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COUNTRY ANALYSIS REPORT

79 YEARS AFTER INDEPENDENCE, WHAT CHANGED, WHAT'S LEFT?

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Executive Summary

As Pakistan marks 79 years of independence, the country enters another period of institutional, economic and geopolitical transition. Pakistan is pursuing a more diversified set of international partnerships, and debates over governance reform, decentralisation and institutional restructuring have returned to the political agenda. Yet across these areas, this report identifies a persistent gap between formal reform and substantive institutional change. Pakistan has repeatedly created new laws, institutions and policy frameworks, but their effectiveness continues to be constrained by weak implementation, overlapping mandates, political instability, limited accountability and the concentration of decision-making away from citizens.

Pakistan's external relations meanwhile reflect an increasingly diversified diplomatic strategy. Deeper engagement with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, continued strategic and economic cooperation with China, renewed institutional ties with the United States and an active diplomatic position on Palestine indicate an attempt to maintain relationships across competing geopolitical blocs. However, tensions with Afghanistan, continuing security threats from the TTP and BLA, and the absence of meaningful political engagement with India demonstrate the limits of this diplomatic opening. Pakistan's international relationships will ultimately be more consequential if they contribute to domestic economic resilience, institutional development and regional stability rather than remaining primarily geopolitical achievements.

The country also faces significant human-rights, humanitarian and climate pressures. Restrictions affecting journalists and civic space, persistent protection gaps for religious minorities and women, and concerns regarding access to justice coexist with new institutional commitments such as the proposed minority-rights commission. Climate change is simultaneously becoming a structural development challenge rather than an episodic humanitarian emergency. Floods, extreme heat, glacial risks, water stress and coastal degradation increasingly intersect with poverty, labour vulnerability, weak urban planning and unequal access to public services. Pakistan possesses considerable institutional knowledge and is attracting significant climate financing, but fragmented responsibilities and weak local implementation continue to limit resilience.

Across these developments, a common conclusion emerges: Pakistan's principal challenge is no longer simply designing reforms, but making institutions work as intended. Whether in constitutional governance, economic management, human rights, decentralisation or climate resilience, sustainable progress will depend on translating formal commitments into predictable implementation, strengthening accountability for outcomes, empowering local institutions and ensuring that public policy produces measurable improvements in citizens' lives. At 79, the unfinished task of independence is therefore increasingly institutional: moving from a state that repeatedly manages crises and restructures authority towards one that consistently delivers rights, services, opportunity and accountability.

79 Years After Independence

WHAT CHANGED, WHAT'S LEFT?

As Pakistan marks its 79th Independence Day, perhaps the more consequential question is no longer how successfully it broke from British rule in 1947, but how completely it has dismantled the system through which the British ruled. There is an important distinction here: Pakistan's Constitution is not a colonial document. The 1973 Constitution guarantees liberty, due process, fair trial, expression and assembly. Yet underneath that constitutional architecture sits a remarkable amount of older legal machinery: the Pakistan Penal Code 1860, Code of Criminal Procedure 1898, Land Acquisition Act 1894, Prisons Act 1894 and Official Secrets Act 1923, among others. These laws were designed for a colonial administration whose fundamental relationship with the population was not that of government to citizen, but ruler to subject. Their continued existence does not automatically make Pakistan undemocratic; their continued use without systematic reconsideration, however, raises a more difficult question about what independence has meant institutionally.

Pakistan's trajectory is particularly striking beside India, which inherited almost exactly the same legal system in 1947. Pakistan took nine years to adopt its first constitution in 1956; that document was abrogated in 1958, replaced by the 1962 Constitution, and ultimately by the present Constitution in 1973. Parliamentary government itself was again suspended between 1977 and 1985. India, despite its own serious democratic weaknesses, eventually undertook a wholesale replacement of the three pillars of colonial criminal justice: from July 2024, the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and Indian Evidence Act were replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam. It had already repealed the colonial Land Acquisition Act 1894 through its 2013 legislation on fair compensation, transparency, rehabilitation and resettlement. This should not be romanticised as complete decolonisation: India's new Section 152 criminalises acts endangering the "sovereignty, unity and integrity" of India and has been criticised as capable of reproducing some of the breadth associated with sedition. The lesson is precisely that changing the name of a law is less important than changing the relationship of power embedded within it.

Bangladesh offers an even more useful comparison because it demonstrates that reform need not mean replacing an entire inherited legal code overnight. Bangladesh still uses the Penal Code 1860, including, remarkably, its colonial sedition provision, Section 124A, and the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898. Yet in 2025 it amended that old criminal procedure framework to insert concrete safeguards at perhaps the most dangerous point of contact between citizen and state: arrest. Police officers must identify themselves, prepare a memorandum of arrest, record the arrest, notify a relative or nominated person within 12 hours, facilitate access to a lawyer or close relative, and document injuries and medical examination. This is a useful model of substantive rather than symbolic decolonisation: if an inherited law cannot immediately be replaced, its coercive provisions can at least be rewritten around the rights of the citizen.

Pakistan's difficulty is that the old logic is not merely surviving; in some areas it is being reproduced in modern forms. Section 124A of the Penal Code, the sedition provision created by the British to suppress challenges to colonial authority, was declared unconstitutional by the Lahore High Court in 2023. Yet the broader public-order architecture remains powerful. Section 144 of the 1898 Criminal Procedure Code continues to enable restrictions on assemblies, while the Peaceful Assembly and Public Order Act 2024 introduced an extensive permission and restriction regime for Islamabad that the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan criticised as inconsistent with the constitutional right to peaceful assembly. The problem, therefore, goes beyond one obsolete sedition clause. A state can remove the word “sedition” while preserving a governmental instinct in which dissent is first processed as a public-order problem and only subsequently as a constitutional right.

The same instinct is now visible in the digital sphere. The 2025 amendments to PECA created new regulatory and enforcement structures and criminalised dissemination of vaguely defined “false and fake information”, with imprisonment of up to three years. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan”s 2026 assessment of the previous year described a severe contraction of civic space and highlighted the combined use of cybercrime, sedition and anti-terrorism frameworks against journalists, activists, political workers and lawyers. In this sense, Pakistan faces a distinctly twenty-first-century form of colonial continuity: the district magistrate's logic has acquired a digital dashboard. The technology is new; the presumption that potentially troublesome expression should be administratively controlled is much older.

This matters to ordinary citizens in ways that constitutional theory can obscure. When arrest powers are broad, the punishment may become the process itself. When public assembly depends upon administrative permission, people may self-censor before the state ever prohibits anything. When a nineteenth-century acquisition framework governs the taking of land, constitutional property rights may mean little to a household unable to sustain years of litigation. When speech offences use elastic concepts such as disorder, false information, national interest or hostility to the state, selective enforcement becomes easier, and citizens cannot confidently predict what lawful conduct is. The cumulative consequence is legal uncertainty, unequal bargaining power between citizen and state, chilling of civic participation and declining institutional trust.

Pakistan has nevertheless been energetic in amending its Constitution. The latest phase is especially consequential. The 27th Constitutional Amendment of November 2025 created a separate Federal Constitutional Court and transferred major constitutional jurisdiction from the Supreme Court. The new Court presents the reform as a specialised mechanism for efficient constitutional adjudication. International jurists, however, have argued that aspects of the 26th and 27th Amendments increase political influence over judicial appointments and transfers and weaken the judiciary's capacity to check executive power. That debate captures Pakistan's larger constitutional dilemma: a constitution can be repeatedly modernised while the citizen-state relationship beneath it remains insufficiently transformed.

Other post-colonial constitutions show what a different direction can look like. For instance, Kenya's 2010 Constitution expressly requires limitations on rights to be reasonable and justifiable, asks whether less restrictive means are available, guarantees fair administrative action and written reasons for adverse decisions, and constitutionally requires public participation in parliamentary lawmaking. These provisions do not guarantee good governance; no constitutional text can, but they reverse the premise of colonial administration. The state must explain why it is restricting the citizen; the citizen should not have to explain why they deserve liberty.

What survives after nearly eight decades survives increasingly by political choice. A meaningful Independence Day agenda would therefore include a systematic audit of colonial and early post-colonial laws governing policing, arrest, public order, secrecy, prisons, land acquisition and expression; testing each against fundamental rights, Pakistan's international obligations and contemporary standards of necessity and proportionality.

Political Updates

Pakistan's political environment remains marked by deep institutional contestation, weak political consensus and growing debate over the effectiveness of the existing governance architecture. This debate intensified in August 2026 after Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi publicly described the governance system as having "collapsed" and called for a broad institutional reset, including consideration of additional provinces or administrative units.

The proposal quickly became politically contentious, particularly after receiving support from the military spokesperson, while major political parties and legal bodies questioned both its constitutional basis and the assumption that Pakistan's governance failures stem primarily from the size or number of provinces. The controversy reflects a much wider problem: political debate continues to focus heavily on institutional redesign and the distribution of authority between political and non-political actors, while comparatively less attention is paid to whether existing institutions actually deliver education, healthcare, security, employment and other public services. Pakistan's governance weaknesses are therefore better understood not simply as a problem of administrative boundaries, but as the product of prolonged political instability, inconsistent policymaking, institutional overlap, elite capture and limited accountability for performance.

The renewed debate also exposes the unresolved consequences of Pakistan's incomplete decentralisation. The 18th Constitutional Amendment substantially strengthened provincial autonomy, but meaningful political, administrative and fiscal devolution has generally not extended further to elected local governments. As a result, significant authority has shifted from Islamabad to provincial capitals without necessarily bringing decision-making closer to citizens. This has created an important distinction between devolution and decentralisation: provinces possess greater constitutional and fiscal authority, yet districts and municipalities often remain dependent on provincial governments for resources and administrative discretion.

Source: Getty Images

Arguments for creating smaller provinces therefore have some administrative logic, particularly in geographically large or highly populated provinces, but new boundaries alone would not necessarily improve governance. Without functioning local governments, predictable fiscal transfers, stronger civil-service capacity and clearer accountability mechanisms, additional provinces could simply reproduce the same centralised practices at a smaller scale.

Article 140A of the Constitution already provides a basis for devolving political, administrative and financial authority to elected local governments; implementing this more consistently may therefore offer a less disruptive route to improving service delivery than treating territorial restructuring as a substitute for institutional reform.

These governance challenges are occurring in an increasingly polarised political environment. Relations between the government and PTI remain confrontational, with former prime minister Imran Khan still imprisoned and PTI preparing further mobilisation demanding his release. An August 2026 shooting in Rawalpindi involving an alleged PTI member and security personnel further illustrated how quickly security incidents can become politically contested, with the government accusing PTI of encouraging violence while the party demanded an independent judicial investigation and rejected attribution of responsibility before evidence was established.

Source: Arab News

Such episodes reinforce a broader pattern in which political competition is increasingly mediated through security institutions, courts and administrative measures rather than sustained parliamentary negotiation. At the same time, public discussion of government performance remains disproportionately centred on visible infrastructure, universities, hospitals, highways and other large projects, rather than measurable outcomes such as literacy, learning, healthcare access, poverty reduction, policing effectiveness or employment creation. The more consequential governance question for Pakistan is therefore whether its institutional map should be redesigned, but also whether political and administrative institutions can become more accountable for outcomes, provide meaningful space for political competition, and translate public expenditure into demonstrable improvements in citizens' lives.

Economic Updates

Pakistan enters FY2026-27 in a significantly more stable macroeconomic position than during the balance-of-payments crisis of 2022-23, but the recovery remains better described as stabilisation than structural transformation. Fiscal consolidation, stronger foreign-exchange buffers and lower inflation have reduced the immediate risk of external default and restored a degree of policy credibility. The fiscal deficit narrowed to 1.6 per cent of GDP during the first eleven months of FY26, while the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) now expects real GDP growth of 3.5-4.5 per cent in FY27, compared with provisional growth of around 3.7 per cent in FY26. It also projects its foreign-exchange reserves to reach $21.1 billion by June 2027.

The IMF similarly assesses that Pakistan has made significant progress in rebuilding stability and external buffers, although it continues to emphasise reforms in taxation, energy, state-owned enterprises, competition and human capital. Growth of around four per cent remains modest for a country with rapid population growth and millions of young people entering working age. Business groups have argued that sustained growth closer to 6-7 per cent will eventually be required to generate employment and materially raise living standards. The precise figure should not be treated as a mechanical threshold; high growth without productivity, employment creation or human development can itself be unsustainable, but the underlying concern is valid. Pakistan has repeatedly demonstrated an ability to stabilise after crises; it has been far less successful at converting stabilisation into sustained increases in productivity and per-capita income.

The principal weakness in the outlook is that fiscal improvement continues to rest on a narrow and vulnerable base. Public debt stood at approximately Rs83.3 trillion at the end of March 2026 and interest payments consumed around Rs6.16 trillion during the first eleven months of FY26. At the same time, the Federal Board of Revenue reportedly fell Rs975 billion short of its IMF-linked tax target, illustrating the continued difficulty of generating sufficient revenues from a broad and equitable tax base. Fiscal adjustment therefore risks depending excessively on easily collectable indirect taxes and levies, expenditure compression and constrained development spending rather than bigger and deeper changes in the structure of taxation and government expenditure.

The energy sector remains particularly important. Capacity charges alone were approximately Rs1.81 trillion in FY25 and are projected at around Rs1.7 trillion in 2026, while the power sector's circular debt, after declining sharply, had again risen to approximately Rs1.84 trillion by the end of FY26. Renegotiation of contracts with fourteen independent power producers represents a meaningful attempt to reduce future liabilities, but large receivables associated with CPEC power projects and continuing losses, theft, weak recoveries and subsidy distortions mean that the underlying circular-debt mechanism remains intact.

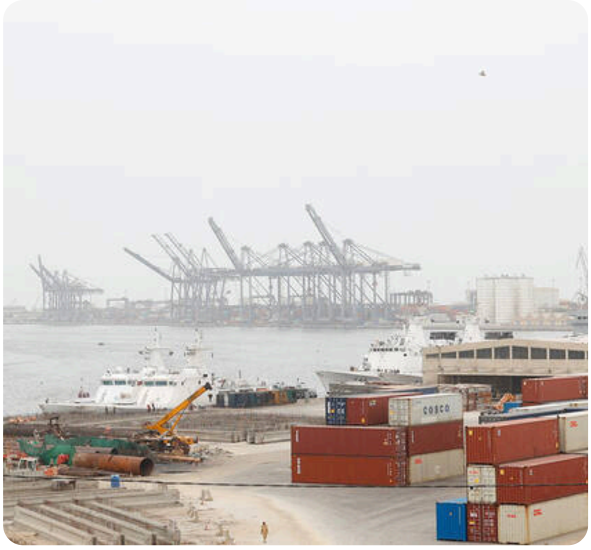
Similar tensions are visible in petroleum policy: using petroleum levies to strengthen revenues may be fiscally convenient, but high fuel prices simultaneously raise transport, agricultural and industrial costs. The policy challenge is therefore not simply to reduce taxes or subsidies, but to shift fiscal adjustment away from repeatedly taxing formal consumption and compressing productive expenditure towards broadening direct taxation, improving expenditure efficiency and addressing structural losses in energy and state-owned enterprises. The forthcoming IMF review cycle in September 2026 will consequently test not whether Pakistan can meet another set of short-term programme benchmarks, but whether fiscal consolidation is gradually becoming institutionally sustainable.

Source: Asia News Network

The investment picture presents a similarly important paradox. Foreign companies already established in Pakistan continue to demonstrate substantial commitment: members of the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) report investing more than $23 billion over the past decade, compared with approximately $21 billion in cumulative net FDI for the country over the same period.

In FY2025 alone, OICCI members reported Rs13.1 trillion in revenues, Rs615 billion in capital expenditure and Rs3.2 trillion in government levies. This is encouraging, but it should not be interpreted simply as evidence that Pakistan has solved its investment problem. In fact, the comparison highlights the opposite: firms that already understand the market, possess established distribution networks and have sunk capital into Pakistan are willing to reinvest, while the economy still struggles to attract sufficiently large volumes of new productive foreign investment.

Macroeconomic volatility, energy costs, taxation, regulatory uncertainty and inconsistent policy implementation continue to raise the risk premium attached to Pakistan. There are nevertheless significant areas of unrealised potential. Government efforts to develop Karachi as a maritime and transshipment hub, expand the blue economy and marine tourism, and improve shipbuilding and logistics could diversify the economy beyond traditional sectors. Similarly, initiatives such as the Meta-backed Small Business Growth Academy, targeting more than 1,000 SMEs with digital and AI skills, point towards the productivity gains possible through technology adoption, particularly among smaller and women-led enterprises.



Source: Reuters

These initiatives are useful, but their economic significance will depend on whether they develop into ecosystems rather than isolated programmes. Pakistan does not primarily lack strategies, investment conferences or ambitious long-term visions; it lacks consistent implementation across political cycles, predictable regulation and a policy environment in which competitive firms are rewarded more reliably than politically connected sectors.

Ultimately, Pakistan's medium-term outlook will depend less on whether FY27 growth reaches the upper or lower end of the SBP's forecast than on whether the country begins changing the institutions that repeatedly convert periods of expansion into fiscal and external crises. The World Bank's recent assessment of fiscal federalism illustrates the problem. The 18th Constitutional Amendment and the 7th NFC Award transferred significant responsibilities and resources to provinces. Still, federal expenditure did not adjust sufficiently, revenue mobilisation remained weak, taxation became fragmented across jurisdictions, and relatively little of the additional fiscal space translated into stronger local-government financing or markedly better health and education services.

Source: Dawn News

Provincial revenues increased substantially after devolution, yet more than 80 per cent of provincial expenditure in FY23 was recurrent, while local governments' share of total public spending fell to below five per cent by 2024. The appropriate response is not recentralisation, but better alignment of revenue, responsibilities, accountability and service delivery across federal, provincial and local governments. This fits a wider political-economy diagnosis: Pakistan's persistent weakness has been its limited capacity to channel public authority and private capital towards human capital, technological upgrading, competitive exports and productivity rather than rents, protection and short-term distribution.

Recent domestic analysis similarly points to incomplete downward fiscal devolution and the concentration of resources at provincial rather than local levels as part of the governance constraint. Pakistan's present stability therefore creates an opportunity rather than an endpoint. If lower inflation, stronger reserves and fiscal consolidation are used to undertake politically difficult reforms in taxation, energy, competition, human capital and intergovernmental governance, the country could finally begin moving from recurring crisis management towards sustained development. If these reforms are postponed once external pressures ease, the current recovery risks becoming another turn in Pakistan's familiar cycle of stabilisation, consumption-led expansion, external imbalance and renewed adjustment.

Pakistan’s trade outlook continues to be constrained less by the absence of export potential than by the narrow structure of its exporter base, limited product diversification and persistent competitiveness problems. Recent firm-level analysis cited by the State Bank indicates that around 17,000 firms participate in exporting, yet just 173 companies account for nearly half of total exports and the top five per cent account for roughly three-quarters, suggesting that Pakistan’s export economy remains highly concentrated and that too few new firms are entering international markets.

This concentration is mirrored in the composition of exports, which remains dominated by relatively low-value textiles, leather and rice, while regional competitors such as Vietnam and Bangladesh have diversified more successfully into electronics, machinery, pharmaceuticals and other higher-value products. The underlying constraints are structural: high electricity and financing costs, tariff-heavy imported inputs, complex duty drawback and export facilitation schemes, regulatory uncertainty, logistics bottlenecks and limited access to affordable finance disproportionately disadvantage SMEs and first-time exporters, effectively reinforcing the position of established firms.

Source: Getty Images

This helps explain why Pakistan’s exports have remained around $30-35 billion while economies that once exported less, most notably Bangladesh and Vietnam, have expanded far more rapidly through sustained industrial policy, integration into global value chains and greater policy consistency. The central trade and economic challenge is therefore not simply to increase sales by existing exporters, but to broaden the pool of exporting firms, diversify products and markets, and reduce the cost and complexity of entering global trade. Unless trade policy shifts from short-term incentives for established sectors towards easier access to imported inputs, export finance, customs facilitation, technology, skills and predictable regulation for SMEs and new entrants, Pakistan is likely to remain dependent on a narrow group of exporters and vulnerable to recurring foreign-exchange and balance-of-payments pressures.

Diplomatic Landscape

Pakistan's diplomatic position in 2026 is being reshaped by a series of developments that, taken together, point to a more diversified foreign policy. On August 7, Pakistan joined Saudi Arabia and Türkiye in a new joint defence agreement in Makkah, bringing together three of the Muslim world's most consequential military and political actors. The agreement is significant because it places Pakistan more firmly within an emerging regional order in which Middle Eastern states are looking for security arrangements less dependent on Western powers. Iran's reaction was therefore important: Tehran publicly expressed that it sees no reason for concern and welcomed greater regional reliance on indigenous security capabilities.

Source: Reuters

For Pakistan, this is a delicate but useful position. It has moved closer to Riyadh and Ankara without, so far, seriously damaging its relationship with neighbouring Iran. At the same time, Islamabad continues to take a strong diplomatic position on Palestine, most recently warning at the UN Security Council that settlement expansion and displacement in the West Bank are pushing the two-state solution towards a "dangerous tipping point".

The fourth Pakistan-U.S. Counterterrorism Dialogue, held in Washington in early August, explicitly identified not only ISIS-K and al-Qaeda but also the TTP (Tehrik-i-Taliban) Pakistan and the Balochistan Liberation Army as shared threats. This matters because Islamabad has long argued that Washington's counterterrorism priorities did not sufficiently reflect the groups attacking Pakistan itself. At the same time, cooperation is broadening beyond counterterrorism. A new five-year (Higher Education Commission) HEC-USEFP agreement will continue Fulbright, PhD, visiting scholar and professional exchange programmes, indicating that both sides are investing again in longer-term institutional ties.

This does not mean Pakistan is moving away from China. On the contrary, China remains the central strategic and economic partner, but CPEC 2.0 is increasingly being presented as a different proposition from its first phase: less focused on roads and power projects, and more on industrialisation, exports, agriculture, technology, automation and business-to-business investment. The broader pattern is therefore an attempt to maintain strong relations with both while extracting different benefits from each.

Source: CPEC Info

The limits of this diplomatic opening are most visible in Pakistan's immediate neighbourhood. Relations with Afghanistan remain burdened by the TTP, border insecurity and the increasingly contentious repatriation of Afghan refugees, while meaningful political engagement with India remains largely frozen. This creates an important contradiction: Pakistan currently appears more diplomatically engaged in diplomatic efforts focused on other regions than it is with two of the countries whose behaviour most directly affects its security. The real measure of diplomatic success will be whether Pakistan can convert this wider international engagement into greater economic resilience, stronger institutions and a more stable neighbourhood.

Social and Humanitarian Updates

Pakistan's humanitarian and human rights environment remains shaped by a combination of shrinking civic space, persistent protection gaps for vulnerable groups, and growing exposure to climate-related risks, even as the government has announced some new institutional measures intended to strengthen rights protections. A particularly significant development has been the introduction of the Foreign Media Facilitation Guidelines 2026, under which international journalists are reportedly required to obtain prior permission to report outside Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore, alongside mandatory accreditation requirements and provisions allowing accreditation to be withdrawn for broadly framed offences relating to sovereignty, security or public order.

The restrictions have drawn criticism from journalist organisations and rights advocates, particularly because they followed international reporting on violence during protests in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and restrictions on access to Al Jazeera's website. For humanitarian monitoring, these measures are important because constraints on independent reporting can reduce visibility of protests, conflict-affected areas and alleged rights violations precisely where independent verification is most necessary. The government disputes the characterisation of the guidelines as a blanket restriction, but the absence of clear approval timelines and the broad language governing accreditation create significant uncertainty for international media operating outside the country's principal cities.

There have also been contrasting developments concerning religious minorities and gender justice. On National Minorities Day, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced steps towards establishing an independent commission for minority rights under legislation enacted in 2025. The proposed body is expected to address grievances, monitor constitutional and legal protections, oversee matters relating to places of worship and employment quotas, and advise the government on laws and policies.

This is potentially important given longstanding demands for an empowered institutional mechanism for minority protection. However, minority-rights organisations continue to report discrimination in education and employment, attacks and encroachment on places of worship, misuse of blasphemy allegations, and cases involving the abduction, forced conversion and marriage of minority girls. Demonstrations in Karachi on 11 August again highlighted the gap between formal constitutional guarantees and the lived experience of minority communities, with activists renewing calls for implementation of the Supreme Court's landmark 2014 minority-rights judgement.

A separate judicial development has raised concerns over protection for survivors of sexual violence. The Supreme Court rejected the Punjab government's request to review a December 2025 ruling that had converted a rape conviction into a conviction for fornication. The earlier judgement had been criticised by women's-rights institutions and prosecutors for potentially stigmatising the complainant and for its treatment of delayed reporting and evidence in sexual-violence cases. The case illustrates continuing tensions between formal legal protections and the way gender-based violence is interpreted and adjudicated within the justice system.

Climate vulnerability constitutes another increasingly important humanitarian concern. A Senate committee reviewing Pakistan's climate governance questioned whether the Pakistan Climate Change Authority duplicates functions already assigned to the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, particularly while the ministry's development allocation has declined.


Source: Senate of Pakistan

The discussion is significant beyond administrative efficiency because Pakistan faces intensifying climate-related threats, including glacial melt, flash floods and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods. Parliamentarians expressed concern that institutional fragmentation and repeated presentation of similar risk assessments were not translating into sufficiently clear evidence of improved protection for vulnerable communities.

The committee therefore called for stronger coordination among climate, meteorological and disaster-management institutions and greater clarity regarding access to international climate finance. Weak enforcement was also highlighted in relation to plastics regulation in Islamabad, illustrating a broader implementation gap between environmental legislation and actual environmental management. These weaknesses are particularly consequential for low-income communities, which are generally least able to absorb repeated climate and disaster shocks.

The recent developments point to a humanitarian landscape in which institutional commitments coexist with significant implementation and accountability deficits. The proposed minority-rights commission and parliamentary scrutiny of climate institutions indicate that some mechanisms for reform and oversight remain active, but their effectiveness will depend on independence, adequate resources and implementation at federal and provincial levels.

At the same time, restrictions on media access, unresolved concerns over the protection of religious minorities and women, and continuing climate vulnerability complicate the broader human-rights environment. Pakistan therefore faces not only the challenge of adopting appropriate legislation and institutions, but of ensuring that these mechanisms produce measurable improvements in protection, access to justice, freedom of information and resilience for populations most exposed to discrimination, violence and environmental shocks.

Climate Change Related Updates

Pakistan's climate outlook is increasingly defined by the shift from episodic disasters to a persistent, multi-dimensional climate risk affecting livelihoods, infrastructure, food security and public health. Recent government estimates indicate that successive floods have killed around 6,000 people, injured approximately 20,000 and displaced as many as 40 million, while the current monsoon season has already caused more than 100 rain-related deaths. The government has responded by emphasising a more coordinated approach across climate, water, planning, finance and disaster-management institutions, including the use of satellite imagery, artificial intelligence, hydrological data and early-warning systems.

Significant external financing is also potentially available, including around $700 million annually for climate-related interventions under the World Bank's long-term country framework. However, the central challenge remains one of implementation: Pakistan continues to devote substantial political and financial attention to post-disaster relief while comparatively less progress is visible in reducing the structural causes of vulnerability, including unregulated construction in flood-prone areas, weak drainage, ecosystem degradation, inadequate urban planning and limited local preparedness.

The distribution of climate impacts is also highly unequal. Poor and geographically marginalised communities in Gilgit-Baltistan, Chitral, southern Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh's riverine areas and the Indus Delta face repeated exposure to glacial lake outburst floods, flash floods, drought, salinity, erosion and heatwaves while possessing the fewest resources to recover. Coastal communities are facing shrinking freshwater flows, saline intrusion, pollution and changing fish stocks, prompting the government to call for traditional ecological knowledge to be incorporated into fisheries and climate-adaptation policy.

Similar vulnerabilities are visible in the labour market: brick-kiln workers in Punjab, many of whom earn extremely low wages and remain tied to employers through debt arrangements, are increasingly exposed to dangerous combinations of furnace heat and rising ambient temperatures. These examples demonstrate that climate change in Pakistan is not simply an environmental problem; it is amplifying existing inequalities in income, labour protection, land tenure, health and access to public services.

Source: Dawn News

The emerging policy debate therefore increasingly concerns whether Pakistan can move from reactive disaster management to climate-informed development planning. Current institutions possess substantial scientific knowledge, but coordination gaps, overlapping mandates and weak implementation continue to undermine results. Greater resilience will require integrating climate projections into land use, agriculture, infrastructure and urban planning; restoring wetlands and natural drainage systems; strengthening heat protections for workers; improving water management; and ensuring that climate finance reaches vulnerable communities rather than remaining concentrated in centralised projects. The government's growing recognition of community-based adaptation, early warning and climate-resilient infrastructure is encouraging, but Pakistan's longer-term climate security will depend on whether these approaches become embedded in mainstream economic and development decision-making rather than activated mainly after each new disaster.

Reading Recommendations

- Beyond Hunger: Tackling Nutritional Deficiencies Among Pakistani Children (Click Here)
- When the Weather Becomes a Workplace Hazard: Climate Change and Labour Rights in Pakistan (Click Here)
- Battleground Algorithms: How Artificial Intelligence is Shaping Modern Conflict Narratives (Click Here)
- Reimagining Civil Society Action in Pakistan (Click Here)
- Building Digital Resilience of Civil Society (Click Here)
- Why Pakistan's Entrepreneurial Landscape Has Struggled to Deliver for Its Youth: A Critical South Asian Comparison (Click Here)
- Mental Health Access for Women: Cultural Stigma and Systemic Barriers (Click Here)
- Concrete Over Canopy: The Unmaking of Islamabad's Green Capital Dream (Click Here)
- Menstrual Health Management: Policy Gaps, Access to Hygiene Products and Cultural Taboos (Click Here)
- Climate Change and Food Security in Pakistan: A Crisis on Our Plate (Click Here)
- Environmental Health Risks: Gendered impacts of air pollution, water contamination, and climate change on women (Click Here)
- Imagination as the Blueprint of Reality (Click Here)
- Constitution for All: Rethinking Gender Inclusive Governance in Pakistan (Click Here)
- Rethinking Reforms Process in Balochistan: Innovation and Leadership at BCSA (Click Here)
- Sports as a Tool for Preventing Violent Extremism in Pakistan (Click Here)
- Groundwater Recharge: Reviving the Hidden Lifeline (Click Here)
- Selling Misinformation (Click Here)
- Data-Driven Cities: Lessons from World for Pakistan (Click Here)
- The FY 2025–26 Budget and Its Impact on Pakistan's IT & ITeS Sector (Click Here)
- Planting for Survival: Pakistan's Path Out of the Heat (Click Here)
- Transparency Through Open Data: Key to Reforming Governance in Pakistan (Click Here)
- From Reports to Reality: Why Pakistan Ranks Last in Global Gender Gap Index (Click Here)
- From Policy to People: Rethinking Governance with Design Thinking (Click Here)
- Floods, Heatwaves, and Hope: Reimagining Agriculture in a Warming Pakistan (Click Here)
- 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)