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Editorial

Dear Readers,

The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) is an internationally recognized parliamentary research and training institution. As per its annual workplan as approved by the PIPS Board of Governors, PIPS held one week promotional course for BS 16-17 officials of the National Assembly of Pakistan. The Institute continues the provision of Research papers as well as technical assistance in legislative services on demand to Members of Parliament.

Taking forward the parliamentary studies initiative of the National Parliament, it is noteworthy that PIPS continues to orient youth in universities regarding working of the Parliament, legislative business and committees' system. This Issue of the PIPS Parliamentary Research Digest includes an articles on Parliament's Priority to cater People's Rights, Justice and Dignity in the society and Youth Employability. Its imperativeness is manifold in a world marred with complex challenges of inflation, unemployment and large population without basic amenities. An absorbing fresh book on the working and reforms in Senate of Pakistan, written by university professor has been also reviewed to encourage scholarship viz a viz parliamentary studies in the country.

Do please send your feedback or contact for any of PIPS legislative and technical services offered to MPs s at research@pips.gov.pk

Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka
Director General (Research)



Oct. 21, 2026: Mr. Asim Khan Goraya, Executive Director, Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS), Pakistan, chaired the first in-person meeting of the Interim Steering Committee of the Global Network of PTIs in Bangkok, Thailand. Hosted by Thailand's King Prajadhipok's Institute (KPI) .



The delegation of Interim Steering Committee of the Global Network of Parliamentary Training Institutes (PTIs) during a guided visit to Thailand's Parliament, exchanging institutional experiences and learning about the country's parliamentary environment.



The Steering Committee of the Global Network of Parliamentary Training Institutes (PTIs), led by Mr. Asim Khan Goraya, Executive Director, PIPS and Chairperson of Interim Steering Committee, during the calls on H.E. Mongkol Surasajja, President of the Senate of Thailand.



Mr. Asim Khan Goraya, Executive Director, PIPS, chairing the first inperson meeting of the Interim Steering Committee of the Global Network of PTIs in Bangkok, Thailand



Mr. Asim Khan Goraya, Executive Director of PIPS, and H.E. Mongkol Surasajja, President of the Senate of Thailand with members of the delegation during their engagement at the Senate of Thailand, reaffirming the commitment to parliamentary friendship and international cooperation.

PIPS Leads Global Parliamentary Training Cooperation at Bangkok Meeting

The Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) marked a significant institutional milestone in international parliamentary cooperation when its Executive Director, Mr. Asim Khan Goraya, chaired the first in-person meeting of the Interim Steering Committee of the Global Network of Parliamentary Training Institutes (PTIs) in Bangkok, Thailand, on 19 October 2026. Hosted by Thailand's King Prajadhipok's Institute (KPI), the meeting brought together representatives from Pakistan, Thailand, Cameroon, Ghana and Kenya, with Pakistan serving as Chair of the Interim Steering Committee and PIPS as the Network's Interim Secretariat.

2. The meeting focused on establishing the Network's institutional and operational framework, including its vision, objectives, membership, communication arrangements and mechanisms for knowledge-sharing, peer learning, joint initiatives and capacity-building. Discussions also advanced preparations for the Global Meeting of Parliamentary Training Institutes, scheduled to be hosted by PIPS in Islamabad in February 2027, in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and participating institutes.

3. The delegation also called on H.E. Mongkol Surasajja, President of the Senate of Thailand, accompanied by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Issara Seriwatthanawut, Secretary-General of KPI. During the meeting, Mr. Goraya conveyed the greetings and best wishes of Honourable Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Chairman Senate of Pakistan and President of the PIPS Board of Governors. The Thai Senate President reciprocated the greetings and fondly recalled his recent meeting with the Honourable Chairman Senate on the sidelines of the 153rd IPU Assembly in Arusha, Tanzania, in October 2026.

4. As part of the visit, the Steering Committee delegation, led by Mr. Goraya, undertook a guided tour of the Thai Parliament. The visit provided an opportunity to gain insights into Thailand's parliamentary institution, legislative environment and facilities, while promoting the exchange of institutional experiences and best practices.

5. The engagement reaffirmed the longstanding friendly relations between Pakistan and Thailand and their shared commitment to parliamentary friendship, institutional development and international cooperation. Pakistan's leadership of the Global Network reflects PIPS's growing role in facilitating collaboration among parliamentary training institutions and strengthening the professional capacity of parliaments worldwide.

6. The Bangkok engagement laid important groundwork for the Network's institutional development and the forthcoming Global Meeting in Islamabad, positioning PIPS to advance a sustained programme of international knowledge exchange and capacity-building for parliamentary institutions.

ANALYSIS

Parliaments Prioritizing Rights and Righteousness of the People

Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka
Director General (Research), PIPS

The spread, progress and success of democracy worldwide is linked to effective and efficient elected legislatures that focus and deliver well-being of the people especially the marginalized communities as their top priority. Democratic regression and backsliding, has emerged as a huge challenge to elected legislatures, as worldwide youth continue to unravel the political and ruling elites for state failure to fulfill even basic human rights of individuals in a society ranging from secure households, education, health, rule of law and equal opportunities for employability.

2. Rising poverty in post pandemic era depletes hope in Africa and South Asia adding to miseries of already limited and weak democracies with aristocratic regimes undermining rights of expression and rule of law in the society with lacs of pending cases in courts undecided reflecting justice delayed in justice denied. Furthermore, return of geo politics in terms of Isreal-Palestine and US-Iran conflicts further worsens the situation as UN based international system of conflict resolution has become ineffective in wake of repeated violations of territorial integrity of states in addition to martyrdom of more than 75000 unarmed civilian citizens in Ghaza and Iran. The world political environment in general and particularly in developing states, is complex and turbulent, constantly adapting to change but also reliant on embedded systems and processes. [1]

3. According to the recent World Bank Report in October, 2026 gives, Pakistan's poverty rate at the $3-per-day extreme poverty line reached 25.3% of total population, seeing huge surge in poverty during 2018-19 to 2024-25 as a consequence of covid19, inflation, floods in 2022, currency devaluation, low female labour force and worst a large chunk of youth NEET (No Education, Employment or Training).[2] Being elected representative of the people, Members of Parliament shoulder the huge responsibility to revitalize the elected Parliament and democratic institutions at National, State (provincial) and local tiers to prioritize poverty alleviation and most imperatively robust national effort for equitable human rights, dignity and progression, focused on:

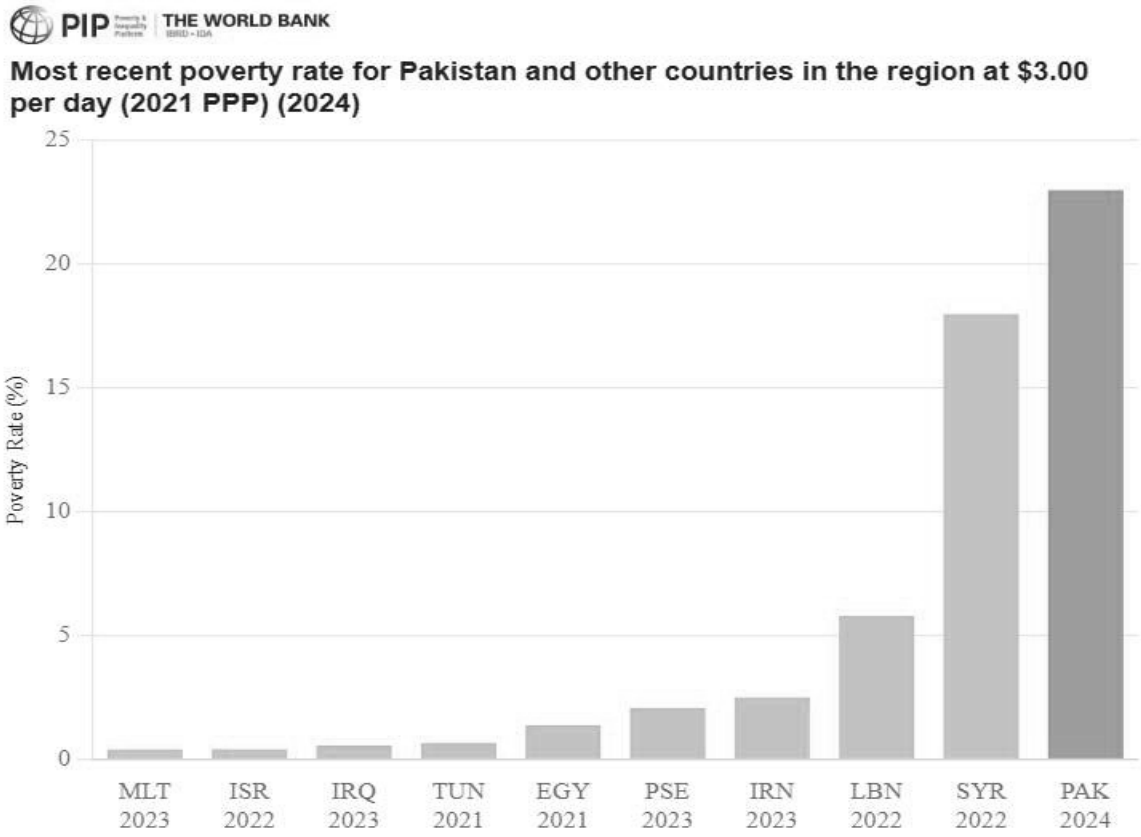
i. Reclaiming basic rights, including civil and political liberties as well as adequate amenities, as well as internationally recognized rights that are also envisioned and promised in Constitution, for all without discrimination;

ii. Ensuring rule of law and developing a judicial system backed by government policing and prosecution that not only delivers justice but successfully curbs any attempts of elite capture; and last but not the least,

iii. Poverty Alleviation as Priority for Dignity of vulnerable strata such as poor, women, children, people with special abilities, daily wagers, farmers, students and mine workers, are safeguarded and work opportunities to earn respectable living, shelter and adequate food and health security to all without fail.

[1] Nerusah Naidoo, Benchmarking, Standards and Guidelines: Strengthening Parliaments Through Best Practise, The Parliamentarian, UK: CPA, 2024: Issue 4. P.322.

[2] World Bank Report, Oct 2026 see at: Poverty and Inequality Platform, https://pip.worldbank.org/country-profiles/PAK, Accessed on 8th Oct., 2026.



World Bank (2026), Poverty and Inequality Platform (version 20260922_2021_01_02_PROD) [data set]. pip.worldbank.org. Accessed on 2026-10-07

4. The above figure from the World Bank Oct., 2026 profiling is an eye opener as it identifies poverty in Pakistan (one fourth population living under abject poverty of only 3 dollars a day) accounting for **48% of all people living in extreme poverty** across the MENAAP (Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan) region.[3] Pakistan's founding fathers led by the Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, defined their vision of parliamentary democracy through his historic first address to the National Constituent Assembly of Pakistan on 11th August, 1947, when he said:

> *"The first and the foremost thing that I would like to emphasise is this – remember that you are now a Sovereign legislative body and you have got all the powers. It, therefore, places on you the gravest responsibility as to how you should take your decisions. The first observation that I would like to make is this. You will no doubt agree with me that the first duty of a Government is to maintain law and order, so that the life, property and religious beliefs of its subjects are fully protected by the State."* [4]

[3] World Bank Report, Oct 2026 see at: Poverty and Inequality Platform, https://pip.worldbank.org/country-profiles/PAK, Accessed on 8th Oct., 2026.

[4] National Assembly of Pakistan, Text of the Address of Founder of Pakistan Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to the 1st Constituent Assembly, See at: https://www.na.gov.pk/en/content.php?id=74, browsed on August 21, 2025.

Representing Vulnerable Strata to Reclaim Human Rights

5. Inclusion of people in consultations by the MPs on aspirations of the masses especially the vulnerable strata is imperative. Democracy is representing all and leaving no stone unturned to fulfill what is required by the people viz a viz their basic rights, as well as an effective judicial system delivering justice and most imperatively creating dignified opportunities to earn their living. The directly elected MNAs, MPAs and MLAs bring hope for lacs of youth as well as down trodden they represent in respective constituencies so they must work in unison through caucusing with fellow MPs to be able to positively contribute in improved lives of every individual of the society now and in the future.

6. **Parliamentary Inclusion of All:** Members are expected to utilize every opportunity be it debate on floor of the House and standing committees to steer effective and persuasive engagement with the executive and state institutions to ensure that voices of all segments, especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged, as well as private entities and all stakeholders are essentially included in the policy-making processes to trigger real human development rather than elitest consolidation. Be it any matter of agenda ranging from sustainable development, education or health policies, law and order or budget allocations, MPs must not ignore any opportunity to effectively take up by any parliamentary tool, genuine issues faced by the poor man on the street, farmers and daily wagers or workers working in the fields or factories or mines, or for that matter students and women.

7. The Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU)'s guide on 21st Century Parliaments calls upon hugely on i. enhanced inclusivity and participation of representation so that ii. legislatures are accessible to lowest echelons of society such as daily wagers, mine workers, people with special abilities, women and the youth so as to make Parliament truly responsive to marginalized communities at the immediate instance.

Data driven evidence-based Interventions by Young Parliamentarians for Emancipation of the People

8. **Human Security Challenge – Grave Numbers:** The Parliament comprising of elected representatives of the people is expected to be custodian viz a viz meeting the basic amenities to the people including but not limited to food security, curbing inflation and unemployment, providing universal education, housing and primary health to all citizens.

> *The Constitution of Pakistan emphasizes on fundamental rights of all without any discrimination, as it remains the linchpin for a peaceful and socio-politically stable society that then consolidates to empower its people by improved indicators of human security and gradual but focused capacity building of the population to become resilient population.* [5]

9. Therefore, it is imperative that Young MPs must keep themselves aware of their country's standing in recognized international human rights index on annual basis, so as to see how independent analyst believe as if country is making a progress on rights, justice and dignity of the people especially the poor and the downtrodden or otherwise. Young MPs must also remain familiar of threats to human population be it conflict, climate change, domestic violence against women and children or challenges posed by digital AI world. The global index and reports to monitor include:

[5] Muhammad Rashid Mafzool Zaka, Measuring Democracy, Parliamentary Research Digest, Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services, Sept., 2024

i. World Freedom Report issued by US based Freedom House;
ii. Human Development Index by UNDP:
iii. Democracy Index by the UK Based journal The Economist.
iv. World Bank Annual Reports on Poverty.
v. The Amnesty International Human Rights Reports.

10. The following statistics are an eye opener viz a viz human rights, justice and dignity. Individual Members of Parliament, standing committees and cross-party caucuses and especially Young MPs aged 25-45 years, must prioritize these grave challenges of human security by consistent, timely, responsive and affirmative push in the legislature with concerned government agencies to seek immediate redressal.

S No	Problems & Issues	Statistics	Remarks (if any)
1.	Poverty Headcount Ration	28% (Economic Survey) of total population of Pakistan under the poverty line 44.7 % (World Bank) under U$ 4.20/day	- Rs 8,483 per adult per month; The World Bank Report 2026, 25.3% population falls below the extreme poverty line of US 3 dollars per day
2.	Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)	39%	Low income, deprivation in health, education, living standards and social inclusion
3.	Real Monthly Household Income and Poverty	Fell 13% from 2018 to 2024 while poverty increased from 21.9% to 28.9%	25 million people have been added to the number of poor since 2018 to 2024.
4.	Stunting	44%	One in three children under five yrs is stunted.
5.	Food Insecurity	23% of total rural population of Pakistan	6.7 million face acute food insecurity in 45 districts.[6]
6.	Unaffordability of Minimum Healthy Diet	63% (161 million people) in Pakistan can't afford cheapest mix of grain, milk, eggs, vegetables and nutritious food	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN, 2025 Report.
7.	Unemployment Rate	6.3% in 2023 to 4.2% in June 2026	As per Economic Survey of Pakistan FY2023 and 2026[7]
8.	CPI Headline Inflation	Reduced to 9.2% in June 2026 from 29.2% in 2023 and 11% in 2022;	-do-
9.	Literacy Rate	62.8%	-do-
10.	Health Expenditures	1.4% of GDP in 2022 as against just 1% in 2021	-do-
11.	Out of School Children (OOSC)	26-30% (Girls OOS 37% and Boys OOS 27%)	More than 26 million out of school children
12.	Immunization against diseases such as typhoid and TB control	92% and 94% vaccine coverage achieved	
13.	WASH; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	61% public drinking water supplies unsafe; 71%	Sources of data include the reports of Pakistan Council of Research on

[6] Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, see website report at: https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1161020/ browsed on 7th Aug., 2026.
[7] Government of Pakistan, Highlight of Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2022-23 and 2025-26.

		Household drink bacterial contaminated water.[8] 53,000 under 5 die annually due to WASH issues as 25 million still practice open defecation. [9]	Water Resources and UNICEF Report (2025-26)
14.	Labor Force	71.76 million labor force in 2020 rose to 85.6 million in 2024-25[10]	Unemployed increased from 4.51 million in 2020-21 to 5.9 million in 2024-25
15.	Pending Cases	2.2 million cases	82% of these cases pending in lower courts.
16.	Crime Against Women and Children	25% increase in reported cases 2025(SAHIL). [11]	
17.	Forced Disappearances	125 in first six months of 2025	
18.	People Affected by Monsoon Floods (2020-2025)	33 million including displacements in more than 80 districts	6.5 lac pregnant women lost health care as 1,000 health units got affected with threat to safe child births as per UNFPA report
19.	Illegal Immigrants from Pakistan to Europe	40,000 in 2022 whereby int'll human traffickers earn over 6.7 US dollars annually	Pakistan is ranked 5th worldwide in illegal migrants attempting to enter European states.

Consequently, this grave human security situation triggers fragility and instability amongst the masses as societal stress reaches a critical level where violent extremism and internal polarization starts to challenge and seriously undermine country's social cohesion and internal security. Where social contracts are weak and services uneven, prolonged turbulence may arise, resulting in further polarization and potential radicalization and violent conflict.[12]

Pakistan's Response on Imperative Human Security Challenges

11. Human Rights Commissions: Human rights institutionalization has progressed through the establishment of independent statutory institutions. The National Commission for Human Rights Act, 2012, the National Commission on the Status of Women Act, 2012, the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017, and the recent National Commission for Minorities Rights Act, 2025 demonstrate an institutional approach to human rights protection rather than reliance exclusively on courts and government departments.

[8] WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, UNICEF Report see at: https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/wash-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-0 browsed on 7th August, 2026.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Federal Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan Labor Force Survey 2024-25, see at: https://www.pbs.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/LFS-2024-25-Annual-Report.pdf browsed on 7th Aug., 2026.
[11] Amnesty International, Human Rights Report of Pakistan (2025) see at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/pakistan/report-pakistan/ browsed on 6th Aug., 2026.
[12] UNDP Study, Building Inclusive Societies and Sustaining Peace through Democratic Governance and Conflict Prevention, An integrated Approach, 2016. p. 9.

12. **Promoting Women, Children and Youth Consolidation**: It is imperative for young elected MPs to leave no stone unturned at their respective legislatures for women empowerment through pragmatic law making in consultation and their guidance on key aspects such as women inheritance laws, family laws and provisions for equal opportunity. Similarly, to protect youth, Parliaments must stand tall to ensure merit-based recruitments by all public sector institutions without fail. The Cockroach Janata Party taking up widespread discrimination in Indian education system is a classic example where inertia amongst existing elected representatives and judiciary was exposed by public displeasure on streets. The following progressive legislation led by women and young MPs in Parliament of Pakistan remains invaluable to ensure rights and ending of violence against women and children while provinces are also complementing these reforms by their own newly enacted laws: i. Protection against Harassment of women at workplace, 2010; ii. Right to free and compulsory education Act 2012-13; iii. Child Protection Act, 201; iv. Response and Recovery Act, 2020; v. Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act, 2020; vi. Anti Rape (Investigation and Trail) Act 2021; vii. Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2025; viii. Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2026. Parliament must encourage respective standing committees to conduct post legislative scrutiny to see compliance and impact assessment of these laws.

13. **Progressive Legislations on Environment and Climate Change:** Pakistan has also legislated in the field of environmental protection and climate change. The Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, 1997 created the foundation of the modern environmental regulatory framework. The Pakistan Climate Change Act, 2017 subsequently established the Pakistan Climate Change Council and Climate Change Authority framework, integrating mitigation, adaptation and climate governance into the legal system. Recent legislation demonstrates that environmental progressivism is moving beyond traditional pollution control toward sustainable development. The New Energy Vehicles Adoption Levy Act, 2025 and the Islamabad Capital Territory (Prohibition of Plastic Book Covers) Act, 2026 indicate an emerging legislative focus on cleaner transportation, resource efficiency and reduction of plastic waste. Construction of dams to develop adequate reservoirs for irrigation and power generation is a must in next decade coming generation.

14. **Skill-development Programs for Dignified Employability:** Pakistan has legislated significantly in the area of human trafficking, migration and protection of vulnerable migrants who re mostly young boys and girls trapped in illegal migration in the guise of provision of jobs in international markets. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2018, the Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act, 2018, and subsequent amendments to trafficking, smuggling and emigration laws demonstrate movement toward stronger protection against exploitation and organized trafficking networks. Parliament further amended these areas in 2025. Only in year 2023, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) curbed more than 40,000 illegal immigrations yet young boys and girls continue to pursue illegal immigration consequently hundreds end up in death during course of the illegal journey. The legislators must guide government to widen the Skills Development Program so that trained Human Resource is not only given certified training and educational programs but arrangements for their legal employment with dignity in international markets are taken care of off. The establishment of National Skills University in Islamabad and the professional broadening of scope and implementation by National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) is the step in right direction.

15. **Laws for Needs of Digital Age:** Digital rights and technological governance are now becoming an emerging frontier of legislative progressivism. The Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 established Pakistan's initial statutory framework for cyber offences, while the Digital Nation Pakistan Act, 2025 represents a broader shift toward digital governance and a digitally enabled economy. The

legislative challenge now is to ensure that digital transformation advances innovation while simultaneously protecting privacy, freedom of expression, cybersecurity and citizens' rights. It is noteworthy that developed powers like US and China pursue intentional "cyber nationalism." The narratives of national identity apply through storytelling as a strategy of creating desired national identity in the digital era, which is not only domain of state or only the conventional media. [13] It is becoming disputed, formulated and co-created in digital space, where the nation and its people must be engaged in the construction and distribution of national stories.[14]

16. Young MPs inspire youth and remain as custodian of sustainable progression of coming generations into dignified, educated and skilled human resource engaging and projecting the true and positive reflection of Pakistan in the cyber space as ambassadors of the country's aspired position as an ideological, welfare and egalitarian state, which has led from the front in war against terrorism by sacrificing its precious souls in civilian and security forces for the greater goal of global peace and happiness of humanity at large. The country needs a bottom-up approach, where besides adequate regulation, continuous engagement of the people especially developing able youth population from schools to universities who are prepared and knowledgeable of the global challenges and Pakistan's national narrative of peace within and peace without along with its ideological basis of contemporary Islamic Republic.

Parliamentary Accountability for People's Rights, Justice and Dignity

17. People Centric Legislative Agenda: Parliaments have to be effective[15] and focused on WELL BEING OF PEOPLE AS THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY so legislators in respective national and provincial assemblies have to persuade as well as continue to push and pull the government in bringing all their policies for scrutiny in front of legislature. Remaining quiet on lack of parliamentary accountability or postponing debate by pending business such as Adjournment Motions or Calling Attention Notices undermines the legislatures' independence and privilege to ponder, deliberate and say its heart out to resolve key disagreements into dialogue and eventually consensus middle path primarily focusing what is best for the masses.

18. Listening Builds Trust: The vulnerable masses especially the poor needs to be nurtured by the legislature and all matters of National Interest must be brought for thread-bare debate by both sides of the House be it the treasury or opposition. The government must reflect restraint on any attempt to curb parliamentary opinions on any matter. Treasury benches must never mute voices of opposition within the legislatures and government must always display to be keen and good listener to each concern of the opposition as "Listening develops Trust," which consolidates democracy and the confidence that unity of diversity is achievable if we agree to disagree with grace, self-restraint and forgiveness for national good.

19. Debate for Transparency and Merit in all Policies without Fail: Be it education or health policy, labour laws or university testing criteria or recruitment processes, everything must be transparently be discussed at the legislature to avoid any conflict of interest by treasury benches who hide facts to award benefit to the elites. Institutions are world-over especially in Pakistan are ridden by dark-termite of

[13] Rida Bilal and Rubina Waseem, Narrative Building in the Age of Cyber Nationalism; Comparative Analysis China and the US, "Strategic Studies, Vol.46: No I, Islamabad: Institute of Strategic Studies, (2026) p.114.
[14] Ibid.
[15] IPU, Parliament and Democracy in the 21st Century: A guide of Good Practise (2006), See at: https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/handbooks/2016-07/parliament-and-democracy-in-twenty-first-century-guide-good-practice, browsed, August 27, 2025.

favoritism due to blatant violation of merit in recruitment and appointments, which are mostly based no more on candidates'/officers' skill, talent or years of accomplished professionalism and excellence but the level of nepotism he or she may secure.

20. People's Priority Matters for the Parliament: The implementation in letter and spirit of the pledged Constitutional framework of rights for all and the basic principle given in Article 3 is most relevant: "The State shall ensure the elimination of all forms of exploitation and the gradual fulfilment of the fundamental principles, from each according to his ability to each according to his work."

i. The Parliament must prioritize to focus on matters of dire public importance including influencing and holding accountable governments at national and provincial tiers on seven key priorities for every Pakistani household, without fail: i. Inflation and Employability, ii. Industrialization, Water and Hydro power, iii, Education and Health, iv. Justice and v. Merit.

ii. Every Orders of the Day on floor of Houses must cover above prioritized matters to focus issues such as what government is doing to keep food basket of the people especially food security of poor echelons; what steps are being taken for enhancing employability opportunities, increased minimum wages, social security for employees working in private industries and services, building of new water reservoirs, ensuring merit and equality of wages to women same as men, are key issues. The standing committee concerned must ask respective ministries to share food supplies and prices details of wheat, rice, lintels, poultry, eggs, meat, vegetables, fruits, oil, sugar to be presented in every session. Committees in respective legislatures and provincial assemblies may hold public hearings to know of this on ground food inflation that may be reported in every session of the legislature. As an example, latest figures tell dismal average 100 eggs (basic cheapest means of protein) intake by each Pakistani per annum as compared to global average of 300.

iii. Let us draw synergies of creation consensus on building reservoir-based at least two big dams on priority so that we are able to allow comparative advantage to our bleeding industry with cheaper hydro-electricity. Water is our life line and with India bet upon violation of Indus Water Treaty and for that matter any sanity in following international law, it will be suicidal if decision makers pend difficult decisions on building big dams within a decade without fail. IT dreams, AI myths and real estate booms are short-lived incentives. The economy needs an industrial push based on utilizing the lacs of educated youth our universities are churning out every moment. Cost effective hydro power through new reservoirs is the catalyst for sustainable and indigenous agriculture, clean drinking resources and above all real industrialization that hasn't actually taken place in Pakistan. Legislatures must strategize to hold specialized sessions on issues such as developing water reservoirs, and addressing needs to support agriculture and revive industry. Let us empower and support local farmers by encouraging prices and support for enhancing indigenous seeds, pesticides and fertilizers as compared to blindly importing the same to increase undue dependence on other states. Similarly, Parliament must persuade government never to fall prey to the IMF trap of devaluation of currency as it will adversely affect every Pakistani's meagre savings besides adversely affecting economy including exports.

iv. Merit must be ensured at all levels. Top 5 to 10 universities of the country QAU, LUMS, IBA, GIKI and FAST so on so forth in close collaboration of FPSC, NTS and professional bodies such as PEC, PMDC and IEEE, may prepare and commence a blue print of merit-based testing while other private unregulated agencies must be banned. Similarly, reforms for merit-based

Law education must continue. Eventually, it will contribute to enabling system based on fairness, merit and justice as part and parcel of envisioning excellence amongst youth as future leaders

v. The topsy-turvy forced debate on increasing provinces from 4 to 8 could still have made some sense rather than haphazardly design dozens of administrative entities that remain unviable only potentially adding to huge financial and administrative burden. Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah clearly termed provincialism as a curse when addressing on 25th Jan., 1948 he said: "*I want the Muslims to get rid of the disease of provincialism. A nation can never make progress unless it marches in one formation. We are all Pakistanis and citizens of the state and we should serve, sacrifice and die for the State so that we may make it the most glorious and sovereign State in the world.*" The Constitution and indigenous debate on floor of the House at provincial assemblies followed by the National Parliament is the only best way forward so that it may consume as much time required to ensure objectivity and consensus on the issue. Rather than creating non-starter liabilities of dozens of secretariats, bureaucratic posts and assemblies, let us allow judgement of elected representatives and political parties to reach a consensus within the Parliament, which exclusively has the constitutional authority for the task.

Let us empathize to perpetually support youth to evolve into skilled and thought leaders who are spiritually in line with the ideological narrative of founding fathers envisioning Pakistan as leading contributor of global peace and tranquility as well as nationally integrated and gelled nation through democratic and constitutional rule serving in unison for the prosperity and welfare of its people especially its poor and vulnerable strata.

OPINION

From Demographic Dividend to Decent Work: Securing Youth Economic Rights

Tanzil ur Rahman
Assistant Director (Research), PIPS

1. Introduction

Youth are not just an adjunct population; they are an economic mainstay. There are approximately 1.2 billion people in the world today aged between 15 and 24, approximately one-sixth of the population, with the majority of youth living in the developing world. The way this generation is educated, employed and protected matters for decades to come and will shape global growth, social stability and the speed of the green and digital transitions. Youth economic rights are not contained within one single legal instrument; rather, they are a collection of entitlements and expectations that include access to decent work, fair wages and safe conditions, social protection, freedom of association, and a genuine voice in the economic decisions that impact young people's lives. The rights are embedded in a wider human rights framework, specifically the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and strengthened by labour standards established by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In recent times, a series of unprecedented shocks has tested these rights. The COVID-19 pandemic has left a "scarring" effect on the generation of young people entering the labour market. Climate change is driving the restructuring of entire industries; automation and artificial intelligence are transforming entry-level work; and geopolitical instability, debt distress and inflation are constraining the fiscal space available to many governments to invest in young people.

2. The Context and Worldwide Youth Demographics

For statistical purposes, the United Nations considers youth to be people between the ages of 15 and 24.[1] According to the World Youth Report (2020), 1.2 billion individuals worldwide were between the ages of 15 and 24, accounting for 16% of the total population, and the cohort was projected to reach nearly 1.3 billion by 2030.[2] With more than 1.9 billion people between the ages of 10 and 24, today's generation of adolescents as well as young adults is the largest the world has ever seen.[3] The distribution is highly uneven: South Asia has the largest population of young people in the world;[4] similarly Sub-Saharan Africa is also home to the world's youngest and fastest-growing population[5], while in many countries, especially in East Asia and Latin America, youth populations are at or near their peak, and will decline in coming decades.[6] The so-called youth bulge is an advantage or a curse: it can be a demographic dividend if young people result in a relative increase in the working-age population and make a positive contribution to the economy or a source of instability if it increases the straining on public finances struggling to provide services.[7]

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[1] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 'Definition of Youth', United Nations, 23 January 2013, 1–3, https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf.

[2] United Nations, World Youth Report: Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2020).

[3] United Nations Population Fund, 'Adolescents and Young People Today: Empowering a Growing Global Population', United Nations Population Fund, 2026, https://www.unfpa.org/adolescents-and-young-people.

[4] UNICEF, 'Youth-Led Action in South Asia',Unicef.Org (2024), https://www.unicef.org/youthledaction/south-asia.

[5] Council on Foreign Relations, 'People and Society: Sub-Saharan Africa', Cfr.Org, CFR Education, 8 February 2022, https://www.cfr.org/education/learn/reading/people-and-society-sub-saharan-africa.

[6] David Lam, 'The Demography Of Youth In Developing Countries And Its Economic Implications', World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, 3 October 2006, https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-4022.

[7] United Nations, 'Shifting Demographics', UN (2020), https://www.un.org/en/un75/shifting-demographics.

Global shocks have struck youth labour markets on many occasions. Youth unemployment rose dramatically during the 2008 financial crisis and many young entrants were discouraged by extended periods of unemployment.[8] COVID-19 was then extremely hard on youth employment, with youth being over represented in those sectors that were hardest hit by the lock downs such as wholesale and retail trade and repair, manufacturing, rental and business services, and accommodation and food services, while some young people were unable to access educational and training opportunities at the same time.[9] The Global Employment Trends for Youth 2026, released by ILO on 11 August 2026, reveals that the recovery has come to a halt. The global youth unemployment rate reached a new peak in 2025, with 67 million young people (12.4 per cent) without jobs, after climbing from its lowest level in over 20 years in 2023. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) also rose, from 2023's 19.7 per cent to 20 per cent – or more than 257 million people – representing a 9 million increase on 2023. The increases have been uneven, with some of the highest in higher income economies and the Arab States (26.2 per cent) and Northern Africa (22.6 per cent) still having the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world.[10]

3. Youth Related International Framework and Instruments

There are a number of instruments and initiatives that shape the global youth employment agenda. The ILO's Global Employment Trends for Youth series is the primary source of internationally comparable data, based on unemployment, underemployment and the proportion of young people not in any employment, education or training (NEET).[11] ILO Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth is first-ever all-encompassing United Nations system-wide initiative to promote youth employment globally. In order to maximize the efficiency of investments in young employment and help Member States fulfill the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it pulls together the enormous global resources and convening power of the UN and other important international partners. In order to increase political will, guarantee policy convergence, foster creative thinking, and mobilize resources for more and better investments in youth employment, Decent Jobs for Youth unites local, national, regional and international partners in a strategic and inclusive coalition.[12]

The youth employment crisis: A call for action. ILO passed a resolution at its 101st International Labour Conference in June 2012 urging prompt, focused, and revitalized action to address the young employment issue. In five areas covering macroeconomic policies, employability, labour market regulations, youth entrepreneurship and rights, this resolution offers a portfolio of tried-and-true approaches for governments and the social partners.[13] Goals 8 and 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address decent work and inequality, respectively. SDG 8 outlines three specific targets related to youth employment. Target 8.5 calls on nations to attain full and productive employment, decent work for all men and women, including young people and people with disabilities, and fair compensation for labour of equal worth by 2030. Target 8.6 called on nations to significantly lower the percentage of young people without jobs, education, or training by 2020. Target 8.b called on nations to create and implement a worldwide strategy for youth employment and the ILO's worldwide Jobs Pact by the same year. Both of these deadlines have been missed and progress towards the target on NEET has

[8] Isabel Ortiz, When the Global Crisis and Youth Bulge Collide: Double the Jobs Trouble for Youth, ed. Matthew Cummins (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2012), https://www.networkideas.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Global_Crisis.pdf.

[9] Asian Development Bank, *Tackling the COVID-19 Youth Employment Crisis in Asia and the Pacific*, in *Www.Adb.Org*, trans. International Labour Organization (Asian Development Bank, 2020), https://www.adb.org/publications/covid-19-youth-employment-crisis-asia-pacific.

[10] International Labour Organization, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2026: Back to the Future.

[11] International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 Decent Work, Brighter Futures 20Th Anniversary Edition* (2024), https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/GET_2024_EN_web4.pdf.

[12] ILO, 'Decent Jobs for Youth - the Global Initiative for Action | International Labour Organization', in Www.Ilo.Org (2017), https://www.ilo.org/publications/decent-jobs-youth-global-initiative-action.

[13] ILO, 'The Youth Employment Crisis: A Call for Action', in International Labour Organization (2012), https://www.ilo.org/resource/record-proceedings/ilc/101/youth-employment-crisis-call-action.

been slow: The global NEET share has increased again between 2023 and 2025. Target 10.2 of SDG 10, "Reduce Inequality within and among countries," calls on nations to empower and promote social, economic, and political inclusion of all people by 2030, regardless of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, or economic status.[14]

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) of UN has consistently elaborated on the content of the right to work through its General Comments. In particular, the ICESCR's recognition of the right to work and to just and favorable conditions of employment (Articles 6 and 7) offers both a normative and for States that have ratified the Covenant, a legal basis for considering youth employment a human rights issue, rather than merely a technical or charitable one. Article 8 (trade-union rights) and Article 9 (social security) are also applicable to young workers. The CESCR has called on States to ensure the right of access to decent work; and consequently to take measures to combat discrimination and promote equal access and opportunities.[15]

4. Key Challenges Regarding Youth Economic Rights and Employment

i. Structural and Economic Challenges

In some economies "jobless growth" has been observed, that is, employment growth and job creation have not been as fast as output growth, as is the case in India, and there is a continued disconnect between education supply and labour demand.[16] Informality continues to prevail in developing economies. ILO estimates that in low- and lower-middle-income nations, nearly nine out of 10 young workers between the ages of 15 and 29 are employed informally, which restricts their access to social safety and steady salaries.[17] In Kenya, a 2026 study by the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) found that over 80 percent of those who find employment are employed in informal jobs without written contracts, health insurance, income security or social security contributions.[18] Many young people are employed but their jobs are not fully utilizing their skills, often in part-time or insecure positions that are not likely to lead to higher productivity.

ii. Technological Disruption

Automation and AI are reshaping the entry-level roles that have traditionally served as young workers' first rung on the career ladder, such as data entry, basic customer service, routine analysis.[19] ILO estimates that 6.1 per cent of all the jobs that young people (aged 15-29) currently occupy are in jobs that are most vulnerable to partial or full AI task (or job) replacement. A loss of just 10 per cent of all the jobs vulnerable to AI would mean 5.6 million youth losing their jobs, getting new positions or leaving the workforce completely.[20] The gig economy provides some flexibility and low barriers to entry, yet comes with no minimum wage guarantees, no employer-provided social protection or volatile incomes.

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[14] Robert Apunyo et al., 'PROTOCOL: Interventions to Increase Youth Employment: An Evidence and Gap Map', *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 17, no. 4 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1196.

[15] General Comment No. 18: The Right to Work (Article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights): Hearing on Thirty-fifth session, UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2005).

[16] Shivani Sen, 'Jobless Growth in India during the 12Th Five Year Plan (2012-2017)', SSRN Electronic Journal, ahead of print, 2019, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3719969.

[17] ILO, 'Youth Unemployment Rises as Young People Face a Harder Road to Decent Work', International Labour Organization, 11 August 2026, https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/youth-unemployment-rises-young-people-face-harder-road-decent-work.

[18] Joseph Muia, 'About 1 Million Youth Enter Labour Market Yearly, over 80% Find Informal Jobs - Report', in Citizen Digital (2026), https://citizen.digital/article/about-1-million-youth-enter-labour-market-yearly-over-80-find-informal-jobs-report-n384935

[19] Dominika Borna, 'How AI Is Reshaping Entry-Level Careers: Risks, Skills, and Strategies', in Substack.Com (The Workforce Lens's Substack, 2025), https://theworkforcelens.substack.com/p/ai-impact-entry-level-white-collar-jobs.

[20] ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2026: Back to the Future (2026)

At the same time, a persistent digital divide in terms of connectivity, device access and digital literacy further limits who can have easy access to tech sector opportunities or remote work.

iii. Social and Demographic Barriers

Gender gaps are still significant and persistent. Global data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) shows a stark gender gap in youth inactivity, as Not in Employment, Education or Training rate for young women is more than double that of young men, standing at 28.1 % compared to 13.1 % for young men[21], and the ILO's 2026 report finds that women make up over two-thirds of all NEET youth.[22] Rural-urban divides limit opportunity for youth outside major cities, and discrimination on the basis of class, ethnicity, or disability further narrows the field, the ILO notes youth with specific disadvantages, such as having a disability, face even more barriers to decent work than the general population.[23]

iv. Macroeconomic and Global Shocks

The transition to the green economy is essential but it is reshaping labour markets and could disrupt millions of jobs.[24] According to the World Economic Forum, by 2030, approximately 14.4 million jobs will be impacted by the green transition, of which around 2.4 million will be lost in carbon-intensive industries. The benefits and costs, however, will be distributed across different regions, sectors and skill groups, with the costs being concentrated on areas reliant on fossil-fuel industries, and young workers in those areas requiring targeted support. In the meantime, inflationary pressures, sovereign debt crises and various fiscal consolidation measures imposed in many developing countries are reducing the available space for public investment and subsidies for youth employment programmes.

v. Education-to-Work Transition Gaps

There are continuing skills mismatches because traditional curricula in many countries do not change quickly enough in response to labour market change.[25] In many settings, vocational and technical training systems are underfunded and socially stigmatized compared to academic pathways.[26] The informal channels that many young people turn to for their first 'real' job, such as internships, work experience and mentorship opportunities, are still tightly linked to those who have social or economic advantage, thereby perpetuating inequality from one generation to the next.

5. The Significance of Economic Rights for Young People

i. Rights-Based Approach to Employment: A rights-based approach distinguishes between the simple right to work, the absence of legal barriers to employment and the fuller right to decent work: fair wages, safe conditions, reasonable hours, and the freedom to organize and bargain collectively. This is important because a young person is not considered to have realized his economic rights if he is working in an unsafe, exploitative or poverty pay environment, even if he appears as employed in the unemployment figures.

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[21] International Labour Organization, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 Decent Work, Brighter Futures 20th Anniversary Edition (2024), https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/GET_2024_EN_web4.pdf.

[22] ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2026

[23] ILO, 'Inclusion of Youth with Disabilities: The Business Case', International Labour Organization, 5 September 2014, https://www.ilo.org/publications/inclusion-youth-disabilities-business-case.

[24] Tarini Fernando et al., 'How the Green Transition Might Affect Jobs around the World', World Economic Forum, 15 January 2026, https://www.weforum.org/stories/economic-growth/green-transition-affect-labour-markets-around-world/.

[25] Inga Jēkabsone et al., 'Bridging the Education–Employment Gap: Linking Labour Market Needs with University Programmes Through AI-Assisted Insights and Micro-Credentials', Education Sciences 16, no. 7 (2026): 1156, https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci16071156.

[26] Saman Nazir and Hafsa Hina, 'What's Your Degree Worth? Return to Education, Employability, and Upskilling Workforce in Pakistan', Pide.Org.Pk, 4 April 2023, https://pide.org.pk/research/whats-your-degree-worth-return-to-education-employability-and-upskilling-workforce-in-pakistan-2/.

ii. Economic Rights as a Foundation for Broader Development: Youth economic empowerment is very closely related to poverty reduction, households with a young earner who has a stable and a decent job are much more resilient. It is also connected with social stability. In some analyses, the economic marginalization of large youth groups is associated with increased conflict risk, but the evidence is not conclusive and varies by context. The ILO's 2026 report describes the rising NEET rate as especially worrying because disengaged young people are harder to bring back into education or work. In addition, there is an inter-generational equity dimension: policies that leave young workers with a debt burden and informal or precarious employment, coupled with low pension benefits or social protection are resulting in transferring of economic burdens forward rather than resolving them.

iii. Political and Civic Dimensions: Economic exclusion and political disengagement often go hand in hand. When young people are unable to find jobs, they lose trust in formal institutions and governance and youth voice in economic policy making becomes both harder to secure and more urgently needed. Meaningful youth participation, not token consultation in labour market policy design is increasingly argued to be a component of the right itself, not just good practice.

iv. Gender and Inclusion Lens: Young women are burdened by multiple disadvantages, including lower labour force participation, wage gaps, and higher representation in the NEET population. There is also parallel exclusion, which occurs when people with disabilities are not employed due to inaccessible workplaces, discriminatory recruitment practices and insufficient accommodation. These should not be considered side issues but integral to decent work for young people in general.

6. Pakistan's Scenario: Youth, Work and Economic Rights

i. A significant and expanding youth population: According to the estimates of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the population of Pakistan is approximately 250.5 million as of January 2025. The population aged 15-24 is 46.3 million (18.5 per cent) and 58.3 per cent of the population is under 25.[27] Labour force has been increasing at a rapid pace: taking into account the 13th ICLS basis for comparison across rounds, the labour force increased from 71.8 million in 2020-21 to 85.6 million in 2024-25 (an average of approximately 3.5 million persons per year).[28] The potential for this youth bulge to be a demographic dividend depends on whether the economy can create sufficient new and decent jobs to accommodate the youth bulge.

ii. Youth in the labour market: The youth unemployment rate is the highest among all age groups. Youth are over twice as likely to be unemployed as the population as a whole, with the youth unemployment rate at 12.8 per cent, compared with 7.1 per cent for the population as a whole; on the older 13th ICLS basis, which is similar to the previous round, youth unemployment was 12.5 per cent in 2024-25, up from 11.1 per cent in 2020-21. For ages 15–29 the rate is 11.8 per cent. Young women are more affected on both indicators: a higher proportion of unemployed women in the youth labour force (14.0 per cent) than unemployed young men (12.5 per cent) and a lower proportion of young women in the labour force (22.1 per cent) than young men (64.7 per cent).[29]

iii. The gender gap in work: In total, 26.3 per cent of women aged 15 years and over are in the labour force, compared with 80.4 per cent of men, representing a gap of approximately 54 percentage points. The unemployment rate for women is 10.5 per cent compared with 6.0 per cent for men, and is 18.1 per cent in urban areas. These differences are significantly large at the provincial level with female participation (ages 10 and above) ranging from 12.8 per cent in Balochistan to 28.1 per cent in Punjab. Unpaid work plays a large role in the explanation: 77.1 per cent of women engage in unpaid domestic

[27] Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), *Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2024-25* (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2025), https://www.pbs.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/LFS-2024-25-Annual-Report.pdf.

[28] PBS, Labour Force Survey 2024-25, Executive Summary and Key Findings (13th ICLS), and Chapter 3

[29] PBS, Labour Force Survey 2024-25

and care work, compared to 55.0 per cent of men, and 49.7 per cent of employed women are contributing family workers, compared to 9.9 per cent of employed men.[30]

iv. Informality and quality of work: Informal employment continues to be a characteristic of the Pakistani labour market. Employment is in the informal sector increased from 72.4 % in 2007-08 to 80.4 % in 2024-25, indicating a substantial rise in employment without social protection or legal coverage. Female informality reached an extremely high level of 86.1 %, compared to 78.7 % for males. Non-Agriculture Sector employment is distributed between formal and informal sector. The share of employment in informal sector is more than seven out of ten (72.1%) of nonagricultural employment. Only 43.5 per cent of workers are employees; 36.1 per cent are own-account workers and 19.1 per cent are contributing family workers.[31] One study mentions the absence of comprehensive social protection program such as unemployment insurance in the country's economy, and this means that workers simply cannot afford to be unemployed; hence they accept whatever is available. The headline unemployment rate tends to underestimate the actual severity of the labour-market distress. Platform (gig) work was measured for the first time in 2024-25; where online gig work accounts for 2.9% of total employment with 3.0% of employed males engage in online gig work compared to 2.5% of employed females.[32]

v. Educational staff, graduates and NEET youth: Increasing school attendance does not automatically lead to jobs. Employed individuals with a degree represent 8.9 per cent of the total employed, while 14.8 per cent of the unemployed are degree holders.[33] A Gallup Pakistan analysis of the same survey revealed that the unemployment rate among women increased with their education, with the unemployment rate among women with a bachelor's degree or above standing at approximately 24 per cent, while among those with no formal education it was 4.7 per cent.[34] LFS 2024-25 estimates 28.4% people aged 15-24 are not in employment, education or training, with young women far more likely than young men to be disengaged from both. Using the broad definition (15-29), IMPACT Strategies estimated that about 37 per cent, or 21.8 million out of 58.6 million young people, were NEET in 2026.[35] The two estimates differ in both age band and method, but both indicate that the pool of disengaged youth is very substantial.

vi. Legal and institutional framework: Pakistan is a signatory and a ratified member of the ICESCR since it signed it in 2004 and ratified it in 2008; thus the rights to work and to enjoy just and favourable conditions of work (Articles 6 and 7) are binding on the State. The rights are also reflected in the Constitution, which bans forced labour and child labour (Article 11), guarantees freedom of association (Article 17), the freedom to pursue a lawful profession or business (Article 18), bans sex discrimination (Article 25), and places duties on the State with regard to the conditions of work (Article 37(e)). Additionally, Pakistan has also ratified ILO's eight fundamental conventions.

The 18th Amendment (2010) transferred responsibility for labour and employment to the provinces, which means that the administration of labour, including labour inspection, is now a mainly provincial responsibility. The practical implication of this for youth employment policy is that national targets can only be achieved at the provincial level with four different types of labour regime, and outcomes have already varied significantly by province: there is 9.6 per cent unemployment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 7.3 per cent in Punjab, 5.5 per cent in Balochistan and 5.3 per cent in Sindh.Federal youth programmes under the umbrella of Prime Minister's Youth Programme, involves the Hunarmand Pakistan skills

[30] PBS, Labour Force Survey 2024-25

[31] PBS, Labour Force Survey 2024-25

[32] Gallup Pakistan, 'Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Labor Force Participation in Pakistan 2024-25 – Gig Economy in Pakistan', 2026, https://gallup.com.pk/post/39735.

[33] PBS, Labour Force Survey 2024-25

[34] Gallup Pakistan, 'Gallup Pakistan Analysis of Labor Force Participation in Pakistan 2024-25.

[35] Muhammad Zubair, '21.8m Youth Not in Education, Jobs or Training: Study', Thenews_Intl, 12 August 2026, https://www.thenews.pk/print/1431727-21-8m-youth-not-in-education-jobs-or-training-study.

scheme and youth business loans and agriculture loans at subsidized rates. The Apprenticeship Act 2018 replaced a 1962 law with the aim of strengthening industry's role in vocational training. The Act requires employers to train apprentices equal to a minimum of 5% of their total workforce, or alternatively contribute financially to the centralized apprenticeship fund. Employers must also bear the costs of in-industry training. In 2026, the federal cabinet approved a National Youth Employment Policy, which was said to provide at least 35 per cent representation of women and a minimum 10% share for youth-led enterprises in new company registrations.

Since the 18th Amendment, many of the rules that govern young people's working lives are made provincially. Minimum wages, for example, are set under four separate laws. Apprenticeship law follows the same pattern. After the federal Apprenticeship Act 2018, the provinces have legislated separately: Punjab in 2021, KP in 2022 and Sindh in 2023. The Punjab Labour Code 2026 is a landmark reform that brings together more than two dozen fragmented labour laws into a single modern code and aligns provincial law more closely with International Labour Standards and constitutional guarantees. It is designed to bring informal, contract, agricultural, domestic, home-based and gig workers within the legal net, and it provides for equal pay for work of equal value and an Equal Employment Opportunity Office. Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Human Resource Research & Development Board, a flagship initiative of Sindh Government undertake research and develop human resource by providing range of skills through trainings for un-employed youth of 18 to 35 years and to facilitate employment for such graduates in Sindh in collaboration with the business sector. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Youth Policy 2026 rests on four pillars (education, employment, environment and civic engagement) and proposes activating a Youth Development Commission and creating a Youth Development Fund. Balochistan CM's Youth Skill Development and Overseas Employment Program aims to train young people and place them in jobs abroad. The Government of Balochistan collaborates with BRSP to run Resilience, Integration and Socio-Economic Empowerment (RISE) program to support youth development and build stronger communities across the province, offering interest-free loans, business support and skills training with an emphasis on gender balance.

7. Strategies for Improving Youth Economic Participation

i. Education and Skills Development Reforms: Education and skills development should prioritize curriculum reform aligned with future market needs, on a continuous cycle using labour-market intelligence and skills observatories, ensuring what is taught keeps pace with emerging occupations rather than being revised only once a decade. The status and capacity of technical and vocational education (TVET) should be expanded and enhanced by co-designing programmes with employers, guaranteeing paid apprenticeship placements, and creating credit-transfer pathways between TVET and university systems so it is no longer a dead-end track. Models from other countries, such as dual-apprenticeship systems like Germany's, can serve as references, adapted to local contexts.

STEM and digital-literacy should be promoted and any investment should be aligned with affordable device and connectivity schemes for low-income and rural youth; so that digital skills mandates do not widen inequality.

Transversal skills including critical thinking, collaboration, financial literacy, and AI-literacy should be embedded across all trajectories. Moreover, informal and non-formal learning such as community training, online micro-credentials, self-taught digital skills should be certified and recognized through national qualification frameworks, so youth who could not access formal schooling are not permanently excluded from the labour market.

ii. Reforms in Labour Market Policies and Transitions into Work: Labour market policies should include active labour market programme such as job placement services and targeted wage subsidies, deliberate strategies to formalize informal employment, and stronger enforcement of youth-friendly labour laws and minimum wage standards. A public youth-guarantee commitment, modelled on the European Union's Youth Guarantee, could guarantee that a quality offer for employment, apprenticeship, traineeship or continued education is provided to every young person within four

months of them becoming unemployed or leaving education.[36] The EU scheme is a political commitment, not a legal entitlement, and any national scheme would have to be designed to identify the responsibility and to determine the financing of delivery. Strategies including simplified business registration, tax incentives phased in gradually for micro-enterprises and portable registration systems should be introduced to let informal workers accumulate a verifiable employment history and access benefits. Youth-friendly labour standards should be strengthened and enforced such as minimum wage compliance, safe working conditions and protection from age-based wage discrimination, harmonizing with accessible, youth-specific labour complaint mechanisms.

iii. Entrepreneurship, Innovation and the Gig Economy: Entrepreneurship and innovation support requires improved access to finance and micro credit for youth-led enterprises, continued investment in incubators and accelerators, and extending basic worker protections into the gig and digital economy rather than leaving platform workers entirely unprotected.

iv. Enforcement of Social Protection and Labour Rights: Social protection and rights enforcement must extend social security coverage to young workers in informal and gig work, who are currently excluded from most systems by design, and safeguard freedom of association and collective bargaining rights for young workers, who are often the least unionized segment of the workforce.

v. Ensuring Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Genuine Youth Participation: Multi-stakeholder collaboration between government ministries/departments including labour, education, finance, the private-sector employer associations and international organizations such as the ILO, World Bank, and UNDP for pooling resources and expertise; equally important is genuine youth participation in policy design, following the disability rights movement's founding principle of "nothing about us without us."

vi. Preparing for Future Uncertainty: Preparing for future uncertainty requires building labour market systems that are adaptive rather than static: investing in green jobs and a "just transition" that retrains workers displaced by de-carbonization, and embedding lifelong learning frameworks so that today's graduates are not locked into a single skill set for a career that may span decades of technological change.

Designing policy for shocks, not just trends: Contingency employment programmes should be maintained that can be rapidly scaled up during economic shocks, pandemics or climate disasters, learning from the speed gaps exposed during crisis.

AI-driven disruption needs to be treated as a labour policy issue, rather than a future one, including transparency requirements when AI tools are used in hiring or performance management, and proactive reskilling pipelines for occupations most exposed to automation.

[36] European Commission, 'The Reinforced Youth Guarantee', Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, 22 October 2024, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/eu-employment-policies/youth-employment-support/reinforced-youth-guarantee_en.

PARLIAMENTARY STUDIES – BOOK REVIEW

Dilawar Hussain, "The Senate of Pakistan and Regional Representation: History, Role and Parliamentary Performance," First Edition, USA: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2026.

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Abstract

The book titled the Senate of Pakistan and Regional Representation is a seminal work by Dr. Dilawar Hussain, visiting faculty member at the National University of Modern Languages, (NUML) Islamabad on understanding the rationale behind the evolution of House of Federation in a ethnically diverse country like Pakistan. The book begins with an engaging introduction that provides a brief yet objective historical overview of the political structure at the very beginning of the independence of Pakistan. The book argues that judicious and equal representation could not materialize under the earlier constitutional arrangements in 1956 and 1962 respectively that ultimately led to the 1971 debacle. Consequently, the makers of the 1973 constitution were convinced that bicameralism is an institutional solution to create parity among the provinces. Under the new constitutional framework, the National Assembly (directly elected House of the People) shall retain the earlier principle of population while the Senate (House of Federation with equal seats for four provinces) would manifest the principle of equality among the federating units regardless of their population and territorial size. The author also compares this parliamentary arrangement with that of US model wherein one chamber is representative of the principle of population while other the other that of territorial units. The book also discusses the reforms and initiative, which contributed to transformation of Senate of Pakistan from only a representative body to an effective legislature with regards to oversight of the executive.

Conceptual Framework

The author evocatively explains the structure and functions of the Senate of Pakistan in the introduction. While drawing a comparison between the two chambers the author notes that the Senate is a permanent chamber and cannot be dissolved unlike National Assembly. The senators are elected for a term of six years while the membership of the senate gets renewed every three years. The elections to the Senate are held based on the proportional representation via a single transferable vote which allows political parties to acquire representation in line with their strength in the provincial assemblies. The author observes that in the wake of 18th Constitutional amendment that Senate has evolved from a solely representative body to a one exercising effective oversight of the government. Although its powers are curtailed to the extent of money bills, yet it performs significant legislative and oversight functions. The Committee of the Whole constituted in the Senate has enlarged its role in discussing on matters of urgent public importance. One of the most creative ideas that author observes in the domain of difference between the two houses is that national assembly is all about the politics of assertion while the senate pertains to the politics of justification. The author, however, laments that Senate receives scant public attention as compared to the National Assembly merely because the latter is elected directly and has the power to remove the government thus, the term Parliament is deemed synonymous with National Assembly alone. However, the author befittingly set aside this perception by emphasizing that the role of the Senate is no less significant in the federal decision-making. The central idea that book attempts to offer is to look around what senate has, in practice, done so far than determining what it is supposed to do

constitutionally. The book is divided into a total of six interlinked chapters; each offering a distinct aspect of the working of the Senate.

2. First Chapter:

The first chapter of the book is dedicated to highlighting the historical rationale behind creating the Senate of Pakistan. This chapter commences with explaining the reasons as to why federal states around the world have adopted bicameralism. The author maintains that the fundamental issue in adhering to unicameralism is that it leads to the dominance of a single territorial unit based on its numerical population thus limiting the say of smaller units in the decision-making. An additional chamber seeks to address this dilemma by providing equal representation to federating units. Citing American experience, the book attempts to expound that the Senate, in the first place, was designed as a systematic solution to ensure that interests of smaller provinces are protected. The author observes that the apportionment of powers between the center and the federating units as enshrined in the constitution is, per se, not adequate enough to ensure protection of provincial interests. Therefore, provinces are needed to have an institutional podium required to sway fiscal decisions and administrative policies of the federal government. This is necessitated by the very fact that both federal and provincial governments rely on each other for financial resources and the implementation of policies. In this context, the second chamber of the Parliament serves two inter-connected purposes; first protecting the interest of the provinces at the federal level and strengthening liaison between the two governments.

The book draws connection between bicameralism and federalism by citing political theorists such as James Madision, Arend Lijphart and Donald Smiley. Bicameralism lends institutional framework whereby interests of the federating units can be represented at the center. As such the federalism seeks to distribute authority between the center and its subsidiary units. The book is of the view that the need for an alternate chamber becomes imperative when federal and provincial governments are increasingly interdependent. Given these circumstances, the Senate is a vital forum for center-province cooperation and also to prevent inordinate concentration of authority with the center. The author makes a distinction between the formal existence of the Senate and its de facto capability to ensure the protection of provincial interests. He argues that the House of Federation does guarantee equal representation to provinces on paper, however, this arrangement alone does not result in meaningful representation. There are two chief factors that determine the effectiveness of the Senate. First, the structure of the institution itself and second, the political conditions under which it functions.

Dr Hussain pinpoints two elements required for gauging the strength of the bicameralism; first the difference in the composition of the two houses and second the difference in their power structure. It may be noted that this serves as the most significant theoretical part of this chapter. The author maintains that there is a marked compositional dissimilarity between the two houses in terms of membership, electoral method and tenure of the members. The author observes that the Seante of Pakistan is better placed to effectively represent the provincial interest on account of its compositional difference from the National Assembly. The author spots three levels of bicameral strength. First the strong bicameralism wherein two houses differ in structure but have correspond in authority. Second the intermediate bicameralism in which both chambers differ in the composition and authority in ways more than one. Third, weak bicameralism where both chambers have almost similar composition, however, Senate has limited powers. The author explains how the powers and authority of the Senate influence its effectiveness. In this respect, he brings to the fore nine elements required evaluating the constitutional authority/powers of an upper chamber. The central idea in this regard is that equal provincial representation is undermined if it is devoid of authority to influence policies of provincial concern. To substantiate his argument, he cites the diminished role of the Senate in constitutional amendments and fiscal decisions.

The book elucidates that the powers and effectiveness of the Senate may be impacted depending on the form of government-Presidential or Parliamentary. For instance, in the presidential form of government, Senate is directly elected and can possess relatively more powers in relation to impeachment, fiscal legislation and also executive appointments. The author observes that prevalent parliamentary system renders the National Assembly in a stronger position vis a vis the executive authority, whereas the powers of Seante are curtailed in matters of financial nature. This chapter is significant in that it provides a framework for inspecting the Senate of Pakistan at two levels. Firstly, it seeks to examine its institutional structure and its powers as laid down in the Constitution. Secondly, it also evaluates whether or not the Senators have made effective use of their institutional position to further the interests of the federating units.

3. Second Chapter:

The third chapter is notable in that it provides historical reasons that led to the creation of the Senate of Pakistan. The author recognizes that regional inequalities were rampant right from the onset of independence. At the birth of Pakistan, it was divided into two geographically distant regions with marked distinction in terms of population, language, culture and economic conditions. The writer notes that eastern wing was heavily populated as compared to the western wing but had a relatively smaller territory. The West Pakistan intrinsically was ethno-linguistically diverse; whereas the East Pakistan was predominantly inhabited by Bengali-speaking. This gave rise to a serious question as to how a country so diverse can ensure fair regional representation at the center.

In the view of the author, federalism is a necessary constitutional instrument because it seeks to devolve authority and powers to the subsidiary federating units. He maintains that federalism is better positioned to promote national unity because it tends to recognize ethnic diversity. But with this, the author also contends that existence of formal constitutional guarantees does not necessarily lead to tangible political and economic parity. The book particularly mentions one Unit scheme of 1955 whereby provinces and princely states of the western wing were merged into a single unit. The author maintains that the creation of one unit was meant to establish a political equality notwithstanding their uneven populations. He asserts that there were three major reasons for invoking this scheme; firstly, to concentrate more powers with the center, secondly to undermine the cultural diversity of the western wing and thirdly to restrict the political majority of the East Pakistan. Instead of allaying the concerns of persistent regional inequalities as experienced by the smaller provinces, the scheme was an attempt to restructure the provinces in a fashion that led to the compounding of provincial reservations. The author observes that this scheme failed miserably as it strengthened a sense of alienation among the Bengalis. The book observes that the Constitution of 1956 kept the principle of parity between two wings intact in a unicameral set up. It did recognize Bengali as a national language alongside Urdu with few more promises aimed at greater economic equality. The 1962 constitution introduced by General Ayub Khan again reintroduced unicameralism despite recommendations by the relevant Constitution Commission in favor of bicameralism.

The author observes that after the separation of East Pakistan in 1971, the makers of the forthcoming Constitution realized the need for an effective institutional solution to end regional inequalities once and for all. Accordingly, the 1973 Constitution introduced bicameralism characterized by two chambers; the National Assembly and the Senate. This arrangement was so because it sought to end the dominance of a single province based on its numerical strength. The author portrays this development as an essential constitutional remedy to ensure equal regional representation at the federal level. While describing the representation functions of the Senate of Pakistan, the author mentions two dimensions in this regard. First, the vertical representation characterized by the Senate promoting the interests of the federating units in the federal decision making. Second, horizontal representation where equal representation of federating units gives them a relative parity at the central parliamentary structure. The author maintains

that attainment of equal representation has been a hall-mark of the Senate. He recalls that at the onset, the membership of the Senate was limited to 45 and its membership has since then multiplied by subsequent constitutional amendments. In this chapter, the author, however, notes that the upper possesses only the recommendary powers in matters related to the budget in comparison with the National Assembly which has ultimate authority when it comes to fiscal legislation.

4. Third Chapter:

This chapter provides a detailed account of the constitutional powers of the upper house of the parliament and also assesses as to how its ability to advance provincial interests is affected by the parliamentary system, the centralization of authority and the distribution of legislative powers. The author explains that the parliamentary framework presently in vogue in the country pins the national assembly at the center stage of executive and legislative relations. This is because the Prime Minister and his cabinet are dependent on the majority of the National Assembly for their political survival, thus all major policies of executive originate from this forum. As a consequence, the Senate of Pakistan is left with limited powers over the executive decision making. This chapter particularly makes the distinction between the formal constitutional powers of the two houses and the real institutional potential. The book observes that the Senate has recommendary powers on matters of financial nature but still its recommendations are not binding.

The author outlines the subsequent constitutional amendments aimed at strengthening the constitutional powers of the Senate. He particularly points to the 18th Constitutional amendment. This chapter also underscores the capacity of the Senate in advancing the provincial interests through debates and scrutiny of the reports furnished by various institutions such as CCI and NFC. The author attributes that notwithstanding the 18th Constitutional amendment, which devolved authority to the lower tier, the centralization of the bureaucracy continues to limit provincial autonomy and hence the reduced role of the Senate as an intermediary between the federal government and the provinces.

5. Forth Chapter:

This chapter chiefly pertains to the unique composition of the Senate vis a vis the National Assembly. It discusses the equal provincial representation, indirect electoral method and the way Senators' selection is influenced by the political parties. The author asserts that these arrangements were, in principle, meant to protect the interests of the smaller units by creating a unique territorial chamber, yet they also continue to give rise to questions with regard to the effectiveness of the Senate and its democratic legitimacy as well. The author cites Arend Lijphart's framework to elaborate that a chamber is rendered institutionally distinct solely by virtue of its difference in composition from the other chamber. The author recalls the evolution of the Senate membership with its current membership standing at 96 after the merger of the FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The author explains that the intent behind proportional representation was that Senate reflected the relative strength of political parties in their respective provincial assemblies where even smaller parties could secure representation. The book explains that provincial assemblies elect Senators which marks a connection between the provinces and the central government. The book, however, maintains that this connection has always been fragile because of lack of sustained communication between the provincial authorities and the member of the Senate. One of the notable arguments that this chapter posits is that the selection of the Senators is greatly influenced by the party top brass. It argues that party leadership at times is more inclined towards people with greater monetary contribution to the party or who have personal acquaintance with the party leaders. As a corollary of this practice, the Senators are likely to prefer party leaders' word than advancing the provincial interests.

6. Fifth Chapter:

This chapter particularly examines the performance of the Senate with regard to its non-legislative business specifically in between 2012 to 2018. It looks into how Senators hold executive accountable and provide voice to provincial concerns by using different parliamentary tools. The author argues that the Senate of Pakistan acted proactively in between 2015 to 2018 because of marked difference between the compositions of the two houses. Shedding light on the participation of the individual members, the author asserts that members of smaller parties and those representing smaller provinces especially the women attended sessions regularly. The author, however, acknowledges that regular attendance in itself does not guarantee meaningful representation. The book provides numerical account of the questions and other parliamentary tools specifically in between 2012 to 2018. Around 7, 682 questions were asked by members, of them 7, 143 were answered marking 71% of government response, in the given period led by the then Hon Chairman Senate Mian Raza Rabbani.

The chapter makes reference to various tools of oversight such as Calling Attention Notice and Adjournment Motion used by members in order to bring to the notice of the government the matters related to governance, security situation, inflation and women's rights. As regards the parliamentary committees, this chapter notes that they are significant in that they examine policies of the executive and put forth doable reforms. The chapter cites various parliamentary committees which seek redressal for issues related to public service, human rights and development. The author, however, recognizes that political influence and bureaucratic resistance sometimes hinder the effectiveness of the committees. The book notes that Senate members hold debates on imperative matters related to foreign policy, law and order, national security and economic development. The author observes that more often there is a rare moment of consensus among all members of the Senate irrespective of party affiliation especially on issues of national importance. This chapter also underscores the contributions made by the Senate in the advancement and implementation of 18th Constitutional amendment.

7. Sixth Chapter:

The last chapter of the book mainly highlights the legislative performance of the Senate of Pakistan in the period between 2012 to 2018 discussing the bills introduced from time to time, the constitutional amendments and also and how the voting behavior of the Senators is affected by the political parties. The author contends that even if the Senate has actively engaged in legislation aimed at advancing the provincial interests yet devout adherence to the party loyalty sometimes undermines the independent functioning of the Senators. Providing a statistical account of the legislative business conducted by the Senate within the given time, the chapter recalls that around 316 bills were introduced in the house, out of which 103 were passed. These bills pertained to different subjects of utmost public importance including governance, judicial reforms, education, health and human rights. The book highlights that most of the bills passed were those of the government, while the opposition members particularly women had been active in bringing up legislation.

The author recollects that during the aforementioned period, significant constitutional amendments were passed including those concerning the establishment of military courts, the merger of FATA with the KPK and National Assembly constituencies. The author, however, argues that most of these constitutional changes were passed without detailed deliberations even if the Senate retained the constitutional authority to exercise effective scrutiny of the proposed constitutional amendments. The key argument of this chapter is that the legislative efficacy of the Senators is greatly influenced by the party leadership. Since they depend on party leadership for election and subsequent re-elections, they are likely to give more weightage to party policy than use their personal acumen to advance provincial interests.

8. Recommendations from the Author:

The book concludes with a brief recap of the content discussed in the preceding chapters. The author reiterates the central argument of the book that in spite of the fact that Senate was established to safeguard and advance the political and economic stakes of the provinces, its ability to materialize the stated objective remains limited due to reduced constitutional authority. In order to further fortify the role of the Senate as House of Federation, the author posits a reform agenda containing six points given as follows: i. Senators from one province form a one distinct group representing the province on the whole instead of being arranged party-wise; ii. Senators from one province should be allowed to act as one territorial block, in particular in matters which have a significant bearing on the province; iii. Senators should be obligated to furnish annual reports to their respective provincial assemblies, regarding efforts to promote interest of that particular province. iv. Members of the provincial assembly may be allowed to voice their concerns on the floor of the Senate as witnessed in the German Parliament. The author, however, limits this special concession to discussing regional issues only; v. There should be a territory-specific committees involving Members of the Senate and respective provincial assemblies to deliberate the impact of proposed legislation on the provinces; vi. Citing Spain and Italy as reference cases, the author recommends that provincial cabinet members should be allowed to put forth legislative proposals in the Senate. The book does neither elucidate on viability or opinion by local parliamentary stakeholders on said suggestions nor presents any evidence of indigenous need for the same.

In a nutshell, the book titled "The Senate of Pakistan and Regional Representation-History, Role and Parliamentary Performance" authored by Dr. Dilawar Hussain, a visiting faculty member at NUML, Islamabad, is equally relevant for Hon Members of Parliament, academics, policy makers as well as scholars of political science and constitutional discourse. The book examines at length the legislative and non-legislative functions of the Senate. It does not reproduce merely the constitutional account of what Senate is, rather it highlights how various factors including party discipline among other things that continue to affect the role of the Senate. It would have been advisable if the author would also have covered examples of how Senate is elected and functions in developed democracies to make it a more objective study. In addition, the book limits its discussion with regards to performance of Senate only to a particular era (2012 to 2018), where as a comparative study of two six years tenure would have given a meaningful depth to the analysis viz a viz functions and performance of the imperative national institution. All in all, it is an appreciable first attempt of a social scientist relevant to students of law and parliamentary studies.



Oct, 2022, 2026: A three-day Orientation Programme for the Newly Elected Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly of Azad Jammu & Kashmir.



PIPS Session at Fatimah Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Main Campus, Rawalpindi chaired by Hon MNA Ms Shaista Khan as part of Parliamentary Studies Initiative.



Oct. 15, 2026: Group photo of participants of seven-day (40-hours) Pre-Promotion Training Course for National Assembly Secretariat Staff (5th Batch), with Mr. Asim Khan Goraya, Executive Director, PIPS.



Oct 06, 2026: Executive Director Mr Asim Khan Goraya presenting PIPS Memento to Mr. Oscar Sánchez Piñeiro, Deputy Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

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