

# COUNTRY ANALYSIS REPORT

13<sup>th</sup> Edition

 **accountabilitylab**  
PAKISTAN

**MARCH**  
1<sup>st</sup> -13<sup>th</sup>



# SUMMARY

*In the month of March, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered the provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to hold elections within 90 days, citing the importance of parliamentary democracy, despite concerns about security due to a recent surge in terrorist activities. Former premier Imran Khan has been issued two non-bailable arrest warrants for failing to appear in court for the Toshakhana reference case and allegedly threatening a female session judge. Pakistan has sought assistance from the US to revive its stalled loan program from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), while Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has criticized the IMF for treating Pakistan unfairly. The finance minister, Ishaq Dar, expressed confidence in the country's resilience despite economic challenges and refuted speculations about potential debt defaults.*

*In other news, the sixth Aurat March (Women's March) in Pakistan turned violent in Islamabad, with protestors being baton-charged by police. In the Noor Mukadam murder case, the Islamabad High Court upheld Zahir Jaffer's death sentence and converted his 25-year jail term into a second death penalty. The US intelligence community's annual threat assessment report warned Pakistan about the potential of increased tensions between India and Pakistan, with the disputed Kashmir region being a possible flashpoint. Authorities from Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to facilitate trade and pedestrian movement at the Torkham Border, and the US State Department expressed availability for India and Pakistan to address their long-standing disputes.*

# POLITICAL UPDATES

## Supreme Court Directs Provincial Assemblies in Pakistan to Hold Elections within 90 Days:

The Supreme Court has directed the provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) to hold [elections within 90 days](#). In its order, the court stated, "Parliamentary democracy is one of the salient features of the constitution.

There can be no parliamentary democracy without parliament or the provincial assemblies. The periodic holding of elections, therefore, underpins the very fabric of the constitution." The assemblies were previously dissolved on former Premier Imran Khan's directive in a bid to force early elections.

After the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) proposed holding elections in Punjab between April 30th and May 7th, Pakistan's President, Dr. Arif Alvi, directed that the [elections in Punjab](#) will be held on April 30th.



Picture Source: Al-Jazeera

## Security Concerns Loom Over Upcoming Elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:

During a meeting of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to deliberate on security arrangements for the upcoming general elections, representatives from the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Intelligence Bureau (IB), and Counter Terrorism Departments proposed [postponing the elections for three to four months](#).



The representatives argued that the current security situation in the country is not conducive for holding elections, citing the recent surge in terrorist activities. However, the PTI leadership attributed this to an attempt by the government to delay elections.

## Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi Appointed President of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf:

Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, former Punjab chief minister who recently joined Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has been [appointed as the party's president](#).

This move follows Elahi's decision last month to formally join the PTI, along with ten former provincial assembly members, which was not unexpected for those closely following the political situation in Punjab.

Elahi's decision to join the PTI came after his sacking as the Punjab president of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) and the revocation of his basic membership by the party's president, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain.

Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, former Punjab chief minister who recently joined Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has been appointed as the party's president.

## Pakistani Government Makes Toshkhana Records Public For The First Time:

On the instruction of the Lahore High Court, the federal government of Pakistan has [made public the Toshkhana](#) (gift depository) since the year 2002, which is the official gift depository for gifts received by former presidents, prime ministers, and government officials. This marks the first time that the Pakistani government has disclosed the recipients of such gifts.

Imran Khan, the former premier of Pakistan, had been accused of not disclosing the gifts he received from the Toshkhana and from foreign heads of state.

He was indicted in a Toshkhana reference case, and on March 13th, he was [issued two non-bailable arrest](#) after failing to appear in court for the case and for allegedly threatening a female session judge.



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS AND INDICATORS

## Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF):

On March 13th, Pakistan [decided to seek assistance](#) from Washington to revive its stalled loan program from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) following a delay in the much-needed bailout package. The government claims to have met the major demands and believes there is no need for further delay in reaching a staff-level agreement.

Completion of the ninth review of the \$7 billion loan program, which has been delayed since last year, would result in a disbursement of \$1.2 billion and also unlock inflows from friendly countries.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed his view that the IMF is treating Pakistan unfairly, stating that the country is facing a ["perfect storm"](#) of crises.

## Despite Economic Challenges, Pakistani Finance Minister Expresses Confidence in Country's Resilience:

During a [press conference](#) on March 3rd, the finance minister, Ishaq Dar, refuted speculations about Pakistan's potential default on its debts and assured that the country's economic indicators are progressing positively.



Picture Source: DAWN

Dar also reported an increase in foreign exchange reserves and stated that foreign commercial banks are extending facilities to Pakistan. He expressed optimism that Pakistan will overcome its current economic challenges.

## Public Pulse Report Issued by Gallup Pakistan:

According to the [Public Pulse report by Gallup Pakistan](#), a research organization, with an error margin of 3-4%, the key findings of the survey from its Nationally Representative Survey reveal that a majority of Pakistanis, 62%, hold the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) responsible for the current economic instability in the country.

The report also indicates that 20% of Pakistanis have reported losing their jobs in the past six months.

# SECURITY AND RULE-OF-LAW SITUATION

## TTP's Stronghold in KP Province Poses a Risk to Pakistan's Electoral Process:

The Tehreek-i-Taliban (TTP) Pakistan, previously weakened, has emerged as a [significant threat to Pakistan](#), which is already grappling with economic challenges. Concerns have been raised with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding the proscribed group's strong presence in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, as the much-anticipated elections are scheduled for 30th April in Punjab.

The dismal state of the security situation in the country could undermine the democratic process and potentially jeopardize the electoral process.



## Mastermind of Headquarters Attack in Karachi Eliminated:

During a recent security operation, [the mastermind behind last month's attack on Karachi police headquarters has been eliminated](#). According to Pakistan's Counter Terrorism Department, the mastermind, Riaz Ullah, along with his accomplices, was killed.



## Suicide Attack in Sibi, Baluchistan:

On March 6th, a suicide bomber riding a motorcycle targeted a police truck in the restive southwest region of Pakistan. The [attack](#) resulted in the death of 10 police officers and left 12 others injured, making it one of the deadliest attacks on security forces in recent times. The Tehreek-e-Jihad militant group, which was recently formed, claimed responsibility for the attack through a statement released several hours later. The incident occurred on a bridge located in the Sibi district of Baluchistan province.

# SOCIAL SECTOR INDICATORS AND DEVELOPMENTS

## Prioritizing Primary Healthcare Spending Key to Ensure Pakistan's National Security:

The Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) and the Health Services Academy (HAS) recently organized a grand [national event titled "Health Security,"](#) which emphasized the crucial role of health in ensuring national security. Former federal health ministers and public health officials warned that Pakistan's security cannot be guaranteed unless it prioritizes spending on primary healthcare, preventive measures, and health promotion.

They recommended increasing the budget allocation for primary healthcare instead of focusing on establishing tertiary and secondary health facilities. To achieve the recommended 5 percent increase in the next eight years, they suggested that the government allocate at least 0.5 percent of the GDP annually towards healthcare.

# ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATES

## Water scarcity is the primary challenge for Pakistan, says federal minister for climate change Sherry Rehman:

Sherry Rehman, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environment, discussed the [catastrophic impact of climate change](#) on all living beings in the ecosystem, including humans. Rehman stressed the urgency of proactively addressing this issue to mitigate its effects. During the discussion, the minister also highlighted the impact of warfare on the environment and biodiversity and how it exacerbates the climate crisis. She emphasized that the devastating floods that have affected Pakistan are not limited to the country alone but will have global consequences. According to Rehman, the climate crisis poses a significant water challenge for Pakistan. She gave these remarks during her participation in the Maritime Expo & Conference 2023 in Karachi.

Sherry Rehman, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environment, stressed the urgency of proactively addressing this issue to mitigate its effects. The minister also highlighted the impact of warfare on the environment and biodiversity and how it exacerbates the climate crisis.



# STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

## Violence surrounds Aurat March (women's march) in Islamabad:

On March 8th, International Women's Day is celebrated worldwide, providing women with an opportunity to express their concerns and opinions, and most importantly, celebrate womanhood.

In Pakistan, tens of thousands of women gathered in major cities such as Islamabad, Lahore, Multan, and Hyderabad to participate in the sixth Aurat March (Women's March). However, over the years, this march has been surrounded by controversy.

Unfortunately, this year's march turned violent in Islamabad when protestors crossed the no-go area and were baton-charged by the police.

The Interior Minister, Rana Sanaulah, announced via Twitter that the police personnel responsible for the mistreatment of citizens have been suspended and that appropriate action will be taken against anyone involved in the incident.



Picture Source: DAWN

## Zahir Jaffer Sentenced to Death Twice in Noor Mukadam Murder Case:

Zahir Jaffer, the primary accused in the Noor Mukadam murder case, had his death sentence upheld by the Islamabad High Court, with his 25-year jail term also being converted into a second death penalty. Noor, who was 27 years old, was murdered at Jaffer's residence in Islamabad's Sector F-7/4 on July 20th, 2021. Earlier, on February 24th, 2022, Jaffer was sentenced to death by an Islamabad sessions court.





# FOREIGN RELATIONS

## Indo-Pak:

The Kashmir region, a disputed territory between India and Pakistan, remains a potential flashpoint between the two archrivals. The US intelligence community's [annual threat assessment report](#) warns Pakistan about the increased tensions between the two countries, stating that it has the potential to escalate into a conventional war, with the disputed Kashmir region being the possible flashpoint. The US intelligence threat assessment report [acknowledges the desire for peace](#) between India and Pakistan. However, it also expresses concerns that efforts toward achieving this goal may be disrupted by perceptions of increased tensions between the two nations.

## U.S-Pak:

The US State Department spokesperson, Ned Price, expressed [U.S availability](#) for India and Pakistan to address their long-standing disputes. However, he emphasized that the decision to initiate such dialogue must be made by the two neighboring countries themselves. Price stated that the United States is committed to being a partner and will assist in the process in any way that is deemed appropriate by India and Pakistan.

## Af-Pak:

At a meeting of the Pak-Afghan Border Management Committee held at the Afghan customs offices in the Gumrak area on Wednesday, authorities from Pakistan and Afghanistan [agreed to facilitate trade and pedestrian movement at the Torkham Border](#). During the meeting, attendees discussed the recent one-week unilateral closure of the Torkham border by Afghan border forces on Feb 19.

The closure was due to allegations of Pakistani forces mistreating Afghan patients and preventing them and their caregivers from entering Afghanistan without visas.



Picture Source: Pakistan Today

# RECOMMENDED READINGS

A nation for the rich, by the rich, Published by Express Tribune

Link: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2405722/a-nation-for-the-rich-by-the-rich>

Gallup Pakistan released Public Pulse Report

Link: <https://www.gallup.com.pk/post/32893>

“Has IMF failed Pakistan?”, Published by Dawn News

Link: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1741391/has-imf-failed-pakistan>

Tax or not to tax, Published by Express Tribune

Link: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2405776/to-tax-or-not-to-tax>

“Rebuilding Pakistan: how much should rich nations help?”, Published by Financial Times

Link: <https://www.ft.com/content/70b2f2ed-8826-4ed4-b67a-4880e72e711f>

“The Other Half”, Published by Dawn News

Link: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1740992/the-other-half>

The need for a new development paradigm, Published by Express Tribune

Link: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2405771/the-need-for-a-new-development-paradigm>