



WEEKLY POLICY PULSE

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC POLICY

Vol. 9 Issue No. 109

28 SEPT-4 OCT 2026





The central theme is institutional strengthening and economic management advancing governance reform, digital innovation, and diplomatic engagement amid fiscal pressures and security challenges.

This week's Policy Pulse examines key developments across governance, socio-economic affairs, security and law and order, and international affairs, highlighting Pakistan's efforts to strengthen institutions, improve economic management, and address domestic and regional challenges.

In Governance, the Federal Constitutional Court introduced new procedural rules to facilitate fundamental rights litigation, while the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority clarified its lack of statutory authority to impose social media age restrictions. Other developments include preparations for Lahore's Basant festival under safety regulations, enhanced anti-smog enforcement by Punjab's Environmental Protection Agency, clarification of evidentiary standards in paternity cases, and proposed regulatory reforms to facilitate business and investment.

In Socio-Economic Affairs, the Federal Board of Revenue announced stricter enforcement against non-compliant retailers amid limited participation in its fixed-tax scheme. Sindh approved a Rs9.5 billion security training academy, while discussions on potential US EXIM financing covered PIA aircraft, refinery upgrades, and the Reko Diq project. Meanwhile, Qatar's extension of force majeure on LNG supplies raised concerns about Pakistan's winter energy security and industrial activity.

Under Security and Law and Order, authorities directed intensified action against cybercrime, including online financial fraud, harassment, and digital blackmail. Federal-provincial disagreements over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's security situation also highlighted the need for coordinated counterterrorism policies and effective resource utilisation.

In International Affairs, Pakistan prepared to host an SCO National Coordinators' Council meeting and advanced space cooperation with China through astronaut training. Regional tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz and the Indus Waters Treaty underscored concerns about energy supplies, water security, and regional stability.

The Policy Nuggets further address glacial flood risks, plastic pollution, ethical concerns surrounding digital mental healthcare, workplace harassment law, public debt, economic growth, and renewed conflict in Yemen.

Overall, the week's developments underscore the importance of effective governance, sustainable economic policies, coordinated security measures, climate resilience, and sustained diplomacy in advancing Pakistan's national interests.

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Policy Nuggets

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F CC frames rules on fundamental rights



The Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) notified the Federal Constitutional Court (Practice and Procedure) Rules, 2026 under Article 191 of the Constitution. The new procedural rules mandate that habeas corpus petitions meeting prescribed requirements be fixed for hearing within seven days of filing, while removing all court fees for criminal petitions to improve direct legal accessibility.

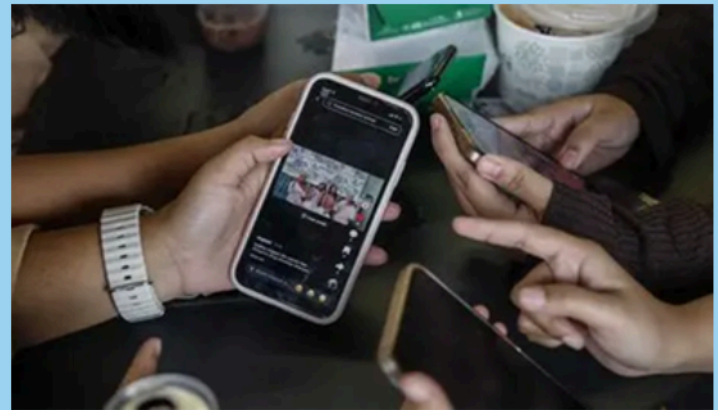
Analysis

By fixing a mandatory seven-day hearing timeline for habeas corpus cases and waiving fees on criminal petitions, the court aims to streamline fundamental rights litigation and reduce procedural bottlenecks in human rights oversight.

Way Forward

- Establish dedicated benches to enforce the seven-day statutory timeline for habeas corpus and urgent fundamental rights petitions.
- Integrate automated e-filing portals to streamline petition verification and reduce pre-hearing administrative delays.
- Partner with district bar associations to ensure indigent litigants benefit from court-fee waivers in criminal constitutional matters.

P TA tells IHC it can't impose social media age limits



PTA submitted a formal reply to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) regarding a petition seeking a social media ban for under-16s, stating it lacks statutory authority under current laws to prescribe age limits or mandate age verification. The regulator clarified that content oversight duties are transitioning toward newly established regulatory frameworks.

Analysis

PTA's submission highlights the widening gap between traditional telecom regulation and modern digital platform oversight. Demanding blanket age restrictions without enabling legislation or technical capability risks technical overreach or platform bans.

Way Forward

- Introduce comprehensive parliamentary legislation establishing clear statutory standards for youth online safety and data privacy.
- Partner directly with global tech companies to implement localized, privacy-compliant age verification protocols.
- Clarify regulatory jurisdictions between PTA and emerging cyber bodies to prevent legal vacuums during institutional transitions.

Lahorites to celebrate 10-day Basant fest



Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz approved a 10-day Basant schedule for Lahore, Jan 29–Feb 7, 2027, continuing the cultural revival initiated in early 2026 after an 18-year ban. Authorities mandated registration for kite manufacturers, banned hazardous chemical/metal wires, and enforced motorcycle safety guards.

Analysis

Structuring Basant into a regulated calendar event boosts local heritage tourism while mitigating public safety hazards. Its long-term viability hinges on strict enforcement against lethal strings across urban zones.

Way Forward

- Monitored production hubs to eliminate illegal chemical and metallic wire sales before the festival.
- Mandate protective wire guards on two-wheelers across urban transit corridors during festival days.
- Promote open public parks for kite-flying to reduce residential urban risks.

EPA introduces night squads, drones for pre-smog operations



The Punjab Environment Protection Agency (EPA) deployed special night squads and drone surveillance across high-risk corridors to combat emissions ahead of the peak winter smog season. In a 24-hour province-wide drive, teams inspected 431 brick kilns and 269 industrial units, while imposing fines for non-compliance with environmental protocols, plastic ban, and suction-hood requirements.

Analysis

While tech-driven enforcement improves operational coverage, sustained reduction in regional Air Quality Index (AQI) levels depends on penalizing persistent industrial offenders and offering subsidized agricultural alternative equipment.

Way Forward

- Expand drone surveillance corridors along motorways to detect stubble burning and illegal kiln operations in real time.
- Mandate industrial suction hoods and wet scrubbers across urban industrial zones through automated compliance audits.
- Scale subsidies for mechanized harvesters to curb crop residue burning across agrarian belts.

DNA Test of Alleged Father's Kin Not Conclusive on Paternity: SC



The Supreme Court ruled that a DNA test involving a relative of an alleged father, without a direct DNA comparison with the alleged father, cannot conclusively establish paternity. The court said DNA findings must be assessed alongside NADRA and Union Council records, documents, and witness testimony.

Analysis

The ruling clarifies the evidentiary limits of indirect DNA testing in paternity cases. It reinforces the need for courts to assess genetic evidence together with official records and other available evidence.

Way Forward

- Ensure courts assess indirect DNA evidence alongside other relevant evidence.
- Strengthen coordination and accuracy of NADRA and Union Council records.
- Provide clear judicial guidance on the evidentiary use of kinship-based DNA testing.

Reforms Indispensable to Facilitate Business: PM



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed regulatory reforms to simplify business activities, promote investment and make the regulatory system more transparent and business-friendly. He also ordered the establishment of a regulatory registry covering existing rules and requirements and called for coordination with provincial governments.

Analysis

A comprehensive regulatory registry and coordination between federal and provincial authorities could help identify unnecessary regulations and improve the business environment. Effective implementation and regular review will be important to ensure reforms translate into easier business operations and greater investment.

Way Forward

- Establish and regularly update a comprehensive national regulatory registry.
- Coordinate federal and provincial reforms to remove unnecessary and overlapping regulations.
- Monitor reforms through measurable indicators of business facilitation, investment and service delivery.

FBR set to launch crackdown as retailers snub 1pc tax scheme



The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) announced a nationwide crackdown on nearly one million non-compliant retailers after its simplified 1% fixed tax scheme yields negligible participation. FBR Chairman Rashid Mahmood Langrial confirmed prompting a transition toward coercive enforcement, including account freezes, business closures, and mandatory tax registration.

Analysis

The failure of voluntary fixed-tax schemes highlights the persistent political and administrative difficulty of bringing Pakistan's informal retail sector into the documented tax net. Executing targeted enforcement is critical to meeting IMF-mandated revenue targets, though it risks triggering organized trader strikes and political resistance across major urban commercial hubs.

Way Forward

- Leverage utility bills, banking transactions, and POS data to automatically issue tax notices to non-compliant commercial entities.
- Resist political pressure for repeated scheme extensions and proceed with statutory penalties against persistent non-filers.
- Establish structured consultations with central trader bodies to minimize market disruptions while enforcing registration.

Murad okays Rs9.5bn security training academy at Chaukhandi



Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah approved a Rs9.5 billion integrated Special Security Unit (SSU) headquarters and security training academy at Chaukhandi, Karachi. The academy will feature advanced police training facilities, weapon simulators, and residential accommodation for officers, trainees, and their families.

Analysis

Establishing a centralized security academy enhances the Sindh Police's capacity for specialized counter-terrorism and tactical operations. Modernizing training infrastructure with advanced simulation tech builds long-term operational readiness across specialized law enforcement units.

Way Forward

- Monitor project completion schedules strictly to prevent cost overruns across development phases.
- Incorporate advanced counter-terrorism, simulation technology, and urban response modules into core officer training.
- Ensure infrastructure work near the historic Chaukhandi area adheres to environmental and heritage preservation norms.

Aurangzeb's US Exim Talks Cover Financing for Boeing Aircraft: Adviser



Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb discussed potential US Export-Import Bank (EXIM) financing for Boeing aircraft for privatised PIA, refinery upgrades, and the Reko Diq copper and gold mining project. Adviser Khurram Schehzad clarified that the government was facilitating access to financing and suppliers, not purchasing aircraft or announcing a sovereign guarantee or taxpayer-funded loan.

Analysis

Potential US EXIM financing could support PIA's fleet requirements and investment in strategic sectors while facilitating economic cooperation between Pakistan and the United States. However, financing terms, creditworthiness assessments, and repayment arrangements will be important to ensure that these projects remain financially sustainable without creating additional fiscal liabilities.

Way Forward

- Ensure transparent financing agreements and independent assessments of repayment capacity before proceeding with aircraft procurement or major investments.
- Strengthen PIA's financial and operational performance to improve its ability to secure financing without relying on government guarantees.
- Establish clear monitoring mechanisms for refinery upgrades and the Reko Diq project to promote accountability, investment efficiency, and long-term economic benefits.

Winter LNG Supply at Risk as Qatar Extends LNG Force Majeure



QatarEnergy has extended force majeure on LNG supplies to Pakistan until November 6, 2026, citing security-related disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz. The extension raises concerns about meeting Pakistan's winter energy needs, with potential implications for power generation, fertiliser production, and industrial and export sectors. Pakistan is exploring alternative LNG sources, including spot-market purchases, while seeking to secure additional cargoes.

Analysis

Continued LNG disruptions could increase Pakistan's energy import costs and intensify competition for limited gas supplies during December and January. Reduced RLNG availability may affect electricity generation, fertiliser production, and industrial output, potentially disrupting exports and increasing pressure on the economy. Prioritising domestic consumers while maintaining essential industrial operations will require careful energy management.

Way Forward

- Diversify LNG suppliers and explore alternative import arrangements to reduce dependence on a single source and minimise winter supply disruptions.
- Develop a transparent gas-allocation plan that prioritises essential domestic needs while considering the requirements of power generation, fertiliser production, and export-oriented industries.
- Accelerate investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and domestic gas infrastructure to reduce reliance on imported LNG and strengthen long-term energy security.

Naqvi orders intensified crackdown on cybercrimes



Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi directed the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) to intensify operations against online financial fraud, digital blackmail, harassment and organised cybercrime networks. He also ordered faster complaint handling, audits of pending investigations, improved digital forensic capabilities and specialised training for investigators.

Analysis

The initiative highlights the need to strengthen Pakistan's institutional capacity to address increasingly sophisticated cybercrimes and protect citizens' financial security and digital privacy. Effective implementation will depend on timely investigations, coordination among relevant institutions, accountability and safeguards for citizens' rights.

Way Forward

- Strengthen enforcement capacity by upgrading digital forensic facilities, training investigators and improving coordination among the NCCIA, FIA, banks and relevant institutions to trace offenders and recover stolen funds.
- Improve complaint resolution through rapid-response mechanisms, timely investigations and transparent monitoring of case progress, particularly in cases involving financial fraud, online harassment and digital blackmail.
- Promote public awareness and digital safety through nationwide campaigns on online scams, secure financial transactions, privacy protection and reporting mechanisms, with particular attention to women, children and other vulnerable users.

Centre Asks KP CM to Choose Between Pakistan and Afghanistan



The federal and KP governments exchanged accusations over the province's worsening security situation, counterterrorism funding, and police capacity. The federal government raised concerns over resource utilisation and possible governor's rule, while the KP government called for a change in the existing security strategy and greater provincial involvement.

Analysis

Rising terrorism and reported increases in police casualties highlight gaps in security coordination and capacity. Continued federal-provincial political confrontation could complicate efforts to develop a unified response to the security challenge.

Way Forward

- Establish a federal-provincial coordination mechanism involving relevant security institutions to develop a unified counterterrorism strategy with clearly defined responsibilities.
- Conduct transparent, independent audits of counterterrorism funds and prioritise essential police and CTD requirements, including protective equipment, modern weapons, training, and forensic facilities.
- Convene an inclusive consultation involving the federal and KP governments, security institutions, and political stakeholders to review existing policies and agree on measures to protect civilians and security personnel.

Pakistan to host first SCO national coordinators' meeting amid Islamabad security curbs



Pakistan will host the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) National Coordinators' Council three-day meeting in Islamabad, preparing for the upcoming Heads of Government summit. Federal authorities instituted strict capital security protocols, including commercial closures and traffic diversions across key corridors.

Analysis

Hosting SCO coordinators reinforces Islamabad's multilateral role in Eurasian security and economic cooperation. However, enforcing heavy urban lockdowns underscores ongoing friction between securing high-level international diplomatic events and maintaining daily commercial movement in the capital.

Way Forward

- Use SCO leadership to position Pakistan as the primary transit corridor connecting Central Asian states with global sea routes.
- Pakistan should adopt smart, non-intrusive security protocols during international summits to protect delegates without paralyzing Islamabad's commercial life.
- Pakistan should leverage SCO security frameworks to secure multilateral support against cross-border terrorism threats on western border.

2 Pakistani pilots train in China for historic space mission



Pakistani pilots Zeeshan Ali and Khurram Daud are training at Beijing's China Astronaut Research and Training Centre for a mission to China's Tiangong space station. Under a SUPARCO-CMSA agreement, one pilot will join as a payload specialist becoming Pakistan's first astronaut in orbit to conduct microgravity experiments on food security and climate resilience.

Analysis

Embedding pilots in China's human spaceflight program expands strategic bilateral cooperation into high-technology and orbital research. Participating in crewed missions builds indigenous scientific capabilities and accelerates technology transfer without requiring capital-intensive launch infrastructure.

Way Forward

- Pakistan should expand SUPARCO's research capacity to apply space-based biotech findings toward domestic agricultural resilience.
- Pakistan can leverage spaceflight cooperation to secure participation in upcoming lunar and satellite research programs.
- Use the historic mission to advance specialized aerospace engineering curricula across Pakistani universities.

Iran Threatens New Strikes as It Awaits US Response to Hormuz Plan



Iran threatened further attacks on regional infrastructure as it awaited a US response to its proposal for reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran has linked reopening the waterway to conditions including a regional ceasefire, sanctions relief, and the unfreezing of Iranian assets.

Analysis

Continued tensions around the Strait of Hormuz pose risks to regional security, global oil and LNG supplies, and energy prices. The situation also reflects ongoing diplomatic efforts involving Iran, the United States, Qatar and other regional actors.

Way Forward

- Diversify energy import sources and strengthen contingency plans to manage possible disruptions in oil and LNG supplies.
- Maintain diplomatic engagement with Iran, the US and Gulf states while supporting de-escalation and freedom of navigation.
- Closely monitor global energy prices and minimise the impact of external supply disruptions on Pakistan's economy and consumers.

IWT Abeyance Puts Millions at Risk, Experts Warn



Experts at a Geneva event held alongside the UN Human Rights Council session warned that India's decision to place the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in abeyance threatens water security, agriculture and the livelihoods of millions dependent on the Indus Basin. The discussion highlighted the Permanent Court of Arbitration's position that the treaty remains in force and stressed the need for legal mechanisms, dialogue and transboundary cooperation.

Analysis

The dispute raises serious concerns for Pakistan's water security, food production and vulnerable downstream communities. Continued reliance on legal and diplomatic mechanisms is essential to uphold treaty obligations and prevent water-related tensions from escalating.

Way Forward

- Pursue legal and diplomatic engagement to uphold the IWT and relevant international decisions.
- Strengthen water conservation, storage, and efficient irrigation to reduce vulnerability to potential disruptions.
- Mobilise international support for rules-based transboundary water cooperation and the protection of downstream communities.

01

OVER 60 GLOF-PRONE LAKES EMERGE IN LESS THAN TWO MONTHS

Impact: Rapid glacial melt in Gilgit-Baltistan and KP drastically elevates flash flood risks, threatening downstream mountain communities and vital infrastructure.

Recommendation: Must deploy automated satellite-based sensor monitoring and construct protective infrastructure in high-risk glacial valleys.

"Glacial lake outburst floods are an immediate, devastating reality of warming temperatures in northern Pakistan, requiring proactive adaptation."

Sherry Rehman

02

PAKISTAN REJECTS TALIBAN'S NURISTAN VIOLENCE ALLEGATIONS AS 'FRIVOLOUS, BASELESS'

Impact: Cross-border accusations heighten diplomatic friction and complicate counterterrorism collaboration along the Pak-Afghan frontier.

Recommendation: Ministry of Foreign Affairs should utilize official intelligence-sharing channels to de-escalate rhetoric and enforce border monitoring mechanisms.

"Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding."

Albert Einstein

03

PLASTIC POLLUTION REACHES NEW CRISIS LEVELS: SHERRY

Impact: Uncontrolled single-use plastic waste clogs urban drainage networks, amplifies urban flooding risks, and damages marine ecosystems.

Recommendation: EPAs must strictly enforce plastic bans, incentivize biodegradable alternatives, and mandate extended producer responsibility.

"We are drowning in plastic, and the cost to our planet and public health is rapidly becoming irreversible."

Inger Andersen

04

TECHNOLOGY ALONE CAN'T FIX MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS WITHOUT ETHICS, MOOT TOLD

Impact: Unregulated integration of AI and digital tools in mental healthcare introduces critical data privacy risks, misdiagnoses, and ethical breaches.

Recommendation: Establish strict ethical governance frameworks and clinical oversight protocols for digital mental health platforms.

"Technology is a tool, not a substitute for human empathy and ethical care."

Vivek Murthy

05

SEXUAL ELEMENT ESSENTIAL FOR WORKPLACE HARASSMENT CASE: FCC

Impact: Clarifies the scope of the workplace harassment law while distinguishing sexual harassment from other forms of inappropriate workplace conduct.

Recommendation: Strengthen workplace grievance mechanisms and ensure that conduct falling outside the Act is addressed through appropriate disciplinary and service rules.

"Violence and harassment in the world of work ... is a threat to dignity, health and well-being."

International Labour Organization (ILO)

06

PAKISTAN OUTLINES FY27 BORROWING PLAN AS IMF RAISES DEBT CONCERNS

Impact: The high gross financing requirement highlights Pakistan's continued debt vulnerability and the need for prudent borrowing and stronger fiscal management.

Recommendation: Strengthen revenue mobilisation, control non-essential expenditure, and prioritise longer-term borrowing to reduce refinancing risks and improve debt sustainability.

"Structural reforms and sound fiscal and monetary policies are essential to creating the foundation for stronger and better-balanced global growth."

Kristalina Georgieva

07

SHEHBAZ RINGS LSE OPENING BELL, LAUNCHES \$3BN EUROBOND

Impact: The \$3 billion Eurobond issuance expands Pakistan's access to international capital markets and diversifies external financing, while increasing future debt-servicing obligations.

Recommendation: Use external borrowing prudently for productive purposes while maintaining debt sustainability, fiscal discipline, and investor confidence through continued structural reforms.

"Advancing and deepening structural reforms is the only way to sustainably boost long-term growth."

International Monetary Fund

08

FOCUS ON GROWTH, JOBS, EXPORTS AS ECONOMIC STABILITY ACHIEVED: PM

Impact: The shift from economic stabilisation to growth highlights the need to translate improved macroeconomic indicators into higher productivity, employment, investment, and export earnings.

Recommendation: Prioritise productivity-enhancing investment, export diversification, skills development, and private-sector-led job creation to sustain economic growth.

"We will continue our journey toward the goal of export-led economic growth through sustained hard work."

Shehbaz Sharif

09

OVER 80 KILLED IN CLASHES BETWEEN HOUTHIS, SAUDI-BACKED FORCES IN YEMEN

Impact: Renewed fighting in Taiz threatens civilians and could further disrupt security around the Bab al-Mandab Strait, a vital route for global trade and energy flows.

Recommendation: Support UN-led diplomatic efforts, protection of civilians, and measures to safeguard freedom of navigation and humanitarian access in the Red Sea region.

"Further escalation risks grave consequences for international peace and security, global energy markets, food security, and the economies of countries far beyond the region."

Khaled Khiari



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