

COUNTRY ANALYSIS REPORT

14th Edition



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SUMMARY

The Country Analysis Report's 14th edition highlights the increased political polarization, which escalated into violent clashes between the police and supporters of the former premier following his arrest. The report also mentions the Finance Minister's statement about Pakistan's sovereign right to determine the limit of its nuclear weapons amid ongoing IMF negotiations.

Additionally, it discusses the surge in Covid-19 cases in Pakistan and the healthcare crisis in the country's prisons, as reported by Human Rights Watch. The report also covers Pakistan's decision not to attend the U.S.-led Summit for Democracy and explores potential reasons for this decision.

POLITICAL UPDATES

Arrest Warrants Against Imran Khan Cancelled After Court Appearance Amidst Police Raid on His Residence:

While the political temperature has been on the rise for the last few weeks, the government's attempt to arrest Imran Khan and use of force against PTI workers has further exacerbated the political tensions. Non-bailable arrest warrants were issued against Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case, just hours after he was granted bail in two other cases by the anti-terrorism court and the banking court.

Imran Khan was required to appear before Additional Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal, but his absence led to the rejection of his application for exemption from personal attendance, and the [issuance of the arrest warrants](#). Later, the Islamabad police, led by Superintendent of Police (SP) City, went to Zaman Park, Khan's residence in Lahore to enforce the warrant.



Picture Source: The Strait Times

The attempts to arrest Imran Khan [turned violent](#) when Khan's supporters resisted their leader's arrest. It was [reported](#) that during the clashes, PTI supporters threw stones at the law enforcement agencies while police retaliated with tear gas canisters. The clashes lasted for two days and halted when later, on March 18th, Imran Khan appeared in court, and the arrest warrants against him were [cancelled](#).

Khan arrived at the court building in the midst of confrontations between his party's supporters and the police. During his absence from his Lahore residence, the police had gathered with heavy machinery and water cannons for a raid.

Videos showed police using cranes to break through the main gate of Khan's house and baton-charging the PTI workers who resisted their entrance. Khan denounced the raid, stating that it had occurred while his wife was alone at home and said it was "illegal".

Pakistan Faces Constitutional Crisis as Government Seeks to Limit Supreme Court's Powers:

Pakistan is facing a constitutional crisis amidst ongoing political turmoil. On March 28th, the government of Pakistan presented a bill in the national assembly, called the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023, [aimed at curbing the powers](#) of the Supreme Court, which according to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif created "political instability" in the country.

The legislation was introduced after the Supreme Court initiated a suo motu notice of the Election Commission of Pakistan's delay in conducting provincial elections in Punjab. Under the constitution of Pakistan, elections take place naturally within 90 days of the dissolution of the government.

Some legal experts have welcomed the proposed amendments to limit the Supreme Court's powers, however, have termed the manner as ["questionable"](#) and ["problematic"](#).

PTI Chairman Unveils 10-Point Program to Tackle Economic Crisis:

The Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Imran Khan, delivered a speech at Minar-e-Pakistan. During his speech, he presented a [10-point program](#) aimed at resolving Pakistan's economic crisis.

The program included incentivizing overseas Pakistanis to invest in the country and facilitating those who export and bring remittances to Pakistan.

He further highlighted that he is currently facing [150 legal cases](#) against him of which 40 are terrorism cases. The former Premier's speech at Minar-e-Pakistan not only outlined his plans to address Pakistan's economic crisis but also hinted at his preparedness for the upcoming elections. By announcing a comprehensive 10-point program, he appeared to have begun his election campaign.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS AND INDICATORS

IMF and Its “Uncustomary” Behavior:

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar made a [clear statement](#) on the floor of the senate, stating that Pakistan has the sovereign right to determine the range of its missiles and the development of its nuclear weapons and that no one has the authority to dictate these decisions. The statement came amidst the ongoing IMF negotiations, which have been delayed.

He later clarified that his statement was not in response to any demands made by the IMF or any other country during the negotiations and that the delay in staff-level meetings is purely technical. This marks the first time the finance minister has discussed the issue in the public sphere. However, it has been [reported](#) that there has been a longstanding demand by Western countries to abandon the long-range nuclear missile programme.



Picture Source: The Express Tribune

Pakistan was Removed from High-Risk Third Countries by the EU:

In a move that is anticipated to improve Pakistan's condition for business activity, the European Union removed [Pakistan from high-risk third countries](#). “The new development would add to the comfort level of the European economic operators and is likely to ease the cost and time of legal and financial transactions by Pakistani entities and individuals in the EU,” the statement said by Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce.

State Bank Removed Condition of Advance Payments on Imports:

State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) [lifted](#) the requirement for 100% advance payments on imports of 826 items, this means reopening the import of a wide range of goods that were previously restricted.

This includes essential raw materials for cement and steel, vehicle parts, confectioneries, chocolate, mineral water, cigarette paper, electrical and electronic goods, machinery, and parts.

Analysts have viewed this decision as a positive development for the country. Additionally, it is [expected](#) that the State Bank of Pakistan will increase interest rates by 2% in order to meet the conditions of the stalled IMF programme.

SECURITY AND RULE-OF-LAW SITUATION

CJP on Timeframe for Security Situation to Improve:

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial asked the ministries of interior and defence to [provide a timeframe](#) for when the security situation would improve enough to hold timely elections, in response to arguments made by the Elections Commission of Pakistan (ECP) about security threats. The CJP made these remarks during a hearing of a case against the ECP's decision to postpone the Punjab Assembly elections. The ECP had [postponed the elections](#) from April 30 to October 8 due to security concerns and lack

of resources, which the PTI challenged in the Supreme Court as unconstitutional and illegal. The security concerns had been raised by the security agencies of Pakistan, citing there is an unwelcome presence of terrorists in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



Pakistan Temporarily Closes Chinese-Run Businesses to Prevent Terrorist Attacks:

In a bid to safeguard diplomatic ties between Islamabad and Beijing, Pakistani security authorities have decided to temporarily close down businesses operated by Chinese nationals, aiming to prevent potential terrorist attacks that could jeopardize their relationship.

In the past, separatist groups have targeted Chinese citizens in Pakistan, making them a primary target.

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs had earlier issued a warning to its citizens at high risk of such attacks.



SOCIAL SECTOR INDICATORS AND DEVELOPMENTS

HEC Ceases Awarding NOCs to New Universities:

The Federal Minister of Education, Rana Tanveer Hussain, has asked the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to ban awarding NOCs to new universities, aiming to enhance the quality of education and research in the current universities.

The minister has also instructed to take strict action against any university that has been established without obtaining a NOC from HEC, as mentioned in an official letter.

Pakistan Continues to Record an Increase in Covid-19 Cases:

Pakistan continues to record an increase in Covid-19 cases. Pakistan's health authorities reported 50 new COVID-19 cases across the country in the span of 24 hours, as of 28th March, 2023, according to data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH).

The positivity ratio of cases was 1.77%, and 23 patients were reported to be in critical condition.

Application Launched to Provide Free Online Education:

The Ministry of Federal Education has developed a mobile application called "Teleschool Pakistan" to provide free online education to students of all grades, which was officially launched by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. He emphasized the importance of utilizing all available resources and efforts to introduce modern modes of education to students, including digitization initiatives and providing the latest training to teachers.



Picture Source: The Express Tribune

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATES

U.S. and Pakistan Commit Partnership in Climate and Agriculture:

The United States and Pakistan pledged to partner with each other in various areas, including strengthening fertilizer efficiency for local farmers through a \$4.5 million programme from the US Department of Agriculture at the conclusion of the second meeting of the Climate and Environment Working Group.

The meeting included discussions on the devastating floods in Pakistan last year and the importance of building resilience to the impacts of climate change. Moreover, the U.S. expressed support for Pakistan's Living Indus Initiative and both the governments recommitted to tackling the climate crisis through cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The Health Care Crisis in Pakistan's Over-Crowded Prisons:

Human Rights Watch [released a report](#) titled, "A Nightmare for Everyone: The Health Care Crisis in Pakistan's Prisons," which outlines the pervasive inadequacies in the health care provided in Pakistan's prisons and the consequences for the approximately 88,000 individuals in custody. The [report mentions](#) that Pakistan's prison system is among the most overcrowded in the world, with cells built for a maximum of 3 people but accommodating as many as 15.

This severe overcrowding has exacerbated existing healthcare problems, putting inmates at risk of contracting infectious diseases and preventing them from accessing even the most basic medical care and treatment, including in emergency situations.



Picture Source: Raw pixel

Absence of Government Accountability in Pakistan, says the U.S. Government Annual Human Rights Practices Report:

According to the [U.S. government's annual report](#) on human rights practices, there is a notable absence of government accountability in Pakistan, with instances of corruption and misconduct by security services being reported frequently.

Additionally, the report states, there is a lack of investigations and punishment of government officials for reported human rights violations and corrupt activities.



FOREIGN RELATIONS

Indo-Pak:

The absence of Pakistan and Chinese government officials at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meetings serve as an element that exacerbates tensions between the already strained India and Pakistan relations. China and Pakistan officials had decided to attend the meeting "virtually." Previously, Pakistan initiated internal discussions to determine whether it would participate in the meetings of the defence and foreign ministers of the (SCO) held in India.

Sino-Pak:

The report, titled "The Future of the China-Pakistan Military Relationship," states that while the current status of the China-Pakistan relationship is a "threshold alliance," it may not progress further due to China's own missteps or active measures taken by its opponents to restrain the relationship.

A recent report conducted by researchers from the World Bank and Harvard Kennedy School that between 2008 and 2021, China invested \$240 billion in bailing out 22 developing nations, with the amount rising significantly in recent years as more countries struggled to repay loans obtained for "Belt and Road" infrastructure projects.

It was also revealed that nearly 80% of the loans were made between 2016 and 2021, primarily to middle-income nations such as Argentina, Mongolia, and Pakistan.

However, China's lending activities have declined since 2016 due to many projects' inability to provide the expected financial returns.

U.S-Pak:

Pakistan announced that it will not participate in the U.S.-led Summit for Democracy, which is being held in Washington and has invited 120 global leaders. This decision is believed to be an attempt by Pakistan to avoid displeasing its longstanding ally China, which was not invited to the summit. While the Foreign Ministry in Pakistan expressed gratitude for the invitation, Pakistan was also not part of the first and only other summit held in December 2021. The Foreign Ministry's statement indicated that Pakistan would work bilaterally with the U.S. and co-hosts of the Summit to promote democratic principles, strengthen values, advance human rights, and fight against corruption.



Picture Source: Global Forum For Media and Development

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Economic growth is not a magic wand for ending poverty, Published by The Guardian

Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/mar/20/economic-growth-is-not-a-magic-wand-for-ending-poverty>

Vox Populai, Published by Dawn

Link: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1743492/vox-populi>

Deadly Toilet Troubles, Published by Asia Democracy Chronicles

Link: <https://adnchronicles.org/2023/03/24/deadly-toilet-troubles/>

Plan B on the economy? Published by Dawn

Link: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2408325/plan-b-on-economy>

Social Movements in Asia, from silos to Strength, Published by Asia Democracy Chronicles

Link: <https://adnchronicles.org/2023/03/02/social-movements-in-asia-from-silos-to-strength/>