

# COUNTRY ANALYSIS REPORT

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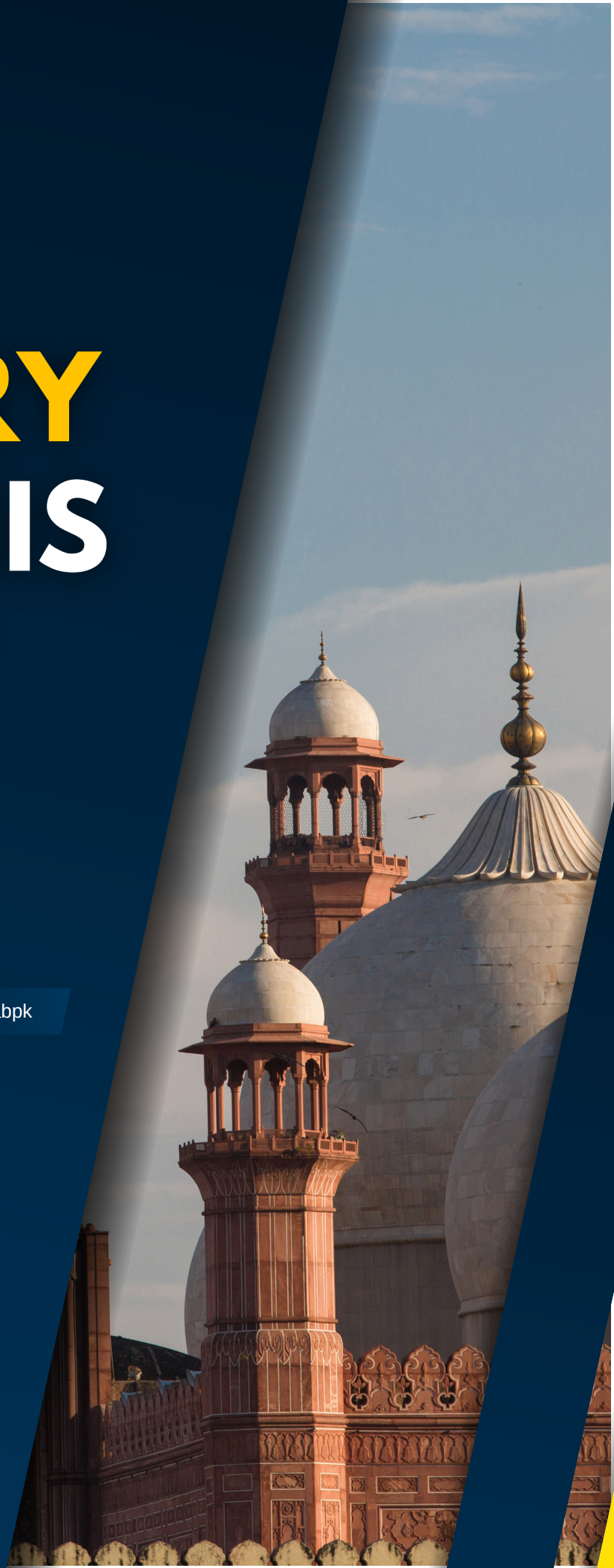
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# Executive Summary

The report offers a comprehensive examination of Pakistan's political, economic, security, and environmental landscapes, highlighting critical challenges and opportunities shaping its future. The political environment remains tense following the arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan. Protests led by his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), escalated into violent confrontations, disrupting supply chains and causing shortages of essential commodities. The government's heavy-handed response underscores the militarization of governance, raising concerns about human rights violations and political stability. This unrest reflects deeper issues of governance, economic fragility, and public distrust in state institutions.

While foreign direct investment grew by 32% in early fiscal 2025, it remains insufficient to address the nation's economic vulnerabilities. Renewable energy, particularly solar power, is surging, but inefficiencies in the national grid risk destabilizing the energy sector. The launch of the Electric Vehicle Policy and the National Climate Finance Strategy signals efforts toward sustainable development, though implementation challenges persist.

Meanwhile, trade ties with Bangladesh have been revitalized through direct shipping, promising regional economic collaboration. Escalating violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan highlights persistent security challenges. Terrorist attacks have surged, exposing weaknesses in counter-terrorism strategies. Policies such as the VPN crackdown and a China-inspired digital firewall aim to bolster cybersecurity but raise concerns about freedom of expression and digital rights. Migration dynamics with Afghanistan further strain regional security and socio-economic stability.

Pakistan continues to face disproportionate climate impacts despite its minimal contribution to global emissions. At COP29, the government emphasized the urgency of climate finance commitments and launched a National Climate Finance Strategy to bridge a \$348 billion funding gap. However, domestic issues like smog in Punjab underscore the need for effective environmental governance.

Collaborative initiatives, such as a \$500 million loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank, represent steps toward resilience but demand sustained implementation efforts. Pakistan stands at a critical juncture, with its socio-political and economic challenges interwoven. While government initiatives offer glimpses of progress, the nation's path to stability and growth hinges on fostering political reconciliation, modernizing infrastructure, and committing to sustainable development goals. Global collaboration and robust internal reforms remain imperative for long-term resilience.



# Political Updates

## Pakistan Grapples with Crisis Amid Protests and Blockades:

Political tensions in Pakistan have escalated following the arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, with his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), [suspending street protests](#) after a midnight crackdown by security forces in Islamabad. The protest, aimed at demanding Khan's release, devolved into a deadly confrontation on Tuesday night, resulting in several deaths.

The crackdown, described by PTI spokesperson Zulfikar Bukhari as a "massacre," involved a large-scale operation to clear protesters from key areas in the capital.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi lauded law enforcement agencies for their efforts, which included the use of tear gas and barricades in the pitch-dark streets of Islamabad. The operation disrupted the convoy led by Khan's wife, Bushra Bibi, forcing a retreat to the PTI stronghold of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

As the dust settled, economic and social repercussions began to surface. Supply chain disruptions triggered shortages of essential goods like vegetables, milk, and chicken in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Prices for basic commodities skyrocketed, exacerbating the hardship faced by residents already reeling from political instability.



Source: Reuters

While the government moved to ease the crisis by opening routes for supply trucks at night, the long-term implications of these developments remain severe. The ongoing crisis in Pakistan underscores the intricate web of politics, governance, and economic fragility that has left the country vulnerable to unrest. While the suspension of protests might offer temporary relief from the immediate chaos, the broader issues of governance, political accountability, and economic mismanagement remain glaringly unresolved.

Imran Khan's arrest marks a flashpoint in Pakistan's political landscape, further polarizing an already fragmented polity. PTI's initial strategy of mobilizing street protests, including a sit-in in Islamabad's high-security red zone, was met with a swift and decisive response from state authorities. While the government's narrative of upholding law and order resonates with some, the heavy-handed tactics, including alleged "massacres" during raids, raise concerns about human rights violations and the shrinking space for dissent.

The reliance on security forces to quell political unrest reflects the increasing militarization of civil governance, a trend that undermines democratic norms. Such measures, though temporarily effective, may deepen public distrust in state institutions and create fertile ground for prolonged instability. The economic impact of the protests and subsequent crackdowns has been immediate and far-reaching. Supply chain disruptions have led to acute shortages of essential items in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Prices for everyday goods like tomatoes, chicken, and cooking oil have surged, placing additional financial burdens on ordinary citizens.





For instance, tomatoes, which were priced at **Rs150-180 per kilogram** just days ago, now cost Rs500 per kilogram. Similarly, chicken prices have spiked, with live chicken selling for Rs350 per kilogram and processed chicken reaching Rs550 per kilogram.

These price hikes are not merely a reflection of supply chain inefficiencies but also evidence of opportunistic profiteering by wholesalers and middlemen.

The government's decision to open supply routes at night and conduct price checks offers a temporary reprieve but does little to address the systemic inefficiencies in food supply chains. Furthermore, such measures highlight the lack of contingency planning to mitigate the economic impact of political crises.

The disruption of daily life, marked by forced market closures and limited access to food and fuel, has left ordinary citizens feeling increasingly alienated.

Laborers and low-income families, who rely on daily wages, are disproportionately affected. The absence of clear communication from authorities further exacerbates their plight, creating a climate of uncertainty and fear.

The broader social fabric of Pakistan is also at risk. Political unrest and economic hardships are compounding existing vulnerabilities, including widespread poverty, unemployment, and inflation. If left unchecked, these issues could lead to further civil unrest and a breakdown of social cohesion.

At the heart of the crisis lies a failure of governance and accountability. While the government has been quick to blame PTI for the unrest, it has yet to address the legitimate concerns raised by the protests, including allegations of political persecution and a lack of transparency in legal proceedings against Khan.

Moreover, the economic mismanagement that has led to skyrocketing inflation and stagnant growth cannot be divorced from the political turmoil. The stock market's recent recovery, fueled by hopes of political stability, is a fragile indicator of investor sentiment. Without substantive policy reforms and a commitment to political reconciliation, such gains are unlikely to be sustainable.

To navigate this multifaceted crisis, Pakistan needs a holistic approach that prioritizes political dialogue, economic resilience, and social inclusion. The government must engage with opposition parties to foster a consensus-driven approach to governance. Simultaneously, targeted economic interventions, such as subsidies for essential goods and investment in local supply chains, are crucial to alleviating the immediate financial burden on citizens.

The international community, too, has a role to play. Diplomatic efforts aimed at encouraging political stability and economic support from multilateral organizations could provide much-needed relief. However, the onus ultimately lies on Pakistan's leaders to rise above partisan interests and address the systemic issues undermining the country's progress.

In conclusion, the suspension of protests may provide temporary respite, but Pakistan stands at a crossroads. The choices made in the coming weeks will determine whether the nation moves towards reconciliation and recovery or descends further into chaos.



Source: Reuters





# Economic Outlook

## Pakistan's Solar Boom and the Risks to Its National Grid:

Pakistan is experiencing a significant shift towards renewable energy, particularly solar power, driven by market forces rather than government initiatives. As solar panel prices decline, alongside skyrocketing grid electricity tariffs, a growing number of businesses, industries, and private users are opting for solar solutions.

In fact, Pakistan has become the world's sixth-largest solar market, with solar installations reaching 13 gigawatts in the first half of the year, and projections of **22GW by year-end**. While this rapid expansion of solar energy has provided much-needed relief from an unreliable and expensive power grid, it has also created a major risk for the national electricity grid.

As more consumers move away from the grid to adopt solar power, the fixed costs for those who remain connected are rising, leading to a potential downward debt spiral for the state-run energy sector.

This shift towards decentralized solar energy is compounded by broader inefficiencies in Pakistan's electricity infrastructure. Despite rapid growth in electricity consumption, over 40 million people remain without access to electricity, and many others experience unreliable service.

The increasing adoption of solar energy, fueled by affordable battery storage and the need for reliable power, highlights a critical gap in the country's energy strategy — grid modernization. Without significant upgrades, including the integration of rapid-response battery storage and AI-driven monitoring tools, Pakistan's traditional electricity grid risks becoming obsolete.

The government's inconsistent energy policy, rising electricity tariffs, and lack of political will to implement necessary reforms are exacerbating the problem.

To avoid the economic and operational fallout of this unregulated energy transition, Pakistan must modernize its grid to accommodate the growing integration of renewable energy sources. This will require a mix of advanced technologies, market reforms, and strong political leadership.

The shift from a government-controlled grid to a more competitive, deregulated market could help lower tariffs, increase grid resilience, and attract new revenue streams. Additionally, policies that incentivize battery usage and promote electric vehicles (EVs) could further stabilize the grid and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

As Pakistan navigates its energy transition, it must balance innovation with regulation to create a sustainable, equitable energy future for its people.

## Foreign Direct Investment in Pakistan Sees Modest Growth Amid Economic Challenges:

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Pakistan rose by 32% during the first four months of the fiscal year 2025, reaching \$904 million, up from **\$683 million** in the same period last year, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

Despite this growth in percentage terms, the total inflow remains relatively low, with October's FDI dropping nearly 20% year-on-year to \$132 million.



A significant portion of the investment came from China, contributing 46% of the total inflows, followed by Hong Kong and the UK with \$99.7 million and \$94 million, respectively. Experts highlight the country's deteriorating law and order situation, particularly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as a major deterrent for foreign investors.

While the growth in FDI is a positive sign, the overall inflows remain insufficient to significantly boost Pakistan's economy, especially given the country's urgent need for foreign capital. The heavy reliance on a few countries, particularly China, indicates a lack of diversified investment sources, which could make Pakistan vulnerable to external geopolitical shifts.

Furthermore, the persistently poor security conditions are a clear signal that the government's efforts to attract investment through incentives are not enough to overcome structural issues. For Pakistan to truly capitalize on foreign investment, addressing internal security, improving governance, and fostering a more stable economic environment will be essential to reassure global investors.

### **Pakistan's New Electric Vehicle Policy Aims for Major Green Shift:**

The federal government has finalized the draft of its [Electric Vehicle \(EV\) Policy](#) for 2025-2030, with an ambitious goal to have 30% of vehicles on the road be electric by 2030. This plan, aimed at reducing Pakistan's reliance on imported fuel and curbing pollution, is part of a broader push to foster environmentally friendly transportation.

Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain, announced that the policy would offer attractive incentives to investors to boost local production of EVs, with four-wheel EV manufacturing set to begin next year.

The government has already approved a PKR 4 billion subsidy scheme to encourage the adoption of electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers, with further plans to engage banks in offering soft loans for affordable financing.

This policy marks a significant step towards transforming Pakistan's transport sector, but its ambitious targets come with challenges.

While the plan to achieve 100% EV penetration by 2025 is a bold vision, its success will depend on the effective implementation of incentives, infrastructure development, and the broader adoption of electric vehicles across both urban and rural areas.

The involvement of foreign investors, especially from China, signals a positive outlook for the sector, but achieving the goal of 30% EVs by 2030 will require extensive coordination across industries, financial institutions, and the government.

Moreover, the policy's success hinges on developing robust charging infrastructure and ensuring that the local manufacturing capabilities meet the growing demand.

As Pakistan navigates this green transition, the EV policy could serve as a model for sustainable industrial development in the region, but only if it addresses the systemic challenges that come with large-scale adoption.



Source: Brecorder



## Rethinking Economic Growth in Pakistan: Challenges and Policy Oversight

In a recent meeting with the [Dutch Ambassador](#), Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to shifting towards export-led economic growth.

This long-standing policy stance, supported across successive civilian and military governments, has faced significant challenges, especially under the current International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme.

The IMF's stance against the continued provision of tax incentives and cheap credit for exporters—who are often part of the country's elite—raises concerns about socio-economic equity, particularly when nearly 41% of the population lives in poverty.

This growing disparity underscores the need for a balanced approach, where fiscal incentives for exports should not come at the cost of aggravating inequality or neglecting the welfare of the general population.

While exports and remittances are indeed crucial for Pakistan's foreign exchange earnings, recent trends indicate that remittances have outpaced exports, highlighting the negative impact of flawed government policies.

For instance, the government's attempt to control the rupee-dollar parity in 2022 led to a decline in remittances due to the rise of illegal money transfer methods.

Similarly, the withdrawal of export incentives has further strained the country's competitiveness in global markets. The focus on low-value consumer items by existing exporters, coupled with a lack of diversification and inadequate research and development, is a major reason behind the stagnation in export volumes.



Source: The Brecorder

The government must address these policy missteps and ensure that export competitiveness is not hampered by high import duties or short-term fixes like fiscal incentives. At the same time, Pakistan must not ignore the growing potential of the digital economy.

As other nations tap into the lucrative export sector driven by technology and digital services, Pakistan must find a balance between regulating digital spaces and fostering growth in this sector, rather than stifling it under the guise of countering fake news. Properly leveraging global communication technologies could offer a new avenue for much-needed export revenues, driving sustainable economic growth.

### Pakistan Faces Economic Challenges as Neighboring Nations Surge Ahead:

Documents reviewed by ProPakistani reveal that Pakistan has fallen behind its neighbors, India and Bangladesh, in key economic indicators such as per capita income and exports.

While these countries have experienced rapid growth in recent years, Pakistan's performance has [remained stagnant](#) since it outpaced them between 1980 and 2000. This trend is particularly concerning as neighboring nations continue to boost their economies, while Pakistan struggles to keep up.





Additionally, Pakistan's public spending on essential sectors like education and healthcare remains lower than that of its regional counterparts, exacerbating concerns about its long-term development prospects. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its current \$7 billion loan program with Pakistan, has urged the country to implement significant policy reforms to improve its economic situation. Among the IMF's key recommendations are revising tariff policies to stimulate exports and achieving a tax-to-GDP ratio of 16 percent.

The IMF has also called for tax reforms targeting retail, agriculture, developers, and the property sectors, as well as a reduction in the size of the federal government.

The lender expects Pakistan to increase its primary balance from 1 percent to 2.5 percent of GDP over the course of the bailout program. If economic targets are not met by December, further revenue measures could be imposed by March 2025, signaling a critical period for Pakistan's economic stability and growth.

# Diplomatic Landscape

## Pakistan's Path to Securing Saudi Investment:

Pakistan's longstanding relationship with Saudi Arabia, rooted in mutual support and cooperation, is evolving into a critical opportunity for [economic growth](#), especially with Saudi Arabia's ambitious Vision 2030.

While recent high-level meetings between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi leadership, including Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, have created positive momentum, Pakistan's approach to securing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from Saudi Arabia remains underdeveloped.

The absence of key private sector representatives during discussions with the Saudi delegation highlights a key flaw: Pakistan's failure to effectively involve its business community in fostering meaningful partnerships with Saudi Arabia, despite the potential for growth in sectors like agriculture, defense, and technology.

Despite signing multiple agreements and MoUs worth \$2.8 billion, the lack of concrete commitments is a pressing issue.

Historically, Saudi Arabia's investment in Pakistan has been minimal, with only \$432 million in FDI over the last 14 years, compared to the \$21 billion Uzbekistan attracted in the same period. The continued reliance on MoUs, which are often non-binding, rather than binding agreements, risks undermining Pakistan's ability to leverage Saudi Arabia's transformative plans for economic growth.

This highlights the need for Pakistan to move beyond ceremonial engagements and focus on creating a robust, transparent, and policy-driven environment that attracts long-term business investments.

To capitalize on Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and other global opportunities, Pakistan must address internal inefficiencies and adopt a more proactive approach.

Strengthening private sector involvement, modernizing investment policies, and ensuring a competitive market framework are essential steps toward making Pakistan a more attractive investment destination.



While diplomatic ties are important, Pakistan's economic future will depend on its ability to foster sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships with key players like Saudi Arabia, backed by sound policy reforms and a clear roadmap for business collaboration.

### **Pakistan and Belarus Strengthen Ties with New Agreements:**

In a significant step towards bolstering bilateral relations, Pakistan and Belarus signed a [series of agreements](#) on Tuesday across multiple sectors, including trade, economy, science, technology, and environmental protection. The signing ceremony took place at the Prime Minister's House in Islamabad, with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko presiding over the event.

A total of 15 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and agreements were finalized, focusing on diverse areas such as agriculture, defense, health, vocational training, electronic commerce, and halal trade. Notably, the two countries also signed an extradition treaty, marking a further step towards enhancing cooperation in legal matters.

During the ceremony, Prime Minister Sharif expressed his satisfaction with the growing partnership, emphasizing that the agreements would pave the way for deeper cooperation in vital areas such as defense, agriculture, and technology.



Source: Anadolu Agency (AA)

He stated that the delegations from both countries would work together to finalize a concrete roadmap to ensure the implementation of these agreements. Belarusian President Lukashenko, in his address, offered Belarus' advanced technology to Pakistan, indicating the country's readiness to share its expertise in various fields to meet Pakistan's growing needs. Lukashenko's comments highlight Belarus's growing role as a potential partner in technology and innovation for Pakistan.

The agreements also reflect a broader shift in Pakistan's foreign policy towards diversifying its economic and strategic partnerships, especially with countries outside the traditional sphere of influence.

While the details of the road map are yet to be finalized, these agreements suggest a mutual desire to not only enhance economic cooperation but also explore technological advancements and defense collaborations.

As both countries look to deepen ties, the outcomes of this partnership could have lasting implications for trade, infrastructure development, and technological exchange between Pakistan and Belarus. The signing of these agreements represents an important step towards fostering a more diverse and resilient international cooperation framework for Pakistan.

### **Pakistan-Bangladesh Direct Shipping Resumes After Decades:**

The [first direct cargo ship](#) in decades sailed from Karachi to Chittagong, marking a significant step in rebuilding Pakistan-Bangladesh trade ties. The Panama-flagged vessel Yuan Xiang Fa Zhan successfully unloaded its cargo on November 11, carrying goods such as raw materials for Bangladesh's garment industry and foodstuffs.



The development follows Bangladesh's decision in September to ease import restrictions on Pakistani products, which previously required lengthy physical inspections. The route eliminates the need for transshipment via third countries, significantly reducing shipping time and costs.

This direct shipping link holds immense potential for enhancing regional trade and economic collaboration. For Bangladesh, the faster delivery of key raw materials supports its globally significant garment industry, while Pakistan gains improved market access to one of South Asia's growing economies. This step also signifies a warming of bilateral relations after decades of frosty ties, opening avenues for broader economic and diplomatic engagement. However, the move comes amidst Bangladesh's internal political shifts, which could shape its trade policies in the near term.

The resumption of direct shipping highlights the importance of regional connectivity in driving economic growth. Both nations must now work to sustain this momentum by addressing trade barriers, ensuring logistical efficiency, and fostering private-sector partnerships.

Strengthening such ties could serve as a template for broader South Asian cooperation, demonstrating the benefits of mutual economic interdependence in a region often marred by political discord.



Source: Brecorder

## Rising Returns Amid Challenges: Afghan Migration Trends

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has reported an [increase in Afghan nationals returning to Afghanistan](#), with 12,166 returnees documented from October 16 to 31, 2024, marking a 6% rise from the previous period.

Since September 2023, over 758,000 individuals have returned, driven by factors like fear of arrest in Pakistan (56%), inability to pay rent (55%), and utilities (50%).

Despite vulnerabilities among returnees, including chronic illnesses and displacement, the majority cited family reunification and assistance availability in Afghanistan as reasons for their migration. These flows highlight ongoing socio-economic challenges faced by Afghan migrants.

The increase in returns underscores the harsh realities of migration for Afghan nationals in Pakistan. While many are compelled to leave due to economic hardships and fear of detention, their return to Afghanistan poses its own set of challenges, particularly in a country still grappling with limited infrastructure and resources. The IOM's findings reveal that most returnees are undocumented, further complicating their reintegration into Afghan society.

Additionally, the reliance on rented housing in both Pakistan and Afghanistan reflects a precarious existence for these individuals, with limited opportunities for stability and self-sufficiency. This data raises critical questions about regional cooperation and the responsibility of neighboring nations in managing migration crises. Pakistan's implementation of policies like the "Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan" has accelerated returns, yet without adequate international support, the sustainability of these migrations remains uncertain.





Ensuring humane treatment, access to resources, and integration mechanisms is vital for reducing vulnerabilities. As the flow of migrants continues, coordinated efforts between nations and international bodies are essential to address both the root causes of displacement and the long-term needs of returnees.



Source: Getty Images

# Security and Governance

## Escalating Violence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Security Personnel Martyred in Two Deadly Attacks

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has witnessed a [surge in violence](#) over the past 24 hours, with two deadly attacks on security forces resulting in the martyrdom of at least 19 personnel. The first attack occurred in the Tirah Valley, where militants targeted a military camp near the Bagh-Maidan Markaz, killing eight security personnel and injuring three others.

Nine militants were also reported killed during the ensuing gun battles. The second attack, a suicide bombing near the Mali Khel checkpoint in Bannu, claimed the lives of [11 security personnel](#), with two others critically wounded.

Following the bombing, militants launched a further assault, leading to another gunfight. The violence has led to local demonstrations calling for peace and compensation for damages caused by mortar shelling in the Tirah Valley, underscoring the deepening instability in the region.

These recent attacks highlight the growing security challenges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in areas like Bannu and the Tirah Valley, where militant activity continues to intensify.

Despite the government's efforts to curb violence through initiatives like the National Action Plan (NAP), the persistence of organized, multi-pronged attacks—ranging from suicide bombings to direct assaults—signals significant weaknesses in the current security strategy.

The violence not only underscores the ability of militant groups to launch coordinated operations but also reflects the inadequacy of existing measures to combat the growing threat effectively. The region's continued unrest highlights the urgent need for a more robust and coordinated approach to addressing the root causes of instability.

Local communities in these regions are growing increasingly frustrated, with calls for stronger actions against armed groups and better security provisions.

The persistent violence, coupled with civilian casualties and property damage, has placed immense strain on local populations. The government must prioritize a comprehensive security overhaul to address these escalating threats and restore peace.



Without decisive action, the cycle of violence will continue to destabilize the region, making it increasingly difficult to achieve lasting stability. Both immediate military response and long-term strategies to address underlying grievances are essential to bring the situation under control and ensure that the lives of civilians and security personnel are protected.

### **PTA Defends VPN Crackdown to Ensure Digital Safety:**

Chairman of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Major General (R) Hafeez-ur-Rehman, defended [the government's policy on virtual private networks \(VPNs\)](#), emphasizing their role in ensuring a secure digital environment, especially for children.

Speaking at a TikTok Safety Seminar, Rehman highlighted that the crackdown on unregistered VPNs is part of efforts to protect users from harmful content and maintain cybersecurity. He stressed that while Article 19 of Pakistan's Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, it must operate within defined social and cultural boundaries.

The chairman clarified that the government's actions to fast-track VPN registrations, which began in December 2010, aim to regulate VPN usage rather than block access, countering the widespread perception of an internet shutdown. Minister of State for IT, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, also addressed the seminar, pointing out the rising challenges of cybersecurity and the risks posed by social media, particularly to youth.



Source: ProPakistani

She linked self-harm among young users to harmful online content, urging all stakeholders to share the responsibility of safeguarding children and young adults in the digital space. With over four million Pakistani youths online, both Rehman and Khawaja underscored the importance of digital safety, responsible content creation, and greater awareness around social media use.

They praised TikTok for adhering to PTA guidelines, reinforcing the importance of platforms collaborating to promote safer online environments.

### **55 Security Personnel Killed in November Amid Rising Terrorist Attacks:**

In the first three weeks of November, Pakistan suffered a significant loss, with at least 55 security personnel killed in a series of clashes and suicide bombings, indicating a troubling escalation in violence.

According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), the number of casualties this month is markedly higher than the 30 reported during the same period last month. Alongside the security personnel deaths, 63 terrorists were killed in confrontations with security forces.

This uptick follows a particularly deadly October, which saw [62 security personnel killed](#), marking the highest number of casualties this year.

Among the major incidents were two suicide bombings: one on November 9 at a railway station in Quetta that claimed 28 lives, including 14 soldiers, and another on November 19 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district that killed 12 soldiers.

The surge in violence, largely concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, reflects the persistent and escalating security challenges Pakistan faces.



In total, the country experienced 785 terrorist attacks in 2024, resulting in 951 deaths and nearly 1,000 injuries. Experts, including security analyst Lt Gen (retired) Talat Masood, point to a combination of factors contributing to this rise in violence, particularly the continued presence of terrorist networks in Afghanistan and the porous border between the two nations.

While Kabul denies the presence of militants from the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) group operating within its borders, Pakistan remains adamant that these terrorists are using Afghanistan as a base to launch attacks.

Masood urges Pakistan to focus on the political and economic development of its tribal areas and Balochistan, as these regions remain vulnerable to extremist influences.

### **Ceasefire Agreed in Kurram Amid Week-Long Violence That Claimed 76 Lives:**

A seven-day ceasefire has been brokered between warring tribes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram District following a week of deadly clashes that have claimed at least [76 lives](#).

The violence, which escalated after a deadly ambush on Thursday in Mandori Charkhel, saw around 40 passengers killed as a convoy of vehicles was attacked. Subsequent reprisals, including gunfights and arson in Bagan village, resulted in further fatalities, leaving dozens injured and critically wounded.

The ceasefire, facilitated by a high-powered provincial commission and led by Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, adviser to the KP chief minister, seeks to address the underlying land disputes between Shia and Sunni tribes.

As part of the agreement, both sides have pledged to exchange prisoners and return the bodies of deceased individuals.

However, sporadic clashes have persisted in areas like Ghozaghari and Kunj Alizai, where three more deaths and six injuries were reported on Tuesday. Gunship helicopters deployed to contain the violence were also targeted by entrenched fighters, though no casualties from the attacks have been reported.

The unrest has drawn widespread criticism. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari accused the PTI-led provincial government of failing to protect Kurram's residents, demanding immediate action to ensure safety. Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai also voiced concerns over the escalating sectarian violence, urging the government and security forces to work together to restore peace. Meanwhile, a grand jirga comprising elders from neighboring districts and led by the Kohat division commissioner is set to mediate further.

The violence has severely impacted daily life in Kurram, with road closures to Parachinar causing critical shortages of medical supplies. Dr. Mir Hassan Khan, head of the district headquarters hospital, warned that lives are being lost due to the lack of medicines needed to treat the injured. Though the ceasefire offers a temporary reprieve, underlying tensions rooted in sectarian divisions and land disputes remain unaddressed, posing challenges to long-term peace in the region.

### **Pakistan Tests China-Inspired Digital Firewall Amid Privacy Concerns:**

Pakistan has initiated the testing phase of a new [digital firewall system](#), modeled on China's approach to online surveillance, raising alarms among civil society and digital rights activists. The government argues that the firewall is essential to curb illegal online content, including extremist material and cybercrime. However, critics fear that the system could become a tool for widespread censorship and surveillance, stifling free speech and online privacy.





According to official statements, the firewall will enable the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to block specific websites and monitor digital traffic more efficiently. Authorities claim the initiative aligns with national security interests, particularly amid growing concerns over cyber threats and the misuse of social media platforms. However, advocacy groups have expressed concerns about the lack of transparency in the system's implementation and its potential misuse. Similar surveillance measures in other countries, such as China's Great Firewall, have been associated with severe restrictions on information flow and political dissent.

Activists warn that the firewall could erode Pakistan's fragile digital freedoms and exacerbate the suppression of dissenting voices. "While cybersecurity is critical, the lack of oversight mechanisms and independent accountability raises serious red flags," a spokesperson for a prominent rights organization said.

The move comes as Pakistan grapples with balancing security priorities with individual rights, sparking a broader debate on the implications of enhanced online surveillance in the digital age.

# Environmental and Climate Perspectives

## Pakistan Pushes for Climate Finance Commitments at COP29:

At the COP29 Climate Summit in Baku, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif renewed Pakistan's call for the realization of financial pledges made at previous climate conferences.

Highlighting the devastating impacts of climate change on Pakistan, he cited the 2022 monsoon floods, which caused over 1,700 deaths, displaced millions, and inflicted \$30 billion in damages.

The premier underscored the urgency of fulfilling commitments like the \$100 billion annual climate finance target and the "loss and damage fund" established at COP27.

He emphasized that Pakistan contributes minimally to global emissions yet ranks among the most climate-vulnerable nations. Meanwhile, Deputy PM Ishaq Dar stressed the importance of early warning systems and called for accessible, grant-based climate finance to bolster national resilience initiatives.



Source: DAWN

The developments at COP29 reflect Pakistan's growing frustration with unfulfilled climate finance promises, which exacerbate the challenges faced by vulnerable nations.

While the establishment of a loss and damage fund at COP27 was a significant step, its slow implementation underlines a systemic gap between climate pledges and tangible action.



Pakistan's leadership has consistently articulated the disproportionate burden it bears due to global emissions, yet international support remains fragmented.

The emphasis on grant-based solutions highlights the inherent inequities of loan-driven climate financing, which risks deepening debt traps for developing countries already grappling with economic and climate crises.

Pakistan's proactive stance at COP29 also underscores a broader struggle for equitable climate justice. While initiatives like the National Carbon Market Framework and renewable energy goals demonstrate domestic commitment, their success hinges on international collaboration. The absence of major global leaders at the summit suggests a troubling disengagement from shared climate responsibilities.

For Pakistan and similarly affected nations, bridging this disconnect is crucial—not only to address immediate climate challenges but also to ensure that global mechanisms align with the principles of equity and shared responsibility, fostering a sustainable future for all.

### **Pakistan Introduced National Climate Finance Strategy at COP29:**

At COP29 in Baku, Pakistan launched its first-ever [National Climate Finance Strategy \(NCFS\)](#), aiming to bridge the country's climate finance gap of \$348 billion by 2030. The strategy outlines pathways to leverage international, domestic, and private financing for climate resilience and low-carbon development.



Source: DAWN

Jointly unveiled by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and Climate Change Coordinator Romina Khurshid Alam, NCFS emphasizes transparency, accountability, and inclusivity while addressing sectoral priorities such as resilient agriculture, climate-smart cities, and sustainable ecosystems.

The framework is complemented by a national climate finance portal to track financial inflows and outflows, ensuring effective resource allocation.

The launch of NCFS represents a proactive shift in Pakistan's approach to climate finance, addressing both the immense financial challenges and the systemic inefficiencies in climate governance.

By embedding inclusivity and transparency into its design, the strategy seeks to secure buy-in from international donors while empowering marginalized groups, including women.

However, the ambitious vision relies heavily on fulfilling international commitments, such as the \$100 billion annual climate finance pledge.

Delayed disbursement from developed nations raises concerns about whether Pakistan and similarly vulnerable countries can meet critical targets without accumulating unsustainable debt.

The NCFS rightly integrates circular economy principles and prioritizes climate-proof investments, yet its success hinges on the efficiency of institutional coordination and global cooperation.

This development also highlights the broader struggles of climate-vulnerable nations to align domestic ambitions with international support. While NCFS is a commendable step, Pakistan must remain vigilant in advocating for a fair share of global climate finance, particularly in forums like the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF).



Collaboration with South Asian neighbors, as emphasized by experts, could further bolster regional climate resilience. Ultimately, translating NCFS's ambitious goals into tangible outcomes requires a blend of strong governance, innovative partnerships, and unwavering commitment from both domestic and international stakeholders.

### **Pakistan and ADB Sign \$500 Million Climate Resilience Loan:**

Pakistan and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a [\\$500 million loan agreement](#) under the Climate and Disaster Resilience Enhancement Programme (CDREP) to strengthen the country's capacity to tackle climate-related challenges.

The program focuses on boosting institutional preparedness for disasters, promoting inclusive investments in disaster risk reduction, and scaling up risk-layered disaster financing.

Signed by Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary of Economic Affairs, and ADB Country Director Emma Fan, the agreement underscores Pakistan's efforts to adapt to climate change and mitigate its vulnerabilities to natural disasters.

This follows the recent launch of Pakistan's National Climate Finance Strategy (NCFS) aimed at mobilizing resources for climate resilience. This collaboration between Pakistan and the ADB reflects a growing recognition of the urgent need for climate action in one of the most vulnerable nations globally.

The inclusion of innovative risk-layered financing mechanisms and institutional capacity building marks a critical shift towards proactive disaster management. However, the effectiveness of the program will depend on its implementation and alignment with Pakistan's broader climate goals, including those outlined in the NCFS.

By integrating international funding with domestic efforts, Pakistan has an opportunity to transform its climate vulnerabilities into a model for resilience, but this will require sustained political commitment, transparent fund allocation, and active stakeholder participation.

### **Pakistan's Smog Crisis: A Wake-Up Call from History**

The industrial revolution, symbolized by the factories of Manchester and New York, marked an era of unprecedented growth. However, this progress came with a heavy price — the environmental crises that plague us today.

Carbon emissions, air pollution, and the ongoing battle against climate change all trace their roots back to the unchecked industrial boom of the 18th and 19th centuries. Pakistan, despite contributing less than 1 percent to global carbon emissions, is now facing a disproportionate impact, particularly in Lahore and across Punjab.

The smog that engulfs the region has become a national security threat, jeopardizing public health and productivity. This pressing issue invites comparison to historical events like the Great Smog of London in 1952, which offers valuable lessons for Pakistan as it grapples with its own environmental disaster.

[The Great Smog of London](#) serves as a grim reminder of the dangers of unchecked industrial pollution. In December 1952, a toxic fog, fueled by coal smoke from factories and home heating, enveloped London for five days, causing over 4,000 deaths. This devastating event was made worse by an atmospheric phenomenon that trapped the smoke near the ground, creating the perfect storm for disaster. Similarly, in Punjab, the burning of crop residue and adverse weather conditions exacerbate air quality, trapping pollutants and creating a potentially catastrophic scenario.





Without immediate and effective measures, the region could face an environmental crisis akin to that of London's 1952 tragedy. The risk to public health is real, with children suffering from respiratory illnesses and schools closing due to unsafe air.

While Britain responded decisively with the Clean Air Acts of 1956 and 1968, which drastically reduced smog, Pakistan has struggled to implement effective policies despite having progressive legislation in place.

The National Clean Air Policy (NCAP) and constitutional guarantees for a clean environment remain underutilized, as urban sprawl and unchecked industrialization continue to overwhelm the country's ability to combat pollution.

Unlike London, which integrated green spaces into urban planning and prioritized clean air, Pakistan's cities are growing without regard for sustainability.

If Pakistan does not take swift and comprehensive action, the smog of Punjab could become an international symbol of environmental failure, much like the Great Smog of London. The time to act is now, before the legacy of industrial progress becomes a global cautionary tale.

## Reading Recommendations

The Fight for Transparent Access to Information in Pakistan

[Click Here](#)

Life without Autonomy: Understanding Our Culture of Dependency

[Click Here](#)

Prioritizing Citizens Beyond the Ballot

[Click Here](#)

Solving the corruption challenge: The key may lie with the citizens.

[Click Here](#)

Citizens' Inclusion and Accountability is the Key to Improved Governance and Efficient Public Sector Institutions

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Digital Community Policing

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Privatization of Schools in Punjab

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