


# COUNTRY ANALYSIS REPORT

A knowledge product of

 **accountabilitylab**  
PAKISTAN

 /accountlabpk

Edition 50

March 1st to 15th 2025

# Executive Summary

Pakistan continues to grapple with rising security threats, political instability, and economic pressures despite efforts to stabilize governance and foreign relations. Terrorist attacks have escalated, with over 2,500 terrorism-related deaths in 2024 and 685 fatalities in the first quarter of 2025 alone. The resurgence of groups like the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has worsened the situation, with attacks on Bannu Cantonment and the Jaffar Express in Balochistan resulting in heavy casualties. The deteriorating security landscape has severely impacted foreign investment and economic stability.

Pakistan's political climate remains turbulent, with the arrest of PTI Senator Aoun Abbas Bappi and the denial of PTI Senator Faisal Javed's Umrah travel despite court orders fueling allegations of state repression. The country's placement on the Civicus Monitor's 2025 watchlist highlights growing restrictions on civic freedoms, digital censorship, and suppression of journalists. Economic uncertainty persists, as Pakistan redirected Rs550 million from the Asian Development Bank's flood relief grant to aid Turkey and Syria, raising questions about financial priorities. The government's privatization drive, including the sale of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and the Roosevelt Hotel, aims to meet IMF conditions but has drawn concerns over transparency.

Social and environmental challenges continue to mount. Pakistan's gender pay gap remains among the highest globally, with women earning 25% less than men. The worsening climate crisis has fueled a rise in child marriages, particularly in flood-affected areas, as families struggle with economic hardship. The country's air pollution crisis deepens, ranking among the world's worst, while severe water shortages in Sindh and key agricultural regions threaten food security.

On the diplomatic front, Pakistan faces growing tensions with the U.S. following the deportation of its ambassador to Turkmenistan and reports of potential travel restrictions for Pakistanis. The government's intensified repatriation of Afghan refugees has also drawn international criticism. Meanwhile, trade with Afghanistan remains disrupted due to border closures, and bureaucratic hurdles with Iran result in daily losses of \$2.2 million.

Despite ongoing reform efforts, Pakistan remains at a crossroads. The country's security, political, and economic challenges demand urgent, transparent, and inclusive policy actions. Without strategic reforms and regional cooperation, long-term stability will remain uncertain.

# Escalating Violence

A SIX-MONTH RUNDOWN OF RISING TERROR AND UNREST

[Financial Times](#) quoted: “Islamabad had deadliest year in almost a decade following rise in terror attacks”. Over the past six months, Pakistan has witnessed a concerning escalation in terrorist activities, posing serious threats to national security, political stability, and economic growth. This surge in violence, driven by militant groups such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), has not only resulted in hundreds of casualties but also signaled the failure of counterterrorism strategies that once kept insurgents at bay. As Pakistan grapples with a deteriorating security situation, the implications extend beyond direct attacks—impacting governance, foreign relations, and the everyday lives of civilians, particularly women, who are disproportionately affected by instability and extremist ideologies.

## The Alarming Toll of Terrorism

Pakistan’s security landscape has shifted dramatically since late 2024, with an alarming increase in terrorist attacks. The country recorded over [2,500 deaths](#) related to terrorism in 2024 - the highest in nearly a decade.

According to reports, the first quarter of 2025 alone has seen over 685 fatalities, averaging nearly seven deaths per day. In one of the deadliest incidents, a suicide bombing at the Quetta railway station in November 2024 killed at least 32 people and injured [55](#) others. Similarly, coordinated attacks by the TTP in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have resulted in severe casualties among security personnel, further challenging the state’s ability to maintain order.

Compounding this crisis is the BLA’s intensification of its insurgency. Historically limited to sporadic attacks, the BLA has now adopted sophisticated tactics, including suicide bombings—a significant shift indicating greater operational capability and external backing. These insurgent groups exploit Pakistan’s internal weaknesses, leveraging economic disparities and ethnic tensions to gain traction and challenge the central government’s authority.

## Strategic and Political Miscalculations

Pakistan’s deteriorating security situation is not an isolated phenomenon but rather the result of strategic miscalculations and geopolitical shifts. One of the most significant developments contributing to this rise in terrorism was the Taliban’s takeover of [Afghanistan in 2021](#).

Initially perceived as a stabilizing force for Pakistan’s western border, the Afghan Taliban instead provided sanctuary to the TTP, emboldening them to regroup and launch renewed attacks. The once-fractured TTP has since emerged as a formidable force, demonstrating increased coordination and lethality.

Another major factor is the failure to integrate marginalized regions like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into mainstream economic and political frameworks. The state's inability to address grievances related to economic exploitation, human rights abuses, and lack of representation has fueled local insurgencies. The BLA, for instance, has capitalized on Balochistan's long-standing resentment over resource extraction by external entities without equitable distribution of wealth, making it a fertile ground for rebellion.

Additionally, Pakistan's internal political instability, exacerbated by frequent government transitions, judicial crises, and civil-military tensions, has diverted focus from counterterrorism efforts. A lack of coherent policy-making and coordination between security agencies has created gaps that militant groups have effectively exploited.

### **A Nation in Peril**

The consequences of rising terrorism extend far beyond direct casualties. Economically, continued violence has [deterred foreign investment and jeopardized critical infrastructure](#) projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Investors perceive Pakistan as a high-risk destination, limiting economic opportunities and exacerbating unemployment. Furthermore, frequent attacks have disrupted daily life, leading to mass displacements in conflict zones and an increased burden on already strained state resources.

From a global perspective, Pakistan's worsening security situation has negatively impacted its [ranking on the Global Terrorism Index](#), further isolating it on the diplomatic front. This decline makes securing foreign aid, trade agreements, and defense collaborations more challenging, forcing the country to rely on domestic strategies with limited effectiveness.

### **Women in Crossfire**

While terrorism affects all segments of society, women face [unique and disproportionate vulnerabilities](#). The rise in extremist ideologies has led to increasing restrictions on women's mobility, education, and employment opportunities, particularly in insurgency-hit areas. Women are not only victims of terrorist violence but also subjected to gender-based oppression as militant groups impose draconian measures on female participation in public life.

In conflict zones, displaced women face heightened risks of exploitation and abuse, with little institutional support available to protect them. Moreover, the normalization of violence has resulted in an uptick in domestic violence cases, as stressors linked to economic hardship and insecurity manifest in households.

Despite legislative advancements aimed at protecting women's rights, implementation remains weak, especially in areas where militant groups exert influence. On International Women's Day, acknowledging these challenges is crucial to ensuring that women's voices are not further silenced in the broader security crisis.

## **A Call for Strategic Overhaul**

Pakistan's counterterrorism strategy needs an urgent overhaul, focusing on a multi-pronged approach that goes beyond military responses. While kinetic operations against terrorist groups are necessary, they must be complemented by political and socio-economic reforms. Addressing root causes such as political disenfranchisement, economic marginalization, and radicalization is essential to breaking the cycle of violence.

Strengthening intelligence-sharing mechanisms, both domestically and with regional allies, could help preempt attacks before they occur. Additionally, policies aimed at integrating marginalized communities into mainstream economic activities could reduce the appeal of insurgent movements. Counter-radicalization programs, particularly those targeting youth, need to be expanded to prevent extremist ideologies from taking root in future generations.

Pakistan is at a crossroads. The surge in terrorism over the past six months has exposed critical flaws in security policies and governance structures. The failure to address the resurgence of the TTP, the growing capabilities of the BLA, and the broader socio-political grievances fueling violence has left the nation vulnerable to further instability.

Beyond military responses, a comprehensive approach that includes economic reforms, political inclusivity, and gender-sensitive policies is necessary for long-term peace and stability. The stakes are higher than ever, and without decisive action, Pakistan risks further entrenching itself in a cycle of violence that could take decades to undo.

# Political Updates

## PTI Senator Faisal Javed Blocked from Umrah Despite Court Order:

The denial of PTI Senator Faisal Javed's travel to Saudi Arabia for Umrah at Peshawar Airport, despite a [Lahore High Court](#) (LHC) order permitting his departure, underscores a troubling disregard for judicial authority. Javed accused the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) of deliberately obstructing his travel, ignoring legal directives that had removed his name from the Provisional National Identification List (PNIL).

This incident raises serious concerns about the politicization of law enforcement and the selective application of judicial rulings, fueling fears that legal decisions are being overridden by administrative biases. The move also highlights the growing tensions between opposition figures and state institutions, with critics arguing that such actions undermine the rule of law and erode public trust in the judiciary's authority.



Source: Tribune

## The Controversial Arrest of Aoun Abbas Bappi:

The arrest of PTI Senator Aoun Abbas Bappi has sparked a fierce political debate, with opposition lawmakers condemning it as yet another instance of state-backed repression. While the government claims the arrest was made on the Punjab Wildlife Department's complaint regarding illegal gazelle hunting, the manner of his detention—allegations of police breaking into his house, vandalizing property, and forcibly taking him away—raises serious concerns about due process and political victimization.

The PTI's strong reaction, including a Senate walkout and demands for his immediate production, reflects the broader climate of political instability in Pakistan, where arrests of opposition figures often align with government crackdowns rather than legal enforcement. If Bappi is indeed guilty of wildlife crimes, the law should take its course transparently, but if this is another politically motivated detention, it underscores the alarming trend of using legal instruments to silence dissent. The government must ensure that legal processes are upheld impartially, rather than reinforcing the perception of selective accountability and authoritarian governance.



Source: Alchetron

# Economic Outlook

## Sindh's Water Woes: Bilawal Calls for Consensus Amid Political Divides

Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has reiterated Sindh's concerns over new canals from the Indus River, urging the government to resolve the issue through consensus via the Council of Common Interests (CCI). He criticized the federal government's unilateral policies, warning against projects that could harm provincial rights. While his call for cooperation aligns with democratic governance, it also reflects the PPP's strategic positioning as a provincial advocate rather than a coalition partner in the federal setup. His broader remarks on law and order in KP and Balochistan, as well as economic policies, highlight the PPP's attempt to maintain political relevance beyond Sindh.



Source: Unsplash

However, his critique of the KP government's inaction on terrorism, while valid, sidesteps the fact that security lapses are a federal issue as well. Bilawal's emphasis on a consensus-driven approach is politically astute, yet it remains to be seen whether his party can translate rhetoric into tangible policy influence.

## Pakistan Redirects ADB Flood Relief Grant to Turkey and Syria, PAC Seeks Explanation:

Pakistan has come under scrutiny for redirecting [Rs550 million](#) from its Asian Development Bank (ADB) flood relief grant to assist Turkey and Syria. During a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), auditors revealed that relief items worth Rs552.6 million were sent using funds originally allocated for Pakistan's own flood victims. Committee members, including Omar Ayub and Shazia Marri, questioned the decision, arguing that while humanitarian aid is important, using funds granted specifically for Pakistan raised ethical and financial concerns.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Chairman, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik, defended the move, explaining that the assistance came from available stock and reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to supporting friendly nations in crisis. Despite the NDMA's justification, PAC members remained unconvinced, emphasizing that aid funds should be used as intended. The committee's chairman criticized the decision, stating that Pakistan should not act as a benefactor with money that was not originally its own. In response, the NDMA assured that the ADB grant had been returned to Pakistan, but the PAC has demanded a full report on the matter within a month. This development has sparked a broader debate on financial accountability, humanitarian priorities, and Pakistan's economic constraints amid its own disaster recovery efforts.

## Pakistan's Rush to Privatization:

The Pakistani government's commitment to privatizing Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) by July, alongside the potential sale of the Roosevelt Hotel and other state-owned enterprises, signals a frantic push to appease the International Monetary Fund (IMF). While privatization can enhance efficiency and reduce financial burdens on the state, the hurried nature of this process raises concerns about transparency, valuation, and long-term national interests.



Source: Profit

The government's uncertainty regarding investor appetite for PIA, coupled with past failures to attract serious bidders, highlights the airline's deep-rooted financial troubles. The decision to remove the 18% sales tax on aircraft leases and erase Rs. 45 billion in liabilities just to lure investors suggests desperation rather than a well-planned economic strategy. Similarly, the potential sale of the Roosevelt Hotel, one of the most valuable real estate assets in the world, should be approached with caution, ensuring that Pakistan does not undervalue a strategic asset in a rushed transaction. Beyond PIA and Roosevelt, the broader privatization drive—including the planned sale of Zarai Taraqati Bank Limited (ZTBL) and First Women Bank—reflects Pakistan's ongoing struggle to manage its debt obligations and meet IMF requirements.

The UAE's interest in acquiring First Women Bank outside of an open bidding process raises concerns about fairness and whether Pakistan is negotiating from a position of weakness.

Moreover, the repeated failures to meet past privatization deadlines raise doubts about the government's ability to execute these transactions effectively.

While privatization can potentially bring in much-needed revenue and improve governance, if mishandled, it could result in further economic instability, job losses, and the loss of key national assets to foreign entities under less-than-favorable conditions.

The government must ensure that its privatization efforts are driven by national interest rather than external pressures, prioritizing strategic planning and transparency over quick-fix financial solutions.

## Pakistan's Mineral Boom: A Promising but Challenging Frontier

The Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum (PMIF) 2025 signals a significant step toward unlocking Pakistan's underutilized mineral wealth, attracting foreign investment, and positioning the country as a global mining hub. With vast reserves of copper, gold, coal, and precious stones, Pakistan has long held the potential for a thriving mining sector.

The participation of international investors, including Barrick Gold and Saudi Arabia's Manara Minerals, highlights growing confidence in Pakistan's resource-rich landscape.



Additionally, infrastructure development under CPEC, particularly enhanced export logistics and railway expansion, is expected to bolster the sector's efficiency and global connectivity.

However, the real challenge lies in effectively implementing the National Minerals Harmonization Framework 2025, ensuring regulatory stability, and addressing security concerns, particularly in mineral-rich but volatile regions like Balochistan.

While PMIF 2025 presents a unique opportunity for economic transformation, several structural and geopolitical challenges must be addressed to fully realize its benefits.

Pakistan's mining sector has historically struggled with bureaucratic hurdles, inconsistent policies, and security risks, all of which could deter long-term investment. Environmental concerns also remain a critical issue, as large-scale mining projects must balance economic gains with sustainable practices. Without a transparent regulatory framework and local community engagement, resource extraction could exacerbate regional inequalities rather than drive inclusive growth. If managed effectively, however, strategic investments and policy reforms could elevate Pakistan's mining industry, transforming it from a marginal GDP contributor into a key driver of national economic stability and export growth.

## Social and Humanitarian Focus

### Pakistan's Gender Pay Gap Among the Highest:

Pakistan continues to grapple with one of the highest gender pay gaps (GPG) globally, with women earning 25% less than men on average, according to a recent International Labour Organisation (ILO) report. The report highlights that for every Rs1,000 earned by men, women make only Rs750, and the gap widens to nearly 30% in monthly earnings due to lower average working hours for women.

While some progress has been made—down from a 33% gap in 2018—the disparity remains stark, particularly in the informal sector, where women earn up to 40% less. Factors like education and experience do not fully explain this wage difference, pointing to systemic discrimination in the labour market.

Though the formal economy, especially the public sector, sees less pronounced wage disparities due to better compliance with labour laws, women in informal and domestic work continue to face severe pay inequities. Pakistan's GPG is notably higher than its South Asian counterparts, including Sri Lanka (22%) and Nepal (18%), with Bangladesh even reporting a negative pay gap. Despite Pakistan being a signatory to international agreements like the ILO's Equal Remuneration Convention (1951), gender-based wage inequality persists. Addressing this requires stronger enforcement of equal pay policies, improved labour protections for informal workers, and broader socio-economic reforms to ensure women's fair participation in the workforce.

## **NADRA Introduces Pakistan's First Digital ID Card on 25th Anniversary:**

As NADRA marks [25 years](#) with the launch of Pakistan's first dematerialized ID card, questions arise about the accessibility and security of this digital shift. While government officials hail it as a breakthrough in efficiency, the move risks deepening the digital divide, particularly for rural and low-income citizens with limited smartphone and internet access.

The introduction of the Pak ID Mobile App promises convenience, but without robust safeguards and an inclusive rollout strategy, it may exclude those who rely on traditional ID systems. As Pakistan accelerates digital transformation with World Bank support, ensuring equitable access must be a priority to prevent further marginalization.

## **Monsoon Brides: How Climate Change Fuels Child Marriages in Pakistan**

In the flood-stricken villages of Sindh, Pakistan, young girls are becoming collateral damage in the battle against climate change. Families devastated by the catastrophic floods of 2022, which submerged nearly a third of the country, are resorting to marrying off their daughters to ease financial burdens.

The practice of child marriage, once rare in these communities, has surged as parents struggle to rebuild lost livelihoods. With crops destroyed, debts piling up, and food insecurity rising, many see marriage as a means of survival rather than a choice.

The phenomenon, dubbed "[monsoon brides](#)," underscores the intersection of poverty, climate change, and gender inequality.

NGOs like Sujag Sansar report a sharp increase in underage marriages, particularly before monsoon seasons when families anticipate further devastation. Pakistan's laws prohibit child marriage, yet enforcement remains weak, leaving young girls vulnerable to early pregnancies, health risks, and loss of education. The climate crisis is not only reshaping landscapes but also dictating the futures of thousands of girls, forcing them into marriages that strip them of their childhood and autonomy.

To combat this growing crisis, urgent action is needed. Strengthening legal protections, providing financial aid to affected families, and ensuring girls' access to education and safe spaces are essential steps. More importantly, addressing the root cause—climate change—requires long-term investment in sustainable farming, flood-resistant infrastructure, and disaster preparedness. Without intervention, climate-induced child marriages will continue to rise, turning vulnerable girls into unintended victims of an environmental catastrophe they played no role in creating.

## **Pakistan Placed on Civicus Monitor Watchlist Amid Crackdown on Civil Liberties:**

Pakistan has been added to the [Civicus Monitor's 2025 watchlist](#), classified as a "repressed" state due to shrinking civic freedoms, arbitrary targeting of activists, and restrictions on journalism. The report highlights the government's use of draconian laws, such as the Anti-Terrorism Act, against human rights defenders like Dr. Mahrang Baloch and Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir.

Civicus condemned these actions as politically motivated efforts to silence dissent, while also criticizing the ban on the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement and the suppression of protests by opposition and ethnic groups. Additionally, the report points to increasing digital censorship, particularly through amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) and the prolonged suspension of social media platform X in Pakistan.

The monitor also noted the state's restrictions on mobile and internet services during protests, viewing them as direct violations of international human rights obligations. Civicus has called on the Pakistani government to reverse these measures, uphold freedoms of expression and assembly, and hold perpetrators accountable to align with UN recommendations on civic rights.

## Security and Governance

### Bannu Cantonment Attack: 16 Terrorists Killed, Security Concerns Intensify

In a significant counterterrorism operation, Pakistan's security forces successfully repelled a terrorist attack on Bannu Cantonment, eliminating all 16 assailants, including four suicide bombers. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) reported that five soldiers embraced martyrdom while defending the military compound, with the attackers resorting to explosive-laden vehicle ramming tactics to breach the perimeter. The incident also led to civilian casualties, with [13 innocent lives](#) lost and 32 others injured due to the destruction caused by the explosions. The ISPR's intelligence assessment pointed to the direct involvement of Afghan nationals, suggesting that the attack was orchestrated by Khawarij elements based in Afghanistan. This has further strained Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, as Islamabad reiterated its demand for the interim Afghan government to prevent its territory from being used for cross-border terrorism. The Hafiz Gul Bahadur group, a faction with historical ties to the Afghan Taliban, claimed responsibility



Source: Brecorder

for the attack, raising serious concerns about the resurgence of militancy in Pakistan's border regions. This assault follows a similar attack last year, underscoring the persistent threat posed by terrorist groups operating with apparent external support. The security establishment has warned of potential retaliatory actions, with the ISPR emphasizing Pakistan's right to take necessary defensive measures. With growing instability and increasing cross-border threats, analysts argue that Pakistan must adopt a robust counterterrorism strategy, while also pushing for stricter international pressure on Afghanistan to dismantle militant safe havens. The attack once again highlights the urgent need for stronger border security, intelligence cooperation, and decisive action against terror networks operating in the region.

## **Jaffar Express Attack: 13 Terrorists Killed, 80 Hostages Rescued by Security Forces**

The recent assault on the Jaffar Express in Balochistan's Bolan Pass has concluded with significant casualties. Security forces successfully rescued over [300 passengers](#), but the death toll has risen to [31](#), including soldiers, railway staff, and civilians. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility, alleging they executed 214 hostages, though no evidence supports this. The military reported eliminating 33 insurgents during the operation.

Reports indicate that the terrorists had stopped the train inside Tunnel No. 8, holding passengers captive while maintaining communication with their masterminds in Afghanistan. Security sources revealed that the attackers used women and children as human shields, complicating the operation.

However, authorities have vowed to continue the clearance mission until every last terrorist is neutralized. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi condemned the attack, emphasizing that those who fire on innocent passengers "do not deserve any concessions." Meanwhile, social media platforms have witnessed an uptick in misleading propaganda, with Indian media and anti-state actors spreading false narratives through AI-generated content, outdated images, and manipulated videos in an apparent effort to incite panic.

Security officials reiterated that the actions of the terrorists have no connection to Islam, Pakistan, or Balochistan, and condemned their cowardly tactics.

They also warned against misinformation campaigns supporting separatist narratives, urging the public to rely on verified sources for accurate information. The Balochistan government has directed all institutions to remain on high alert, while security forces tighten their grip on the area to prevent further terrorist activity. Despite the severity of the attack, authorities remain steadfast in their resolve to secure the region and ensure the safety of civilians. The operation continues, with officials determined to bring the situation to a successful conclusion. Further updates will be provided as the situation unfolds.



Source: The Sun

## **Punjab CTD's Counter-Terrorism: 10 Militants Arrested in Sweeping Operations**

Punjab's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) has intensified its crackdown on militant networks, arresting 10 terrorists in a series of 73 intelligence-based operations (IBOs) across the province.

The operations, conducted in key districts including Rawalpindi, Toba Tek Singh, Khushab, and Rahim Yar Khan, targeted elements affiliated with proscribed organizations such as Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Security forces recovered explosives, an IED bomb, detonators, and propaganda materials, preventing potential attacks aimed at destabilizing the region. Additionally, a total of 107 suspects were detained in [758 combing operations](#) over the past week, demonstrating the government's renewed commitment to combating rising terror threats.

The surge in counter-terrorism activity comes amid an alarming increase in terrorist attacks across Pakistan, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

According to the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), February alone saw 79 terrorist attacks, resulting in the deaths of 55 civilians and 47 security personnel.

As security forces continue to dismantle terror cells, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi praised Punjab police for thwarting an attack on a Dera Ghazi Khan border post, underscoring the crucial role of law enforcement in curbing militancy. With terrorist networks growing more emboldened, CTD's proactive approach remains vital in safeguarding national security.



Source: Pexels

## Escalating Tensions at Torkham Border Amid Prolonged Closure:

The Torkham border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been closed since [February 21, 2025](#), following a dispute over the construction of a border post by Afghan authorities. This closure has led to escalating tensions, culminating in heavy exchanges of gunfire between Pakistani and Afghan security forces on March 3, 2025.

The clashes resulted in casualties on both sides, including the death of an Afghan soldier and injuries to Pakistani personnel. The use of heavy weaponry during these skirmishes caused significant damage to infrastructure and forced residents in nearby areas to evacuate for safety.

The prolonged closure of this critical trade route has stranded thousands of trucks carrying essential goods, leading to substantial economic losses estimated at [\\$1.6 million](#) in imports and [\\$1.4 million](#) in exports daily. The situation has been exacerbated by the onset of Ramadan, a period when food imports are vital for Afghanistan, which is already grappling with a severe humanitarian crisis. Efforts to resolve the impasse through dialogue have so far been unsuccessful, leaving traders, transporters, and local communities in a state of uncertainty and hardship.



Source: AP News

# Diplomatic Landscape

## Diplomatic Tensions Rise as Pakistani Envoy Denied Entry to the US:

The denial of entry and subsequent deportation of Pakistan's ambassador to Turkmenistan, K K Wagan, by [US immigration authorities](#) raises concerns over the evolving nature of diplomatic relations between the two countries. While the Foreign Office maintains that Wagan was on a private visit, the incident suggests deeper complications, potentially linked to previous controversies or diplomatic sensitivities.

The fact that a senior diplomat with a valid visa was stopped raises questions about whether the US is tightening its scrutiny of Pakistani officials, signaling a shift in bilateral engagements. If the issue stems from past legal or visa-related complications, it underscores the need for greater diplomatic transparency and coordination to prevent such embarrassments.



Source: Tribune

This development could have broader implications for diplomatic protocols and mutual trust between the US and Pakistan. While countries reserve the right to regulate entry at their borders, the deportation of a serving diplomat—even on a private visit—sets a precedent that may affect future diplomatic exchanges.

If the US took this step based on unverified or politically motivated concerns, it risks straining relations at a time when cooperation on regional security and economic matters remains crucial. Pakistan's response will be key in determining whether this incident escalates into a diplomatic standoff or is quietly resolved through backchannel negotiations.

## Pakistan's Deadline for Afghan Citizen Card Holders: Uncertainty Looms as Deportation Nears

With [March 31](#) set as the final deadline for Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders to leave Pakistan, the government has intensified its efforts to repatriate all undocumented foreigners. The latest directives mandate the immediate relocation of ACC holders in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, marking the first phase of the deportation plan. Meanwhile, Proof of Registration (POR) card holders have been given a temporary reprieve until June 30, 2025, though they will also be relocated from major cities.

Intelligence agencies, including the ISI and IB, have been tasked with overseeing the implementation of the plan, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates with foreign embassies to facilitate the resettlement of those awaiting relocation to third countries.

The move has further complicated the fate of 15,000 Afghan refugees approved for relocation to the United States, as the recent

suspension of the US Refugee Admission Programme under President Donald Trump has left them in limbo. The United Nations and international organizations have raised alarms over Pakistan's mass deportation plan, urging authorities to ensure human rights protections for refugees and asylum seekers. The UNHCR and IOM have called for clarity on the relocation process, emphasizing that forced returns could put many Afghans at severe risk. Despite Pakistan's assurance that no one will be mistreated during repatriation, concerns persist over the fate of thousands who have lived in the country for decades.

While Pakistan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it has long hosted millions of Afghan migrants. As the deadline approaches, the global community watches closely, with human rights advocates urging Pakistan to consider legal pathways for those with deep socioeconomic and family ties in the country.

### **Potential US Travel Restrictions on Pakistan: A Diplomatic and Economic Setback**

The possibility of Pakistan facing travel restrictions under the US visa review highlights the growing diplomatic strain between the two nations. While official confirmation is pending, the reported classification of Pakistan in an "orange" category—limiting visa access to only certain groups—could significantly impact students, professionals, and tourists.

The uncertainty surrounding these restrictions has already created anxiety among Pakistani students in the US, some of whom have been advised against returning home.

Such measures, if implemented, could not only hinder educational and professional opportunities for Pakistanis but also disrupt people-to-people ties and business collaborations, further widening the divide between the two nations.

Additionally, the decision to impose stricter vetting on Pakistani citizens raises concerns about the discriminatory nature of US immigration policies, which often disproportionately target Muslim-majority countries under the guise of national security.

Beyond the diplomatic fallout, these potential restrictions could have far-reaching economic consequences. Pakistan's business and tech sectors rely on international travel for networking, investment, and trade, and any barriers to entry in the US market could hurt economic growth.

The uncertainty also risks discouraging American institutions and investors from engaging with Pakistan, exacerbating the country's existing economic challenges. Furthermore, the move could push Pakistan towards strengthening ties with other global powers, such as China and Russia, shifting geopolitical alliances in a way that could have long-term implications for US-Pakistan relations.

If the US aims to maintain diplomatic engagement with Pakistan while addressing security concerns, a more nuanced and transparent visa policy—rather than broad-stroke restrictions—is necessary to avoid further alienation and economic repercussions.

# Environment and Climate Perspectives

## Pakistan's Wheat Crop at Risk as Water Shortages Intensify:

With Tarbela and Mangla dams nearing dead levels, Pakistan's key wheat-producing provinces, Punjab and Sindh, face a severe water shortage of up to **35% in the final phase** of the crop season, according to the Indus River System Authority (Irsa). The rapid depletion of reservoirs threatens wheat yields, which were already affected by lower-than-expected sowing.

While recent rains have temporarily improved water availability, Irsa warns that the situation remains precarious, urging provinces to take precautionary measures.



Source: DAWN

As the wheat harvest approaches, the reliance on further rainfall grows critical to mitigating potential losses in one of Pakistan's most essential crops.

## Sindh Faces Imminent Water Crisis as Major Dams Near Depletion

Sindh is confronting an escalating water crisis as the province's major reservoirs, Mangla and Tarbela dams, approach critical depletion levels. As of March 3, 2025, official reports indicate that Tarbela Dam holds a mere **0.102 million acre-feet** of water, while Mangla Dam contains 0.226 million acre-feet, with projections suggesting complete exhaustion within 4-5 days.

This alarming situation stems from minimal rainfall during the current Rabi season, leading to a drastic reduction in water reserves. Consequently, urban centers such as Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, and Larkana are already experiencing the adverse effects of this drought.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department has raised concerns over a worsening drought due to a 52% decline in rainfall in Sindh, with the dry spell expected to persist through February and March. This exacerbates the crisis, particularly in areas like Naushahro Feroze, Sukkur, Shaheed Benazirabad, and Jamshoro.

In response, authorities are advocating for systematic planning to ensure equitable distribution of the diminishing water supply, hinting at potential rationing measures to mitigate the impact on agriculture and drinking water resources across the region.



## Pakistan's Air Pollution Crisis Deepens

### Amid Monitoring Setbacks:

Pakistan remains among the world's most polluted countries, ranking in the [top five](#) alongside Chad, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and India, with PM2.5 levels far exceeding WHO's safe limit. Major cities like Lahore and Karachi continue to experience hazardous smog, exacerbated by industrial emissions and climate change-driven factors like extreme temperatures and wildfires.

The situation worsened with the discontinuation of the US air quality monitoring program, which provided crucial real-time data, leaving Pakistan with significant gaps in pollution tracking. Experts warn that without robust monitoring systems and stricter environmental policies, the country's air pollution crisis will persist, posing severe health risks and environmental challenges.

# 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](#))
- Water Governance Challenges in Pakistan ([Click Here](#))
- Consumer Protection in Pakistan ([Click Here](#))