

NIAS Area Studies

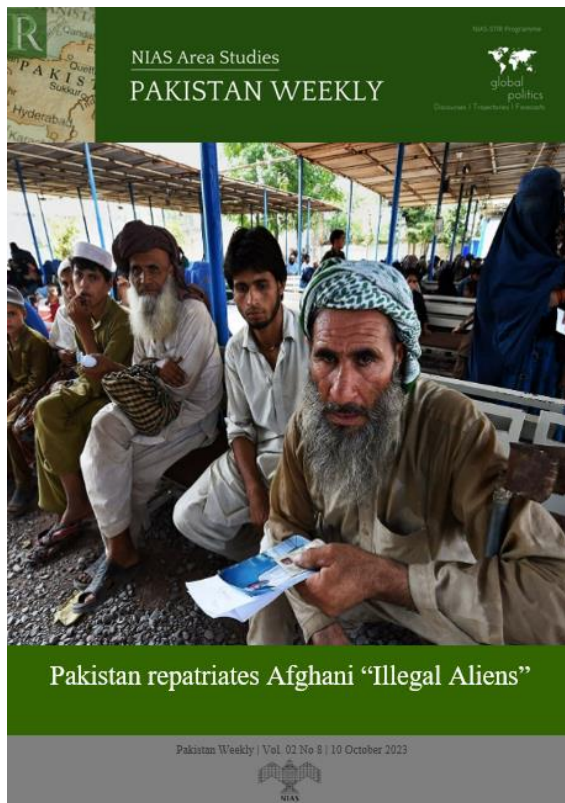
PAKISTAN WEEKLY



Pakistan repatriates Afghani “Illegal Aliens”

Pakistan Weekly

09 October 2023, Tuesday | Vol 2, No 8



CONTENT

PR SHORT NOTES

23 days left for “Illegal aliens” to “voluntarily” flee Pakistan

Femy Francis

LHC strikes down federal government notification on sugar price fixing as “ultra vires”

Femy Francis

Pakistan's debt reached PKR 64 trillion

Femy Francis

Pakistan’s Afghan Refugees: The government’s plan to push back

Shamini Velayutham

PR DAILY BRIEFS

Politics | Pakistan Elections 2023 | Security | Economy | External | China and CPEC | Energy/Environment | Provinces | Pakistan occupied Kashmir |

About NIAS Global Politics

Global Politics is a primary focus of the NIAS Programme on Science, Technology, and International Relations (STIR). The primary focus is on contemporary world affairs. The Programme publishes *The World This Week*, and *NIAS Fortnightly on Science Technology and International Relations*.

Editor

D Suba Chandran

Editorial Team

Femy Francis, Dhriti Mukherjee, and Shamini Velayutham

About NIAS Pakistan Reader

Pakistan Reader is an academic exercise at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) in the Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore, India. The objective of its alert - "Pakistan Reader - Evening Brief" is to update the readers on contemporary developments within Pakistan, on a regular basis.

The PR Evening Briefs are a part of the focus on Pakistan at the International Strategic and Security Programme (ISSSP) within the NIAS.

PR Short Note

23 days left for “Illegal aliens” to “voluntarily” flee Pakistan

By Femy Francis



Source: Foreign Policy

On 7 October, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) issued a joint statement extending their support for registering Afghan nationals in Pakistan. They issued: “provide support in developing a comprehensive and sustainable mechanism to register and manage Afghan nationals, including those who may require international protection.” They appealed that Pakistan should continue to protect all assailable who have sought refuge in Pakistan and would face risk upon returning. It is estimated that there are 1.3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan out of which 880,000 are legal refugees.

Additionally, Pakistan has sought the Taliban-governed Afghan government to establish a sub-consulate in Chaman, Balochistan a strategic city situated near Afghanistan and Pakistan border. They want to establish mechanisms to issue on-arrival visas for the returning refugees. The devastating earthquake in Afghanistan has further aggravated the concerns. A systemic expulsion of Afghan nationals both documented and undocumented has been encouraged, with tenants indiscriminately evicting them and rounding them at police stations. There have been complaints heard that individuals are using the vulnerable condition of Afghan nationals to extort bribes in turn for safety.

Repatriation of “illegal” Afghan Nationals in Pakistan

Caretaker Interim Minister Sarfraz Bugti announced till 1 November for the voluntary return of illegal Afghan nationals from Pakistan after which law enforcement will kickstart the deportation process. This comes after the apex court meeting on the National Action Plan at the

Prime Minister’s House chaired by the interim Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar, attended by COAS Asim Munir and federal ministers amongst others present. They discussed the security issues grappling Pakistan and the need for the withdrawal of “illegal aliens” from the country by formalizing border movement activities. Additionally, they planned a crackdown against trade and property accusations of the “aliens”. There are plans to establish three camps in Chaman, to hold undocumented migrants before they are deported back. Bugti stressed that the government's priority lies in the “welfare and security of a Pakistani are most important for us over any country or its policy. The first decision taken is about our illegal immigrants who are living in Pakistan through illegal means,” counting the days Interim Information Minister Murtaza Solangi announced that there are 28 days left for them to leave.

Furthermore, Bugti informed that e-tazkiras would be only valid till 31 October after which they can only stay with official visa and passport documents. The frenzy saw a new level of paranoia when he also announced that the government would use DNA testing to weed out Afghans holding illegal Pakistani identity cards.

Hike in terrorist activities in Pakistan

Since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the Pakistani government has found an exponential rise in terrorist activities. It is reckoned that there were 24 suicide attacks since January 2023 out of which 14 bombings were claimed by Afghan-based terrorist organizations. The Pakistani government and military have accused the Taliban administration of its inability to curb terrorist activities and providing a safe haven, launching pad for terrorists to attack Pakistan. A report by Pak Institute for Peace Studies titled ‘Pakistan’s Afghan Perspective and Policy Options’ found that the most affected regions are Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan infiltrated by terror and militant organizations like Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan and Balochistan Liberation Army, has seen a surge in terror activities to 92 and 81 per cent.

Responses

While the detainment is claimed largely to be against the illegal settlers, contrarily the Afghan Embassy in Islamabad claims that the arrest has been indiscriminate with thousands detained out of which half are legal refugees. UNHCR spokesperson Qaisar Afridi said: “Pakistan has remained a generous refugee host for decades. This role has been acknowledged globally but more needs to be done to match its generosity,”

Amnesty International of South Asia posted: “Many Afghans living in fear of persecution by the Taliban had fled to Pakistan, where they have been subjected to waves of arbitrary detentions, arrests, and the threat of deportation. It is deeply concerning that the situation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan is not receiving due international attention.” A former senator Afrasiab Khattak warned against government plans of treating Afghan refugees as “vanquished people” and that they are sowing seeds of “intense hatred” that will further “breed animosity” reaped by generation of Afghans refugees, essentially being detrimental to Afghan-Pakistan relations. Social Worker Menna Gabeen highlighted the violent repercussions of such actions would be faced by the most vulnerable Hazara community, who have historically faced targeted violence by the Taliban. JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman opposed the discriminatory treatment against Afghans stating that this would create bitterness with Afghanistan and that they should give the war-torn country more time to settle. He criticized that while the aim is to repatriate “illegal aliens”, they are only targeting the Pashtun community, “Are Pashtuns the only illegal aliens in the country.”

Interim Information Minister of Balochistan Jan Achakzai informed that the repatriation action was the country’s step towards becoming a “normal state.” Urging that several foreign companies and

countries want to invest in Pakistan and are hesitant about the security risks in the country. He said: “We have to turn ourselves into a normal state. And for that, we need to secure our borders, as no normal state can afford to have porous borders.” Interim Minister Murtaza Solangi stated that the country cannot survive with soft borders.

References

- “Govt sets deadline of Nov 1 for illegal immigrants to leave Pakistan,” *Dawn*, 3 October 2023
- Aleezeh Fatimah, “Concern over move to expel ‘illegal’ Afghans,” *Dawn*, 4 October 2023
- Iftikhar A. Khan, “Terror attacks increased in Pakistan after Taliban takeover of Afghanistan: report,” *Dawn*, 1 June 2023
- Saleem Shahid, “Pakistan seeks Kabul’s consulate in Chaman to ease visa process,” *Dawn*, 9 October 2023
- Amin Ahmed, Manzoor Ali, “Pakistan must consider risks to returning Afghans, say UN agencies,” *Dawn*, 8 October 2023
- “UN agencies ‘stand ready to support Pakistan in registering, managing Afghan refugees,” *Dawn*, 7 October 2023
- “Turned away,” *Dawn*, 9 October 2023
- “Political leaders, parties felicitate new CJP,” *The Express Tribune*, 18 September 2023



Source: Radio Liberty

PR Short Note

LHC strikes down federal government notification on sugar price fixing as “ultra vires”

By Femy Francis



Source: Dawn

On 5 October, The Lahore High Court (LHC) dismissed the federal government's order over the fixing of sugar prices and reinstated that the authority lies with the provincial government in this case of Punjab. The decision was held by a two-bench judges consisting of Justice Shahid Karim and Justice Sultan Tanvir Ahmad hearing the petition by Sugar Mills against the federal government's interference. They questioned the jurisdiction of the government to determine the price ceiling for the province of Punjab. Deputy Attorney General Asad Ali Bajwa cited Article 151 to support the government's role in determining the sugar prices stating that the power resides with the parliament as they intended to establish a uniform price for all the provinces. While the presiding Judge Karim clarified that Article 151 did not award parliament of any such mandate. Advocate General Samia Khalid put forth that the province of

Punjab has the capacity and the competence to determine and fix the prices of all necessities and conferred that the interference of the governments lies outside their jurisdiction.

The Judgement

They observed that the 1977 Act only outlines on price control and that it allots no authority to the parliament to determine the price of essential goods which lies exclusively under the province's jurisdiction. The parliament's power is regulating inter-province relations in trade and commerce and not regulating internal decisions. The judgement highlighted that the provincial government are better positioned to decide on price fixation as they are aware of the various circumstance of the said province and would be able to consider all factors required before making a judgement.

Justice Karim also noted that the price fixation for essential commodities need not be uniform across all provinces and not fix a price if not needed. They ruled the government cannot allocate the price without regarding that some provinces do not require the ceiling. The bench ruled that under the 1977 act, the parliament's power to control prices of essential goods and commodities and the prevention of profiteering and hoarding is “ultra vires” meaning beyond their powers. Additionally, they struck down the notification by the federal government under the Price Control and Prevention of Profiteering and Hoarding Order 2022.

References

Wajih Ahmad Sheikh, “Provinces empowered to fix sugar price, LHC rules,” *Dawn*, 6 October 2023
“LHC directs Punjab govt to fix sugar price,” *The News International*, 6 October 2023



Lahore High Court Logo

PR Short Note

Pakistan's debt reached PKR 64 trillion

By Femy Francis



Source: The Print

On 6 October, the State Bank of Pakistan released a report stating the government's debt has hiked to PKR 64 trillion a PKR 14.5 trillion increase estimating a 29.2 per cent rise within just one year. The rising debt and the fiscal loss incurred have exposed the country to various vulnerabilities as heightened by a report by the World Bank. Within the past two years the country has seen a mounting budget deficit and the World Bank expressed their concerns that their shortcoming in reaching the budget has led to the accumulation of debts, scaring away potential private investments. The SBP reported that there has been a volatile increase in external debt reaching PKR 24.2 trillion a 39 per cent hike. This hike in external debt was attributed to the devaluation of the Pakistani currency. It is estimated that PKR 17.4 trillion external debts stand since 2022, excluding IMF liabilities.

There has been a sharp decline in the value of Pakistani currency against the dollar as it stands at PKR 305.6 against one dollar presently. The currency marked a devaluation of 40 per cent in just one year. While the recent efforts to curb smuggling and hoarding by the army have led to some recovery in the value of PKR. The World Bank estimates that of all the public debts of Pakistan, external debt accounts for 40.9 per cent and short-term debt accounts for 13.7 per cent.

The rising domestic debt creates concerns as it absorbs most of the tax revenue and in turn, reduces funds for the development and economic growth needs. A major chunk of the revenue now is used to pay for services that are releasing interest payments and debt. While the government had been consistently paying off debts there has been a dip or rather an absence of inflows and funds since the IMF loan and funding by UAE and Saudi Arabia.

References

Shahbaz Rana, "[Government debt soars to Rs64 trillion](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 6 October 2023
 Shahid Iqbal, "[Weak rupee drives up external debt](#)," *Dawn*, 6 October 2023



Source: CNBC

PR Short Note

Pakistan's Afghan Refugees: The government's plan to push back

By Shamini Velayutham



Source: Dawn

On 3 October, all unauthorized immigrants, including a disproportionately large number of Afghans, were given an ultimatum by the federal apex committee to leave by 31 October or risk being imprisoned and deported. This was a follow-up to the recommendations made on 27 September by the top committee of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Federal and provincial governments are scrambling to put together a workable plan to carry out what could become as one of the most substantial eviction operations in the modern era as the target date to repatriate over a million undocumented Afghans and other foreigners.

Harsh response from Kabul

On 4 October, with more than half of the Afghan community living in KP, the short deadline has alarmed the entire Afghan community across Pakistan. Zabihullah Mujahid, the top spokesman for the Afghan Taliban, expressed his outrage at the decision by calling Pakistan's "behavior" against Afghan refugees "unacceptable" and urging Islamabad to rethink its course of action. He apprised Pakistan should allow them since Afghan refugees are not to blame for Pakistan's security issues. Pakistan ought to accept them as long as they depart of their own volition.

Meanwhile, as a result of ongoing disputes between the two countries, two Pakistani nationals were killed by the Afghan border force at the Chaman border crossing without provocation. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), an Afghan sentry working at the Friendship Gate of Chaman border crossing, which is located along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the Balochistan province, opened fire on pedestrians crossing the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan without provocation or warning.

Internal Responses: For and against the eviction

Dawn referring to an official wrote that the issue of returning Afghan refugees to their country has long been a priority, especially following the December 2014 release of the National Action Plan (NAP). Plans were developed, and tactics were solidified, but no real attempt was made to create a feasible logistical plan supported by human and financial resources.

During a press conference at the Quetta Press Club, Jan Achakzai, the interim minister for information in Balochistan declared that the Afghan refugees had just 27 days left to exit the country. He cautioned that if the eviction order were not followed after the deadline had passed, severe action would be taken. He said that no international pressure would be tolerated in this regard and also claimed that Afghan refugees had harmed the nation and added that after the departure of the refugees, crime will decline.

On the contrary, an editorial in the Dawn "Targeting Afghans," expressed that it is impossible to wish the Afghans gone. They are woven into the social fabric of the area, therefore a sympathetic, long-term solution to their suffering must be discovered. They will only plant the seeds of future strife if Pakistan abandon them in a hurry.

Afghan Refugees in Pakistan

There are 2.18 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This includes the 1.3 million refugees who now possess Proof of Registration (POR) cards, as determined by the 2006 to 2007 census, as well as the extra 880,000 refugees who received Afghan Citizens Cards (ACCs) in 2017 as a result of a registration push in 2017. According to Pakistan's government estimates, a new wave of 600,000 to 800,000 Afghans entered Pakistan after the collapse of the Afghan Republic and the re-emergence of the Afghan Taliban in August 2021. Some of these people are from Afghanistan and had legitimate visas but are currently staying. Monitoring the issues in Islamabad, a senior official informed Dawn over the phone, Unknown numbers of illegal immigrants from Afghanistan fall somewhere between the three aforementioned categories. He said that "from a security, social, and economic standpoint, this is a serious concern."

PR Daily Briefs

POLITICS



Source: Pakistan Today

Supreme Court resumes hearing on challenge to Practice and Procedure Act 2023

On 9 October, the Supreme Court of Pakistan resumed hearings on petitions challenging the 2023 Practice and Procedure Act, a law that mandates the formation of benches to handle constitutional matters. The bench, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, includes several senior justices. This legislation had previously been blocked by the Supreme Court, citing concerns about the powers of the Chief Justice. During the hearing, there were debates regarding the interpretation of the Constitution and the Supreme Court's rule-making authority. Justice Isa stated that “nobody moves petitions to express opposition [to their action], except when parliament enacts law,” raising questions about the Parliament’s legislation under the pretext of cases being “subject to the law and the Constitution.” Thus, the case furthered the debate on the balance of power between Parliament and the Judiciary. (“[SC resumes hearing pleas against law limiting CJP’s powers](#),” *Dawn*, 9 October 2023)

Five PTI leaders declared proclaimed offenders in riots case

On 7 October, an anti-terrorism court declared five Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leaders, including former federal minister Hammad Azhar, proclaimed offenders in a case related to the 9 May riots. They were accused of torching police vehicles during the unrest. Despite non-bailable arrest warrants, the suspects remained in hiding. The court has granted permission to initiate proceedings to attach their properties under Section 88 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). This action follows a previous declaration of nine PTI leaders as proclaimed offenders in the same case. (“[ATC declares 5 PTI leaders proclaimed offenders](#),” *Dawn*, 8 October 2023)

PPP leader Zardari raises concerns over election fairness

On 9 October, Dawn reported on PPP leader Asif Ali Zardari expressing “serious concerns” about alleged perceived preferential treatment for the PML-N by caretaker governments in Punjab and the Centre ahead of the January elections. The PPP additionally accused the “partisan” Punjab caretaker government of playing the role of a “B-team” of the PML-N. These concerns arose a month after the PPP's central executive committee expressed reservations about election fairness and caretaker cabinet appointments. The PML-N has supported PPP's call for a level playing field, saying that it is a “fair” demand. While PPP suspects its former allies are aligning with the military, PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif downplayed tensions, stating that “PML-N and the PPP have separate politics.” A close aide to Sharif refuted allegations of preferential treatment. (Zulqernain Tahir, “[PPP raises level playing field issue with ‘quarters concerned’](#),” *Dawn*, 9 October 2023)

Criticism against government's repatriation plan

On 6 October, the current government reaffirmed its commitment to expelling all illegal immigrants, including the approximately 1.7 million Afghan refugees living in the area on the grounds that it was in accordance with international norms. Over the past week, a sizable number of families have crossed into Afghanistan as law enforcement authorities have kept up their crackdown on referred to as “illegal aliens.” In an interview with Hong Kong's Phoenix TV on the brink of a forum in Tibet, caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani said, “No government allows illegal persons to live in their country, whether it is Europe, whether it is countries in Asia, or in our neighborhood. The expulsion plan would be implemented in stages, according to Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, a spokesperson for the Foreign Office. She said that the procedure would go in an orderly manner, contrary to what she called assumptions that all of them would simply be expelled in one go, and that it may begin with persons with criminal records, such as those involved in smuggling or crimes. (“[Govt firm on repatriation plan amid criticism](#),” *Dawn*, 7 October 2023)

Cabinet declares a PIA emergency

On 6 October, an emergency order to directly appoint financial consultants for the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) was approved by a Cabinet body with the intention of getting the loss-making company ready for sale within the next four months. Bypassing the necessity for open bids through advertisements, the Cabinet Committee on Privatization (CCOP) chose to hire an international financial advisor by directly soliciting offers from the top 25 global financial firms. This choice will likely speed up the procedure by around two months, enabling the preparation of the transaction structure and other milestones to be finished by January of the following year. The temporary administration's goal is to begin the bidding process in January. (Shahbaz Rana, "Cabinet invokes emergency for PIA," *The Express Tribune*, 7 October 2023)

Shehbaz confirms Nawaz's return as he wraps off UK business

On 6 October, Shehbaz Sharif, Nawaz Sharif's younger brother, stated that the PML-N supreme leader would return to Pakistan as scheduled on October 21 after his medical reports were presented to the Lahore High Court by Nawaz Sharif's legal team. The party's de facto London headquarters, Stanhope House, hosted the older Sharif on his penultimate day. Shehbaz Sharif clarified the ambiguity surrounding his elder brother's return during a news conference in Lahore. He also stated that after his arrival, he will address a rally at the Minar-i-Pakistan and "give an economic roadmap to steer the country out of crises.". Additionally, Shehbaz Sharif seems to redefine the party's catchphrase, "vote ko izzat do." Respecting the ballot does not imply that a slogan is anti-establishment. He questioned whether promoting anti-establishment rhetoric would contribute in resolving the issues facing the populace and responded, "It means serving the voters. (Zulqernain Tahir and Wajih Ahmad Sheikh, "Nawaz wraps up UK affairs as Shehbaz confirms homecoming," *Dawn*, 7 October 2023)

IHC: The court will hear Imran's bail request in the cipher case in public

On 3 October, The Islamabad High Court (IHC) stated that while the hearing of PTI Chairman Imran Khan's bail request in the cipher case will take place in open court, "sensitive information" would be discussed behind closed doors. The judgement was made as the IHC rejected the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) request for in camera deliberations about the PTI chief's bail bid in the case. The diplomatic document that allegedly

vanished from Imran's possession is the subject of the cipher case. According to the PTI, it featured a US threat to remove the party head from power. After receiving a three-year prison sentence in the Toshakhana graft case from a court, Imran was transferred to Attock jail on 5 August, 2023. He had been placed on judicial remand in the cipher case, it was revealed after the sentence was suspended. Meanwhile, PTI lawyer Barrister Salman Safdar termed the in-camera trial of Imran and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the cipher case "unconstitutional". (Umer Burney, "Imran's bail plea in cipher case to be heard in open court, IHC says," *Dawn*, 4 October 2023)

Asad Umar and Imran's sisters were sought by Lahore police pertaining attack on Jinnah House

On 3 October, PTI chairman Imran Khan's sisters Uzma and Aleema, as well as party leader Asad Umar, had been sought by Lahore police in connection with the attack on Jinnah House on May 9. As an anti-terrorism court (ATC) considered the accused' bail requests, the police made the request.. Due to widespread rioting and attacks on significant military installations following the PTI chief's detention in the Al-Qadir Trust case on May 9, the state initiated a harsh crackdown against his party. Following the property's vandalism during the riots, Sarwar Road Police had opened a case over the attack on Jinnah House, which also serves as the residence of Lahore's corps commander. Aleema and Uzma both came before the joint investigation team (JIT) in August to participate in the investigation into the attacks on the military facilities. (Rana Bilal, "Lahore police seek arrest of Asad Umar, Imran's sisters in Jinnah House attack case," *Dawn*, 4 October 2023)

'They comply with martial law but assault the parliament' says CJP

On 2 October, according to Pakistan's Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, the Supreme Court has already approved martial law multiple times, and many justices have forgotten their oaths after the declaration of martial law. He added that the parliament should be respected and that the supreme court cannot permit anyone to cause trouble in the nation. The parliament is being attacked by everyone. The CJP stated that the Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Act has now been incorporated into law and that the question of whether or not parliament was able to do so should not be discussed. "When martial law is imposed, everyone surrenders their weapons. There are many pictures [of judges] in this room who forgot their oath after the imposition of martial

law,” the CJP Isa stated after the attorney read out the judges’ oath in court. The Supreme Court had previously supported martial law, according to CJP Isa, who also claimed that one person was to blame for the country's ruin. (“[They surrender to martial law but attack parliament: CJP](#),” *The News International*, 4 October 2023)

ECONOMY



Source: PT Profit

Pakistan detects signs of shale gas in a well

On 9 October, the nation discovered encouraging signs of the presence of heavy reservoirs of shale gas at the pilot well KUC-1, Hyderabad, Sindh, despite the fact that natural gas output is dropping by 8 to 9 per cent annually. Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) launched the project in 2020. According to a study by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Pakistan's multiple shale layers contain more than 3,000 TCF (trillion cubic feet) of shale gas resources. Dr. M. Saeed Khan Jadoon, head of the shale gas cell and advisor to OGDCL on oil and gas exploration, told *The News* that after reaching and fracturing the third layer, the process of digging the same well horizontally up to 1,500 to 2,000 meters within a depth of 3,000 to 6,000 meters would be done. He added, “We have vertically drilled the well and found two layers of rocks containing shale gas; OGDCL experts will continue to vertically dig up to the third layer in the first week of the next month.” (Khalid Mustafa, “[Pakistan finds indications of shale gas presence in well](#),” *The News International*, 9 October 2023)

Privatisation approach worries World Bank

On 9 October, the World Bank expressed concern about Pakistan's strategy for privatizing its state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and emphasized the negative effects of court activism, political annoyance, the sale of K-Electric, and what it called the flawed Sarmaya-i-Pakistan model. The financial institution advised against divesting to foreign states under government-to-government contracts due to impending litigation and instead suggested making public offerings on stock exchanges followed by privatization with open

oversight from a special joint committee of the parliament. The bank precisely addressed the Inter-Governmental Commercial Transactions Act 2022 in its public expenditure review 2023 where it permits the administration to provide SOE shares to foreign governments. By doing so, the bank was alarmed that it could lead to lawsuits, provoke concerns over transparency and might impede the

privatisation process henceforth. The bank also stated that SOE’s profits are halting in Pakistan which has resulted in huge losses. It apprised “the profitability of Pakistan’s federal SOEs is the lowest in the South Asian Region” because the profit is 0.8 per cent of GDP in 2014 which turned into losses worth 0.4 per cent of GDP in 2020. Thus, making it a significant driver of fiscal deficit and source of considerable fiscal risk. (Khaleeq Kiani, “[World Bank flags concerns over privatisation approach](#),” *Dawn*, 9 October 2023)

Middle East violence hikes oil prices

On 9 October, the repercussions of the Israeli and Hamas violence have led to the rise of oil prices of more than USD 4 a barrel in Asian trade. The military clashes between Israeli and Hamas forces have caused political turmoil across the Middle East. By 0120 GMT, Brent crude was up USD 4.18, or 4.94 per cent, to USD 88.76 per barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude was up USD 4.23, or 5.11 per cent, to USD 87.02 per barrel. The increase in oil prices reversed last week's downward trend, which was the worst weekly fall since March. Amid worries about rising interest rates and their effects on demand globally, Brent plummeted by about 11 per cent, and West Texas Intermediate (WTI) fell by more than 8 per cent. (“[Oil prices jump more than \\$4 as Middle East violence rattles markets](#),” *The Business Recorder*, 9 October 2023)

Pakistan's finances will be examined at discussions in Marrakech

On 7 October, when decision makers and asset managers assemble for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) annual meetings in Marrakech next week, countries like Pakistan and Egypt's finances will be under close examination. In addition, a week of meetings regarding the threats to the world economy will bring together central bankers and finance ministers from 190 nations in Morocco, not far from the epicenter of a terrible earthquake in Morocco that claimed 2,900 lives. Emerging countries are experiencing headwinds from all directions as uncertainty surrounds US economic plans and China's faltering economy. Some of these

economies continue to endure the effects of extreme weather and climate change. Fitch estimates that three nations, including Pakistan, will spend at least 40 per cent of their annual earnings on debt interest payments. ("Pakistan's finances to come under the scanner at Marrakech meetings," Dawn, 7 October 2023)

Pakistan is set to receive USD 3.4 billion of the USD10.9 billion in Geneva pledges

On 7 October, a careful examination of the international donors' committed pledges of USD10.9 billion for the flood-affected regions reveals that Pakistan is only anticipated to get about USD 3.4 billion as net funds to carry out the infrastructure projects. Out of the USD10.9 billion in commitments made at Geneva, a sizable portion of cash was committed in the form of financing for commodities, an oil facility, and the re-use of funds; the remaining net funding was solely available for the implementation of development projects in flood-affected areas. According to a detailed study of the USD10.9 billion in promises, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) committed USD 4.2 billion through the ITFC for financing of commodities and oil over a three-year period. There was USD 6.7 billion left on the obligation. (Mehtab Haider, "Pakistan likely to get \$3.4bn out of \$10.9bn pledged in Geneva," The News International, 7 October 2023)

Delegation to get back two PIA aircraft stranded in Jakarta

On 6 October, The Express Tribune reported that a four-team delegation would leave for Indonesia to get back two Pakistan International Airline's Airbus 320 aircraft that have been stored in Jakarta Soekarno-Hatta for the last two years. PIA returned the airbuses in 2021 owing to a massive loss of payments on the parking of planes. The negligence of the PIA management is responsible for the plane's prolonged parking in Jakarta. PIA spokesperson stressed that the negotiations are on the way and that "they will be purchased and added back to the fleet. Soon both the planes will come to Pakistan." (Aftab Khan, "Team to leave for Jakarta to repatriate two PIA planes," The Express Tribune, 6 October 2023)

Discos to be provided to the private sector by interim in "long-term" concessions

On 4 October, the interim government made the decision to introduce eight hours of gas load-shedding for home consumers during the winter and to transfer electricity distribution businesses to the private sector through "long-term concessions." The interim administration also promised to keep

up its fight against money laundering and currency smuggling with the goal of eradicating PKR 1 trillion in yearly tax evasion in Afghan trade. The aforementioned decisions were taken at the sixth meeting of the Apex Committee of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), which was presided over by acting Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar. General Syed Asim Munir, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), also participated in the nine-hour meeting.

According to an official news statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on the SIFC meeting, the ministries updated the forum on the concrete steps they had made during the previous month to improve the business and investment climate in the nation. According to the statement, inordinate delays in restructuring or privatizing cash-strapped state-owned businesses (SOEs) were among the primary macroeconomic issues the committee looked at. The committee decided to speed up the privatization process and cut back on ongoing losses to the national exchequer. (Syed Irfan Raza, "Caretakers to give Discos to private sector via 'long-term' concessions," Dawn, 5 October 2023)

SECURITY



Source: Dawn

PMDC official killed in roadside blast near Quetta

On 8 October, a Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation (PMDC) official, Shabar Ali Mirza, was killed in a roadside explosion near the Sor Range coalfield, close to Quetta. The incident occurred while he was traveling to the coal mines. The blast, likely caused by a remote-controlled improvised explosive device (IED), which, according to a spokesperson for the Civil Hospital Quetta, resulted in "his immediate death. Emergency services and authorities quickly responded to the scene. The incident is under investigation, and so far, no group or individual has claimed responsibility for the attack. Balochistan's Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Domki and Home Minister Mir Zubair Ahmed Jamali have strongly condemned the incident. Domki stated that the culprits would be brought to justice as security

forces have been “fighting against terrorism with courage and determination.” (Saleem Shahid, “[PMDC official killed in blast near Quetta](#),” *Dawn*, 9 October 2023)

Terrorist killed in North Waziristan clash with security forces

On 8 October, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated that a terrorist, “known as Azeem Ullah alias ‘Ghazi,’” was killed in an exchange of fire with security forces in North Waziristan’s Ramzak area. He was “actively involved in various terror activities against security forces and killing of innocent civilians.” The operation also led to the recovery of weapons and ammunition, with sanitisation efforts to neutralise any lingering threats. This is in the wake of Pakistan’s surge in terrorist activities recently, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, following the end of the ceasefire with Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) last year. In August, the country witnessed the highest monthly tally of militant attacks in nearly nine years, according to a report by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS). (“[Terrorist killed in gun battle with security forces in North Waziristan: ISPR](#),” *Dawn*, 9 October 2023)

Two BLA insurgents killed in Quetta

On 6 October, in an exchange of fire in the Hazar Gangi region, anti-terrorism officials killed two militants who belonged to the outlawed Baloch Liberation Army. In a statement, a CTD official said that an intelligence-based operation against the outlawed BLA in the Shalkot Hazar Ganji region was carried out, and a terrorist plot was thwarted by the killing of two militants and the recovery of weapons and ammunition. According to the statement, the CTD was informed that two armed BLA militants had been given the mission to commit acts of terrorism against important installations in Quetta. (Saleem Shahid, “[Two BLA militants killed in Quetta](#),” *Dawn*, 7 October 2023)

EXTERNAL



Source: Daily Sabah

Pakistan aids Afghan earthquake victims

On 8 October, the leadership of Pakistan expressed its profound sorrow and condolences over the loss of valuable lives and property in the tragic earthquake that struck Afghanistan's western provinces on 7 October. The Taliban administration reported that the earthquake, which was the deadliest to shake the quake-prone mountainous nation in years, killed more than 2,000 people and injured more than 9,000 others. The Foreign Office spokeswoman released a statement that stated, "The government and people of Pakistan are deeply saddened by the devastating earthquake that struck yesterday in Western regions of Afghanistan, resulting in tragic loss of life and widespread damage to property." Separately, President Dr. Arif Alvi expressed his deep sorrow over the fatalities caused by the catastrophic earthquake in Herat province. Arif Alvi requested assistance for Afghanistan in this time of need from the Islamic world and the international community in a statement. (“[Pakistan offers support for Afghan quake victims](#),” *The Express Tribune*, 9 October 2023)

US lawmakers promise to strengthen ties with Pakistan

On 6 October, many influential US senators and congressmen have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening US-Pakistan relations and broadening current collaboration in the areas of trade and investment, renewable energy, combating climate change, and regional security. The US lawmakers talked about how to further solidify bilateral relationships in their talks with Pakistan's ambassador to the US, Masood Khan, over the last week, with an emphasis on links in commerce and investment, energy, and counterterrorism. According to a press release from the Press Information Center, the US lawmakers included Senators Bill Hagerty, Jon Ossoff, Representative Jim Banks, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, and Representative Jason Crow. Additionally, Ambassador Khan has written letters of gratitude to several US lawmakers for their unwavering support during the recent House vote that rejected a proposed amendment to forbid funding for Pakistan

under the State Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations (SFOFS) Act 2024. ("US lawmakers vow to cement ties with Pakistan," *The Express Tribune*, 7 October 2023)

Pakistan's Climate and Development Goals Are Undercut by IMF and WB Policies

On 4 October, according to the study written by the Dutch organization Recourse for Financial Accountability, the inherent limitations of these programs towards the climate and the poor are hurting the country's climate and development goals because financially strapped Pakistan is unable to wean itself off of financial injections and development interventions from international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMR) or the World Bank (WB). The research examined the two organizations' projects and the fundamental flaws in the underlying analytical and developmental logic of the programs they both conducted in Pakistan, including their climate-related initiatives. According to the report, Pakistan was chosen as a case study for the various climate-related effects of international financial institutions' programs in the Global South because it has had a record number of 23 IMF programs not all of which were completed and World Bank Group (WBG) investments totaling more than USD 40 billion over a number of decades in a variety of industries, including energy, agriculture, and water. ("IMF, WB Policies Undermining Pakistan's Climate And Development Goals: Report," *The Friday Times*, 4 October 2023)

SOCIETY



Source: Ministry of National Health Services

There is a "low" risk of the Nipah virus in Pakistan says NIH

On 8 October, according to the National Institute of Health, Pakistan has a minimal risk of contracting the Nipah virus (NiV). However, it has advised officials at entry points across the nation to continue being watchful. Six instances of NiV were identified in the Indian state in September of this year, and the virus caused two fatalities, according to a warning from the NIH released on 7 October. The advice stated that there was a minimal chance

of illness occurrence overall in Pakistan and that no confirmed cases of the infection in humans or animals had been reported as of yet. However, it added, "There are a number of factors that could allow NiV emergence in Pakistan, including evidence of the presence of *Pteropus giganteus* species of bats, international travel, and Pakistan's extensive border with India, where NiV outbreak has been documented." The NIH also emphasized a variety of precautions that the government might take to stop NiV from spreading to Pakistan. ("NIH says risk of Nipah virus in Pakistan 'low', urges vigilance at entry points," *Dawn*, 9 October 2023)

"90 per cent of Pakistan's cases of polio are "imported" from Afghanistan", says Health minister

On 6 October, Interim Health Minister Dr. Nadeem Jan has stated that 90 per cent of Pakistan's poliovirus infections were "imported from Afghanistan" as the country continues to experience an upsurge in poliovirus cases. Just one day after the third case of the year was reported, two more samples tested positive for the poliovirus in the nation. Sewage samples taken from Dera Bugti in Balochistan and Peshawar, according to a representative of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) polio laboratory, tested positive for the virus. Both viruses, which were discovered in sewage samples, resemble the poliovirus in Afghanistan. To combat polio, the government has started a five-day polio immunization campaign with a target population of 44 million kids nationwide. The campaign to give youngsters aged 0 to 5 years anti-polio vaccination drops would involve some 350,000 polio workers. (Nadir Guramani, "90pc polio cases in Pakistan 'imported' from Afghanistan: health minister," *Dawn*, 6 October 2023)

Preterm birth rates are highest in Pakistan, according to research

On 6 October, according to a thorough study by the WHO, Unicef, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine that was published in a journal, Pakistan is among the worst-affected nations in southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa where almost 65 per cent of preterm births occurred in 2020. The rates are three to four times greater in the worst-hit nations, Bangladesh (16.2 per cent), Malawi (14.5per cent), and Pakistan (14.3 per cent), than in the least afflicted nations, Serbia (3.8 per cent), Moldova (4 per cent) and Kazakhstan (4.7 per cent). The study estimates that 13.4 million infants, or almost one in ten of all live births, were delivered before 37 complete weeks of pregnancy. (Amin Ahmed, "Pakistan among countries worst affected by preterm births: study," *Dawn*, 7

October 2023)

PROVINCES



Source: Dawn

Balochistan: Thousands lose their Jobs amid closure of mine factories and coalfields

On 6 October, Dawn reported on the loss of employment for thousands of workers owing to the closure of hundreds of coal mines in Balochistan. The mine owners were facing recurring debt and were burdened by billions worth of loans. Chairman of Mines Owners Emergency Committee Balochistan Mir Nusrat Hussain Unqa blamed the poor law and order situation in the province as the culprit for the dwindling mining factories. They complained that the mine owners were not able to confront the terrorists who were disrupting the work. He stressed that it was the government's and the security forces' responsibility to provide them with a stable and safe environment. (Saleem Shahid, "Closure of coal mines in Balochistan triggers job losses," *Dawn*, 6 October 2023)

the region." (Jamil Nagri, "GB clerics agree to put sectarian strife behind them," *Dawn*, 6 October 2023)

CHINA AND CPEC



Source: Arab News

Consulate General of China donates essential ration to Gwadar citizens

On 6 October, Dawn reported that the Consulate General of China established in Karachi donates ration bags consisting of rice, flour, sugar, oil and other necessities to Gwadar residents. It is estimated that they were 4,000 in portions and weighed over 80 tons. The endeavor was supported by two companies Linyi Trade City Overseas Investment (Pakistan) Co. Ltd and China Overseas Ports Holding Company Pakistan Pvt. Ltd. They aided logistical requirements to distribute the bags in batches. (Behram Baloch, "China provides essential aid to Gwadar citizens," *Dawn*, 6 October 2023)

PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR



Source: Dawn

Religious leaders in Gilgit Baltistan issued a joint declaration to aid peace in the region

On 6 October, Delegation from both Shia and Sunn sects came together and issued a joint declaration assuring the regional government to maintain law and order in Gilgit Baltistan to Chief Minister Gulbar Khan. During the early month of September in Gilgit Baltistan internet services were shut down owing to the insensitive comments made by the religious clerks of both sides. Gulbar Khan said: "A peaceful environment is the need of every citizen, and without peace, we cannot bring development to



Pakistan Reader is an academic exercise at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) in the Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore, India. The objective of this alert - "Pakistan Reader - Evening Brief" is to update the readers on contemporary developments within Pakistan, on a regular basis.

The PR Evening Briefs are a part of the focus on Pakistan at the International Strategic and Security Programme (ISSSP) within the NIAS.

We are hoping to build this initiative into a credible independent global portal with independent research and analysis on contemporary Pakistan in a real-time basis. In the process, we are also looking forward to building capacity amongst young scholars who would want to work on Pakistan.



Copyright © Pakistan Reader, All rights reserved.

Editor: D. Suba Chandran

Editorial Team: Femy Francis, Dhriti Mukherjee, and Shamini Velayutham

NIAS Programme on Science, Technology, and International Relations (STIR) School of Conflict and Security Studies, NIAS, IISc Campus, Bangalore, India

Email to Prof D. Suba Chandran: subachandran@nias.res.in

Click here to subscribe to our other Alerts:

Conflict Reader: A Weekly analysis, published every Wednesday

The World This Week: A weekend reference, published every Sunday on major global developments