

www.pakistan.accountabilitylab.org



f t X @ /accountlabpk



Only for Members

C O U N T R Y

# ANALYSIS

REPORT

EDITION 42

16th to 31st October, 2024

# Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of pressing issues in Pakistan, focusing on the healthcare crisis of breast cancer, political developments, economic challenges, and diplomatic relations. Breast cancer is the most prevalent cancer among women globally and poses a severe threat in Pakistan, which has the highest incidence rate in Asia. Alarmingly, one in nine Pakistani women is at risk of developing breast cancer, with many diagnosed at advanced stages due to cultural misconceptions and inadequate access to early detection services.

The report highlights systemic barriers such as cultural taboos, a shortage of female oncologists, and insufficient healthcare infrastructure. To combat this crisis, the report advocates for community awareness programs and significant improvements in healthcare facilities, emphasizing that early detection is crucial for survival.

The report discusses the implications of Pakistan's 26th Constitutional Amendment, which threatens judicial independence by allowing the ruling coalition to control judicial appointments. This shift raises concerns about authoritarianism and the erosion of democratic norms. Additionally, the release of Bushra Bibi, wife of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, has sparked speculation about Khan's potential release from imprisonment. However, analysts caution that the government may be strategically managing this situation to maintain control over opposition dynamics.

Pakistan's request for \$1 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) underscores its economic fragility amidst rising inflation and significant debt. The report critiques the country's reliance on international financial support and highlights the need for effective governance to ensure proper fund utilization. It also examines the challenges surrounding the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and the outsourcing of Islamabad's airport operations.

The report stresses that successful reforms must address underlying issues such as corruption and inefficiency. The renewal of the Kartarpur Corridor agreement with India signifies Pakistan's commitment to interfaith dialogue and improving bilateral relations. This corridor facilitates visa-free access for Sikh pilgrims and serves as a symbol of hope amid strained relations.

Furthermore, recent U.S. sanctions targeting Pakistani entities involved in weapons development reflect ongoing geopolitical tensions and their potential impact on regional stability. In conclusion, this report emphasizes that addressing these multifaceted challenges requires coordinated efforts from both government and civil society to foster sustainable development and uphold democratic values in Pakistan.



# Breast Cancer Awareness Month

## The highest burden of breast cancer in Asia and Pakistan's healthcare system; A Review

Breast cancer remains the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the leading cause of cancer deaths among women worldwide. In Pakistan, this crisis takes on an alarming magnitude, as the country holds the [highest incidence rate of breast cancer in Asia](#). With one in nine women at risk of developing the disease in her lifetime, the situation calls for urgent attention. However, most Pakistani women are diagnosed in advanced stages due to widespread misconceptions about the disease and a lack of access to early detection services.

Misbeliefs around breast cancer's etiology, compounded by socioeconomic barriers and cultural stigmas, mean that survival rates are significantly lower than in countries with better healthcare systems. The key to survival lies in early diagnosis, yet countless women in Pakistan continue to miss this critical window.

Multiple factors contribute to this delay in seeking help, both at the individual and systemic levels. Cultural taboos around discussing breast health, the lack of female oncologists, and deep-rooted misconceptions about breast cancer being a contagious or shameful disease deter women from seeking timely care. In many cases, women avoid breast examinations due to modesty concerns or rely on alternative medicine and spiritual healers, delaying medical intervention. Moreover, the healthcare system in Pakistan, with only 2.6% of the GDP allocated to health expenditure, is ill-equipped to handle the increasing number of cancer patients. There is a dire shortage of cancer specialists, diagnostic facilities, and public awareness campaigns, all contributing to a system that fails to detect and treat breast cancer in its early stages.

Efforts to tackle this crisis must address both patient-level barriers and broader healthcare infrastructure gaps. Community-level awareness programs are essential to dispel the myths surrounding breast cancer and promote the importance of early detection through clinical exams and mammography. Educational campaigns in schools, workplaces, and rural areas could help break the silence surrounding breast cancer and empower women to prioritize their health. Additionally, healthcare infrastructure needs urgent upgrades. Pakistan requires more specialized cancer centers, affordable diagnostic tools, trained female oncologists, and a robust national cancer registry to track the disease's incidence and outcomes.

The battle against breast cancer in Pakistan is far from won, but with coordinated efforts from both the public and government, progress can be made. Early detection saves lives, and through improved awareness, better healthcare access, and policy reforms, Pakistan can work towards reducing the mortality rate from this devastating disease. Investing in education, healthcare infrastructure, and early detection strategies will not only help reduce the number of preventable deaths but also uplift women's overall health and well-being.



# Political Updates

## Erosion of Justice: Pakistan's 26th Constitutional Amendment and the Threat to Judicial Independence:

The passage of Pakistan's [26th constitutional amendment](#) represents a significant encroachment on judicial independence, signaling a troubling trend toward authoritarian governance.

By enabling the ruling coalition, led by the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), to control the appointment of the chief justice, this amendment undermines the checks and balances essential for a functioning democracy.

Critics have rightly pointed out that this move is not merely a political maneuver but a calculated effort to ensure that the judiciary serves the interests of the ruling elite, particularly as the government faces allegations of electoral fraud and human rights abuses.

The allegations of coercion, intimidation, and even abduction of lawmakers during the amendment's passage highlight the lengths to which the ruling coalition is willing to go to consolidate power, raising alarms about the erosion of democratic norms and civil liberties in Pakistan.



Source: Splash

This shift in the [power dynamics](#) between the judiciary and the executive branch exacerbates existing concerns regarding the politicization of the judiciary, which has long been accused of acting in concert with the military establishment to suppress dissent and silence opposition.

The government's fear of an independent judiciary—especially one that might investigate electoral irregularities or grant relief to imprisoned political leaders like Imran Khan—has prompted a preemptive strike against judicial autonomy. Legal experts and opposition figures have expressed that this amendment effectively places the judiciary under the thumb of the ruling coalition, thus dismantling the very framework that protects individual rights and freedoms. With the ruling party designating judges who are ideologically aligned with its agenda, the prospects for fair trials and justice for opposition figures are dimmed, creating a legal landscape ripe for abuse and repression.

Furthermore, the amendment sends a chilling message to citizens and civil society, effectively signaling that dissent will not only be met with repression but will also be systematically undermined through legal means. The disillusionment of the public with the judicial system could lead to increased civil unrest, as seen in the protests organized by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. As the government seeks to consolidate power amid accusations of electoral fraud and human rights violations, it risks igniting a broader societal backlash. The international community must remain vigilant, as this constitutional amendment may signify a pivotal moment in Pakistan's trajectory towards authoritarianism, undermining the fundamental principles of democracy, rule of law, and human rights that are crucial for sustainable governance and societal progress.



## Political Calculations and Imran Khan's Future: Analyzing the Implications of Bushra Bibi's Release:

The [release of Bushra Bibi](#), the wife of former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, has ignited speculation regarding the potential for Khan's freedom after enduring over a year of imprisonment. While leaders from Khan's party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), have expressed optimism that his release could follow Bibi's, analysts remain skeptical about the likelihood of such a development. This juxtaposition highlights the complex interplay of political maneuvering, legal challenges, and public sentiment in Pakistan's turbulent political landscape.

The events surrounding Bibi's release reflect a potential strategy by the government to alleviate some public discontent while maintaining a firm grip on Khan, who continues to symbolize significant opposition to the current regime.



Source: Aljazeera

Bibi's release comes amid heightened tensions in Pakistan's political climate, particularly with the recent constitutional amendment empowering the parliament to appoint top judges—a move fiercely opposed by the PTI.

This context suggests that Bibi's freedom could be a calculated political maneuver to create a diversion within PTI or to instigate factionalism among its leadership. Analysts point out that while Bibi commands respect and influence within the party, Imran Khan remains the primary figure that unifies PTI.

By selectively allowing Bibi's release while maintaining a stringent approach towards Khan, the government could be aiming to create rifts within the PTI, especially with multiple factions vying for power in Khan's absence. Such a strategy could weaken the party's overall cohesion and divert attention from broader issues surrounding governance and accountability.

Despite the optimism expressed by Khan's legal team and supporters regarding his potential release, many analysts believe the government's approach remains largely unchanged.

The timing of Bibi's release does not appear to signal an imminent shift in Khan's status, as the government may prefer to uphold its hardline stance unless substantial political changes occur.

The lingering legal challenges Khan faces—over 150 cases including corruption and inciting violence—indicate that his path to freedom will likely be fraught with obstacles.

While Bibi's release may momentarily shift the narrative and energize Khan's supporters, the underlying political dynamics suggest that the government is strategically managing the situation to maintain its dominance. In essence, Khan's future remains uncertain, with the potential for his release contingent upon both political calculations and evolving public sentiment in Pakistan.



Source: NewArab



# Economic Outlook

## Pakistan Emerges as a Tech Powerhouse: Insights from GITEX Global 2024

Pakistan's recognition as the "Tech Destination of the Year" at GITEX Global 2024 in Dubai represents a significant milestone in the nation's quest to establish itself as a leading player in the global technology landscape.

This accolade reflects not only the growth of over 200 local companies and startups but also highlights the underlying resilience and potential of Pakistan's IT sector amid a challenging economic backdrop. [Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication](#) Shaza Fatima Khawaja aptly noted the dedication and innovation exhibited by these companies, indicating a robust commitment to enhancing the country's digital ecosystem.

The success at GITEX serves as a critical juncture for Pakistan, offering a platform to forge valuable international partnerships that can catalyze economic growth and technological advancement.

Key collaborations and the signing of MoUs with global tech leaders underscore the importance of integrating local enterprises into the international market. Such partnerships are essential for leveraging advanced technologies and sharing expertise, which can drive innovation and enhance the competitiveness of Pakistan's IT industry.



Source: [Dunya News](#)

Moreover, the presence of a substantial delegation at GITEX signifies an emerging narrative of technological prowess that can attract foreign investment, potentially transforming Pakistan into a tech powerhouse. However, the road ahead is not without challenges. While the recognition is a positive signal, it is essential for Pakistan to address issues such as inadequate infrastructure, regulatory hurdles, and a need for a more robust talent pipeline. Reports indicate that the country must continue to invest in education and training programs to equip the workforce with the skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly digital economy. As the nation navigates these complexities, the potential for sustainable growth in its tech sector hinges on its ability to foster an environment that encourages innovation and adaptability.

This recent accolade at GITEX not only bolsters the confidence of local entrepreneurs but also serves as a clarion call for stakeholders across the board—government, industry, and academia—to collaborate and create a cohesive strategy that maximizes the benefits of this recognition. If Pakistan capitalizes on this momentum, it could significantly enhance its standing in the global tech arena, contributing to broader economic resilience and growth.

## Pakistan's Request for \$1 Billion from the IMF: A Critical Examination of Economic Stability and Climate Resilience

Pakistan's formal request for [\\$1 billion from the International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#) reflects the country's pressing need for financial support amid ongoing economic turmoil. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb announced the request during the IMF/World Bank autumn meetings in Washington, highlighting the critical role of the [Resilience and Sustainability Trust \(RST\)](#) in facilitating climate-related spending.



While this request comes on the heels of a recently approved \$7 billion bailout, the necessity of such funding underscores the fragility of Pakistan's economy, which is grappling with a significant debt burden and rising inflation. The repeated reliance on international financial institutions raises concerns about the sustainability of Pakistan's fiscal policies and its long-term economic viability, particularly as it continues to face substantial external shocks.

The implications of Pakistan's request are even more pronounced in the context of its vulnerability to climate change, as highlighted by the devastating floods of 2022 that affected millions and significantly hampered economic recovery efforts.

The IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust aims to provide long-term concessional funding for climate adaptation and transition to cleaner energy, which is vital for a country like Pakistan, identified as one of the most susceptible to climate impacts. However, merely securing funding is insufficient; Pakistan must also demonstrate effective utilization of these resources to enhance its climate resilience and infrastructure. This raises the question of governance and accountability in the allocation of funds, especially given the historical challenges of corruption and mismanagement that have plagued Pakistan's public sector.

Moreover, while the government's strategy to diversify its funding sources through initiatives like the issuance of Panda bonds indicates a proactive approach, it also exposes Pakistan to further financial risk.

Engaging with international markets requires transparency and a robust regulatory framework to instill investor confidence. The talks with various financial institutions, including Middle Eastern banks for commercial loans, highlight a broader strategy to stabilize the economy.

However, this strategy hinges on improving the credit rating and ensuring fiscal discipline, which have historically been inconsistent. As Pakistan navigates these complex financial waters, the real challenge lies not just in securing funds but in implementing reforms that foster economic stability, enhance tax revenues, and address systemic inefficiencies—key factors that will determine the country's ability to emerge from its current crisis.

### **The Challenges of PIA Privatisation and Airport Outsourcing in Pakistan:**

The announcement by Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Aurangzeb regarding the [finalisation of the privatisation](#) of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and the outsourcing of Islamabad's international airport signals a pivotal moment for Pakistan's economy. However, the five-month delay highlights the precarious state of Pakistan's macroeconomic environment, raising concerns about whether the foundational issues are being adequately addressed. With potential foreign investors scrutinising the economic stability of the country, the government must not only reassure them of a conducive investment climate but also tackle underlying issues such as inflation, high public debt, and the need for systemic reforms.

The long-standing mismanagement of PIA and its mounting losses make its privatisation critical, yet successful transfer to private hands necessitates robust regulatory frameworks and transparent processes that are currently lacking.



Source: Tribune



Moreover, while Aurangzeb touts a decrease in inflation and the stabilisation of the Pakistani rupee, it is essential to consider the broader socio-economic implications of these policies. The government's reliance on tightening measures, such as import bans and high-interest rates, may offer short-term relief but could stifle growth in the long run, particularly in a nation heavily reliant on imports for essential goods.

The call to broaden the tax base reflects an urgent need for fiscal reforms, yet the historical resistance to taxation in the informal economy presents a formidable challenge. Moreover, the targeted tax increases, while commendable, may not be sufficient to achieve the desired fiscal stability, especially if accompanied by increased pressure on an already burdened salaried class.

In conclusion, the road ahead for Pakistan's economic recovery appears fraught with challenges. The potential privatisation of PIA and the outsourcing of airport operations could provide much-needed investment and operational efficiency, but only if accompanied by comprehensive reforms addressing corruption, inefficiency, and the country's complex socio-economic landscape.

Stakeholders must remain vigilant and proactive, ensuring that these initiatives do not merely become another chapter in Pakistan's history of economic mismanagement, but rather a turning point toward sustainable growth and stability.

### **Assessing the Viability of the New Gwadar International Airport:**

The New Gwadar International Airport, inaugurated amidst a flurry of [agreements between Pakistan and China](#), has raised significant concerns about its economic viability and long-term impact on the region.

While the airport is touted as a key component of the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), its location in the sparsely populated and insurgency-prone Balochistan province casts doubt on its ability to attract sufficient passenger and cargo traffic. With nearby major cities like Karachi and Quetta located over 600 kilometers away, the airport may struggle to fulfill its intended role as a hub for commercial and cargo flights, potentially mirroring the fate of the underutilized Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport in Sri Lanka.

The ambitious vision behind the airport aims to enhance connectivity and stimulate economic activity in Gwadar, linking it with regional markets in China, South Asia, and the Middle East. However, the airport's effectiveness hinges on the development of a comprehensive multimodal transport network, including critical rail connections. Currently, Gwadar relies on a single highway for transport, leading to congestion and inefficiencies. Moreover, the persistent security challenges in Balochistan pose a formidable barrier to attracting investment and ensuring the safety of ongoing projects. Recent attacks targeting Chinese nationals highlight the region's instability, raising questions about the commitment to enhancing security measures for both personnel and infrastructure.

As China recalibrates its investment strategies in light of domestic economic pressures and a net outflow of foreign direct investment, the future of the New Gwadar International Airport remains precarious. Without addressing the underlying security issues and ensuring a robust transport network, the airport risks becoming a "white elephant"—a grand initiative left underutilized and ineffective. The potential economic burden on China, juxtaposed with Pakistan's pressing need for infrastructure development, underscores the complexity of this ambitious project, leaving its true value yet to be determined.





# Diplomatic Landscape

## **Pakistan Extends the Kartarpur Corridor Agreement to Foster Interfaith Harmony:**

On October 22, 2024, Pakistan [renewed the agreement](#) with India regarding the Kartarpur Corridor, a move that reaffirms its commitment to fostering interfaith dialogue and promoting peaceful coexistence between communities. The corridor, which opened in 2019 to commemorate the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, has played a significant role in facilitating visa-free access for Sikh pilgrims from India to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur, the site where Guru Nanak spent his final years.

This renewal not only highlights Pakistan's dedication to safeguarding the rights of religious minorities but also acknowledges the importance of religious heritage in fostering goodwill between the two nations.



Source: Geo News

The Kartarpur Corridor serves as a vital symbol of hope and reconciliation amidst the often fraught relations between India and Pakistan. By allowing thousands of pilgrims to visit this sacred site, Pakistan recognizes the cultural and spiritual significance of the Sikh community, both domestically and internationally. The United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has previously referred to the corridor as a "Corridor of Hope," reflecting its potential to bridge divides and enhance interfaith understanding.

Furthermore, this initiative can be seen as a strategic diplomatic move, as it may help soften perceptions of Pakistan among the Sikh diaspora and the broader international community, potentially fostering a more collaborative environment for dialogue on other contentious issues.

While the renewal is a positive development, it also serves as a reminder of the complexities surrounding religious freedoms and minority rights in both countries. Pakistan's small Sikh population, which has historically faced challenges, benefits from initiatives like the Kartarpur Corridor, yet broader systemic issues related to minority rights and interfaith relations remain. As the region continues to grapple with socio-political tensions, the Kartarpur Corridor stands as a testament to the enduring aspirations for peace and understanding between different faiths and communities.

## **Sanctions and Strategic Tensions: Analyzing U.S. Export Blacklisting of Pakistani and Chinese Entities**

The recent decision by the United States to add over two dozen entities, primarily from Pakistan, China, and the UAE, to its [export blacklist](#) underscores the evolving geopolitical dynamics and the perceived threats to U.S. national security.

By targeting 26 entities for their involvement in weapons and drone development programs, as well as their connections to ballistic missile capabilities in Pakistan, the U.S. aims to curtail activities that undermine its strategic interests.

The classification of these entities as threats highlights Washington's rigorous enforcement of export controls and its commitment to preventing the transfer of sensitive technologies to nations considered adversarial.



This initiative reflects a broader strategy to contain the military advancements of China and Iran, with the U.S. maintaining a vigilant stance against potential proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the circumvention of sanctions.

However, this approach raises critical questions about the implications of such sanctions on regional stability and international relations. The U.S. claims that these actions are necessary for national security, yet they may inadvertently escalate tensions between Washington and Islamabad, as well as between the U.S. and its adversaries.

For instance, the blacklisting of Pakistani entities linked to ballistic missile programs can further strain U.S.-Pakistan relations, which are already complex due to historical issues of trust and cooperation. Pakistan's refusal to join the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and its continued collaboration with China in missile technology development pose additional challenges, indicating a potential alignment between these nations in the face of U.S. sanctions.

Moreover, the accusation of “discriminatory and unfair measures” from Beijing in response to the blacklisting reflects a growing sentiment in China and allied countries that the U.S. is using economic sanctions as a tool for geopolitical maneuvering rather than genuine concerns over proliferation. Furthermore, the blacklisting initiative serves as a reminder of the limitations and potential pitfalls of unilateral sanctions in addressing complex international security issues. While the U.S. government emphasizes the need for accountability in the face of violations of export controls, it risks alienating countries like Pakistan that have their own security concerns and strategic imperatives. The sanctions may prompt Islamabad to deepen its military and technological collaboration with China, thereby undermining the intended objectives of U.S. policy. This situation exemplifies the intricacies of modern geopolitics, where national security, technology, and international relations intersect. Ultimately, while the U.S. seeks to protect its interests through stringent measures, a nuanced understanding of regional dynamics is essential to avoid exacerbating tensions and fostering a more cooperative security environment.

## Security and Governance

### **Rocket Strike in Achakzai: Rising Tensions in Quetta:**

An attack on [Achakzai Colony in Quetta](#) highlights the persistent security challenges faced by the region, particularly in the context of ongoing violence and militancy.

The incident, in which three rockets were fired at a military installation but ultimately struck civilian property, underscores the precarious nature of safety for residents living in close proximity to strategic military sites.

This misfire not only reflects the operational difficulties faced by militant groups but also raises concerns about the broader implications for urban security. The lack of casualties in this particular attack may provide a temporary sense of relief; however, the damage inflicted on homes and the psychological toll on the community are significant. Residents are left grappling with the constant threat of violence, which can create a pervasive atmosphere of fear and instability.



The concurrent grenade attack in Khuzdar serves to further illustrate the multi-faceted nature of the threats facing local populations. By targeting an irrigation department office, the assailants may be attempting to undermine critical infrastructure that supports livelihoods in an already economically vulnerable region.

Such attacks could signal a strategic shift in tactics by militants, moving from direct confrontations with security forces to more insidious methods aimed at disrupting essential services and instilling a sense of insecurity among the populace.

The injuries sustained by individuals in this attack not only represent a physical toll but also highlight the risks faced by those working in public service sectors, which are vital for community resilience and development.

In response to these incidents, the immediate actions taken by security forces—such as cordoning off the area and launching search operations—must be coupled with long-term strategies that address the underlying socio-political grievances fueling such attacks. The cycle of violence in Balochistan has deep roots, including issues related to governance, economic marginalization, and ethnic tensions. A comprehensive approach that involves community engagement, investment in social infrastructure, and genuine dialogue with local stakeholders may be necessary to disrupt this cycle. Without addressing the root causes of violence, security measures alone may prove insufficient to create a sustainable peace in the region.



Source: DAWN

## Investigation Launched into Issuance of 400 Fake Blue Passports:

The revelation regarding the issuance of 400 blue passports to unauthorized individuals in Pakistan signals a severe breach of trust and raises alarming questions about the effectiveness and integrity of the nation's passport issuance system. Between 2018 and 2022, these official travel documents—designed explicitly for government officials and high-ranking personnel—were improperly granted, with 54 of them still actively used by unauthorized individuals.

This situation not only reflects a systemic failure within the immigration framework but also highlights the potential ramifications for national security and the credibility of the Pakistani government in the international arena.

Blue passports are critical to ensuring the legitimacy of governmental travel and safeguarding sensitive state affairs. The report that over 12,000 Pakistani passports were recently recovered from Afghan nationals by Saudi Arabian authorities further underscores the fragility of Pakistan's immigration control.

Such incidents not only cast doubt on the efficacy of border management but also raise concerns about the exploitation of the passport system by foreign nationals, particularly when fraudulent passports are allegedly acquired through various centers operating in Pakistan.

This influx poses a significant threat, as unauthorized access to these official documents can facilitate illicit activities, including human trafficking, terrorism, and other forms of organized crime, thereby jeopardizing both national and regional security. In response to this alarming situation, the Ministry of Interior has formed a high-level committee that includes representatives from the Interior Ministry, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and other sensitive agencies to investigate the matter.





Source: Tribune

However, questions arise about whether this reactive approach is sufficient to address the deeper issues at play. A mere investigation may not adequately resolve the fundamental flaws within the passport issuance process that allowed this situation to develop in the first place. There are concerns that without systemic reforms and stringent oversight mechanisms, the root causes of this crisis will persist.

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar's assurances regarding enhanced data verification protocols and new scanning technologies are a positive step; however, the real test will be the effective implementation of these measures and their ability to adapt to evolving threats.

The three-tier scrutiny process for Afghan applicants may strengthen security, but it also raises issues about bureaucratic efficiency and potential delays that could impede legitimate applicants.

The Pakistani government must adopt a proactive, comprehensive approach that not only investigates the current issue but also fortifies the immigration and identity verification systems against future abuses, ensuring that such breaches do not recur.

## Social and Humanitarian Focus

### Addressing the Rising Threat of Congo Virus in Quetta: A Call for Urgent Action:

Quetta is currently facing a serious public health crisis as cases of Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF) rise alarmingly, exposing the vulnerabilities of livestock-dependent communities. [With 42 confirmed cases](#) reported this year alone and four fatalities, the situation underscores the urgent need for heightened awareness and preventive measures. Health experts, including Dr. Shahzada Kamran and Dr. Kamalan Gichki, emphasize that the disease primarily spreads through tick bites and contact with infected animals, placing butchers and livestock handlers at significant risk. Dr. Kamran's advocacy for improved slaughterhouse practices, including a waiting period to monitor animals for signs of illness before slaughter, highlights the intersection of public health and traditional practices that often exacerbate the situation.

The crisis is compounded by a lack of community knowledge regarding the disease's transmission and prevention. In a region where home slaughtering is common, the potential for infection is high. Dr. Gichki's call for increased public education through radio programs and informational campaigns points to the critical role of community engagement in addressing this health threat. The response from health authorities has included isolation protocols and the use of personal protective equipment by medical staff, yet the rapid proliferation of ticks and imported livestock from neighboring regions poses ongoing challenges. As the World Health Organization warns of the potentially high fatality rates associated with CCHF, it is imperative that coordinated efforts among health officials, community leaders, and the public are prioritized to combat this emerging health crisis.



The need for collective action is clear: enhancing awareness, adopting safer livestock handling practices, and fortifying public health infrastructure can significantly mitigate the threat posed by the Congo virus in Quetta.

### **The Future of Urban Livability in Pakistan:**

Pakistan's urban centers are currently at a crossroads, grappling with escalating challenges that threaten their [livability and economic viability](#).

According to the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) "[Pakistan National Urban Assessment Report](#)," the rapid urbanization of cities is resulting in increased congestion, pollution, and a significant decline in public space, contributing to an overall deterioration in urban quality of life.

With urban populations projected to rise to approximately 99 million by 2030, or 40% of the national total, the pressure on already strained infrastructure and services is expected to intensify, raising urgent questions about sustainable urban governance and planning.

One of the report's critical findings is the stark inequality in urban development, where affluent neighborhoods benefit from better access to green spaces and public amenities, while marginalized communities are often left with deteriorating environments.

For instance, Karachi is highlighted for its pronounced socio-economic divides, marked by class, religious, and ethnic segmentation, which have historically led to social unrest and violence. Lahore, conversely, faces rampant sprawl that consumes surrounding agricultural lands, driven by unregulated housing developments.

This uncontrolled expansion not only threatens local food security but also results in significant infrastructure challenges, including inadequate transportation and waste management systems

The ADB report advocates for a comprehensive approach to urban planning that integrates climate resilience and equitable service delivery. It calls for strong political will and coordinated efforts among various governmental and civic organizations to transform urban areas into sustainable economic and cultural hubs. This includes revising master plans to focus on sustainable land use and improving the delivery of municipal services.

Without these concerted efforts, the potential for Pakistan's cities to contribute positively to economic growth and social cohesion remains compromised.

### **Pakistan Faces Renewed Polio Challenge as Cases Surge to 40:**

As the world observes Polio Day, Pakistan grapples with a concerning rise in polio cases, with the latest reports confirming [a total of 40 cases](#) for the year.

This alarming trend comes as a significant setback to the nation's polio eradication efforts, which had seen a promising decline in recent years. The most recent case, involving a 30-month-old boy from Darra Adam Khel in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kohat district, marks the second instance of polio in the area this year.

This resurgence is particularly troubling given the backdrop of a successful vaccination campaign that had previously seen a dramatic reduction in cases.

The confirmation of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) in this latest case raises serious questions about the effectiveness of ongoing vaccination efforts and highlights the continuing challenge posed by the virus. In addition to the reported cases, 402 environmental samples across the country have tested positive for poliovirus, indicating a significant risk of transmission in the community.



Kohat district, which has reported four positive environmental samples this year, is of particular concern as it suggests the virus is circulating and poses a threat to children in the area. The trend of rising polio cases, with a stark increase from just one case in 2021 to 40 cases in 2024, underscores the urgency for renewed commitment and action from health authorities.

In response to this crisis, the Pakistan Polio Programme is set to launch a nationwide vaccination campaign on October 28, aiming to reach over 45 million children under the age of five. Health officials are urging parents to cooperate by ensuring their children receive the crucial oral polio vaccine, emphasizing that collective action is vital in protecting future generations.

Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari, First Lady and MNA, has rallied the nation to unite against polio, emphasizing the critical need for sustained vaccination efforts to safeguard children's health. As the government prioritizes polio eradication, a consensus roadmap is being implemented to interrupt the transmission of the virus by mid-2025.

However, success will depend not only on governmental initiatives but also on community engagement and commitment to vaccinating children, as the threat of polio remains a pressing concern for Pakistan's public health landscape.

### **Chikungunya Outbreak in Karachi:**

A significant surge in chikungunya cases has emerged in Karachi, Pakistan, putting immense pressure on the city's healthcare system. [Since May 2024](#), hospitals have been inundated with patients, reporting between 500 to 750 suspected cases daily. Government data reveals 172 confirmed cases during the peak months, but the actual figures are likely much higher due to the prohibitive costs of PCR testing, which can reach up to 8,000 rupees (\$28).

Many residents are unable to afford proper diagnostics, relying instead on symptom recognition. The disease, transmitted by *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes, is particularly severe among vulnerable populations, including the elderly and those with underlying health conditions.

Complications can include neurological issues and prolonged hospitalizations, raising concerns about the overall impact on public health.

As chikungunya continues to spread, public health authorities emphasize prevention strategies, such as wearing protective clothing, using mosquito repellents, and eliminating standing water to curb breeding sites. While there is currently no specific antiviral treatment for chikungunya, symptomatic relief can be managed through rest and hydration.

The situation has sparked criticism from residents who blame the government for inadequate mosquito control measures, such as fogging.

Globally, the outbreak reflects a wider trend, with over 460,000 cases reported this year, predominantly in Brazil and India, highlighting the need for increased vigilance and proactive measures to address mosquito-borne diseases in Pakistan and beyond.



Source: Pexels



# Environmental and Climate Perspectives

## Pakistan's Quest for Effective Climate Funding:

The announcement of the [Loss and Damage Fund \(LDF\)](#) at the 2022 UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) marked a watershed moment for Pakistan, acknowledging the country's vulnerability to climate change.

This diplomatic victory, formalized at COP28 in the UAE, represents not just an opportunity but a critical turning point in the fight against climate-induced losses.

However, as the reality of climate impacts deepens, the allocated funding—approximately \$700 million against an estimated need of \$290-580 billion by 2030—reveals a troubling shortfall that threatens to undermine these hard-won gains.

The gap between promise and delivery raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of the current climate finance architecture and whether it can sufficiently address the needs of developing countries like Pakistan.

To harness the full potential of the LDF, Pakistan must navigate the complexities of the foundational mechanisms that preceded it: the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) and the Santiago Network. While WIM offers technical guidance, the Santiago Network is aimed at building the capacity of vulnerable nations to engage effectively with climate finance. Unfortunately, Pakistan's lack of coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Climate Change has stymied its engagement, preventing it from fully integrating L&D principles into national climate and development strategies.

This disconnect illustrates a broader challenge in the global climate governance landscape: the difficulty in translating high-level agreements into actionable policies at the national level.

If Pakistan fails to bridge these institutional gaps, it risks remaining on the sidelines while other countries leverage L&D mechanisms for meaningful climate action.

As discussions at COP29 in Baku approach, the urgency for Pakistan to assert its voice within these governance structures cannot be overstated. The interplay between WIM, the Santiago Network, and the LDF must evolve into a coherent strategy that prioritizes accessible funding, transparent decision-making processes, and robust methodologies for assessing non-economic losses.

Expanding partnerships and diversifying funding sources for the LDF are critical steps to ensure that vulnerable communities receive timely assistance.

However, with developed countries often resistant to integrating L&D financing targets within broader climate frameworks like the New Collective Quantified Goals (NCQGs), the path forward is fraught with obstacles.

As climate impacts escalate, the effectiveness of these mechanisms will be tested, and Pakistan's ability to mobilize support will be a litmus test for global solidarity and commitment to climate justice.



## Breaking Barriers for Climate Adaptation in Pakistan:

Pakistan's climate adaptation strategy, outlined in the [National Adaptation Plan \(NAP\)](#) of 2023, represents a much-needed shift towards addressing the growing threats posed by climate change. However, a critical analysis reveals that while the NAP is ambitious and comprehensive on paper, it faces significant [barriers in practice](#). The [Ministry of Climate Change \(MOCC\)](#) may be leading the effort, but the real test lies in its ability to engage other key sectors—like agriculture, water management, urban planning, and disaster risk reduction—many of which are beyond its direct control.

This fragmentation of responsibilities raises serious concerns about the plan's effectiveness. The problem is that adaptation measures must be inherently cross-sectoral, but Pakistan's bureaucratic structure operates in silos, making collaboration difficult. Without a framework to ensure cross-ministry and provincial cooperation, the implementation of the NAP risks being piecemeal and insufficient to address the scale of the climate challenge.

The financing of Pakistan's climate adaptation efforts also underscores this structural weakness. Although the NAP acknowledges the importance of securing financial resources, much of the responsibility for funding lies outside the MOCC.

Other sectors, such as agriculture or urban development, are tasked with integrating adaptation into their budgets, but climate resilience is often treated as an afterthought.

This lack of prioritization is evident in the continued reliance on international funding for climate projects, which, while helpful, cannot sustain long-term adaptation.

Pakistan needs to focus on generating domestic resources and incentivizing private sector involvement in climate-resilient infrastructure and technologies.

Moreover, even when funding is available, the lack of technical expertise and capacity at provincial and local levels to translate policy into action creates further obstacles. Building this capacity is as essential as securing funds, yet it remains underemphasized.

Ultimately, the success of Pakistan's adaptation plan depends on sustained political will, which has historically been inconsistent. Climate resilience requires long-term planning and resource commitment, but the country's frequent political instability makes such sustained efforts difficult.

Without consistent leadership, climate adaptation efforts risk becoming a casualty of shifting government priorities. The NAP may set the right goals, but without breaking down institutional barriers, aligning funding mechanisms, and building capacity at every level of government, these ambitions will remain largely unfulfilled.

Climate adaptation must become a national priority, integrated across all levels of governance, with the understanding that resilience is not the responsibility of one ministry but the entire government.





# 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

[Click Here](#)

Digital Community Policing

[Click Here](#)

