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Pakistan agrees to join Trump's "Board of Peace"

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About NIAS Global Politics

The Science, Technology and International Relations (STIR) programme at NIAS has a specific focus on Global Politics, discussing contemporary world Affairs. There are four area studies under the programme on Europe, China, East Asia and the Pacific (CEAP), Pakistan and Africa. Apart from these, the programme publishes The World This Week looking at global developments across the regions from East Asia to Latin America on a weekly basis.

About NIAS Pakistan Reader

As a part of the area studies initiative, the Institute started a focused study on Pakistan in 2020 within the Science, Technology and International Relations (STIR) Programme at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru. The aim is to study contemporary Pakistan with a comprehensive and regular focus, build a team of young scholars within India, and create a network of global scholars.

About Pakistan Monitor

Pakistan Monitor is an academic initiative under the area studies programme of STIR. It is an advanced form of Pakistan Weekly that used to be published earlier. The monthly publication includes commentaries, short notes, focus notes and daily developments.

PAKISTAN MONITOR

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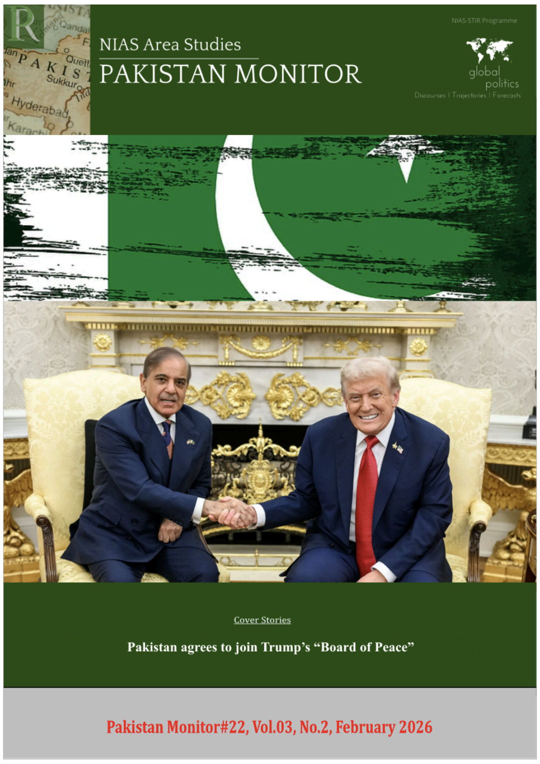

FOCUS NOTES

Pakistan witnessed 34 per cent increase in terrorism in 2025: PIPS data records 699 terror attacks in the year

Pakistan to join Trump's "Board of Peace": FO; Defence Minister Asif defends decision amid criticism

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FOCUS NOTES

Short Notes on key daily developments

Pakistan witnessed 34 per cent increase in terrorism in 2025: PIPS data records 699 terror attacks in the year

On 2 January, as reported by Dawn, Pakistan's security reports for 2025 reported a 34 per cent rise in terrorist incidents in contrast to last year's 21 per cent increase, according to data released by the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS). Furthermore, there have been over 699 terrorist attacks resulting in over 42 per cent fatalities among the security forces. The attacks also resulted in over 1,034 civilian casualties and 1,366 civilian injuries, which were caused by the rising trajectory of militancy that has persisted since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. The 95 per cent attacks took place in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan provinces, with over 243 militants getting killed, either in suicide attacks or amidst the crossfire with the task forces.

On another note, there was a 40 per cent rise in incidents associated with TTP and its affiliates in KP, which resulted in over 581 civilian casualties and 698 injuries. The coordinated attack across 11 districts on Independence Day was accounted as a symbolic challenge to the state's authority. Balochistan experienced over 254 militant attacks, which led to over 419 deaths, where militant groups like BLA and BLF conducted coordinated attacks that targeted the economic infrastructure and state symbols to intensify their political message and cause governance instability. Pakistan experienced the highest number of terrorist activities in the year of 2025.

The report comes as the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) also reported a rise in internal violence in Pakistan in 2025. The think-tank recorded a 25 per cent increase in fatalities from violent incidents across the first 11 months of the year, which was already higher than the entirety of 2024. An increase in counterinsurgency operations across the country has been attributed as the reason behind the rise in numbers, with such operations. Similar to the data released by PIPS, numbers from the CRSS showed that over 96 per cent of all fatalities and 92 per cent of all violent incidents were recorded in KP and Balochistan. The data also recorded 1,795 militant fatalities, showing the impact of expanded counterinsurgency operations.

References:

"Country witnessed 34pc increase in terrorism in 2025," Dawn, 2 January, 2026

Pakistan to join Trump's "Board of Peace": FO; Defence Minister Asif defends decision amid criticism

On 21 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO) had announced its acceptance of US President Donald Trump's invitation to join the "Board of Peace," a new body chaired by Trump to oversee the implementation of the Gaza ceasefire, humanitarian aid, and reconstruction under UNSC Resolution 2803. The decision followed an invitation to PM Shehbaz Sharif, with Deputy PM and FM Ishaq Dar sharing the news, followed by a joint statement by foreign ministers of Pakistan, UAE, Turkiye, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Qatar, and Jordan confirming their participation.

The Board of Peace emerged amid a fragile three-month Gaza ceasefire signed in October 2025 in Sharm El-Sheikh, following intense conflict that killed tens of thousands and displaced much of Gaza's population. Pakistan has long championed a two-state solution, Palestinian self-determination on pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as capital, and UN-led processes, as voiced in OIC and UNGA forums. Membership requires a USD one billion fee for permanent status, with Trump holding veto power over decisions; the board currently focuses on Gaza but eyes expansion to other conflicts, such as Ukraine.

Pakistan's Foreign Office emphasised its commitment to Palestinian rights, ceasefire enforcement, aid scaling, and reconstruction, positioning Islamabad to influence outcomes and bridge legitimacy gaps among Muslim-majority countries. Defence Minister Khawaja Asif defended the decision, saying it amplifies Pakistan's voice on Gaza, warning that absence risks irrelevance in a large gathering of invited nations. Domestically, backlash was swift from Senator Allama Raja Nasir, who decried it as neo-colonial and UN-undermining, inconsistent with Pakistan's Kashmir advocacy; JI chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman rejected it as a ploy to seize Palestinian land, opposing any troop deployment; ex-UN envoy Maleeha Lodhi, Shireen Mazari, and Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar echoed concerns over the lack of parliamentary debate. The board's structure features Trump as chair with an executive board including Rubio, Witkoff, Kushner, and Blair, where members hold three-year terms with one vote each, but the chairman approves all resolutions.

References:

"Pakistan accepts Trump's invitation to join 'Board of Peace': FO," *The Express Tribune*, 21 January 2026;
"Defence Minister Asif defends move to join Trump's 'Board of Peace' amid criticism," *The Express Tribune*, 21 January 2026

PAKISTAN IN BRIEF

1 January- 31 January

By Tanvi Harendra, Sunidhi Sampige, Nirmiti M, Abhimanyu Solaki, Preetha R, Brighty Ann Sarah, Vani Vyshnavi Jupudi & Akshath Kaimal

POLITICS & GOVERNANCE

Opposition condemns Adiala sit-in crackdown

On 01 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the opposition alliance led by the PTI condemned the use of water cannons by the Punjab Police to disperse protesters who staged a sit-in outside Adiala Jail. This is the third time the police have resorted to force to break up a sit-in outside the prison. Imran Khan's sisters and other PTI workers were also arrested before being released near Chakri on the motorway. "In the severe cold, an attack with water cannons was carried out on unarmed, peaceful children, women, and citizens," a video shared on X by PTI Punjab said. The Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) also denounced the use of force by the police, alleging that the water used to scatter protesters was laced with a chemical and hundreds were "badly injured". Additionally, the PTI shared another list of six persons with the Adiala Jail administration, requesting that it allow them to meet Imran Khan. ("Opposition takes exception to yet another Adiala sit-in crackdown," *Dawn*, 01 January 2026)

Confidence-building between big players can improve political situation, says Sanaullah

On 02 January, as reported by *Dawn*, PM's adviser Ranan Sanaullah emphasised that "confidence-building measures" among five key political figures in Pakistan are essential for improving the political landscape. Despite this, the PTI, led by Imran Khan, refused to negotiate with the federal government, according to party Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram. Sanaullah identified the leaders involved, including Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Nawaz Sharif, and Asif Ali Zardari, and noted that any progress requires the cessation of hate speech against the military. He criticised the PTI for failing to disown instigating social media narratives and urged them to retract a planned strike on 8 February. Meanwhile, Malik Amir Dogar from PTI encouraged a meeting among various leaders to potentially resolve tensions, although Akram reiterated the party's rejection of negotiations. Recent statements from political figures highlight an ongoing call for dialogue and restraint in the face of rising instability. ("Confidence-building measures between 'five' big players can improve political situation, says Sanaullah," *Dawn*, 2 January 2026)

Islamabad LG elections to be delayed for the fifth time in a row

On 03 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the local government elections in Islamabad, which were scheduled to be held on 15 February, are likely to be postponed again for the fifth time in a row due to implication of new amendments to the Act disrupting the flow of the procedure. There were over 14 amendments that were approved by the federal cabinet to be implemented in the Act, one of which was a change in the name of the Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad to "Town Corporations." The new proposal states the presence of three town corporations in Islamabad, with each town corporation comprising the territorial limits of the NA constituency. The prejudice for delay in elections was already set by the PTI based on persistent delay in the elections due to several federal changes, like consistently increasing the number of UCs, and now the fresh amendments. The local government's term had ended in 2019; nonetheless, the elections kept getting delayed, resulting in over 2.5 million residents of the state facing ongoing issues from water shortages to unpaved streets. ("LG elections in capital likely to be postponed again," *Dawn*, 03 January 2026)

Sanaullah: PM not in a "minus Imran" mindset

On 3 January, as reported by *Dawn*, earlier PM's adviser Sanaullah proposed a confidence-building measure between PML-N, the PTI, and PPP to stabilise the political situation, in response to which the PM offered negotiations on the legitimate matters with the opposition and invited the respective parties to the National Assembly chamber. Although due to the policies imposed by Imran Khan previously, the TTAP and PTI's second and third tier leadership, despite the efforts, state that "nothing could materialise unless Imran Khan's policy changes in favour of dialogue." On the other hand, the PTI has authorised anyone to hold the negotiations. ("PM Shehbaz has not set a 'minus Imran' condition, says Rana Sanaullah, referring to negotiations," *Dawn*, 03 January, 2026)

KP CM's ready to hold talks over provincial issues

On 03 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, the KP CM stated his assent to hold talks with the establishment regarding the provincial issues while clarifying that the responsibility for PTI negotiations with the establishment has been assigned to Mahmood Khan Achakzai and Allama Nasir Abbas. The CM extends his concern regarding the restriction to meet the PTI founder and legitimises the founder's political position whilst urging the PTI leadership to re-enter politics with resolve. He also proceeded to call for the withdrawal of the drone attacks and formulation of policies with all stakeholders, including the establishment in line with public interest. The CM proceeded to highlight the financial grievances with the federal government, claiming significant unpaid dues to KP, including funds for the merger of tribal districts and net hydel profits. Emphasising the refurbishment of the funds to eliminate militancy. ("K-P CM ready for talks on provincial issues," *The Express Tribune*, 03 January, 2026)

PIA union makes an effort to stall the airline sale

On 05 January, *Dawn* reported that People's Unity, a PIA Employees' Combined Bargaining Agent (CBA), has asked the government to put on hold the signing of the airline's purchase agreement and the transfer of management to the Arif Habib-led consortium until its reservations are considered and a counteroffer is issued. In a letter to the board of directors, it was stated that the bidding process was not transparent and that employees were not allowed to participate. People's Unity President said the government is repeating the mistake of handing over to them, as an earlier takeover of Pakistan Steel Mills was declared illegal by the Supreme Court. The union had applied to participate in the bidding process but was declined by the privatisation commission. ("PIA union makes vain effort to stall airline sale," *Dawn*, 05 January 2026)

48 per cent of the information disclosed by the public bodies of Balochistan

On 05 January, *Dawn* reported that according to the latest transparency assessment report by Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen), as required under the Balochistan Right to Information (BRTI) Act, 2021, on average, 48 per cent of information is proactively disclosed by the Public bodies in Balochistan. Fafen's campaign on "Countering Disinformation through Information" highlights the importance of institutional transparency. Fafen reviewed 66 public bodies in Balochistan, including 39 secretariat departments, 12 attached departments, and 15 autonomous bodies, against the proactive disclosure requirements outlined in Section 5 of the BRTI Act. ("Balochistan public bodies disclosed 48pc of required information: Fafen," *Dawn*, 05 January 2026)

PTI is willing to negotiate but Imran blocks the way

On 05 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that, according to a senior Pakistan People Party (PPP) leader, Qamar Zaman Kaira, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders wanted to negotiate, but despite the willingness of the party leaders, Imran Khan personally blocked the negotiating process. Qamar said this deadlock on both sides made it unlikely to move forward. ("PTI wants talks, but Imran blocks the way," *The Express Tribune*, 05 January 2026)

Afridi clarifies his "only stance" is acting upon Imran's directives to run KP

On 04 January, *Dawn* reported that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sohail Afridi, clarified on Sunday that his "only stance" was to implement Imran Khan's directives to run his province and prepare for the street movement. Afridi announced that after his three-day visit to Lahore, Karachi was his next destination for mobilising party supporters. During his visit to Lahore, Afridi had cast doubt on the government's sincerity in holding talks with PTI and said he was actively making efforts to initiate the street movement by reaching out to stakeholders. ("CM Afridi clarifies his "only stance" is acting upon Imran's directives to run KP, prepare for street movement," *Dawn*, 04 January 2026)

A slowdown in political discussions due to government inaction, reports The Express Tribune

On 06 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's efforts to conduct a political dialogue remained at an impasse ten days after the statement was released, due to the federal government's delayed efforts towards due diligence with the opposition party. The TTP formally accepted the offer without any preconditions on 24 December, as officially stated by the party's Vice

Chairman, Khokhar, who proceeded to show the party's wholehearted cooperation with the government, but at the same time criticising them for the delay in the formal proceedings, which he transcribed as the government bluffing. He later questions the legitimacy of the intentions of the government due to the recent obstacles created for the opposition parties in both houses of the parliament. Several months after the election, Ayaz Sadiq has not notified Mahmood Khan Achakzai as Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, nor has Allama Raja Abbas Nasir been notified in the Senate. This has led TTAP to decline participation in the National Dialogue Committee's (NDC) conference, which aims to propose a roadmap for political dialogue. ("Political dialogue stalls as government fails to follow up on PM's offer," *The Express Tribune*, 06 January 2026)

The new local government assigns three mayors in Islamabad

On 06 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, the federal cabinet officially approved a new local government system for Islamabad, adding three town corporations, each led by a mayor and two deputy mayors serving for four-year terms. These officials will be elected by the chairmen of union councils. The system aims to grant administrative and financial autonomy to the town corporations, transferring powers from the CDA. The elections conducted by the Election Commission are scheduled after the presidential approval, after a delay of four years. ("Islamabad to get three mayors under new local govt system," *The Express Tribune*, 06 January 2026)

KP government opposes military operations in province

On 06 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the KP CM Sohail Afridi stated his strong opposition to military operations in the province, emphasising the need for political, social, and consultative processes to resolve issues. This stance aligns with unanimous decisions by a grand peace jirga, questioning the viability of military operations as a solution. Afridi also emphasises the importance of transparency in the policy-making process, stressing that sustainable peace requires an inclusive policy involving all stakeholders. The KP government reiterated its commitment to safeguarding the rights and properties of overseas Pakistanis. The cabinet also addressed governance reforms, social welfare, health, education, youth development, and environmental concerns, approving measures such as establishing special courts for overseas Pakistanis' property disputes, a "Shuhada Package" for excise staff, transportation for special education initiatives, winter provisions for the homeless and tourists, desilting campaigns, youth conventions, and upgrades for educational institutions. ("KP govt opposed to military operations, says Afridi," *Dawn*, 06 January 2026)

Protests in Balochistan over Kech Kidnappings

On 06 January, as reported by *Dawn*, a protest organised by All Parties Kech in collaboration with traders, the Doctors association, accompanied by various leaders, workers and civilians, rallied in Turbat town on Monday against weakening law and order and the recent rise in kidnappings for ransom incidents in Kech districts. The protesters also demanded the recovery of recently abducted youths and demanded that state institutions enhance security in the province, whilst showing resistance to any forces that would lead to instability in the province. The Kech Bar Association displayed solidarity by boycotting the court proceedings. The kidnappings are severely disrupting the daily lives and business activities and affecting the entire Markran region. ("Balochistan protesters demand action on Kech kidnappings," *Dawn*, 06 January, 2026)

PTI leaders involved in May 9 case to be arrested

On 06 January, as reported by *Dawn*, an arrest warrant was issued against more than 40 PTI leaders by Anti-Terrorism Court Judge Amjad Ali Shah on Tuesday in the case concerning the May 9 protest outside the GHQ. During the proceedings, the defence requested the court's permission to meet Imran Khan at Adiala Jail to obtain instructions regarding the pending cases, which was opposed by the judge based on Khan not being under the custody of the ATC during the May 9 GHQ attack, and the PTI founder being convicted in another case. The court recommended that the defence approach a relevant forum to file grievances regarding the access. The defence protested against the court's decision and stayed adamant, refusing to be part of any further proceedings till the court complies. On another note, the court also took notice of the absence of several accused and issued non-bailable arrest warrants for 40 to 45 accused who failed to appear; furthermore, the court decided to hold further proceedings online via video link. ("Arrest warrants out against PTI leaders in May 9 case," *Dawn*, 07 January, 2026)

PTI, Imran's sisters ends sit-in outside Adiala jail

On 06 January, as reported by *Dawn*, PTI supporters and Imran Khan's sisters ended their sit-in outside Adiala Jail after the head of the opposition TTAP alliance, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, assured Imran's sisters of arranging a meeting with the PTI founder next week. Previously, the protesters and Imran's sisters were dispersed by the authorities with water cannons, which the party claimed were chemical-laced. Even so, the protesters stated adamantly that if they aren't allowed to meet Imran, they "will not move." Achakzai also argued that the refusal of the meeting was a dismissal of International Law, and further got assurance from the station house officer (SHO) that he would try to arrange a meeting. Over 10,000 people gathered for the protest on Tuesday in support of the sisters demanding the meeting. ("PTI, Imran's sisters end sit-in outside Adiala jail," *Dawn*, 07 January, 2026)

KP CM urges policy shift, seeks provincial consultation on counterterrorism

On 07 January, as reported by *Dawn*, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Sohail Afridi called for a policy shift, emphasising the inclusion of the provincial government in counter-terror policy making as the federal authorities criticise the PTI-led KP government for its failing security in the province. In a speech at Peshawar University's convocation, the CM addressed the rise of terrorism in the province, whilst mentioning that when the issue was acknowledged, it was brushed off as propaganda by the higher authorities. Additionally, the CM emphasised the need for transparency from the military to regain the confidence of the KP citizens. "A clear policy formed in this manner will play a role in lasting and enduring peace; a decision made behind closed doors will leave our people suffering, as they have for the past 17 years," he said. Notably, as per the Annual Security Report 2025, there has been a roughly 34 per cent year-on-year surge in violence, with the most significant increase taking place in KP. ("KP CM calls for 'policy shift', urges consultation with province on counter-terrorism measures," *Dawn*, 07 January 2026)

NDC calls for govt–opposition talks and release of political workers

On 07 January, as reported by *Dawn*, a group of former PTI leaders and others demanded the release of political prisoners to promote "confidence-building measures" at the national level, during a National Dialogue Committee (NDC) conference in Islamabad. The initiative was led by former Sindh governor Imran Ismail, Dr Shahzad Waseem, and Mahmood Moulvi. As per sources, the NDC extended a special invitation to the TTAP, which was met with dismissal by party authorities. Furthermore, the proposal also suggested that restrictions on political activities should be lifted, the complete freedom of political activities should be ensured within the framework of the Constitution and law. and media censorship be removed. ("Politicos urge govt-opposition talks, seek release of political workers as 'confidence-building measure," *Dawn*, 07 January 2026)

TTAP convoy reaches Lahore despite police actions

On 09 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, a convoy of the Tehreek-e-Tahafuz-e-Ayeen-e-Pakistan (TTAP) reached Lahore despite police resistance as the opposition alliance pressed ahead with a street mobilisation campaign for the second anniversary of the 08 February 2024 general elections. Several members of the TTAP were detained during their journey, while the vehicles in the convoy were vandalised. As stated by the organisation, containers were placed by the Lahore administration to block routes near Data Darbar, and the son of MWM chief and TTAP Vice Chairman Senator Allama Raja Nasir Abbas was taken into custody, an action that was later denied by the Gujranwala police. PTI condemned the actions of the Punjab Police, calling them "fascist" and "oppressive". On the other hand, the PTI also reported late-night raids that were conducted on the homes of its workers in Lahore. ("TTAP convoy reaches Lahore amid detentions," *The Express Tribune*, 09 January 2026)

TTAP chief Achakzai faults PTI discipline for Imran Khan's jailing

On 09 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Ain Pakistan (TTAP) chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai criticised state conduct and questioned Pakistan's Islamic credentials while addressing a gathering at the Lahore High Court. He condemned alleged police brutality against protesters, including violence against women and children and the use of live ammunition, arguing that such actions contradict claims of Pakistan being an Islamic state. Achakzai also said that despite Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) enjoying strong public support, its founder, Imran Khan, remains jailed due to a lack of discipline and organisation within the party. Calling for a peaceful protest, he urged the youth to keep the streets empty on February 8 and stressed non-violence. He further warned state institutions to operate within constitutional limits and announced support for Irfan Hayat Bajwa in the Lahore Bar Association elections. ("Achakzai faults PTI discipline for Imran's jailing," *The Express Tribune*, 09 January 2026)

Information Minister Tarar accuses PTI of sheltering militants, calls TTP an enemy of the state

On 09 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Federal Information Minister Attaullah Tarar declared Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) an enemy of Pakistan and vowed that the state would relentlessly pursue the banned outfit. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Tarar accused Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of sheltering militants and alleged that the party had received an "exemption" from TTP attacks. He criticised governance failures in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, citing deficiencies in education and healthcare and accusing the provincial leadership of tolerating extremism and corruption. Tarar also highlighted signs of economic recovery, including record remittances from overseas Pakistanis and improved import cover, and defended Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's foreign engagements, saying they had boosted trade and enhanced Pakistan's international standing. ("PTI sheltered terrorists, TTP is enemy of state: Tarar," *The Express Tribune*, 09 January 2026)

KP CM calls for joint approach to peace in the province

On 09 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi said peace in the province could not be achieved through military operations alone and called for a joint strategy involving the federal and provincial governments, political parties, and security institutions. Speaking at a Meet the Press programme at the Karachi Press Club, Afridi reiterated his opposition to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and all militant groups, while arguing that repeated military operations had displaced millions without delivering lasting stability. He said KP had made over 80,000 sacrifices in the war on terror and stressed dialogue, consultation with elected representatives, and inclusive peace mechanisms such as jirgas. Afridi also linked his Karachi visit to preparations for a PTI-led street movement demanding the release of Imran Khan, while outlining broader demands related to constitutional supremacy, provincial rights, and equitable resource distribution. ("Afridi stresses joint effort for peace in K-P, opposes militants and TTP," *The Express Tribune*, 09 January 2026)

KP CM Afridi and ex-ministers identified as suspects in 09 May Radio Pakistan attack case

On 12 January, as reported by the *Dawn*, KP Chief Minister Sohail Afridi became one of the suspects in the 09 May Radio Pakistan attack case, according to a forensic report submitted by the prosecution to the anti-terrorism court. Video clips and pictures of CM Afridi were submitted by the Punjab Forensic Science Agency, who further questioned the legitimacy of the evidence submitted and the persons whose profile pictures had been shared appeared in the clips. Alongside Afridi, four more people were seen in the video, but the connection to the attack is still unclear. As stated by PTI leader, Taimur Jhagra, "the posts with screenshots are very interesting because they have nothing to do with Radio Pakistan. I believe the Punjab lab is simply commenting on whether it thinks the videos are genuine or not." ("Afridi, ex-ministers identified in Radio Pakistan attack clips," *Dawn*, 12 January, 2026)

Opposition leaders to be appointed as National Assembly sessions summoned

On 12 January, as reported by *Dawn*, President Asif Ali Zardari has summoned the National Assembly to initiate the process of appointing the leader of the opposition. The issue resurfaced after PTI's Omar Ayub withdrew his petitions from the Supreme Court and high courts filed against his removal. Additionally the opposition for a long time has been criticizing the government for delaying the appointment process and nominated Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) chief Mehmood Achakzai as the opposition leader. This is backed by Rule 39 of the "Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly 2007", titled "Declaration of Leader of the Opposition," which states that after each general election - and at any time thereafter - the National Assembly speaker must declare the opposition leader as soon as possible following the election of the prime minister. ("Opposition leader's appointment awaited as National Assembly session summoned," *Dawn*, 12 January, 2026)

New ordinances set to delay Islamabad local elections

On 13 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the local government elections in Islamabad are set to be postponed again as President Asif Ali Zardari introduced several amendments to the Local Government Act 2015. Firstly, besides replacing the Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad with three town corporations, the ordinance additionally provides the government-appointed administrator with more power, along with an indefinite tenure. Secondly, the administrator can hold office until new local government elections are held. Moreover, the federal cabinet recently approved 14 amendments to the Act. However it is important to highlight that the local chapter of the PTI had claimed that the government, fearing defeat, would opt for an escape route and would not conduct the elections in February, to which the PML-N replied that the ordinance was brought for a better government system in Islamabad stating, "You know the previous election was held based on weak local government Act that was why the local government representatives could not live up to the expectations of the their constituents. Local government representatives in their tenure remained busy in removing bureaucratic hurdles." ("New ordinance set to further delay local govt polls in Islamabad," *Dawn*, 13 January 2026)

PPP's displeasure forces withdrawal of Special Economic Zones ordinance

On 12 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the government withdrew an ordinance which the PPP alleged was promulgated without the approval of the President Asif Ali Zardari, later staging a walkout in response. As per the sources, the prime minister forwarded a summary advising President Zardari to withdraw the Special Economic Zones (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026. As per Law Minister Tarar, "This ordinance was also approved. Staff to staff, it was considered approved," further adding that the PPP and the PML-N have "a good relationship and because of this relationship, the ordinance has been withdrawn." "In the future, we will approach these matters with understanding," he concluded. ("PPP's displeasure forces govt to withdraw ordinance promulgated sans President Zardari's approval," *Dawn*, 12 January 2026)

The TLP leader's whereabouts still unknown

On 13 January, as reported by *Dawn*, law enforcement agencies still aren't able to track down TLP chief Saad Hussain Rizvi and Anas Rizvi, despite it being more than three months. A couple of days ago, rumours were spread stating that the two brothers were held in custody, which was denied by senior law enforcement officials, adding that the two are hiding somewhere in "Azad Jammu and Kashmir". Currently, both brothers are categorised as "high-profile wanted criminals" with over 44 FIRs registered in Sheikhupura and 11 in Lahore, with the charges being of a severe nature. ("Law enforcers 'still in the dark' on TLP leaders' whereabouts," *Dawn*, 13 January, 2026)

Opposition calls for joint session on Iran issue

On 15 January, *Dawn* reported that the Opposition alliance, which consists of PTI and some other parties, raised a demand to hold a joint session in Pakistan's parliament to discuss tensions in the Middle East and particularly the Iran issue. In this regard, Tehreek Rahafuz Ayeen -i- Pakistan (TTAP) also convened a meeting in the Capital and asked the government to initiate a meeting of "neighbour countries" to formulate a "joint and coordinated strategy". TTAP also emphasised that the Iran issue needs to be addressed as Iran's sovereignty is undermined, which could lead to a potential crisis. ("Opposition demands joint sitting on Iran situation," *Dawn*, 15 January 2026)

TTAP announces strike for 08 February

On 16 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the opposition alliance Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) announced the formation of international, national, and provincial committees to organise a nationwide strike on 08 February. The strike will be in protest of the "violation of public mandate and vote theft" in the 2024 general elections, with the backing of incarcerated former Prime Minister Imran Khan. The protest will be supervised by the TTAP's central coordination committee, which will oversee strike-related activities across the country, while being in direct contact with all provincial and regional committees to simultaneously review preparations, progress and outcomes. ("TTAP forms bodies," *Dawn*, 16 January 2026)

Sanaullah says PTI leaders seek talks but Imran opposes

On 16 January, *Dawn* reported that the Prime Minister's advisor, Rana Sanaullah, said the government has been in contact with PTI leaders who want dialogue, but jailed PTI founder Imran Khan is not in favour of negotiations as the party presses ahead with a protest planned for 08 February. Sanaullah said PTI leaders believe a meeting with Imran could help postpone the protest, but claimed any opening for talks or meetings would be possible only after 08 February. He said the government would deal with protests through administrative procedures, while asking PTI to return to their work on the parliamentary committee. ("PTI leaders want dialogue but Imran not in favour of it: Rana Sanaullah," *Dawn*, 16 January 2026)

Achakzai appointed opposition leader in NA

On 16 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai was formally notified as the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly (NA), filling a post vacant since 07 August last year. NA speaker Ayaz Sadiq handed the notification to PTI chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and opposition Chief Whip Aamir Dogar after opposition-backed papers were processed, with Gohar saying the appointment followed completion of required parliamentary formalities backed by 76 opposition MNAs. Achakzai became the only candidate who could run for office because the nomination period ended without any other candidates, and his supporters from PTI-backed independents validated his candidacy through signature verification, which occurred before this week. ("Mahmood Khan Achakzai appointed opposition leader in National Assembly," *The Express Tribune*, 16 January 2026)

Adiala jail sit-in abandoned by Imran Khan's sister

On 21 January, as reported by *Dawn*, on Tuesday night, as reported by the PTI media coordinator, Imran Khan's sisters abruptly ended their demonstration outside Adiala Jail to be part of another protest rally on Murree Road as the PTI workers moved towards Islamabad despite meeting with police resistance. A statement from one of the Khan sisters stated that the protesters were going to head towards Islamabad due to the authorities not granting them permission to meet Imran Khan. ("Imran's sisters abandon sit-in near Pindi's Adiala jail, head to Islamabad for protest rally," *Dawn*, 21 January 2026)

MWM chief Raja Nasir Abbas appointed as Senate opposition after months-long delay

On 21 January, as reported by *Dawn*, Senator Raja Nasir Abbas has been chosen as the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, a seat that remained vacant since August 2025 due to the disqualification of Shibli Faraz. The Chairman of the Senate, Yousuf Raza Gilani, revealed that the position remained vacant due to the case in court and that Raja Abbas had the backing of 22 opposition senators in the Senate. In his first speech, Abbas thanked Imran Khan, pledged allegiance to the constitution, and talked about the rising distrust in institutions, especially in the wake of the 2024 general elections. He also demanded the release of Imran Khan and other political prisoners and a halt to the political instability through dialogue. ("PTI-nominated MWM chief Raja Nasir Abbas appointed Senate opposition leader after months-long delay," *Dawn*, 21 January 2026)

PM Sharif seeks to quell talk of Center-KP confrontation

On 21 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, PM Shehbaz Sharif delivered a wide-ranging speech concerning terrorism, federal-provincial relations and national development, stating the importance of unity amongst all four provinces to help the country progress, highlighting the negative impact of social media corrupting the youth mindset against the government. Additionally, he addressed the issue of internal terrorism within the country whilst assuring Pakistan's efforts to combat these attacks, describing KP as an extremely important and strategic province and vowing to end terrorism in the province and the country as a whole. ("PM seeks to quell talk of Centre-K-P confrontation," *The Express Tribune*, 21 January 2026)

Bill allowing for secrecy of lawmakers' assets sails through NA

On 22 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the National Assembly (NA) passed a bill allowing lawmakers' asset declarations to be kept confidential under certain conditions, amid opposition from the PTI. The amendment to the Elections Act 2017 aims to balance transparency with personal safety, permitting non-publication if it poses a threat to members or their families. The House also passed the Corporate Social Responsibility bill, mandating large companies to allocate one per cent of profits to social initiatives. Additional subjects discussed included the treatment of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in prison, a military operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and renewed controversy over the 18th Amendment, with debates on provincial autonomy following critical remarks by government ministers. ("Bill for secrecy of lawmakers' assets sails through NA," *Dawn*, 22 January, 2026)

KP CM accuses federal government of imposing military operations without provincial consent

On 23 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa CM Sohail Afridi said that military operations in the province were being imposed without the approval of the provincial government. He mentioned that despite several military operations, the security concerns remain; as a result, families are relocating to safer places. He also alleged that the federal government had not released funds promised for internally displaced persons; as a result, the provincial government had to spend PKR 7.5 billion from its resources. ("Military operations imposed on KP without provincial approval: CM Sohail Afridi," *The Express Tribune*, 23 January 2026)

Social media platform X refused to suspend Imran Khan's account, says PTA

On 23 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that despite contacting social media platform X three times in the last few years, the company declined to suspend and delete tweets of PTI founder Imran Khan's account. All requests made by authorities to X were declined by the company. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) informed the court that social media companies had neither registered with PTA nor appointed a local focal person. It also states that ("X rebuffs PTA attempt to suspend Imran's account," *The Express Tribune*, 23 January 2026)

PTI raises concerns over proposed changes to Election Act

On 23 January, *Dawn* reported that during a National Assembly (NA) session, one PTI member objected to the Assets Secrecy Bill, which was passed yesterday. Asad Qaiser announced PTI's rejection of the bill and sought its withdrawal. The proposed amendment is made to Section 138 of the Elections Act. This act originally required the Election Commission of Pakistan to publish declarations of members of parliament and provincial assemblies about their assets and liabilities in the official gazette. The proposed amendment seeks to insert a provision stating that the Speaker or Chairman may permit temporary non-disclosure of a member's asset statement if public disclosure threatens the member's or their family's safety. Such exemption is limited to one year, with full disclosure made confidentially to the Election Commission. ("PTI seeks withdrawal of Asset secrecy bill," *Dawn*, 23 January 2026)

Opposition questions govt decision to join Trump-backed "Board of Peace"

On 23 January, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan government defended its decision to join the "Board of Peace" created by US President Donald Trump, in the face of criticism from the opposition. The signing ceremony for the "Board of Peace" was held on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) summit in Davos and was joined by leaders from 19 countries, including Pakistan. Amid opposition concerns, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry stated that the government's decision to join the board was guided by national interest and collective priorities of the Muslim Ummah. Meanwhile, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman warned against becoming part of any campaign to disarm Hamas. Additionally, the PTI accused the government of taking such a sensitive decision without any consensus. ("Govt defends decision to join Trump's Board of Peace amid opposition outcry in NA," *Dawn*, 23 January 2026)

Tension in Senate over 'institutional overreach & election fraud'

On 24 January, as reported by *Dawn*, during an intense Senate meeting, opposition party members expressed concerns about the government's handling of issues such as excessive federal power and fraudulent elections. Party members also requested a parliamentary inquiry. PTI's Ali Zafar informed the Senate that the government was disregarding parliamentary authority and mishandling the economy. He explained that the government's manipulative tactics and strict controls were driving the nation toward a crisis. He asserted that the government lacked legitimacy and any moral basis for tackling issues. Additionally, he emphasised the growing national debt, inflation, brain drain, and the absence of an effective economic plan. Responding to opposition party members' allegations, Finance Minister Bilal Azhar Kayani asserted that the previous PTI government had driven the country's economy into a crisis and that this government was focused on economic recovery and establishing conditions for sustained expansion. He claimed the government bore no responsibility for what party members alleged but pointed to PTI's interference in economic accords as the issue. ("Barbs fly in Senate as PTI's Ali Zafar demands probe into 'institutional overreach, election fraud'," *Dawn*, 24 January 2026)

Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz issues stern warning ahead of Basant festivities in Lahore

On 24 January, as reported by *Dawn*, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz announced the celebration of Basant in Lahore from 06 to 08 February, after an 18-year hiatus, stressing that it is an important part of the region's cultural heritage. Acknowledging past accidents, she outlined strict safety measures, including dividing the city into risk zones and enforcing rules for kite flying. Violations could lead to severe penalties, including imprisonment. Moreover, the government will offer free transportation and deploy over 4,000 police personnel for safety. CM Nawaz emphasised public compliance with regulations to ensure everyone's safety during the festivities, supported by medical services and monitoring systems to manage the event effectively. ("'This is not a joke': Punjab CM warns against violating rules ahead of Basant festivities in Lahore," *Dawn*, 24 January 2026)

KP CM pens letter to PM Shehbaz over Centre's 'failure' to release NFC funds

On 26 January, *Dawn* reported that on Monday Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi wrote a formal letter to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, demanding a "full and unconditional release of constitutionally guaranteed funds" as he underscored that KP's budget for fiscal year 2025-26 was framed and approved strictly based on clear constitutional entitlements within the National Finance Commission (NFC). KP is entitled to receive over PKR 658.4 billion under the NFC, but has received only PKR 604 billion so far. Furthermore, these fiscal constraints are emerging at a critical juncture, as the province is at the forefront of counter-terrorism efforts while also working to stabilise the aftermath of the ongoing floods. ("KP CM pens letter to PM Shehbaz over Centre's 'persistent failure to release constitutionally guaranteed' funds," *Dawn*, 26 January 2026)

President Zardari assents to the seven bills passed by parliament

On 27 January, *Dawn* reported that on Monday, President Asif Ali Zardari gave assent to previously unsigned bills before leaving for his official trip to the UAE. A joint sitting of the parliament was summoned approving legislation including The National Tariff Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Export Development Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Transfer of Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2026; the Daanish Schools Authority Bill, 2026; the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2026; and the National Commission for Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2026. During his visit to the UAE, the president would hold high-level meetings with the UAE's leadership to review bilateral ties. ("President okays seven bills, heads to UAE," *Dawn*, 27 January 2026)

Karachi: Protesters demonstrate against Imaan-Hadi conviction; blocks roads to press club

On 26 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that all roads leading to the Karachi Press Club (KPC) were blocked on Monday following a protest against the conviction of lawyer-activist Imaan Mazari and her husband, Advocate Hadi Ali Chattha, in a case related to controversial social media posts. Mazari and Chattha were arrested on Friday. An anti-terrorism court sent them on a 14-day judicial remand period. The two were convicted for allegedly making "anti-state" posts on social media, violating the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) 2016. In response, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), alongside lawyers, journalists, and members of civil society, staged a protest condemning the restrictions on freedom of expression under PECA. However, due to road closures, other workers in nearby offices faced severe commuting difficulties. ("Roads to Karachi Press Club blocked as protesters demonstrate against Imaan, Hadi conviction," *The Express Tribune*, 26 January 2026)

Opposition plans the 8 February protest

On 27 January, *Dawn* reported that opposition parties in Pakistan are organising a protest on 08 February to address alleged rigging in the 2024 general elections. Additionally, the TTAP plans a nationwide strike, possibly announcing a Jail Bharo Tehreek, led by Chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai, who urged the public to observe the day as a Black Day. Moreover, the meeting held by TTAP members formed ten committees to ensure the success of the protest, further highlighting concerns over wrongful convictions given to rights activists. ("Opposition chalks out plans for Feb 8 protest," *Dawn*, 27 January 2026)

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PTI weighs return to parliamentary panels

On 28 January, *Dawn* reported that several days after the appointment of the leader of the opposition in both the Senate and the National Assembly, the main opposition party, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), is considering rejoining the standing committees of parliament. As the final decision to rejoin the committees rests with Imran Khan, political analysts believe he is likely to decide on the matter after the PTI's countrywide protest scheduled for 08 February. PTI previously held the chairmanship of more than a dozen standing committees in the National Assembly and five in the Senate, and also participated in several others. However, on the directives of Imran, the party withdrew from all standing committees in both houses of parliament in August last year. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, who heads the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (Pildat), stated: "A lack of opposition representation in these important committees negatively impacts the quality of parliamentary proceedings." ("PTI weighs return to parliamentary panels," *Dawn*, 28 January 2026)

PTI raises alarm over Imran Khan's eyesight; demands family access

On 27 January, *Dawn* reported that PTI raised fresh concerns about jailed party founder Imran Khan's health, citing "credible reports" that he has central retinal vein occlusion in his right eye, which the party said could cause permanent damage to his eyesight without prompt treatment. The PTI requested complete access to him fo his family members and associates, while he asked to receive hospital treatment at any facility he selected because medical experts stated his required care could only be found outside the jail walls amid claims that the court-issued medical access orders were not being followed. Shaukat Khanum Hospital said it was gravely concerned and asked that its physicians be allowed to examine him. The reports faced scepticism from Imran's sisters because the family received no notification about the meetings, which took place with limited attendance.

Then on 28 January, the PTI demanded an immediate meeting between Khan and his family after reports that he was taken to a hospital for treatment linked to the eye condition. PTI chairman Gohar Ali Khan said the family was not informed about the diagnosis or the reasons for returning him to jail, and urged that meetings not be blocked until 08 February. PTI leaders in Kot Lakhpat jail echoed the demand and sought the intervention of the Chief Justice. State Minister Tallal Chaudhry stated that jail officials maintain full authority to make decisions about prisoner meetings, while he asked people to verify information before concluding. ("PTI says Imran suffering from ailment that could permanently damage his eyesight if not treated promptly," *Dawn*, 27 January 2026; "PTI demands meeting between Imran and his family amid reports of ex-premier being taken to hospital," *Dawn*, 28 January 2026)

ECONOMY

Petrol price cut by PKR 10.28, diesel by PKR 8.57

On 31 December, as reported by *Dawn*, the government slashed the rates for petrol and high-speed diesel (HSD) by PKR 10.28 and PKR 8.57, respectively, for the next fortnight. The Petroleum Division said the revision followed movements in international markets and recommendations from the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA). The petrol price was reduced to PKR 253.17 per litre, and the HSD price to PKR 257.08. ("Petrol price slashed by Rs10.28, diesel by Rs8.57 for next fortnight," *Dawn*, 31 December)

PM rolls out governance reforms under the IMF lens

On 01 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that the Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, launched economic governance reforms on Wednesday to address vulnerabilities identified in the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Governance and Corruption report, while taking ownership of a 142-point agenda for institutional building and the rule of law. The plan includes undertaking a national risk assessment on corruption, making rule-based appointments in key institutions, which include the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), and improving its credibility. According to the conduct of the IMF's USD 7 billion bailout package, the country was required to publish a "governance action plan based on the recommendations of the Governance Diagnostic Assessment" to address critical governance vulnerabilities by 31 December. Shehbaz said under his plan, there are 59 priority actions and 83 complementary, which total up to 142 to be implemented over the next three years. ("PM rolls out governance reforms under IMF lens," *The Express Tribune*, 01 January 2026)

PM hails significant oil and gas discovery in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

On 2 January, *Dawn* reported that Prime

Minister Shehbaz Sharif, while chairing a high-level meeting on the petroleum and gas sector, congratulated the nation on the discovery of significant new oil and gas reserves in Kohat district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. He called it a major milestone for Pakistan's domestic energy sector, which would also help conserve precious foreign exchange spent on petroleum imports.

On 31 December, The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) reported the discovery of new reservoirs in the Datta Formation in the Nashpa Block, producing 4,100 barrels of oil per day, alongside 10.5 million cubic feet of gas per day. The Datta Formation is a rock layer known to hold oil and gas in parts of northern Pakistan and has been a key focus of exploration activity. The OGDCL said the well was drilled to a depth of 5,170 meters and encountered oil and gas-bearing zones at multiple levels.

Officials informed Sharif that work on RLNG connections had accelerated, with a target of 350,000 new connections by June 2026, while pipelines for the Sheva and Batani gas fields have been commissioned, and construction is underway on the Kot Palak field. Sharif also directed the digitisation of the entire oil and gas supply chain, arguing that it would curb smuggling and protect state revenues. ("PM hails significant oil and gas discovery in K-P," *Dawn*, 02 January 2026)

Traders question inflation figures despite relief

On 02 January, as reported by *Dawn*, traders questioned official inflation figures, arguing that headline data does not reflect ground realities despite recent relief in vegetable prices. While consumers have benefited from a sharp fall in tomato, onion and potato prices, staple food items have continued to become more expensive. Tomato prices fell to as low as PKR 30 per kg, easing household costs but hurting farmers. In contrast, prices of wheat flour, milk, cooking oil, ghee, meat and chicken recorded notable year-on-year increases. Wheat flour prices rose sharply following higher wheat rates under a revised government support policy, while milk, meat and poultry became costlier due to higher input costs and weak price enforcement. Business representatives warned that food inflation remains a serious concern, with rising utility prices, taxes and weak demand worsening business confidence. ("Traders question inflation figures despite relief," *Dawn*, 02 January 2026)

Household Integrated Economic Survey shows 57 per cent surge in internet users

On 02 January, *Dawn* reported that the Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024–25 revealed a significant expansion in digital access across Pakistan, with individual internet users increasing by 57 per cent and household internet connectivity rising from 34 per cent to 70 per cent. Released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the survey covered 32,000 households nationwide and was the first fully digital HIES conducted after the 2023 digital census. Mobile or smartphone availability reached 96 per cent of households, highlighting the rapid spread of digital infrastructure. The survey also recorded improvements in key social indicators, including higher gender parity in primary education and declines in neonatal and infant mortality rates. Average monthly household income rose to PKR 82,179, though food and housing continued to account for the largest share of consumption. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal described the findings as a milestone for data-driven policymaking, while noting that inflation and utility costs have disproportionately affected lower-middle-income households. ("Household Integrated Economic Survey shows 57pc surge in internet users across Pakistan as access reaches 70pc of homes," *Dawn*, 02 January, 2026)

New gas reserves discovered in KP for second consecutive day

On 03 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) announced the discovery of new gas reserves in the TAL Block in Kohat District, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, for the second consecutive day, and informed the Pakistan Stock Exchange of the latest find. In its disclosure, PPL stated that the TAL Joint Venture, comprising MOL Pakistan Oil & Gas Co BV (as Operator), Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), PPL, Pakistan Oilfields Limited (POL) and Government Holdings Private Limited (GHPL), has discovered gas from the Hangu/Lumshiwal formations at its exploratory well Bilitang-1, located in Kohat district. ("New gas reserves discovered in K-P for second consecutive day," *The Express Tribune*, 03 January 2026)

Pakistanis spend two-thirds of income on food, power as remittance reliance grows

On 03 January, according to the Household Integrated Economic Survey 2024-25, released by Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistanis spent two out of every three rupees on just two basic needs: food and electricity, as reliance on foreign remittances and financial assistance increased to meet growing expenditures. The survey found that expenditures have risen faster than incomes amid inflation and a higher cost of living, leaving only 2.5 per cent of household spending for education. Reliance on foreign remittances increased sharply, rising to almost 8 per cent of household income, while gifts and financial assistance more than doubled, indicating shrinking domestic income sources. Although average monthly income nearly doubled over six years, consumption rose even faster, deepening disparities between rich and poor. Urban households earned significantly more than rural ones, where dependence on remittances was highest. Spending on education and health declined as food inflation and energy costs absorbed most household resources. ("Pakistanis spend two-thirds of income on food, power as remittance reliance grows," *The Express Tribune*, 03 January 2026)

Trade deficit widens sharply as exports slump, imports surge

On 03 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan recorded a trade deficit of USD 19.2 billion in the first half of the current fiscal year (July–December), nearly 35 per cent higher than the same period last year, as exports declined and imports rose faster than projections. Data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed exports falling 8.7 per cent year-on-year to USD 15.2 billion, meeting only 42 per cent of the annual target, while imports increased 11.3 per cent to USD 34.4 billion, exerting pressure on the external account. December marked the fifth consecutive monthly decline in exports and the sixth month of imports exceeding USD 5 billion, with the deficit widening to USD 3.7 billion. Exporters blamed an overvalued rupee and rising costs, while trade liberalisation measures failed to deliver the expected export boost. Meanwhile, scrutiny of exporters' tax returns by the FBR sparked concern within the business community over added pressure on an already strained export sector. ("Trade deficit widens to $19b," *The Express Tribune*, 03 January 2026)

"Expecting meaningful government-led relief under Pakistan's current economic constraints may be unrealistic," says editorial in Dawn

On 5 January, an editorial in *Dawn* titled "Bracing for the new year" opined that 2026 might prove to be a year of economic uncertainty for Pakistan. The editorial suggests that for the middle class and poor households, the year could be "marked by rising living costs, job anxieties, and aspirations that continue to outpace opportunities," while businesses might have to confront the "mounting pressure to adapt to rule-based management and rapidly shifting market dynamics." It also highlights that domestic constraints, including "persistent political instability, entrenched resistance to reforms that threaten elite privileges and immunity, low-grade insurgency in border regions, climate-related disaster risks, and the enduring spectre of terrorism", challenge decisive economic actions. It also argues that the fiscal resource management under the IMF is a burden on the taxpayers through higher rates and cuts in welfare spending, compounded by the rising costs of running the administration. The editorial identifies that the policies have weakened savings and investment, stalling growth. With GDP rising only 3.2 per cent, economic gains are neutralised, fuelling poverty and unemployment. It also criticises that, like the previous PML-N governments, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's administration appears to favour business interests on the assumption that growth will trickle down, urging that the administration must "exercise greater caution in its policy choices, ensuring that short-term growth ambition does not undermine long-term economic stability, social equity and institutional resilience." The article cites analysts, including Dr Khaqan Najeeb, former economic advisor to the Ministry of Finance, in stating that meaningful state-led relief is unlikely under current constraints, and that financial resilience in 2026 will "depend less on policy relief and more on fiscal discipline." (Afshan Subohi, "Bracing for the new year," *Dawn*, 05 January 2025)

Sindh accounts for over 70 per cent of PPP contingent liabilities

On 06 January, Dawn reported that Pakistan's total contingent liabilities arising from public-private partnership (PPP) projects exceeded PKR 472 billion by the end of December 2025, with Sindh accounting for more than 71 per cent of the exposure, according to a new Ministry of Finance report. The Fiscal Risk Monitoring Framework, prepared under commitments to the IMF, put cumulative PPP-related liabilities at PKR 472.3 billion across the federal and provincial governments. Sindh alone accounts for PKR 335.6 billion, reflecting its large PPP portfolio of 17 projects, nearly half of the national total. The framework aims to improve transparency and monitoring of PPP-related fiscal risks nationwide. ("Sindh leads Centre, counterparts in PPP liabilities," *Dawn*, 06 January 2026)

Service exports rise 17 per cent in July-November

On 06 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan's exports of services grew 16.77 per cent during the first five months of the financial year 2025-26, driven largely by an increase in information technology exports. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, services exports rose by 18.27 per cent year-on-year in July to 22.26 per cent in November. The growth in export of services is mainly led by telecommunication, computer and information services. At the same time, the import of services surged by 12.78 per cent, attributed to the transport sector, with its value rising 6.35 per cent to USD 2.093 billion, followed by travel services, which surged 54.27 per cent to USD 1.487 billion. ("Services exports rise 17pc in July-November," *Dawn*, 06 January 2026)

Pakistan to privatise DISCOs following PIA sale

On 07 January, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reiterated that privatisation of loss-making state-owned enterprises remains a top priority, citing the sale of 75 per cent of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) shares as the first step in a broader reform drive. Chairing a high-level meeting on the Privatisation Commission, he ordered faster reforms to ensure efficiency, transparency, and credibility in the privatisation process. The government announced that electricity distribution companies (DISCOs) will be privatised in two phases. The first batch includes IESCO, GEPCO, and FESCO, followed by HESCO and SEPCO in the second batch. Sharif directed that the Privatisation Commission be strengthened through transparent induction of private-sector talent, full digitisation, and mandatory third-party audits by internationally reputed firms. He also instructed officials to formulate a comprehensive five-year strategy to boost agricultural exports, which would focus on improving per-acre yields through timely access to quality seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides at affordable prices. ("After PIA, DISCOs also to go under hammer," *The Express Tribune*, 07 January 2026)

Pakistan mulls fuel levy hike to address gas sector debt

On 07 January, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistani government is considering increasing the petroleum levy on petrol and diesel to help manage the gas sector's circular debt, which has crossed PKR three trillion, instead of raising gas tariffs. Briefing the National Assembly Standing Committee on Petroleum, Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik said gas prices would not be increased for the next six months on Sharif's instructions. While he confirmed the size of the circular debt, he avoided directly addressing proposals for a PKR five per litre fuel levy hike, saying lawmakers would be briefed separately. OGRA had earlier approved a gas price increase for FY2025–26, but the government has delayed its implementation, focusing instead on reforms such as reducing gas theft, cutting losses, diverting surplus LNG cargoes, and improving monitoring systems. ("Goverment mulls fuel levy hike to aid gas sector," *Dawn*, 07 January 2026)

Pakistan International Airlines: Operational inefficiencies and Spare parts mismanagement cost PKR 30 billion

On 08 January, *Dawn* reported that the prolonged grounding of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (PIAC) aircraft led to losses of PKR 22 billion. The Public Accounts Committee was informed that, due to the alleged negligence of its management, PIA failed to dispose of spare parts and retired aircraft, resulting in losses of approximately PKR 8.6 billion from 2015 to 2021. The routine maintenance of PIA aircraft used to take 44 to 239 days, resulting in operational and financial losses to PIA, particularly in 2022. In one case, the aircraft remained grounded for around 652 days. In justification of the Auditor General's office objections raised to the Parliamentary Committee, the Defence Ministry stated that aircraft were grounded due to global supply disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, and delays in the rollout of aircraft were caused by unscheduled repairs. The Parliamentary committee is also informed that spare parts would be acquired by bidders who purchased PIA. ("PIA incurred Rs22bn loss due to prolonged grounding of aircraft," *Dawn*, 08 January 2026)

UAE delegation explores AI and digital infrastructure partnerships in Pakistan

On 08 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that a Sajwani business delegation from the United Arab Emirates is on a visit to Pakistan to explore collaboration deals in Pakistan's financial sector. During the meeting with the Finance Minister, the delegation expressed interest in partnering with the government for the development of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and digital infrastructure. The delegation agreed to offer technical expertise, advisory support, and capacity building. These efforts will support

Pakistan's ongoing financial sector reforms and digital transformation agenda and will enhance the Digital Pakistan vision, aimed at building an inclusive, innovation-driven digital economy. ("UAE delegation offers support for AI capacity building," *The Express Tribune*, 08 January 2025)

Pakistan's forex reserves rebound to USD 16 billion amid debt pressures

On 09 January, *Dawn* reported that the State Bank of Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves had risen to USD 16 billion, indicating a stable foreign exchange regime in Pakistan. As per Central Bank data, reserves soared to their highest level in FY21 with USD 17.29 billion; since then, reserves have been falling continuously. In FY23, the reserves have fallen to the default level, at around USD 4.4 billion. As of 2 January 2026, State Bank Reserves reached USD 16.055 billion, total liquidity stood at USD 21.19 billion held by the country, and net holdings of commercial banks were recorded at USD 5.136 billion. However, in FY26, Pakistan has to complete debt servicing of around USD 26 billion. ("Forex coffers rise to $16bn, highest level since FY21," *Dawn*, 09 January 2026)

Finance ministry report flags transparency gaps in SIFC

On 09 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that the Finance Ministry report, as part of the action plan of the IMF Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Assessment, flagged concerns over the absence of transparency in the Special Investment Facilitation Council's initiatives. The ministry agreed that the lack of transparency in SIFC work could undermine policy predictability and weaken the investor's confidence. The SIFC was established in 2023 to attract foreign investment by facilitating investors through a single window and promoting cooperation among all government departments. But SIFC failed to attract any major foreign investment in the last two and a half years of its establishment. The report underlined that the availability of information in public regarding concessions and fiscal and regulatory relaxations remains limited. The ministry is preparing a final report on SIFC to meet the IMF's USD 7 billion loan package conditions, as Pakistan is bound to make an action plan public to address the governance and corruption-related vulnerabilities. Also, the IMF had raised concerns over the Board of Investment Act, which gives vast powers to the SIFC Council; particularly, Articles 10F and 10 G undermine accountability mechanisms. ("Investment steps lack transparency," *The Express Tribune*, 09 January 2026)

Government approves major funding to modernise Sindh's railway network

On 09 January, *Dawn* reported that a multi-billion-rupee plan to modernise the Sindh railway network was approved by the Sindh and federal governments. PKR 63.27 billion investment is outlined for core infrastructure rehabilitation, procurement of DMU train sets, and development of maintenance facilities. The Sindh government ordered the release of PKR 6.6 billion immediately, which will be allocated to replace 100 of the province's 308 unmanned railway crossings across key routes. In the first phase, six new trains will be rolled out, while another batch of six diesel-run train sets will follow in the next phase. These projects will help in cutting travel time between Kotra and Dadu by one and a half hours. Also, Rohri railway station will be upgraded with the installation of escalators and the beautification and renovation of buildings. ("Major rail-based transport plan approved to connect cities in Sindh," *Dawn*, 9 January 2026)

Losses from state-owned entities surge by 302 per cent in 2024-25

On 10 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) reported that state-owned entities (SOEs) incurred a net loss of PKR 122.9 billion during 2024-25, which is a 302 per cent increase over the PKR 30.6 billion loss incurred in the previous year. The consolidated financial results of the SOEs were released by the Central Monitoring Unit (CMU) of the MoF, which also came up for review before a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on SOEs (CCoSOEs), which was presided over by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb. Aggregate profits of the year stood at PKR 709.9 billion compared to PKR 820.7 billion last year. "During 2024-25, aggregate revenues of SOEs stood at approximately Rs12.4 trillion, reflecting a decline largely attributable to reduced profitability in the oil sector following lower international oil prices," the MoF said. The losses remained heavily concentrated in a small number of entities, particularly in the transport and power distribution sectors. The committee also reported that government support to SOEs increased to PKR 2.078 trillion, while subsidies showed a modest decline. The importance of realistic business plans, sector-specific engagement, loss reduction strategies and the need for enforcement of audit completion in compliance with the SOEs Act 2023 was also recommended by the committee. ("SOE losses triple despite reforms," *Dawn*, 10 January 2026)

Pakistan to exit IMF programme in 2026

On 12 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), announced that Pakistan would exit the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme by June. Addressing a diaspora gathering in London, Mashhood said the country's recent economic direction had restored investor and overseas Pakistani confidence, pointing to a sharp rise in workers' remittances in 2025 as evidence of renewed trust in the economy. He argued that IMF-linked policies adopted after 2018 had constrained growth, while the current government's emphasis on fiscal discipline, structural reforms, exports, productivity, and youth-led entrepreneurship was helping rebuild foreign exchange reserves and reduce dependence on external bailouts. ("Pakistan to exit IMF programme this year," *The Express Tribune*, 11 January 2026)

Pakistan panel urges urgent reforms to avoid IMF return

On 12 January, *Dawn* reported that a high-level committee, constituted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and led by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, has called for urgent reforms to ease the cost of doing business and rationalise energy and trade tariffs, aiming to more than double Pakistan's exports to over USD 60 billion within three years. Formed to chart a path beyond the current USD 8.4 billion IMF programme ending in 2027, the panel identified high and volatile energy prices, distortionary taxation, policy unpredictability, weak trade facilitation, limited access to finance, and regulatory fragmentation as key constraints across 20 priority export sectors. The committee warned that without structural reforms, Pakistan's economy cannot sustain growth for its population of 250 million. Iqbal said export-led growth was essential for economic sovereignty, adding that the findings would inform a sector-specific roadmap under the Uraan Pakistan plan, subject to IMF. ("Urgent reforms proposed to avert another IMF loan," *Dawn*, 12 January 2026)

ADB warns Carec Tranche-III loan may lapse amid delays

On 12 January, *Dawn* reported that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) warned the economic affairs division that, based on current progress, there was a significant risk the approved USD 360 million under the Multi-tranche Financing Facility (MFF) would not be fully utilised by the expiration date of 31 December 2027. The project, involving the widening of sections of the N-55 Highway, has been stalled for eight months due to controversies in the bidding process examined by multiple parliamentary committees and the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority. Although the Islamabad High Court ordered immediate award of contracts to avoid cancellation and reputational damage, implementation remains slow. The ADB has cleared the lowest evaluated bidder for four project lots and urged swift action by the National Highway Authority to ensure full utilisation of the loan. ("ADB warns $360m loan for highway project risks lapsing," *Dawn*, 12 January 2026)

PIA's revival set in motion with USD 482 million privatisation deal

On 13 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL) has entered a new phase of revival, the first major privatisation of a state-owned enterprise in nearly two decades, leaving the government with a 25 per cent stake and aligning with IMF-backed market reforms. Consortium chairman Arif Habib outlined plans to assume operational control by April 2026 and reinvest around PKR 125 billion into fleet modernisation, route expansion, debt restructuring and governance reforms, while committing to no layoffs for at least one year. The consortium includes Fauji Fertiliser Company, the Arif Habib and Fatima groups, and several private investors, and aims to restore PIA's competitiveness by improving risk management, service quality and safety standards, targeting key passenger segments such as overseas Pakistanis and Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. ("PIA's revival set in motion with $482 million privatisation deal," *The Express Tribune*, 13 January 2026)

Government planning to impose 'export emergency'

On 13 January, *Dawn* reported that the government plans to declare an "export emergency" and establish a special cell at the Prime Minister's Office to urgently address exporters' complaints, aiming to raise exports by 40 per cent within four years and nearly 200 per cent by 2035. Speaking at a press conference, Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan must rapidly transform into an export-led economy to achieve sustainable growth, job creation, and economic sovereignty, warning that continued reliance on the IMF and friendly countries would persist otherwise. Proposed measures include faster refund payments, direct grievance redressal through a

PM Office hotline, labour flexibility to prevent production disruptions, and sector-specific export strategies. The government was also going to be engaging with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to make export plans with local chambers at the district level. ("Govt planning to impose 'export emergency'," *Dawn*, 13 January 2026)

Automobile sales jump 46 per cent

On 13 January, *Dawn* reported that the sales of cars, light commercial vehicles, pickups and vans rose by 46 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to 88,322 units in the first half of FY26, up from 60,675 units in the same period last year, despite a month-on-month(MoM) decline in December 2025. December sales stood at 13,280 units, reflecting a 35 per cent YoY increase but a 14 per cent MoM fall, due to year-end effects and delayed purchases ahead of new year registrations. The strong overall growth was driven by new market entrants, lower interest rates, easing inflation and improved macroeconomic sentiment. Major manufacturers, including Honda Atlas, Indus Motor, Hyundai Nishat, Sazgar and Pak Suzuki, all recorded significant YoY gains in FY26. Two and three-wheeler sales also rose sharply by 33 per cent YoY in the first half, while tractor sales declined and truck and bus sales posted strong growth. ("Automobile sales jump 46pc," *Dawn*, 13 January, 2026)

Pakistan signs MoU with Trump-linked World Liberty Finance

On 14 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with SC Financial Technologies, an affiliated entity of World Liberty Financial, a venture linked to US President Donald Trump's family, to explore the use of World Liberty's USD1 stablecoin for cross-border payments. According to the Pakistan Virtual Asset Regulatory Authority (PVARA), the agreement aims to develop a technical understanding of digital payment architectures and could allow the USD1 stablecoin to operate alongside Pakistan's regulated digital currency framework in coordination with the central bank. The MoU was signed during a visit by World Liberty CEO Zach Witkoff and comes as Pakistan examines digital currency solutions to improve remittances and reduce cash dependence, amid warming ties with the United States. ("Pakistan signs MoU with Donald Trump-linked World Liberty Finance," *Dawn*, 14 January 2026)

Power users to continue paying electricity debt surcharge

On 15 January, *Dawn* reported that the federal government has decided to continue charging a PKR 3.23 per unit debt surcharge on electricity consumers for up to five to six more years, as it notified a revised uniform national base tariff for FY26 without any change. The Power Division said the surcharge would be withdrawn only after the clearance of circular debt, for which a settlement plan has been launched with a similar five- to six-year timeline. It acknowledged that rising off-grid solar use has doubled the number of protected consumers since 2021, increasing fiscal strain and cross-subsidy burdens on industrial and commercial users. To mitigate this, the government introduced a surplus power package offering electricity to industrial and agricultural consumers at a concessional rate of PKR 22.98 per unit for three years, and said industrial cross-subsidies had fallen from PKR 225 billion in March 2024 to PKR 102 billion currently. ("Power users to continue paying debt surcharge," *Dawn*, 15 January 2026)

Government seeks low interest on USD 2.5 billion debt

On 16 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan has formally requested the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to roll over USD 2.5 billion in maturing debt for two years and reduce the interest rate by nearly half, including on a USD 450 million loan taken in 1996–97 that remains unpaid. The request coincided with the visit of the UAE president to Pakistan, after which Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif confirmed that the UAE had agreed in principle to extend the debt, though the duration and revised terms were not disclosed. Of the total amount, USD two billion is maturing in January 2026, forming part of Pakistan's USD 16 billion foreign exchange reserves. Pakistan has sought a reduction in the interest rate from the current 6.5 per cent to around three per cent, citing improved credit ratings and lower global rates, and arguing that repayment during the ongoing IMF programme, ending in September 2026, would be unfeasible. ("Govt seeks low interest on $2.5b debt," *The Express Tribune*, 16 January 2026)

Ministry of Commerce bans imports of 'personal' used cars

On 16 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce has amended the Import Policy Order 2022, banning the import of used cars under the "personal baggage scheme." Under SRO 61(I)/2006, used vehicles may now be imported only through the "gift" and "transfer of residence" schemes, with a one-year non-transfer condition and stricter safety and environmental standards. The move, ratified earlier by the federal cabinet, has raised concerns among motor dealers over reduced imports and potential revenue losses, even as parts manufacturers welcomed it as a step to protect the local auto industry. ("No more imports of 'personal' used cars," *Dawn*, 16 January 2026)

Pakistan approves 37 new SEZs under phase II of CPEC

On 17 January, *Dawn* reported that 37 new Special Economic Zones were approved in the second Phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC-II) by the Board of Investment. With the addition of these SEZs, a total of 44 SEZs are now part of CPEC-II, with particular focus on SEZ-led industrialisation and Pakistan-China business-to-business cooperation. In the Project Management Unit of the CPEC-II, the Industrial Cooperation Development Project (PMU CPEC-ICDP) has played a key role, resulting in the rapid progress on the Karachi Industrial Park, "Gilgit-Baltistan" SEZ and approval of the land lease policy for Bin Qasim Industrial Park. Additionally, the PMU CPEC-ICDP is planning to hold more investment rounds, focusing on initiatives that would commemorate the 75th anniversary of Pak-China diplomatic relations. ("Number of SEZs surges to 44 under CPEC 2.0," *Dawn*, 17 January 2026)

Auto loans grow for 13th consecutive month

On 21 January, *Dawn* reported that for the 13th consecutive month, auto loans in Pakistan grew as per data from the State Bank of Pakistan. Auto sales (cars, SUVs, Pickups and vans) in the first six months of FY26 recorded a 46 per cent rise with 88,322 units from 60,676 units in the first six months of FY25. As a result, auto loans accounted for PKR 319 billion at the end of December 2025. The growth in demand is majorly driven by new entrants, easing inflation, low interest rates and improving macroeconomic indicators. ("Auto loans rise for 13th month," *Dawn*, 21 January 2026)

Weakening dollar raises risks for remittances and exports

On 21 January, *Dawn* reported that US dollar depreciation against Pakistan's rupee has raised concerns as the exchange rate hit PKR 280. Further decline against the Pakistan rupee will hurt remittances and the export market. In the case of remittances, which have increased by 10.6% in the first six months of FY26, further depreciation can lead the dollar to find a path into the black market. ("Dollar slide sparks economic fears," *Dawn*, 21 January 2026)

Fitch affirms Pakistan's debt ratings at 'B-'

On 22 January, *Dawn* reported that Fitch Ratings affirmed Pakistan's long-term debt ratings at 'B-' with a stable outlook and assigned a Recovery Rating of 'RR4', reflecting average recovery expectations in the event of default following the adoption of its new Sovereign Rating Criteria. Fitch cited Pakistan's high government debt and interest burden, weak governance indicators, and external vulnerabilities, while noting that the ratings remain sensitive to IMF programme performance, external liquidity conditions, and fiscal discipline. The agency said upgrades would depend on sustained reductions in debt and financing risks through fiscal consolidation and improved revenue generation, while failures in these areas or renewed external pressures could trigger a downgrade. ("Fitch affirms Pakistan's debt ratings at 'B-'," *Dawn*, 22 January 2026)

Business costs 34 per cent higher in Pakistan than regional peers

On 23 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan's cost of doing business is about 34 per cent higher than regional peers, severely undermining industrial competitiveness and export performance, the Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) warned, citing irrational taxation, high energy prices, and currency instability as core constraints. The group noted that exports have remained stagnant since 2022 despite a global trade recovery, as Pakistani firms struggle to compete with countries such as Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam. PBF called for urgent reforms, including tax rationalisation, lower electricity and gas tariffs for industry, and a stable exchange rate, arguing that prolonged rupee devaluation has fuelled inflation and production costs without boosting exports. The forum also flagged a deepening cotton sector crisis, with over 400 ginning factories closed, urging the withdrawal of 18 per cent GST on cottonseed and oil cake to revive domestic production and reduce import dependence. ("Business costs 34pc higher than region," *Dawn*, 23 January 2026)

SBP likely to cut policy rate by 50 bps despite IMF caution

On 24 January, *Dawn* reported that the State Bank of Pakistan's Monetary Policy Committee is scheduled to meet next week, and a key policy rate cut by 50 basis points is expected. This expected 50 basis points cut will bring Pakistan's policy rate to 10.5 per cent. This rate cut will be in line with SBP's continuous efforts to cut its key policy rate since mid 2024, moving away from its earlier aggressive tightening cycle. Analysts believe that this cut is expected because of moderate inflation, higher foreign exchange reserves and a better balance of payments outlook. However, a International Monetary Fund (IMF) report has cautioned against premature monetary easing under Pakistan's USD seven billion loan programme. ("Central bank seen cutting rates again after december surprise," *Dawn*, 24 January 2026)

Sindh govt approves PKR 21.5 billion for Karachi infrastructure upgrades

On 24 January, *Dawn* reported that Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah approved PKR 21.5 billion of funding for infrastructure upgrades in Karachi, particularly the Town Municipal Cooperation (TMC) road and Karachi Metropolitan Cooperation (KMC) projects. The total funding is around PKR 22 billion that includes PKR 13.32 billion for TMC projects and PKR 8.53 billion for projects under the KMC. During approval, the CM also pressed the need for coordinated execution of road, sewerage, and water supply works with transparency, quality control and timely completion. ("CM Murad approves PKR 215bn for Karachi infrastructure upgrades including PKR 13bn for improving roads," *Dawn*, 24 January 2026)

Committee on energy approves Integrated Energy Planning Framework for 2025–27

On 24 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan's Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE) approved the Proposed Integrated Energy Planning (IEP) ecosystem, secretariat structure and high-level roadmap under 2025-27, to enhance decision-making pertaining to the energy sector. It has also approved the institutionalisation of the Energy Information System. ("CCoE okays Integrated Energy Plan," *The Express Tribune*, 24 January 2026)

Auto sales surge 76 per cent as falling interest rates boost demand

On 24 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that auto sales volumes surged by 76 per cent as a result of lower interest rates and stable macroeconomic conditions. According to a review by Optimum Capital Management, with the increased sales, the profit after tax from the sector is estimated to reach approximately PKR 6.6 billion. Also, as interest rates have fallen from 24 per cent to 11 per cent and are expected to drop into the single digits in the next six months, it will lead to a further boom in car financing and sales numbers. Now, Passenger car sales dominate overall volumes with Japanese brands retaining the domination over Korean and Chinese manufacturers. ("Auto sector profits to hit Rs 66 billion," *The Express Tribune*, 24 January 2026)

Industry slams SBP's decision to hold policy rate at 10.5 per cent

On 27 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan's business community has sharply criticised the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) for maintaining the policy rate at 10.5 per cent, arguing that the decision undermines industrial revival and export growth at a time of subdued inflation and weak economic momentum. Business leaders, including FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh, reiterated demands for a single-digit interest rate, warning that high borrowing costs, combined with elevated energy tariffs, are driving industrial closures and eroding export competitiveness. FPCCI and sectoral associations said the real interest rate remains excessively high compared to regional peers despite inflation stabilising near 5 per cent, limiting access to finance for SMEs and penalising the private sector. ("Industry slams SBP's 'penal' rate policy," *Dawn*, 27 January 2026)

Public debt rises to 70.7 per cent of GDP in FY2024–25

On 29 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the current government's first full financial year recorded an increase in total public debt as a percentage of GDP from 67.6 per cent to 70.7 per cent in June 2025. As a result of the increase in public debt, debt per capita increased by 13 per cent. Under the Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation Act (FRDL), the finance ministry presented a fiscal policy statement in parliament. It stated that debt per capita has increased to PKR 333,041 in fiscal year 2024-25 from PKR 294,098 in 2023-24. The report also stated that public debt remained a key challenge as the federal fiscal deficit recorded a rise from 3.5 per cent to 6.2 per cent of GDP, crossing the limit as per the Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation Act. ("Every Pakistani owes Rs 333,000," *The Express Tribune*, 29 January 2026)

Arif Habib-led consortium takes over management of PIA

On 30 January, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan government signed the transaction documents for the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) privatisation in the presence of PM Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshall Syed Asim Munir. During the ceremony, the PM emphasised the transparent process of privatisation, which was also telecast live. In the privatisation bid, the PIA bidding was closed at PKR 180 billion, of which the consortium would spend PKR 135 billion on improving PIA. Meanwhile, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Privatisation sought more clarification and comprehensive information on the transaction, employee participation, consultant mechanism and grievance redress from the Privatisation commission. ("Deal signed to officially put PIA under new management," *Dawn*, 30 January 2026)

KP revenue hit hard by Pak–Afghan border closure, seeks federal intervention

On 30 January, *Dawn* reported that the KP government is facing sharp revenue losses due to the closure of Pakistan Afghanistan border. The KP border is crucial for the province's revenue as KP borders accounted for nearly 80 per cent of total Pakistan exports to Afghanistan in FY25, particularly through the Torkham and Ghulam Khan borders. The suspension of trade due to ongoing escalations at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border since October last year led to a 53.02 per cent decline in the revenue of the KP government. In the first seven months of FY26, the Infrastructure Development Cess (IDC) fell to PKR 3.48 billion from PKR 7.42 billion in the same period in FY25. Financial adviser of KP's CM has written to the Commerce minister seeking an urgent meeting of provincial and federal stakeholders, as border disruptions are affecting businesses, leading to loss of employment. In the long term, it can have broader implications on the provincial economy with a slowdown in overall economic activity across the province. ("KP seeks Centre's help amid loss of revenue due to border closure," *Dawn*, 30 January 2026)

ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & WATER

UN-ESCAP to help Pakistan develop its energy transition plan

On 05 January, *Dawn* reported that, at the request of the government, a scoping mission of UN-ESCAP visited Pakistan recently and held talks with ministries concerned and development partners to understand the needs, challenges, and opportunities in Pakistan on energy transition financing. Heavy reliance on imported fossil fuels, along with a circular debt crisis exceeding PKR 2.6 trillion, makes it important for Pakistan to shift to renewables to meet energy needs by 2030. To bridge this gap, UN-ESCAP will provide policy advisory and technical support to energy financing to assist Pakistan in the development of its Energy Transition Investment Plan (ETIP). ("UN body to help Pakistan develop its energy transition plan," *Dawn*, 05 January, 2026)

Pakistan needs USD 566 billion to meet climate targets

On 15 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan will require an estimated USD 565.7 billion in investment to achieve its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) 3.0 climate commitments by 2035, including a 17 per cent unconditional and 33 per cent conditional reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, 30 per cent electric vehicle adoption, and a transition to 60 per cent renewable energy. The scale of financing needed underscores the importance of mobilising green-aligned capital through frameworks such as the Pakistan Green Taxonomy (PGT) and strengthened ESG disclosure practices. The issue was highlighted at a session hosted by the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI), held against the backdrop of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan's revised ESG Disclosure Guidelines, now aligned with the PGT. Launched by the State Bank of Pakistan in 2024, the PGT classifies environmentally sustainable activities, while the ESG guidelines, set to become mandatory between 2029 and 2031, aim to standardise sustainability reporting, enhance transparency, and support Pakistan's climate transition. ("Pakistan needs $566bn to meet climate targets," *Dawn*, 15 January 2026)

SECURITY

Gunmen attack the brother of PTI's Sheikh Waqas Akram

On 03 January, *Dawn* reported that according to the police, on Friday, gunmen attacked the convoy of Jhang Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Sheikh Fawad Akram, who is the brother of PTI Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram, leaving one of his guards dead and three others injured near Jhang's General Bus Stand (GBS). The incident took place near a petrol pump where Fawad was heading to the office. The Jhang police arrested four suspects, who included two alleged gunmen and Fawad's stepbrother. According to the district police officer, strict action has been taken against the suspects. Reports said that over the past six months, Fawad's stepbrother had joined hands with the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) to contest the election against Waqas and his father. ("Gunmen attack brother of PTI's Sheikh Waqas Akram in Jhang: guard killed, 3 others injured," *Dawn*, 03 January 2026)

Three injured after 'back-to-back quadcopter attacks' on school in North Waziristan

On 05 January, *Dawn* reported that at least three people, including a school principal and a Rescue 1122 official, were injured after unknown assailants carried out back-to-back quadcopter attacks on a private school in Mir Ali, North Waziristan. According to local sources, explosives dropped from a quadcopter struck the premises of Al-Fatah Public School in Khasokhel village, injuring the principal and a security guard. While Rescue 1122 personnel were providing first aid and evacuating the wounded, a second quadcopter reportedly dropped a mortar shell near the site, injuring a rescuer. ("Three injured after 'back-to-back quadcopter attacks' on school in North Waziristan," *Dawn*, 05 January 2026)

BLA terror bid foiled in Karachi; 2,000 kg explosives seized

On 05 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that security forces in Karachi foiled a major terrorism plot when they uncovered a mini-truck converted into a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) that had been concealed inside a compound beneath piles of clothing, apparently prepared for deployment. The prepared vehicle contained 60 plastic drums filled with explosives, together with five explosive LPG cylinders. The BDS defused the explosive drums and cylinders from the mini-truck and the room, and took the perpetrators into custody. ("BLA terror bid foiled in Karachi; 2,000kg explosives seized," *The Express Tribune*, 05 January, 2026)

Four on-duty officers lost their lives in Laki, Bannu

On 05 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, four on-duty cops got shot during a cross-firing against unidentified armed terrorists in Lakki Marwat. As per the police reports, the first attack took place on Dera-Bannu road, when a motorcycle opened fire on the on-duty cops and immediately fled the scene, during which three cops were shot. The second attack took place in Madan police station, where the unidentified gunman opened fire, shooting another constable. The reports also state that the attacks were mainly targeted towards uniformed officers on duty. ("Four on-duty policemen martyred in Lakki, Bannu," *The Express Tribune*, 05 January, 2026)

Operation launched after Kech grenade attack

On 09 January, *Dawn* reported that security forces launched a combing and search operation in the Mand area of Kech district following a grenade attack during an open court held by Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries Mir Barkat Rind. Officials said the grenade exploded in a parking area near the venue in Mand, close to the Iran border, but Mir Barkat Rind and attendees escaped unharmed. In the aftermath of the attack, authorities increased security for the parliamentary secretary as investigations and security operations continued in the area. ("Operation launched after Kech attack," *Dawn*, 09 January 2026)

CTD kill six terrorists in targeted operations in KP

On 12 January, *Dawn* reported that Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) CTD has carried out two successful intelligence-based operations in Peshawar and Khyber, which resulted in the killing of six "highly wanted" terrorists linked to Fitna al-Khawarij, while several of their accomplices managed to escape by taking advantage of nearby residential areas. The first operation conducted on the outskirts of Peshawar, CTD ambush team engaged and killed three terrorists on the spot. The second operation was carried out in Jamrud, where terrorists were reportedly preparing a coordinated attack on police. ("CTD kills six terrorists in targeted operations in K-P," *Dawn*, 12 January 2026)

Arms smuggling attempt intercepted at Torkham border

On 12 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that, according to the officials, the Pakistani authorities have intercepted a large cache of ammunition and magazines being smuggled from Afghanistan. The weapons were seized from the truck, and both the vehicle and its driver have been taken into custody for further investigation. The operation was carried out on a tip-off by the Customs House at Torkham. The Authorities said that the interception not only prevented a major arms smuggling attempt, but also foiled a potential large-scale terrorist operation within Pakistan. ("Major arms smuggling attempt foiled at Torkham border," *The Express Tribune*, 12 January 2026)

15 terrorists gunned down in separate KP operations

On 16 January, as reported by *Dawn*, as per an Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) statement, 13 members of TTP were killed on 13 and 14 January. The first shootout took place in Bannu, where security forces engaged with militants, killing eight of them. The second intelligence operation took place in Kurram, where five terrorists were shot down. Meanwhile, in Dera Ismail Khan, two armed militants were killed whilst a police officer was injured. ("15 terrorists gunned down in KP: ISPR," *Dawn*, 16 January, 2026)

Security forces repel coordinated attacks in Balochistan, 12 militants killed

On 17 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that security forces killed at least 12 militants after foiling coordinated attacks on a police station and two banks in Kharan city, northwestern Balochistan. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), 15–20 militants linked to what the government terms "Fitna al-Hindustan" targeted the Kharan City police station, the National Bank of Pakistan and Habib Bank Limited, looting PKR 3.4 million and attempting to take hostages. The hostage bid was thwarted by a swift security response, and mop-up operations remain ongoing. Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said one civilian was injured and warned that militant groups were increasingly shifting towards organised criminal activities such as bank robberies. President Asif Ali Zardari praised the security forces, reiterating the state's resolve to counter militancy and foreign-sponsored violence. ("12 terrorists killed as forces fight off multiple attacks in Balochistan's Kharan," *The Express Tribune*, 17 January 2026)

Suicide attack targets aman committee member in KP

On 24 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that a suicide blast took place at a wedding ceremony in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan area. The incident happened at the home of Noor Alam Mehsud, the head of a local Aman Committee. Five people lost their lives, and more than 20 people were injured in the blast. The DI Khan area has continuously remained a focal point of militant violence since 2020 due to its strategic location at the junction of Balochistan, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The CM ordered the authorities to provide the injured persons with the required health facilities and ordered an investigation of the targeted attack. ("Atleast 3 killed, 7 injured in suicide blast at aman committee member house in KP's DI Khan- Police," *The Express Tribune,* 24 January 2026)

Five terrorists killed in Pishin operation

On 27 January, *Dawn* reported that, in an operation which lasted several hours, five suspects, which included one wanted in several terrorist cases, were killed during an intelligence-based operation which was led by the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of police in Balochistan's Pishin district, according to officials who said on Monday. During the exchange of fire, 10 CTD officials sustained injuries. The CTD seized a huge quantity of arms, which included rocket launchers, hand grenades and SMGs, and ammunition from their possession. Despite repeated warnings by the police to them to surrender, they fired at CTD officials using modern weapons, and an exchange of fire ensued. The residents of Pishin district, especially those living in Kali Karbala has expressed their satisfaction over the successful operation that they said would put an end to fear and panic in the area. ("Five terrorists killed in Pishin operation: CTD," *Dawn*, 27 January 2026)

41 militants killed in Balochistan IBOs under 'Azm-i-Istehkam'

On 31 January, *Dawn* reported that 41 terrorists were killed in Harnai and Panjgur districts of Balochistan in intelligence-based operations. The sanitisation process is underway in the area, as a large cache of ammunition and explosives was also found in terrorists' possession and was destroyed by security forces. These actions by security forces are taken under the vision of 'Azm-i-Istehkam', which was approved by the federal apex committee on the National Action Plan. As per the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies report, the country has witnessed a sharp rise in militant violence in 2025, despite record militant deaths. In 2025, terrorist attacks rose by 34 per cent and terrorism related fatalities increased by 21 per cent year on year. ("Security forces kill 41 terrorists during IBOs in Balochistan's Harnai and Panjgur districts-ISPR," *Dawn*, 31 January 2026)

PAKISTAN OCCUPIED KASHMIR

Pakistan urges international support towards plebiscite in POK

On 05 January, as reported by *Dawn*, on Self-Determination Day, Pakistani leaders, including President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and the President and Prime Minister of "Azad Jammu and Kashmir", urged the international community and the UN to implement resolutions granting Kashmiris the right to self-determination through a plebiscite. They condemned India's actions in the region, reiterated Pakistan's support for Kashmiris, and emphasised that resolving the Kashmir dispute is crucial for lasting peace in South Asia. The leaders highlighted the unfulfilled UN commitment to the Kashmiri people and called for an end to human rights violations in the region. ("Pakistan calls for Kashmir plebiscite on Right to Self-Determination Day," *Dawn*, 05 January, 2026)

EXTERNAL

Pakistan expresses "complete solidarity" with KSA, reiterating support for Yemen

On 01 January, *Dawn* reported that according to a statement from the Foreign Office (FO), Pakistan, on Wednesday, expressed "complete solidarity" with Saudi Arabia amid a resurgence of violence in Yemen. Pakistan also reiterated its support for the "unity and territorial integrity" of Yemen, along with the efforts to establish "lasting peace and stability". ("Pakistan expresses 'complete solidarity' with Saudi Arabia, reiterates support for 'territorial integrity' of Yemen," *Dawn*, 01 January 2026)

PM Shehbaz stresses need for unity in Ummah during a phone call with Saudi crown prince

On 31 December, *Dawn* reported that according to a statement from the Prime Minister's office (PMO), the Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, on Wednesday, during a phone call with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, stressed the need for unity and harmony within the Muslim Ummah. They also exchanged views on the regional situation and current developments and said that it was imperative to maintain regional peace and stability through dialogue and diplomacy. In another statement, Shehbaz expressed his satisfaction with the bilateral relations between Riyadh and Islamabad. ("PM Shehbaz stresses need for unity, harmony in Ummah during phone call with Saudi crown prince," *Dawn*, 31 December 2025)

Pakistan hopes for diplomatic end to Yemen standoff

On 02 January, *Dawn* reported that according to the Foreign Office (FO), Pakistan was seeking a diplomatic resolution of the dispute between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates over Yemen. Islamabad was actively engaging both countries to encourage restraint and diplomacy. A FO spokesperson, Tahir Andrabi, stated: "We have been advocating peace and diplomacy to reach a solution. So, this is part of our exchanges that are taking place between our leadership and the leadership in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi." Andrabi said that Pakistan was pursuing the issue through multilateral forums, including the UN Security Council. ("Pakistan hopes for diplomatic end to Yemen standoff," *Dawn*, 02 January 2026)

Beijing and Islamabad reaffirm commitment to all-weather strategic partnership at the seventh round of the Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue; Set to commemorate 75 years of diplomatic cooperation

On 04 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan and China have agreed to further strengthen coordination at bilateral and multilateral forums during the seventh round of the Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar is to co-chair the seventh round of the dialogue held in Beijing. A statement issued by Pakistan's Foreign Office stated that "During the talks, both sides reviewed the full spectrum of Pakistan-China relations and discussed key regional and global issues," and that views were exchanged on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), trade, multilateral cooperation and people-to-people exchanges. Highlighting the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, both sides reaffirmed that the Pakistan-China friendship is vital to peace, stability and prosperity for the two countries and the broader region. Islamabad and Beijing have also agreed to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. Dar and Wang also jointly unveiled the logo for the 75th anniversary of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations, "marking the start of year-long celebrations to commemorate this historic milestone in a befitting and memorable manner." "The two sides reaffirmed their shared commitment to further deepening the Pakistan–China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership," the FO said, adding that the Chinese executive vice premier "appreciated Pakistan's consistent support to China on issues of core interest." It added that both countries "expressed satisfaction with the steady and forward-looking trajectory of bilateral relations while reviewing party-to-party exchanges, regional developments, and progress on various projects under CPEC." ("Pakistan, China agree to strengthen coordination at bilateral, multilateral forums," *The Express Tribune*; 04 January 2025; "FM Dar, Wang Yi term Pak-China friendship 'vital' for regional peace, stability," *Dawn*, 4 January 2025)

UNSC: Pakistan urges restraint amid

"profound concern" over situation in Venezuela

On 05 January, as reported by Dawn, Pakistan's Acting Permanent Representative Ambassador Usman Jadoon expressed "profound concern" over the developments in Venezuela during an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). He said that at a time when the world was already facing multiple crises, instability in the region "does not augur well for regional and international peace and security." Pakistan urged all parties to exercise maximum restraint, de-escalate tensions and engage in dialogue. Jadoon also reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to contributing to the UNSC's primary responsibility of addressing threats to international peace and security. He added that unilateral military action went against the principles of international law as well as the doctrine of sovereign immunity, warning that such actions set dangerous precedents. He also expressed hope that Latin America and the Caribbean would remain free from conflict and confrontation. "Peace and stability of Venezuela and the welfare and prosperity of its people, with full ownership, must be the overriding objective of all efforts," he said. ("Pakistan expresses 'profound concern', urges restraint and dialogue on Venezuela at UNSC," *Dawn*, 05 January 2026)

Pakistan and China researchers collaborate on ocean study cruise

On 07 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the Pakistan Navy facilitated a Pakistan-China Joint Oceanographic Cruise through its National Hydrographic Office (NHO). The main goal was to promote maritime awareness and facilitate marine scientific research in Pakistan. The research outcomes are anticipated to increase coastal and offshore dynamics awareness for both countries, enabling enhanced assessment of patterns and supporting informed maritime planning and policymaking. According to the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), the signing ceremony was held on 12 December 2025. The Pakistani researchers will get to test their samples using Chinese laboratory equipment and machines, and receive various training opportunities on ocean equipment innovation, equipment operation, data collection techniques on board, and post-cruise laboratory analysis. ("Pakistani, Chinese researchers embark on ocean study cruise," *Dawn*, 7 January, 2026)

Pakistan in talks with Saudi Arabia to convert loans into JF-17 fighter jet deal

On 07 January, as reported by *Dawn*, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are in talks to convert around USD two billion in Saudi loans to a JF-17 fighter jet deal, a Reuters report found. This follows a mutual defence pact the two countries signed in September last year, further deepening military cooperation. Sources said the discussions were limited to the provision of the JF-17 Thunder fighter jets, which Pakistan and China jointly developed. One source stated that the total deal would be worth approximately USD four billion, with an additional USD two billion allocated for equipment. This continues Pakistan's push to expand arms exports and build on its arms deal with Libya and negotiations with Bangladesh. Pakistan's Air Chief Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu was in Saudi Arabia for bilateral talks, including on military cooperation. ("Pakistan, Saudi in talks on JF-17 jets-for-loans deal: Reuters report," *Dawn*, 07 January 2026)

Pakistan to set up special unit to protect Chinese nationals

On 07 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi announced the establishment of a special unit in Islamabad to ensure the protection of Chinese citizens. He made the announcement during a visit to the headquarters of the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, where he met Chinese Interior Minister Wang Xiaohong. The two also spoke about counterterrorism cooperation, police training exchanges and Pakistan-China relations in general. They also decided to form a joint working group on internal security, which would meet every three months. The Chinese Interior Minister praised Pakistan's efforts in counterterrorism and internal security, as well as measures taken to protect Chinese citizens. Additionally, the two also agreed to further strengthen the joint rapid response system against terrorism and crime. Other areas of discussion included cybercrime and AI. "Pakistan and China share an unbreakable bond of enduring cooperation, and no one can create a wedge between us," Naqvi said. ("Pakistan to set up special unit in Islamabad to protect Chinese citizens," *The Express Tribune*, 07 January 2026)

Pakistan police to get training at Beijing Police College

On 09 January, as reported by *Dawn*, all assistant superintendents of police (ASPs) of the National Police Academy will undergo a one-month training program at the Beijing Police College. The program was accepted in principle during Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's visit to the Beijing Police College. Through this initiative, Pakistani police officers would get an extensive training where they would be equipped with modern professional education, whilst gaining access to the high-tech training sections of the Beijing Police College. Moreover, Naqvi was highly impressed by the professional capabilities and top-class training displayed by the vehicle squad. The minister was briefed regarding the use of modern technology to modulate protest and violent incidents, technology-based education and practical training, and AI-based instructions. ("Law enforcers to be trained at Beijing Police College," *Dawn*, 09 January 2026)

Turkey seeking entry into Pakistan-Saudi mutual defence agreement, says Bloomberg

On 10 January, as covered by *Dawn*, a report by Bloomberg found that Turkey is seeking entry into a mutual defence agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Bloomberg reported that talks are at an advanced stage, with a deal "very likely". Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a "Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement" last September, pledging that any attack on either nation would be treated as an act of aggression against both. As Turkey's interests overlap with those of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in South Asia and the Middle East, such a deal would make sense for the country, the report said. According to Nihat Ali Ozcan, a Turkish strategist, Turkey's military experience and developed defence industry, along with Pakistan's nuclear capability and manpower, and Riyadh's financial power, would make this a productive deal for all three countries. "As the US prioritises its own interests and that of Israel in the region, changing dynamics and fallout from regional conflicts are prompting countries to develop new mechanisms to identify friends and foes," Ozcan was quoted as saying by Bloomberg. ("'Deal very likely': Turkiye seeks to join Pakistan-Saudi mutual defence pact, report says," *Dawn*, 10 January 2026)

ALSO READ:
1. Editorial, "Landmark strategic deal," *The Express Tribune*, 19 September 2025
2. Dr Muhammad Ali Ehsan, "Pak-Saudi defence pact," *The Express Tribune*, 21 September 2025
3. Zarrar Khuhro, "Ties that bind," *Dawn*, 22 September 2025
4. Arifa Noor, "Elite pact," *Dawn*, 23 September 2025
5. Khurram Husain, "A bailout too far," *Dawn*, 02 October 2025

PM Shehbaz looks to increase UAE investment in IT sector

On 10 January, as reported by *Dawn*, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the government is giving special importance to the economic relationship with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), particularly in the fields of information technology, digital innovation and blockchain, among others. The PM had met a delegation from the UAE's Sajwani Group and stated that recent high-level contacts and exchanges had increased cooperation between private sector investors from Pakistan and the UAE. He also praised the UAE's investment and global connectivity, pointing out that a combination of these with Pakistan's human resources and workforce could result in a highly beneficial partnership for economic growth. ("PM Shehbaz woos UAE investment in IT sector," *Dawn*, 10 January 2026)

Indonesia planning to expand defence ties with Pakistan

On 12 January, *Dawn* reported that, according to the military's media affairs wing, on Monday, Indonesia had expressed its desire to further expand defence ties with Pakistan across multiple domains. The Inter-Services Relations (ISPR) said that the development came as Indonesian Defence Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin called on Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir at the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi. The ISPR stated: "The meeting reaffirmed the historic and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Indonesia and focused on strengthening bilateral air force cooperation, particularly in capacity building, training, and technological collaboration." The meetings follow a month after Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto visits Pakistan, during which the two countries agreed to enhance bilateral trade, as well as cooperation in agriculture, information technology, science, and education, and deepen coordination on regional and global issues, including Palestine. ("Indonesia expresses desire to expand defence ties with Pakistan," *Dawn*, 12 January 2026)

US suspends immigrant visa processing for Pakistan and 74 other countries

On January 14, as reported by *Dawn*, the US Department of State announced that immigrant visa processing would be paused for 75 countries until authorities ensure that new immigrants would not draw on American taxpayer resources, as part of the administration's "America First" approach. For Pakistan, this suspension could delay travel, study and work plans for thousands of its citizens who seek US visas. ("US announces suspension of immigrant visa processing for Pakistan, 74 other countries from Jan 21," *Dawn*, 14 January 2026)

Pakistan and Bahrain reaffirm commitment to deepen ties

On 14 January, as reported by *Dawn*, President Asif Ali Zardari arrived in Bahrain on a four-day visit to meet with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. The President reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to broadening cooperation between the two countries across political, economic, defence and cultural fields. During the one-on-one meeting, the two leaders reviewed the overall state of Pakistan-Bahrain relations and expressed an optimistic outlook towards their ongoing trajectories. ("In meeting with Bahrain's king, President Zardari reaffirms commitment to deepening trade, defence ties," *Dawn*, 14 January 2026)

Several countries interested in acquiring nation's fighter jets, says PM Shehbaz Sharif

On 14 January, as reported by the *Dawn*, Pakistan is in talks with several countries for a deal on the JF-17 fighter jets, said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. After border clashes with India last year, Pakistan's fighter jet demands have escalated progressively. Defence Production Minister Raza Hayat Harraj emphasised that Pakistan would only deal with countries that have friendly relations with the nation. Furthermore, the JF-17 jets have proven to be highly efficient and cheaper compared to the average jet cost globally, with their value of USD 40 to 50 million much lower than the average cost of USD 250 to 350 million. ("Several countries 'actively' engaged in talks with Pakistan for its fighter jets, confirms PM Shehbaz," *Dawn*, 14 January 2026)

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey preparing defence agreement

On 15 January, Dawn reported that, according to Defence Production Minister Raza Hayat Harraj, on Wednesday, he confirmed that Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey have prepared a draft defence agreement after nearly a year of talks. Harraj told Reuters the potential deal between the three countries was separate from a bilateral Saudi-Pakistani accord announced last year. Harraj stated: "The Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Turkey trilateral agreement is something that is already in the pipeline." Bloomberg cited that people familiar with the matter reported last week that Turkey was seeking to join the Pak-Saudi defence pact signed in September 2025. The report said Turkey viewed the pact "as a way of strengthening security and deterrents when there are questions over the reliability of the US, which has strong military ties with all three countries, and President Donald Trump's commitment" to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. ("Pakistan-Saudi-Turkiye defence deals in pipeline, minister confirms," *Dawn*, 15 January 2026)

PM Shehbaz reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to CPEC

On 16 January, *Dawn* reported that the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, on Thursday, reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the One China Policy and lauded China's generous support to Pakistan, especially through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and stressed the need for timely implementation of the next phase of CPEC. The PM talked to members of a Chinese delegation, which was led by Vice Minister of International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (IDCPC), Sun Haiyan, who called on the prime minister at the PM House. While welcoming the Chinese dignitary and her delegation to Pakistan, the PM said it was particularly auspicious that the visit was taking place amid bilateral celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. ("PM Shehbaz seeks timely completion of CPEC-II," *Dawn*, 16 January 2026)

Pakistan seeks clarity after US halts immigrant visa processing

On 16 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO) sought further clarification from Washington after the United States suspended immigrant visa processing for nationals of 75 countries, including Pakistan. FO spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrabi described the move as part of an internal US policy review and expressed hope that routine processing would resume soon, rejecting suggestions of any strain in bilateral ties. Islamabad said it remained engaged with US authorities on visas, trade issues, and regional developments. ("Pakistan seeks clarity after US halts immigrant visa processing," *The Express Tribune*, 16 January 2026)

Pakistan, US expand military engagement amid renewed defence ties

On 17 January, *Dawn* reported that according to a statement issued by the US Central Command (Centcom), American and Pakistani troops this week concluded joint training at Pakistan's National Counter-Terrorism Center in Pabbi, under Exercise Inspired Gambit, alongside expanded defence cooperation. In December, Washington approved a USD 686 million upgrade package for Pakistan's F-16 fleet, reinforcing a long-standing pillar of bilateral defence ties after the brief India–Pakistan conflict in May 2025. The re-engagement has been accompanied by unusually positive rhetoric from President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly praised Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir and hosted him at the White House in June 2025. ("Pakistan, US expand military engagement amid renewed defence ties," *Dawn*, 17 January, 2026)

Putin hails growing 'mutually beneficial' Russia–Pakistan partnership

On 17 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin had praised the expanding Russia–Pakistan partnership as "mutually beneficial" during a Kremlin ceremony where Pakistan's Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi presented his credentials. Putin highlighted Pakistan's role as a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and noted growing cooperation across trade, energy, education, agriculture, health, IT and industry. The exchange comes amid deepening economic engagement, including talks on energy cooperation, a potential oil-sector agreement, and Russian interest in Pakistan's banking sector to reduce reliance on Western payment systems. ("Putin hails growing 'mutually beneficial' Russia–Pakistan partnership," *The Express Tribune*, 17 January 2026)

Pakistan and China sign MoUs worth USD 4.5 billion in agriculture sector

On 21 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistani and Chinese private sector entities signed 78 memoranda of understanding worth USD 4.5 billion at the Pak-China Agriculture Investment Conference in Islamabad, formally elevating agriculture as a priority sector under the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC 2.0). Briefing the media, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain said the agreements aim to expand bilateral agricultural trade, modernise production and processing systems, and strengthen commercial partnerships between the two countries. The MoUs cover cooperation across 10 priority sub-sectors, including agri-machinery, food processing and value addition, meat and dairy, fruits and vegetables, fisheries, animal feed, cold chain systems, agri-chemicals and food-grade packaging. Of the agreements signed, 37 were business-to-business investment deals, 24 were joint ventures, and 14 were partnership arrangements. The government stated that dedicated monitoring units would be established within the ministry and at Pakistan's embassy in Beijing to ensure implementation, with the broader goal of doubling Pakistan's USD eight billion in agricultural exports over the next three years through investment-led growth and enhanced market access to China. ("MoUs for $4.5bn agri investment with China," *Dawn*, 21 January 2026)

PM Sharif briefs IMF chief on improving economic indicators

On 22 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, PM Shehbaz Sharif met with International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) summit in Switzerland, where he is also participating in discussions on global cooperation and engaging with international leaders. He met with the IMF chief to discuss Pakistan's macroeconomic improvements and reform commitments. Additional meetings included one with Palestinian PM Mohammad Mustafa and various world leaders focusing on economic challenges and Pakistan's reform agenda. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb also engaged with the president of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) regarding development partnerships and Pakistan's economic stabilisation efforts. ("PM Shehbaz apprises IMF chief of improving economic indicators on WEF's sidelines," *The Express Tribune*, 22 January 2026)

Pakistan & Finland boost bilateral cooperation

On 22 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar met with Finland's Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen on Wednesday, reaffirming their commitment to enhance Pak-Finland bilateral cooperation in trade and investment. The meeting took place at the 26th World Economic Forum in Davos, where they also discussed significant regional and global developments, emphasising a forward-looking and mutually beneficial partnership. ("Pakistan, Finland to boost bilateral cooperation," *The Express Tribune*, 22 January 2026)

PM Sharif, CDF Munir hold meetings on sidelines of World Economic Forum

On 23 January, *Dawn* reported that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence

Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir held a series of informal meetings with key international leaders on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, including Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, underscoring Pakistan's parallel civilian–military diplomatic engagement. During the three-day visit, Sharif also met the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Kristalina Georgieva, briefing her on macroeconomic stabilisation, institutional reforms, and Pakistan's commitment to fiscal discipline, while reiterating that export-led growth remained central to economic recovery. He also held discussions with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa, as Pakistan sought to balance economic diplomacy with strategic and political outreach at the global forum. ("PM Shehbaz, CDF Munir hold meetings on sidelines of World Economic Forum," *Dawn*, 23 January 2026)

China to invest up to USD 10 billion in Pakistan through new agreements

On 23 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, China has signed new investment agreements worth billions of dollars with Pakistan and is set to invest up to USD 10 billion in the near future, Federal Minister for Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said on Thursday. He mentioned that Pakistan had finalised negotiations with China on a USD 1.5 billion investment in joint ventures, and MoUs had been signed worth an estimated USD 9 billion in the agriculture, automobile, and mineral sectors. A large delegation of 300 Pakistani businessmen visited China in an attempt to strengthen investments. Pakistan aims to improve transportation and trade by building new connections to the mining site at Reko Diq and by linking it with Karachi. The country secured an investment of around USD 7 million. ("China to invest up to $10bn in Pakistan with new agreements," *The Express Tribune*, 23 January 2026)

PM Shehbaz signs Trump-led "Board of Peace" charter along with other world leaders

On 23 January, as reported by *Dawn*, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif signed the "Board of Peace" charter, an initiative of US President Donald Trump, along with leaders from 19 countries, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) summit in Switzerland. Primarily set up to promote the second and subsequent phases of the ceasefire in Gaza, the board is also planning to address conflicts in other parts of the world, like the war in Ukraine. Trump opened the conference with warm words about the leaders' popularity around the world as well as their friendship with each other. Countries are supposed to pay USD 1 billion in order to join the board. Although Trump said that the board is looking forward to working with the UN, other major powers like France and the United Kingdom have shunned the board. ("PM Shehbaz, other world leaders sign charter for Trump-led Board of Peace," *Dawn*, 23 January 2026)

Australian help sought to boost agricultural yields

On 23 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan sought Australian technical assistance to boost agricultural and livestock productivity, with Federal Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain highlighting plans to establish foot-and-mouth disease–free zones, improve animal yield and market access, and expand cooperation on biosecurity, digitisation, and capacity building, as both sides agreed to deepen collaboration amid food security challenges and Pakistan's push to raise farm productivity, livestock exports, and horticultural access, particularly mango exports, to Australia. ("Australian help sought to boost agri yields," *Dawn*, 23 January 2026)

Pakistan, Somalia expand internal security cooperation

On 24 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan and Somalia agreed to deepen cooperation on internal security after Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met a Somali delegation led by Interior Minister Ali Yusuf. The two sides discussed collaboration in police training, border management, disaster response and a joint counterterrorism strategy. Naqvi assured Somalia of Pakistan's support in policing and counterterrorism, and announced visa facilitation for Somali citizens travelling to Pakistan for medical treatment and education. Yusuf said Somalia was facing a difficult security situation and wanted to learn from Pakistan's experience, while also inviting Naqvi to visit Somalia. He also conveyed a message from Somalia's prime minister to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. ("Pakistan, Somalia agree to boost security ties," *Dawn*, 24 January 2026)

Parliament to decide on Gaza troop deployment

On 24 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that security sources clarified that any deployment of Pakistani forces to Gaza is the exclusive prerogative of Parliament and the federal government, and no unilateral or extra-constitutional decision would be taken. A government official at a high position attended an online meeting which brought together YouTube content producers and social media personalities to confirm that no official declaration had been made about creating an international stabilisation force (ISF), its operational zone or its particular goals. The official explained that Pakistan participates in the Gaza Peace Board through reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, but this does not establish an ISF. He said a firm "red line" for the army was that Pakistani troops would not be used against Hamas or Palestinians and would not participate in any effort to disarm Hamas. The report showed Pakistan became a member of the Gaza Peace Board in Davos together with twenty other nations, but this move received criticism from opposition groups. The US plan for security management includes an ISF, which Major General Jasper Jeffers from the United States would lead. ("Parliament to decide Pakistani troop deployment to Gaza: security sources," *The Express Tribune*, 24 January 2026)

Pakistan, Myanmar pledge closer cooperation in tourism and cultural exchanges

On 27 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan and Myanmar agreed to expand bilateral cooperation across multiple sectors, including religious tourism, people-to-people contact, and cultural exchanges, during delegation-level talks in Islamabad between Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Myanmar Foreign Minister Than Swe. Both sides reviewed the state of bilateral relations, acknowledged a prolonged gap in high-level exchanges, and committed to sustained, structured engagement to revitalise ties rooted in shared anti-colonial histories and long-standing friendship. Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's support for peace, stability, and inclusive governance in Myanmar ahead of its forthcoming elections, while Than Swe highlighted the approaching 77th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2026 and expressed hope for identifying new avenues of multi-sectoral cooperation to deepen engagement and mutual benefit. ("Pakistan, Myanmar vow cooperation in religious tourism, cultural exchanges," *The Express Tribune*, 26 January, 2026)

Pakistan, Ghana hold first formal bilateral talks; reaffirm commitment to strengthen ties

On 28 January, *Dawn* reported that in a press release by the Foreign Office (FO), Pakistan and Ghana held their first formal bilateral talks and signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). The talks, led by Pakistan's Additional Foreign Secretary Hamid Asghar Khan and Ghana's Chief Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, resulted in the signing of two Memoranda of Understanding: one institutionalising regular BPCs and another linking Pakistan's Foreign Service Academy with the Ghana Foreign Service Institute. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening ties. They agreed to expand cooperation across a wide range of sectors, including politics, trade, defence, tourism, culture, health, education, and information technology, and to schedule the next BPC round in Islamabad next year. ("Pakistan, Ghana hold first formal bilateral talks; reaffirm commitment to strengthen ties," *Dawn*, 28 January 2026)

President Zardari and his UAE counterpart discuss ways to further deepen ties

On 28 January, *Dawn* reported that President Asif Ali Zardari, who is currently undertaking a four-day official visit to the Gulf country, met his UAE counterpart while being accompanied by a high-level delegation. The two sides reviewed the full spectrum of cooperation and explored new opportunities in trade, investment, energy, infrastructure, technology, and people-to-people exchanges, while also exchanging views on regional and international developments and reaffirming support for peace, stability, and sustainable development. President Zardari welcomed the UAE president's recent visit to Pakistan and appreciated Abu Dhabi's continued support, while separately engaging with UAE Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan on promoting dialogue, inclusivity, and interfaith harmony. The president also met AD Ports Group CEO Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi, praising the group's investments in Pakistan's maritime and logistics sector, particularly at Karachi Port, and welcoming its Islamabad representative office and collaboration on digital and customs facilitation, underscoring the growing economic dimension of the Pakistan–UAE strategic partnership. ("President Zardari, UAE counterpart discuss way to further deepen ties," *Dawn*, 28 January 2026)

Pakistan and Australia eye mining partnership

On 28 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan and Australia discussed the possibility of an

Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for structured, long-term cooperation in Pakistan's mining and mineral sector, proposed by Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik during his meeting with the new Australian High Commissioner (AHC) to Pakistan, Timothy Kane. It builds on a previous Australian proposal made through former AHC Neil Hawkins for collaboration between Australian universities, mining firms, and Pakistani institutions to provide specialised training programmes in modern mining techniques and services and enhance local expertise and support Pakistan's mining sector development and reflects growing Australian interest in Pakistan's mineral potential, particularly in the Tethyan Belt. The two sides reviewed cooperation in mining and gemstones, including Australian involvement in the Reko Diq copper-gold project, originally identified through collaboration between the Geological Survey of Pakistan and BHP Billiton, and now being developed by Barrick Gold. Discussions also covered gemstone sector formalisation, Australian participation in the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum, and the strategic importance of copper and gold for the global energy transition, with both sides agreeing to deepen bilateral cooperation for mutual benefit. ("Pakistan, Australia eye mining partnership," *Dawn*, 28 January 2026)

Pakistan and Sri Lanka launch digital partnership

On 29 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan and Sri Lanka established a Joint Working Group on IT and Digital. During the 13th Session of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) held in Colombo, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral economic relations further and expanding cooperation across multiple sectors. Discussions were held on expanding industrial collaboration and increasing bilateral trade, with Sri Lanka inviting Pakistani pharmaceutical companies to explore investment opportunities. Both countries expressed consensus on strengthening cooperation in the SME sector, recognising its vital role in economic growth and employment generation. Significant progress was made in the agriculture sector, particularly the export of Sri Lankan pineapple and avocado to Pakistan, and the livestock sector, including discussions on meat and seed trade. ("Pakistan, Sri Lanka launch digital partnership," *Dawn,* 29 January 2026)

Pakistan and China launch e-mining platform, sign several MoUs

On 29 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan reaffirmed China's central role in transforming its mineral sector beyond extraction at the Pak-China Mineral Cooperation Forum, signing multiple memoranda of understanding (MoUs) aimed at tapping an estimated USD 8 trillion in mineral resources. The two sides launched the Pak-China E-Mining Platform to enhance information sharing, transparency and project coordination, and signed MoUs involving Wah Nobel, JW Corporation, MCCT International, Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation, POWERCHINA International and Pak China Investment Company to promote digital trade, investment facilitation, technical cooperation and joint development. ("Pakistan, China launch e-mining platform, sign several MoUs," *Dawn*, 29 January 2026)

Pakistan reaffirms support for Palestinian statehood at UN Security Council

On 29 January, *Dawn* reported that on Wednesday, the UN Security Council held an open debate addressing the Palestinian issue, where Pakistan showed support for the establishment based on pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, stating that Palestine is an independent, sovereign, and contiguous state. Furthermore, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, emphasised the widespread civilian casualties caused by Israeli aggression in Gaza over the past two years, stating that the occupation is marked by dispossession, repression, and the denial of Palestinians' inalienable rights. Additionally, the ambassador welcomed renewed diplomatic engagement with the High-Level Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and President Donald Trump's Peace Plan, endorsed by Security Council resolution 2803, with hopes of the second phase of the plan helping consolidate the ceasefire and enable recovery and reconstruction, while providing humanitarian assistance and preparing a credible ground for the political process towards Palestinian self-determination. ("At the UN Security Council, Pakistan reaffirms support for Palestinian statehood," *Dawn*, 29 January 2026)

Bangladesh & Pakistan resume flights after 14 years

On 30 January, *Dawn* reported that after a 14-year-long hiatus, the first direct flight between Pakistan and Bangladesh landed at Jinnah International Airport on Thursday night, marking a new chapter in the relationship between the two countries. Sindh Governor

Kamran Tessori further stated that cooperation between the two would extend to other sectors. ("Bangladesh-Pakistan flights resume after 14 years," *Dawn*, 30 January 2026)

Pakistan opposes the use of force against Iran

On 30 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan, through multiple official channels including the Prime Minister and the Foreign Office (FO), strongly opposed the use of force against Iran amid US Naval buildup in the Gulf. Pakistan reiterated the importance of finding solutions to the issue via diplomatic means. In response, Iran's ambassador to Pakistan, Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddam, said that Tehran would accept dialogue if it resulted in a win-win outcome. Pakistan's position was articulated through official engagements and public statements, including a call between PM Sharif and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. ("Pakistan opposes any use of force against Iran," *Dawn*, 30 January 2026; "'Sanctions harm economic, cultural rights of Iranians'," *Dawn*, 30 January 2026)

Pakistan, Turkiye military chiefs review regional security, expand defence cooperation

On 30 January, *Dawn* reported that the Chief of Defence Forces and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir met Selcuk Bayraktaroglu at General Headquarters to discuss the regional and global security landscape and prospects for strengthening bilateral defence and military cooperation, according to Inter-Services Public Relations. The report said the Turkish general was received with a guard of honour on arrival. The two nations showed contentment about the current state of Pakistan-Turkiye relations, while they emphasised the need to work more closely together for defence cooperation. The statement added that Munir highlighted the longstanding brotherly relationship between Pakistan and Turkiye, rooted in shared history, mutual trust, and people-to-people ties, and appreciated the cooperation extended by the Turkish armed forces. Bayraktaroglu expressed gratitude to Pakistan for the welcome before he commended the Pakistan Armed Forces for their professional conduct and confirmed Turkiye's commitment to enhancing military ties through training programs, combined military operations and equipment development. ("CDF Munir, Turkiye's chief of general staff discuss regional security landscape and defence cooperation," *Dawn*, 30 January 2026)

SOCIETY

Basant to be celebrated only in Lahore and not in the rest of Punjab

On 31 December, *Dawn* reported that on Wednesday, the Punjab government announced it had no plans to celebrate the Basant festival across the province, but instead, it would only be celebrated in Lahore. For 18 years, it was not celebrated, following the passage of the Punjab Regulation of Kite Flying Bill of 2025 by the provincial assembly on 24 December. The Home Secretary, Dr Ahmad Javed Qazi, to the cabinet committee stated: "The provincial cabinet had allowed limited Basant on February 6, 7, and 8 in Lahore only." Meanwhile, the divisional commissioner said: "People should watch their neighbourhoods and ensure that no illegality is committed and that no one is injured … in the best interest of the Basant festival". ("Basant to be celebrated only in Lahore; no plans for festival in rest of Punjab: home dept," *Dawn*, 31 December 2025)

More markets, shops sealed across Karachi as drive against 'encroachments' continues

On 06 January, *Dawn* reported that authorities in Karachi have expanded their anti-encroachment drive, sealing more markets and shops across the city, including the auto spare-parts market near Tibet Centre and the motorcycle market on Akbar Road. On Monday, 86 shops off M.A. Jinnah Road were sealed after officials said vehicles parked for roadside repairs were obstructing traffic, while the Akbar Road motorcycle market remained shut for a third consecutive day, affecting at least 115 shops. Officials said traders had been warned multiple times to clear encroachments from footpaths and roads. Under new measures, shopkeepers must submit affidavits pledging compliance with standard operating procedures before their businesses are reopened in phases. Authorities warned that future violations could lead to arrests and FIRs. Over the past three days, nearly 200 eateries have also been sealed citywide. ("More markets, shops sealed across Karachi as drive against 'encroachments' continues," *Dawn*, 06 January 2026)

Lahore tightens Basant rules, bans kite flying in parks

On 23 January, *Dawn* reported that the parks and horticulture authority has banned kite flying in Lahore's public parks and greenbelts during the three-day Basant festival (6–8 February), citing risks to trees and park infrastructure. The parks stay open for visitors, but security personnel stay alert, while zonal directors need to enforce all rules throughout the entire area. The report added that the district administration will monitor Basant through drones and Lahore Safe City Authority cameras via a control room at the deputy commissioner's office. Kite flying will be allowed only at designated grounds and notified rooftops, oversized kites will be prohibited, and kite material will be sold only through registered dealers. By 22 January, 2,437 manufacturers, sellers, traders and associations had applied for registration, with most approvals already issued. ("Kite flying to remain banned in Lahore parks over Basant," *Dawn*, 23 January 2026)

AI/CYBER

National Assembly discusses rising cyber scams

On 17 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan's National Assembly discussed the sharp rise in cybercrimes, with lawmakers highlighting widespread fraud involving fake traffic challans and deceptive messages posing as banks, educational institutions and telecom companies. Members warned that some victims, after responding to such messages, later faced serious legal consequences, including blasphemy and anti-state charges. Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry informed the House that the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) received over 150,000 complaints last year, including more than 81,000 related to financial crimes, leading to 1,095 arrests. He said reforms were underway to strengthen the NCCIA's capacity and that telecom operators had been directed to tighten SIM security measures. ("Rising cyber scams echo in NA," *Dawn*, 17 January 2026)

JUDICIARY

Peshawar High Court declares the right to a fair trial applicable to all proceedings

On 03 January, *Dawn* reported that the Peshawar High Court has held that the right to fair trial and due process applies to all statutes and proceedings, including summary trials, even where the law is silent. Justice Mohammad Naeem Anwar rejected the plea of the provincial government against a session judge's verdict to set aside the order of a special magistrate to convict a sugar hoarder. On 12 July 2023, the sessions judge accepted the appeal of convict Malik Jan and ordered the refund of PKR 200,00 received from him, as a fine for hoarding huge quantities of sugar in his godown. Discussing the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) Price Control and Prevention of Profiteering and Hoarding Act of 1977, the bench declared that, likewise, Article 10-A of the Constitution guaranteed the fundamental right to a fair trial and due process, and it applied to every statute and proceeding, even when the law was silent. The Court said that even when procedural law is silent, the minimum standard of fairness under Article 10-A must be observed. ("Peshawar High Court declares right to fair trial applicable to all proceedings," *Dawn*, 03 January, 2026)

Law Minister lauds 27th Amendment as 'historic step'

On 09 January, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan's Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar defended the 27th Constitutional Amendment as a historic measure to strengthen the country's federal structure, rejecting criticism that it undermines judicial independence. Speaking at a book launch at the Supreme Court Bar Association, Tarar said the amendment's key achievement was the establishment of a Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) with equal provincial representation. He argued this addressed long-standing concerns over imbalance in the Supreme Court, where judges from larger provinces, particularly Punjab, dominated due to the size of their high courts. Responding to Amnesty International's criticism, Tarar noted that the FCC was envisaged in the 2006 Charter of Democracy and emerged from concerns over the Supreme Court's expansive suo motu powers. He maintained that the FCC would help address provincial grievances and reinforce federalism. ("Law minister defends 27th Amendment as 'historic step'," *Dawn*, 09 January 2026)

Federal Constitutional Court hearings to begin at FSC building as caseload pressures mount

On 10 January, *Dawn* reported that the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC), which had been temporarily relocated by the law ministry to the Federal Shariat Court building, is set to begin hearing cases from 12 January. FCC is also considering setting up the registry branches in all four provinces of the country. These registry branches will facilitate the filing of cases. However, a presidential order is yet to be issued for the establishment of these registry branches. Also, establishing the permanent infrastructure for the FCC remains on the priority list of the government, as the load on the FCC has already increased, with 22,910 cases transferred from the Supreme Court to it. On 12 January, the Judicial Commission of Pakistan will hold a meeting; it may also take up the formulation of rules for appointing FCC Judge, as to date only seven judges have been appointed to the FCC, with plans to increase its strength to 13. ("FCC to begin hearings at Shariat court from 12th," *Dawn*, 10 January 2026)

FCC takes up first case at new premises

On 13 January, *Dawn* reported that on Monday, the Federal Constitutional Court finally settled into its newly renovated building on Constitution Avenue, where FCC Chief Justice Aminuddin Khan presided over a bench to resume hearing challenges to the imposition of the super tax inside the refurbished Courtroom No. 1 Justice Aminuddin Khan inaugurated the new court building before the hearing in a simple ceremony attended by several justices. The new building has been completely revamped with new furniture and fixtures, replacing the older seating, and features the installation of a modern audio system to facilitate lawyers and litigants. ("FCC takes up first case at new premises," *Dawn*, 13 January 2026)

JCP confirms six additional Peshawar High Court judges

On 15 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) approved the confirmation of six additional judges of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) as permanent judges during a meeting held at the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Yahya Afridi. Those confirmed include Justices Muhammad Tariq Afridi, Abdul Fayaz, Salahuddin, Sadiq Ali, Syed Mudassar Ameer and Qazi Jawad Ehsanullah. The commission also granted six-month tenure extensions to four additional PHC judges, Justices Farah Jamshed, Inamullah Khan, Sabitullah Khan and Aurangzeb. The decisions were taken by majority vote after reviewing evaluation materials and antecedents. The meeting, like previous JCP sessions, was marked by the absence of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) representatives. The approvals form part of a broader series of confirmations and extensions across high courts nationwide, concluded in recent JCP meetings. ("JCP confirms six additional Peshawar High Court judges," *The Express Tribune*, 15 January, 2026)

SC upholds appellate jurisdiction in rent and family matters

On 21 January, *Dawn* reported that a three-judge Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi affirmed SC's appellate hierarchy under the 27th amendment. The bench overruled the office's objection, which contended that with the insertion of Article 175 F (1) (c) by the 27th amendment, the high court functioned as the final judicial forum in rent matters. The SC bench held that civil petitions concerning rent and family matters, previously adjudicated by the high courts under Article 199, are maintainable before it. ("Supreme Court upholds appellate jurisdiction in rent and family cases," *Dawn*, 21 January 2026)

FCC reserves verdict for ban on imports from India

On 22 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) reserved its ruling regarding the federal government's challenge to the Lahore High Court's (LHC) directions on the import ban from India. A three-judge bench, led by Justice Aamer Farooq, reviewed an appeal from the commerce ministry against the LHC's 26 January 2024 ruling, which upheld the legality of statutory regulatory orders (SROs) that banned imports, including books, from India, citing national security and foreign policy. Although the LHC declared the SROs valid, it directed the federal government to appoint an officer to review the policy, which the FCC is now evaluating for possible judicial overreach. Government representatives argued that the LHC exceeded its jurisdiction by interfering in executive policy and that trade restrictions fall within the executive domain under the Constitution. The FCC has reserved its judgment following the arguments presented.
("FCC reserves verdict on case related to ban on imports from India," *Dawn*, 22 January, 2026)

Court cancels Najaf Hameed's bail in FIA land fraud case

On 27 January, *Dawn* reported that a special court in Islamabad cancelled the bail of Najaf Hameed, brother of former ISI director general Lt Gen (retd) Faiz Hameed, and ordered his arrest in a fraud case. Special Judge Central Shahrukh Arjumand decided after he announced his decision to reserve judgment on the FIA request to revoke bail privileges. Najaf was not arrested immediately because he was absent from court when the verdict was read. The court granted his request for jail release until his lawyers showed proof of his agreement with the accuser, but the FIA team opposed this request because they believed the 31 December case involved fraudulent property documents for land theft, which needed court proceedings. ("Court cancels bail of Faiz Hameed's brother in fraud case," *Dawn*, 27 January 2026)

Arshad Sharif's wife pleads FCC to continue suo motu proceedings

On 29 January, *Dawn* reported that Somiya Arshad, one of the widows of journalist Arshad Sharif, strongly urged the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) to continue the suo motu proceedings and form a commission with international observers to probe the Arshad Sharif case. Somiya Arshad also requested the FCC to share the Special Joint Investigation Team report with the family and to ensure action under the MLA agreement. Arshad Sharif, an investigative Pakistani journalist and a critic of Pakistan's military establishment, was shot dead by Kenyan police in 2022 on the outskirts of the national capital, Nairobi. Earlier, the case was heard by an SC bench in 2022, and now transferred to the FCC under the 27th constitutional amendment act. Recently, the FCC hinted at closing the case, noting that a mutual legal assistance agreement had been signed between Kenya and Pakistan. Earlier, the Additional Attorney General also informed the court that Pakistan's investigation had been completed and that red notices had been issued and sent to Kenyan authorities for further action. ("FCC urged not to close Arshad Sharif case," *Dawn*, 29 January 2026)

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

The Afghan border closure brings down terrorist violence in Pakistan

On 01 January, *Dawn* reported that after it closed its border to Afghanistan on 11 October, Pakistan has recorded a significant drop in cross-border terrorist attacks and violence-linked fatalities. According to the data collected by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), the terrorist attacks went down by 17 per cent in December, which was preceded by a nine per cent decline in November. By nearly four per cent and 19 per cent, respectively, in November and December, terrorist violence-linked fatalities among civilians and security officials fell in the last quarter of 2025. ("Afghan border closure brings down terrorist violence in Pakistan," *Dawn*, 01 January 2026)

Pakistan and Afghanistan agree to form a joint committee to restore trade

On 06 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to form a 13-member Joint Committee aimed at easing tensions and restoring trade. The committee will hold negotiations at the Torkham border and will consist of six members from Pakistan and seven members from Afghanistan. Due to recent heightened tensions, the trade crossings between the two nations have remained closed since 12 October 2025. The main objective of the committee will be to reopen trade routes immediately to stop further losses to traders on both sides. ("Pakistan, Afghanistan set up joint committee for talks at Torkham border", *The Express Tribune*, 06 January 2026)

Pakistan army flags Afghanistan's involvement in major terror incidents in 2025

On 07 January, *Dawn* reported that the Pakistan Army claimed that in 2025, Afghanistan was involved in major "high-impact" terror incidents in Pakistan. During a press conference, the Inter-Service Public Relations Director General maintained that Pakistan's fight against terrorism has been ongoing for more than two decades, and 2025 remains a landmark and consequential year in the fight against terrorism. He further highlighted that in 2025 World acknowledged Pakistan's stance, particularly that Afghanistan has become a "base for terrorist operations." "The hubs of Fitna al-Khawarij and Fitna-e-Hindustan are in Afghanistan," he said, alleging that all major terrorist organisations targeting Pakistan were based and being supported in Kabul. "This war against terrorism is the war of the entire nation." ("DG ISPR says Afghans involved in major terrorist incidents in Pakistan in 2025," *Dawn*, 07 January 2026)

Pakistan worst-affected by Taliban's takeover of Kabul, says ICG

On 09 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the Taliban's 2021 takeover of Afghanistan affected Pakistan the worst, as per a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG). The main cause for the escalation is the Afghan Taliban's refusal to act against Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which Pakistan blames for a surge in militant violence that has killed over 600 security personnel last year alone. In retaliation, Pakistan has carried out cross-border airstrikes, including its first-ever strike on Kabul, and stated that it would strike again if attacks that are traced back to Afghanistan continue. The report places Afghanistan-Pakistan tensions among the top 10 major conflicts to watch in 2026, and proceeds to warn that Pakistan's already tense relations with Afghanistan could unravel after recent tensions. More broadly, the ICG states that the world is entering an increasingly violent era. ("Pakistan worst-hit by Taliban takeover of Kabul: International Crisis Group," *Dawn*, 09 January, 2026)

FO says terrorism from Afghan soil the sole bilateral issue with Kabul

On 08 January, as reported by *Dawn*, the Foreign Office (FO) said that terrorism supported by Kabul is the only bilateral issue between the two countries. During a weekly briefing in Islamabad, FO spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said, "We do not have any bilateral dispute with Afghanistan except for this one issue. Terrorism emanating from Afghanistan is a major issue. So we need verifiable assurances, commitments that these acts will be stopped." Furthermore, he reiterated Pakistan's long-standing demand for Kabul to address the increasing number of terror attacks and make an effort to neutralise the situation. The spokesperson further stated that Pakistan does not wish to be hostile towards Kabul and is instead requesting a written assurance from the Afghan Taliban that the neighbouring country's provinces would not be used by Tehreek-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP). ("Only 'bilateral dispute' with Kabul is terrorism emanating from Afghan soil: FO," *Dawn*, 08 January 2026)

KP traders warn prolonged border closure is costing billions

On 12 January, *Dawn* reported that business leaders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said the Pakistan-Afghanistan border closure for over three months has caused losses worth billions of rupees, hitting exports, transport businesses and government revenue. Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber senior vice-president Ziaul Haq Sarhadi and Sarhad Chamber representative Manzoor Ellahi said KP is disproportionately affected because over 90 per cent of Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan pass through KP customs stations, mainly via Torkham. They estimated KP's export losses at around PKR 2.5 billion and revenue losses at nearly PKR 2.5 billion in the first five months of FY2025-26, warning of spoilage of perishable goods and expiry of medicines and raw materials. They also cited a report saying bilateral trade fell 53 per cent year-on-year to USD 594 million in the first half of FY2025-26 from USD 1.26 billion, largely due to border closures. ("KP business community raises alarm over prolonged border closure," *Dawn*, 12 January 2026)

Nearly one million Afghans sent back as repatriation continues

On 15 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that Pakistan authorities managed to repatriate around 1 million Afghans back to their country. It consists of 2,30,470 holders of Proof of Registration, 6,86,772 undocumented Afghan nationals and 71,570 holders of Afghan Citizen cards. The process of repatriation continues, particularly through the Torkham border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. ("Around 1 million illegal Afghans repatriated," *The Express Tribune*, 15 January 2026)

UN agencies flag increase in detention of Afghan nationals in January

On 17 January, *Dawn* reported that arrest and detention of Afghan nationals had increased by 18 per cent in the first ten days of January, with Chaghi, Pishin and Islamabad accounting for the highest number of detention and arrests. The UN refugee agency, UNHCR and the UN Migration Office jointly released this 'flash update' on the arrest and detention of Afghan Nationals. A total of 130,999 Afghan nationals were arrested and detained from 15 September 2025 to 10 January 2026. The International Federation of Red Crescent also published an analysis. It reported that over 5.2 million refugees (deportees and returnees) from Iran and Pakistan. ("Arrest detention of Afghans increase 18pc in Jan UN IOM," *Dawn*, 17 January 2026)

Pak-Afghan trade blockade forced by Kabul's failure to act against terrorists, says PM Sharif

On 21 January, *Dawn* reported that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan was "forced" to impose a complete blockade on trade with Afghanistan due to the interim Afghan government's failure to act against terrorist groups operating from its territory. Speaking at a national workshop in Islamabad, the prime minister said the closure, in place since mid-October 2025 following border clashes, came after repeated talks on counter-terrorism, which were mediated by Turkiye and Qatar, failed to yield results. He cited Kabul's lack of commitment to rein in groups such as the TTP and BLA, referencing obligations under the 2020 Doha Accords, and warned that continued inaction had contributed to a resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan after 2018, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. While acknowledging concerns raised by Pakistani exporters, PM Shehbaz said the blockade should not have occurred and stressed that peace and stability were in the shared interest of both countries. ("'They forced us': PM Shehbaz says Pak-Afghan trade blockade result of Kabul's inaction against terrorists," *Dawn*, 21 January 2026)

Hundreds of Pakistani students stuck in Afghanistan; return hinges on embassy verification

On 24 January, *Dawn* reported that due to the closure of borders between Pakistan and Afghanistan as a result of the armed escalation over the last few months, hundreds of Pakistani students remain stranded in Afghanistan. Taliban authorities have agreed to allow them to cross the border, subject to certain conditions. These conditions include getting official verification from the Pakistan embassy or consulate. However, Pakistani diplomats are reluctant to verify the details and approach the Taliban authorities, as Pakistani officials are directed not to make any official communication with the Taliban authorities. Students also appealed to PM Shehbaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari to look into the matter. ("Around 200 Pakistani students stuck in Afghanistan seek to return," *Dawn*, 24 January 2026)

ON INDIA

NA Speaker and Indian FM meet in Dhaka

On 31 December, as reported by *Dawn*, the Speaker of the National Assembly (NA), Ayaz Sadiq, and Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar shook hands in Dhaka during the Speaker's visit for former Bangladeshi prime minister Khaleda Zia's funeral. This is the first high-level contact between Indian and Pakistani officials since the military conflict in May last year. "Indian External Minister Dr S Jaishankar approached the Speaker [of the] National Assembly and shaked hands," a press release from the NA Secretariat read. ("NA Speaker Sadiq, Indian FM Jaishankar shake hands in Dhaka in first high-level contact since May conflict," *Dawn*, 31 December 2025)

India and Pakistan swap key lists in accordance with 1988 agreement

On 02 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that India and Pakistan continued their confidence-building measures by exchanging lists of their respective nuclear installations and prisoners, in accordance with the 1988 Agreement on the prohibition of attacks against nuclear installations and facilities, even as broader bilateral relations remain strained. Concerns persist over New Delhi's actions on shared water resources. They handed over the lists to their respective high commissioners in New Delhi and Islamabad. While limited diplomatic protocols have continued, Islamabad has voiced concerns over the alleged violation of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), particularly in light of reports of New Delhi approving the Dulhasti Stage-II hydro project on the Chenab River in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK). ("Pakistan, India swap key lists after pulling back from brink," *The Express Tribune*, 02 January 2026)

Pakistan's Indus Waters Commissioner denies legal credibility of India's abeyance of the IWT

On 4 January, *Dawn* reported Pakistan Commissioner for Indus Waters Syed Muhammad Mehar Ali Shah's statement that India's claim of placing the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in "abeyance" has no legal basis and that the treaty remains fully in force under international law. During a television programme, Shah argued that "As far as holding the treaty in abeyance is concerned, the word 'abeyance' is not recognised under international treaty law. It is a coined term, because we believe India understands that it cannot suspend, breach or terminate the treaty." He alleged that India's continued non-cooperation within the rules-based framework was "alarming" and had compelled Pakistan to adopt a formal, calibrated legal and diplomatic response, adding that Pakistan's steps were being taken cautiously and strictly through formal channels. He added that the treaty was deliberately crafted to endure political tensions, with a dispute-resolution mechanism designed to prevent unilateral actions. Shah further warned that any move by India to reduce water flows to Pakistan "would be considered an act of war." "There is no fixed amount of water allocated to Pakistan," he said, adding that the waters should be available to Pakistan based on the "natural pattern of the western rivers." Citing Article 12 of the treaty, Shah highlighted that four provisions allow for changes to be made with the passage of time, asserting the need for mutual agreements, in the absence of which the pact will remain fully enforced, stressing that "it clearly says that no one party can unilaterally change it."

Shah also argued that India possessed a "geographic advantage" with the eastern rivers of Beas, Ravi and Sutlej, but had previously stated that "When we gave the three eastern rivers to India, we have been facing consequences since the beginning of the treaty. The Sutlej is always dry, barring the flooding season. Ravi is dry." Recalling past water disputes, Shah observed that while the IWT has no external guarantor, it contains its own dispute-settlement mechanism. The water commissioner added that a core principle of the treaty is that the natural flow of the western rivers must not be altered. "India was allowed to use the western rivers for hydroelectric power generation only in line with the pact guidelines. If there is a violation, then any party can take the matter to a third forum," Shah said. ("India's 'abeyance' claim has no standing under treaty law: Pakistan commissioner for Indus Waters," *Dawn*, 4 January 2024)

PROVINCES

Gulf Plaza fire death toll rises as rescue enters fourth day

On 22 January, as reported by *The Express Tribune*, the death toll from the tragic fire in Karachi rose to 52. The inquiry committee formed by the Sindh chief secretary would examine all angles, including potential sabotage, in light of a tragic fire incident at RJ Mall, which revealed gaps in fire safety audits. Karachi Commissioner Hasan Naqvi emphasised collective institutional responsibility rather than individual accountability, asserting that those who take risks bear fundamental responsibility, and the inquiry will provide a comprehensive picture. He confirmed that 31 bodies have been recovered from the scene, though some remain unconfirmed, and noted that the building, while damaged, is not deemed unsafe. Naqvi stressed the need for forward-looking preventive measures, accurate building maps, and compliance with international fire safety standards. While no evidence of sabotage has been found, investigations into the circumstances surrounding the fire continue. Missing persons have increased to 86, with ongoing rescue operations complicated by lingering smoke and heat. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan expressed grave concern about the incident, citing failures in urban governance and building safety. It called for an independent investigation and an overhaul of fire safety standards. The report highlighted systemic issues that allowed the fire to escalate and disproportionately affected the working class, urging the establishment of effective local governance for better implementation of safety measures. ("Death toll in Gul Plaza fire rises to 30 as rescue enters fourth day," *The Express Tribune*, 22 January 2026)

Gul Plaza fire toll rises to 67 as search continues

On 22 January, *Dawn* reported that the death toll from Karachi's Gul Plaza fire rose to 67 as rescuers continued searching the wreckage of the gutted shopping mall on M.A. Jinnah Road. Police surgeon Dr Summaiya Syed released a list of 67 deceased, with only seven identified, while the Sindh health department said post-mortems had been conducted. The officials reported that they found 30 dead bodies inside a single shop, which was located on the mezzanine level. The Rescue 1122 team employed specialised cutting tools together with thermal imaging equipment to perform their work because they needed to handle the extreme temperatures, building deterioration and cooling process. The construction process received criticism from family members because it took too long, while some relatives demonstrated their discontent by standing outside the construction area. Dawn reported that the initial investigation results showed the fire started at an artificial-flower shop located on the first floor when a match caused flammable substances to burn. SBCA started conducting fire safety evaluations throughout Karachi while announcing that buildings without proper compliance would face building closure. ("Death toll of deadly fire at Karachi's Gul Plaza reaches 67," *Dawn*, 22 January 2026)

Gul Plaza death toll reaches 71 as recovery operation enters final phase

On 23 January, *Dawn* reported that the death toll from Karachi's Gul Plaza fire rose to 71 as rescuers recovered more human remains from the rubble of the gutted shopping centre on M.A. Jinnah Road. Police Surgeon Dr Summaiya Syed issued the updated list and said only 16 victims had been identified so far, including nine through DNA testing; authorities have collected 49 DNA samples, and warned the final toll can only be confirmed once all remains are matched and identified. The fire, which erupted on the night of 17 January and took nearly two days to extinguish, left the ground-plus-three-storey building in ruins, with sections collapsed. The south deputy commissioner said 77 people were reported missing and described the search as in its "final stages", while Rescue 1122 said teams were still working through 10–15 per cent of the site that had been inaccessible, including the ground floor where the blaze reportedly started. ("Death toll from Karachi's Gul Plaza inferno reaches 71; search operation in 'final stages'," *Dawn*, 23 January 2026)

Snowfall paralyses KP as Chitral avalanche kills nine

On 24 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that heavy snowfall disrupted daily life across Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), cutting off roads, knocking out electricity and communication networks, and triggering an avalanche in Lower Chitral that killed nine people. The avalanche hit a house in Drosh Arandu's Domel area, killing four women and five men and critically injuring a child. Rescue 1122, the district administration, local residents and the Pakistan army retrieved the bodies despite harsh conditions and shifted the injured child to the hospital. The districts of Shangla and Batagram experienced complete power and internet disruptions, which forced micro-hydel stations to stop their operations and blocked all roads that connected their districts. The city of Abbottabad experienced its first snowfall since 2008, while the Thandiyani and Galliyat areas received multiple feet of snow, which made it difficult to move around. Rescue 1122 said over 100 personnel and 23 vehicles were deployed in Tirah Valley, rescuing stranded people and vehicles, amid difficulties linked to displacement and blocked routes. The weather service issued a warning about upcoming rain and snowfall, which would start on Sunday evening and continue through Tuesday, because of a new western weather system, while advising people to stay home unless necessary. ("Snow cripples K-P, 9 dead in Chitral," *The Express Tribune*, 24 January 2026)

Karachi police forms special team to probe Gul Plaza tragedy

On 26 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that the Karachi police constituted a five-member special investigation team on Monday to probe the Gul Plaza tragedy and arrest those responsible for the incident. According to a notification issued by South Deputy Inspector General of Police Syed Asad Raza, the special team will be headed by the City Superintendent of police. The search operation at Karachi's fire-hit Gul Plaza building is nearing completion, and the structure will be sealed after a final inspection, South Deputy Commissioner Javed Nabi Khoso said earlier today, as the death toll rose to 73. The FIR states that severe negligence and carelessness were shown at Gul Plaza, where no safety measures were in place. It says the lights were switched off during the fire, creating difficulties for people inside the building, while several gates were found closed. A technical investigation team formed by the Sindh government inspected Gul Plaza. They examined the building, especially the pillars, to assess the safety. They are to submit a report to the Sindh government. A technical team from Lahore also visited Gul Plaza on Sunday to conduct investigations as the rescue operation entered its eighth day. ("Karachi police form 5-member special team to probe Gul Plaza tragedy, arrest culprits," *The Express Tribune*, 26 January 2026)

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif terms Tirah Valley displacement "routine"

On 27 January, *The Express Tribune* reported that the recent displacement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Tirah Valley was a part of a routine seasonal migration, and as stated by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, it was not a military operation in the area as the federal and provincial disagreements kept escalating. Moreover, while thousands of families have relocated due to unrest, Asif characterised the situation as misinterpreted, emphasising that migration occurs annually due to harsh winter conditions, while acknowledging previous negotiations involving the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which did result in substantial migration, further emphasising the army's limited role in the displacement. The defence minister further went on to criticise the provincial government's management, highlighting infrastructural neglect and alleging that the situation had escalated for political gain. ("Defence Minister Khawaja Asif addresses press conference on Tirah: terms displacement 'routine' seasonal migration," *The Express Tribune*, 27 January 2026)

NIAS PAKISTAN READER TEAM

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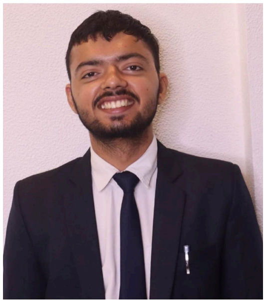

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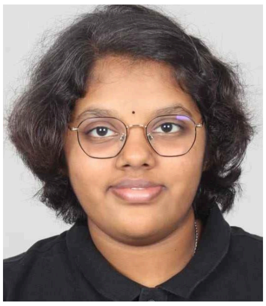

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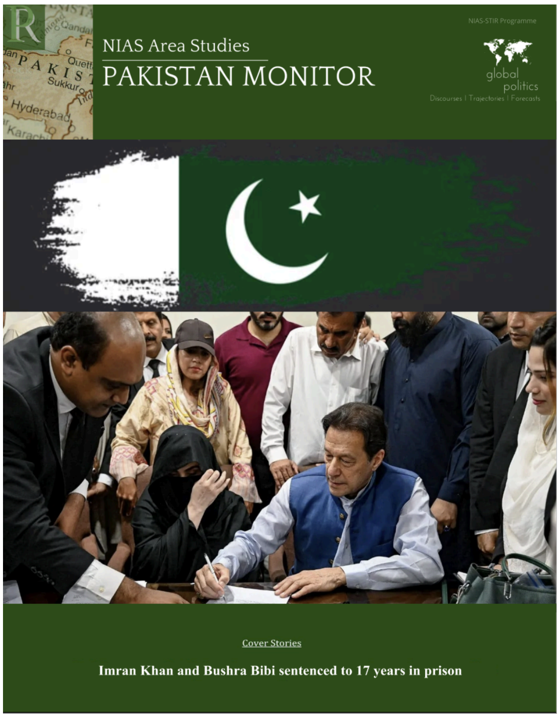
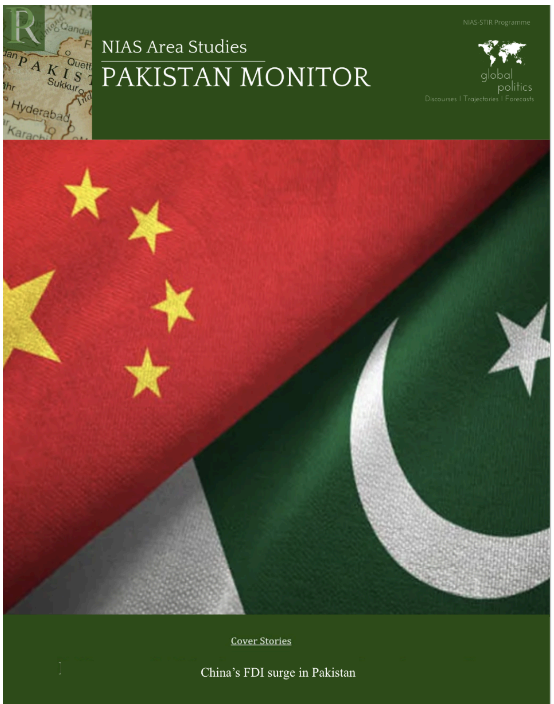
PREVIOUS EDITIONS



Pakistan Monitor#21, Vol.03, No.1, January 2026

Pakistan Monitor#19-20, Vol.03, No.11-12, December 2025



Pakistan Monitor#18, Vol.02, No.9, September 2025

Pakistan Monitor#17, Vol.02, No.08, August 2025