

COUNTRY ANALYSIS REPORT

Edition 48
January 16th to 31st, 2024

Executive Summary

Pakistan's socio-political and economic landscape continues to face significant challenges and transformations. The suspension of US foreign aid has disrupted critical healthcare, governance, and humanitarian projects, leaving many civil society organizations in uncertainty. The threat to Pakistan's GSP+ trade status due to human rights concerns—including military court trials and restrictive cyber laws—puts billions in exports at risk.

Politically, PTI's withdrawal from talks with the government over judicial commissions reflects deepening polarization, while crackdowns on cybercrime and digital freedom raise concerns about press and individual liberties. Security challenges persist, with a rise in insurgent attacks in Balochistan and escalating tensions with the Taliban regime.

Economically, Pakistan's trade deficit has widened, but rising remittances and technology exports offer some relief. The \$1 billion loan from Middle Eastern banks and \$2 billion UAE financial support provide temporary stability. However, ongoing rupee devaluation and foreign exchange pressures remain critical concerns.

In the social sector, wheat market deregulation efforts aim to improve food security, while a tragic migrant boat disaster underscores the risks of illegal migration. The passage of the PECA Amendment Bill 2025, imposing stricter penalties on misinformation, has triggered backlash over potential censorship.

On the environmental front, Pakistan faces worsening drought conditions, threatening agriculture and water security. Additionally, devastating wildfires in Murree's forests have caused extensive damage.

Moving forward, Pakistan must navigate its geopolitical position carefully, strengthen judicial transparency, and implement sustainable economic and environmental reforms to address these complex challenges.

Aid on Hold

HOW THE US FOREIGN AID FREEZE IS IMPACTING CIVIL SOCIETY IN PAKISTAN

For decades, the United States has been one of the largest foreign aid donors globally, channeling around [\\$70 billion annually](#) into humanitarian projects, healthcare, education, and economic development. However, a recent executive order by President Trump has abruptly halted this flow, suspending all foreign assistance for a [90-day review period](#). The only exemptions granted were for emergency food aid and military assistance to Israel and Egypt. This sudden decision has sent shockwaves through civil society organizations worldwide, including those in Pakistan, where US-funded programs play a crucial role in healthcare, education, and humanitarian relief.

The [suspension](#) has upended various programs in Pakistan, particularly those targeting healthcare, governance, justice, and economic support for marginalized communities. With many Pakistani NGOs relying on US aid, the freeze has left them in limbo, unable to continue essential projects. Paul Jordan, a specialist at the European Institute of Peace, highlighted the unprecedented nature of this freeze, stating, "In terms of immediate impact, I've never seen anything as significant as this before." His work on repatriating foreign citizens from Syria's Al-Hol and Al-Roj camps, funded by the US, was halted overnight, leaving thousands without essential services. This abrupt shutdown has raised fears of instability and security risks.

Similarly, the global health initiative PEPFAR, credited with saving millions of lives through HIV treatment, was initially suspended, affecting [20 million patients](#). Dr. Atul Gawande, former Assistant Administrator for Global Health at USAID, noted, "The program is shuttered... Services are shut. Clinics that served 20 million people with HIV are affected."

Pakistan's civil society organizations have been particularly vulnerable to these cuts. Many rely on US funding for their operations, and the freeze has disrupted key initiatives, from women empowerment and community-building programs to climate resilience projects.

One of the hardest-hit sectors is healthcare. The sudden stop-work order affected numerous health initiatives, including vaccinations and disease prevention programs. Dr. Joia Mukherjee of Harvard Medical School, who has advised on PEPFAR, warned, "It's taking 20 years of goodwill and turning it into an instrument of terror when people feel like if they touch the drugs or see a patient, they might get fired."

Another significant impact has been on economic development projects. In Uganda, a USAID-funded farming project employing small-plot farmers was abruptly halted, leaving workers unsure of their futures. Project leader Teddy Ruge lamented, "We were actually preparing to have a meeting with all the farmers to talk about the new season and what to plant... but now it's more of a funeral."

Political and Strategic Motivations Behind the Freeze

The Trump administration has defended the [decision](#), arguing that US foreign assistance has been "on autopilot" for too long and that a temporary halt was necessary to evaluate spending efficiency. Secretary of State Marco Rubio explained, "Every dollar we spend, every program we fund, and every policy we pursue must be justified with the answer to three simple questions: Does it make America safer? Does it make America stronger? Does it make America more prosperous?"

The administration has also made it clear that aid programs supporting diversity and inclusion, transgender rights, family planning, and abortion access will not be reinstated, further narrowing the scope of permissible funding.

Pakistan's Response and the Future of Aid

The Pakistani government and civil society organizations are now grappling with the long-term consequences of this freeze. The disruption has left thousands without vital services, from clean water and sanitation to educational initiatives for girls in rural areas.

While the [US State Department](#) has started issuing waivers for "core life-saving medicine, medical services, food, and shelter," many programs remain in limbo. The uncertainty surrounding future aid commitments has left organizations hesitant to plan long-term projects, fearing further funding cuts.

As Pakistan navigates these challenges, civil society leaders are calling for alternative funding sources, increased domestic investment, and regional partnerships to mitigate the impact of US aid reductions. However, with such a significant donor stepping back, the road ahead remains uncertain. For the millions in Pakistan who have relied on US-funded programs, the aid freeze is more than just a policy [decision](#) – it is a disruption of lives, health, and opportunities. As one international aid worker put it, "It feels like an earthquake across the aid sector, with life-saving programs in ruins."

As the 90-day review continues, the world watches anxiously. The US aid freeze is not just a financial setback—it is a test of resilience for civil society in Pakistan and beyond. The coming months will determine whether these organizations can adapt and survive without what has historically been a vital source of support.

Pakistan's GSP+ Status: A Wake-Up Call

Pakistan's Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) status is under serious threat as the European Union (EU) [raises alarm](#) over the country's human rights record. The concerns highlighted by the EU, including military court trials of civilians, restrictive cybercrime laws, and increasing censorship, signal that Pakistan can no longer take its GSP+ privileges for granted. With [billions of dollars](#) in exports—particularly in textiles—on the line, the urgency of addressing these issues has never been greater.

The GSP+ scheme offers duty-free access to the EU market for certain developing countries, such as Pakistan, on the condition that they comply with 27 international conventions related to human rights, labor rights, environmental protection, and governance.

For Pakistan, GSP+ has played a pivotal role in facilitating its exports to the EU, especially in the textile sector. A loss of this status would result in higher tariffs on Pakistani goods, making them less competitive in the EU market. Given that the EU is one of Pakistan's largest trading partners, losing this preferential trade status would have a significant economic impact.

What's the EU Concerned About?

One of the most serious issues raised by the EU is the [trial of civilians in military courts](#), particularly following the May 2023 riots. Over 80 civilians were tried in military courts, a move that violates international fair trial standards. This practice has raised red flags for the EU, as it undermines the fundamental principles of justice and fairness in Pakistan's legal system.

Pakistan's amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) have sparked strong objections from digital rights activists. The revised law is seen as a tool for the government to silence critics and curtail freedom of expression. The EU is concerned that the law is being misused to target journalists, activists, and political dissent, which is a direct violation of the core requirements for [GSP+ eligibility](#).

While the government claims progress in improving press freedom, journalists continue to face significant challenges, including censorship, intimidation, and arrests. The EU has urged Pakistan to take concrete actions to protect journalists, such as establishing an independent commission for journalist protection. The EU is looking for more than just promises—it wants to see tangible steps that ensure journalists can work freely without fear of reprisal.

Although the Pakistani government has claimed a decline in blasphemy cases, religious minorities still face significant discrimination and targeted violence. The EU is particularly interested in how Pakistan implements the National Commission for Minorities Bill, which aims to strengthen legal protections for non-Muslim citizens. The EU is monitoring how this legislation is put into practice and whether it effectively addresses the ongoing issues faced by religious minorities.

Pakistan must ensure that all non-military cases are handled by civilian courts, upholding the principle of fair trials for all individuals. The government must demonstrate its commitment to justice and due process, ensuring that military trials of civilians are no longer practiced.

The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) should be revised to prevent its misuse against journalists, activists, and political dissidents. Clear and transparent guidelines must be established to differentiate between hate speech and legitimate political discourse, ensuring that freedom of speech is protected.

Pakistan should establish an independent media oversight body to safeguard press freedoms. This body would help ensure that journalists can operate without fear of censorship or persecution, supporting an environment where free expression and public debate can thrive.

Pakistan should expedite the passage and implementation of the National Commission for Minorities Bill. It is also essential to address concerns regarding the misuse of blasphemy laws, ensuring that they are not used to target religious minorities or result in wrongful prosecutions.

To build trust and demonstrate a commitment to reform, Pakistan should engage in regular dialogue with the EU and civil society organizations. Transparent communication and cooperation will be key in addressing concerns before they escalate and ensuring that Pakistan remains on track to meet the requirements for GSP+ eligibility.

The Bottom Line

Pakistan's [GSP+ status](#) is more than just a trade issue—it represents a crucial test of the country's commitment to human rights and democratic values. The EU's warning is clear: if Pakistan fails to align with international human rights standards, it risks losing a significant economic advantage.

With the next GSP+ review on the horizon, Pakistan has a narrow window to make the necessary reforms. The government must act swiftly and decisively to address these concerns, or it will face the consequences of trade losses that could significantly impact its economy.

Political Updates

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Pulls Out of Talks Over Government's Failure to Form Judicial Commissions:

PTI, under the leadership of Imran Khan, has decided to pull out of talks with the government, citing the government's failure to form judicial commissions as promised. These commissions were a crucial part of [PTI's demands](#), aiming to investigate the controversial incidents surrounding Imran's arrest in May and the violent crackdown on protests in November. After several rounds of discussions, the government's inaction on these key issues led PTI to call off the negotiations, with Barrister Gohar Ali Khan emphasizing that talks cannot move forward without a commitment to a three-judge commission. Despite this setback, PTI remains open to dialogue, but only if the government takes concrete steps to address its concerns regarding accountability and transparency.

On the government's side, PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqui has called on PTI to reconsider its decision, urging them to give the talks more time. Siddiqui pointed out that the deadline for a formal response had not yet passed and expressed disappointment at PTI's impatience. While the PTI remains firm in its stance for a fair investigation into the events of May 9 and November 26, its decision to end the talks shows how crucial these issues are for them.

PTI and the 'Charter of Demands':

The political dialogue between Pakistan's government and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) took a pivotal turn as the PTI



Source: DAWN

presented a formal charter of demands during the third round of negotiations. This development marks a significant shift in the months-long impasse that has fueled political unrest.

The [PTI's demands](#) include the formation of two judicial commissions to investigate critical events, including the violent protests following Imran Khan's arrest on May 9, 2023, and the crackdown during the party's November 2024 protests.

These commissions, the PTI insists, should be constituted under the Commission of Inquiry Act, 2017, and be led by senior judiciary members to ensure impartiality and transparency. The party also emphasized the need for government support in facilitating the release and acquittal of political prisoners arrested in connection with these events.

This push for institutional scrutiny reflects the PTI's effort to address what it perceives as systemic injustices while laying the groundwork for broader political engagement. Despite weeks of negotiations, the government and PTI remain at odds, with mutual accusations of insincerity underscoring the challenges of trust-building.

However, the formal submission of demands offers a rare opportunity for progress, provided both sides act with genuine intent. The government has formed a committee to prepare a comprehensive response, signaling a willingness to engage further. Yet, the PTI's ultimatum for immediate action on the commissions underscores the fragile nature of the dialogue.

Beyond the immediate demands, the talks also highlight larger issues of governance, political accountability, and the deepening divide in Pakistan's political landscape. Whether this process leads to meaningful consensus or exacerbates the polarization remains to be seen, but the outcome could significantly influence Pakistan's democratic trajectory in the months ahead.

Security and Governance

Crackdown on Cybercrime and SIM Smuggling Raises Concerns Over Digital Freedom:

The recent seizure of **6,700 foreign SIM cards** at Multan International Airport, intended for illicit use in cybercrime, highlights the growing challenge Pakistan faces in addressing digital threats. While the FIA's swift action is a step forward in curbing illegal online activities, it also raises questions about the broader implications of such operations on personal freedoms and privacy.

This development follows the passage of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Peca) Amendment Act 2025, which introduces stricter penalties for spreading "false" information online. The law aims to modernize the country's approach to cybercrime but has been criticized for its vague provisions, particularly around the term "fake news," which many argue could be misused to silence dissent and control digital discourse.

While the fight against cyber threats is essential, the challenge remains in ensuring that measures don't encroach on freedom of

expression or become tools of political and media suppression. The tension between securing the digital landscape and upholding civil liberties continues to be a critical debate in Pakistan's evolving digital policy.



Source: The News

Balochistan: Deadly Clashes Leave Dozens Dead

The security crisis in Balochistan has intensified, with at least 18 paramilitary soldiers and 24 insurgents killed in two related incidents, marking one of the deadliest escalations in recent months. According to Pakistan's military, the clashes erupted when heavily armed fighters attempted to set up roadblocks in Kalat,

a region bordering Afghanistan, leading to an intense confrontation with security forces. A separate attack near Mangochar saw a convoy of Frontier Corps personnel ambushed by around **70 to 80 insurgents**, resulting in multiple casualties. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), a separatist group advocating for Balochistan's independence, claimed responsibility for the attacks, asserting that their fighters had achieved "significant progress" in their operations. Pakistani authorities have condemned the violence, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif vowing that "the perpetrators, facilitators, and abettors of this heinous act will be brought to justice."

This surge in violence comes amid a broader increase in insurgent activity across Pakistan. In 2024 alone, the military reported a staggering **40% rise** in militant attacks compared to the previous year, with 383 soldiers and 925 insurgents killed in various operations. Balochistan, a resource-rich yet underdeveloped province, has been the epicenter of separatist violence for decades, driven by longstanding grievances over economic marginalization and military crackdowns.

The latest clashes highlight the ongoing challenge for Pakistan's security forces in stabilizing the region, particularly as tensions with the Afghan Taliban continue to strain counterinsurgency efforts. With militant groups expanding their operational capacity and launching more coordinated attacks, experts warn that the region may be heading toward a prolonged period of instability unless meaningful political dialogue and development initiatives are pursued alongside military operations.

PM Shehbaz Sharif Orders Crackdown on Human Smuggling Networks:

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has instructed authorities to intensify efforts against human smuggling, emphasizing strict legal action against those tarnishing Pakistan's reputation through this illicit trade. In a high-level meeting, he directed the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to address manpower shortages and enhance airport screening processes to curb illegal travel.

The prime minister also called for an awareness campaign on the dangers of illegal migration and sought Interpol's assistance to extradite key offenders. The briefing highlighted progress, including arrests of smugglers, dismissals of complicit officials, and confiscation of **Rs 500 million** worth of assets.

With the appointment of special prosecutors, the government aims to send a strong message that human smuggling will no longer go unchecked. Awareness campaigns alone won't suffice without meaningful socioeconomic reforms to tackle the root causes.



Source: Unsplash

Economic Outlook

Dollar Inflows Shortage Could Pressure Pakistan Rupee :

Pakistan's currency market is facing significant pressure due to the lack of channels to attract dollar inflows, compounded by rising global factors that could weaken the rupee. Experts highlight that the country's [reliance on borrowing](#) from commercial banks to meet debt obligations at higher interest rates could lead to further depreciation of the rupee.

Despite some stabilization measures, such as restricting outflows and curbing smuggling, the US dollar has been gaining strength globally, particularly after Donald Trump's presidency, and this trend has added to the pressure on Pakistan's currency.

The country's foreign exchange reserves are already under strain, with high outflows for debt servicing and profit repatriation, further challenging the rupee's stability. Additionally, Pakistan's trade balance remains unfavorable, and while remittances have supported a current account surplus, other indicators point toward potential depreciation in the near future.

Currency traders and market experts are closely monitoring the situation, as concerns grow over the government's borrowing strategy and its long-term impact on market confidence. Pakistan has yet to secure crucial loan rollovers from China, while commercial borrowing continues to rise, leading to fears of erosion in investor confidence.

The global trend of weakening regional currencies, particularly the Indian rupee, and the potential for a stronger dollar due to the US Federal Reserve's rate decisions, are adding to the uncertainty. The outlook suggests a minor adjustment in the rupee's value, although it may remain below the Rs280 level in the coming week. Exporters are also warning that the rupee's depreciation could impact Pakistan's competitiveness in regional markets, while continued global economic shifts, including tariff measures by the US, could further challenge the country's foreign exchange stability.

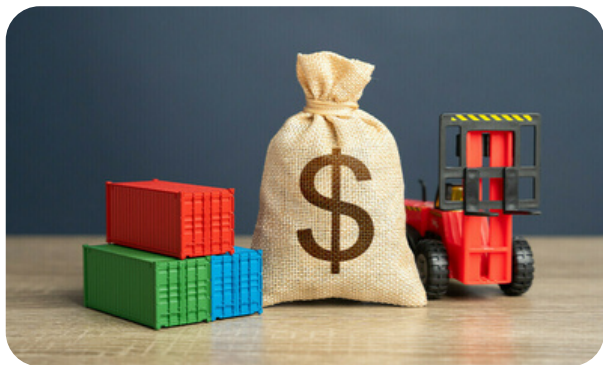


Source: Pixabay

Pakistan's Economic Performance: Mixed Results Amid Rising Deficits

The first half of Fiscal Year (FY) 25 has presented a mixed economic outlook for Pakistan, as positive macroeconomic indicators like falling inflation and a current account surplus provide some relief, while growing trade deficits raise concerns. A notable achievement is the current account surplus of \$1.2 billion, reversing last year's deficit, bolstered by a positive balance of

payments and a **\$2.3 billion increase** in foreign exchange reserves, now totaling \$11.7 billion.



Source: Brecorder

This surge in reserves, covering nearly three months of imports, highlights the impact of robust home remittances, which grew by 33% to \$13.4 billion. However, rising goods imports, particularly machinery and textiles, and a widening combined goods and services trade deficit of 13% to \$13.1 billion, signal emerging challenges.

The growing trade deficit, combined with a decline in the primary income balance, underscores the difficulty of financing imports once economic growth picks up in the coming months. While the economy is grappling with these deficits, there are several positives, particularly in the technology and textile sectors. The technology sector, in particular, has seen impressive growth, with exports rising by 28% to \$1.8 billion, driven by a recovery in IT business confidence and favorable government policies.

Additionally, the textile sector has seen expansion, especially in value-added products like garments and knitwear. Despite these gains, the overall outlook remains cautious, as growing import demand and potential volatility in foreign exchange markets could strain Pakistan's balance of payments. Furthermore, external risks, such as fluctuating global oil prices and pressures on capital flows, underscore the need for a careful approach to managing monetary and fiscal policy moving forward.

Pakistan Secures \$1 Billion Loan from Middle Eastern Banks:

Pakistan has successfully negotiated terms for a \$1 billion loan with two Middle Eastern banks, with an interest rate ranging from **6% to 7%**. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb confirmed the deal during an interview at the World Economic Forum in Davos on January 21, 2025. The loans, which are short-term (up to one year), include one bilateral and one trade finance agreement. The move comes as Pakistan seeks to strengthen its finances after securing a \$7 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in September 2024, with the first review of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) scheduled for the end of February. The country is hopeful of a favorable outcome from the IMF review as it works to address its balance of payments challenges.

Social and Humanitarian Focus

Pakistan Works on Wheat Market Deregulation for Food Security

As part of the structural reforms under the ongoing IMF programme, Pakistan's Ministry



Source: DAWN

of National Food Security is developing a strategy to [deregulate the wheat market](#) while ensuring adequate reserves and food security. The strategy seeks to move away from traditional procurement practices and introduce innovative solutions to manage wheat reserves in a deregulated environment. To ensure broad-based input, the ministry is held a "National Workshop on Deregulating the Wheat Sector" in Islamabad on January 24, where representatives from all provinces presented their strategies for managing wheat reserves and addressing food security challenges. Minister for National Food Security, Rana Tanveer Hussain, emphasized the government's commitment to agricultural reforms that cater to modern demands while ensuring long-term sustainability for all stakeholders involved.

Tragic Migrant Boat Incident Claims Lives of 44 Pakistanis in Spain:

A devastating tragedy has unfolded in the waters off the Canary Islands, where a migrant boat attempting to reach Spain from West Africa capsized, resulting in the deaths of [up to 50 individuals](#), including 44 Pakistanis.

The boat, which departed from Mauritania on January 2, carried 86 migrants, primarily from Pakistan. After days of being missing, Moroccan authorities rescued 36 survivors, but the absence of timely rescue operations exacerbated the situation, leaving many to perish during the perilous journey.

This incident is part of a broader crisis, with record numbers of migrant deaths in 2024, highlighting the perilous nature of the Atlantic route to the Canary Islands.

In response to the tragedy, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed profound grief and called for an immediate report from relevant authorities, vowing strict action against human traffickers responsible for the loss of life. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is coordinating with local authorities in Morocco to provide assistance to the survivors.

The embassy has confirmed that several Pakistanis were among those aboard the ill-fated vessel. The tragic loss has sparked international outrage, with leaders like Fernando Clavijo of the Canary Islands urging urgent intervention to address the growing humanitarian crisis in the region and prevent further deaths along this dangerous migration route.

Peca Amendments Signed into Law Amid Free Speech Protests:

On January 28, 2025, the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Peca) (Amendment) Bill 2025 received [presidential assent](#) from Asif Ali Zardari, despite widespread opposition from various parties and media organizations.

The bill, which had already passed through the National Assembly and Senate, introduces stricter penalties for the dissemination of "fake news" and establishes new regulatory bodies such as the Social Media Protection and Regulatory Authority (SMPRA) and the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA).

The amendments include provisions for punishing individuals who intentionally spread false or misleading information online with up to three years in prison and fines up to Rs2 million.

Critics argue that the bill lacks clarity, particularly around the definition of “fake news,” and fear it will be used to curtail freedom of expression, with potential negative impacts on the press. The bill also proposes the creation of specialized tribunals and a Social Media Complaint Council to address grievances related to cybercrime. These new bodies are designed to streamline the process of investigating and prosecuting offenses, with decisions expected to be made within 90 days.

However, the proposed legislation has sparked significant protests across the country, with opposition parties and journalists warning that it poses a threat to democratic freedoms.

Media bodies, in particular, have condemned the amendments, arguing that the law's vague language and extensive powers could be wielded to suppress critical voices, further centralize control over digital platforms, and inhibit press independence.

Diplomatic Landscape

UAE Extends \$2 Billion Support to Pakistan as Financial Rollovers Confirmed:

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has extended crucial financial support to Pakistan by rolling over two deposits of [\\$1 billion each](#) for another year, as confirmed by the State Bank of Pakistan on Thursday. The deposits, which were set to mature this month, will provide vital liquidity to Pakistan as it continues to navigate its economic challenges.

This move comes shortly after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced the rollover arrangement, which was pivotal in securing the \$7 billion bailout deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). External financing, particularly from allies like the UAE, China, and Saudi Arabia, has played a significant role in Pakistan's ability to meet IMF conditions, including timely debt rollover confirmations. This ongoing support from friendly nations remains critical as Pakistan works to stabilize its economy amid mounting pressures.

Bangladesh Eyes JF-17 Thunder for Air Force Modernization:

Bangladesh is reportedly considering the acquisition of the [JF-17 Thunder fighter jets](#), jointly developed by Pakistan and China, as part of efforts to modernize its aging Air Force. During a recent visit to Pakistan, a high-level defense delegation led by Lieutenant General SM Qamarul Hassan showed keen interest in the JF-17, a multi-role combat aircraft designed for a range of tasks from ground assaults to aerial interceptions.

With the Bangladesh Air Force currently operating older aircraft such as the F-7 and MiG-29, which are increasingly difficult to maintain, the JF-17 offers an attractive alternative at a lower cost compared to other fighter jets on the market.

The JF-17 Thunder, particularly the upgraded Block III variant, promises enhanced combat capabilities with better avionics, improved maneuverability, and a reduced radar cross-section.

While Bangladesh had previously expressed interest in other aircraft, including the Chinese J-10C, the JF-17's affordability, ease of maintenance, and multi-role versatility make it an appealing option for the country's defense strategy.

If finalized, this move could mark a significant shift in Bangladesh's military alignment, as the country seeks to strengthen its defense ties with Pakistan and China amid changing regional dynamics.

Environment and Climate Change Updates

Pakistan Faces Drought-Like Conditions Amid Scarcity of Rainfall:

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has issued a warning regarding drought-like conditions affecting much of the country due to a significant lack of rainfall. According to the PMD's National Drought Monitoring Centre (NDMC), rainfall has been **40% below average** from September 1, 2024, to January 15, 2025, with the most severe deficits observed in Sindh, Balochistan, and Punjab. This has led to mild drought conditions in various rain-fed regions, including parts of Potohar, Sindh, and Balochistan.

The lack of significant rainfall, exacerbated by the likely persistence of El Niño conditions, threatens to worsen the drought in the coming months.



Source: Pexels

The PMD predicts that the second half of the season will remain equally dry, potentially intensifying the drought and impacting agriculture and water availability, particularly in southern Balochistan. The PMD's advisory also noted the broader implications of these dry conditions, including the risk of flash droughts—rapidly intensifying droughts due to increasing temperatures and continuing rainfall deficits. While there may be some relief in the northern regions with normal to slightly above-normal rainfall expected in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, the overall outlook remains concerning, particularly for water resources.

Local water supplies in drought-prone areas, such as southern Balochistan, are under strain, which could affect both irrigation and domestic consumption. The PMD has urged authorities to take proactive measures to mitigate the impact, as the warmer temperatures and below-normal rainfall forecasted for the second half of the season may also lead to early heat stress in vulnerable populations, especially in southern Pakistan.

Wildfires Ravage Murree Forests, Destroying Timber and Worsening Conditions:

Severe wildfires have been devastating [three major forests in Murree](#)—Ghoda Gali, PP-1, and Samli ranges—spreading across 49 areas and intensifying as night approaches. The blaze, visible from afar, has caused extensive damage, including the destruction of valuable timber worth millions of rupees. Local authorities and firefighting teams are struggling to contain the flames, which continue to grow stronger due to high winds and the challenging terrain, leaving the area in dire need of additional resources and support to combat the crisis.



Source: Dailytimes

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](#))
- Privatization of Schools in Punjab ([Click Here](#))