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COUNTRY ANALYSIS REPORT

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF JUSTICE



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Executive Summary

The report concludes that Pakistan is experiencing a period of increasing institutional strain in which short-term stability masks deeper structural weaknesses across governance, politics, the economy and public service delivery. Although the state continues to expand legal, administrative and security mechanisms, public confidence in institutions is steadily eroding as concerns persist over judicial independence, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial violence, military trials of civilians and unequal access to justice. Political authority is becoming increasingly centralised while demands for greater provincial autonomy, constitutional recognition and equitable resource distribution are intensifying in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Balochistan. Rather than resolving these tensions through political consensus, institutional restructuring and legal controls have increasingly become the primary tools for managing dissent, further widening the trust deficit between the state and citizens.

Economic indicators present a similarly mixed picture. While foreign exchange reserves, revenue collection and macroeconomic stability have shown some improvement, these gains remain heavily dependent on remittances, external financing, debt rollovers and administrative interventions rather than productivity, exports or private investment. Persistent inflation, weak fiscal reform, growing public debt, declining competitiveness, rising poverty and continued dependence on imports expose structural vulnerabilities that temporary stabilisation measures cannot resolve. Pakistan's external trade position also faces increasing pressure as international markets place greater emphasis on governance, labour rights and regulatory compliance. The approaching revision of the European Union's GSP+ framework and new trade restrictions from the United States demonstrate that governance reforms have become central to Pakistan's future export competitiveness and economic resilience.

Climate change, insecurity and humanitarian challenges are increasingly interconnected. More frequent floods, water scarcity, groundwater depletion and inadequate urban planning illustrate how governance failures amplify environmental risks. At the same time, deteriorating security in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa reflects not only militant violence but also long-standing governance deficits, weak local institutions and declining public trust. Humanitarian indicators reveal similar implementation gaps, with inadequate healthcare, education, digital infrastructure, labour protection and gender-based violence prevention disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations. Across all sectors, ambitious policy announcements consistently outpace institutional capacity to deliver meaningful results

Overall, Pakistan's central challenge is not the absence of laws, policies or institutional structures, but the limited capacity, independence and credibility of those institutions to implement them fairly and effectively. Sustainable stability will require strengthening judicial independence, restoring political trust, deepening fiscal and governance reforms, improving public service delivery, investing in human capital and addressing longstanding provincial grievances through meaningful constitutional and administrative reforms. Without tackling these underlying structural issues, Pakistan is likely to remain caught between recurring cycles of temporary stabilisation and renewed political, economic and social crises.

International Justice Day

Observed on 17 July, [International Justice Day](#) commemorates the adoption of the Rome Statute and the principle that even the gravest abuses must not be protected by official position, political power or institutional immunity. Pakistan is not a party to the Rome Statute, but the day remains deeply relevant because its central question is also Pakistan's: can law restrain power, or does it operate mainly against those who lack it? Pakistan has an elaborate constitutional structure, superior courts, criminal codes, commissions of inquiry and an expanding network of specialised judicial forums. Yet justice cannot be measured by the number of laws or courts alone. Its true measure is whether a disappeared citizen is produced before a judge, whether a police killing is independently investigated, whether an unpopular defendant receives a fair trial and whether an ordinary litigant can obtain a remedy before delay consumes its value.

The clearest illustration is the treatment of alleged state violence. Enforced disappearances are often discussed as missing-person statistics, but each case represents the removal of an individual from both legal protection and public visibility. Families are left in a procedural maze: authorities may deny custody, commissions may record complaints, and courts may repeatedly demand information without identifying who took the person or under whose authority. The European Commission's latest [GSP+ assessment](#) states that enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings increased during [2023-2025](#) without accountability. It notes that more than [9,000 disappearance cases](#) had been closed by the official commission without finding evidence of state involvement and that no prosecution for enforced disappearance had occurred. In Balochistan, this absence of accountability has become inseparable from the broader political conflict: disappearance weakens peaceful politics by teaching communities that legal participation may offer less protection than silence, exile or militancy. International justice begins precisely where this ambiguity ends-by insisting that national security cannot create a legal space in which neither detention nor death requires an identifiable decision-maker.

Punjab presents a different but related case study. A 2026 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan fact-finding report documented at least [670 encounters](#) involving the provincial Crime Control Department over eight months in 2025, in which [924 suspects](#) and only two police officers were reportedly killed. Such an extreme imbalance does not by itself determine the facts of every encounter, but it demands independent judicial scrutiny rather than institutional self-certification. Extrajudicial violence is sometimes defended as a practical response to dangerous criminals, weak investigations and slow trials. Yet this reasoning creates a destructive cycle: because the justice system is considered ineffective, officials bypass it; because it is bypassed, investigation, prosecution and forensic capacity remain weak; and because those institutions remain weak, further bypassing appears necessary.

The result is punishment without conviction and policing without meaningful judicial supervision. A state may eliminate suspects this way, but it also eliminates the possibility of establishing guilt, identifying accomplices, correcting wrongful accusations and demonstrating that public authority remains bound by law.

The second fault line concerns who is permitted to administer justice. Pakistan's recurring use of [military courts](#) for civilians exposes the tension between security-driven adjudication and the constitutional promise of an independent and public trial. UN experts raised concerns regarding the reported conviction of [105 civilians](#) by military courts, while the [UN Human Rights Committee](#) has stated that such courts lack the independence and due-process guarantees available in the civilian system and has urged Pakistan to remove their jurisdiction over civilians.

More recently, concerns surrounding constitutional restructuring and the creation of the Federal Constitutional Court have focused on whether specialised forums improve adjudication or allow political power to reshape the courts that review it. Specialisation is not inherently unjust: constitutional, commercial and accountability cases may benefit from focused expertise. The danger arises when jurisdiction is redistributed without broad political legitimacy, transparent appointments and credible guarantees of independence. Justice depends not only on the legal availability of an appeal, but also on public confidence that the forum hearing it is neither designed for a particular defendant nor responsive to the executive whose actions it must examine.

Pakistan's justice crisis, however, is not confined to exceptional cases involving militants, political leaders or state agencies. For most citizens, injustice is experienced through delay, expense, inaccessible legal representation, overcrowded prisons and the inability to enforce even a favourable judgment. Recent judicial initiatives show that institutional improvement is possible: district courts disposed of more than [1.3 million prioritised cases](#) between September 2025 and May 2026, model courts expanded time-bound adjudication, and a national judicial analytics system has been introduced. But faster disposal must not become a substitute for better justice.

A system can clear cases while still reproducing unequal outcomes if the poor remain unable to obtain counsel, undertrial prisoners spend years awaiting decisions, women face pressure to abandon claims, and victims of official abuse cannot secure evidence against the state. International Justice Day's most meaningful observance would be a domestic commitment to protect judicial autonomy and measure reform by the experience of the least powerful litigant. Justice becomes real when the state accepts that it too must answer before the law.



Political Updates

Pakistan's political landscape in late July 2026 presented a striking contradiction: political and constitutional authority is becoming increasingly concentrated at the centre, yet the state's legitimacy and effective control appear to be weakening across several regions. The confrontation between the government and the PTI-led opposition remains unresolved, with opposition parties proposing [Parliament House](#) as a neutral venue for negotiations while simultaneously preparing nationwide protests to mark [three years](#) of Imran Khan's imprisonment. The opposition no longer regards government-controlled spaces, electoral institutions or judicial forums as politically neutral, while the government continues to treat dissent primarily as a challenge to authority rather than a constituency requiring engagement. This trust deficit is especially visible in [Azad Jammu and Kashmir](#), where opposition leaders have alleged that civil liberties, voting rights and freedom of expression are being suppressed and that force has been used against protesters. Whether every allegation can be independently verified or not, the political significance lies in the widening gap between official narratives and public perceptions circulated through social media. When citizens believe elections lack credibility, mainstream media conceal events and judicial remedies are narrowing, coercion may temporarily contain mobilisation but cannot restore confidence in the political order.



Source: Oic.org

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa faces a parallel combination of insecurity and fiscal grievance. Its petition before the Federal Constitutional Court seeks approximately Rs964 billion because the province's National Finance Commission (NFC) share was never adjusted after the 2018 merger of the former Fata, despite the expansion of its population, territory and administrative responsibilities. Together with the unfulfilled commitment of Rs100 billion annually for the merged districts, the province estimates its claims at more than Rs1.6 trillion. This financial dispute tests whether constitutional federalism can respond to changes in the federation or whether resource distribution will continue through outdated arrangements. [KP's Digital Transformation Roadmap 2030](#), covering paperless administration, online services and digital skills for 100,000 young people, offers a more constructive model of state-building, but its success will depend on resources, connectivity, security and institutional continuity rather than policy ambition alone.

These disputes expose a wider imbalance created by the incomplete implementation of the [18th Amendment](#). [Fifteen years](#) after major subjects were devolved, the federal government continues to operate ministries dealing with education, health, food security, culture, climate, housing and other provincial responsibilities.

The centre reportedly maintains [31 ministries](#) despite arguments that its constitutional functions could be performed through roughly nine. This administrative duplication is also a political mechanism: federal ministries retain influence over policy, funding and standard-setting in areas that provinces were supposed to control. It also imposes a substantial fiscal cost. Federal expenditure has reached approximately Rs19 trillion, while provinces are required to generate surpluses, restrain development spending and support national debt-servicing commitments. In effect, provinces are asked to finance a federal structure that continues to encroach upon their jurisdiction. The unanimous [Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly](#) resolution seeking interim provincial status, constitutional representation and a share in the National Finance Commission (NFC) adds another dimension to this unsettled federal compact. The resolution attempts to reconcile the region's demand for political equality with Pakistan's international position on Kashmir, but implementing it would require careful constitutional design. Alongside the grievances of KP, AJK and Balochistan, the resolution demonstrates that Pakistan's territorial peripheries are seeking credible representation, constitutional recognition and control over decisions affecting their resources and political futures.

At the national level, recent judicial and electoral developments suggest that institutional restructuring is proceeding faster than political consensus. Following the [27th Constitutional Amendment](#), the Supreme Court has ruled that it no longer has jurisdiction over pending [NAB appeals](#) and bail matters falling within the authority of the newly established Federal Constitutional Court. The decision may have immediate consequences for high-profile cases involving Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi, but its wider importance concerns the redistribution of judicial power. Supporters may view the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) as a specialised constitutional forum, while critics see the [26th and 27th Amendments](#) as weakening judicial independence and shifting sensitive cases into a newly designed institutional structure.

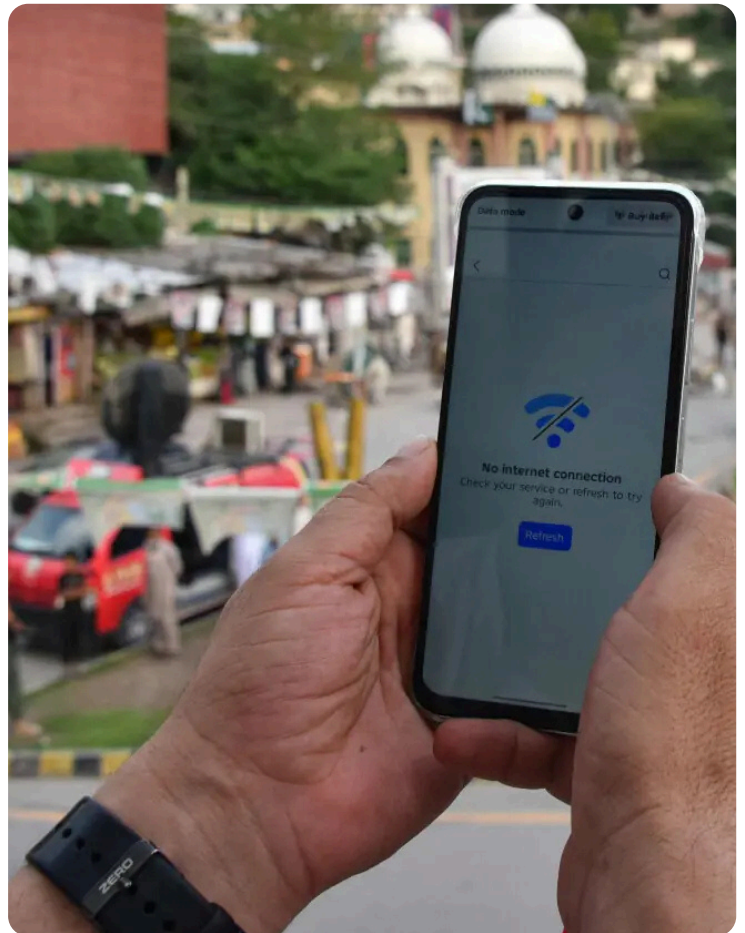


Source: Tribune

The emerging lawyers' movement reflects these concerns. Creating additional superior courts/laws cannot substitute for the independence, accessibility and capacity of the wider judicial system. Similarly, the Election Commission's decision to review the Constitution, [Election Act 2017](#) and election rules before the next general election could address weaknesses exposed in the disputed 2024 polls. Yet technical reforms will not restore electoral credibility unless they are developed transparently, debated publicly and accompanied by institutional independence. Absence of laws has never been Pakistan's crisis; it is a shortage of trust that laws will be applied impartially.

This contradiction is now being acknowledged from within the government itself. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's declaration that Pakistan's governance system has "[collapsed](#)," coupled with his call for new provinces or administrative units, is significant because it recognises that centralised crisis management cannot compensate for structural failure. Yet creating additional units would not automatically improve governance unless accompanied by genuine fiscal devolution, accountable local institutions, administrative capacity and political consensus; otherwise, it could simply reproduce existing inequalities at a smaller scale.

The urgency of institutional reform is also evident in AJK, where the Legislative Assembly has called for an [independent truth commission](#) to investigate deaths, injuries and alleged abuses during recent unrest. That proposal, alongside demands from [HRCP and Amnesty International](#) for an impartial inquiry and restoration of communications, offers a possible route towards accountability, but only if the commission is genuinely independent, its findings are published and victims receive meaningful redress. Meanwhile, escalating tensions between the [PML-N and PPP](#) over the AJK elections expose the fragility of the governing coalition and the transactional nature of elite alliances. Together, these developments reinforce the central political dilemma: even senior officials now concede that the system is failing, but meaningful reform continues to be deferred because the actors responsible for redesigning it remain invested in preserving the existing distribution of power.



Source: Dawn

The most consequential trend, therefore, is the growing reliance on legal, administrative and technological control to manage political disagreement. Colonial-era sedition provisions, Section 144, preventive detention laws and the Maintenance of Public Order framework now operate alongside PECA amendments, criminal defamation, internet restrictions and expanding surveillance systems. The problem extends beyond the policies of one government: Pakistan's legal order has long provided the executive with broad powers to define dissent as disorder or criticism as a security threat. Recent analysis of free expression argues that authoritarianism has become systemic rather than merely regime-specific, with surveillance, cybercrime enforcement and [vague restrictions](#) creating a chilling effect in which prosecution itself becomes punishment.

Mainstream media controls may suppress coverage, but they cannot eliminate political grievances in a society where millions of young people communicate through digital platforms. Regional youth movements in [Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and India](#) illustrate how unemployment, perceived injustice, corruption and restrictions on expression can transform specific grievances into broader challenges to political authority. Pakistan's approximately [70 million Gen Z](#) citizens face shrinking economic opportunities, weak public services and limited political participation; treating this population principally as a security or information-management problem could turn a demographic advantage into prolonged instability. A durable political settlement will require credible elections, an independent judiciary, and meaningful provincial autonomy. Without these changes, the continued centralisation of power may make the state appear harder while leaving the federation more fragmented, insecure and politically brittle.

Economic Updates

Pakistan enters FY2026-27 with headlines that paint a different picture than the realities underneath. The State Bank of Pakistan's decision to keep the policy rate unchanged at **11.5 per cent** reflects this tension. Foreign-exchange reserves have improved, the Federal Board of Revenue met its revised **Rs13 trillion** collection target, private-sector credit is recovering, and the central bank projects GDP growth of 3.5-4.5 per cent. Yet headline inflation remained **11.1 per cent in June**, core inflation was **8.4 per cent**, and food prices are rising again. Renewed conflict in the Middle East, volatile **oil prices** and uncertain weather conditions could weaken growth and keep inflation above the State Bank's **5-7 per cent** target. The government's consideration of **shorter working weeks**, restrictions on official vehicles and **reduced fuel consumption** further demonstrates how quickly apparent stability can revert to emergency management when sustainable growth is not prioritised in policy-making.



Source: Brecorder

Unpacking these statistics, the deeper problem is that monetary tightening has not been matched by meaningful fiscal discipline. While high interest rates restrict borrowing by businesses and households, the State Bank continues to inject enormous liquidity into banks that finance government deficits. Government-sector credit reached approximately **Rs37.2 trillion** in May 2026, compared with **Rs13.8 trillion** for the private sector. Banks can earn high, relatively risk-free returns by lending to the state, leaving less capital available for factories, exporters, small businesses and innovation. The result is a monetary system that formally targets inflation while practically ensuring that government borrowing remains uninterrupted. This also explains why expanding the money supply in Pakistan is more inflationary than in **productive economies**: much of the new credit finances debt servicing, salaries, subsidies and recurring expenditure rather than expanding production. Fiscal consolidation is equally uneven. Debt servicing and defence reportedly consume 94 per cent of net federal revenue, while Rs2.353 trillion in tax concessions continue to benefit selected sectors. Salaried taxpayers face effective rates exceeding 30 per cent, yet the proposed voluntary regime for small retailers would impose a one per cent turnover tax and exempt participants from routine audits and digital invoicing. Such measures may improve compliance at the margins, but they also reinforce the perception that the state repeatedly burdens documented taxpayers while accommodating politically organised groups.

Pakistan's external position is more stable but not more competitive. The FY26 current account deficit was limited to **\$139 million**, largely because workers' remittances reached around **\$41.6 billion**. Goods exports remained weak, imports stayed elevated, and the merchandise trade deficit exceeded \$35 billion. The regional trade deficit widened by **30 per cent** to almost **\$16 billion**, driven by rising imports from China and collapsing exports to Afghanistan.

The regional trade deficit widened by **30 per cent** to almost **\$16 billion**, driven by rising imports from China and collapsing exports to Afghanistan. Food imports exceeded \$9 billion while raw food exports declined sharply, exposing failures in agricultural planning and inconsistent decisions that have seen Pakistan first export and then import the same commodities. The June current account deficit of **\$649 million** shows how quickly pressures can return when imports rise. Gulf hostilities now threaten to increase oil, freight and industrial input costs, disrupt informal exports through Dubai, reduce unofficial dollar inflows and discourage portfolio investment. Daily fuel pricing will also transmit global volatility more rapidly into transport, production and food prices.

The relative **stability of the rupee** should therefore not be confused with a durable improvement in economic fundamentals. It has been supported by remittances, official financing, debt rollovers, subdued domestic demand and tighter management of foreign-exchange flows. An exchange rate cannot be sustained indefinitely through administrative intervention when inflation remains high, exports are uncompetitive, and productivity is stagnant. The **proposed merger** of the Board of Investment and the Special Investment Facilitation Council will achieve little unless it is accompanied by predictable taxation, competitive energy prices, reliable foreign-exchange access, enforceable contracts, lower trade barriers and efficient regulation.

Pakistan must prioritise investment that creates exports, technology transfer, productive employment and domestic supply chains rather than protected projects serving the local market. More fundamentally, average growth of around 2.3 per cent during the past four years has barely matched population growth, while productivity contributed almost nothing to economic expansion between 2000 and 2022. With more than 26 million children out of school, weak human capital may be the most serious long-term constraint on economic transformation.

Recent developments also illustrate that Pakistan's improved external position remains heavily dependent on administrative measures and external support rather than stronger economic fundamentals. Saudi Arabia's rollover of a **\$5 billion deposit** has reduced immediate external financing pressures, while the State Bank purchased around **\$9 billion** from the domestic foreign-exchange market during FY26 to strengthen reserves. Together with expected Chinese refinancing and continued remittance growth, these measures buy valuable time but do not reduce the economy's structural dependence on friendly governments, multilateral financing, and debt rollovers.

Reserve accumulation supported by external inflows and market intervention is fundamentally different from reserve growth driven by **export competitiveness**, foreign direct investment and productivity gains. As long as these underlying weaknesses persist, external stability will remain vulnerable to shifts in creditor confidence and global financial conditions.

The government's approval to import up to one million tonnes of wheat, at an estimated cost of **\$340 million**, further exposes the contradictions within Pakistan's economic management. After scaling back public intervention in the wheat market in the name of reform, authorities are again relying on costly emergency imports as domestic shortages and prices escalate.

Combined with rising food imports despite Pakistan's agricultural potential, the decision highlights persistent weaknesses in agricultural planning, market governance and food security policy. Rather than reflecting an isolated policy reversal, it reinforces a broader pattern of reactive economic management in which short-term crisis responses repeatedly substitute for structural reforms capable of improving productivity, competitiveness and long-term resilience.

The social consequences are already severe. Official estimates show poverty rising from 21.8 per cent in 2018-19 to [28.9 per cent in 2024-25](#), while inflation-adjusted household incomes and consumption have declined. At the same time, asset owners, financial investors and groups connected to state spending remain better protected, producing an increasingly divided economy in which the costs of stabilisation fall disproportionately on salaried workers, informal labour and households without assets. Yes, IMF programmes provide financing, but governments have also used them as political cover to impose taxes and price increases without reforming tax privileges or inefficient state enterprises. Unless fiscal reform reaches privileged sectors, and human capital receives sustained investment, Pakistan will remain trapped between temporary recovery and renewed crisis.

Diplomatic and Trade Landscape

Pakistan's diplomatic activity in July 2026 reflects an effort to position the country as a regional interlocutor while expanding economic ties beyond its traditional partners. The visit of [Kuwait's foreign minister](#), who arrived on Tuesday, is expected to focus on trade, investment and broader economic cooperation, following Kuwait's restoration of several visa categories for Pakistani nationals after nearly a decade. Pakistan has also intensified engagement with Iran amid renewed Middle East hostilities, agreeing to strengthen cooperation on counterterrorism, border security, narcotics control, migration and railway connectivity.

Discussions on the [Zahedan-Taftan railway](#), the [Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul freight service](#) and a proposed increase in bilateral trade from \$3 billion to [\\$10 billion](#) demonstrate the commercial potential of the relationship. At the same time, Pakistan has worked with Qatar to promote de-escalation between the United States and Iran, strengthening its claim to a diplomatic role in a conflict that directly threatens its energy security, trade routes and remittance-dependent economy. Meetings with [Russia](#), Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum similarly indicate a policy of diversified engagement centred on energy, connectivity, commerce and multilateral coordination.



Source: Dunya News

Yet Pakistan's diplomatic relationships are not automatically translating into predictable trade access. The most immediate example is the reported difficulty faced by Pakistani businesses in obtaining [UAE visas](#). Although Emirati authorities deny that a formal ban exists, exporters and chambers of commerce report [widespread rejection](#) of business and family applications, cancelled meetings and reduced participation in major exhibitions such as Gulfood and Arab Health. Given Dubai's role as a regional commercial hub, these restrictions affect much more than travel: they limit market development and access to re-export networks.

The contrast is notable. Saudi Arabia has expanded travel access and increased financial support to replace withdrawn UAE deposits, while Kuwait has eased visa restrictions; nevertheless, Pakistan remains vulnerable whenever political or administrative changes in Gulf states disrupt investment and financial flows. [Saudi support](#) and the proposed [\\$10 billion](#) US exchange-stabilisation facility may provide valuable breathing space, but deposits and financial backstops are liabilities rather than evidence of lasting external strength. Pakistan's diplomatic challenge is therefore to convert relationships based on emergency liquidity and strategic relevance into productive investment and durable market access.

Trade policy is facing even greater pressure from a more protectionist global environment. The United States has imposed a new [10 per cent tariff](#) on Pakistani goods, alongside measures affecting dozens of other trading partners, citing forced-labour concerns. The decision shows how labour rights, governance and supply-chain standards are increasingly becoming instruments of trade policy rather than issues confined to diplomatic dialogue. A similar message is coming from the European Union. Pakistan remains the largest beneficiary of GSP+, with [EU exports](#) worth more than [€8 billion in 2024](#) and approximately [€732 million](#) in tariff savings, but the latest European Commission assessment identified serious concerns regarding judicial independence, enforced disappearances, [freedom of expression](#), labour enforcement and political rights.



Source: Pexels

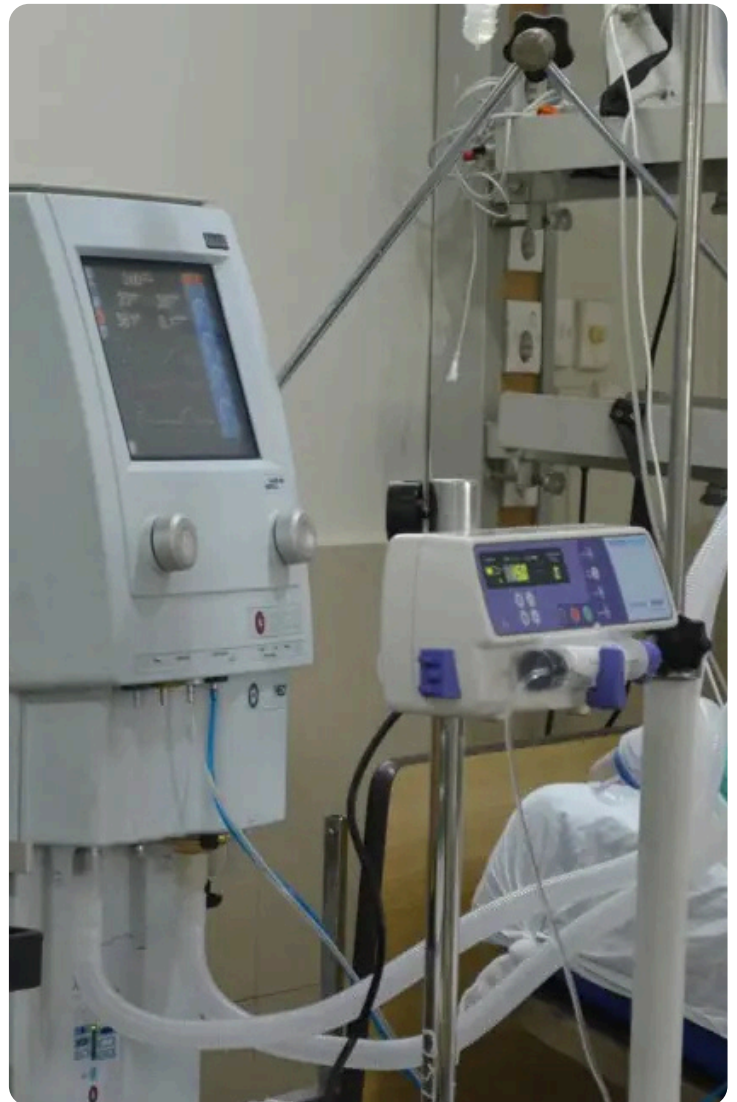
This vulnerability is compounded by weaknesses within Pakistan's own export model. Food exports fell by almost 30 per cent in FY26 while food imports rose to [\\$9.15 billion](#), reflecting low productivity as well as excessive dependence on a small number of commodities and destinations. IT exports rose strongly to [\\$4.6 billion](#), but much of the sector's growth remains concentrated in [freelancing](#) rather than companies capable of creating intellectual property, enterprise contracts and scalable employment. Pakistan's previous strategic trade policies repeatedly set ambitious export targets without resolving high energy costs, policy unpredictability, weak logistics, tariff distortions and limited access to technology.

The next trade strategy should therefore move beyond headline targets and focus on export-oriented [agricultural clusters](#), corporate IT development, integration into global value chains and reciprocal trade agreements. Pakistan's diplomacy is becoming broader and more active, but its bargaining power will ultimately depend on domestic competitiveness. Strategic location, friendly-country deposits and temporary trade preferences can create opportunities; only stronger institutions, compliance, productivity and export diversification can turn them into lasting economic influence.

Social and Humanitarian Updates

Pakistan's social and humanitarian outlook reveals the gap between ambitious policy announcements and the state's inability to provide basic services reliably. The country is launching 5G services and proposing artificial intelligence education for primary schools, yet [internet connectivity](#) remains poor even in major cities, while electricity outages continue to disable mobile towers. In the merged [tribal districts](#), the consequences are more severe: only [11 per cent](#) of women reportedly have internet access, girls climb hills to find mobile signals, and many schools lack computers, trained teachers or dependable electricity. At the same time, the future of [191 community-based](#) education centres serving more than [18,000 students](#) remains uncertain because 269 teachers have gone without salaries for over 30 months. The Punjab government's AI curriculum has similarly stalled before implementation because thousands of schools lack laboratories, devices and digital classrooms. These cases reveal a recurring policy failure: governments announce technologically advanced programmes before securing the institutional foundations, electricity, connectivity, trained personnel and recurrent financing needed to make them meaningful. Digital transformation under such conditions risks widening inequality, offering new opportunities to already connected urban households while leaving poor, rural and female students further behind.

Public health indicators expose an equally serious breakdown in prevention, regulation and access to treatment. Thirteen children have reportedly died from [diphtheria](#) at a single Karachi hospital this year, despite the disease being preventable through routine vaccination. [Oral cancer](#) is rising among young people in Sindh because of widespread gutka, mawa and tobacco consumption, while many patients reach hospitals only at advanced stages and the province still lacks a comprehensive public cancer facility. Laboratory testing has also identified [nine cancer medicines](#) as fake, substandard or unregistered, including samples without the required active ingredients, turning the treatment system itself into an additional risk for already vulnerable patients. In Islamabad, nearly all ventilators at major public hospitals remain occupied, with shortages compounded by [inadequate numbers](#) of trained ICU personnel and unaffordable private treatment. The result is a two-tier system in which wealth determines whether patients can obtain timely diagnosis, authentic medicine and critical care.



Source: Dawn

3,172 cases of gender-based violence were reported in the first half of 2026, including hundreds of murders, abductions, rapes and so-called honour killings. More than half occurred in victims' homes, while the report's reliance on newspaper coverage means the actual scale is almost certainly greater. Together, these developments show that Pakistan's humanitarian challenge is not a collection of separate problems. These inequalities reinforce one another, particularly for women, children, informal workers and remote communities. The central deficit is therefore the weakness of implementation and accountability.

Labour protection has also emerged as a major humanitarian concern. The methane explosion at a coal mine in Quetta's Sor Range, which has killed at least 34 miners, is the latest in a series of fatal mining accidents in Balochistan this year. Similar incidents in Duki, Degari and Harnai point to a persistent failure to enforce even basic workplace safety standards, including adequate ventilation, gas detection systems and emergency response mechanisms. Despite repeated inquiries and official assurances, hazardous conditions remain largely unchanged, reflecting weak regulatory oversight, limited labour protections and a culture of impunity. For many workers, poverty leaves little alternative but to accept life-threatening conditions, making these disasters as much a governance failure as an industrial one.

These failures are compounded by broader structural pressures. Official projections that Pakistan's population could reach 400 million by 2040 highlight the widening gap between demographic growth and the state's capacity to provide healthcare, education and employment. At the same time, continued human trafficking through transnational scam networks, alongside concerns over HIV infections linked to unsafe medical practices in Karachi, expose persistent weaknesses in law enforcement, public health regulation and institutional oversight. These developments reinforce a common pattern across Pakistan's humanitarian landscape: policy commitments consistently outpace implementation. Without stronger institutions, effective regulation and sustained investment in public services, existing inequalities and vulnerabilities are likely to deepen rather than diminish.

Security Updates

Pakistan's security environment is increasingly defined by the convergence of internal militancy, regional confrontation and weakening public confidence in the state's ability to provide protection. The latest coordinated attacks across Balochistan, killing a deputy superintendent of police and two civilians, abducting six labourers and setting fire to trailers and fuel tankers, illustrate both the geographical reach and the diversified targeting strategies of militant groups. Judicial officers, police personnel, migrant workers, passenger transport, highways, bridges and economic infrastructure have all become targets, suggesting an effort to inflict casualties and to disrupt mobility, undermine investment and demonstrate that the state cannot secure ordinary life.



Source: Dawn

Security forces have responded with intelligence-based operations, including recent actions in [Surab and Mastung](#) in which the military reported killing [10 militants](#) and arresting two suspected female suicide bombers and a facilitator. Such operations are necessary against organisations deliberately attacking civilians, but tactical successes have yet to reverse the wider trend. In the first half of 2026, reported militant violence remained concentrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, with the TTP expanding beyond its traditional areas and Baloch separatist groups broadening their targets. Pakistan is therefore facing not one uniform insurgency but overlapping theatres involving different organisations, grievances and operational methods. Treating these threats solely as extensions of foreign sponsorship may explain part of the problem, but it cannot explain why militant organisations continue to recruit, move and operate within communities where trust in state institutions has steadily eroded.

The escalation also confirms that Pakistan's security crisis is no longer episodic but systemic. Reported violence in the first quarter of 2026 caused [813 fatalities](#), with Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa accounting for almost [93 per cent](#) of the national toll, while rising attacks, abductions and criminal financing networks indicate an expanding conflict economy rather than isolated militant incidents. This makes repeated military operations insufficient on their own: cleared areas must be followed by credible administration, policing, justice, public services and political inclusion, or militant groups will continue to regenerate. A coherent national strategy must therefore target not only armed networks but also the smuggling, extortion, illegal mining, narcotics and informal financial systems that sustain them, while strengthening the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), provincial police, prosecution services and parliamentary oversight. Without this institutional shift, Pakistan risks continuing to win tactical encounters while losing the broader contest for legitimacy and durable peace.

The external environment further narrows Pakistan's room for manoeuvre. Relations with Afghanistan remain strained amid cross-border militancy, periodic clashes and the suspension of trade, while tensions with India have intensified through hostile rhetoric, the unresolved Kashmir dispute and Pakistan's concern over possible military "adventurism". Pakistan now effectively faces an eastern deterrence challenge, an unstable western border and two internally destabilised provinces at the same time. Yet the deepest weakness remains political rather than purely military. In Balochistan, decades of enforced disappearances, disputed resource distribution, [weak representative government](#) and the exclusion of peaceful nationalist voices have created a climate of alienation that militant groups exploit.

In KP, mistrust between communities, security institutions and competing federal and provincial governments obstructs effective counterterrorism. The state's reliance on force has often contained individual networks without rebuilding the local legitimacy required for sustainable security. A durable security strategy must therefore combine precise [intelligence-led operations](#) with accountable policing, stronger border management, political dialogue, credible provincial representation and transparent responses to civilian allegations. Pakistan's central challenge is to distinguish violent actors from alienated citizens and to recognise that effective state authority rests not merely on the capacity to use force, but on the public's confidence that such force is lawful, proportionate and connected to a credible political settlement.



Source: Dawn

Environment and Climate Change Related Updates

Pakistan's climate crisis is most clearly captured by a seemingly impossible reality: some neighbourhoods are submerged while others struggle to obtain safe drinking water. Lahore received [343 millimetres](#) of rain within 48 hours, overwhelming roads and underpasses, while floodwaters damaged bridges and suspended rail traffic between [Lahore and Faisalabad](#). By July 29, the national monsoon death toll had risen to [110](#), with another spell of heavy rainfall forecast. Yet this abundance is deceptive. Torrential rain produces short, destructive surges rather than a dependable supply, and much of it is rapidly drained, contaminated by sewage or lost because cities lack retention ponds, functioning waterways, permeable land and groundwater-recharge systems. [Tarbela](#) had risen to [1,531.11 feet](#) by July 28, but a filling reservoir does not mean that water will reliably reach water-scarce neighbourhoods, farmers or drought-prone regions.



Source: Dawn

Climate change is intensifying rainfall, glacial melt, heatwaves and drought, but poor governance converts these hazards into disasters. Urban expansion has consumed natural drainage channels and open land, while construction continues on floodplains and municipal systems remain designed for an increasingly obsolete climate. Government responses still prioritise [rescue boats](#), drainage pumps and compensation after rainfall rather than enforcing land-use rules, restoring waterways and [redesigning cities](#) to absorb water. The same contradiction exists in agriculture. Groundwater has become increasingly important as canal reliability declines: tubewell-only irrigation expanded from 6.1 million acres in 2010 to 14.1 million in 2024, while solar now powers an estimated [960,000 tubewells](#) and lift pumps. Solar pumping has reduced irrigation costs but has also removed the financial constraint on extraction, allowing aquifers to be depleted precisely when monsoon runoff that could replenish them is being expelled from cities and fields as quickly as possible. Pakistan is effectively pumping out its underground savings while throwing away its seasonal income.

The deeper failure is that floods, drinking-water shortages, irrigation stress, glacial risks and [public health](#) are still governed as separate problems. Floodwater mixed with sewage increases malaria, diarrhoea, typhoid and other infectious diseases, while communities already lacking clean water are hit first by inundation and then by the contamination it leaves behind. A credible national water-security strategy must therefore treat the entire hydrological cycle as one system: protect urban waterways, map and enforce flood zones, build local retention and recharge infrastructure, regulate groundwater extraction, modernise irrigation and align crop choices with water availability.

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](#))
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