain and Brazil call for Cuba's sovereignty to be protected



The leaders of Mexico, Spain, and Brazil issued a joint statement calling for Cuba's sovereignty to be respected amid an ongoing US pressure campaign under President Trump, expressing "great concern" about the humanitarian crisis on the island. The three countries pledged to coordinate increased humanitarian aid and warned against actions contrary to international law.

Analysis:

The joint statement represents a significant diplomatic rebuke to US unilateral pressure tactics, with major Latin American and European powers collectively defending Cuba's sovereignty. Trump's threats of potential military action against Cuba, coupled with existing sanctions on Venezuelan oil imports affecting Cuba's energy supplies, have intensified the humanitarian crisis. The Barcelona gathering of leftist leaders underscores growing international opposition to Trump's interventionist foreign policy.

Way Forward:

- Support multilateral diplomatic efforts at the UN and other forums to uphold Cuba's sovereign rights under international law.
- Coordinate with like-minded countries, including OIC members, to oppose US' coercive initiatives against developing nations.
- Monitor humanitarian conditions in Cuba and contribute to international aid efforts as appropriate.

POLICY NUGGETS

1 Sindh strengthens governance through administrative reforms

Impact:

Improves service delivery and protection of public assets through structured governance systems.

Recommendation:

Institutionalise merit-based recruitment and standardised service structures across enforcement bodies.

“Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.”

– Kofi Annan

2 International humanitarian aid to Pakistan

Impact:

Strengthens emergency food security and livelihood recovery in disaster-affected communities.

Recommendation:

Strengthen national disaster preparedness systems through sustained partnerships with international donors.

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” – Helen Keller

3 Mandatory women representation in public decision-making.

Impact:

Enhances institutional responsiveness through broader representation in policy decisions.

Recommendation:

Ensure merit-based implementation of gender quotas supported by leadership training.

“There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.” – Kofi Annan

4 Proposed tax rationalisation on mobile imports

Impact:

Strengthens digital accessibility while influencing consumer affordability of smart devices.

Recommendation:

Adopt a balanced tax framework that promotes affordable digital access without undermining fiscal stability.

“Access to technology is a great equalizer in education and economic opportunity.” – Bill Gates

5 SOEs park Rs1tr outside Federal Fund

Impact:

Reduces government liquidity available for debt management and public spending, forcing the state to borrow at higher costs.

Recommendation:

Strictly enforce the Public Finance Management framework to ensure timely transfer of public funds into the Federal Consolidated Fund.

“Transparency is the currency of trust.” – Howard Schultz

6 Pakistan-Italy cooperation strengthens protection against cultural smuggling

Impact:

Enhances institutional capacity strengthens cross-border enforcement against antiquities trafficking.

Recommendation:

Formalise sustained intelligence-sharing frameworks and expand specialised training for cultural crime units.

“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.” – Marcus Garvey

7 Trump Signals Islamabad Visit Amid Iran Deal Prospects

Impact:

Prospective US presidential visit reflects Pakistan’s rising diplomatic relevance as a mediator in high-stakes global negotiations.

Recommendation:

Convert diplomatic momentum into a structured facilitation framework, anchored in multilateral legitimacy.

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

8 HIV Outbreak in Taunsa Exposes Public Health Gaps

Impact:

The outbreak signals critical failures in infection control, surveillance, and healthcare governance with serious transmission risks.

Recommendation:

Strengthen regulatory oversight, enforce infection protocols, and expand real-time disease surveillance systems.

“There can be no real growth without healthy populations. No sustainable development without tackling disease” – Harlem Brundtland

9 Iran War Highlights Asia's Fossil Fuel Vulnerability

Impact:

Hormuz disruptions expose Asia's dangerous over-reliance on a single energy corridor, fuelling inflation and economic instability.

Recommendation:

Accelerate renewable transition and diversify supply routes to reduce single-corridor dependency.

“The starting point for energy security today is diversification of supplies and sources.” – Daniel Yergin



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