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COUNTRY ANALYSIS REPORT

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY

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Executive Summary

Pakistan enters October 2026 with improving external financial indicators but growing strains on democratic governance and public welfare. The report identifies a persistent gap between state measures and their effects on citizens. Political confrontation and insecurity threaten economic recovery, while weak public services and climate vulnerability deepen pressures on already disadvantaged communities.

The immediate political risk centres on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's planned 4 October march to Islamabad and federal discussion of emergency measures or governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Linking exceptional constitutional measures to a political protest could intensify disputes over provincial autonomy and representation. The Pakistan Peoples Party's position and prospects for dialogue will shape whether the confrontation escalates. Unrest in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and planned tax protests in Malakand further expose grievances over how decisions are made and whose interests they reflect.

Economic stabilisation remains fragile. The current account deficit narrowed by 36% in July-August compared with a year earlier, largely through remittances, while the goods trade deficit widened by 18%. Growth in IT and services exports offers opportunities, but weak manufacturing performance, August inflation above 11% and exposure to higher oil prices constrain recovery. A Peshawar survey of 462 households illustrates severe borrowing pressures and difficulty meeting education and healthcare costs, although its findings are regional. Tax, subsidy and privatisation reforms linked to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) therefore require scrutiny of their distributional effects, implementation and parliamentary accountability.

Pakistan's diplomatic relationships provide support while creating competing obligations. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) 2.0 offers investment prospects beyond infrastructure, but outstanding payments to Chinese power producers complicate cooperation. Deeper security commitments to Saudi Arabia and Turkey could narrow room for engagement with Iran. Escalation with Afghanistan and continuing tensions with India over the Indus Waters Treaty further constrain Pakistan's ability to secure regional stability.

Insecurity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan affects civilian protection, transport, commerce and access to services. Pakistan's cross-border strikes and Afghanistan's allegations of civilian casualties present conflicting accounts that remain unverified. Domestic attacks and ordinary lawlessness also expose gaps in everyday policing. Humanitarian pressures compound these risks: monsoon incidents caused 180 deaths, four of five reported polio cases were concentrated in Bannu division, and Afghan returns and deportations raise protection concerns. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is particularly exposed where insecurity, interrupted vaccination, and household financial distress overlap.

Climate risks demand stronger implementation of existing evidence. Suparco has identified 131 potentially dangerous glacial lakes, with risks compounded by watershed deforestation and settlement in exposed mountain areas. Lahore's ground-level ozone pollution also points to the need for emissions controls beyond seasonal smog enforcement. Priorities include enforcing safer land use, protecting watersheds, and making climate finance and public expenditure more transparent and responsive to regional vulnerability.

Young people's limited opportunities to influence decisions also weaken democratic participation. Youth turnout alone does not establish meaningful participation. Functioning student unions, accessible local forums, transparent routes into party leadership, and civil society programmes that reach beyond universities would give young citizens practical authority. Locally led models such as the Digital Democracy Initiative show the value of giving participants resources and responsibility. These mechanisms need identifiable decision-makers, resources and published response timelines so participation produces an accountable institutional response.



International Day of Democracy

In the thirteenth century, [Frederick II of Sicily](#) reportedly set out to discover which language children would speak if they never heard anyone talk. According to the chronicler Salimbene, nurses were told to feed and wash the infants but forbidden to speak to them or show affection. The experiment produced no answer because the children died. Its underlying question remains uncomfortable: what can be expected to develop in people when the conditions that make development possible are withheld?

Pakistan's Generation Z has been placed in a quieter version of that experiment. Young people are urged to vote, speak up and engage, yet offered few settings in which to learn what meaningful participation looks like. The expectation of active citizenship runs well ahead of the opportunities to practise it.

For many Pakistanis who came of age in the 2000s and 2010s, the state first appeared as a source of risk rather than a mechanism for collective decision-making. Security fears shaped ordinary routines, from wariness about stopping in traffic to the checks and emergency drills introduced in schools after the [December 2014 attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar](#). For many, the first encounter with the idea of an election was the news of Benazir Bhutto's assassination, [twelve days before parliamentary polls](#) had originally been scheduled. The vocabulary of terrorism and attack arrived long before that of participation and representation. Public life, in this sense, was first learned as something to survive.

The spaces where earlier generations learned to organise and negotiate have also narrowed. Student unions were banned nationwide on [9 February 1984](#). More than four decades later, despite periodic attempts at restoration, the ban has outlasted the entire lifespan of Generation Z. A functioning union does not by itself make a country democratic. What it offers is early exposure to three ideas: that one's own voice has value, that others' voices do too, and that decisions affecting everyone should be open to scrutiny. Where students cannot question a steep fee increase while classmates struggle to stay enrolled, they may reasonably conclude that speaking up carries little weight.

Electoral participation among the young is not negligible. [PILDAT estimated that 48 percent of young voters cast a ballot in the 2024 general election](#), in line with overall turnout. But turnout measures engagement on a single day. It does not show whether those voters later influenced policy or came to trust the institutions they elected.

The more telling test comes afterwards. Where does a young person take a proposal about an unaffordable bus route, an inaccessible college or an unstaffed health facility? Effective participation requires an identifiable decision-maker, a procedure for raising the issue, and a reasonable prospect of receiving an answer. Without these, political interest can coexist with a pervasive sense of powerlessness.

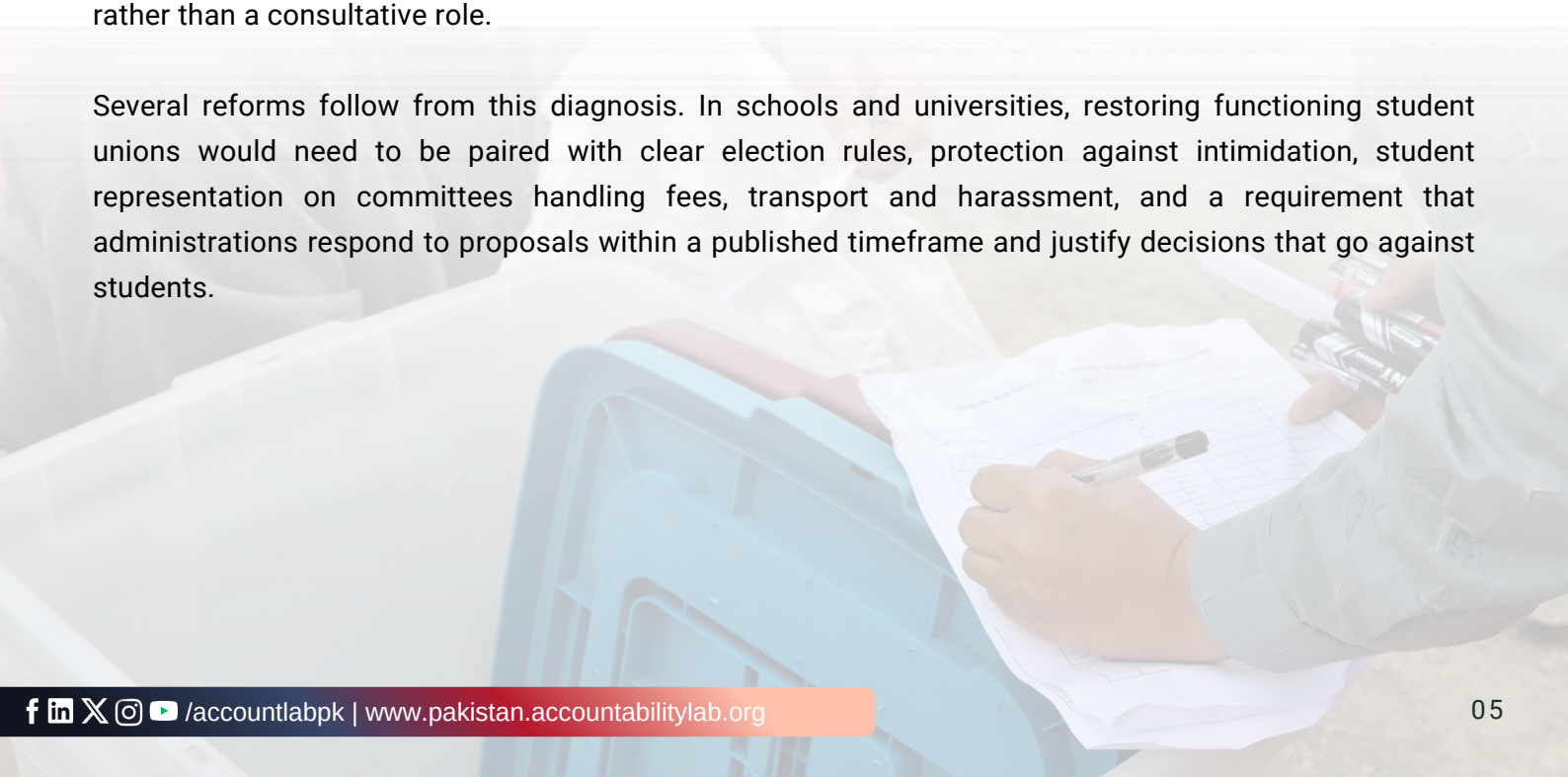
Psychologist Julian Rotter's concept of locus of control is useful here. People with an internal locus believe their actions shape outcomes and are more likely to take initiative; those with an external locus attribute outcomes to luck, fate, or powerful others. If young people's repeated experience is that decisions lie beyond their influence, withdrawal becomes a rational response rather than apathy. Public rhetoric can reinforce the lesson. Citizens generally understand that governments face constraints, that fuel prices respond to international pressures, and that not every problem can be solved at once. What erodes trust is the perception that power owes no explanation, as when an expensive purchase is defended as personal choice or a price increase is announced with the implication that nothing can be done.

Spaces created specifically for young people can reproduce the same imbalance. Political parties often engage youth in campaigning, rallies and social media work, which build skills and networks. These activities do not automatically translate into influence over candidate selection, party spending or policy priorities. Nor does appointing a young office-holder necessarily broaden representation when that person enters politics through family connections or a powerful patron. A more useful test is whether an ordinary member can understand how decisions are made, compete for responsibility and question leadership without losing their place. Age diversity matters, but the rules governing access to authority determine how much difference it makes.

Civil society faces a related problem of selection. In development programming, "youth" frequently comes to mean university students. Young people working in shops, learning trades, doing unpaid care work or seeking employment are much harder to reach. A consultation held at a university on a weekday, advertised online and conducted in English determines its constituency before discussion begins, risking the mistaking of the most accessible voices for those of a generation.

Alternative models exist. The Digital Democracy Initiative, implemented regionally by Accountability Lab Pakistan, offers small grants and support for locally led projects across South Asia, allowing communities, including young people, to identify problems and design their own responses. The lesson is that participation becomes more meaningful when young people hold real resources and responsibility rather than a consultative role.

Several reforms follow from this diagnosis. In schools and universities, restoring functioning student unions would need to be paired with clear election rules, protection against intimidation, student representation on committees handling fees, transport and harassment, and a requirement that administrations respond to proposals within a published timeframe and justify decisions that go against students.



At the local level, regular public meetings could connect young residents with the officials responsible for their concerns, with each issue leaving the room with a named official, a response date, and a public update. Political parties could publish how members compete for positions and contribute to policy, while giving younger members genuine authority over decisions and resources. Civil society could recruit through vocational centres, workplaces, neighbourhood groups and rural networks, hold discussions in local languages, and schedule around work and care responsibilities. Organisers should also state in advance which decisions participants can influence, who will receive their recommendations, and when they will hear back.

Frederick's experiment assumed that language would emerge without interaction. Pakistan makes a comparable assumption when it expects democratic citizens to appear simply because people reach voting age. Participation is a practised skill, and willingness to take part depends on what earlier attempts have taught people to expect. On this International Day of Democracy, the pertinent question is less whether young Pakistanis care enough than whether institutions have given them anywhere to practise. Read the full article by Accountability Lab [here](#)



Political Updates

On Sunday, October 4, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) plans to [march from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa \(KP\) to Islamabad](#). The federal government is openly discussing whether to respond by removing the party's elected provincial government. Both sides say they are defending the constitution, and both are preparing for a confrontation. The week's news is easier to follow once you know how Pakistan got here.

The march is meant to demand Khan's release. The party first announced September 27, then moved it to October 4. Sohail Afridi, KP's Chief Minister, calls it potentially the biggest long march in the country's history and says it will happen ["come what may."](#)



Source: The Nation

Federal ministers have spent the week saying the Centre is ["seriously considering"](#) imposing an emergency under [Article 232](#) of the Constitution, or governor's rule, in KP. In plain terms, this would let Islamabad take over the province's administration and sideline the elected government. The stated reason is pervasive terrorism across the province, and that reason deserves serious weight, although the federal government has not applied the same reasoning in Balochistan, which is far more troubled than KP. KP's security situation is bad. The PPP's Nayyar Bukhari described residents, even in the chief minister's home district, staying indoors after sunset. A Senate committee heard this week that police at inter-provincial checkpoints are overstretched, and that daily threat alerts drive strict checking.

Still, it is hard to read the timing as coincidence. Ministers pair the security argument with a demand that PTI cancel the march, and the government has said it would send the provincial government packing if the march goes ahead. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry insists emergency would be imposed "not because of any political reason." That claim is hard to square with a threat issued as a condition on a protest. The PTI's reply is that security is a pretext, and its leaders say they would challenge any such move in court and on the streets.

The legal route is also less simple than the rhetoric suggests. Any such move would shake a federal system already strained by the question of who really decides what in the provinces, and it would likely hand PTI a fresh grievance. Afridi has already hinted that his supporters could take to the streets at short notice if anyone tries to remove him.

The party with the most leverage this week is neither PTI nor PML-N. It is the PPP, which props up the federal government without being part of it. The prime minister is reportedly set to meet President Asif Ali Zardari and party chair Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, and PPP leaders have already met their PML-N counterparts to discuss KP. The PPP's public line is careful: it will give its views "strictly in accordance with the Constitution," supports dialogue, and calls the situation in KP alarming. It has also criticised PTI for using provincial resources for the march. It has not committed to backing governor's rule.

That caution makes sense. The PPP benefits from being needed, and the same meetings reportedly covered four bills linked to IMF conditions, with the PPP agreeing to three and rejecting one. The PPP is also weighing an invitation to an opposition multiparty conference. It is trading support on several fronts at once.

Despite the confident message, PTI is not fully united. Senior figure Shaukat Yousafzai wrote a letter asking the party to postpone the march. Afridi said he would have torn it up. Party chair Barrister Gohar Ali Khan called it a personal opinion but said Yousafzai remains part of the leadership. Even basic planning is murky: reports say the march may start from the [southern districts, perhaps Karak or Dera Ismail Khan](#), with the route and even who rides on which container still undecided.



Source: Dawn

The pressure on the party is also legal. An anti-terrorism court reissued arrest warrants for Afridi in the November 26 protest case after he and others skipped hearings, though the police also failed to file the case challan, and the hearing was adjourned to October 9. The Islamabad High Court is hearing petitions against the detention of two PTI Members of the National Assembly (MNAs). PTI says workers and lawmakers are being picked up ahead of the march, and that one MNA was abducted on September 22. Imran Khan's sisters are reportedly on hunger strike, according to a cousin, and lawyers say they were again denied a meeting with him at Adiala. These are the party's claims, and the government disputes the political framing, but the pattern is what PTI will lean on when it argues the state is cornering it.



Source: Dawn

The government faces other protests as well. The Jamaat-e-Islami, which has paused its own long march after a promise from the prime minister, is demanding the full abolition of the petroleum levy and the [release of political prisoners](#), and warns that governor's rule in KP could backfire. In Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), [unrest in Poonch continues](#), and over [120 people](#) have been arrested in connection with attacks on police. A former AJK prime minister has called for dialogue and warned that "the system we currently have may collapse."

Look across these stories and the same question keeps coming up: who has the right to decide for the provinces and regions? A Dawn [opinion piece](#) this week makes that argument directly, saying Pakistan was built as a union of distinct communities, that decisions about provinces and local governments belong to the people, and that removing popular will strikes at the country's founding premise. It captures a worry that runs from KP to Poonch.

Three things to watch. First, whether the prime minister's outreach, including a possible meeting with opposition leader Mehmood Khan Achakzai, produces any deal before Sunday. Second, what the PPP decides. Third, whether the government actually follows through on the emergency. Threatening an emergency is cheap and may be intended to deter. Imposing one is a gamble with consequences nobody can fully predict. Right now, neither side shows signs of backing down.

Economic Updates

Pakistan's economy is in a strange position. The official numbers look better than they have in years, and the people living inside them say things are getting harder. Both are true, and understanding why is important. Pakistan is in the middle of a \$7 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, approved in September 2024. About \$4.5 billion has been received so far, and three reviews are complete. The fourth review began this week, with an IMF mission led by Iva Petrova in Islamabad. A clean result would unlock roughly \$1.2 billion and waivers for targets missed at the end of June.

Meanwhile, the war involving Iran and the US, and the disruption around the Strait of Hormuz, has [pushed up global oil prices](#). Pakistan imports most of its fuel, so every other number in this story has to be read against that. The headline figure is encouraging. In July and August, the current account deficit was [\\$543 million](#), 36% narrower than the [\\$853 million a year earlier](#). August alone showed a deficit of just \$98 million.

The reason matters, though. Goods exports rose only about 4% in August, while imports rose faster. The goods trade gap for the two months widened 18% to \$7.12 billion. What closed it was money from abroad: remittances of \$3.66 billion in August, up almost 17%, and roughly \$7.3 billion over the two months.

There is a second bright spot. IT exports rose 17% to \$394 million in August, and \$4.7 billion over the past twelve months. Services exports overall jumped 29%, and travel receipts more than doubled. The government's goal is \$10 billion in IT exports by FY29, which would need growth near 28% a year, well above the 17-21% pace now. Net foreign direct investment also rose 80% in August, led by power and finance, though portfolio investors pulled money out.

The picture is of a country that earns its foreign currency from its diaspora and from skilled, urban, digital work, while the factory sector barely moves. That has consequences. Industrial policy and textile packages still assume manufacturing is the engine, and the data suggests otherwise.



Inflation topped 11% in August, and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has held its policy rate at [11.5% for a third straight meeting](#), after raising it by a full percentage point in April, the first hike in nearly three years. The government's own data points to oil as "the principal risk."

Opinions split. Business groups want relief. The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) says industry needs breathing room, and its leaders complain that electricity costs businesses about [12 cents per unit](#) against seven in competing countries, even after a recent cut from 17. They also accuse the tax authority of heavy-handed raids on factories. Some commentators argue the opposite, that real rates are tight but inflation is stubborn enough to justify another 100 basis points. Sources suggest the central bank may yet tighten to limit the second-round effects of the oil shock.



Source: Dawn

The squeeze shows up clearly in a survey from the Institute of Regional Studies covering 462 households in Peshawar. It found that [89% of low-income families](#) are borrowing to pay for daily needs, and 95% of those borrowing to survive struggle to repay. Prices of essentials are reported up 35-40%, petrol around 50% since February, and 59% of families have delayed school fees. Nearly [80% say they cannot afford medical treatment](#). The sample is small and regional, but the direction matches what the national figures imply: incomes rose, but costs rose faster.

In this context, behind the current IMF review is a long list of demands. The Finance Secretary told a National Assembly committee that the IMF wants about [174 legislative amendments](#) covering taxes, energy, privatisation, sugar policy, Islamic banking and the Sovereign Wealth Fund. He stressed that Parliament, not the IMF, decides. Four port and insurance bills tied to IMF directives are heading to the Assembly, and the PPP has reportedly agreed to three.

Three themes stand out:

1. Power subsidies. Pakistan plans to move electricity subsidies from consumer tariffs to targeted payments through the [Benazir Income Support Programme \(BISP\)](#) by January 2027, with cash transfers rising to Rs18,000. This is the sort of reform economists have long wanted, and it is politically delicate.
2. Privatisation. Three power distribution companies are at an advanced stage. Committee chair Naveed Qamar asked the obvious question: if the profitable ones are sold, what happens to the loss-making rest? The government is also weighing a transaction in the restructured national airline PIA covering 75% ownership.
3. Revenue. Pakistan beat its first-quarter tax target, which the IMF noted. But a retailer registration scheme has seen weak uptake, and members of parliament are asking whether benchmarks being ticked off mean anything on the ground, citing electric-vehicle charging stations as an example.

These updates point to a structural issue. Pakistan's debt-to-GDP ratio, [around 67%](#), is not the world's worst. The trouble is that government revenue is only about [15.8% of GDP](#), so servicing debt crowds out everything else. The state taxes what it can easily reach (salaried workers, registered firms, fuel), while investment suffers, growth stays weak, and another IMF programme follows. Their test for borrowing is simple: what lasting asset did it create?

That helps explain the [unrest in the Malakand division](#) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Traders there are threatening to block motorways on October 7 and stop paying utility bills, after the federal government moved to end long-standing tax exemptions in the former tribal areas. Residents who have lived through militancy, floods and displacement see new taxes as a punishment. The Centre, bound by IMF commitments, sees exemptions as something it can no longer afford.

Pakistan has bought stability, and the numbers back that up. What it has not yet bought is a broad-based recovery. The risks are lined up in plain sight: oil prices, a trade gap that widens whenever the economy grows, and a population whose patience is thinning. The next few weeks will show how much room the government has, with the IMF board decision, the October 7 protests, and whether the central bank holds or hikes.

Diplomatic Landscape

Pakistan's foreign policy this week looks like a country spreading its commitments across several fronts at once. On Wednesday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif marked the 77th anniversary of the People's Republic of China and the [75th year of bilateral relations](#), calling Beijing the "anchor" of Pakistan's foreign policy and pledging a move into CPEC 2.0, which shifts the focus from roads and power plants to industry, IT, agriculture and mining. Days earlier, the two countries activated a [joint border commission](#) for the first time, nearly thirteen years after the 2013 agreement that created it. India rejected it, saying no boundary exists between Pakistan and China, a reminder that even routine border management carries the weight of the Kashmir dispute.



Source: Dawn

Beneath the warm ceremony sits a harder problem: overdue payments to Chinese-built power plants have [passed \\$1.5 billion](#), and as Pakistanis install solar panels and leave the grid, those plants earn less. Islamabad is asking for longer repayment terms, not write-offs, and Beijing has so far been reluctant to give ground.

The second axis runs through the Gulf. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey signed the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement in August, treating an attack on one as an attack on all.

Minister Khawaja Asif said this week that "[whatever means are available](#)" would be at Saudi Arabia's disposal against the Houthis, who have been attacking Saudi territory and have taken the [Yemeni port of Mokha](#), though he declined to say whether Pakistani forces have already taken part in strikes. This marks a notable shift. Earlier this year, Pakistan was positioning itself as a lead mediator between the US and Iran, and it still depends on goodwill in Tehran along a long shared border. A more open military commitment to Riyadh against an Iran-backed group could narrow that room for manoeuvre, even though the pact is officially defensive.



Source: Arab News

The third front is the least comfortable one: Afghanistan. Pakistan carried out [airstrikes in two Afghan provinces](#) overnight, saying it killed [22 militants](#), while Kabul says nine civilians, including women and children, died. Neither claim has been verified, and the United Nations has recorded over 1,100 civilian casualties in Afghanistan from cross-border violence this year. Pakistan argues it is responding to militants who attack inside its territory, which links directly to the security crisis in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Afghanistan denies sheltering them.

The strikes, however, give the Taliban government fresh grievances and leave a border that carries trade and refugees permanently unstable. On the eastern side, relations with India remain frozen over [the Indus Waters Treaty](#), which Delhi put in abeyance in April 2025. Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said this week that the move sets a dangerous global precedent, pointing to an August ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration that backed Pakistan's position that the treaty remains in force.

Pakistan is leaning on China for capital, on Saudi Arabia and Turkey for security and money, and on international law for pressure against India, while fighting two hostile borders. Each relationship is useful, but the demands overlap. Pakistan needs Chinese patience on debt, Gulf support during an IMF programme, and calm on its western frontier, all at a time when its domestic politics are tense. Whether it can manage that without being forced to pick sides will shape the coming year.

Social and Humanitarian Updates

September's social news from Pakistan shows how one set of pressures feeds the others. The monsoon season was less deadly than last year's, but it still killed in a pattern that exposes weak housing and rural vulnerability. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said [180 people had died and 509 had been injured in rain-related incidents since June 26](#), with children making up 82 of the dead and house collapses causing half of all deaths. Provincial figures put Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) at 74 deaths and Punjab at 61, with 1,716 homes damaged or destroyed. For comparison, the 2025 floods killed [1,037 people](#) and displaced two million. The pattern matters more than the total. When collapsing roofs are the main killer, the cause is poor construction and poor warning, not just heavy rain.

The health news was mixed, and the worst of it was in the same part of the country. Pakistan confirmed its fifth wild polio case of 2026 on September 29, [a 17-month-old girl in Bannu](#), with four of this year's five cases from the Bannu division. A case reported earlier in the month made the cause plain: teams have been unable to reach children regularly in Nurar Union Council since 2025 because of insecurity.

The national tally is far below 2025, when 31 cases were recorded, and KP accounted for 20 of them. Even so, the virus is surviving where vaccinators cannot safely go. Dengue season also began to bite. Punjab recorded [57 confirmed cases](#) in September, led by Rawalpindi with 22 and Lahore with 14. Rawalpindi's health authority reports 23 confirmed cases for the year, no deaths, and a heavy enforcement drive of FIRs, sealed premises, and fines. The numbers are small for now, but September and October are typically the peak months, so this is an early warning rather than reassurance.

The most acute humanitarian story this month involves Afghans, on both sides of the border. Pakistan's expulsion campaign has continued: more than [80,000 Afghans were arrested and deported between January 1 and September 12](#), according to IOM and UNHCR monitoring, within a wider return of over [787,000 people this year](#). The pressure built over the summer, when the government ordered all Afghan nationals to leave by July 10, and UNHCR warned about forced returns, especially of women.



Source: DiD Press

The violence driving all this is also hitting Pakistani communities. From these updates, KP is where the militancy, the polio gaps, the displacement and the household debt discussed in the economic section above overlap, and none of the month's headlines suggests that is easing.

Security Updates

On Thursday, the information ministry said "[calibrated](#)" [air strikes](#) hit militant hideouts at two locations, with initial reports of 22 militants killed. It framed the action as part of Operation Ghazab lil Haq, the campaign launched on the night of February 26 after cross-border firing by the Taliban. Kabul tells a different story, saying nine civilians, women and children among them, were killed and eleven wounded. Neither account has been independently verified. September had already seen the same pattern. On September 21, Pakistan struck Kunar and Paktika and claimed 28 militants dead, while the UN mission in Afghanistan confirmed three civilian deaths and has documented more than 1,100 civilian casualties from cross-border violence this year. Islamabad also delivered a formal protest to Kabul on September 26 over drones that entered Pakistani airspace on September 23.



Source: Dawn

The state's argument is consistent: the threat comes from Afghanistan, and Taliban authorities have ignored requests to shut down sanctuaries used by the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). A UN-mandated monitoring report covering December to June partly backs this, saying Taliban support for the TTP has raised the frequency and lethality of attacks in Pakistan, while noting that Kabul has taken some early steps to rein it in. The same report notes growing links between the TTP, Al Qaeda, ISIS-Khorasan and the Baloch Liberation Army.

The reason for the strikes is plain on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) side. On September 18, militants stormed the Old Police Lines complex in Kohat, killing at least 31 people, including 16 police officers, and injuring more than 100. A TTP-linked group claimed it. The Diplomat counts close to 1,700 deaths among civilians and security forces in terrorism-related incidents this year, 545 of them in KP. Meanwhile, security forces say they killed [five militants](#) in an operation in Bara this week.

Balochistan is the second front, and by one measure the worse one. The Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies recorded [89 militant attacks](#) in the province in August, up from 83 in July, and named it the country's most affected province. The pattern this month is a mix of large operations and constant low-level disruption. The military said on September 27 that more than [71 militants](#) had been killed in Shaban and other areas in the previous 96 hours, and on Thursday security forces said six more were killed in Kachhi using quadcopters.



Source: Tribune

Against that, someone threw a grenade at the main railway line near Nasirabad on Monday just as the Jaffar Express was approaching, suspending Quetta-Jaffarabad services. Armed men shot dead two people in a car in the same district. Militants set fire to a water tanker in Chagai, one of several arson attacks along the [N-40 highway](#). The state labels these groups "[Fitna al Hindustan](#)" to stress an Indian role. Notably, all of this attacks the movement of trains, trucks and people, which is how insecurity becomes an economic problem as well.

The security story also has a quieter civilian layer that official statements rarely cover. In [Bhag, in Balochistan's Kachhi district](#), the whole market shut down on Wednesday in protest against robberies, highway looting and street crimes, and organisers gave the administration four days to act. [Three Afghan men](#) were found shot dead and dumped in a river in Kech, where one injured survivor was also found, and the police investigation is only beginning. These cases point to a state that is stretched thin. Counter-terrorism consumes the attention, the police, and the headlines, while ordinary lawlessness spreads. The harder part is the day-to-day security that people measure, such as whether the train arrives, whether the road is safe after dark, and whether anyone responds when a shopkeeper is robbed. On that measure, the picture this month is not improving.

Climate Change Related Updates

Unlike last year's catastrophic floods, this season's flows drained through the plains without a major disaster. What is unsettling is what happened next door. In August, a mass of glacial ice and rock collapsed near Nepal's Langtang region, sending a surge up to nine metres high down the Bhote Koshi/Trishuli river system and killing more than 1,400 people. A month later, a mountainside fell into the Kali Gandaki River and caused a second wave of floods and landslides. Pakistan sits on the same mountain system, the Hindu Kush-Himalaya, sometimes called the "Third Pole" because it holds so much ice. Its upper valleys in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) already see smaller flash floods nearly every year.

The numbers behind the warning are specific. Pakistan's space agency, Suparco, said in August that it had identified [131 potentially dangerous glacial lakes](#), mostly in GB and KP. In one month, the number of those lakes that had thawed jumped from 40 to 105, driven by higher temperatures. The wider regional survey by International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) counts [25,614 glacial lakes](#) across the major river basins. Naseer Memon, in his [article](#) in Dawn, argues that climate change is only part of the problem. Forests anchor slopes and slow runoff, and they are shrinking: Chitral lost around 9,288 acres between 1992 and 2009, with the annual deforestation rate rising nearly fourfold, and GB's forest cover is down to 3.57% of its area. At the same time, population growth is pushing people onto the only flat land available. GB's population grew from [roughly 881,000 in 1998 to about 1.5 million](#) in 2023, and dry flood channels that look like wasteland get built on. Suparco flagged exactly this near Gilgit city in July, where satellite images show settlements crowding a glacial-lake stream. His policy conclusion is blunt: ban building along mountain riverbanks and stop deforestation in watersheds. That is a land-use and enforcement problem, not a technology problem, and it is the kind that governments tend to defer until after a disaster.



Source: Dawn

In the plains, the problem is air. A new analysis by the EU's Copernicus monitoring service, released Wednesday, lists Lahore among the cities with ["extremely poor" ground-level ozone](#), alongside New Delhi, Dhaka and Chongqing. Ozone forms when heat and sunlight act on emissions from vehicles, industry and fires, so a hotter climate makes it harder to control. Between January 1 and September 15, 34% of the world's people were exposed to extremely poor levels of air quality, and in Asia the share was 53%. Punjab's [pre-smog preparations](#) are in full swing, but they are aimed mainly at the particulate pollution that thickens winter smog.

The provincial Environment Protection Agency is using night squads and drones to watch stubble-burning hotspots along the motorways. In one 24-hour stretch, [it inspected 431 brick kilns](#), demolishing five and sealing nine, and sealed 11 industrial units, with fines running to a few million rupees. This is the more visible and more familiar fight, and the ozone ranking shows it will not be enough on its own, since ozone comes from different chemistry and needs cuts to vehicle and industrial emissions through the hot months too.

Behind both stories is the question of who pays. Senator Waqar Mehdi of the PPP told a gathering of fiscal institutions in Manila that Pakistan contributes less than 1% of global greenhouse-gas emissions yet suffers floods, heatwaves and droughts, and he called for climate finance that is more predictable and transparent, with better budget tagging and parliamentary oversight. He also wants transfers between federal and provincial governments to reflect how exposed each region is to climate risk. That argument has a domestic edge, since the places most at risk, like GB, Chitral and the Indus delta, are also among the poorest and have the least say. It also lines up with the pressure Pakistan faces from the IMF, where seven climate-related reforms under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility were reported as unmet, and lawmakers questioned whether ticked-off policy boxes mean anything on the ground. The month's lesson is that Pakistan has more warning than it has used. The data on glacial lakes, forest loss, and ozone are in, but the planning and enforcement that would turn them into protection are still catching up.

Reading Recommendations

- Reviving the Role of Youth in Pakistan's Social and Political Life ([Click Here](#))
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