



NIAS Area Studies

PAKISTAN MONITOR



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PR EXPLAINER

Pakistan's Climate and Water Crisis: Five Questions on Challenges, Capacity and Policies

Lekshmi MK



Source: Reuters

At the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) organised a Rome Water Dialogue in Rome, Pakistan's Adviser to the PM, Syed Tauqir Hussain Shah warned that Pakistan's climate adaptation efforts are being choked by slow, bureaucratic climate-finance systems. He also mentioned that Pakistan would need USD 7-14 billion annually to cope with worsening water scarcity, extreme weather, and food security threats.

1. What is the nature of Pakistan's climate and water crisis?

Being one among the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, Pakistan faced a dual threat of water abundance and scarcity. Extreme weather events have become recurrent, highlighting the country's exposure to climate shocks. Devastating 2022 floods that affected over 33 million people and destroyed four million acres of crops. At the same time, water storage capacity is limited. It left the nation with barely 30 days' supply, which threatened food security. Agriculture, which employed a large portion of the population, was directly impacted. Flood and drought disrupted crop cycles and irrigation. Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns stressed water resources. Meanwhile, urbanisation, population, growth, and inefficient water management further strained supply. These challenges make water crisis an existential threat rather than an

abstract policy concern. Pakistan risked worsening food insecurity, economic losses and increased vulnerability particularly in rural areas without immediate and effective adaptation measures.

2. Is the challenge national or provincial challenge?

Pakistan's climate and water crisis is both a national and provincial issue. Each tier experiencing distinct but interconnected challenges. At the national level, Pakistan faces systemic vulnerabilities, melting glaciers, erratic monsoons, chronic water scarcity, and rising climate-finance needs that require coordinated policies, interstate river management, and federal disaster-response mechanisms. However, because of the 18th Constitutional Amendment, provinces now hold primary responsibility for environment, water, land use, agriculture, and local development. This means provinces such as Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan face the crisis directly. They face waterlogging, drought cycles, canal degradation, and rapid ecosystem loss. Their institutional capacity is often weaker than federal bodies, making them less equipped to design and implement adaptation projects, even though they manage the areas most exposed to climate impacts.

Urbanisation has intensified these provincial vulnerabilities. In major cities like Karachi, Lahore, and Peshawar, riverbanks, floodplains, wetlands, and natural drainage channels have been encroached. These are due to unregulated construction, real-estate expansion, and weak municipal enforcement. The destruction of natural buffers such as the Ravi riverbanks in Lahore and the Lyari and Malir riverbeds in Karachi has severely restricted water flow, causing urban flooding even during moderate rains. This ecological degradation, combined with heavy rains and poor infrastructure, increases flooding. This demonstrates that the crisis is nationally structural and provincially acute.

3. Is the institutional capacity a primary challenge for Pakistan?

At the national level, Pakistan has made progress by establishing the Ministry of Climate Change, a Climate Finance Unit, and developing key frameworks such as the National Climate Change Policy and updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). These enable engagement with global funds like Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Global Environment Facility (GEF). However, national institutions still struggle with limited technical expertise to prepare complex, "bankable" project proposals, which require sophisticated modelling, feasibility studies, and detailed financial planning. Coordination gaps across ministries such as climate, water, agriculture, planning, and finance further slow decision-making and hinder timely submission of proposals.

The provincial-level capacity is even more constrained despite being the frontline for climate adaptation. Provinces lack specialised climate finance cells, trained officers, and modern data systems needed for vulnerability assessments and project design. Their monitoring, reporting, and implementation systems remain weak, reducing absorption capacity even when funds are approved. As a result, Pakistan remains heavily reliant on international accredited entities to structure proposals and execute projects. Overall, while the policy direction exists, institutional capacity limitations particularly at the provincial level continue to hinder Pakistan's ability to efficiently attract, manage, and utilise climate finance.

4. Why is Pakistan struggling to access climate finance?

First, bureaucratic barriers. Pakistan faces significant administrative obstacles while trying to access global climate finance. Climate funds expect highly technical and "bankable" project proposals, which require extensive data, modelling, and financial justification. Pakistan's institutions, however, often lack the specialised capacity needed to meet these complex criteria, especially under time pressure. As a result, Pakistan struggles to prepare competitive proposals quickly, slowing down its ability to secure urgently needed climate funds.

Second, structural inefficiencies in climate funds. Even when Pakistan submits proposals, the structure of major climate funds themselves becomes a bottleneck. Multi-year legal and procedural processes delay decisions, and

disbursement cycles remain slow. Funds like the Green Climate Fund (GCF) operate with fragmented internal review systems, often taking 24 months or more to approve a single project. Additionally, much of the financing provided is loan-based rather than grant-based, increasing the debt burden on already fragile economies.

5. What are the legal and policy frameworks has Pakistan adopted?

At the federal level, Pakistan's core legal framework is shaped by the National Climate Change Policy (2012; updated 2021) and the Pakistan Climate Change Act (2017). The Act mandates the formation of key bodies such as the Pakistan Climate Change Council and the Pakistan Climate Change Authority, responsible for coordinating national climate planning, approving adaptation and mitigation programmes, and guiding climate-finance access.

Complementing this is the National Water Policy (2018), which legally recognises the country's water crisis and establishes commitments to integrated water-resource management, groundwater regulation, and climate-resilient infrastructure. The Pakistan Environmental Protection Act (1997), implemented through federal and provincial Environmental Protection Agency (EPAs), provides statutory authority for environmental assessments, pollution control, and environmental monitoring. Nationally, climate obligations have been mainstreamed through the National Adaptation Plan, updated NDCs, and the Living Indus Initiative.

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PR EXPLAINER

Pakistan and the US: A New opening, or another cycle?

Vani Vyshnavi Jupudi



The diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the US have started to move forward again during the second half of 2025 after multiple years of diplomatic freeze and mutual distrust. The rising number of senior-level meetings and positive public statements and growing interest from both countries indicates that Washington and Islamabad can initiate a new phase of practical dialogue. The US-Pakistan alliance has witnessed repeated cycles of cooperation and skepticism because their fundamental differences continue to exist through various international political changes. The current developments in the relationship between Pakistan and the United States create uncertainty about whether they will establish a lasting partnership or maintain their current strategic alliance.

Recent Pakistan-US developments: A brief review

The two sides have shown increased interest through their controlled exchanges. The Foreign Office of Pakistan has made sustained efforts to connect with Washington to promote economic recovery and counterterrorism efforts and regional stability. The US officials now show positive sentiments toward Pakistan because they understand its vital contribution to Afghan border protection and terrorism combat and economic stability maintenance. The present circumstances show major differences from 2021 when the Taliban seized power and dual foreign policy allegations and security aid interruptions led to deepening mutual suspicions.

The military leaders of Pakistan have established direct contact with the Pentagon to establish defense ties and resume security partnership activities. The US has shown support for Pakistan's IMF talks through indirect means which demonstrates their desire to stop Pakistan's financial situation from worsening. The two demonstrate their operational collaboration development through their official visits and ambassadorial meetings and positive public statements.

What does the United States want from Pakistan?

The US uses a limited and functional method to handle Pakistan through its present diplomatic activities. It seeks security cooperation with Pakistan to stop militant activities which originate from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area particularly because the TTP has regained strength. Washington requires intelligence coordination because it lacks ground forces in Afghanistan to monitor the region and protect against terrorist attacks. It maintains its focus on maintaining stability throughout the entire region. A Pakistani economic breakdown would trigger negative effects which would spread across South Asia and the Gulf region while affecting vital American strategic interests. Washington supports stability in Pakistan because it wants stable partners during times of global instability. Finally, the US wants Pakistan to stay independent from Beijing's control although China does not serve as the main focus of US Pakistan strategy.

How is Pakistan re-positioning?

Pakistan works to gain US backing for IMF operations and market investor trust and new trade possibilities. The US stands as one of the few international powers which can affect global financial institutions and create market stability through its actions. Pakistan's military leadership shows readiness to establish official communication channels with the US for handling border security threats and developing a stable counter-terrorism framework. The Pakistani government implements diplomatic efforts to gain international recognition

following several years of national instability and presidential changes.

Pakistan follows a non-zero-sum strategy by keeping its relationship with China strong while establishing new communication channels with Washington. The government understands that depending too heavily on China would restrict Pakistan's ability to make strategic choices. The foreign policy alignment between civil and military sectors has enabled Pakistan to present a unified position toward the US during this period.

What are structural challenges for Pakistan and the US?

The two countries maintain an ongoing dialogue yet they cannot overcome their long-standing core problems. The relationship between the US and Pakistan remains stuck because of ongoing historical distrust which stems from US accusations about Pakistani militant support and Pakistani claims about US strategic abandonment during past conflicts. The two maintain diplomatic relations while working to achieve their foreign aid goals through different methods. The US government tends to view Pakistan as a transactional partner because it expects security and economic benefits in return for its assistance. The Pakistani government views US demands as threats to its national independence.

The two operate with distinct strategic goals which produce major distinctions between their approaches. The US maintains its focus on two main objectives which include fighting terrorism and securing stability in Afghanistan. The security needs of Pakistan stem from two main sources which include India and internal political factors. The strong anti-American feelings among Pakistani citizens make it difficult to establish a strong strategic alliance between the two nations. The two nations face restrictions in their relationship because China stands as Pakistan's primary strategic ally and

India serves as the US preferred regional partner. The existing structural elements prevent essential transformations between the relationship entities but they allow the system to operate continuously.

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PR EXPLAINER

Pakistan and IMF's Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Assessment: Risks, Reforms and Trajectories

R. Preetha



1. What is the IMF's Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Assessment?

On 20 November, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released its long-awaited Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Assessment (GCDA) report. The GCDA is a detailed technical evaluation conducted at the request of Pakistan's government in January 2025. It examines federal-level governance weaknesses and corruption vulnerabilities that have significant macroeconomic consequences. The assessment covers five core state functions: fiscal governance, financial sector oversight, market regulation, anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism (AML/CFT), and the rule of law. It also evaluates the effectiveness of anti-corruption institutions. The GCDA, which was designed to suggest priority reforms, serves as a structural benchmark under Pakistan's USD 7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF), with its publication being a precondition for the IMF board's approval for loan disbursements.

2. What are the key findings of the report, and what reforms has the IMF proposed?

First, the assessment finds corruption in Pakistan is systemic rather than episodic. The report points to the following as the factors driving corruption in the country: institutional weaknesses, opaque regulations, fragmented oversight, and inadequate accountability. These elements bring substantial economic costs to Pakistan as it distort markets, divert public resources, hinder fair competition, and investment.

Second, the report identifies elite capture as a central mechanism through which corruption is sustained. It notes that influential political and economic networks allow preferential policies, tax exemptions (keeping the tax base narrow), subsidies, and discretionary powers that favour connected entities. This in turn leads to misguided decision-making, revenue losses, and unequal opportunities. High-risk sectors such as financial oversight and AML/CFT frameworks, remain vulnerable due to uneven identification of politically exposed persons and reliance on informal channels.

Third, gaps in fiscal governance reinforce the above dynamics. The report notes that fiscal Governance in Pakistan suffers due to weak budget credibility, excessive supplementary grants bypassing parliamentary scrutiny, opaque procurement favouring state-owned enterprises, insufficient internal controls, and limited follow-up on audit observations. Further, the rule of law is weakened by judicial delays, outdated laws (which impact contract enforcement), political influence over anti-corruption bodies such as the National Accountability Bureau, and low enforcement rates, leading to impunity.

Fourth, the IMF outlines a 15-point priority reform agenda to address these challenges, with initial actions recommended within three to six months. The action points focus on improving transparency, reducing discretion, and strengthening accountability across state functions. The report estimates that targeted governance reforms could increase Pakistan's GDP by 5 to 6.5 per cent over five years.

In fiscal governance, proposals include stricter limits on discretionary financial powers, mandatory e-procurement, elimination of preferential treatment for state-owned enterprises, and real-time parliamentary tracking of audits, alongside full independence for the Auditor General of Pakistan. Further, the IMF calls for simplifying the tax system, reducing exemptions, and increasing transparency in order to limit rent seeking.

For investment facilitation and the rule of law, the reforms call for annual public reporting by the Special Investment Facilitation Council on deals and concessions, a central registry for state land with rule-based transfers, standardised judicial appointments and performance assessments, merit-based leadership for anti-corruption bodies, public asset declarations for senior officials starting in 2026 with risk-based verification, and stronger AML/CFT measures. These steps aim to improve access to information and empower oversight by state and civil society actors. These measures, if implemented effectively, are expected to bring in inclusive growth, rebuild trust, and create a level playing field.

3. Why has Pakistan struggled to address the concerns repeatedly flagged by the IMF?

First, elite capture in Pakistan is deep-seated and remains a primary barrier. Influential networks continue to influence policies and regulations to keep in privileges, exemptions, and discretionary benefits. This occurs often at the expense of broader economic equity.

Second, longstanding institutional weaknesses such as complex and opaque rules, fragmented oversight, inadequate controls, and poor coordination among anti-corruption entities have allowed vulnerabilities to continue despite previous identifications in IMF programs and assessments.

Third, political interference in independent bodies, judicial delays, executive influence over audits, and inconsistent enforcement have created an environment of impunity. This challenges long term accountability efforts across governments. Historical patterns of incomplete implementation, resistance from vested interests, and limited public participation have stalled progress, perpetuating macroeconomic costs.

4. What is the likely trajectory moving forward?

First, Pakistan has begun addressing short-term commitments, including publishing the diagnostic report in November 2025, a key step that facilitated IMF board approval of disbursements worth USD 1.2 billion in December 2025. It has also initiated plans for asset declaration disclosures and SIFC transparency reporting.

Second, medium- to longer-term success will depend on advancing institutional independence through merit-based appointments, e-procurement mandates, tax reforms, judicial modernisation, and enhanced anti-corruption capacities, alongside improved parliamentary and civil society oversight.

Third, while effective implementation could deliver growth and stability, entrenched elite interests and past resistance pose risks. Sustained political commitment beyond short-term IMF compliance is essential to overcome these challenges. Failure to do so risks prolonging dependence on external support, further IMF conditionalities and impact long-term economic stability in Pakistan.

FOCUS NOTES

Short Notes on key daily developments

Pakistan Population Summit

On 2 December, *Dawn* reported on the Pakistan Population Summit, organised by Dawn Media. The summit arrived at the unanimous conclusion that the country's prosperity is weighed down by the rising population, highlighting that without managing the population in tandem with resources, all of the government's efforts towards development, progress and social uplift would be futile.

The Population Council's Country Director, Dr Zeba Sattar, opined that parents have the right to make free and responsible decisions about the number and spacing of their children, ensuring a balance (Tawazun) between family size and resources. "The balance really is about responsibility, the state's responsibility; the balance has to be restored in terms of societal issues, the balance between resources and the number of people in Pakistan," she said, highlighting that of 12.7 million pregnancies recorded in Pakistan, six million were "unwanted or mistimed." She underscored that effective population control programmes would reduce the unplanned pregnancies and "focus on the other 6.7 million instead, ensuring a better mortality rate." Dr Sattar expressed confidence that Pakistani families would react positively to a well-funded population management programme.

Senator Sherry Rehman recalled that seven years ago she had written about three "ticking time bombs" for Pakistan: unchecked population growth, water scarcity, and climate stress, adding that "they are no longer ticking; they have silently exploded around us," and that population growth "has passed some kind of danger line." She urged the federal government to conduct an awareness drive in the national language on population management measures. Noting that the Contraception Prevalence Rate (CPR) stood at 34 per cent, she stressed that wider use of contraceptives could reduce the birth rate and highlighted the need for them to be affordable and easily accessible. Ms Rehman added that in Pakistan, a woman dies every 50 minutes due to pregnancy- or childbirth-related complications. She also referenced the Council of Islamic Ideology's (CII) ruling permitting birth spacing, emphasising that reluctance to use

contraceptives stems from cultural taboos rather than religious restrictions.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Shaista Pervaiz asserted that "population growth is no longer a demographic issue," noting that it is interlinked "with everything a country is judged by." Ms Pervaiz noted that while there was "political will" present to address the issue, it was time that it should be "turned into action."

In a video message, Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal stated that the country's population could hit an estimated 370 million by 2025, stating that it was a "defining challenge for the country's future stability, prosperity and competitiveness." "Every single year, Pakistan adds almost the entire population of New Zealand, around 4-4.5 million people," the minister added. He stated that PM Sharif has placed "stunting and population management at the highest national priority", highlighting that the government is moving towards emergency multi-sector action integrating health, nutrition, education, social protection, water and local government systems.

Speaking at the summit, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb stated that the need to "recognise and negotiate" population growth and climate change as two existential issues for Pakistan. He asserted that "it is not the government's job to give jobs and we have to get out of that mindset," emphasising that it is individuals working as freelancers who are driving the country's IT services and powering the IT economy. "We need to upskill the youth, reskill them; that is how we are going to go forward with respect to this," he stated. Zaidi noted that unemployment had been rising over the past five to seven years. Referencing data from economist Dr Hafeez Pasha, he said real wages in Pakistan have dropped by 20 per cent in just the last three years. He also pointed to Pakistan's falling position on the UN Human Development Index, calling the numbers "deeply troubling," with the country now ranked 168th, among the lowest in the world.

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Pakistan-Afghanistan talks in Riyadh: No breakthrough as both sides maintain rigid positions

On 2 December, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan and Afghanistan held a brief, unannounced high-stakes meeting in Riyadh, mediated by Saudi Arabia, but the talks ended quickly and without progress as both sides maintained rigid positions.

First, the meeting, held late on 30 November, sought to address tensions following the October border clashes and Pakistan's demand for action against militant groups operating from Afghan territory. The Afghan Taliban delegation was led by Anas Haqqani and Rahmatullah Najib. The Pakistani delegation consisted of officials previously involved in the Türkiye-Qatar track discussions, with an additional Foreign Office (FO) representative. Second, Islamabad reiterated that Kabul must take concrete action against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and other militant groups based in Afghanistan. The Taliban delegation maintained its existing stance, leading to no meaningful progress.

Third, the Riyadh engagement occurred as the Türkiye-Qatar mediation track remained stalled. Turkey's President Erdogan had earlier indicated plans to send a delegation to Islamabad, but this visit has not materialised. The Türkiye-Qatar effort produced a fragile ceasefire, though the FO spokesperson stated the truce faltered as it was "contingent on a halt in terrorist activities."

Fourth, Saudi officials urged both sides to keep channels open and encouraged Pakistan to consider resuming bilateral trade while counterterrorism discussions continue. Islamabad rejected the proposal. Despite the absence of a breakthrough, sources indicated that Saudi Arabia aims to remain engaged and may convene another round of talks.

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Access to Imran Khan: PTI pushes ahead with coordinated protests; the Government bans meetings in Islamabad and Rawalpindi

On 2 December, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will proceed with protests outside the Islamabad High Court (IHC) and Rawalpindi's Adiala jail despite formal bans on public gatherings in both cities. The Islamabad administration imposed a two-month prohibition on assemblies on 18 November, while Rawalpindi issued a separate three-day ban on 1 December. PTI leaders explained that the protests exist to fight against the current restrictions that block Imran Khan from receiving visits from party members and his family. Asad Qaiser announced that opposition members of parliament would first assemble outside the IHC before proceeding to Adiala jail to protest against prison staff who allegedly ignored court orders for prisoner visits.

The party showed evidence that senior PTI members, including the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister, had been refused meetings with Khan multiple times. Qaiser explained that the parliamentary committee considers this measure an infringement of basic rights, so they want to restore access right away. The situation has become more critical because Imran Khan's legal team, along with his family members, have been denied access to him for multiple weeks.

The PTI parliamentary committee strongly warned against any attempt to establish governor's rule in KP because they viewed it as a destabilising measure that would create political unrest. The committee declared that KP faces financial problems and security deterioration so the federal government needs to execute its NFC award and tribal district merger obligations. The committee advised Islamabad to resolve its disputes with Kabul through diplomatic talks instead of using military force.

The KP chapter of PTI declared its plan to stage a motorway protest, which would start at the Peshawar-Islamabad Interchange and end at Swabi to demonstrate party-wide pressure on the government. According to organisers, supporters from Nowshera, Charsadda, Mardan and Swabi will join the procession.

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Pakistan and Turkey strengthen energy partnership

On 3 December, *Dawn* reported that a delegation from Turkey, led by Minister for Energy and Natural Resources Alparslan Bayraktar, visited Pakistan and held discussions with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, and Power Minister Awais Leghari on 2 December. Key agreements on strengthening partnership in the energy sector were signed during the engagement, and in June 2022, PM Sharif and President Erdogan had agreed to expand bilateral trade from USD 1.1 billion to USD 5 billion in three years. As of 2024, the bilateral trade stood at USD 1.4 billion.

What are the key developments from the engagement?

First, Pakistan and Turkey signed five memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and deeds of assignment (DoAs) on oil and gas exploration. This includes: the deed of assignment for Eastern Offshore Indus-C, the Petroleum Concession agreement Ziarat North Block, the Petroleum Concession agreement Sukhpur-II Block, the Petroleum Concession agreement Deep C block and the Offshore Deep F Block. The two countries agreed to explore adopting a unified approach by involving a joint trading company for the procurement of petroleum. Both sides also committed to expanding the partnership to mining and equity participation in the power sector.

Second, PM Sharif highlighted the importance of expanding cooperation between the two countries in the energy, petroleum, and mineral sectors. He noted and appreciated that Turkish Petroleum had joined offshore and onshore exploration activities in Pakistan, making this a key achievement in their bilateral energy cooperation.

Third, Turkey's Energy Minister put forth that Turkey aims to develop further ventures in collaboration with Pakistan, especially in oil and gas exploration, energy infrastructure, and the mining sector. He stated: "To achieve our shared goal of \$5 billion in bilateral trade, significant contributions will come from deeper collaboration in energy and mining." Meanwhile, Pakistan's Power Minister invited established international private-sector investors from Turkey for bidding as Pakistan prepares for the privatisation of its first three Discos.

Fourth, both countries agreed that a ministerial delegation from Pakistan will visit Turkey soon

to explore further cooperation in the energy sector.

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Parliament passes a bill to establish a statutory body to protect and promote the rights of minority communities

On 3 December, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan's parliament passed a bill establishing a statutory body to protect and promote the rights of minority communities. The joint sitting approved the bill by majority vote, despite opposition from members of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) and Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F). The Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar tabled the bill, with around one-third of lawmakers opposing a motion which allowed the legislation to be taken up for immediate consideration. 160 members voted in favour, while 79 opposed it. The legislation was passed with certain amendments, notably the removal of a clause granting overriding legal effect and the withdrawal of earlier provisions that would have given the National Commission for Minorities' Rights suo motu powers.

What is the proposed commission?

First, the bill establishes a commission aimed at institutionalising minority rights protection. It will include representatives of all provinces and recognised minority communities. A council of the commission will be formed under the act and will exercise delegated powers and functions assigned by the commission.

Second, the body will comprise 18 members. This includes three Hindu representatives (two from scheduled castes), three Christian members, one Sikh member, one member from the Bahai community, one member from the Parsi community, two Muslim members with a human-rights background, one representative from each provincial minority or human-rights department, and one minority member from Islamabad Capital Territory.

Third, the National Assembly Secretariat will initiate and complete the process for appointing the chairperson within 60 days of the act's commencement or at the required time thereafter.

Fourth, a parliamentary committee of four members, two from the Senate and two from the National Assembly, preferably non-Muslims, will

recommend candidates. If the committee fails to reach a consensus, the Prime Minister will appoint the chairperson.

What are the arguments and counterarguments? First, objections centred on concerns that the earlier provision granting the bill an overriding legal effect could undermine the 1984 anti-Ahmadiyya ordinance. The law minister clarified that the legislation would neither limit anti-Ahmadiyya provisions nor affect existing court judgements. He pointed out that the Constitution and the state define Ahmadis as non-Muslims, and since they do not accept this classification, they fall outside the ambit of the bill. He recalled that when this status was challenged, the Supreme Court held that Article 20 protections do not apply to those who reject their legally recognised non-Muslim status.

Second, the minister emphasised that the Constitution defines minorities as “non-Muslims,” stating: “This is a commission for non-Muslims. Our Hindu, Christian and Parsi brothers are as good Pakistanis as we are.” He added that the commission would not possess punitive authority but would submit recommendations to the government. He highlighted the need for a formal platform for non-Muslim citizens to raise issues such as forced conversions, sanitation workers’ rights, job quotas and dignity-based concerns.

Third, the PTI Chairman noted that the president had returned the bill without assent, objecting to the mechanism for removing the commission’s chairperson and members, authority to create or upgrade posts and to maintain independent financial accounts. JUI-F Senator Kamran Murtaza and other critics added that Section 35, which stated that the legislation would override prior laws, should be omitted entirely. They also opposed Section 12 of the bill, which they added gave suo motu powers to the proposed commission. The opposition suggested that the bill would be acceptable if these clauses were removed.

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Terrorism & Violence: Increase by 25 per cent in first 11 months of 2025

On 04 December, *The Express Tribune* had reported that there was a sharp increase in terror violence fatalities and incidents by 25 per cent in comparison to the previous year. This year, there were 3187 fatalities in comparison to 2546, the prior year. According to the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the deaths and incidents have occurred among civilians, security personnel, and outlaws. The concentration of violence is mostly in the northwestern region of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and Balochistan, which comprises 96 per cent of fatalities and 92 per cent of incidents from January and November. According to the statistics, K-P has the worst number then followed by Balochistan.

Other regions like Sindh, Punjab, PoK, Islamabad, Capital Territory, and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) comprise the remaining four per cent. Throughout the reporting periods, there are about 15 casualties per day on average. Statistics reveal that in K-P, the fatalities occurred from security operations as counter terrorist attacks, which suggests their large-scale and aggressive campaigns against terrorism. However, in Balochistan, the opposite seems to be at play, with the number of 36 per cent more fatalities by terrorist attacks compared to security operations.

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Pakistan & Afghanistan: In Riyadh, the talks fail to reach deal

On 03 December, officials from Pakistan and Afghanistan said that a fresh round of talks between the two countries in Saudi Arabia failed to reach a deal. While a ceasefire agreement between the two South Asian neighbours following the 10-day conflict has largely held, longer-term issues remain to be solved. The fresh round of talks was held in Saudi Arabia last week after negotiations in Istanbul last month failed to produce a peace agreement. The series of meetings last weekend was hosted by Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The talks - A Saudi initiative - included three representatives from Afghanistan and two from Pakistan. Islamabad argues that Afghan-based militants have been carrying out attacks in Pakistan, including suicide bombings. Kabul denies the allegations, with the Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi calling them shifting and inconsistent. “[...] we urge Pakistani officials: focus on solving

your own fundamental problems, and value the constructive steps taken by the Islamic Emirate," he said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has decided to reopen the Torkhan and Chaman border crossings exclusively for humanitarian cargo from the United Nations, following nearly 50 days of complete closure of all trade routes with Afghanistan. The Ministry of Commerce reached this decision in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and issued a letter to the Member Customs (Operation), Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Islamabad and the Director General of Transit Trade, FBR Karachi. It requests that all necessary measures be taken to allow the UN humanitarian containers to transit smoothly. Pakistan has approved the clearance of 143 containers, with 74 belonging to UNICEF, 67 to the World Food Programme (WFP) and two to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). It will be implemented in three phases: the first involving containers carrying food and supplies, the second carrying medicines and medical equipment and the third carrying other essential items like kits for students and teachers.

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Punjab to celebrate Basant after an 18-year ban

On 04 December, Punjab formally lifted its ban on Basant. Pakistan's celebrated kite-flying festival, Basant, was once a vital symbol of Lahore's springtime culture. It is remembered for its colourful kites, music, food, and historic roots across Punjab. The festival, celebrated for centuries, from the time of Mughal Sufism up to pre-partition Vaisakhi gatherings, uniting people of all ages together, attracting thousands of visiting tourists, highlighting various varieties of Punjabi cuisine and dance, and supporting a vast number of artisan-related economies. After its prohibition, imposed in 2007 after a string of tragic incidents in which chemical and metal-coated strings caused deaths across the province, thousands of families who relied on kite-making lost their livelihoods. This left

Basant cherished in collective memory but absent in the national calendar for 18 years.

Punjab has formally lifted its ban on Basant after Governor Sardar Saleem Haider promulgated the Regulation of Kite Flying Ordinance 2025, allowing the festival to resume under strict new regulations that are in place to limit the number of injuries associated with kite flying and to avoid any tragedies similar to those that resulted in many deaths from sharp kite-string injuries.

The new law, which is being placed before the provincial assembly, includes banning anyone under 18 years of age from flying kites, requiring registration of kite-flying clubs and shops, and requiring a unique QR code identifier for each kite that links it to the manufacturer. Kite flyers are only to use cotton cord, while metal, chemical or glass-coated string is strictly prohibited. Any violation of these provisions could result in penalties of between three to five years in jail and/or fines up to PKR two million. The new legislation points toward years of public pressure on authorities to bring back the culture of Punjab, while at the same time putting in place measures to prevent any tragedy and bring about safety.

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"Punjab lifts Basant ban with strict conditions after 18 years," *The Express Tribune*, 04 December 2025

11th National Finance Commission (NFC) inaugural meeting: A Profile

On 05 December, *Dawn* reported on the developments from the much-delayed inaugural meeting of the 11th National Finance Commission (NFC) held on 04 December. The meeting was chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb, with participation from the chief ministers of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (both holding the finance minister portfolio), the finance ministers of Punjab and Balochistan, four provincial non-statutory NFC members, KP Chief Minister's adviser, and federal and provincial finance secretaries.

What are the key developments from the meeting?

First, the Centre presented a bleak fiscal overview. Federal officials stated that national

finances had deteriorated significantly over the past 15 years, with debt servicing consuming nearly all available federal resources in the post-7th NFC Award period. This is said to have constrained defence and development spending, limiting improvements in infrastructure and social impact initiatives. A 30-year comparative analysis contrasting the pre-7th NFC period (1995–2010) with 2010–2025 showed that the fiscal deficit had expanded from an annual average of around 4 per cent to between 6.6 and 7 per cent.

With 57.5 per cent of the Federal Divisible Pool (FDP) going to provinces, the Centre contended that it still financed nearly 15 per cent of provincial functions, resulting in heavy federal borrowing and accelerating debt accumulation. It called for increasing the tax-to-GDP ratio by 3 to 3.5 per cent within three years, alongside provinces increasing their revenue effort to three per cent of GDP through improved mobilisation of property tax, agricultural income tax and sales tax on services. The federal government argued that without these measures, the fiscal imbalance created after 2010 would continue to worsen. It proposed mobilising additional consolidated revenues exceeding five per cent of GDP over the next three years, roughly PKR 6.5 trillion annually at current exchange rates.

Second, provinces resisted federal proposals to shift expenditure responsibilities. The Centre called for the provinces to increase their own revenue generation and assume financial responsibilities for the Higher Education Commission, Benazir Income Support Programme, and certain PSDP projects. Provinces strongly objected, stating that the NFC's constitutional mandate concerns revenue distribution only, not expenditure assignments. Sindh and KP were particularly firm, stating that the Centre cannot "dictate" provincial responsibilities or question how provinces utilise transferred funds. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah highlighted that Article 160 establishes the NFC as a revenue-sharing forum and that provinces were under no obligation to follow federal spending directives.

Third, consensus was reached on establishing seven thematic working groups. These committees will examine vertical and horizontal distribution of resources, provincial taxation policies, debt servicing impacts, poverty indices, and the fiscal requirements of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. A follow-up

meeting is expected between 8 and 15 January, depending on the readiness of the working-group reports.

Fourth, a special working group for KP's merged districts was approved. KP's chief minister put forth that the 7th NFC had become outdated after the 18th Amendment, given major devolved subjects such as population and education, and the province's heavy financial burden arising from terrorism. KP's finance adviser noted that the province's development spending as a share of GDP had fallen below 2005 levels. The next NFC session will revisit these issues as federal-provincial disagreements over resource allocation continue.

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Field Marshal Asim Munir appointed Pakistan's first Chief of Defence Forces

On 05 December, *Dawn* reported that the President had approved the appointment of the first-ever Chief of Defence Forces of Pakistan, as per the advice of the Prime Minister. The decision was taken according to the revised Article 243 under the 27th constitutional amendment act and the updated military legal framework. Chief of Army Staff Field Marshall Asim Munir has been appointed concurrently as Chief of Defence Forces for a period of five years. In his remarks, he said that "Pakistan will now soar to greater heights from here." COAS Field Marshal Asim Munir acquired the new post that places him in command of all armed forces.

Field Marshall Asim Munir was appointed as the 17th Army Chief in 2022. He started his defence career in 1986 when he was commissioned in the 23rd Frontier Force Regiment. He graduated from Fuji School, Japan, and also holds an MPhil from the National Defence University, Islamabad. Over the years, he has held several key military positions, including direct staff at Command and Staff College, Quetta; brigade major of a deployed infantry brigade in Kel; general staff officer, grade-2 at the CGS secretariat; and chief of staff of Mangla Corps. He also served as Quartermaster General at the General Headquarters and force commander in the Northern Areas, Gilgit, among others.

Particularly in the intelligence area, he has held top positions, including Director General of Military Intelligence and head of Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). He has become the first army chief to be awarded the Sword of Honour and, finally, the first Chief of Defence Forces of Pakistan. However, the Prime Minister's advisor said that regulations and rules for the post of CDF are not framed yet and that the government is taking great caution in framing the CDF's rules, as this new position consolidates operational, administrative, and strategic authority in a single office. Along with the CDF appointment, the President also approved a two-year extension for the Air Chief Marshal, whose term ends in 2026.

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Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan revitalizes engagement; Concludes 15 MoUs across sectors and Islamabad offers Bishkek access to ports of Karachi and Gwadar

On 5 December, *Dawn* reported that Kyrgyzstan's President Sadyr Japarov conducted a two-day state visit to Pakistan on 3 and 4 December. This marked the first such visit by a Kyrgyz head of state in 20 years, focusing on strengthening bilateral ties in trade, energy, and connectivity. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offered the landlocked Kyrgyzstan access to regional and global markets through the sea ports of Karachi and Gwadar and has engaged in a series of memorandums across key areas.

Pakistan-Kyrgyzstan: Bilateral and trade relations

Diplomatic ties between Islamabad and Bishkek were formally established on May 10, 1992, shortly after Kyrgyzstan's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, with Pakistan opening an embassy in Bishkek in 1995. Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan have longstanding ties rooted in deep cultural and historical connections. However, their economic engagement has weakened in recent years, with bilateral trade falling from USD 11.2 million in 2022-23 to USD 5.18 million in 2024-25. Pakistan primarily

exports pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, textiles, and rice to Kyrgyzstan, while imports from Kyrgyzstan are minimal, mainly consisting of raw materials and machinery parts. At the fifth meeting of the Pakistan-Kyrgyzstan Inter-Governmental Commission, Power Minister Sardar Awaiz Leghari underscored the urgency of revitalising economic links and reaffirmed the shared objective of raising trade to USD 100 million. He emphasised that achieving this goal would require steady and coordinated efforts across multiple sectors.

The revival of the Joint Business Council, stronger business-to-business exchanges, and an MoU on electronic customs data sharing were highlighted as essential for strengthening commercial cooperation. Further, Pakistan's possible role in the proposed 500-kV Torugart-XUAR-Gilgit-Baltistan transmission line, which could form a strategic Kyrgyzstan-China-Pakistan power corridor, was also deliberated. Kyrgyz interest in Pakistan's mining sector, especially in copper and gold exploration, was also welcomed. The meeting highlighted that improving transport and communication links remained vital for unlocking the broader economic potential of the relationship.

Latest round of MoUs exchanged

At the bilateral business forum to explore new pathways for collaboration in economic sectors, the leaders signed 15 Memorandums of Understanding across trade, agriculture, defence, education and energy, and pledged to increase bilateral trade from USD 16 million to USD 200 million by 2027-28. The two leaders signed a joint statement on "Strengthening of Comprehensive Cooperation in the Interest of Both Countries." The MoUs included those of Pakistan's Foreign Service Academy and Kyrgyzstan's Diplomatic Academy, and between the commerce ministries of both states, collaboration in agriculture, mining and geosciences, the energy sector, and the use of Pakistani ports for regional connectivity. An agreement enabling the transfer of sentenced persons to serve their terms in the other country has also been signed. Further MoUs were exchanged on electronic customs data sharing, tourism cooperation, and surgical instruments, along with agreements on cultural cooperation and establishing sister-city ties between Bishkek and Islamabad.

Speaking at a joint press conference with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Nurgozhoevich Zhaparov, PM Sharif stated that such initiatives will further

reinforce the solid foundation of friendship and brotherhood between the two countries,” adding that the MoUs “will serve as a framework for structured, result-oriented engagements and closer institutional linkages between the two countries.” The leaders also highlighted the need for secure, sustainable, and diversified connectivity routes between Pakistan and the Kyrgyz Republic to boost bilateral and regional trade. They expressed satisfaction at the activation of the road corridor linking the two countries under the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA).

Discussions also focused on the need to strengthen people-to-people exchanges through cultural initiatives, tourism promotion, and academic partnerships. President Zhaparov termed Pakistan an important partner of Kyrgyzstan in South Asia, and that the countries aimed for collaboration in trade, economy, investment, transport, logistics, education and science. He also emphasised strengthening the Kyrgyz-Pakistan Business Council as an effective platform for connecting the two countries’ business sectors. PM Sharif highlighted that maximising transport and transit links is a key area of cooperation, and noted that both sides underscored the central importance of the CASA-1000 project as a foundational step toward an integrated Central-South Asian energy network.

The Express Tribune reported that during the delegation-level talks held at the Prime Minister's House, the leaders stressed that regional peace hinges on the Afghan Taliban fulfilling their commitments to the international community and addressing Pakistan's security concerns through concrete, verifiable action against terrorist groups. Both sides also reviewed key regional and global developments, voicing concern over rising threats to peace and stability. They agreed that disputes should be settled peacefully in line with international law, the UN Charter, and relevant Security Council resolutions. PM Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's long-standing commitment to strengthening its ties with Central Asian states under the “Vision Central Asia” policy. Both leaders underscored the importance of broadening and deepening Pakistan-Kyrgyz relations, rooted in historic ties, cultural affinities, shared values, and a mutual vision for regional stability and prosperity. The leaders also noted the success of the Fifth meeting of the Kyrgyz-Pakistan Joint Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural

Cooperation, held in Islamabad, on 28-29 July 2025.

President Zhaparov highlighted that both countries reaffirmed their commitment to tackling terrorism, extremism and transnational crime, agreeing to deepen coordination between their security agencies to promote regional stability. He also invited PM Shehbaz to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit and the World Nomad Games to be held in Bishkek in 2026. He welcomed an official state visit to Kyrgyzstan to strengthen bilateral ties further.

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Heavy exchange of fire reported along the Chaman border; bilateral medicine trade comes to a standstill

On 06 December, *Dawn* reported that a heavy exchange of fire between Pakistani and Afghan forces took place along the Chaman border late on 5 December. Both sides accused the other of initiating the incident. Pakistan officials stated that Afghan forces fired mortar shells into the Badani area, while Afghan Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid alleged that Pakistan launched an attack on Spin Boldak, prompting a response.

According to official sources, Pakistani forces retaliated after what they described as Afghan aggression. There were also reports of clashes along the Chaman-Kandahar highway, though these accounts remained unverified. A senior official in Quetta confirmed that firing began around 10 pm and continued until late at night. The medical superintendent of Chaman district hospital reported that three injured individuals, including a woman, were brought to the medical facility. As of publication, *Dawn* noted that there had been no official statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations or the Foreign Office.

Impact of repeated Border closures: Bilateral medicine trade comes to a standstill; impacts over USD 200 million worth of pharmaceutical exports

On 6 December, *Dawn* reported that repeated closures of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border

have severely affected bilateral medicine trade, leaving hundreds of trucks stranded and “jeopardising” nearly USD 200 million in pharmaceutical exports, according to industry sources. The continued blockade at Torkham and Chaman is reportedly disrupting essential supplies to Afghanistan, damaging temperature-sensitive drugs, and creating significant financial losses for Pakistani exporters at a time of broader economic strain.

Industry officials pointed out that Afghanistan is Pakistan’s largest overland trading partner and a key transit route to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. They noted that each border shutdown impacts regional connectivity and investments linked to the Pakistan–Uzbekistan–Afghanistan railway and related initiatives. A representative of the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association stated, “The closures are now so frequent that they have become a structural threat, forcing countries investing in this route to consider more predictable alternatives. For Pakistan’s pharmaceutical sector, the impact is already severe.”

“Almost all exports to Afghanistan have stopped,” with containers of antibiotics, insulin, vaccines, cardiovascular drugs and other essential medicines stuck at border points, dry ports and warehouses. These delays have led to substantial and potentially irreversible losses, with one firm alone reporting PKR 850 million worth of products stranded at Torkham and Chaman; likewise, fifty-plus companies reportedly face similar challenges.

Pakistan links the delay in the Turkish mediation visit to Kabul’s lack of cooperation. On 06 December, Dawn reported that the Foreign Office stated that the Turkish delegation’s planned visit faced delays because Kabul failed to show sufficient cooperation. The FO said that the fragile ceasefire between Pakistan and the Taliban regime failed because Taliban terrorist activities violated the terms of the truce. The FO spokesperson, Tahir Andrabi, confirmed Pakistan’s readiness to welcome the Turkish delegation but explained that scheduling problems and Kabul’s non-cooperation stood as the main barriers to the visit. The spokesperson confirmed Pakistan supports President Erdogan’s mediation efforts while dismissing claims that Pakistan failed to participate in the process.

The spokesperson denied knowledge about the unannounced Riyadh talks, which failed to

achieve any progress. The spokesperson declared that Pakistan would receive support from any fair mediation process because the country bases its terrorism stance against Afghanistan on established legal and moral principles. The spokesperson confirmed Saudi Arabia maintains its independent peace negotiations, which could result in new diplomatic relations.

The spokesperson, Andrabi, confirmed that Pakistan authorised the controlled passage of UN humanitarian aid through specific transit routes, which the organisation requested after commercial trade stopped in October. The first items for clearance will be food products, followed by medical supplies and essential equipment. The border stays shut for business operations, yet humanitarian groups can enter the area because Pakistan continues to support Afghan citizens.

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On Imran Khan: DG ISPR calls Imran national security threat, Gohar urges dialogue

On 05 December, the Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations, Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, called former Prime Minister Imran Khan a “threat to national security” and warned against inciting the public against the armed forces. Addressing a conference in Rawalpindi, the DG ISPR stated that Khan’s “anti-army” rhetoric posed a national security threat that the army had to address. “Who are you? What message do you want to give? Who do you think you are?” he said. He described Khan as a “sick-minded person”, saying that his ambitions are greater than the state itself and that he should focus on his own politics and keep the military out of it. Chaudhry called out Khan was spreading fake news and lies, clarifying that the military is not the state and the government is supreme. He also spoke about the army’s role in protecting the country from external and internal forces. “It is the armed forces that are standing between the Hindutva mindset in India and their hegemonic design, and the people of Pakistan,” he said.

He also accused foreign social media platforms and media outlets based in Afghanistan and India of promoting anti-army narratives. Along the same lines, he alleged that individuals within the country were also "heavily funding" anti-army campaigns. Chaudhry emphasised that it is the government's responsibility to decide whether to restrict meetings with Khan, not the military's. "Under which law, rules, or constitutional provision can this be allowed? Which politics in Pakistan permits meeting a convict while using it to build a continuous narrative against the country's armed forces?" he asked. He further went on to stress that the army does not represent any particular group and that even though Article 19 of the Constitution provides freedom of expression, it should be used responsibly. "It clearly says that freedom of expression and political activity are permitted, subject to reasonable restrictions. Under reasonable restrictions, nothing can be allowed that goes against the security and integrity of the state," he said.

In response to the DG ISPR's remarks in a post on X, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan expressed his disappointment over the press conference and appealed to pro-democracy forces to help reduce tensions. He further went on to say that he always hoped for relations to improve between state institutions and that the defence of the country was paramount. He also stressed that PTI's narrative "had never been, and would never be, against the state". He said that it was deeply unfortunate that political leaders were labelling one another as "mentally unstable" or as threats. "Pakistan is ours, and the army is also ours. We have demonstrated this in practice and will continue to do so," he said. Gohar also warned against the conduct of "certain non-stakeholders" in worsening relations between the PTI and state institutions. "The country cannot afford any more tension and chaos," he cautioned, urging all political actors to act responsibly, keeping national stability in mind.

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"Gohar voices disappointment over DG ISPR's presser, urges for dialogue," *The Express Tribune*, 06 December 2025

Faiz Hameed sentenced to prison: 14 years imprisonment for former ISI chief

On 11 December, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief, Faiz Hameed, was being sentenced to 14 years rigorous imprisonment by a Field General Court Martial (FGCM) that was initiated against him on 12 August 2024. Hameed was tried on four charges under provisions of the Pakistan Army Act, related to "engaging in political activities, violation of the Official Secrets Act, misuse of authority and government resources, and causing wrongful loss to persons". The sentence came into effect on 11 December following a 15-month process that started last year. "After lengthy and laborious legal proceedings, the accused has been found guilty on all charges and sentenced to 14 years rigorous imprisonment," ISPR said. The FGCM was found to have complied with all legal provisions, and Hameed was "afforded all legal rights" and could use his own defence team. Under Section 133B of the Army Act, a sentence exceeding three months handed out by a court-martial may be appealed against in a court of appeals, which should be filed within 40 days from the "date of announcement of finding or sentence or promulgation thereof, whichever is earlier."

The former lieutenant general was taken into custody in August 2024 following allegations of misconduct by the owner of a private housing society. The military subsequently announced FGCM proceedings against him, and a military court indicted Hameed in December 2024 on three counts - engaging in political activities, violating anti-espionage laws and abusing his authority. At the time, the ISPR stated that an investigation was being conducted into "events related to creating agitation and unrest, leading to multiple incidents including, but not limited to May 9, 2023, for fomenting instability at the behest of and in collusion with vested political interests." 09 May 2023 saw violent protests across the country following the arrest of former prime minister and PTI founder Imran Khan.

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said that Hameed was also being penalised in the Top City case, in which he was accused of misusing his position to extort money from a private housing society. "Today, the person who crossed the red line has been punished," he said, adding that Hameed was given "full opportunity" to defend himself. He termed the court's decision as "historic" and alleged that Hameed had been the PTI's "political adviser." Tarar also mentioned that further action could be taken against Hameed. "[...] even beyond events like May 9,

there are serious issues that will be investigated further against him. Another probe is underway into the extent and nature of Hameed's involvement in politics. It's not hidden that he was advising PTI and trying to weaken the state's writ," he added. Meanwhile, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif reacted to Hameed's sentencing, commenting on a post on X that the "nation will reap the harvest of seeds sown by Faiz Hameed sahib and (former army chief) Bajwa for years."

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Pakistan insists on written guarantees from Taliban

On 12 December, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO) cautiously welcomed a declaration from more than 1000 Afghan Ulema, issued in Kabul, terming cross-border militant activities as acts of "rebellion." However, the FO stated that there would likely be no meaningful progress between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban until the latter have issued written assurances. In addition to viewing the Ulema declaration as implicitly condemning other groups, such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the FO's statement pointed out that historically, Ulema and Taliban authorities in general have not implemented any of their verbal or political commitments. Therefore, for Pakistan to consider this latest development to be significant, it must translate into formal, written guarantees from the Taliban's leadership, ideally within the broader context of mediation with friendly states.

The current stance is rooted in Pakistan having ongoing negotiations with the Taliban in Kabul, which were made possible by Kabul facilitating several rounds of communication and an initial ceasefire agreement. Just before a suicide attack in North Waziristan that killed seven Pakistani soldiers and injured 13 others on August 24, Pakistan and Afghanistan had reached an agreement to extend their ceasefire. In this act of violence, a group of militants rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into a military camp, killing six of themselves. At the time, a group of Pakistani and Afghan delegations were preparing to meet in Doha for peace talks, with the Pakistani delegation already in Doha, while the Afghan delegation was on its way following

the expiration of a newly established 48-hour ceasefire after nearly a week of intense fighting along the border. Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Afghan Taliban, confirmed that the Taliban received orders from their leadership in Kabul to adhere to the ceasefire, as long as Pakistan did not conduct military operations against the Taliban. Both nations are currently involved in an intense diplomatic quarrel due to the ongoing conflicts and accusations regarding militant activity. In November, delegations of both countries met in Istanbul to accelerate the peace process, but these talks failed to produce a comprehensive peace deal. The Pakistani government is demanding that the Afghan government take action to control the operations of the Pakistani Taliban operating from Afghanistan, while the Afghan government is accusing the Pakistani government of spreading lies about the Taliban and supporting the spread of military operations against the Taliban.

The FO's most recent briefing implies that they consider the Afghan Taliban's refusal to accept aid provided through humanitarian convoys, which were organised through Pakistan, to be unprecedented behaviour for a government that has significant economic and humanitarian difficulties. This backlash has been part of a greater trend of Pakistan's hardening position towards Afghanistan and has shown that now, as with border management and political engagement, trade facilitation will increasingly become conditional on the Afghan Government's promise of reducing or eliminating anti-Pakistan militancy and formalising its commitments to Pakistan. Therefore, Islamabad's call for written guarantees represents both mistrust of the past commitments made by the Taliban and an effort to change the nature of their relationship from a non-structured or informal basis of religious or political motivation to a more accountable basis for both parties through a structured engagement process.

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Finance Ministry says IMF's "new conditions" are part of an existing reform trajectory, and not an "abrupt or unprecedented" imposition

On 14 December, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan's finance ministry clarified that 11 targets identified as "new conditions" under the ongoing International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme were not sudden additions but part of an already existing reform trajectory. The clarification followed reports that Pakistan had agreed to additional tax measures and expenditure controls to address revenue shortfalls and keep the USD 7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) on track. The ministry highlighted that these measures reflected "continuity, sequencing, and deepening of Pakistan's agreed reform agenda" rather than the "imposition of abrupt or unprecedented conditions."

First, the clarification came after IMF documents showed that Pakistan's commitment to revised structural benchmarks, along with the completion of two prior actions, enabled a staff-level agreement for the second EFF review. This led to the IMF Executive Board approval and the disbursement of about USD 1.2 billion on 9 December. According to the finance ministry, the updated Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) supplements earlier commitments and follows a phased, medium-term approach.

Second, the ministry explained that several measures seen as "new" were already incorporated in earlier agreements. For instance, the public disclosure of civil servants' asset declarations had been included since the initial MEFP in May 2024, with the latest benchmark representing a follow-up step after legislative amendments to the Civil Servants Act, 1973. Similarly, efforts to strengthen the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and provincial anti-corruption bodies were described as extensions of earlier governance reforms rather than responses to new external assessments.

Third, the ministry highlighted reforms aimed at financial stability and market efficiency. Strengthening remittance inflows was noted as "critical to Pakistan's external stability," having a 26 per cent year-on-year increase from FY24 to FY25 following measures to curb informal channels. It added that reforms to cross-border payments and studies on local currency bond markets were logical progressions of prior commitments.

Fourth, on taxation and regulatory reforms, the ministry said that initiatives such as the Tax Policy Office, compliance risk management, and amendments to the Companies Act, 2017, were part of a broader agenda to improve the business environment. Contingency revenue measures, including duties outlined in the initial MEFP, were also framed as pre-agreed safeguards.

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"IMF targets dubbed 'new' benchmarks do not represent 'imposition of abrupt conditions': finance ministry," *Dawn*, 14 December 2025

Pakistan issues NOCs to global cryptocurrency exchanges Binance and HTX as a "first step under a risk-mitigated, phased, supervised entry framework"

On 14 December, *Dawn* reported that the Chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA), Bilal Bin Saqib, highlighted that the no-objection certificates (NOCs) issued to global cryptocurrency exchanges Binance and HTX do not constitute a "blanket approval" but represent the "first step under a risk-mitigated, phased, supervised entry framework." His televised video statement followed Pakistan's decision to grant initial clearance allowing the two exchanges to register with regulators, establish local subsidiaries, and begin preparations for applying for full exchange licences.

He described the move as the "first practical step" reflecting a "new mindset" guided by a "Pakistan-first" approach. Under this framework, authorities aim to ensure control in three areas: preventing money laundering and terrorism financing; ensuring transparency of ownership and fitness checks; and enforcing clear licensing timelines. "It is mandatory for every platform to register on the AML [system] and have direct linkages with the financial monitoring unit," he said, noting that no platform would operate without "disclosures and verification."

Highlighting the importance of regulation over promotion, Saqib stated, "We will first control this industry and then scale it." He noted that Pakistan ranks among the top crypto-adoption countries, with an estimated 30–40 million users, adding that regulation is necessary to protect users, attract capital, and prevent talent

outflow. He concluded that Pakistan seeks to welcome innovation while ensuring compliance, and added: "Pakistan should emerge as a global case study in the area of global assets."

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"NOCs to Binance, HTX not 'blanket approvals' but first step under supervised entry framework: Bilal bin Saqib," Dawn, 14 December 2025

FCC affirms that all courts are to adhere to its judgments

On 22 December, as reported by Dawn, the Federal Court Commission (FCC) Bench has reiterated these principles in a recent ruling regarding a long-standing land dispute case in which the bench has commented on the fact that 24 years have elapsed and that the Supreme Court has already made a decision in the matter. The Commission noted that Karam Ali had filed a revision petition before the Federal Land Commission in 2010 and that the petition was accepted by the chairperson of the commission despite the fact that the petitioner had failed to disclose the litigation that had preceded it, which is a clear violation of Article 189 of the Constitution. The bench has also noted that the matter had previously been conclusively adjudicated by the Supreme Court and noted that reopening the matter in a lower court is contrary to established principles of judicial finality and sets a very dangerous precedent. The order has also held that the Chairperson of the Commission has acted in violation of Article 190 as well as the doctrine of res judicata and has confirmed that once a dispute has been conclusively resolved, it may not be relitigated, as this will undermine the foundation of constitutional governance.

With the introduction of the 27th Constitutional Amendment in Pakistan, an escalating dialogue regarding the independence of courts and the separation of powers amongst governmental components has begun. While some may view the Amendment and the resulting changes to the way judicial bodies operate in relation to administrative and monitoring procedures, as a positive trend towards improving the efficiency of the judiciary, critics have charged that the Amendment has diminished the ability of the higher or appellate level judiciary to operate independently as a result of introducing additional instances of executive or parliamentary influence upon the judiciary. Both legal analysts and the opposition to the current government believe that the inclusion of these amendments diminishes the spirit of the 1973

Constitution and, as a consequence, makes courts more amenable to political pressure and thus undermines the separation of powers principle. Furthermore, the Amendment has become a "symbol" of a larger issue that is developing regarding the misuse of constitutional mechanisms to centralise authority and shut off institutional checks on governmental powers, contrary to the goal of improving democratic governance.

Pakistan's judiciary has responded to the violation of its constitutional authority with a firm and consistent approach by issuing clarity to its authority through Supreme Court judgements as prescribed by Article 189 of Pakistan's Constitution. The senior judges have also indicated to subordinate courts and government agencies that any attempts to revisit previously decided cases can cause instability in the law, and also that these types of actions would represent a breach of the Constitution. Furthermore, based on previous cases decided by the Supreme Court, it would appear that every executive or judicial body must respect and facilitate the authority of the Supreme Court as stated in Article 190 of Pakistan's Constitution. Thus, the history of the judiciary in Pakistan shows that the judiciary has consistently upheld the importance of res judicata, respect for the institution of the judiciary, and adherence to the rule of law as the basis for its authority.

References:

"FCC affirms all other courts, including SC, are 'constitutionally mandated' to adhere to its judgements," Dawn, 21 December, 2025

Pakistan signs major arms deal with Libya: Deal includes the sale of JF-17 fighter jets and Super Mushak trainer aircraft

On 23 December, as reported by Dawn, according to Reuters news agency, Pakistan made its largest weapons sales worth over USD four billion to the Libyan National Army (LNA). It was finalised after a meeting last week between Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir and Saddam Khalifa Haftar, deputy commander-in-chief of the LNA, in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi, officials said.

As per Reuters, the deal - one of Pakistan's largest ever weapons sales - includes 16 JF-17 fighter jets, a multi-role combat aircraft that has been jointly developed by Pakistan and China, and 12 Super Mushak trainer aircraft, used for

basic pilot training. As a result of an arms embargo on Libya, any transfer of weapons requires UN approval, which was dismissed by the Pakistani military, comparing the various other countries supplying weapons and equipment to Libya. Nevertheless, as a result of this deal, Libya is likely to face scrutiny in the long run.

One of the Pakistani officials said the deal included the sale of equipment for land, sea and air, spread over two and a half years, adding it could also include the JF-17 fighter jets. Two of the officials said the deal was valued at more than USD 4 billion, while the other two said it amounted to USD 4.6 billion. "We announce the launch of a new phase of strategic military cooperation with Pakistan," Haftar said in remarks broadcast on Sunday by Al-Hadath television. Libya has been subject to an arms embargo since 2011. A panel of experts said in December 2024 that the UN arms embargo regime remained "ineffective". Pakistan has been looking to increase defence exports, drawing on decades of counterinsurgency experience and a domestic defence industry that includes aircraft production and overhaul, armoured vehicles, munitions and naval construction.

References:

"Pakistan snaps up major deal with Libyan force", Dawn, 23 December 2025

Imran and wife get bail extension: Interim bail of Imran and Bushra extended till 27 January

On 24 December, *Dawn* reported that a local court on Tuesday extended the interim bail of Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the 9 May cases and five other matters while directing Imran to appear at the next hearing in person or via video link. Arguments on the bail plea could not be advanced due to the unavailability of Imran. The court extended the interim bail and adjourned the hearing till 27 January for both Imran and Bushra. Separately, a PTI lawyer once again was denied the opportunity to meet Imran to obtain his signature on the power of attorney papers for filing the appeal against his recent conviction in the Toshakhana case.

References:

"Interim bail of Imran, Bushra extended till Jan 27," Dawn, 24 December 2025

PIA bidding process complete:

Arif Habib wins auction for airline with PKR 135 billion bid

On 24 December, as reported by *The Express Tribune* and *Dawn*, a consortium led by investment firm Arif Habib Corp won the auction for Pakistan Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL) with a PKR 135 billion bid placed during the open auction. Initially, pre-qualified bids were submitted by Lucky Cement, Airblue and Arif Habib. Airblue exited the race after the first round with a bid lower than the reference price of PKR 100 billion. Following a 30-minute break, the next round commenced with Lucky Cement placing a bid of PKR 134 billion, which was subsequently countered and topped by a PKR 135 billion bid from Arif Habib. "PIA is our national institution," Habib said. "Initially, we plan to expand the fleet to 38 aircraft in the first phase, then to 65, depending on demand. Employment opportunities will grow as we expand. The existing experienced employees will also get opportunities," he added. Arif Habib will purchase a 75 per cent stake in the PIA, with the transition committee giving them an option to purchase the remaining 25 per cent.

Out of the PKR 135 billion, the government will receive PKR 10 billion, and the remaining amount will be invested in the PIA. Muhammad Ali, privatisation adviser to the prime minister, said that the winner would have to deposit two-thirds of the bid amount within three months and the remaining within the next year. He also mentioned that the successful bidder will have three months to show interest in acquiring the remaining 25 per cent shares of the PIA at a 12 per cent premium. There is also a possibility for Fauji Fertilizer Company Ltd. to become the fifth partner in the consortium. The government's desire is for the PIA to have 40 functional aircraft carrying seven million people annually, up from the current four million. It has also barred the new owners from terminating any employee for a maximum period of one year.

The completion of the bidding process for the PIA marks the first major privatisation transaction in Pakistan in nearly two decades. This was the second attempt to sell the PIA in just over a year and marks the first successful transaction since the country's largest power distribution company, K Electric, was sold by the government in 2005. To make a successful second attempt, the government even waived off the 18 per cent sales tax on aircraft lease, gave PKR 36 billion tax credit to the bidders and extended the timeframe to clear the current PKR

33 billion of liabilities of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The airline currently has fewer than 6,900 permanent employees, in addition to the 2,900 contractual employees. Arif Habib assured employees that they should not have any fear, as good and competent workers will be retained and compensated.

References:

Shahbaz Rana, "Govt finally cuts loose 'white elephant' PIA," *The Express Tribune*, 24 December 2025

Amin Ahmed, "Arif Habib consortium emerges victorious in PIA auction with Rs135bn bid," *Dawn*, 23 December 2025

Imran and Bushra file appeals with IHC: They challenged their conviction in the Toshakhana-2 case

On 30 December, *Dawn* reported that PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi on Monday filed separate appeals with the Islamabad High Court (IHC) challenging their conviction in the Toshakhana-2 case. The couple's lawyers contended that the cases against them were politically motivated, adding that "the overarching objective of the present prosecution appears to be the continued incarceration of the appellant, thereby preventing his participation in national politics and curtailing his political role and influence."

It was further noted that the Toshakhana-2 conviction was the fourth prosecution in the Toshakhana cases and constituted double jeopardy, "reflecting a repetitive and overlapping invocation of criminal process in respect of the same subject matter". The appeals also state that the conviction ignored the 2018 Toshakhana policy, with Clause I, mandating that all gifts received shall be duly reported and deposited with the Toshakhana. It argued that there was no violation of the Toshakhana policy, as the gifts were deposited and fees to retain the gifts were paid.

On 20 December, a special court had sentenced Imran and Bushra to 17 years in prison in the case related to the purchase of an expensive Bulgari jewellery set, which was gifted to Imran by the Saudi crown prince during an official visit in May 2021 at a throwaway price. The prosecution contended that Imran retained the jewellery set, which was valued at approximately PKR 80 million, after paying only PKR 2.9 million.

References:

"PTI founder Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi challenge Toshakhana 2 verdict in IHC," *Dawn*, 30 December 2025

PAKISTAN IN BRIEF

1 December- 31 December

By Tanvi Harendra, Sunidhi Sampige, Nirmithi M, Abhimanyu Solaki, Preetha R, Brighty Ann Sarah & Akshath Kaimal

POLITICS & GOVERNANCE

KP CM announces weekly demonstrations outside IHC in solidarity with Imran Khan's sisters; Claims that PTI is being forced into a conflict

On 1 December, Dawn reported that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi stated that those in authority were trying to provoke the PTI into a conflict, but the party would stay calm and avoid any confrontation, but that "the PTI will never hesitate to offer sacrifice." Addressing a news conference at the Chief Minister's House, he asserted that attempts are underway to corner the PTI, yet the party would persist with its peaceful demonstrations. "Persistent efforts have been made to isolate the PTI, and peaceful protesters were even shot at," he said. Afridi also announced that the PTI had resolved that all its lawmakers would stage peaceful demonstrations outside the Islamabad High Court every Tuesday and accompany Mr Khan's sisters to Adiala Jail. He added that the KP government would act in accordance with the PTI leadership's directives. "All the parliamentarians, including National and provincial assembly members as well as senators, will protest outside the IHC over delayed case hearings. They will all proceed to Adiala, accompanying Khan sahib's sisters," Mr Afridi told reporters. He stated that the PTI was being mistreated, citing that he was placed on the Passport Control List. He also asserted that no part of KP was under the control of militants, but added that the entire country was being controlled by a single individual. He said the federal government should take the province's proposals into account to ensure lasting peace in KP, noting that decisions made behind closed doors had previously hurt the region. "If the federal government implements what the provincial government has been suggesting, it will be our responsibility to carry out those decisions and maintain law and order," he said. ("PTI to stay calm despite being pushed towards conflict: KP CM," Dawn, 1 December 2025)

Authorities concealing information about Imran Khan, fears son

On 01 December, Imran Khan's son, Kasim Khan, alleged that authorities were concealing information regarding his father's condition,

stating it could be "something irreversible". His remarks came as the PTI and Imran's sisters have protested outside Adiala jail, where he is imprisoned. Imran has been in prison since August 2023, following convictions in a series of cases he believes were politically driven after he was ousted as Prime Minister following a non-confidence vote in 2022. Kasim told Reuters that he had no direct or verifiable contact with his father despite a court order for weekly meetings. "Not knowing whether your father is safe, injured or even alive is a form of psychological torture," he said. He also added that the family has repeatedly tried to contact Imran's personal physician, who has not been allowed to examine him for over a year. The isolation of the former Prime Minister has fuelled fears over a deliberate effort to push him out of public sight. Kasim added that he last saw his father in November 2022, after he survived an assassination attempt. The family has also been pursuing internal and external avenues, like appealing to international human rights organisations. Despite Defence Minister Khwaja Asif assuring that Imran's family were being allowed to meet him, his former wife, Jemima Goldsmith, wrote on X, "They're not even allowed to speak to him on the phone. No one is." ("'Something irreversible' about Imran being hidden, fears son," Dawn, 02 December 2025)

Governor's rule is a constitutional measure if the need arises, says law minister

On 01 December, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar told the National Assembly that the imposition of Governor's rule in any province was within the constitutional process, with no resemblance to martial law. This was in reference to the imposition of Articles 232, 233, and 234 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, following protests against the imprisonment of Imran Khan. "There is nothing unconstitutional if circumstances arise to impose Governor's Rule," he said. Speaker Ayaz Sadiq urged him to engage with parliamentarians from both sides and that any issue can only be resolved through dialogue. He asserted that the dignity of the Parliament will be protected at all costs against anyone threatening to attack it. In response, opposition leader Ali Muhammad Khan questioned how any dialogue would be possible

while Imran Khan was still in prison. Speaker Sadiq had also mentioned that a member, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, had “also threatened to physically approach the Speaker’s chair”. The House passed a resolution condemning the move by Achakzai, but the speaker said he would not put the resolution to a vote and instead would make it a part of the Assembly’s record. On the other hand, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said Achakzai was the only person to challenge the 8th Constitutional Amendment and that it was against democracy to call someone a traitor for having a different opinion. Meanwhile, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi dared the federal government to impose Governor’s rule in his province. “There is no need for any other rule in the province,” he said, adding that his government is not afraid. (“If situation demands, Governor’s rule a constitutional measure: law minister,” *The News International*, 02 December 2025)

KP Assembly unanimously passes resolution for creating Hazara province

On 01 December, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly unanimously passed a resolution calling for the creation of Hazara as a separate province. The resolution urges the provincial government to complete all arrangements needed and to forward its recommendations to the federal government so that the demand of the Hazara people is realised. Presented by ruling party member Nazir Abbasi, the resolution calls for the immediate initiation of the constitutional process under Article 239 for the establishment of the province. It also called for the provincial government to finalise administrative structures, boundaries and other required arrangements promptly. In addition to this, the assembly also unanimously approved a motion to recognise the late former Prime Minister and PPP founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as a national martyr. Separately, another resolution was approved calling for the restriction on the use of the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) ordinance against political workers. Provincial Minister Meena Khan Afridi reiterated that the chief minister’s position is to prevent punitive measures against political workers. The assembly also addressed agricultural concerns, passing a resolution to maintain last year’s tobacco quota of 30 million tons. Meanwhile, KP government members and opposition parties unified in expressing support for a larger National Finance Commission (NFC) allocation, ahead of the upcoming meeting on 04 December. (“K-P Assembly unanimously passes resolution on creation of Hazara province,” *The Express Tribune*, 01 December 2025; “KP Assembly

passes unanimous resolution for Hazara province,” *The News International*, 02 December 2025)

Not the government’s responsibility to give jobs, says finance minister

On 01 December, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said that it was not the government’s responsibility to provide jobs, amidst a capital outflow from the country in the absence of a friendly business environment and a high unemployment rate. “It is not the government’s job to give jobs, and we have to get out of that mindset; it is the ladies and gentlemen who are freelancers today, leading our IT services, leading the IT economy,” he said as he addressed a seminar on population growth. In response, the executive director of the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Karachi, Akbar Zaidi, said that Pakistan’s economy is in a “very, very sharp decline” and that most will agree that all numbers are going in the wrong direction. This comes amidst an absent conducive business environment, which has lately been acknowledged by key policymakers. Pakistan’s economy is struggling under a growth model that cannot support its rapidly expanding population of 250 million, which was emphasised by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmad last week. Policymakers and economists have highlighted severe issues from rising unemployment, declining real wages, and a worsening Human Development Index ranking. Comparisons with neighbouring countries show Pakistan lagging significantly, with lower GDP per capita and weaker capital investment. International institutions, including the World Bank, stress the need for job creation, skills development, and reductions in stunting and learning poverty for sustainable growth. (“Giving jobs is not the government’s responsibility: FinMin,” *The Express Tribune*, 02 December 2025)

Achakzai claims that the Constitution has been reduced to formality and state repression is unleashed against the PTI

On 3 December, Dawn reported Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) Chairman Mehmood Khan Achakzai’s statement claiming that the Constitution has been reduced to a mere formality, questioning how a state can operate without pre-agreed rules and regulations, while it’s fundamental to the functioning of even a village. Speaking at a public meeting to mark the 52nd death anniversary of Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, a Pashtun nationalist and political leader, he criticised the government as a parliament formed through stolen mandates,

money or influence that wielded no authority to alter the basic structure of the Constitution. Achakzai also alleged that in order to secure a majority, state repression was unleashed against the PTI, claiming that thousands of homes were raided, workers were tortured in police stations and detention centres, and even their dignity was violated. "Despite this, the public gave PTI the mandate, but instead of counting votes, candidates who came third or fourth were declared winners through tick-marking, while others were given victory in exchange for millions," he alleged. He added that when a majority still couldn't be secured, opposition lawmakers were mass-disqualified through court orders, with their seats then transferred to what he called the "fake government." ("Achakzai says Constitution reduced to formality," *Dawn*, 3 December 2025)

Imran Khan reconstitutes PTI's political committee

On 4 December, *Dawn* reported that the PTI's information secretary informed that the PTI's political committee with 40 members would be replaced by a smaller body. The smaller body will include provincial heads, leaders of the opposition, and a few other members. PTI's founder, Imran Khan, in his tweet, said that Shahid Khattak should be appointed as the parliamentary leader in the national assembly and authorised KP's newly elected CM, Sohail Afridi, to reorganise the body of the Insaaf Lawyer Forum (ILF). The PTI founder also criticised the participation of PTI people in the National Defence University (NDU) workshop, calling it a shameful act. ("Imran dissolves PTI political committee amid 'leaks'," *Dawn*, 04 December 2025)

KP CM petitions court for medical assessment for Imran Khan amid health concerns

On 4 December, *Dawn* reported that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's newly elected Chief Minister Sohail Afridi petitioned the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to allow doctors from Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital (SKMCH) to examine the 'ailing' PTI founder. He argued that the PTI founder was facing multiple health complications that required assessment from specialist doctors. In the petition, the Punjab government, through its prison department, has been made a respondent. Separately, PTI founder's elder sister Aleema Khanum announced that there will be a sit-in protest outside Adiala jail until six family members and six lawyers are allowed to meet Imran Khan.

("IHC urged to allow Imran's medical examination by Shaukat Khanum doctors," *Dawn*, 04 December 2025)

KP CM again denied a meeting with Imran Khan

On 5 December, *The News International* reported that the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi was denied a ninth time from meeting Imran Khan at Adiala Jail. Despite a scheduled visit by Afridi, he was still blocked from meeting Khan. Separately, Khan's sister, Aleema Khan, had said that her interview with foreign media was misrepresented and said to the media outside of the Anti-Terrorism Court in Rawalpindi that Khan has been kept in solitary confinement and vowed their protest would continue. Afridi called the denial to meet Khan "discriminatory treatment" and said that the rejection had once again proved the obstruction of lawful meetings. ("KP CM again denied meeting with Imran," *The News International*, 05 December 2025)

Parties across the spectrum align to support the armed forces in condemning the PTI; The PTI seeks apology and accountability over "derogatory" language against Imran Khan

On 08 December, *Dawn* reported that parties across the political spectrum sided with the country's armed forces in condemning the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's rhetoric as a "coordinated campaign to malign state institutions and sow instability." Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) convener Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui stated that "If PTI believes its leader is greater than the country, then it must make a choice," recounting that his party had once chosen the state over the narrative of its own founder. Federal health minister and senior deputy convener of the party, Mustafa Kamal alleged that PTI and its leadership were actively maligning Pakistan's military and its commanders internationally. He stated that "These attitudes are shameful," and that the PTI should be grateful that the army is only holding press conferences to expose the party. In a press conference in Islamabad, Balochistan Chief Minister and Pakistan Peoples's Party (PPP) leader Sarfraz Bugti also condemned Imran Khan for "spreading propaganda against the army and maligning them in line with the agenda of hostile agencies." "In this situation, the nation has to choose, and the nation has chosen to stand with its forces," he asserted, adding that there was an urgent need to "abandon the narrative which was weakening the state." Railways Minister Hanif

Abbasi also assailed Imran Khan during a press conference in Rawalpindi, saying that had his claims about the former premier receiving funding from India and Israel been taken seriously, Pakistan would not be in the state it is now. "I had said that the PTI was receiving Indian and Israeli money. This was proven. I took the foreign funding case to the Supreme Court," he added. He also asserted that if Imran Khan had been disqualified over the foreign funding case then, there would not be anarchy or terrorism." In response to Abbasi's remarks, PTI, in a statement, said that "it would be difficult for individuals like Abbasi to understand that Imran always stood firm for his country, its institutions, and the people of Pakistan at every forum."

PTI, through a resolution adopted at a large protest rally in Peshawar on 07 December, has demanded an apology for alleged derogatory language used against Imran Khan and accountability of those responsible to prevent such statements in future. Leaders of PTI and Tehreek-i-Tahafuz Ayeen Pakistan (TTAP), addressing the gathering, strongly condemned Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry for his remarks about Mr Khan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi in a media briefing, and urged the institution to "remain within its constitutional limits." The party added that "further attempts to malign" Imran Khan in a bid to tarnish his popularity would only lead to it rising with each narrative levelled against him. The party also rejected any attempt of imposing governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, stating that the people of the province had given a clear mandate to Imran Khan and PTI "despite all obstacles and rigging." "Any government formed as a result of the governor's rule will be illegal and unconstitutional in the eyes of the people," the resolution stated.

In a separate development, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has refused to recognise Barrister Gohar Ali Khan as chairperson of the PTI. According to a 26 November letter addressed to Barrister Gohar, he had written an application to the commission on 13 November seeking the inclusion of those senators into the party who were elected to the upper house of Parliament from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly in July after much delay. The ECP stated in the letter that since the issue of intra-party election of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf is pending before the commission due to the stay order obtained by

the party from the Lahore High Court (LHC), "the commission is not in a position to accept you as chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf. Therefore, you do not have any locus standi." Barrister Gohar responded by stating that "It is very unfortunate that they do not recognise the PTI." ("PTI stays defiant despite flak from all sides," *Dawn*, 08 December 2025; "PTI says attempts to malign Imran will only increase his popularity," *Dawn*, 07 December 2025; "ECP does not recognise Barrister Gohar as PTI chairman," *Dawn*, 07 December 2025)

UN special rapporteur states that Imran Khan's conditions in prison amount to inhuman or degrading treatment, urges authorities to comply with international standards

On 13 December, *Dawn* reported that a United Nations special rapporteur, Alice Jill Edwards, warned that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and former Prime Minister Imran Khan's conditions in Adiala jail could amount to inhuman or degrading treatment, urging the authorities to comply with international norms and standards. Imran Khan's legal team had approached the rapporteur to urge the government to cease the alleged mistreatment. "I call on Pakistani authorities to ensure that Khan's conditions of detention fully comply with international norms and standards," Edwards said in a statement. "Since his transfer to Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi on September 26, 2023, Imran Khan has reportedly been held for excessive periods in solitary confinement, confined for 23 hours a day in his cell, and with highly restricted access to the outside world," she said. "His cell is reportedly under constant camera surveillance." "Khan's solitary confinement should be lifted without delay," she said. The Prime Minister's Aide Rana Ihsan Afzal dismissed the concerns, stating that Imran was being held "according to prison rules and the jail manual," and that he was being provided facilities "greater than his rights" as a B-class prisoner. "His children have access, and he should schedule [a call] and put in the appropriate request. There is no issue or obstacle from the government of Pakistan," he added. ("UN expert decries Imran's detention, calls on authorities to ensure compliance with international standards," *Dawn*, 13 December 2025)

Deputy Chairman of Senate vows to enforce ruling that restricts the criticism of 'national heroes'

On 13 December, *Dawn* reported that the Deputy Chairman, Syedaal Khan, stated that he would strictly enforce the 4 December ruling

restricting criticism of “national heroes,” including political leaders, in the Senate. Speaking to reporters, he stressed that derogatory or disrespectful remarks against national heroes, whether from the armed forces, politics, judiciary or other national institutions, would not be tolerated in the House. “This ruling is not against any specific party, individual, or group. It is strictly in accordance with the rules and laws governing the Senate. The sole purpose is to preserve the sanctity of the House and uphold parliamentary values,” he asserted. He made the remarks during an informal interaction with reporters at Parliament House. Mr Khan said formal letters had already been sent to all parliamentary leaders, including those from the PTI, to ensure strict enforcement of the acting Senate chairman’s ruling. Copies were also shared with the Leader of the House, the law ministry and the chief whip to avoid any ambiguity. He said the ruling on suspending members who disrupt proceedings would be implemented without compromise, noting that it explicitly bans bringing banners, placards, photographs or any material that undermines parliamentary decorum into the House. Emphasising that protecting Parliament’s credibility is a shared responsibility, he paid tribute to the security forces and urged restraint in public statements. While affirming full protection for members speaking within constitutional and parliamentary limits, he stressed that Parliament would not be used for pressure tactics, intimidation or provocation. “Every member has the right to express views, but that right must be exercised within the constitutional framework, rules of procedure, and established parliamentary traditions,” he emphasised. (“Syedal vows to enforce his ruling to bar criticism of national heroes,” Dawn, 13 December 2025)

Senate standing committee approves the ‘Transfer of Railways Amendment Bill, 2025’

On 13 December, *Dawn* reported that the Senate Standing Committee on Railways, chaired by Senator Jam Saifullah Khan, unanimously passed the draft of the ‘Transfer of Railways Amendment Bill, 2025’, aimed at attracting investment through track access. on the serving employees, manpower planning, budget implications, and revenue trends before and after outsourcing. Railways Minister Muhammad Hanif Abbasi told the committee that the proposed initiative would improve logistics for the Reko Diq mining project, while amendments would also allow provincial governments to invest in Pakistan Railways’ infrastructure. The

committee was informed that the changes aim to attract investment by granting track access for private operators using their own locomotives and rolling stock, enhancing efficiency, competition, revenue generation, safety planning, and freight and passenger services. The committee raised concerns over the proposed railway board, with Senator Rubina Khalid noting the absence of the federal railways minister as a public representative. The chairman stated that the minister must be included on the board to strengthen oversight and accountability. The panel also urged the ministry to engage chambers of commerce to boost investment and expand public-private partnerships, extend ongoing improvements such as LED installations to smaller stations, and enhance public awareness on rail safety. The committee also discussed concerns raised by Senator Shahadat Awan regarding the potential impact on serving employees, directing the minister to protect staff interests. It further instructed the ministry to present a detailed briefing at the next meeting on outsourcing, new hiring, manpower planning, budgetary implications, and revenue trends before and after outsourcing. (“Senate panel okays Railways bill,” Dawn, 13 December 2025)

Foreign Office accused of ‘corruption of billions of rupees’ in attestation of documents

On 12 December, *Dawn* reported that following Senator Rana Mahmoodul Hassan’s allegations that “corruption of billions of rupees” was being committed daily at the foreign affairs ministry in the attestation of documents, a Senate body decided to raise the matter with the Foreign Office (FO). The issue was brought up during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, where Senator Hassan of the PPP alleged corruption in the process and remarked: “Overseas Pakistanis are either running from post to pillar for a single signature or paying money for corruption.” He said citizens were forced to spend nights on pavements to get documents attested, stressing that the process should either be digitised or delegated to union councils and deputy commissioners. Senator Anwaarul Haq Kakar questioned why digitisation had not been implemented, asked whether resources were lacking, and suggested a dedicated Foreign Office app. He added that the FO should be held accountable for failing to resolve the issue, remarking that senior officials were unwilling to relinquish control while lower staff exploited the system. (“Senator alleges ‘corruption of billions

of rupees' in attestation of documents at Foreign Office," Dawn, 12 December 2025)

PTI to reconstitute 23-member political committee and include leaders of opposition alliance

On 12 December, *Dawn* reported that the PTI has announced the reconstitution of a 23-member political committee, including members from the opposition political alliance, to serve as the party's decision-making forum and responsible for overseeing political strategy, organisational matters, and policy direction. The party's political committee had been dissolved by PTI founder, Imran Khan amid disagreements within the opposition party. The party's Central Secretariat issued a notification, signed by PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja and Additional Secretary General Firdous Shamim Naqvi. "The secretary general, on the instruction of the party's founding chairman and in consultation with senior colleagues in the party, hereby reconstitutes the Political Committee of the Party/Alliance," the notification said. The newly formed committee is set to be effective immediately and will serve as the "apex decision-making body of the party with respect to all decisions/ functioning, its wings and other committees." It has been decided that the committee will convene at least once a week, and its decisions will be implemented through the Central Secretariat and relevant party structures across the country.

It will also lay down "policies to be followed by the parliamentary parties of PTI in the National Assembly, the Senate and the provincial assemblies, including the assemblies of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir." "Sub-Committees will also be formed with individuals having relevant experience, including office-bearers of the party's wings, invited to serve on the sub-committees," it said. The notification stated that sub-committees would be formed comprising individuals with relevant experience, including office-bearers from the party's wings. Secretary General of the Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan, Asad Qaiser, said the proposal to dissolve the political committee had been raised repeatedly by members, citing decision leaks as a key reason. He added that the timing of the announcement was inconsequential, as the matter had been under consideration for some time. Earlier, an internal memo seeking to centralise authority in the secretary general's office had drawn criticism from party insiders, who viewed it as an attempt to curb internal democracy and

silence dissent within the PTI. ("PTI reconstitutes political committee, includes leaders of opposition alliance," Dawn, 12 December 2025)

KP CM calls on PTI supporters to prepare for 'Haqiqi Azadi'

On 14 December, *Dawn* reported that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister urged the PTI supporters to be ready to seize true freedom from the country's current rulers. During the PTI rally in Kohat, he reminded the public that Imran Khan had delivered the message from jail of "freedom or death" and given the responsibility of making decisions to Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party Chairman and Senator Allama Raja Nasir Abbas. He claimed that all the government institutions are working to eliminate the PTI and condemned the authorities for calling Imran Khan a "security threat." In his speech, he also advised the Punjab's CM, Maryam Nawaz, to focus on her province and not interfere in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa matters. ("We will together seize Haqiqi Azadi': CM Afridi asks PTI supporters to be ready in case call for protest is made," Dawn, 14 December 2025)

PTI raises concern over Imran Khan's Jail conditions after UN report

On 14 December, *Dawn* reported that PTI raised concern over its founder's conditions in Adiala Jail as a UN expert report exposed "degrading treatment" of the party's founder during his incarceration at Adiala Jail. The report called on authorities to comply with international norms and standards. PTI claimed that it has raised this issue for a long time now, and this report confirmed their concerns. As the report reaffirmed that Imran Khan is facing 23 hours of solitary confinement, constant CCTV surveillance, isolation from the outside world, and not allowed to meet with legal counsel and family and even denied religious practice and basic human necessities, PTI asserted that it shows Imran Khan was being subjected to "inhuman, unlawful, and degrading treatment motivated entirely by political vendetta." However, the prime minister's aide dismissed the UN rapporteur's findings, insisting that Imran Khan is treated as per the prison rules and jail manual. ("PTI demands cessation of Imran's 'solitary confinement' following UN expert's report," Dawn, 14 December 2025)

Aseefa Bhutto urges nationwide support for Polio Vaccination Drive

On 14 December, *Dawn* reported that First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari appealed to parents and public representatives to actively support the

nationwide polio vaccination drive. As Pakistan is one of the last two countries in the world that has active polio cases, the Pakistani government is conducting a last nationwide vaccination drive for this year. The campaign aims to vaccinate 45.4 million children with the help of 408,484 frontline polio workers. Aseefa Bhutto Zardari recalled the legacy of the late Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, under whose leadership Pakistan's first nationwide polio eradication campaign was launched in 1994. ("Aseefa Bhutto appeals for public support ahead of polio vaccination campaign's commencement tomorrow," Dawn, 14 December 2025)

Former senator criticizes Mines and Minerals Act over provincial autonomy

On 15 December, *Dawn* reported that the minister of the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan said that investigations revealed trends of fake information being created and sold through WhatsApp and other platforms. The amount paid to conduct these activities ranged from a few rupees to cents per post, tweet, or message forwarded over 100 times a day. The minister also claimed that these same networks had been found to promote content linked to terror-list organisations as well as "unrelated international causes", which shows that the activity was more commercial rather than ideological. He emphasised he does not need ordinary people to face charges; however, people who are knowingly involved will face legal consequences. Chaudhry also accused PTI-linked social media accounts, which received foreign funding, of promoting an "enemies narrative and target institutions by creating anti-state trends". ("Orchestrated campaign against state unearthed," Dawn, 16 December 2025)

PTI demands an end to Imran's solitary confinement

On 15 December, *Dawn* had reported that a UN rapporteur, Alice Edwards, exposed the degrading treatment of the former prime minister Imran and called it a violation of international law and fundamental human rights. PTI's central media department said that this UN report confirms what has been maintained for months, as well as the claims, which include 23 hours of solitary confinement, no contact with the outside world, obstruction of meetings with legal counsel and family, denial of religious practices, deprivation of basic human needs, etc. According to the report, the statement said "solitary confinement exceeding 15 days amounted to psychological torture." PTI

further asserted that subjecting a detainee to extreme measures despite their age, previous assassination injuries, and denying adequate care is inhumane and unethical. ("PTI demands end to Imran's solitary confinement," Dawn, 15 December 2025)

Pakistan opposition alliance TTAP calls for a nationwide strike, KP CM signals countrywide movement

On 21 December, as reported by *Dawn*, the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohail Afridi, has called for a countrywide political movement in response to the opposition's call for a nationwide wheel-jam and shutter-down strike on the second anniversary of the General Election held in 2024, by blocking the democratic expression of the people of Pakistan (TTAP) on 08 February 2026. TTAP, at a press conference in Islamabad with PTI and its partner parties, also presented their plans for mobilising the masses across all provinces and districts and working with provincial Bar Councils and other civil society organisations to meet the basic demands of free and fair elections, reconstitute the Election Commission, support political prisoners, including Imran Khan, repeal all draconian media laws, address poverty, improve governance, and finally, provide law and order. ("KP CM announces preparations for countrywide movement as TTAP issues Feb 8 strike call," Dawn, 21 December, 2025)

Opposition alliance demands probe into 2024 elections, calls for impartial Election Commission

On 22 December, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, the Tehreek Tahaffuz-e-Ain Pakistan (TTAP) has called for an independent investigation into the alleged rigging of the 2024 General Elections that were held on 08 February. It has also demanded the appointment of an independent Chief Election Commissioner to run the elections again through a reconstituted Election Commission of Pakistan. As part of its announcement following a two-day National Consultative Conference that was held in Islamabad, TTAP has also declared that 08 February, 2026 will be observed across the country as a "Black Day", with Wheel Jams and Shutter Downs scheduled, and has set up a Central Committee to oversee the organisation of activities, which will be headed by Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar. In addition to expressing concern about the state of judicial independence, political imprisonment (specifically regarding Imran Khan and Bushra

Bibi), human rights violations, the economic decline associated with political chaos, and a lack of transparency in governance, the communiqué has stated that democracy, constitutionalism, and the rule of law are in significant danger. ("Opposition alliance demands probe into 2024 elections," The Express Tribune, 22 December, 2025)

Pakistan opposition alliance TTAP calls for a nationwide strike, KP CM signals countrywide movement

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Government and allies push back at TTAP charter

On 23 December, *The Express Tribune* reported that the government and its allies pushed back against the declaration issued by the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTAP) on Monday, which questioned both the feasibility of its demands and the political intent behind them while reiterating that dialogue remains possible only if it's meaningful and constitutional. The series of demands included a probe into the 24 February elections as well as a call for dialogue. Reacting to demands, the Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs said the government was not opposed to dialogues. ("Govt. allies push back at Opposition alliance charter," The Express Tribune, 23 December 2025)

PM Shehbaz reiterates readiness for talks with opposition

On 23 December, *Dawn* reported that PM Shehbaz said on Tuesday that he was reiterating his offer for talks with the opposition but also

emphasised that dialogue between the two sides could only proceed on "legitimate matters". Shehbaz continued that there should be no "blackmailing" under the guise of talks and dialogues, which could only forward "in light of legitimate matters". The need for dialogue between the government and opposition has been stressed as Pakistan continues to face political and economic crises. On 21 December, the second and last day of a national conference held by opposition alliance TTAP, the participants agreed that the door to dialogue should not be closed in a democracy. They thought that in light of the ongoing national crisis, the country needed a new Charter of Democracy. ("If they are ready, govt is definitely ready": PM Shehbaz reiterates offer for dialogue with opposition," Dawn, 23 December 2025)

Ball in govt's court after TTAP nod

On 26 December, *The Express Tribune* reported that with Tehreek-e-Tahafuz Aeen Pakistan (TTAP) accepting PM Shehbaz Sharif's offer for political dialogue, the federal government now has the upper hand to decide when and how to formally open talks with the opposition alliance. However, it is far from the dialogue being smooth as different factions within the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have differing opinions. One faction within PTI is opposed to dialogue with the government. Imran Khan's sister, Aleema Khan, is reported to be opposed to engaging in talks with the present government. However, there appears to be broad agreement within the party that Imran has delegated authority over the future course of action to TTAP Chief Mahmood Khan, who has accepted the PM's offer for dialogue. ("TTAP opens door for talks, but PTI's split leaves dialogue uncertain," The Express Tribune, 26 December 2025)

PTI to launch fresh street movement from Lahore

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is about to launch a new street protest movement today by welcoming Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister in Lahore and holding a public event at the Liberty Roundabout. PTI Punjab chief organiser Aliya Malik said the province will implement party founder Imran Khan's direction to launch a mass movement. Aliya has instructed their people in the Lahore division to ensure their presence at Liberty Roundabout to welcome Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi. Aliya has stated that this mass movement will be historic as they are to convert Lahore's main boulevard into a March for the release of Imran.

("PTI to launch fresh street movement from Lahore," Dawn, 26 December 2025)

KP CM Afridi promises street movement with full force

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will launch a street movement with 'full force'. Sohail said that a coordinated propaganda campaign was being carried out to create a false impression that the provincial government had granted approval to a military operation in the Tirah area of Khyber tribal district. He stated that "We vehemently support the stand of Imran Khan on the issue of military operations. He is opposed to such actions, insisting they have always brought misery to the innocent tribal people." He continued saying that his government won't make any compromise on the rights of tribal districts. ("KP CM Afridi promises street movements with 'full force'," Dawn, 26 December 2025)

PTI grows weary of mixed signals on protest or parley

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that the leaders of Pakistani Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have been increasingly frustrated at what the party has termed as mixed messages by the government on where to go with the political agenda in the future. The officials of the party quoted that there is still doubt whether the ruling party is willing to hold dialogue in the future or is simply trying to quash the opposition pressure with contrived messaging. These contradictory signals, the PTI leaders claimed, have brought confusion in party ranks on whether to focus on protests in the streets or to negotiate. Top officials warned that an extended period of uncertainty would lead to the loss of political energy and internal unity. The party has thus called upon the government to come out plainly to proclaim its intentions so that it does not escalate and make a miscalculation. ("Protest or parley?": PTI grows weary of mixed signals," Dawn, 26 December 2025)

Political instability is holding us back, Federal Planning minister says

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that the Federal Planning minister, Ahsan Iqbal, said on Thursday that Pakistan's current setbacks stem not from a lack of resources, but from political instability, policy inconsistency, weak institutions, neglect of education and absence of discipline. He introduces Uraan Pakistan as a concrete execution framework to translate Quaid-i-Azam's dream into a modern

development strategy to build a trillion-dollar, competitive and knowledge-driven economy. He said rebuilding Pakistan in accordance with Quaid-i-Azam's golden principles was the need of the hour. He warned that corruption, nepotism, intolerance and disorder were identified by the Quaid as the gravest threats to the country's survival. ("Political instability is holding us back: Ahsan," Dawn, 26 December 2025)

Families seek govt help for release of fishermen from Indian jails

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that family members of 11 Pakistani fishermen who are already imprisoned in Indian jails have called on the federal government to come in and have their fishermen released at once. The families claimed that the fishermen have served their terms, but they remain in prison because of delays in repatriation. They emphasised the great financial and emotional distress due to many years of separation and lack of breadwinners. The families asked Islamabad to take the issue to the Indian authorities via the established diplomatic channels to end the issue forcefully. ("Families seek govt help for release of 11 fishermen from Indian jails," Dawn, 26 December 2025)

Onus of SIM misuse placed on registered user

On 26 December, *The Express Tribune* reported that the federal government has indicated that, according to the new telecom laws, the owner of a SIM card who is registered will be liable to any form of misuse or criminal acts that may be associated with that number. The authorities have indicated that this liability will not go away until the user can produce evidence of having been robbed, lost his or her SIM, or transferred it illegally. The policy will enhance traceability and prevent crimes that have been enabled by unregistered and misused SIMs, such as fraud and terrorist related activities. According to the officials, the relocation puts an added burden on consumers to take care of their SIM cards by not letting third parties abuse them. ("Onus of SIM misuse on registered user," The Express Tribune, 26 December 2025)

CM Bugti reiterates commitment to Jinnah's vision, warns against destabilisation in Balochistan

On 26 December, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the chief minister of Balochistan, reiterated his dedication to achieving Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's vision for Pakistan, claiming that coordinated plots to destabilise

the region will be soundly thwarted. Speaking at a Quaid-i-Azam Day ceremony at Jinnah's home in Ziarat, Bugti stated that Pakistan was continuously moving closer to the principles of its founder and was becoming known throughout the world for its tenacity and stature. He claimed that the Pakistan Armed Forces' performance had improved Pakistan's standing abroad and commended them for protecting the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Bugti emphasised unity and cautioned against attempts to take advantage of ethnic and sectarian divisions in Balochistan, emphasising that national identity as Pakistanis must take precedence over linguistic or regional affiliations. He also cautioned that ideological attacks on the state's foundations would not be successful. ("CM Bugti vows to realise Jinnah's vision for Pakistan," *Dawn*, 26 December, 2025)

PM Shehbaz will decide on talks once PTI clarifies its stance, says Rana Sanaullah

On 27 December, *Dawn* reported that according to what the Prime Minister's adviser on political affairs, Rana Sanaullah, said on Friday, the PM Shehbaz Sharif would decide talks with Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) once the opposition party clarifies its stance on negotiations. PTI had rejected talks with the government, but Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP), of which the PTI is a part, stated its openness to conduct talks with the government. PM's aide stated on a news programme called 'Naya Pakistan' that 85 per cent of TTAP consists of PTI members, who rejected any negotiations with the government. The KP chief minister's aide on information and public relations, Shafiullah Jan, also appeared on the programme and reiterated the PTI's stance of not engaging in negotiations with the present government. ("PM Shehbaz will decide on talks once PTI clarifies its stance, says Rana Sanaullah," *Dawn*, 27 December 2025)

PTI rejects talks without 'level playing field'

On 29 December, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (Pakistan Movement for Justice or PTI) will not be negotiating with the current Pakistan government until it is given a so-called "level playing field". Before doing so, the party claims it cannot enter into negotiation with the government from a weak stance and the way things stand now, they feel that they are weak. According to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohail Afridi, and PTI Secretary General, Salman Akram Raja, PTI will continue its current campaign of conducting public rallies and protests until a perceived equal status of the government is recognised by the current Pakistan government. Leaders of the PTI Party

have accused the current government of limiting their political rights, and failure to take seriously the PTI allegations about experiences of election vote tampering and also political prisoner release, while at the same time saying that only after both parties agree to terms can any talks take place. ("PTI rules out talks 'from position of weakness'," *The Express Tribune*, 29 December, 2025)

Mustafa Kamal accuses Altaf Hussain of ordering the killing of Dr Imran Farooq

On 28 December, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, ever since Shumaila Imran died, the two factions of MQM in London and Pakistan have engaged in a blame game during a conference in Karachi held last Sunday. Mustafa Kamal accused Altaf Hussain of ordering the killing of Dr Imran Farooq, which the MQM-London leadership strongly denies. The row has widened the internal divide by dragging other rival figures of MQM into the issue, showing serious splits within the party. ("Blame game erupts between MQM factions over Dr Imran Farooq's murder", *The Express Tribune*, 28 December 2025)

Afridi to visit Sindh and Balochistan after Punjab tour

On 30 December, *Dawn* reported that after the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohail Afridi, toured Punjab, he will next visit Sindh and Balochistan as part of Tehreek-i-Insaf's street movement. His special assistant, Shafi Jan, said that the love of Punjab residents for the PTI was evident from the warm welcome accorded to the delegation on arrival in Lahore. He regretted that the Chief Minister was denied permission to visit the houses of some PTI workers in the cantonment area. Shafi condemned the Punjab government's conduct towards Afridi. Afridi said that the federal government owed PKR 4.758 trillion to KP and that the finance ministry tried to hold a media trial of the provincial government on the issue of fiscal releases through false propaganda. These funds are related to the Accelerated Implementation Programme. ("After Punjab, Afridi to tour Sindh, Balochistan to spur PTI's street movement," *Dawn*, 30 December 2025)

Imran's sisters and PTI protesters dispersed using water cannons

On 30 December, as reported by *Dawn*, the PTI leaders and Imran Khan's sisters again dispersed using water cannon. The sit-in was a protest against the denial of a meeting with Imran. The video of the dispersal of the sit-in with water cannons was shared on social media by the PTI Punjab account. The post stated: "In

the severe cold, an attack with water cannons was carried out on unarmed, peaceful children, women, and citizens." Aleema Khan said that the TTAP did not request dialogue with the government, but rather it was Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif who extended the invite. She added that she and her sisters would continue to demand a meeting with their brother. ("Imran's sisters, PTI protesters again met with water canons during sit-ins outside Adiala jail," *Dawn*, 30 December 2025)

PTI rescind notification of parliamentary board for local bodies polls in Islamabad

On 31 December, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), which has been continuously demanding adherence to the Constitution, has rescinded the notification of the parliamentary board for Islamabad local bodies elections due on 15 February. The decision was made after realising that the notification was issued in violation of the party's constitution. However, the party's secretary general, Salman Akram Raja, has withdrawn the notification. ("PTI rescinds notification of parliamentary board for local bodies polls in Islamabad," *Dawn*, 31 December 2025)

ECONOMY

Finance Minister calls for a higher provincial revenue share in NFC

On 01 December, *Dawn* reported that the Finance Minister urged both the federation and its units to contribute greater revenues in the upcoming National Finance Commission. He appreciated the provincial government's efforts by bringing in legislation for Agriculture Income Tax (AIT). He also asserted that the nature of NFC was to have consensus mainly on revenue, expenditure, and governance, and emphasised the need to bring in not only structural but also institutional reforms, as highlighted in the IMF's governance and corruption diagnostic assessment (GCDA). He insisted that the IMF's GCDA should be viewed as a catalyst rather than a criticism of government policy, as the government itself had requested and facilitated the GCDA as part of its commitment to transparency. The minister also appreciated that the announcement of the US Exim Bank joining the USD 3.5 billion Reko Diq Syndication, which had helped in achieving financial close for the project, also announced that the inaugural panda bond in the Chinese market would be issued in December. ("Finance minister expects 'good' NFC output," *Dawn*, 1 December 2025)

Inflation eases to 6.1 per cent, but cost of living pressures persist

On 02 December, the official figures released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) showed that consumer inflation eased slightly to 6.1 per cent in November, driven by a steady decline in the price of rice and pulses. Although there was a 0.4 per cent month-on-month increase, average inflation for FY25 has dropped sharply to 4.49 per cent, compared to 23.41 per cent last year, largely due to the high-base effect and lower food and transport costs. Economists describe the trend as disinflation, noting that price rises are slowing but living costs remain high, especially with food inflation at five per cent in urban and 5.9 per cent in rural areas, and non-food inflation still elevated nationwide. Core inflation stood at 6.6 per cent in cities and 8.2 per cent in rural regions. November saw steep price increases for onions, chicken, eggs and fish, while tomatoes, vegetables and several pulses registered significant declines. ("Inflation slows to 6.1pc in Nov," *Dawn*, 02 December, 2025)

Govt ramps up efforts to build business-friendly tax regime

On 3 December, *Dawn* reported that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif presided over a meeting of the working group on tax reforms. During the meeting, the Prime Minister emphasised that the government desires to create a business environment in the country and has been taking practical steps for export-driven economic growth. The Chairman of the working group recommended necessary tax reforms to support private sector development. The Prime Minister also praises private sector experts to provide comprehensive proposals to the government, and ensures that the government will soon form a committee headed by the finance minister to work on these proposals. ("Govt taking steps to enhance exports: PM," *Dawn*, 3 December 2025)

Import schemes undermining local auto sector: PAPAAM

On 3 December, *Dawn* reported that the local automotive industry raised concerns over the misuse of import schemes. The government's failure to control the implementation of the import scheme is affecting the local industry, which is 20 per cent of the country's large-scale manufacturing businesses. According to a Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (PAPAAM) report, Pakistan ranks at the top of the list of completely knocked down (CKD) and used car importing countries with a 24 per cent share. Meanwhile,

India has zero share, Vietnam has 0.3 per cent, and Thailand with 1.2 per cent. PAPAAM's former chairman claimed that the government must reconsider its import scheme for used cars, as it is damaging the domestic industry, which creates jobs. ("Automotive industry concerned at 'misuse of import schemes'." *Dawn*, 3 December 2025)

Pakistan targets USD two billion in horticulture exports by 2028

On 3 December, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters and Merchants Association (PFVA) announced a plan to boost the country's exports from USD 700 million at present to USD 2 billion within the next three years. For the first time, Pakistan has received export orders from the United Kingdom, Germany, and Oman during the FoodAg Pakistan. The FoodAg exhibition opened new avenues for partnerships and sustainable growth, with business deals worth USD 730 million emerging at the expo. ("Fruit, green exporters eye \$2bn target in three years." *Dawn*, 3 December 2025)

11th NFC convenes to decide resource distribution

On 4 December, *Dawn* reported that the 11th National Finance Commission is all set to hold its inaugural meeting to begin negotiations on the horizontal and vertical distribution of divisible pool resources among the federating units. This meeting was postponed repeatedly, initially called on 27 August after constituting the 11th NFC on 22 August to decide the share of federal divisible resources between the centre and provinces. The Federal Finance Minister will preside over the meeting, and four provincial finance ministers and four non-statutory members will lead the discussions. ("NFC meets today to discuss resource sharing." *Dawn*, 04 December 2025)

Govt rejects claims IMF report targets parliament

On 4 December, *Dawn* reported that the Federal Finance Minister rejected the claims by lawmakers that the IMF report targets parliament and government. Lawmakers criticised both the parliamentary committees of the Senate and the parliament for failing to act against corruption and termed the recent International Monetary Fund's Technical Assistance report, Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Assessment, critical of the parliament and government. However, the Finance Minister emphasised that the government itself initiated the assessment and that committees, after conducting a detailed review of the report, are

now preparing an action plan based on the weaknesses identified in the report for the benefit of the country. Meanwhile, the Senate Committee on Finance expressed concerns over the absence of the Finance Minister, the Secretary of Finance, and the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan at the meeting held to prepare a comprehensive strategy to address the issues mentioned in the IMF report. ("Lawmakers slam govt's inaction on corruption." *Dawn*, 04 December 2025)

PM Shehbaz announces bidding dates for PIA

On 4 December, *Dawn* reported that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif released the schedule for bidding of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). He announced that as the government seeks to sell a 51-100 per cent stake in the loss-making national airline, the bidding will be initiated with a live media broadcast on 23 December. The PIA privatisation would be the country's first major privatisation in nearly two decades. The government will make sure that the bidding process will be transparent and based on merit; with that, four bidders have been pre-qualified for the sale. However, previous attempts to sell the airline failed as a bid from real estate firm Blue World City fell short of the USD 305 million floor price. ("Bidding for PIA to be held on Dec 23, says PM Shehbaz." *Dawn*, 04 December 2025)

Service exports rise 16 per cent in first four months of FY 26

On 5 December, *Dawn* had reported that according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the exports of services grew 15.95 per cent during the months July to October by reaching USD 3.034 billion, from USD 2.617 billion in the same period last year. According to the data consolidated by the State Bank of Pakistan, the exports of telecommunications, computer, and information services rose to USD 1.443 billion during July-October, up from USD 1.207 billion. These sectors saw strong demand in the global markets. However, the increase in imports rose to USD 1.050 billion in October, and the trade gap was widened by USD 1.161 billion compared to the USD 1.129 billion. ("Services exports rose 16pc in July October." *Dawn*, 05 December 2025)

Government expenditure on civil administration and pensions witness stark rise despite austerity measures and downsizing exercises

On 08 December, *Dawn* reported that the government's expenditure on civil administration and pension payouts has persistently climbed over the last five years,

with the first quarter of the current fiscal year seeing a double-digit increase despite a strict official austerity policy and an aggressive downsizing exercise. Fiscal data from the Ministry of Finance shows a 13 per cent rise in "Running of the Civil Government" expenditure during the first quarter from July to September. Spending climbed to PKR 161.2 billion this fiscal year, a rise from PKR 142.5 billion in the same period in 2024. The increase comes despite the government's claims of austerity through major staffing cuts and structural reforms. The rise is notable given that over 150,000 posts were eliminated last year and various ministries, divisions, and subordinate departments have been "rightsized" through mergers and closures. The Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb had recently announced that an additional 54,000 vacant posts had been scrapped across multiple departments, saving the exchequer more than PKR 56bn annually. He added that the restructuring and consolidation of several ministries and divisions remains in progress as part of the broader fiscal reform agenda.

The data also indicates that spending on the running of the civil government has risen by nearly 80 per cent since the first quarter of FY22, when it stood at PKR 89.5 billion. Pension expenditures are also on the rise. In the first quarter of the current fiscal year, pension payments stood at PKR 249.5 billion, marking a 10 per cent increase from the PKR 223 billion spent in the same period of FY25. The previous year had already seen a 9 per cent rise. Over the past five years, pension spending has soared by almost 125 per cent, up from PKR 111 billion in the first quarter of FY22. By the end of the last fiscal year, the total pension bill had reached PKR 911 billion. Unlike the fixed, monthly liabilities of pensions and civil administration, subsidy payments vary significantly because they can be delayed. In the first quarter of the current year, subsidies surged sixfold to PKR 120 billion, compared to PKR 20 billion in the same period last year. In the first quarter of FY24, the government had released only PKR 2.5 billion, while the preceding two years saw disbursements of PKR 93 billion and PKR 74 billion. Last year's total subsidy bill stood at PKR1.298 trillion. Despite a stated commitment to austerity since 202, driven by the fiscal constraints of successive IMF programmes, implementation has been uneven, reported Dawn. In June, the government reaffirmed austerity measures for FY26, including a complete ban on purchasing vehicles, acquiring

machinery or equipment, and creating new posts across the federal government. ("Centre's own spending rises amid austerity, restructuring," Dawn, 08 December 2025)

National Accountability Bureau secures a record PKR 9 trillion through recovery of illegal non-monetary assets

On 08 December, Dawn reported that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) recovered nearly PKR 9 trillion in between 2023 and 2025 in non-monetary assets such as land and properties belonging to various state institutions that had been illegally occupied by individuals and groups. After the PTI-led government was removed in April 2022, the PML-N-led coalition revised the National Accountability Ordinance 1999, limiting NAB's jurisdiction to cases involving PKR 500 million or more. However, according to NAB Chairman retired Lt Gen Nazir Ahmed Butt, these amendments, widely seen as weakening NAB, ultimately broadened its operational scope and resulted in significant recoveries. "It was a blessing in disguise as we approached many government institutions, offering them help in recovering their illegally occupied land worth trillions," he stated in his first press conference since taking charge in 2023. "This has made NAB's job more demanding but also more useful for the state and its institutions," he added. Comparing his tenure with NAB's historical performance, he noted that from the bureau's establishment in 1999 up to March 2023, total recoveries stood at USD 3.15 billion. In contrast, during the two and a half years under his leadership, NAB recovered a staggering USD 29.99 billion. This figure includes cash recoveries of PKR 1.124 trillion (around USD 4 billion), with the remainder consisting of recovered assets. He added that over the past 26 years, the government has allocated PKR 62 billion to NAB, while the bureau has secured PKR 9 trillion in recoveries, a record he described as unmatched by any anti-corruption agency worldwide. ("Bulk of NAB recoveries in form of assets, land," Dawn, 08 December 2025)

Exporters are hit as transporters' strike enters fifth day

On 12 December, Dawn reported that the strike had entered its fifth day, during a period when the country's exports were in negative growth for four consecutive months. The strike has disrupted the entire supply chain, especially vegetables and fruits, which have been sitting idle at depots awaiting export to the international market. The country's average

textile exports are at USD 1.5 billion, which is about USD 50 million a day. Kurram Mukhtar, Patron-in-Chief of Pakistan Textile Exporters Association, told Dawn that this disruption to the supply chains has impacted raw material movement, industrial production, and port operations, as well as increasing the overall economic losses, which affected multiple sectors nationwide. The strike brought the manufacturing sector to a halt. Mukhtar said: "This situation is causing irreparable damage to Pakistan's reputation as a reliable sourcing destination and poses a direct threat to our already fragile economic stability." A senior customs officer had said that there are no issues on their side as 87 per cent of export consignments had been cleared through green channels and moved directly to vessels, while downplaying concerns over delays caused by the strike. The Chairman of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association wrote a letter to the Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, urging her to intervene for an immediate resolution of the strike and to restore goods movements to facilitate stable and predictable logistic conditions to support the flow of export goods. ("Exporters turn panicky as transporters strike enters fifth day," *Dawn*, 12 December 2025)

IMF imposes 11 conditions as Pakistan faces expanded reform demands

On 12 December, *The Express Tribune* had reported that Pakistan had been struck with the 11 new conditions of the IMF (making a total of 64 conditions in only 18 months), with the new conditions focusing on corruption risks, elite capture in the sugar industry, remittance charges, losses in the power sector, and FBR inefficiency. The staff level report by the IMF obliges Pakistan to have its asset declarations of high-ranking federal civil servants released by December next year, extend it to provinces, provide complete access to banks, and come up with a corruption-reduction plan of 10 high-risk departments with the NAB playing the lead. An empowering provincial anti-corruption agency, having fully assessed the remittance costs and payment barriers by May, and a study of the bottlenecks in the local currency bond market by September are other conditions. In order to end sugar-sector elite capture, Pakistan needs a national liberalisation policy by June, as well as to complete a detailed FBR reform roadmap, introduce at least three priority reforms, and publish a medium-term tax strategy by December next year. ("IMF imposes 11 new conditions to Pakistan's \$7 billion bailout package," *The Express Tribune*, 12 December 2025)

IMF push for tight liquidity dims prospects of rate cuts

On 13 December, *Dawn* reported that the International Monetary Fund had advised Pakistan to take measures to tighten liquidity to curb expected inflation. Although industries are demanding rate cuts in monetary policy for immediate relief, the government is unlikely to agree to them. Amid pressure, many manufacturers have already shifted their operations to Egypt, Mexico, Dubai, and Vietnam to remain competitive globally. The IMF, after releasing a USD 1.2 billion tranche, praised the State Bank of Pakistan for maintaining positive real interest rates. The SBP is going to maintain the rate at 11 per cent, as political uncertainty, border tensions, elevated petroleum prices, and a widening current account deficit could trigger instability. ("No rate cut seen as IMF wants tight liquidity," *Dawn*, 13 December 2025)

CDWP clears eight projects despite cost escalation concerns

On 13 December, *Dawn* reported that PKR 266.55 billion worth of projects were cleared by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP). In total, eight projects were approved despite serious reservations over a 193 per cent cost escalation in Karachi's Yellow bus transit and non-compliance with prior government guidelines in Rawalpindi's cardiac centre. CDWP itself approved four projects that included the Construction of Graduate Block in the National College of Arts, Lahore, the Punjab Family Planning Programme, Project Readiness Financing for Punjab Water Resources Management, and Housing Community Support Programme. It also recommended four larger projects to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for approval that includes, Karachi Urban Mobility Project, the Expansion of Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology and National Institute of Heart Diseases, Prime Minister's Pakistan Fund for Education, and ADB-funded Upgradation/Extension of NTDC's Telecommunications & SCADA system. ("CDWP clears eight projects worth Rs266bn," *Dawn*, 13 December 2025)

Government signs MoU with Binance for blockchain-based financing

On 13 December, *Dawn* reported that a memorandum of understanding with crypto exchange Binance has been signed by Pakistan to explore the "tokensiation" of up to USD 2 billion in sovereign bonds, T-bills, and commodity reserves. With this step, Pakistan Virtual Asset Regulatory Authority(PVARA) aims to boost liquidity and attract investors. PVARA

also allowed Binance, which is a digital asset platform, to register with regulations to set up local subsidiaries and begin preparations for full exchange license applications. The Finance Ministry claimed that this MoU will enable Pakistan to assess modern, compliant blockchain infrastructure with the help of Binance's technical expertise, advisory support, training, and capacity building. ("Pakistan to allow Binance to explore 'tokenisation' of up to \$2bn of assets," *Dawn*, 13 December 2025)

Pakistan secures new multilateral funding for reforms and climate resilience

On 13 December, *Dawn* reported that the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank approved a total of USD 940 million for Pakistan. The ADB will provide USD 540 million for two projects to accelerate state-owned entities reforms in Pakistan and enhance disaster resilience in Sindh's coastal districts. The World Bank approved USD 400 million for projects supporting the water sector and safely managed water, sanitation, and basic hygiene services, and also to help improve the institutional and financial performance of local urban administration in Punjab province. While the government claimed that these investments are crucial for the governance reforms and climate adaptation, economists raised concerns over Pakistan's persistent reliance on external borrowing, pushing Pakistan deeper into a debt quagmire. ("Lenders approve \$940m for SOE reforms, water hygiene, sanitation," *Dawn*, 13 December 2025; "Pakistan's reliance on ADB, World Bank loans raises concerns over dependency," *The Express Tribune*, 13 December 2025)

Rate cut too meagre to address major challenges, industry leaders complain

On 15 December, as reported by *Dawn*, the business community in Pakistan was disappointed with the recently announced policy rate cut of 0.5 per cent by the State Bank of Pakistan to 10.5 per cent. Many industry leaders believe this will have no positive impact on reviving economic activity, increasing export activity, or significantly reducing the costs of doing business in the country.

The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry has praised the announcement as a cautious move toward creating a positive environment for the private sector to begin to experience lower borrowing rates. However, trade associations such as the KCCI, FPCCI, and SITE Association of Industry believe this

minimal rate cut does not come close to reflecting the current lower inflation rate or address the competitiveness of Pakistan against other regional competitors with many nations having single-digit interest rates.

The business leaders also made it clear that the continued high level of interest rates in Pakistan, the growing cost of energy, higher taxes and the volatility of the exchange rate are creating an unreasonable burden on all sectors of the economy and forcing many companies to operate below capacity, delay capital investment and cut staffing; they also urged the SBP to lower its policy rate to a single-digit level to rebuild business confidence and spur economic growth. ("Rate cut too meagre to address major challenges, industry leaders complain," *Dawn*, 16 December, 2025)

Pakistan-crypto sector sees boost as Fauji Foundation partners with Binance

On 15 December, as reported by *Dawn*, the Fauji Foundation has partnered with global cryptocurrency giant Binance to help the Pakistani economy thrive with new technology. The parties will explore jointly building digital payments, blockchain applications, and Web3 environments. The two parties signed a Letter of Intent on 12 December at the foundation's offices in Rawalpindi. Under this agreement, Binance will give Fauji Foundation financial markets insight and technology advice and expertise; both parties will work together to create a digital payments network in Pakistan based upon digital assets. The parties also plan to work together to develop and increase awareness and education about crypto and digital currencies through educational institutions. Infrastructure development and education development, built upon crypto and digital asset systems in Pakistan, are aligned with the ongoing advancement in financial innovation by the Pakistani government through continued interaction with Binance for tokenisation and blockchain instruments. ("Fauji Foundation, Binance partner for crypto push," *Dawn*, 16 December 2025)

Karachi cargo strike raises fears of industrial shutdown

On 15 December, as reported by *Dawn*, a cargo transporter strike in Karachi lasted for nine days, following a new Motor Vehicle Ordinance (MVO) in December 2025 and created a significant interruption in shipping throughout Sindh. As a result of this interruption, business and industry leaders across Sindh and Karachi

expressed concern about a potential economic halt on all trade and production within the region. Several major industry associations, such as the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI), have called on the Sindh Government to intervene because they have been unable to allow trucks from Punjab into the city of Karachi, significantly hindering port operations. In addition, a number of manufacturers have said that many of their facilities may close soon if they do not find a way to ship their raw materials and finished goods. Industry representatives in the edible oil, steel, and other manufacturing sectors warned that if the current delays persist, production would be stopped, employees would be laid off, demurrage fees would be incurred, and Pakistan's manufacturing reputation would be severely harmed. Additionally, if provisions of the Motor Vehicle Ordinance 2025 are not modified, several transport unions are threatening to launch a nationwide wheel-jam strike on 19 December. ("Cargo transporters' strike disrupts movement of goods," *Dawn*, 16 December, 2025)

Centre for an eight-member NFC Commission to review the fiscal framework

On 15 December, *The Express Tribune* reported that the centre notified eight committees of the National Finance Commission (NFC), which included one on debt utilisation and transfer of expenditure to provinces. The committees will be charged with the responsibility to scrutinise matters of tax devolution, funding of resources to newly merged districts, funding of the energy sector, funding of the social sector, and how to simplify the inter-governmental fiscal transfer. According to the officials, the federal and provincial governments will be represented in each committee, with preference to the consensus-based recommendations that are to be furnished before the next award of NFC. The relocation is based on the demands of various provinces for a more equal distribution of federal resources, especially towards Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The committees are expected to be formed, and this will form the ground for the start of NFC award negotiations that will seek to decide how the tax proceeds will be distributed between the centre and provinces in the coming years. ("Centre forms eight NFC committees among provincial tensions," *The Express Tribune*, 16 December 2025)

The tax-to-GDP ratio is expected to stagnate over five years, the IMF says

On 22 December, *Dawn* reported that in the last year, there was a 1.4 percentage point increase in the GDP ratio, which was mostly through additional revenue worth PKR 2.5 trillion. The IMF expects the federal tax contribution to remain stagnant over the next five years, and a slight improvement coming from provinces. Recent IMF estimates suggest Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) receipts rose from 8.9 per cent of GDP in fiscal year 2023-2024 to 10.3 per cent in 2024-2025, but still missed the Fund's programme target of 10.7 per cent. In absolute terms, the revenue increased from PKR 9.3 trillion in FY24 to PKR 11.74 trillion in FY25, with a massive shortfall. For the current year, collections are projected at PKR 13.98 trillion, with a shortfall of PKR 328 billion under assumptions. ("Tax-to-GDP ratio to stall over five years, IMF expects," *Dawn*, 22 December 2025)

Sindh objects to NFC terms shifting costs to provinces

On 23 December, the Sindh government objected to the three new terms of reference being added to the National Finance Commission (NFC), as they are believed to be unconstitutional by transferring the responsibility for several major fiscal responsibilities like higher education, the Benazir Income Support Programme, and national development projects away from the federal government and onto the provinces. Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah of Sindh has argued that the provincial expenditures should be dealt with by provincial assemblies or the National Economic Council and not through the NFC, and he warned that this will erode the spirit of fiscal federalism outlined in Article 160 of the Constitution. However, the Federal Government, with the support of the Finance Secretary and the Attorney General, has argued that Article 160 of the Constitution allows the NFC to assess both revenues and expenditures, including borrowing, as it relates to the provincial governments. Discussions about the disagreement between the provincial and federal governments continue to illustrate the existing centre-province tensions concerning the allocation of resources, with the federal government claiming fiscal constraints imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), while the provinces are asserting their right to receive their constitutionally entitled share of federal revenues. ("Sindh objects to NFC terms shifting costs to provinces," *The Express Tribune*, 23 December, 2025)

Three bids received for privatisation of PIA

On 23 December, *Dawn* reported that three bids have been received for the privatisation of loss-making national airline Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL) which is the country's most high-profile transaction of a state-owned entity. The bids came from Lucky Cement, private airline Airblue, and investment firm Arif Habib. The reference price for PIACL will be approved soon. The auction is the second attempt in the country at selling the once storied flag carrier after televised bidding last year collapsed when a solitary offer fell far below the government's reference price, which derailed what would have been the country's first major privatisation in nearly two decades. ("Three bids received for privatisation of national carrier PIA," *Dawn*, 23 December 2025)

Stakeholders endorse PIA privatisation, urge broader SOE divestment

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that the sale of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to the Arif Habib consortium had been warmly received by Pakistan's business community, which has framed it as a potential turning point for investor confidence, service quality, and broader state-owned enterprise (SOE) reform. In areas where PIA had steadily lost the public's trust under state ownership, industry leaders contended that privatisation could improve basic passenger expectations, such as punctuality, safety, and reliability, and restore accountability. Business associations also emphasised the financial advantages, pointing out that the privatisation of PIA alone could save about PKR 100 billion in public funds each year. They also advocated for the quick divestment of other SOEs that are losing money in order to lessen the estimated PKR 800 billion annual burden on the exchequer. According to analysts, the deal, which surpassed market expectations, may indicate that Pakistan's privatisation agenda has newfound legitimacy and promotes future sales, particularly in the power sector, at a time when the government is struggling. ("Stakeholders back PIA sale, call for divestment of other SOEs," *Dawn*, 26 December, 2025)

Government borrowing reverses course in first half of FY2025-26

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that according to State Bank of Pakistan data, Pakistan's fiscal position has drastically changed in the first half of FY2025-2026. The government borrowed PKR 672 billion from banks, reversing the net debt retirement of PKR 1.7 trillion recorded in

the same period last year. Bankers anticipate a greater reliance on banks in the second half of the fiscal year due to revenue shortfalls and increasing liquidity pressures, even though borrowing is still largely under control. With bank investments at PKR 36.7 trillion by the end of June 2025, domestic bank borrowing continues to finance about 86 per cent of the fiscal deficit, raising concerns about crowding out private sector credit. Even though the World Bank has approved new financing linked to reforms aimed at improving revenue mobilisation and public spending efficiency, the trend reflects Pakistan's continued reliance on domestic sources amid weak external inflows. ("Government borrowing reverses course," *Dawn*, 26 December, 2025)

FBR intensifies crackdown on tax evasion in private healthcare sector

On 26 December, in order to monitor service delivery and revenue collection in real time, Pakistan's Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) stationed Inland Revenue Service officers inside commercial hospitals and clinics as part of an increased enforcement campaign against tax evasion in the private healthcare sector. The action comes after doctors' consistently low tax compliance. According to official data, only about 41 per cent of the nation's 319,000 registered doctors are on the tax rolls, and less than half of them filed returns for the 2025 tax year, with many of them reporting extremely low or no income. As the FBR works to close gaps between registration, filing, and declared income levels in one of Pakistan's most lucrative professional sectors, officers have been stationed at 50 private hospitals under the Income Tax Ordinance in the first phase to detect underreporting, particularly amid high inpatient charges. ("FBR cracks down on healthcare tax evasion," *Dawn*, 26 December, 2025)

Pakistan, ADB sign \$730m agreements to strengthen power grid and reform SOEs

On 26 December, two significant financing projects totalling USD 730 million were signed by Pakistan and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) with the goal of bolstering the nation's power transmission infrastructure and quickening reforms in state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The package includes a USD 400 million program aimed at enhancing the operational efficiency, transparency, and governance of SOEs, with a focus on the National Highway Authority, and a USD 330 million second power transmission strengthening project that aims to

reduce congestion in current transmission lines and allow the evacuation of up to 2,300 megawatts from upcoming hydropower projects. While ADB pointed out that the initiatives come at a crucial time for Pakistan's energy and public sector reform agenda, supporting ongoing efforts to stabilise infrastructure and improve economic sustainability, officials characterised the agreements as transformative, connecting energy security with broader governance reforms. ("Pakistan, ADB sign two key initiatives worth \$730m in power, state-owned enterprises sector," *Dawn*, 25 December, 2025)

IMF raises concerns over reduced PSDP and rising defence expenditure

On 27 December, *Dawn* reported that the International Monetary Fund, after consultations with the government, raised concerns over low Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) expenditure that has been reduced to PKR 873 billion against the original estimate of PKR 1.065 trillion. Originally, the PSDP expenditure was estimated at 0.9 per cent of GDP in FY25, but had been contained to 0.7 per cent to adjust it to revenue shortfalls. For the current year, the PSDP has been estimated to remain at 0.7 per cent, and for next year, 0.6 per cent of GDP. Also, as PSDP utilization remains low due to a significant reduction by provinces, special areas, and the Ministry of Railways, the Finance Minister pledged to reprioritise the PSDP with new methods of streamlining the projects. On the other hand, the size of defence expenditure had been increased to two per cent of GDP for the current fiscal year. Cumulatively, in the last four years, it has increased more than 67 per cent from PKR 1.3 trillion in FY21 to PKR 2.2 trillion in FY25. ("IMF sees Public Sector Development Programme shrinking as defence outlay to rise," *Dawn*, 27 December 2025)

Retail food prices defy official controls as chicken costs spike in Lahore

On 29 December, retail food prices in Lahore increased rapidly over the last week and became increasingly out of reach for many households due to skyrocketing utility costs. Market research revealed that the government rate boards did not influence live chicken or chicken products, as both were sold at much higher prices than the prescribed price. Boneless chicken is also considered a luxury by most consumers because of its price. Even though some types of vegetables, like onions, cucumbers, and cabbage, have decreased in price according to the rate boards, consumers will not see any advantage of these decreases at their local farmers' markets. Potatoes, onions

and tomatoes continue to be priced well above the price established. Traders cite supply chain interruptions and growing costs associated with producing goods, while consumers say they do not trust the weekly price lists anymore when they make purchases on a day-to-day basis. ("Retail food prices defy official lists," *The Express Tribune*, 29 December, 2025)

SBP mandates climate stress tests to shield banks from rising risks

On 30 December, *Dawn* reported that the State Bank of Pakistan has introduced new "shock covering" measures for banks and other regulated financial institutions in Pakistan. These measures require banks and other financial institutions to incorporate hydrometeorological and transition climate risks into their financial stress tests and political stress tests due to the growing vulnerability of Pakistan's economy to climate change. Systemically important banks will have to include the consideration of climate shocks in their annual macro stress tests, whereas all regulated institutions will be required to perform separate climate stress tests using data available as of year-end, along with the previously mentioned exercises. The purpose of implementing these measures, according to the State Bank of Pakistan, is to enhance the management of climate risk, protect the lending portfolio from the impact of climate shocks, and preserve financial stability. The SBP has stated they will likely require full compliance with the SBP's Climate Risk Regulatory Framework by June 2029. ("SBP rolls out 'shock covering' measures for banks," *Dawn*, 30 December, 2025)

Telecom industry demands rational spectrum auction policy

On 30 December, as reported by *Dawn*, the telecom industry demanded rational conditions in the spectrum auction policy expected to be announced by the federal cabinet in the coming days, suggesting that the government needs to prioritise long-term economic benefits over short-term revenue generation. Since financial technology adoption, freelancer platforms, and digital tools used by schools and hospitals all depend on mobile broadband capacity, the demand for connectivity has surged in the country while spectrum availability remains scarce. CEO of Jazz, Amir Ibrahim commented that a pragmatic, long-term approach aligned with national objectives, similar to the PIA auction model, was essential to deliver affordable internet at scale and unlock Pakistan's digital future. Meanwhile, as 5G services are set to be launched in Pakistan, Zong

and Huawei have successfully tested ultra-high-capacity backhaul technology to meet the growing data traffic in the country. ("Telecom industry demands rational spectrum auction policy," Dawn, 30 December, 2025)

Economy grows by 3.7 per cent, defying projections

On 31 December, according to *The Express Tribune*, the National Accounts Committee (NAC), the government body that publishes growth numbers, approved a 3.7 per cent economic growth rate for the first quarter of the current fiscal year. The growth came on the back of expansion across all major sectors of the economy, defying predictions that growth had been hindered by the devastating summer floods. Electricity and gas output grew by more than 25 per cent, the construction sector expanded by over 21 per cent, and rice production increased by 2.5 per cent to nearly 10 million tonnes. A Ministry of Planning report had initially forecasted 8.3 to 8.9 million tonnes. The NAC approved sector-wise growth rates of 2.9 per cent for agriculture, 9.4 per cent for industry and 2.4 per cent for the service sector. Due to the controversy surrounding last year's growth rate of 2.7 per cent, the Finance Minister had offered to commission an independent investigation and review of the growth numbers, but no such meetings were held. ("Economy grows by 3.7% in Q1 2025, defying flood fallout, official projections," The Express Tribune, 31 December 2025)

Traders announce nationwide protests on 16 January

On 31 December, as reported by *Dawn*, traders announced countrywide protests on 16 January if the directive to install point of sale (POS) devices was not withdrawn. POS machines help record digital transactions, which can then be tracked by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). The announcement was made at a rally in Aabpara Chowk, which was stopped by a heavy police contingent. It was organised by the All Pakistan Anjuman-i-Tajran and Traders Action gathering (TAC). A larger number of people from Islamabad and Rawalpindi participated. Ajmal Baloch, President of the TAC Islamabad, said that the government should withdraw the policy, saying that the "installation of POS machines at small shops will only create new options to fleece the traders for bribery." ("Traders announce countrywide protests on Jan 16," Dawn, 31 December 2025)

ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & WATER

Pakistan faces \$22bn annual losses due to toxic air crisis

On 5 December, *The News International* had reported that a senior Pakistan Peoples' Party leader, Sherry Rehman, while chairing a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee, stated the damage caused to Pakistan's economy by air pollution, resulting in a loss of USD 22 billion annually, equivalent to 6.5 per cent of the national GDP. She has also quoted new statistics that indicate air pollution-related deaths have now reached an all-time high of approximately 256,000 per year and that these air pollution-related deaths have now been estimated to be more than double what was previously reported by government agencies and are more deadly than terrorism. Rehman expressed her concerns about the ongoing problems related to consistent smog throughout the province of Punjab, as well as the record of Lahore as the most polluted city in the world, due to a lack of control over the emissions produced by brick kilns and the emissions produced by industrial sources and vehicles. She also drew attention to a vacuum of reliable data within the Environmental Protection Agency. Lastly, she cautioned that smog may decrease the average life span by as many as 4.6 years and puts 11 million children under the age of five at risk in Punjab alone, so she implored both public and private partnerships to take a more proactive approach to deal with this situation. Rehman described this public health concern as an "apocalyptic" national public health emergency. ("Air pollution inflicts \$22bn yearly losses on Pakistan," The News International, 05 December 2025)

Petroleum Minister announces plans set to sell excess gas in international markets from 1 January

On 08 December, *Dawn* reported that Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik announced that Pakistan would begin selling excess liquefied natural gas (LNG) in international markets from 1 January 2026. Malik made the remark at a press conference in Lahore, months after reports emerged that Pakistan was considering options to sell surplus LNG cargoes as a supply glut threatened to inflict millions in annual losses on domestic producers. "From January 1, we will sell this excess fuel in international markets and reduce our burden while limiting the loss caused by it," he stated. He explained that Pakistan has been importing gas from "our friend" Qatar as well as from the Italian energy firm Eni.

However, the country now had a surplus of imported gas because its use in power generation had declined over the past few months. As a result, “we were compelled to divert it to domestic consumers, due to which circular debt was increasing in the gas sector,” he said, adding that this situation has cost Pakistan roughly PKR 1,000 billion between 2018–19 and now. He added that the move would also enable Pakistan’s state-owned companies in the gas sector to run at full capacity and return to profitability. Reports last month indicated that Pakistan had reached an agreement to cancel 21 LNG cargoes under its long-term deal with Eni as part of efforts to curb surplus imports that have overwhelmed the gas system, Dawn stated. It was also said that Pakistan was in discussions with Qatar regarding its LNG supplies, exploring options such as deferring certain cargoes or reselling them under existing contractual provisions.

At the press conference, Malik also outlined the petroleum-sector investments expected from foreign firms, noting that Turkey’s energy minister had recently visited Pakistan and that, after two decades, Turkish Petroleum, working alongside Pakistani companies, would participate in both onshore and offshore exploration projects. He added that Turkish Petroleum would open an office in Islamabad staffed by 10 to 15 Turkish nationals, with job opportunities also available for Pakistanis. “We are moving towards decreasing our reliance on imported oil and gas,” he said. Malik further revealed that a delegation from the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) would visit Pakistan in the coming week and was expected to partner with local companies on oil and gas exploration. SOCAR, he added, would also establish an office in Pakistan and invest millions of dollars in an oil pipeline from Machike to Thalian, in collaboration with PSO and the Frontier Works Organisation. (“Pakistan to sell excess gas in international markets from January 1: petroleum minister,” Dawn, 08 December 2025)

Islamabad tightens vehicle checks as smog reaches ‘very unhealthy’ levels

On 15 December, Dawn reported that Islamabad authorities have intensified a crackdown on smoke-emitting vehicles as worsening winter smog pushes pollution levels into the “very unhealthy” range. The capital has established checkpoints which have resulted in more than 200 traffic violations and 20 vehicle seizures while authorities continue to warn that trucks and cars without proper documentation will

face entry restrictions into the city. The air quality monitors in Islamabad have shown PM2.5 levels which exceed WHO safety standards during multiple days throughout this month. The capital’s pollution stems from vehicle emissions which officials and researchers identify as the main source responsible for more than half of the total pollution while they label this environmental disaster as a result of private transportation growth without proper control. (“Islamabad puts drivers on notice as smog crisis worsens,” Dawn, 15 December 2025)

PMD warns of emerging drought conditions in Balochistan

On 31 October, Dawn reported that the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) had placed two districts of Balochistan under drought watch, advising the provincial government to take preemptive measures in drought-prone areas. The PMD report recorded an increase in the number of dry days across the Balochistan region, accompanied by a significant rainfall deficit. The prevailing dry conditions are expected to cause water stress in cultivated areas, primarily due to limited irrigation water availability for rabi crops. The PMD also advised close monitoring of the evolving drought situation. (“12 Balochistan districts under drought watch,” Dawn, 31 October 2025)

Senator Sherry Rehman calls for Pakistan’s own “Conference of the Parties” for climate resilience

On 4 November, Dawn reported that Senator Sherry Rehman proposed convening Pakistan’s own “Conference of Parties” involving provinces, experts, and citizens to promote data-sharing, innovation, and public-private partnerships for climate resilience. Speaking at a pre-COP30 conference organised by the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, she highlighted that “every province has its own share of challenges,” from drought-hit Balochistan to flood-affected Sindh, KP, and Punjab. She warned that climate change is worsening and, without adaptation, Pakistan could lose 18–20 per cent of its GDP by 2050 pointing to World Bank estimates.

Rehman questioned the delivery of the USD 300 billion from the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) and stated that climate finance is a “fundamental right.” She called for debt swaps and financial safeguards for vulnerable states saying “our house is burning at 53°C every summer.” Pakistan’s updated nationally determined contributions target a 50 per cent emissions cut by 2035, requiring USD 565.7

billion, with 17 per cent from domestic efforts and 33 per cent dependent on external finance. Rehman noted Pakistan's 37 per cent emissions reduction between 2021 and 2025 without external aid. However, she also warned that the projected total cost of climate inaction in Pakistan is estimated at USD 250 billion by 2030 and USD 1.2 trillion by 2050. She called for greater private sector involvement, improved sanitation and water systems, and action against pollution, describing air pollution as a "serial killer" causing over 128,000 deaths annually. (Bakhtawar Mian, "Sherry proposes Pakistan's own 'Conference of Parties' to boost climate resilience," *Dawn*, 4 November 2025)

Pakistan to submit a proposal at COP30 for USD 20 million to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage

On 6 November, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan plans to submit project proposals to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) at COP30. Three years after its launch at COP27, the Fund holds USD 300 million, with an additional USD 700 million pledged, far below the scale of climate-related losses, says the news report. Although designed as a rapid-response mechanism, it is to release any funds. Pakistan's Climate Minister confirmed that the country has not received assistance despite severe climate damages. He stated that the FRLD is set to operationalise USD 250 million this year, half is reserved for Small Island and Least-Developed States, leaving roughly USD 100–150 million for others, including Pakistan. He said Pakistan plans to submit proposals worth up to USD 20 million, without revealing much details. Further, the Minister criticised the Global North for shifting responsibility to developing nations despite their historical emissions. He said bureaucratic delays and hypocrisy hinder climate talks and the purpose of the fund. The minister added that Pakistan would pursue all available opportunities to access funds and advocate for fair, efficient, and less bureaucratic climate financing. Meanwhile, an FRLD board member advised Pakistan to act proactively by appointing a national authority, developing a unified national policy, and involving provinces. Such steps, he said, would signal political commitment and strengthen Pakistan's case for accessing the fund's limited resources. (Zaki Abbas, "Pakistan to tap Loss & Damage fund despite reservations," *Dawn*, 6 November 2025)

Digital transformation needed in Pakistan's agriculture sector, FAO Report

On 17 November, *Dawn* reported that the Food

and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations published a report titled "The Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security 2025," providing digital solutions for reducing risks and impacts. The FAO report findings are relevant to Pakistan, as agriculture in Pakistan is facing disastrous floods, resulting in soil erosion, irrigation and damaging drainage networks. The report suggests that the Pakistan government should also work on formulating a digital-oriented national strategy for agriculture, as Pakistan lags in digital crop monitoring. It adds that tech-based resilience in the agricultural sector is the need of the hour, with focus on AI-based surveillance, mobile advisory hubs and disaster-indexed insurance. ("Agriculture crisis," *Dawn*, 17 November 2025)

Pakistan plans to build an artificial island to accelerate offshore energy exploration

On 20 November, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), a state-owned energy company, is reclaiming land from the sea to create a launchpad to ramp up oil and gas exploration. The decision to reclaim the island builds on Abu Dhabi's experience, where artificial islands for drilling have been successfully built. A six-foot-high artificial island will be created about 30 kilometres off the coast of Sindh, near Sujawal, for uninterrupted round-the-clock exploration work. The island reclamation will be completed by February, to drill around 25 wells. Exploration work gained momentum after United States President Donald Trump indicated an interest in the country's massive oil reserves. ("Pakistan to build island to boost oil exploration: report," *Dawn*, 20 November 2025)

SECURITY

Police are being killed in Lakki Marwat and Bannu attacks

On 02 December, *Dawn* reported that a suicide bomber targeted a suicide bomber yesterday, on 01 December, in the Lakki Marwat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, killing one officer and injuring several others, while in a separate shooting in Bannu, another officer is reported killed. A police mobile from Tajori was intercepted after they received intelligence about a suspicious motorcyclist; when the officer attempted a checkpoint, the attacker fired, and it led to the detonation of an explosive device. A Police Constable have been confirmed to be killed in Bannu district, along with five other officers, who were injured in the

explosion. In Bannu, a spokesman for the regional police office informed Dawn that on his way to duty, terrorists opened fire on the Constable. ("2 cops martyred in Lakki Marwat, Bannu attacks," Dawn, 02 December 2025)

Two-day Nokundi Operation ends with all militants eliminated

On 3 December, Dawn reported that security forces completed the operation against perpetrators who attacked the brigade headquarters of Frontier Corps in the Nokundi area of Chagai district. In two-day clearance operations, security forces have killed all six militants who attacked the FC fort. On 1 December, militants attacked the FC fort with a suicide bomber who detonated herself in front of the main gate. In the attack, three armed men were instantly killed; however, three managed to enter the building and take hostages. Although the military's media wing has not released any statements on the casualties. ("Nokundi FC HQ standoff ends, all militants killed," Dawn, 3 December 2025)

More than 200 intelligence-based operations conducted and over 100 militants killed in north Balochistan in three months

On 4 December, Dawn reported that the Additional Chief Secretary of Home and Tribal Affairs Mohammad Hamza Shafqaat disclosed that security forces have killed over 100 militants in the northern areas of Balochistan during the past three months and carried out more than 200 intelligence-based operations in Kachhi district. Speaking at a high-level meeting presided over by Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti on 3 December, he highlighted that 3,561 illegal petrol pumps had been sealed, while customs officials conducted 2,575 operations and seized 416 non-custom-paid vehicles. The meeting also reviewed the progress on targets set by the national and provincial action committees, overall law and order and ongoing security measures. Mr Shafqaat told the meeting that joint operations were underway against terrorist and criminal networks across several districts, alongside efforts to register seminaries and enforce existing regulations. Balochistan's Chief Minister Bugti welcomed the progress in tackling smuggling, crime, and security threats, urging departments to intensify operations and strictly implement decisions of the national and provincial action committees. He reaffirmed that protecting citizens is the state's primary duty and said the government would continue using all available resources to maintain peace and advance the province's development. ("More than 100 militants killed over three months,"

Dawn, 04 December 2025)

Sindh Cultural Day rally escalates to protests; Police arrests 45 citizens for alleged stone pelting against the forces

On 7 December, Dawn reported that the Karachi police arrested 45 people participating in the Sindh Culture Day rally after people allegedly pelted police personnel with stones. South Deputy Inspector General of Police Syed Asad Raza stated that upon being attacked by participants, police responded with a baton charge and tear gas shelling. "We detained 45 people on Sharea Faisal," DIG Raza said. "The South SSP (Senior Superintendent of Police) is at the scene, and the situation is under control." He added that since the Red Zone has been closed, alternative traffic routes are being provided for citizens and commuters and that the law enforcers asked the rally participants to use the Lines Area route towards Saddar and subsequently the venue of the rally at Karachi Press Club (KPC), but "they were bent upon using the main Sharea Faisal from Jinnah Bridge." According to police sources, rally participants began arguing with officers after being stopped, and the confrontation eventually escalated into stone-throwing. When asked why police had blocked the road at the Finance and Trade Centre (FTC) flyover, DIG Raza explained that an advisory had been issued for Cultural Day, as several rallies and cultural processions were expected to gather at the FTC and proceed towards the KPC via Sharea Faisal. Later, the DIG said that 12 of the 45 arrested were released on the surety of the Karachi Bar Association president. ("45 arrested as citizens clash with police during Sindh Culture Day rally," Dawn, 7 December 2025)

Twelve alleged "Fitna-al-Hindustan" killed in intelligence based operations in Balochistan

On 7 December, Dawn reported that Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), in a statement, said that Security forces have killed 12 terrorists during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Kalat district of Balochistan. ISPR claimed that the terrorists belonged to the alleged Indian proxy, "Fitna-al-Hindustan". The ISPR statement highlighted that during the operation, "own forces effectively engaged the terrorists' location, and after an intense fire exchange, 12 Indian-sponsored terrorists were sent to hell". Weapons, ammunition and explosives were found in the terrorists' possession, and they had been "actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area." "Sanitisation operations are being conducted to eliminate any other

Indian-sponsored terrorist found in the area as [a] relentless counter-terrorism campaign under [the] vision [of] 'Azm-i- Istehkam' (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by security forces and law enforcement agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and -supported terrorism from the country," the statement concluded. ("Security forces kill 12 terrorists during IBO in Balochistan's Kalat: ISPR," Dawn, 7 December 2025)

Terrorist Attack on the Bannu police checkpoint, injuring five officers

On 12 December, *Dawn* reported that, on Thursday night, terrorists attacked the Police checkpoint in Shaik Landak, injuring five police officers. Kashif Nawaz, spokesperson for the regional police officers, stated that the Fitab al Khawarij terrorists were the ones to blame for this vicious attack. Based on the statement, the gallant officers, with the help of armed tribesmen and members of the peace committee, acted promptly and neutralised the situation. Amidst the three-hour-long crossfire, several terrorists had been killed and injured. Situations before the attack were already tense due to the quadcopter terrorist attack, which injured seven people, including minors. There has been a spike in the surge of terror activities predominantly in KP and Balochistan following the TTP ending a ceasefire with the government, dating back to November 2022. In October, CRSS stated that violence had surged in the country over three months due to a spike in militant attacks and intensified counter-terrorism operations. ("5 cops injured in late-night terrorist attack on police checkpoint in Bannu," Dawn, 12 December 2025)

Over 700 militants killed in intelligence operations in Balochistan this year

On 15 December, Additional Chief Secretary Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat said that over 700 militants had been killed in 78,000 intelligence-based operations (IBO) in Balochistan this year, as reported by *Dawn*. "In various operations and attacks, 202 security personnel and 280 civilians were martyred in the province this year," he added while addressing a press conference alongside Balochistan Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) chief Aitzaz Ahmed Goraya. He mentioned that better strategies by security forces and other agencies had helped reduce terrorist attacks this year, even though militants continue to target civilians. He also added that the designation of the Balochistan Liberation Army

(BLA) and the Majeed Brigade as terrorist organisations helped with the process and that Pakistan would initiate action through Interpol against those operating against Pakistan from abroad. Meanwhile, CTD chief Goraya said that the kidnapped assistant commissioner of Zairat, Muhammad Qasim Baloch, had been killed and a search operation to recover his body was underway. Three suspects were arrested by the CTD, and they confessed to the crime while also mentioning that they worked for the BLA. ("700 militants killed in Balochistan IBOs this year," Dawn, 15 December 2025)

One soldier and seven terrorists killed in DI Khan IBO crossfire

On 15 December, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, security forces killed seven terrorists from Fitna al Khawarij, whilst, as stated by the military's media wing, one soldier lost his life. Naik Yasir Khan was killed during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Dera Ismail Khan. The ISPR reported the recovery of weapons and ammunition from the terrorists, who have also been reported for multiple other terrorist activities in the area. The military stated that a sanitisation operation is underway to eliminate the other terror outfits present in the area as part of the counter terrorism campaign approved by the Federal Apex Committee under the National Action Plan. The leader reaffirmed their resolve and ensured lasting peace and security across the country. ("Seven terrorist killed, soldier embraces martyrdom during exchange of fire in DI Khan IBO: ISPR", The Express Tribune, 15 December 2025)

Nine terrorists were killed during the two KP operations

On 21 December, as reported by *Dawn*, According to ISPR, on 19 December nine Khwarij were put to death during the two ongoing operations in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province with the first IBO being carried out in Dera Ismaili Khan district where four Khwarij were put to death after an intense crossfire and the Second IBO in the district of Bannu ending lives of five more Khwarij lives. As per the ISPR reports, the Khwarij actively terrorised both locations, resulting in the operation task force retrieving the weapons and ammunition from the opposition. The reports also state the rise in Kharji activities in Pakistan's provinces, resulting in sanitisation operations under the vision "Azm e Istehkam". Additionally, Pakistan ranked second in the Global Terrorism Index 2025, with the deaths caused due to terrorist

activities rising to 45 per cent in comparison to the previous year. ("Security forces neutralise 9 terrorists in two separate KP operations: ISPR", *Dawn*, 21 December 2025)

Police vehicle comes under attack in Karak, five cops killed

On 23 December, as reported by *Dawn*, on Tuesday, a police mobile came under attack, resulting in the death of five cops. Shaukat Khan, the district police spokesman, confirmed that the cops who fell victim to the attack were four constables and one driver. The prime minister condemned the incident, extending his condolences to the bereaved families and assured them full government support during such rough times and emphasised the elimination of terrorism in all its forms. Throughout this entire month, there has been a significant rise in deaths in the line of duty due to such violent terrorist insurgencies ("Five cops martyred as police vehicle comes under attack in KP's Karak", *Dawn*, 23 December 2025)

11 terrorists killed in KP, Balochistan operations

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that terrorists eleven terrorists were killed by security forces and police in separate intelligence-led missions in the Dera Ismail Khan and Lakki Marwat districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the Kalat district of Balochistan, including one of the high-value targets who is believed to have participated in militant activities. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) implied that two militants were killed at Kulachi together with their supposed ringleader Dilawar, who had a bounty of PKR 4 million on his head, and weaponry and ammunition were seized at the location. In Lakki Marwat, a terrorist leader was killed in an exchange of fire with the police and CTD-SWAT forces and in Kalat, eight terrorists were also killed and weapons and explosives confiscated. The ISPR added that the killed militants were busily engaged in terrorist activities against the security forces and civilians and that counter-terrorism operations were still going on. ("11 terrorists killed in KP, Balochistan operations", *Dawn*, 26 December 2025)

Sit-in over enforced disappearances enters third day

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that a sit-in protest against so-called forced disappearances entered its third straight day as the protesters continued their stand despite increasing pressures to end the demonstrations. Activists of civil society and families of the disappeared reinstated their demand for accountability and

an immediate rescue of the so-called disappeared ones. People demanded that words and promises were not enough, and demanded clear investigation procedures supported by actual action. They threatened to go on with the sit-in until authorities come out with their demands and lay out a plausible resolution process. ("Sit-in over 'enforced disappearances' enters third day", *Dawn*, 26 December 2025)

Pakistan busts alleged USD 60 million cyber fraud network in Karachi

On 25 December, during coordinated raids in Karachi's Defence Housing Authority, Pakistan's National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) arrested 15 foreign nationals and 19 Pakistanis, dismantling what authorities called an "international cartel" involved in an estimated USD 60 million cyber fraud operation. Zia-ul-Hassan Lanjar, the home minister of Sindh, claims that the group ran sophisticated online investment scams. They used phoney forex and cryptocurrency platforms that were advertised on social media and in Telegram groups to entice victims with promises of large returns before charging extra fees and blocking accounts. 37 computers, 40 cell phones, more than 10,000 international SIM cards, and illicit gateway exchanges that were purportedly used to generate fictitious online personas, route money, and transfer proceeds across borders using cryptocurrency were found by investigators. Both domestic and foreign victims were targeted, according to authorities, and additional technical and financial investigations are being conducted to confirm this. ("NCCIA busts 'international cartel' involved in \$60m cyber fraud, arrests 15 foreigners from Karachi", *Dawn*, 25 December, 2025)

Pakistan security forces kill 10 militants in K-P and Balochistan operations

On 25 December, *The Express Tribune* reported that according to ISPR, Pakistan's security forces killed ten militants on December 24 in separate intelligence-based operations in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, including a senior ringleader. Two militants, including Dilawar, a "kharji" ringleader wanted for several attacks and carrying a PKR four million bounty, were killed in the Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan; weapons and ammunition were also found. Eight militants connected to what the military refers to as "Indian-sponsored elements" or Fitna al Hindustan were killed in a separate operation in Balochistan's Kalat district following a fierce gunfight, and weapons and explosives were taken from the scene. Amidst persistent militant activity in Balochistan and KP

and a wider increase in violence reported throughout Pakistan in 2025, the ISPR stated that sanitisation operations were ongoing and reaffirmed that counterterrorism efforts would continue under the federal Azm-e-Istehkam initiative. ("Security forces kill 10 terrorists, including kharji ringleader, in K-P, Balochistan operations ISPR," *The Express Tribune*, 25 December, 2025)

Armed locals kill six terrorists in KP's Lakki Marwat

On 27 December, *Dawn* reported that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Lakki Marwat, six terrorists were killed and several other injured on Friday in a clash between police forces, Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) commandos and armed locals. A police statement said that "The terrorists armed with sniper rifles and quadcopters attacked the police in the rural area bordering Bannu district and located within the limits of Shaheed Asmatullah Khan Khattak police station of Serai Naurang town." Earlier, the security forces and police had destroyed several hideouts of terrorists during an operation in the Bettani subdivision of Lakki Marwat district on Tuesday. Pakistan has seen a rise in terrorist attacks in the recent past, particularly in KP and Balochistan, since the banned TTP ended its ceasefire with the government in 2022. ("Police, armed locals kill 6 terrorists in KP's Lakki Marwat," *Dawn*, 27 December 2025)

Heavy security in place at Benazir Bhutto mausoleum anniversary

On 27 December, more than 8,500 police personnel, along with Rangers and other security agencies, have been deployed in and around Garhi Khuda Bakhsh ahead of the 18th death anniversary of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, as hundreds of thousands of party workers and supporters are expected to attend the programme on Saturday. Authorities have put in place multi-layered security arrangements, including CCTV surveillance, walk-through gates, metal detectors, night-vision cameras and intelligence monitoring, with additional forces kept on standby. Senior PPP leaders, including President Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, are expected to pay homage at the mausoleum, while special arrangements have been made for transport, medical care and crowd management to prevent any untoward incident. ("Over 8,500 policemen deployed for security at Benazir's mausoleum," *Dawn*, December 27, 2025)

Security forces kill 12 militants in coordinated operations across KP and Balochistan

On 29 December, authorities in Pakistan confirmed that 12 militants were killed during a series of intelligence-led operations by Pakistani security forces on Sunday, and this is part of Pakistan's growing Counterterrorism efforts. The Counter Terrorism Department coordinated with police in Karak District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to conduct an operation that resulted in the death of 8 militants; however, 2 police officers sustained injuries. A distinct operation in Kalat District, Balochistan, resulted in the death of 4 militants affiliated with the "Fitna Al Hindustan," and weapons and explosive devices were seized, while cleansing operations continue in the area. The Pakistan Army reports that these operations form part of the broader campaign Azm-e-Istehkam against indigenously-sponsored terrorism, as expressed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi praising Pakistan's security forces for their diligence in bringing peace to Pakistan. ("Security forces kill 12 terrorists in K-P, Balochistan operations," *The Express Tribune*, December 28, 2025)

Major terror attack thwarted as minor recruited online by BLA intercepted

On 29 December, *The Express Tribune* reported that, according to Sindh officials, a major terrorist attack was averted after a police officer intercepted an underage girl who had been recruited through social media and was being moved to Karachi for a potential attack. According to the police, the girl said she was first contacted through her Instagram account, where individuals began sharing content about the separation of Balochistan and alleged oppression in the province. She was later added to a WhatsApp group that circulated anti-state and anti-military material and glorified Baloch separatist figures, which included Shari Baloch. The girl spoke in a recorded video at a press conference, saying that she gradually came to believe the narratives shared in the WhatsApp group. ("Major terror attack thwarted as minor recruited online by BLA is intercepted," *The Express Tribune*, 29 December 2025)

Major and five terrorists killed during IBO in KP's Bajaur, says ISPR

On 29 December, *Dawn* reported that according to a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), a major-ranked officer was killed during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district.

The military identified the major as 36-year-old Major Adeel Zaman from Dera Ismail Khan. Five terrorists were also killed during the operation. The security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in the general area of Khar, Bajaur district, on the reported presence of Khwarij belonging to the Indian Proxy, Fitna al Khwarij. Fitna al Khwarij is a term that the state uses for terrorists belonging to the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). (Major martyred, 5 terrorists killed during IBo in KP's Bajaur: ISPR," Dawn, 29 December 2025)

Three alleged Fitna al-Khawariji militants killed in military operations in North Waziristan and Tank districts

On 4 November, The Express Tribune reported that three alleged Afghan-backed Fitna al-Khawariji terrorists were killed in separate military operations in North Waziristan and Tank districts. The report highlighted that the incidents occur against the backdrop of a persistent terror threat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's border region, where cross-border infiltration attempts and targeted attacks on security forces have escalated in recent months. Following the attack, the local police forces from the Bannu region launched a large-scale search operation in the area, with Quick Response Force (QRF), Rapid Response Force (RRF) and Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) taking part in the operation. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), issued a statement claiming that the troops "effectively engaged the group of Khwarij. As a result of precise and skillful engagement, two Khwarij belonging to Indian proxy, Fitna al Khwarij were sent to hell". It also stated that Pakistan "has repeatedly been asking the Interim Afghan Government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border and is expected to fulfil its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by Khwarij and involvement of its citizens in terrorism inside Pakistan". President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif commended the security forces for their successful counterterrorism operations. The president praised the forces for thwarting a terrorist infiltration attempt in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, stating that "defeating the Indian-backed Fitna al-Khawarij is crucial for Pakistan's peace and stability." He also paid tribute to the troops for their "timely and effective response." ("Three terrorists killed in NW, Tank ops," The Express Tribune, 4 November 2025)

Five TTP militants killed by security forces in KP

On 17 November, Dawn reported that five alleged terrorists affiliated with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were killed in an intelligence operation in Tirah Valley of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa district. The terrorists were reportedly acting under the command of local TTP commander Abuzar. The funerals of two major Afghan militants were held in the Nangarhar province of Afghanistan, reports Dawn. There has been no official confirmation of the killing of these insurgents by regional security officials. ("5 TTP terrorists killed in KP's Tirah," Dawn, 17 November)

Security operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa kill 38 militants

On 19 November, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) claimed that 38 terrorists were killed in four separate intelligence-based operations (IBOs) over three days in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The statement alleged that the militants were part of the Fitna al Khawarij. The first IBO was conducted by security forces in the Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan district, killing ten militants, including Kharij ringleader Alam Mehsud. Five terrorists were killed in the operation in Datta Khel in North Waziristan district. In the operations conducted on 16 and 17 November in Bajaur district and Bannu district, 11 and 12 terrorists, respectively, were killed. Ringleader Sajjad alias Abuzar was also killed in the Bajaur IBO. ISPR asserted that the security forces and law enforcement agencies would continue to "wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country." President Asif Ali Zardari commended the operations and stated that political attempts to divert attention from the national consensus on terrorism would not be tolerated. He reiterated that Pakistan is "determined to completely eradicate all forms of terrorism from the country." ("38 terrorists killed in four separate KP operations: ISPR," Dawn, 19 November 2025)

Economic Coordination Committee greenflags security and defence grants, and an offshore petroleum exploration consortium

On 18 November, Dawn reported that the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC), chaired by the Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, approved Pakistan's security and defence grants. The ECC approved "several strategic grants and reforms aimed at strengthening Pakistan's security framework, defence capabilities, food security, and

petroleum sector operations,” the Ministry of Finance informed in a statement. Dawn reported that a technical supplementary grant of PKR 100.3 million was approved for the maintenance of defence equipment used by the federal civil armed forces, and an additional technical supplementary grant of PKR 841.56 million was approved for enhanced border management, internal security and law and order. Further, a technical supplementary grant of PKR 50 billion was also approved for defence services projects. The committee will also establish a new special purpose vehicle, with initial paid-up capital of PKR 1,000,000, to take forward the winding up of Pakistan Agriculture Storage and Services Corporation, along with “measures to incentivise foreign participation in offshore oil and gas exploration, including licence extensions and working interest assignments.”

A new offshore exploration consortium was also approved, allowing the Turkish Petroleum Overseas Company (TPOC) to take over operatorship of the Eastern Offshore Block-C in an attempt to revive drilling. The ECC approved Pakistan Petroleum Limited’s request to assign part of its interest in the block to TPOC, Mari Energies and state-run Oil and Gas Development Co Ltd, leaving PPL with a 35 per cent stake. “This will bring valuable international offshore operating experience to Pakistan’s exploration landscape and this transition is expected to enhance technical capabilities, operational efficiency, and overall project delivery,” adviser to the Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad said. (“Economic Coordination Committee approves grants for security, defence projects,” Dawn, 19 November 2025)

Security forces kill 27 militants in KP intelligence operations

On 20 November, Dawn reported that during intelligence-based operations by security personnel, at least 27 militants were killed in different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The operation was carried out in the Kurram district’s Manato and Marzai areas, where nearly two dozen terrorists were hiding in a residential area and had planted explosives in the house. However, the military’s media wing has not issued any official statement on developments in Kurram. (“27 militants killed in KP operations,” Dawn, 20 November 2025)

Approval of 38 bulletproof vehicles for the school children in Balochistan

On 31 December, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, most of the cabinet and the finance

minister held a meeting which resulted in the approval of RS 2.1 billion supplementary budget, as well as the procurement of 38 bulletproof vehicles for schoolchildren in Balochistan. The initiative was taken into consideration due to the 2014 attack on APS, where over 144 children lost their lives, while 114 were injured. (“Govt approves 38 bullet-proof vehicles for Balochistan schoolchildren,” *The Express Tribune*, 31 December, 2025)

PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

PML-N is appointing Shah Ghulam Qadir as AJK opposition leader

On 02 December, Dawn reported that Shah Ghulam Qadir had been appointed as the opposition party leader for AJK, replacing Khawaja Farooq Ahmed of PTI. The replacement was made official yesterday after an application, which was backed by all nine lawmakers of the PML-N, was handed to the Speaker’s office. The appointment under Rule 17(a) of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly was granted by the Speaker based on the majority opinion of the opposition members. The shift represents a realignment in the legislative politics of AJK, after the previous pullout by PML-N of the ruling coalition. Through this nomination, Qadir attaches the privileges and rank of a cabinet-level post, where he is the main voice of opposition in the Assembly. (“PML-N’s Shah Ghulam Qadir replaces PTI lawmaker as AJK opposition leader,” Dawn, 02 December 2025)

Gilgit-Baltistan polls are scheduled to be held on January twenty-four

On 12 December, Dawn had reported that the Election Commission of Pakistan had announced that general elections in Gilgit-Baltistan would be held on January twenty-four, with preparations underway to ensure a smooth polling process. Given that the notification states that polling will occur in all constituencies in the region, the election schedule, including nomination and scrutiny schedules, will come out later. To ensure sufficient security, local authorities are being liaised with because the area is sensitive geographically and politically. The elections are projected to influence the politics of Gilgit-Baltistan and affect the agenda of governance and development in the strategically positioned area. (“Gilgit-Baltistan polls to be held on Jan 24,” Dawn, 12 December 2025)

“Azad Kashmir” and Gilgit-Baltistan should receive NFC funding, Nawaz says

On 13 December, Dawn had reported that the

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had called for “Azad Jammu and Kashmir” and Gilgit-Baltistan to be included under the National Finance Commission award, arguing that both regions require sustainable fiscal support for development and governance. In a public speech, Sharif indicated that the two regions have not been able to plan long-term and deliver services due to the lack of a formal revenue-sharing mechanism. He emphasised that financial inclusion via the NFC would serve to deal with developmental inequalities and institutional capacity building. (“Azad Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan must receive funding under the NFC award: Nawaz,” Dawn, 12 December 2025)

Gilgit-Baltistan is set to hold local government polls on 14 February

On 15 December, as reported by *Dawn*, the chief election commissioner in Gilgit-Baltistan announced that there will be local government elections in the region in February next year. This is to be conducted after two decades. The public notice will be issued on 19 December, whereas the nomination papers can be filled out from 22 to 26 December. The Chief Election Commissioner Khan said that these elections would help solve certain issues at the grassroots levels and called it a milestone for strengthening the democratic institutions as well as promoting development in the region. He also said that these elections would provide the people with an opportunity to directly participate in local development and the decision-making process. (“After two decades, Gilgit-Baltistan to have local government polls on Feb 14,” Dawn, 16 December 2025)

Kashmiri rights group condemns India's seizure of properties in disputed territory

On 26 December, India's recent seizure of properties owned by pro-freedom Kashmiri leaders and activists has drawn criticism from a London-based Kashmiri human rights organisation, which contends that New Delhi lacks the legal right to take property in an internationally recognized disputed territory. According to the Jammu Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR), India's obligations under international law and the UN Charter are violated when domestic laws like the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act are used to suppress dissent and seize property in occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The group argued that India's role in Kashmir is that of an interim administrator bound by UN resolutions and forbidden from changing the region's status or undermining the right to self-determination, citing recent

seizures of ancestral land and homes throughout the region, including the attachment of land linked to US-based Kashmiri leader Dr Ghulam Nabi Fai. (“Kashmiri rights group decries India's seizure of properties,” Dawn, 26 December, 2025)

EXTERNAL

Pakistan and Egypt to set up business council, expand defence collaboration

On 1 December, *Dawn* reported that Egypt's Foreign Minister arrived in Islamabad for a two-day official visit. He met Chief of Army Staff Field Marshall Asim Munir in Rawalpindi and discussed “defence and security cooperation, military exchanges, training collaborations, and regional peace and stability.” He also met President Asif Ali Zardari and the Foreign Minister. The president noted that “this year marks 77 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries” and expressed the hope that both sides will reinvigorate cooperation in trade, investment, and people-to-people exchanges. During a meeting, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar mentioned that Pakistan will share with Egypt a comprehensive list of 250 Pakistani business houses representing key sectors of the economy that will enhance bilateral commercial engagement. He also announced that a Pakistan-Egypt Business Council will be established soon, and political consultations between the two countries will be held in the first quarter of 2026. The two ministers also discussed Kashmir, Afghanistan, and cooperation at multilateral forums. (“Egyptian FM discusses defence and security cooperation, regional peace with COAS Asim Munir,” Dawn, 1 December 2025)

Pakistan's defence minister calls for reassessing the Gaza peace treaty

On 1 December, *Dawn* reported that Defence Minister Khawaja Asif expressed concerns about the Gaza peace treaty, as Israel is violating the fragile ceasefire in the region. He emphasised that Muslim countries that supported the treaty, including Türkiye, Egypt, and Qatar, may need to reassess their stance given the present situation. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar had already said that Pakistan was willing to commit troops to the Gaza peace force but not ready to participate in the disarmament of Hamas, claiming that Pakistan's job is peacekeeping, not peace enforcement. (“Defence minister says Muslim countries may need to reassess stance on Gaza peace treaty due to Israeli ceasefire violations,” Dawn, 1 December 2025)

Pakistan rejects UN rights chief's criticism of 27th Amendment

On 1 December, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan's Foreign Office rejected the statements by United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk, raising concerns about the 27th Constitutional Amendment. The Human Rights Chief, in his statement, claimed that the 27th constitutional amendment, like the 26th amendment last year, had been adopted without consultations and debate, and also these amendments undermine judicial independence and raise concerns about military accountability. In response, the Foreign Office emphasised that constitutional amendments adopted by the parliament of Pakistan followed due procedures enshrined in Pakistan's constitution and urged the high commissioner to respect the sovereign decisions of Pakistan's parliament and avoid commentary that reflects political bias and misinformation. ("FO rejects 'baseless' apprehensions of UN rights chief about 27th Amendment," *Dawn*, 1 December 2025)

Turkiye-Pakistan seal major offshore energy and mineral deals

On 02 December, Pakistan and Turkey's energy and mineral cooperation will increase, as a high-level delegation from Turkey will arrive in Islamabad to sign multi-billion-dollar agreements. Led by energy minister Alparslan Bayraktar, the Turkish Petroleum Overseas Company (TPOC) has been awarded the operatorship of the Eastern Offshore Block-C (owned by OGDC and Mari Energies), with TPOC holding a 34 per cent working interest in this venture and beginning offshore exploratory drilling in the year 2020. Additionally, a separate minerals agreement is expected to be finalised this week, with Turkish firms showing significant interest in securing leases for copper/gold mining near the Reko Diq area in Balochistan province. This improved relationship has reinvigorated investor confidence. According to the Petroleum Minister, Ali Pervaiz Malik, and the Turkish Ambassador, Irfan Neziroglu, mutual cooperation and investment in OGDC, PPL, Mari Energies and several other companies indicate the transformation of the relationship. ("Türkiye to sign multibillion-dollar energy, mineral deals with Pakistan this week," *The Express Tribune*, 02 December, 2025)

Pakistan deploys an urban search and rescue team to cyclone-affected Sri Lanka

On 3 December, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan has deployed an urban search and rescue team

to cyclone-affected Sri Lanka. A Pakistan Air Force C-130 aircraft, carrying a 47-member team and 6.5 tons of specialised equipment, departed to support ongoing rescue operations. According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) chairman, the deployed unit is a "very competent military team," and it will remain in the field as long as required. He added that Pakistan has also sent 200 tons of cargo assistance through a commercial container ship from Karachi, and that "the prime minister has also committed additional support from Pakistan if required." The deployment follows allegations by Pakistan's Foreign Office that India was preventing humanitarian assistance from being sent to Sri Lanka by air. A statement from the Pakistan High Commission in Colombo said Pakistani aircraft had been awaiting clearance and accused India of obstructing relief flights through "shenanigans." It noted that since 29 November, Pakistan's emergency mission comprising a C-130 aircraft with field hospitals, sniffer dogs and nearly 200 tonnes of life-saving supplies had remained grounded due to delays in flight clearance. As per the news report, PM Shehbaz Sharif stated: "Pakistan will also play a significant role in the restoration and rehabilitation of flood-affected areas of Sri Lanka after the search and rescue phase." According to *Dawn*, "The Sri Lankan president thanked PM Shehbaz... appreciated that Pakistan was among the first countries to respond after the cyclone." ("Pakistan sends urban search and rescue team to assist cyclone-hit Sri Lanka," *Dawn*, 03 December 2025)

Pakistan denies claims of Israeli-made spyware use

On 5 December, *Dawn* had reported that the government of Pakistan had denied allegations in Amnesty International's Intellexa Leaks report, claiming that Pakistan is using an invasive spyware called Predator created by the Israeli company Intellexa. A senior intelligence official has denied the existence of any Predator deployment in Pakistan, claiming that the accusations were simply to "malign Pakistan". The report discusses an alleged spyware attack on a Pakistani human rights attorney, with a fingerprint of the infection pointing back to a Predator command and control server. Amnesty's Security Lab has conducted this investigation using leaked internal Intellexa company documents along with partners from Greece, Israel and Switzerland, following up on previous global alerts from Google regarding suspected Predator users in Pakistan and

elsewhere. ("Pakistan denies claims of use of Israeli spyware," Dawn, 05 December 2025)

Italy, Pakistan move toward agriculture skills partnership

On 5 December, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan and Italy are expected to enter into a new memorandum of understanding in early 2023 to expand and improve their respective agricultural sectors through the establishment of training, skill development and modernisation. In a meeting held at the Italian Ministry of Agriculture in Rome, Mr Lollobrigida and Mr Rana Tanveer Hussain, Pakistan's Minister of Food Security, discussed current activities between the two countries, which include the Italian EUR 20 million horticulture development project and a number of olive industry projects in Pakistan supported by the Italian Development Agency. During their discussions, they agreed to expedite the ratification of the professional capacity-building memorandum of understanding between their countries, as this will allow for the development of improved technical and vocational training and employee development for agricultural workers in Pakistan. In support of their future partnerships, Mr. Lollobrigida proposed that Italy be allowed to create a joint technical committee in order to deepen the work done together in the areas of research, mechanisation, and extraction technology for the olive oil industry, whereas Mr. Hussain suggested that he invite Italy to attend the next Joint Economic Conference, as well as attend the labour working group meetings that will take place in the near future. Both Ministers emphasised that their strengthened partnership will result in job creation, increased agricultural productivity and improved value chain quality standards. ("Italy, Pakistan set to seal agriculture skills pact," Dawn, 05 December 2025)

Pakistan and Turkmenistan step towards strengthening their Trade and Economic ties

On 12 December, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, Prime Minister Shebaz, accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Energy Minister Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar and other members of the cabinet and senior government officials arrived in Ashgabat to attend the International Forum on Peace and Trust - International Day of Neutrality and the 30th anniversary of the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan for expressing his resolve to further strengthen bilateral ties between the two countries, particularly through enhanced trade and

economic engagement. The PM met with President Berdimuhamedov of Turkmenistan, Gratifying the Turkmen leadership and government for supporting Pakistani nationals to evacuate from Iran during the Iran-Israel war. He even reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to enhance connectivity with Turkmenistan through land and sea, conveniently placing ports in Karachi and Gwadar for Turkmen people to enhance their outreach to South Asia and beyond. ("Pakistan, Turkmenistan agree to strengthen trade, economic ties," The Express Tribune, 12 December 2025)

Pakistan and Uzbekistan to expand PTA

On 13 December, *The Express Tribune* reported that, having held high-level discussions, Pakistan and Uzbekistan increased their efforts to develop their Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and expand bilateral trade to USD two billion within two years. In an official statement, negotiations between the Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industry, Ihsaan Afzal and the Deputy Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shohrukh Gulamov, were based on the immediate expansion of the product range of the PTA, and the formal agreement concerning the updated version of the agreement is to be expected in the near future. Both parties reiterated the desire to increase economic interaction by simplifying customs regulations, the growth of digital connectivity, and the implementation of an Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) system to simplify trade. The priority areas in terms of the joint venture and technology transfer were identified as textiles, leather, pharmaceuticals and surgical instruments. ("Pakistan, Uzbekistan to strengthen security cooperation," The Express Tribune, 13 December 2025)

PM meets world leaders in Ashgabat

On 12 December, *The Express Tribune* reported that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with world leaders at Ashgabat at an international forum in connection with the International Year of Peace and Trust, the International Day of Neutrality, and the anniversary of Turkmenistan's permanent neutrality. Sharif interacted with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon and Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov. The leaders also participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Neutrality Monument, where Sharif affirmed Pakistan's commitment to the peaceful settlement of global disputes while also pressing the Afghan Taliban to curb terrorist groups operating within Afghanistan. Sharid also met

the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr Masoud Pezeshkian and both leaders appreciated each other's support when they faced external aggression earlier this year, a news release from the Prime Minister's office said. Sharif also emphasised the need to strengthen bilateral cooperation primarily through trade, border markets and security and transport connectivity. Both leaders also discussed ongoing peace efforts in Gaza and agreed to continue regular high-level engagement. ("Shehbaz meets world leaders in Ashgabat," *The Express Tribune*, 13 December 2025)

Erdogan supports stability plan to maintain ceasefire between Pakistan and Afghanistan

On 13 December, *Dawn* reported that Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed Turkey's readiness to contribute to a plan to maintain stability amid the "extended ceasefire" between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This came at an international forum hosted by Turkmenistan, where Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged the international community to press the Afghan Taliban to honour their international obligations. Sharif said peaceful dispute resolution was a "cornerstone" of Pakistan's foreign policy and also supported the Gaza Peace Plan in this regard. "While we persevere in this quest for peace, the scourge of terrorism is, however, raising its head yet again, and this time, unfortunately, from Afghan soil," he said. He also expressed gratitude to Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the UAE for their efforts in brokering the ceasefire between Islamabad and Kabul. In his interaction with President Erdogan, Sharif said Pakistan was committed to cooperating in areas including energy, the economy, defence and investment, while reaffirming the significance of bilateral ties between the two countries. President Erdogan thanked the prime minister and expressed a desire to further strengthen ties. ("Türkiye backs stability plan as PM seeks global action to stem terror," *Dawn*, 13 December 2025)

FM Dar speaks with the Iranian and Turkish FMs on regional issues

On 22 December, *Dawn* reported that the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Ishaq Dar, and Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi met on Sunday to review bilateral cooperation across various sectors, including trade, connectivity, and people-to-people ties, and to exchange views on regional developments. They also had telephonic conversations with the FM of Türkiye to discuss

key aspects of bilateral relations. They also reaffirmed their commitment to promote regional peace, stability, and development.

("Dar speaks with Iran, Türkiye FMs on regional issues," *Dawn*, 22 December 2025)

Pakistan and Iraq pledge stronger bilateral cooperation

On 22 December, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari met with Iraqi President Dr Abdul Latif Jamal at the Baghdad palace during Zardari's five-day visit. Zardari congratulated the Iraqi leadership and its people on the successful conduct of parliamentary elections and wished for their smooth formation of a new government. According to a statement issued by the Presidency, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitments to deepen bilateral relations across various domains. They also agreed to maintain close coordination at regional and multilateral forums including the UN and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Zardari reaffirmed Pakistan's support for Iraq's sovereignty, integrity, and national unity and reiterated commitments to Iraq's stability and democratic progress. Zardari requested improved facilitation for Pakistani pilgrims visiting Iraq and expressed hope for early finalisation and implementation of the proposed MoU on Zaireen Management aimed at ensuring orderly travel and addressing long-term issues related to religious visits. ("Pakistan, Iraq pledge stronger bilateral cooperation," *Dawn*, 22 December 2025)

Pakistan emerges as leading recipient of Chinese combat aircraft

On 26 December, according to a recent Pentagon report presented to the US Congress that emphasises Beijing's growing role as a global arms supplier, Pakistan has become China's most important partner in the air combat domain. According to the report, China has only exported the J-10C multirole fighter jet to Pakistan; out of a total order of 36, 20 aircraft will be delivered to the Pakistan Air Force by May 2025, demonstrating a level of confidence not shown to other interested states. Additionally, it highlights the jointly developed JF-17 Thunder as a prime example of defence cooperation between two developing nations. Although the aircraft is currently in use in a number of foreign air forces, it is still essential to Pakistan's own aerial capabilities and defence exports. China has provided Pakistan with sophisticated armed drones and naval platforms in addition to manned aircraft, strengthening a defence alliance marked by collaborative

development, production, and acquisition. ("Pakistan emerges as main recipient of Chinese combat aircraft," Dawn, 26 December, 2025)

Pakistan and Jordan reaffirm commitment to deepen military cooperation

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that during a meeting with Major General Yousef Ahmed Al Huneiti, Chairman of the Jordanian Joint Chiefs of Staff, at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi on December 25, Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces and Army Chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, reiterated Islamabad's commitment to bolstering military cooperation with Jordan. The Jordanian military chief commended the professionalism of the Pakistani armed forces and their role in fostering regional peace and stability, while Field Marshal Munir emphasised closer cooperation to address evolving security challenges. The two sides discussed regional security dynamics and matters of mutual interest, according to the ISPR. In keeping with the larger trajectory of Pakistan-Jordan military engagement, which has included reciprocal high-level visits and repeated affirmations of a strong defence partnership aimed at contributing to the region, the meeting ended with a shared resolve to further deepen defence ties between the two nations. ("CDF Field Marshal Munir vows enhanced military cooperation with Jordanian military chief," Dawn, 25 December, 2025)

Pakistan summons UK envoy over 'provocative' protest outside Bradford consulate

On 27 December, in response to what it called "provocative" and "inciteful" remarks made during a protest outside the Pakistani consulate in Bradford, Pakistan has called the acting high commissioner of the United Kingdom to file a formal protest. Following statements and slogans directed at Pakistan's military and civil leadership from British territory, including a circulating video that officials claim contained threats of violence, the Foreign Office said a démarche was issued. Islamabad argued that such acts go beyond free speech and violate both domestic and international counterterrorism standards, and it urged UK authorities to prosecute those responsible under British law. With officials cautioning that additional legal options remain open if action is not taken, the action reflects Pakistan's growing concern over political activism abroad that it perceives as incitement against state institutions. ("Pakistan summons UK high commissioner after 'provocative' Bradford demonstration," Dawn, 27 December, 2025)

The US acknowledges Pakistan's strategic return

On 29 December, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, according to a prominent US journal, the Carolina Political Review, due to effectively utilising diplomacy and defence capabilities, Pakistan has restored its strategic importance. The journal reviews the India-Pakistan war that took place in the month of May and highlights Pakistan's defence capabilities, and gave a new trajectory to Pak-US relations, with Washington's restored faith in Pakistan due to Islamabad's effective diplomacy. Due to the developing relations, Pakistan has opened a new economic avenue based on national interest by maintaining a multilateral tie with the US. ("US reports spotlight Pak strategic return," The Express Tribune, 29 December 2025)

PM Shehbaz and the UAE president meet up in RYK

On 31 December, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, PM Shehbaz met with the President of the UAE at Sheikh Zayed Palace to discuss the bilateral ties between the two countries. The leaders continued their discussion from the previous meeting, which was held on 26 December. The PM reiterated his firm resolve to elevate the longstanding, strong ties between the two countries in terms of a strategic, mutually beneficial economic partnership. Additionally, the leaders also discussed enhancing cooperation in various other terms, like IT, energy, mining, and minerals, as well as defence cooperation. The PM thanked the President of the UAE for hosting over 2.1 million Pakistanis. In conclusion, the two nations capped off a year of extensive leadership-level engagements. ("PM Shehbaz meets UAE president in RYK," The Express Tribune, 31 December, 2025)

Awami National Party (ANP) executive committee member Mumtaz Ali Khan escapes an assassination attempt

On 13 November, *Dawn* reported that Awami National Party (ANP) executive committee member Mumtaz Ali Khan escaped an assassination attempt when his car was targeted by a remote-controlled bomb in Swat district on 12 November. "Fortunately, all occupants, including Mumtaz Ali Khan, remained completely unhurt," a police official stated. Authorities noted that Khan has previously lost 10 family members, including his father, brother, and son, in terrorist attacks. The Swat Qaumi Jirga called it "heinous and inhumane act," and says its objective was to spread fear among the

Swat citizens, highlighting deteriorating security in the region. The jirga pointed out that it had repeatedly cautioned authorities about the re-emergence of heavily armed militant groups, allegedly operating with tacit state support, in the mountainous areas of Swat. The jirga noted its right to hold public demonstrations against terrorism and oppression, and announced that a collective plan of action would be finalised following consultations among senior members. (Fazal Khaliq, "[ANP leader escapes assassination bid in Swat](#)," *Dawn*, 13 November 2025)

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) confirms its national team would continue its Pakistan tour despite security concerns following the Islamabad attack

On 13 November, *Dawn* reported that Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) confirmed its national team would continue its Pakistan tour in spite of security concerns after the Islamabad attack. Earlier reports suggested some players had requested to return home due to safety concerns. The team is currently in Pakistan for a ODI series and a triangular T20 tournament with Pakistan and Zimbabwe. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi held an emergency meeting with the Sri Lankan players and management, addressing their concerns and assuring that he would "personally supervise" the team's security. Following the meeting, SLC issued an official statement confirming the tour would proceed as scheduled. "Should any player or member of the touring party decide to return to Sri Lanka despite the directive issued by SLC to continue with the tour, Sri Lanka Cricket will immediately send replacements to ensure that the tour continues without interruption," it stated. ("[Sri Lanka to continue Pakistan tour after PCB assures foolproof security](#)," *Dawn*, 13 November 2025)

Pakistan and China agree to deepen counterterrorism cooperation

On 18 November, *Dawn* reported that the Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met the Chinese Ambassador Jian Zedong to discuss security enhancement and counterterrorism cooperation in Islamabad. The two parties chose to enhance their intelligence sharing and operational collaboration after a suicide bombing attack took place near the Islamabad district courts. The Chinese Ambassador Jian Zedong sent condolences to Pakistan for the victims, while the Chinese Foreign Ministry released its own statement about the attack. The Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi declared that

Pakistan-China relations need trust, while he identified China as Pakistan's dependable ally during difficult circumstances. The ambassador confirmed that Beijing will maintain complete backing for Pakistan regarding security matters and all aspects of cooperation. ("[Pakistan, China to boost anti-terror cooperation](#)," *Dawn*, 18 November 2025)

EU raises concerns ahead of GSP+ review

On 19 November, *Dawn* reported that EU Ambassador Raimundas Karoblis commented that Pakistan needs to take additional steps to fulfil its obligations under the 27 UN conventions which support GSP+ status before the monitoring team decides its future access to the scheme. The Ambassador listed human rights, labour rights, enforced disappearance, minority defence, women's rights and civilian court use by military forces as the main issues of concern. The Ambassador listed various advantages but stated that present standards do not fulfil requirements, so the upcoming evaluation will determine Pakistan's future trade position. The EU envoys who preceded him have warned about worsening human rights conditions in Pakistan while making it clear that trade benefits depend on Pakistan showing actual progress in reforms. ("[Pakistan needs to 'do more' on fulfilling GSP Plus conventions ahead of review](#)," *Dawn*, 19 November 2025)

Pakistan and Russia reaffirm deepening of bilateral ties

On 27 November, Pakistan and Russia pledged to deepen their bilateral cooperation in trade, energy, business-to-business engagements, and sectors such as health and education. This came during the 10th Pakistan-Russia Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) held between 25 and 27 November and chaired by Energy Minister Awaiz Leghari and his Russian counterpart, Sergei Tsivilev. They reiterated their continued cooperation to facilitate exchanges between business communities and improved access for Pakistani products like textiles and IT services. The two countries also emphasised the importance of advancing the pilot cargo movement along agreed corridors and confirmed their intention to start a pilot train. Other sectors of cooperation include renewable energy, hydropower development, hydrological monitoring and flood resilience. Additionally, both sides confirmed plans to establish Russian language centres in Islamabad and Karachi. Three Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were also signed, first between the Pakistan Standards and Quality

Control Authority (PSQCA) and Russia's Federal Agency for Technical Regulation and Metrology, second between the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) and the Federal Antimonopoly Service of Russia, and third by the state-run news agencies, Associated Press of Pakistan and Russia's Sputnik. The two sides also decided to hold the next IGC session in Russia in 2026. ("Pakistan, Russia vow 'forward-looking' partnership," Dawn, 28 November 2025)

SOCIETY

Islamabad hosts Pakistan Population Summit

On 01 December, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan Population Summit organised by Dawn Media had begun in the national capital, Islamabad, with a focus on restoring balance and building sustainable futures. The summit, a national dialogue, aims to emphasise the need to recognise the importance of population planning as an investment in the country's development. Pakistan's population has reached over 241 million, making Pakistan the fifth most populous country in the world. With a population growth rate of 2.40 per cent, Pakistan maintains the highest population growth rate in South Asia. ("2-day Pakistan Population Summit begins in Islamabad," Dawn, 1 December 2025)

Sorranj mine sealed after deadly landslide kills two workers

On 01 December, *Dawn* reported that a landslide struck a coal mine in the Sorranj area of Quetta. Two coal miners lost their lives in the incident. The Chief Mine Inspector has ordered the coal mine sealed and an inquiry initiated into the incident. These deadly incidents are common in mines in Balochistan province, with private companies operating the mines under lease agreements with the government, known for hazardous working conditions and poor safety standards. ("2 killed as coal mine collapses in Quetta," Dawn, 1 December 2025)

Nationwide measles-rubella & polio drive vaccinates 33 million children

On 02 December, a nationwide campaign on Measles-Rubella (MR) Vaccine and Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) in Pakistan concluded, with government officials reporting that 33 million children received vaccinations with 95 per cent coverage from the nationwide Measles-Rubella (MR) immunisation activities, and this campaign was one of the most successful immunisation campaigns in Pakistan in recent times across different areas, such as Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and Islamabad. The success of this campaign has been attributed to the

collaborative coordination between the Federal Directorate of Immunization (FDI) and other stakeholders to be able to successfully deliver MAWs to remote, hard-to-reach, and higher-risk communities that were previously not being reached in other immunisation campaigns. In addition, Pakistan continues to prepare for the last round of OPV vaccinations from 15-21 December 2025, in its efforts to eradicate the polio virus from Pakistan. ("MR, polio drive concludes," Dawn, 02 December, 2025)

Milk from Karachi pronounced unfit for human consumption after substantial traces of formalin and phosphate found in samples

On 3 December, *Dawn* reported that the city commissioner had informed the Sindh High Court that all milk samples collected from Karachi were found unfit for human consumption by the Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority after finding traces of formalin in 22 samples and phosphate in eight samples, indicating extensive adulteration. It further argued that there was no basis for raising the price of fresh milk, especially since the consumption of milk-based products typically falls during winter. In 2023, a dairy farmer filed a petition challenging an October 2023 notification that set the official price of fresh milk, naming the agriculture, supply and prices department, the commissioner, and others as respondents. A report from the Karachi commissioner was then submitted to a two-judge SHC constitutional bench, headed by Justice Adnan Iqbal Chaudhry, in compliance with the court's previous order. The commissioner's report added that, to tackle milk adulteration, sellers' associations were directed to develop joint Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on hygiene and safety, which they submitted on 25 November. It noted that during a 20 November meeting, a representative of the Bureau of Supply & Prices said there was no justification for a price increase, given the seasonal drop in consumption of milk-based products and the expectation that prices would fall in the coming month. The report further stated that a new notification was issued on 27 November, setting the maximum retail price of fresh milk at PKR 220 per litre, with all associations instructed to follow the official rate, ensure accurate measurements and comply with the agreed SOPs. ("All milk samples collected in Karachi found unfit for human health, SHC told," Dawn, 3 December 2025)

Women's financial inclusion reaches 52 per cent, claims SBP

On 4 December, *Dawn* reported that the State Bank of Pakistan's governor called women's inclusion in entrepreneurship a powerful driver of growth, celebrating Pakistan Women Entrepreneurship Day 2025. He noted that women's financial inclusion has risen to 52 per cent. He also appreciated the milestone of more than 17.6 million new women having their bank accounts opened since 2021. With the third edition of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028, the government aims to raise overall financial inclusion to 75 per cent by 2028 and reduce the gender gap to 25 per cent. Meanwhile, the Chairperson of the Pakistan Business Council raised concern over the entrepreneurial landscape, where only one per cent of enterprises are led by women, and 92 per cent of women-owned enterprises remain informal. ("Women powering Pakistan's growth push: SBP chief," *Dawn*, 04 December 2025)

USF approves nine telecom projects for rural connectivity

On 4 December, *Dawn* reported that nine new telecom projects with PKR 13.05 billion were approved by the Universal Service Fund to provide high-speed internet and voice services. These projects will help 5.5 million unserved and underserved residents across the country. The Information Technology and Telecommunication Secretary claimed that USF projects have served 39.4 million rural residents to date, playing an instrumental role in empowering rural communities. ("Rs13bn telecom projects okayed to connect 5.5m rural residents," *Dawn*, 04 December 2025)

Legal challenge emerges against Punjab's revival of Basant festival

On 5 December, *Dawn* had reported that a petition was filed in the Lahore High Court against the Punjab government's decision to revive Basant by the Judicial Activism Panel, alleging that the Punjab Regulation of Kite Flying Ordinance 2025 was illegally issued while the Assembly was sitting and would result in a repetition of past deaths and injuries associated with dangerous kite strings. The petition references past Supreme Court decisions and recent deaths as proof that there are still significant safety risks associated with the festival. The government has responded to the challenge with a commitment to regulate Basant as a cultural festival with strict rules against participation by anyone under 18 years of age, require that kite manufacturers register with the government, mandate that all kites have QR codes on them and only cotton string be used,

and impose significant penalties and possible incarceration for violations of these rules. Azma Bokhari, Information Minister for the Punjab, stated that the objective of reviving the festival is to ensure that it can be celebrated safely by establishing adequate controls and monitoring, and by implementing improved measures for traffic safety with special consideration of the safety of motorcycles and children. In addition to being banned, any person found responsible for producing or intentionally using metal or chemically coated string can face severe penalties, including imprisonment for up to five years and/or monetary penalties of PKR two million. Further, Bokhari has stated that there will be increased safety measures for motorcyclists; underage violators will not be arrested or handcuffed but will instead receive a monetary penalty. The LHC petition also creates an opportunity for what could be a significant legal and political challenge to Punjab's largest cultural festival while waiting for the ordinance to be formally presented to the Punjab Assembly. ("Move to revive Basant in Punjab faces first legal challenge," *Dawn*, December 05, 2025)

Basant for three days in Lahore

On 12 December, as reported by *Dawn*, Azma Bokhari, Punjab's Information and Culture Minister, announced that Basant will be celebrated in Lahore only. It will take place for three days from 6 to 8 February and will be governed by strict regulations introduced through the Punjab Kite Flying Ordinance 2025. She clarified that there would be no kite flying permitted outside these dates or in any other district, adding that the festival may be expanded across Punjab next year if people in Lahore demonstrate responsible behaviour. The government has mandated QR-coded kites, licensed sellers, and registered manufacturers to ban the use of hazardous metallic strings that previously caused numerous deaths and injuries, before the statewide ban in 2007. In addition, free safety antennas will be distributed to motorcyclists, while cultural programmes highlighting traditional music, food, and festivities will be organised to mark the revival of the festival. ("Basant for 3 days and in Lahore only," *Dawn*, 12 December 2025)

Media associations condemn government restrictions on advertisements to Dawn Media Group's TV and radio outlets

On 13 December, *Dawn* reported that the Council of Newspaper Editors (CPNE) and other media bodies condemned the government's unannounced curbs on advertisements for Dawn

Media Group's TV and radio outlet, imposed after restricting ads to its flagship newspaper, urging the authorities to immediately lift the ban. In a statement, the CPNE stated that Dawn is among Pakistan's most credible media organisations and warned that suspending government advertisements amounted to financially crippling the group. Attributed to its president and secretary general, the statement recalled that Dawn Media Group has provided independent and unbiased journalism since Pakistan's inception. The All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) also condemned the move, expressing dismay that after 13 months of curtailed advertising to Daily Dawn, the restriction had been extended to the group's television and radio outlets. opined that since these ads were paid for through the treasury, they "should not be used as [a] tool to strangle the dissenting voice." "The APNS expresses its solidarity with [the] Dawn Media Group in this hour of financial stifling and urges ... the federal and provincial governments to review their unconstitutional decision and restore government advertising to Dawn Media Group," it concluded. The Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) similarly criticised the ban, reiterating its long-standing opposition to the use of advertising as a means of controlling media or free expression. Stressing the importance of credible traditional media in an era of widespread misinformation, it called on the government to immediately withdraw the restrictions. The Joint Action Committee (JAC), representing major journalists and media bodies, also denounced the curbs, saying the government was using official advertising to pressure media organisations, with Dawn Media Group being the primary target. It said the group had long faced advertising withdrawals due to its editorial independence and impartial reporting, and demanded the immediate restoration of government advertisements across its print, TV and radio platforms. ("Media bodies slam govt ad ban for Dawn outlets as tool to gag press," *Dawn*, 13 December 2025)

PFUJ condemns the 13-month ad-ban on Dawn media as an "attack on press freedom"

On 15 December, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) termed the ban on government advertisements for various outlets of the Dawn Media Group as an "attack on press freedom," condemning the move in a press release. The statement highlighted that the 13-month ban is "an attempt to control media and stifle free expression." The PFUJ urged the government to withdraw the ad ban for the promotion of "free

and responsible journalism" and underscored the significance of traditional media's role amid the influx of fake news. "[The] PFUJ views this as an attempt to force the media group to change its editorial policy, which is unacceptable," the press release stated, adding that the union would stand in solidarity with the Dawn Media Group and called on the government to "respect the principles of press freedom and freedom of expression." ("PFUJ dubs Dawn Media Group's ad ban 'attack on press freedom'," *Dawn*, 15 December 2025)

PIA denies claims of crew disappearance in Toronto as "baseless," and intending to "malign PIA and Pakistan"

On 14 December, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) decried the reports on the disappearance of the entire crew of a PIA flight in Toronto, Canada, adding that it was "fake news" circulated by "anti-Pakistan quarters." "A tweet, circulated by certain anti-Pakistan quarters, claiming that [the] whole crew of a particular PIA flight is missing, is entirely baseless," the flag carrier said in a post on X, adding that the purpose was to "malign PIA and Pakistan". "There has been no such incident, and the news is fake," it asserted. A PIA spokesperson also issued a separate statement denying the news, alleging that the information had been circulated by an "Afghan and anti-Pakistan account." ("PIA dispels 'fake news' of crew disappearance in Toronto," *Dawn*, 14 December 2025)

PMA condemns revenue report that highlights defaulted income tax payments from the health sector

On 14 December, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) condemned a recent Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) report, as "biased and misleading" and reflective of an "unacceptable attitude" by FBR and the government towards the nation's most vital healthcare sector. "The report selectively identifies doctors as the only professional group failing to file income tax returns. The healthcare community is not engaged merely in business; we are dedicated to providing essential, life-saving services to the people of Pakistan, often at very low cost," the statement read. The PMA called for the immediate withdrawal of the report, emphasising that most income tax non-compliance stemmed from other powerful sectors, including "the rulers and their allies," who it claimed were routinely ignored, while doctors were being treated as an easy target. "To single out doctors as the primary defaulters is not only misleading but also a grave insult to

professionals working tirelessly on the front lines," the statement asserted. Media reports cited FBR data showing that although 130,243 doctors are registered nationwide, only 56,287 filed tax returns this year. Of these, 31,870 declared zero income from private practice in 2025, 307 reported losses despite busy practices in major cities, and just 24,137 acknowledged earning any business income at all. ("PMA wants withdrawal of FBR report," *Dawn*, 14 December 2025)

Polio refusals fall in KP, but security risks and myths persist

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded a decline in polio vaccination refusals during 2025, even as it remained the country's worst-affected province with 19 of Pakistan's 30 reported polio cases. During the final campaign of the year, about 100,700 children missed vaccination out of a target of 6.48 million, with refusals accounting for only three per cent. The officials reduced undetected cases by 50 per cent through their continuous outreach efforts, but people continued to believe fake vaccine side effect rumors which included false claims about infertility and religious violations. The ongoing security problems in the area prevent the complete elimination of polio because five police officers and two ordinary citizens lost their lives this year, while vaccination teams and people who were kidnapped faced continuous attacks. The authorities predicted that polio transmission would persist because they lacked sufficient administrative powers to stop vaccine refusal cases. ("Polio vaccination refusals decline in KP but challenges remain," *Dawn*, 26 December 2025)

Karachi court rules child marriage conviction does not void nikkah

On 27 December, *Dawn* reported that a Karachi sessions court ruled that a conviction under the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2013, does not invalidate a marriage or render a nikkah void under personal law. Additional District and Sessions Judge Zahoor Ahmed Chandio held that the law is penal and restraining in nature and does not provide for annulment of marriage, clarifying that the validity of a nikkah falls within the jurisdiction of family courts. The court handed the defendant two years of prison time because he married a minor, but he received no punishment for abduction and rape because there was insufficient proof, yet medical tests proved the victim was under 18. ("Conviction under child marriage law doesn't

invalidate nikkah, Karachi court rules," *Dawn*, 27 December 2025)

Kohistan protest continues as talks with authorities collapse

On 27 December, *Dawn* reported that negotiations between the Lower Kohistan district administration, police and local protesters collapsed despite Wapda's announcement of a Rs500 million release for rebuilding the flood-damaged Dubair-Ranowalia Road. The Dubair Khawar hydropower project faces a power generation halt because residents have been occupying the site for five weeks. The officials explained to protesters that the World Bank-funded project needed survey completion and open tendering procedures, which would extend the process for three and a half months. The protest leaders refused to accept the government's promises because they demanded actual construction start before ending the sit-in protest. The protesters maintained their sit-in because they faced ongoing difficulties since the 2022 floods, which blocked their access to roads. ("Talks between officials, Kohistan protesters fail," *Dawn*, 27 December 2025)

KP to hire over 10,000 primary teachers through parent-teacher councils

On 29 December, KP is implementing a temporary plan to hire 10,074 teachers for primary schools via parent-teacher councils to counter a serious shortage of teachers. The majority of the new teachers will come from the local union councils in the settled and traditional districts of KP, where there is currently a need for approximately 19,000 teachers. This plan was approved by the provincial cabinet and will help ensure that KP will have an optimal number of teachers in each school based on its requirements and will phase out the practice of only having one teacher per primary school. The new teachers hired will be paid compensation of PKR 25,000 each and will be able to work with parents and teachers until the hiring of 16,000 permanent teachers through ETEA. There will be different timeframes for hiring teachers in summer and winter zones. ("Over 10,000 teachers to be hired in KP through school level councils," *Dawn*, 29 December, 2025)

AI/CYBER

AI ecosystem is being boosted as a local data centre is launched

On 02 December, *Dawn* reported that a new AI-ready data centre and sovereign AI cloud were launched yesterday in Pakistan,

established by telecom company Telenor in partnership with Data Vault Pakistan. The complex will have enterprise-grade GPUs and group computing infrastructures, which will facilitate the development of artificial-intelligence applications locally without the need for data export to other countries. The CEO of Data Vault claimed that it has acquired over 3,000 GPUs, and this is the first purely AI-powered data centre in the country. It is hoped that the centre will enable the AI to be embraced in various industries, such as health care, finance, and law enforcement, and maintain data sovereignty and enhance cybersecurity by not moving sensitive information beyond national borders. Data-Vault and Telenor assume that with the cloud, it will be possible to build AI tools locally, models of large languages in the region, and other applications, and overcome historical limitations of global GPUs and export bans. ("Pakistan's AI potential being unlocked with local data centre," *Dawn*, 02 December 2025)

Pakistan warns of New Year WhatsApp scams as cybercrime risks rise

On 29 December, the NCCIA warned individuals about New Year's-themed scam messages that are now active on WhatsApp. These messages can result in account takeover and spyware infections. Do not click on "congratulations" or "gifts" sent via WhatsApp, and never relay your verification code to another person or entity. According to a press release from the NCCIA on Sunday, hackers will often attempt to hide malicious software in the form of a gift associated with the New Year holiday, and it only takes one click on the link for the hacker to gain access to the victim's phone, private information, and chat history. In addition to this, the NCCIA warns of new ways that hackers via "zero-click" attack vectors can penetrate your device without any input from the victim (although still rare) and the greater risk of malicious links, unsecured compressed cloud backups, and any unofficial versions of WhatsApp that are now available on the internet. Individuals are urged to be on alert during the holiday season. ("Your New Year's gift: a hacked WhatsApp account," *The Express Tribune*, 29 December, 2025)

HEALTH

Over 3,500 dengue cases reported in Punjab after floods

On 15 December, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, over 3,500 confirmed dengue cases have been reported across the Punjab in 2025. As per the health officials, the recent floods and

weather conditions have brought about mosquito-borne disease. New cases have been recorded daily in flood-hit districts. The surge is primarily escalated due to stagnant water accumulated after heavy rainfall and floods, a major factor of which is poor drainage systems. According to the PDMA, the threat of dengue transmission has doubled due to such instances. Punjab has a longstanding history of public health challenges and has reported more than 380,000 dengue cases and 640 deaths over the last 14 years, with approximately 5,405 dengue cases and 17 deaths over the last year. In response, the PDMA has directed all the district administrations to take major actions with regard to cleanliness, removal of stagnant water, and accelerated mosquito control measures. Residents criticise the efficiency of the administration and say that the measures have yet to bring visible relief. ("Flood aftermath fuels dengue surge across Punjab, Cases cross 3,500", *The Express Tribune*, 16 December 2025)

JUDICIARY

Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb elevated to permanent judge of the Supreme Court (SC) in the first JCP meeting since the 27th Constitutional Amendment

On 02 December, *Dawn* reported that in the first meeting since the passage of the 27th Constitutional Amendment and the establishment of the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC), the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP), responsible for appointing judges to the superior judiciary, elevated Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb to a permanent judge of the Supreme Court (SC). The session was presided over by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi. The JCP had appointed Justice Aurangzeb as an acting judge of the Supreme Court in February after elevating him from the Islamabad High Court (IHC). The forum also sanctioned the appointment of Justice Zafara Ahmed Rajput as chief justice of the Sindh High Court (SHC) and Justice Kamran Mullahkhail as chief justice of the Balochistan High Court (BHC). During the meeting, the JCP reviewed candidates for the position of SHC chief justice from among the three most senior judges of the court. The judges under consideration were Justice Rajput, Justice Muhammad Iqbal Kalohoro and Justice Mahmood A. Khan. Additionally, the JCP evaluated candidates for the post of BHC chief justice from the high court's three senior-most judges, Justice Mullahkhail, Justice Iqbal Ahmed Kasi and Justice Shaukat Ali Rakhshani. Following the establishment of the FCC, which saw four Supreme Court judges, Justices Aminuddin Khan, Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi,

Aamer Farooq and Ali Baqar Najafi, appointed to the new court, along with the resignations of Justices Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Athar Minallah, the Supreme Court's total strength has fallen from 24 to 18 judges.

A press release issued later stated that the JCP had set up a committee comprising Justice Farooq, AGP Awan, Naek, Zafar and Bhoon to draft rules under clause 20 of Article 175A of the Constitution. The clause requires the creation of rules for the annual performance evaluation of high court judges and for determining the period within which a judge must improve their performance if found to be underperforming. The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), the top forum for judicial accountability, investigating allegations of misconduct against judges, also met today and formed a committee comprising Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Rizvi and Justice Aalia Neelum to draft rules governing its procedures and conduct of business under clause 10 of Article 209 of the Constitution. "In the meantime, the council unanimously adopted the Supreme Judicial Council Procedure of Inquiry, 2025, on a provisional basis," the press release added. ("First JCP meeting post-27th Amendment elevates Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb to permanent SC judge," Dawn, 2 December 2025)

"Inefficiency in provincial spending, meanwhile, does not automatically justify a return to centralised control," argues editorial in Dawn

On 3 December, Dawn, in an editorial titled Undermining the federal compact, analysed the rising discussions on the 28th Constitutional Amendment. The editorial underscores that the 28th Amendment "strikes at the core of Pakistan's federal compact and carries grave implications for provincial autonomy, federal cohesion and human development." According to the editorial, the 28th Amendment, which is claimed to be a long-standing agenda of the PML-N, the PTI, the establishment and international lenders, would "strip away constitutional protection for provincial shares under the seventh National Finance Commission (NFC) award," arguing that "Islamabad needs a larger slice of the divisible pool." It highlights the three main arguments towards the amendment—first, they contend that the seventh NFC award granted the provinces an excessively large portion of the divisible pool without assigning them corresponding spending responsibilities. Second, they argue that the provinces' reliance on federal transfers has created a moral hazard,

weakening their incentive to expand their own tax base. Third, they claim provincial governments engage in wasteful, politically driven spending on salaries and discretionary development projects, with minimal gains in public service delivery. Although some of these concerns are meaningful, Pakistan's fiscal crisis did not begin with the seventh NFC Award, and reducing provincial shares alone will not fix it, argues the editorial.

The core issues lie in stagnant productivity, a narrow and poorly documented tax base, and weak institutional capacity to tap new revenue sources, the editorial identifies. Both federal and provincial governments have failed to expand the tax net, with tax-to-GDP ratios falling for both tiers in recent years, a sign of deeper structural problems. It also highlights that Pakistan cannot afford to further curtail social spending. "Experience suggests that when more resources are channelled to the centre, they tend to fund defence and elite-centric subsidies rather than classrooms and clinics," the article reiterates.

The editorial suggests that a more effective alternative to cutting provincial transfers is to redesign the fiscal framework to reward improvement in social indicators by linking part of federal allocations to provinces' revenue efforts. This could mend the moral hazard built into unconditional transfers. However, provincial inefficiency does not justify a return to centralised control, as federal spending is equally vulnerable to patronage and weak discipline, as highlighted in the editorial. It further argues that Islamabad contributes to the fiscal strain by retaining large ministries and funding projects in devolved sectors such as health and education, with a significant share of the federal development budget spent on provincial-level initiatives, leaving the centre overburdened and then using fiscal pressure to argue for reclaiming provincial authority. "A sounder course is to reform tax policy, enforce discipline on federal and provincial spending, and embed performance-based criteria in the NFC formula as well as inter-organisational resource allocation," the editorial recommends. (Rafiullah Kakar, "Undermining the federal compact," Dawn, 3 December 2025)

IHC orders HEC to present judge's degree record

On 3 December, Dawn, in an editorial titled On 3 December, Dawn reported that the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had ordered the Higher

Education Commission (HEC) to show relevant records regarding the law degree of IHC Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri. The court bench was hearing the petition accusing Justice Jahangiri of having a dubious law degree. The petitioner contended that the LLB degree of Justice Jahangiri had been cancelled by Karachi University. Earlier, the IHC bench, while hearing the petition, issued an interim order restraining Justice Jahangiri from performing judicial functions until the maintainability of the petition could be examined. Later Supreme Court intervened and set aside IHC's restraining order and held that no high court can bar a sitting judge from performing judicial duties. The SC asked the IHC to decide the objections raised to the petition and proceed in the matter accordingly. ("IHC seeks Justice Jahangiri's degree record from HEC," Dawn, 3 December 2025)

CJP Afridi highlights the need to build a citizen-centric justice system that integrates modern technology

On 4 December, *Dawn* reported that Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi reiterated the judiciary's commitment to building a citizen-centric, transparent, and equitable justice system. Addressing the participants of a consultative workshop on "National E-Court Reform Agenda: Requirements and Challenges", held at the Federal Judicial Academy, Afridi stressed that the integration of modern technology is central to delivering accessible and efficient justice. The event convened the Supreme Court Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, senior government officials, digital authority leaders, high court registrars, IT specialists and judicial officers from across Pakistan to discuss the judiciary's national digital transformation agenda. CJP Afridi underscored the central role of the National Judicial Automation Committee (NJAC), led by Justice Mazhar, in driving this transition. He noted that the NJAC serves as the institutional framework for aligning digital initiatives across all courts. Earlier, high court registrars and Pakistan Digital Authority representatives presented assessments of the current technological landscape, progress in digitisation and challenges across different judicial tiers. Their briefings highlighted the need for an integrated national e-court system, a unified digital master plan and improved interoperability among judicial institutions. ("CJP Yahya Afridi stresses citizen-centric justice system," Dawn, 4 December 2025)

Lawyers questions the impact of the new constitutional court

On 23 December, *The Express Tribune* reported that a debate had emerged regarding the working of the country's two apex courts and their effect on litigants which is a supposed centre of the justice system as creation of the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) has reshuffled caseloads and raised questions about where justice now stands and how smoothly it moves. Figures show that as of 13 November, a total of 56,608 cases were pending before the Supreme Court of which 26,910 cases were transferred to the newly created FCC. At present 18 judges including the chief justice of Pakistan are performing judicial functions in the SC against a sanctioned strength of 34. Seven judges including the chief justice are performing duties at the FCC. Legal experts say that there is a trust deficit surrounding the new body. Another layer believes that the purpose behind the new body is to target PTI, particularly Imran Khan. He stated that the government should have considered nominating judges to the FCC who had demonstrably evolved constitutional jurisprudence. ("Lawyers question impact of new Constitutional Court," The Express Tribune, 23 December 2025)

High Court judges likely to be reshuffled soon

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that the high court judges are supposed to be reshuffled in the near future. The suggested reforms are associated with the idea of transferring and reassigning judges between the bench. The development has become an issue in the legal circles because it may affect the functioning of the court and the distribution of cases. No official announcement or schedule of the reshuffle has been made yet. ("High Court judges likely to be reshuffled soon," Dawn, 26 December 2025)

LHC sets aside govt's authority to render passports inactive

On 26 December, *Dawn* reported that the Lahore High Court had decided that the federal government cannot take a unilateral decision to make the passports of citizens inactive. According to the court, such action is against due process, and it can not be done without any legal justification. It has been stressed that executive powers should not be beyond the control of the judicial system. Consequently, the administrative order of blocking passports by the government was suspended. ("LHC sets aside govt's authority to render passports 'inactive'," Dawn, 26 December 2025)

CJP highlights judicial infrastructure gaps in remote regions

On 27 December, *Dawn* reported that the Chief Justice of Pakistan expressed concerns over the lack of basic judicial facilities in remote areas, resulting in regional disparities in access to justice. CJP Yahya Afridi also underscored the need to develop infrastructure in remote areas while presiding over a high-level review meeting of the Law and Justice Commission focused on ongoing initiatives in remote districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For province-wide coverage in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an estimated amount of PKR 688 million is required. Of this, LJCP has allocated PKR 390 million, while the remaining funding gap is to be met through provincial support. Also, the PHC Chief Justice briefed the forum about the establishment of Family Court Blocks in Peshawar and Swat and proposed similar facilities at divisional headquarters in the province. ("CJP Afridi for better judicial facilities in remote areas", *Dawn*, 27 December 2025)

Appeal filed against Faiz Hameed's military court conviction

On 30 December, *Dawn* reported that a former chief of the Inter-Services Intelligence, Faiz Hameed, is seeking an appeal of the 14-year sentence handed out by a military court. His lawyer confirmed on 29 December that the appeal had been filed. Earlier this month, Hameed was convicted by the Field General Court on four charges, including breaching secrecy legislation and being politically involved in his official capacity, abusing his power to cause harm or discomfort to another party, and causing harm or discomfort through unlawful means. Under the Pakistan Army Act, the military appellate authority will conduct an internal review of the appeal. The Chief of Army Staff has the authority to confirm, amend, or overturn the sentence as they see fit. Appeal processes for a full military trial have historically taken anywhere from a few years to decades before any decision was made, including appeals that were filed but never decided. Even though the incidents that led to his conviction occurred during a raid in 2017 concerning a property dispute, it was not until 2023 when the Supreme Court directed a review of the case, resulting in new evidence being introduced ("Appeal filed against ex-spy-master Faiz Hameed's conviction by military court: lawyer", *Dawn*, 29 December, 2025)

JCP likely to meet on 12 January to confirm IHC judges

On 31 December, *Dawn* reported that the

Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) is expected to meet on 12 January to consider the confirmation of three additional judges of the Islamabad High Court (IHC). The administration of IHC has already forwarded the service record of the three judges along with the recommendations of Chief Justice Sardar Mohammad Sarfraz Dogar, who will participate as a member in the meeting from JCP. In the series of meetings expected in January, the JCP is also expected to confirm the appointment of additional judges to the Lahore High Court and the Balochistan High Court. ("JCP likely to meet on 12th to confirm IHC judges", *Dawn*, 31 December 2025)

AF-PAK

Afghan refugees urge the US to resume the resettlement programme; Asserts that the National Guard shooting was an individual act and plead that collective punishment be avoided

On 1 December, *Dawn* reported that Afghan refugees, awaiting resettlement in the US, have urged the Trump administration to resume the immigration process of Afghan nationals, stating that their living conditions in Pakistan were severe and under constant fear of deportation. The statement came from Afghan P1/P2 case holders, who stated that "We, the Afghan allies and partners of the United States with completed P1/P2 cases, express our deep concern and urgent plea for assistance." They asserted that the shooting of the National Guard soldiers was the act of a single individual, "and it must never be used to collectively punish thousands of loyal Afghan allies who served the United States honourably and at great personal risk." The statement highlighted that "Individual crime is not a reflection of an entire group, and we respectfully ask that this principle of justice be upheld." The statement also highlighted that the deteriorating relations between Islamabad and Kabul has led to the deportation of even "documented US allies," adding that "Individual crime is not a reflection of an entire group, and we respectfully ask that this principle of justice be upheld," the statement added." The statement also pleads that if the refugees are deported, they will be "immediately identified and killed by the Taliban for our service to the United States." "We are not criminals. We are the allies who stood with America. Now, we ask America to stand with us," said the statement issued on behalf of the P1/P2 case holders in Pakistan. In a recent statement, the UN refugee agency had also urged Pakistan to ensure that Afghans with specific protection needs are exempted from the

provisions of the 'Illegal Foreigner Repatriation Plan' and allowed to remain safely in the country, reported Dawn. ("Afghan refugees in Pakistan urge US to resume resettlement programme," Dawn, 1 December 2025)

Pakistan clears humanitarian consignments for Afghanistan after nearly two months of suspended cross-border cargo movement

On 4 December, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan has initiated clearing humanitarian consignments for Afghanistan after nearly two months of suspended cross-border cargo movement. This marks the first controlled reopening of transit trade since all routine trade was halted in October. Customs clearance for exports, imports and Afghan Transit Trade (ATT) had been completely suspended at major border points, including Torkham, Ghulam Khan, Kharlachi, Angoor Adda and later Chaman from mid-October. The latest decision follows instructions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after consultations with the UN resident coordinator in Pakistan. An official letter was issued to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and the Directorate General of Transit Trade, authorising the movement of humanitarian consignments belonging to three UN agencies through Chaman and Torkham.

According to the letter, the reopening will proceed in three phases: first, clearance of food shipments; second, medicines and medical equipment; and third, education-related supplies. Additional consignments will be processed once updated requirements are shared. In the initial phase, 143 containers will be cleared: 67 containers of food aid from the World Food Programme (WFP), 74 containing children's supplies from UNICEF, and two containers of healthcare and family-support items from UNFPA. Officials stated that the reopening applies only to humanitarian ATT cargo and does not indicate the resumption of routine trade. (Mubarak Zeb Khan, "UN aid consignments cleared for Afghanistan," Dawn, 04 December 2025)

Pakistan-Afghanistan border reopening seen as humanitarian aid only; Kabul says otherwise

On 5 December, *The News International* had reported that after nearly two months of disclosure, Pakistan had reopened the Torkham and Chaman border the previous day, specifically for humanitarian aid being sent by the UN for the people of Afghanistan. The supplies include food, medicine, medical equipment, and other essential goods for health

and education. The Pakistan government had clarified that trade and transit will continue to be suspended. In response to the reopening, the Afghan government criticised the Pakistan government as they misunderstood the intent and called the act a violation of their interests. The Afghanistan side demands for guarantee that the border will not be used to politically or economically pressure and questioned why trade continues to be blocked, and the border is opened just for aid. ("Kabul misunderstands move to reopen Pak-Afghan border only for UN aid: official," *The News International*, 05 December 2025)

Afghan trade suspension leaves Pakistani truck drivers stranded

On 5 December, *The Express Tribune* had reported that days after the bilateral trade was suspended and amid new tensions, hundreds of Pakistani truck drivers remained stranded for weeks at the closed border crossings. The transporters carrying goods, which included Kinnow and other goods for Afghanistan, Central Asia, etc, have been blocked, which has led to losses and demurrage costs. Traders, operators, supply chains, seasonal exporters logistic firms were the ones to be hit the hardest. ("Afghan trade suspension leaves Pakistani truck drivers stranded," *The Express Tribune*, 05 December 2025)

Normalcy returns to the Chaman border following heavy clashes

On 7 December, *Dawn* reported that normalcy had returned to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border at Chaman on 6 December, following heavy clashes a day earlier. Chaman Deputy Commissioner confirmed that fighting between Pakistani forces and Afghan Taliban troops had ceased. He noted that an emergency had been declared at Chaman District Hospital immediately following the attack. Residents reported that many families from border villages relocated to Chaman city for safety. An official stated that "heavy fighting started at 10 pm and continued for over two hours." The incident occurred in the backdrop of stalled Pakistan-Afghanistan negotiations, as three rounds of talks in Istanbul produced no breakthrough. Border clashes first erupted on 11 October, and bilateral relations have since deteriorated. The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) remains the central point of contention, with Islamabad insisting that Kabul take concrete action to curb cross-border terrorism. On 7 November, after the third round of talks, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said discussions on cross-border terrorism were

“over” and had “entered an indefinite phase,” as the negotiators failed to overcome core disagreements between the two sides. (Saleem Shahid, “Calm returns to Chaman border after overnight clashes,” *Dawn*, 7 December 2025)

US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report confirms Taliban control of abandoned American weapons and security infrastructure; reports highlight implications for Pakistan's Security

On 7 December, *Dawn* reported that a final assessment by the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has confirmed that billions of dollars' worth of American-supplied weapons, equipment and security infrastructure abandoned during the 2021 withdrawal now constitute the core of the Taliban's security apparatus. In parallel, findings from UN monitoring teams and a Washington Post investigation suggest that some of these weapons have already reached the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The 137-page SIGAR report documents the scale of the 20-year US effort to rebuild Afghanistan. Congress provided roughly USD 144.7 billion between 2002 and 2021 to support reconstruction and a democratic transition, “yet ultimately delivered neither.” UN assessments further highlight the regional consequences, noting continued Taliban logistical and operational support to the TTP. SIGAR attributes part of this spillover to the collapse of the Afghan government and Taliban takeover, which caused an abrupt loss of oversight. The US Department of Defence has confirmed that approximately USD 7.1 billion worth of equipment, including thousands of vehicles, hundreds of thousands of small arms, night-vision devices, and more than 160 aircraft, was left behind.

The consequences are already visible in Pakistan, noted *Dawn*. According to the Washington Post, serial numbers on at least 63 weapons seized in Pakistan match those originally supplied to Afghan forces. Officials note that some are “significantly superior” to equipment previously used by TTP. UN monitoring reports estimate that the TTP maintains around 6,000 fighters across multiple Afghan provinces; Denmark's deputy permanent representative noted that it continues to receive “logistical and substantial support from the de facto authorities” in Kabul. Certain UN reports released earlier documented Taliban-provided guesthouses, weapons permits, movement authorisations, and immunity from arrest for TTP leaders. SIGAR's 2025 quarterly reports

also document a rise in cross-border attacks, including an assault in South Waziristan that killed 16 Pakistani security personnel. As SIGAR concludes its mandate, the report puts forth that the Afghanistan experience should stand as a cautionary lesson on the limits of rebuilding fragile states, and the security consequences of its failure, especially to the wider region. (Anwar Iqbal, “Equipment, weapons left behind by US in Afghanistan now form core of Taliban's security apparatus: watchdog,” *Dawn*, 7 December 2025)

Pakistan calls on Afghan-Taliban to rid the country of terrorism at Afghan-centric multi-state forum in Tehran; Taliban abstains from the meeting

On 15 December, *Dawn* reported that at the meeting of Special Representatives for Afghanistan from neighbouring countries, hosted by Iran, Pakistan urged the Afghan Taliban to rid the country of all militant groups, as Iran stressed the need for regional cooperation. The Taliban were invited to participate, but declined to attend. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmaeil Baqaei stated that “Afghanistan, however, chose not to attend the meeting, a decision that Iran respects.” The high-level summit in Tehran convened special representatives from Pakistan, China, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan to discuss shared security concerns and strategies for engaging with Afghanistan's de facto authorities. Pakistan's Special Representative for Afghanistan Mohammad Sadiq emphasised that “The continued threat of terrorism emanating from Afghan soil is a big challenge for the region.” He highlighted a stable Afghanistan, free from terrorist elements, was central to gain the trust of its neighbours and tap into its vast economic potential. “It is, therefore, imperative that the current de-facto rulers take steps to ameliorate their suffering. And the foremost step in this regard would be to rid their soil indiscriminately of all types of terrorists,” he stated. “The people of Afghanistan have already suffered enough and they deserve better,” he added in a social media statement. Asif Durrani, Pakistan's former ambassador to Iran criticised the Taliban's absence as a sign of “the Taliban's lack of political maturity.” “This decision reinforces the argument that the Taliban cannot negotiate an issue; a mere ‘Na-manu (don't accept)’ is a head-in-the-sand attitude and will not resolve the serious problems,” he wrote in a social media statement.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, stated that Afghanistan's stability hinges on its integration into regional political and economic structures, not on external involvement, arguing that "Experience has shown that 'imported prescriptions and trans-regional decisions' have failed to bring stability to crisis-hit countries." He called on the neighbouring states, terming them the "most natural and reliable" actors capable of addressing Afghanistan's complex challenges. The Express Tribune reported that Iran also facilitated talks among anti-Taliban Afghan political groups, culminating in the "National Solidarity of Afghanistan's Political Parties and Movements" declaration. China, Russia and Central Asian Neighbours focused on regional stability and economic integration highlighted differing priorities, while Iran positioned itself as a mediator in Afghan Affairs, the lack of a joint statement showcased the limits of regional initiative. ("Tehran moot on Taliban ends inconclusively," *The Express Tribune*, 15 December 2025; "Multi-state forum presses Afghanistan on terror support," *Dawn*, 15 December 2025)

PUC urges Afghan government to implement Clerics resolution

On 15 December, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) urged the Taliban government to implement the recently passed resolution by more than 1000 Afghan clerics against indulging in militancy abroad. The PUC, which is a broad coalition of clerics from various Sunni schools of thought, has worked on a declaration stressing that aggression against Afghan soil is unacceptable and Afghan soil should not be used against any other country. Also, there should be no attacks on Afghanistan from Pakistan and vice versa. The PUC chairman also urged for political maturity in Pakistan and strongly condemned attacks and criticism directed at the IRPR director general over his remarks. ("Pakistan Ulema Council urges Afghan govt to implement clerics resolution," *Dawn*, 15 December 2025)

Afghan Taliban says doors open for talks to resolve issues

On 27 December, *Dawn* reported that the Afghan Taliban regime's interior minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani, on Friday spoke at the graduation ceremony at the Kabul Police Academy stating that his country was not a threat to any state and that it was ready to address misunderstandings. The Afghan Taliban's official media reported that Haqqani said that his government continues to adhere to the commitments made under the Doha Agreement, not allowing Afghanistan's soil

to be used against any country. Although Haqqani did not mention Pakistan by name, he appeared to refer to Pakistan's long-standing demand from Kabul to rein in the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). ("Afghan Taliban says doors open for talks to resolve issues," *Dawn*, 27 December 2025)

Afghanistan bears a higher economic cost as the Pakistan trade suspension hits

On 31 December, *Dawn* reported that, according to trade data, Afghanistan's export losses have reached around 10 per cent since 10 October, compared with about 0.6 per cent for Pakistan due to the suspension of bilateral trade, which has placed Kabul at a clear disadvantage. Nearly 46 per cent of Afghanistan's total exports are to Pakistan, and a sizeable volume is to India. Whereas, Pakistan exports only about 3.46 per cent to Afghanistan. India has emerged as Kabul's second-largest export destination, accounting for 40 per cent of Afghanistan's total exports. ("Afghanistan bears heavier economic cost as Pakistan trade suspension bites harder," *Dawn*, 31 December 2025)

ON INDIA

Pakistan Air Chief hails post-conflict emergence as 'Regional Stabiliser'

On 2 December, *Dawn* reported that the Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu declared that Pakistan established itself as a regional stabilising force after the May 2025 conflict with India, which he called Marka-i-Haq. The PAF Academy Asghar Khan in Risalpur hosted a passing out parade, where he declared that Pakistan achieved a better diplomatic position and military respect through its unified response during the crisis. The PAF conducted its initial complete multi-domain operation, which combined space capabilities with cyber warfare and electronic warfare and long-range bombing and drone and loitering munition systems. The air chief stated that Pakistan used its missile strike on 10 May to destroy Indian military facilities while disabling sections of the S-400 defence system. The air chief attributed the successful outcome to national leadership and tri-service coordination while stating that Pakistan would take decisive action against any upcoming threats. The PAF achieved its success through ongoing modernisation efforts under NASTP, which include new unmanned systems and EW and space assets. ("Pakistan successfully emerged as 'regional stabiliser' following 'Marka-i-Haq'," *Dawn*, 2 December 2025)

Multilateralism “under assault,” amidst the fragile stability in South Asia; Pakistan rejects “bloc politics and zero-sum approaches,” asserts Ishaq Dar

On 4 December, *Dawn* reported that Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar stated that multilateralism was “under assault” as stability in South Asia faced various threats, stressing the need for regional cooperation. Speaking at an event in Islamabad, he added that “the institutions of global governance are often criticised for the acts of omission and commission of a few states driven by unilateralist impulses.” Citing the India-Pakistan conflict in May, Dar recalled that “In 92 hours, the Indo-Pakistan war had the potential to escalate to far more dangerous levels,” emphasising that India and Pakistan were “involved in a conflagration” that would have gone toward an “uncontrollable escalation”, adding that an “uneasy and fragile peace persists.” He added that states had increasingly resorted to the use of force to settle disputes while disregarding international law and the principles of the UN Charter, and that emerging technologies, transnational terrorism and hybrid warfare, including misinformation campaigns, posed major threats to stability. Citing intensifying military, technology, trade, tariff and resource rivalries, he noted that “major power competition is a defining feature of our time.” Dar asserted that Pakistan “opposed bloc politics and zero-sum approaches and consistently stressed the imperative of cooperation rather than confrontation,” and that as an elected member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2025-2026 term, Pakistan was “engaged in vanguard efforts to promote international peace and security.” Speaking on South Asia, Dar noted that the region had a complex security environment as it comprised “three geographically contiguous nuclear powers with complicated relationships.” The foreign minister said that real and lasting peace in South Asia demands more than strategic stability, stressing that resolving the Kashmir dispute fairly and durably remains indispensable. He further noted that the Indo-Pacific strategy, designed to contain China, effectively designates one regional state as the net security provider. This, he said, creates friction with China’s connectivity-focused Belt and Road Initiative and undermines regional efforts toward peace and development. He argued that South Asia’s challenges could not be addressed amid “political fragmentation and a fractured regional architecture.” Dar said the first step was to move past zero-sum thinking

and build a climate of dialogue, peaceful coexistence, economic interdependence, and mutually beneficial cooperation. “Pakistan envisions a South Asia where connectivity replaces divisions, economies grow in synergy, disputes are resolved peacefully in accordance with international legitimacy and where peace is maintained with dignity and honour,” Dar said. (“Dar says multilateralism ‘under assault’ amid complex security climate in South Asia,” *Dawn*, 04 December 2025)

PROVINCES

Below-normal rainfall records in Balochistan heightens concerns of drought in Quetta and six other districts

On 8 December, *Dawn* reported that according to a Meteorological Department report, Balochistan has received 41.9 per cent below-normal rainfall over the past three months, intensifying drought risks in Quetta and six other districts. The report indicates that the province recorded just 8.6 mm of rain in September, October and November, compared to the normal 14.8 mm. Temperatures during this period were also 0.9°C above average. The Met Office’s drought advisory (pre-alert) noted that from May to November, western and southwestern Balochistan experienced declining rainfall and an increase in consecutive dry days. Forecasts suggest rainfall in the affected areas will remain below normal until February 2026, with above-average temperatures expected to further worsen drought conditions in Quetta, Chagai, Gwadar, Kech, Kharan, Mastung, Nushki, Pishin, Panjgur, Qilla Abdullah and Washuk. However, the Met Office also anticipates partial relief later this month from a weather system that may bring rain to parts of the region. (“Alarm over below normal rainfall in Balochistan,” *Dawn*, 8 December 2025)

Two environmental samples test positive for poliovirus in Rawalpindi

On 13 December, as reported by *Dawn*, before Rawalpindi’s last anti-polio vaccination campaign of 2025, which will take place between 15 December and 18 December, two environmental samples of raw sewage collected there tested positive for poliovirus. Health officials reported that these two samples were taken from Nullah, or channel, located near Pirwadhai and Dhoke Dalal, both along the border between Rawalpindi and Islamabad; they confirmed that they were genetically identical to the strain of poliovirus located in Rahim Yar Khan and Karachi that is causing an active outbreak. However, health authorities also

advised that at this point, there should not be any significant concern regarding the samples' findings. Health departments have developed security, monitoring, and logistical plans to support the four-day campaign to vaccinate approximately 1,050,000 children in Rawalpindi by a workforce consisting of more than 10,000 health care workers. Additionally, as part of an overall strategy being developed throughout Pakistan, during this particular campaign, a total of 23,300,000 underage children throughout Pakistan will receive the polio vaccine. Health officials emphasised the importance of continuing all efforts to work with parents and other institutions to join in the fight against polio to ensure that the virus will no longer be endemic. ("2 environment samples test positive for poliovirus in Rawalpindi," Dawn, 13 December 2025)

Quality healthcare is a basic right, says Balochistan CM Bugti

On 13 December, *Dawn* reported that on the occasion of International Universal Health Coverage Day, Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, reiterated the commitment of the Government of Balochistan to ensure all citizens have access to quality health care, as the right to quality health care is a fundamental human right, and also the responsibility of the State. He further explained that the government has initiated several initiatives to ensure that access to health care will be available from the urban areas of Balochistan, and throughout the more remote mountainous areas, and many of the currently underserved areas will have access to basic health care services. Chief Minister Bugti further stated that a strong health care system forms the foundation for social and economic development and that current investments made in health services will contribute to the long-term security of Balochistan. In a related matter, Provincial Health Authorities have been working with the Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade to create additional opportunities for private sector investment

through public-private partnerships in the areas of health system modernisation, development of hospitals, diagnostic testing, telemedicine, pharmaceuticals, and the use of digital health technology. The Provincial Government has pledged to create an investor-friendly environment to facilitate the rapid modernisation of health services in Balochistan. ("Quality healthcare a basic right, says Balochistan CM Bugti," Dawn, 13 December 2025)

KP Assembly sets up probe into 2023 Radio Pakistan attack

On 27 December, A 15-member special house committee has been established by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly to look into the mob attack on Radio Pakistan's Peshawar facility during the 9-10 May 2023 protests that followed PTI founder Imran Khan's arrest. The committee, which was established in accordance with Rule 237 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, will investigate the incident's circumstances and causes, determine whether an organised conspiracy was involved, and evaluate the role of law enforcement agencies before making recommendations to the House. Nine members of the Treasury benches and six members of the opposition make up the panel, which represents cross-party involvement in the investigation into an attack that damaged vehicles, broadcast equipment, and historical recordings while injuring a staff member. ("Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly forms committee to probe Radio Pakistan mob attack," Dawn, December 27, 2025)

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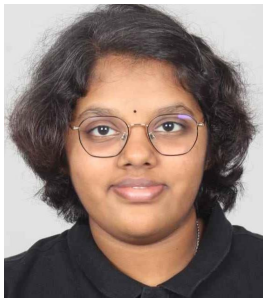
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PREVIOUS EDITIONS

