



Sania greets 2025 with son whom she calls her 'forever date'

Friday 03 January 2025

# Economic development directly linked with political stability: PM

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday underlined that the economic development was directly linked with political stability as the strength of a country's economy was deeply rooted in its political framework.

Chairing a meeting of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the prime minister said the country's macroeconomic indicators had significantly improved due to the untiring efforts of the economic team, expressing his confidence that the year 2025 will bring

prosperity and growth in the country.

For the first time after 2018, the inflation rate has been eased down to 4.1%, foreign remittances have posted increase of 34%, exports have also jumped from \$4 billion to \$12.5 billion," PM Shehbaz said adding that the policy rate which was now at 13% had space of further 8% keeping in view the inflation rate.

As regards, foreign investment, the prime minister emphasized that the MoUs worth billions of dollars had already been signed with Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE.



He said having achieved economic stability, the country had now entered the growth stage. "If we want to achieve the economic development,

then we will have to focus on export-led growth ...and we have no other option"

The prime minister also appreciate the efforts of Federal Board of Revenue and the economic team for collecting additional Rs 72 billion under ADR (advance-to-tax ratio) due to which the government's target of tax revenue for December 2024 had almost been achieved.

The prime minister noted that due to the faceless interaction facility, 39% time duration of container inspection had been reduced while the businessmen got relief of 89%.

# Pakistan concerned over Indian extra-territorial killings in country

HUMA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office has expressed serious concern over Indian extra-territorial and extra-judicial killings inside Pakistan.

At her weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said this is not just limited to Pakistan. India's network of extra-territorial killings and abductions has now gone global and other countries are also concerned about India's extra-territorial activities. Mumtaz Baloch said

Pakistan desires friendly relations with all its neighbours including Afghanistan.

She said Pakistan has a robust mechanism of dialogue with Afghanistan and it will like to continue dialogue with the neighbouring country on all aspects of bilateral relations including the issues related to security and border management.

The FO spokesperson said Pakistan is fully capable of defending its national security and sovereignty against any internal or external threat.

# Awais writes letters to CMs, AJK PM for implementation of energy conservation building code

SAMRA ATHAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari has written letters to all Chief Ministers (CMs), Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Federal Ministers for Planning and Science and Technology for implementation of Energy Conservation Building Code 2023 (ECBC-2023) in the relevant building laws under their domain.

In order to increase efficient utilization of energy and reduce its leakage/wastage, the federal minister has stressed on implementation of this code for mutual benefit of government and consumers, said a statement issued by Ministry of Power Division here Thursday.

An inefficient utilization of electricity in buildings results in an increase in utility bills. Similarly, peak summers for managing peak load of 60 to 80 hours, the power sector has to maintain a number of power plants which remain idle for rest of the year due to lower demands resulting in capacity and other allied payments making part of overall electricity tariff.

Additionally, energy-efficient buildings contribute to the conservation of natural gas by reducing the need for heating during the winter season.



major reason for maintaining many power plants in the system, the implementation of the Code will also help in managing the peak demand helping the power sector to reduce operational costs and energy consumption.

The Minister in his letter has proposed two pronged strategy to ensure sustainable development of the power sector and bolster economy of the country through energy efficiency in building sector. First revision of existing by-laws by the relevant development authorities/building control authorities, municipalities and local governments to incorporate the ECBC-2023 and secondly integration of this code in the Annual Development programs for public sector infrastructure development.

implementing this Code will result in lower operational costs and promote sustainable growth.

The Minister in his letter, mentioned approval of the ECBC-23 by Federal Cabinet and subsequently by National Economic Council (NEC). The ECBC-2023 is now accessible on the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA) website (https://neeca.gov.pk/DoWrioad) for the information and use of the general public.

The public is encouraged to utilize this extremely useful resource to advance sustainability efforts.

# Mercy petitions of 19 convicted persons in May 9 riots accepted

KOMAL BUTT

RAWALPINDI: The mercy petitions of 19 convicted persons involved in May 9, 2023 riots have been accepted on humanitarian grounds.

"Sequence in the promulgation of punishments to 9th May Tragedy convicts, they have exercised their right to appeal and have asked for mercy/ remission in their punishment," a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Thursday.

petitions. 48 petitions have been processed to Courts of Appeal while, petitions of 19 convicts have been accepted purely on humanitarian grounds, in accordance with law. Mercy petitions of remaining will be decided in due course of time, following the legal process," it further said.

Those whose punishment has been remitted are: Muhammad Ayaz s/o Sahibzada Khan, Sami Ullah s/o Meer Dad Khan, Laeeq Ahmed s/o Manzoor Ahmed, Amjad Ali s/o Manzoor Ahmed, Yasir Nawaz s/o Ameer Nawaz



Khan, Said Alam s/o Maaz Ullah Khan, Zahid Khan s/o Muhammad Nabi, Muhammad Suleman s/o Asher Butt s/o Muhammad Arshad Butt, Muhammad Waqas s/o Malik Muhammad Khalil, Saufyan Idrees s/o Idrees Ahmed, Muneeb Ahmed s/o Naveed Ahmed Butt, Muhammad Ahmed s/o Muhammad Nazir, Muhammad Nawaz s/o Abdul Samad, Muhammad Ali s/o Muhammad Boota, Muhammad Bilawal s/o Manzoor Hussain and Muhammad Ilyas s/o Muhammad Fazal Haleem.

All those convicted retain the right of appeal and other legal remedies as per the law and the Constitution, it further said.

"The remission of punishments is a testament to the strength of the due process and fairness, which ensures that justice is served while also taking into account the principles of compassion and mercy," the statement added.

Earlier in April 2024, release of 20 convicts was also carried out on humanitarian grounds in accordance with the law.

# Discussion to be made after receiving demands of PTI; Irfan Siddiqui

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-N, Senator Irfan ul Haque Siddiqui on Wednesday said that discussion would be made after receiving demands of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI). We will have consultation with coalition partners and PML-N leadership regarding PTI leadership of demands (CoD), he said while talking to a private television channel.

The legal help can also be taken on the matter of PTI CoD, he added.

In reply to a question about judicial commission on May 9 and November 26, he said, we will seek legal assistance regarding issues that held on May 9 riots, and November 26.

The homework would also be completed before taking the decisions and reviewing the demands of PTI leadership, he stated.

# Efforts underway to make nuclear Pakistan an economic power: Ishaq Dar

AYESHA REHAN

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday said that the latest one being making all-out efforts to accomplish Pakistan's journey from nuclear to economic power and regain its lost stature in the world.

The deputy prime minister, addressing a news conference, gave a roundup of the government's efforts to bring economic stability and enhance Pakistan's diplomatic footprints through bilateral and multilateral engagements with the latest one being making all-out efforts to accomplish Pakistan's journey from nuclear to economic power and regain its lost stature in the world.

Pakistan's participation in and hosting of international events, he said the incumbent government had strived to enhance Pakistan's diplomatic footprint during its first 100 days, which led to the burying of the impression of an "isolated Pakistan."

The deputy prime minister said that the PML-N-led coalition government inherited huge policy rate, slow GDP growth and skyrocketing inflation. However, the government's prudent economic policies downed the policy rate to 13%, inflation below 5%, and remittance, foreign exchange reserves and exports on the rise.



Ishaq Dar told the media that following Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visits and effective engagements with the leadership of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Azerbaijan, there were indications of around \$29 billion investment in coming to Pakistan.

On the issue, besides condemning Israel's barbarism against innocent people.

He said that besides hosting Palestinian medical students, Pakistan also dispatched relief aid to Gaza, Syria and Lebanon.

The deputy prime minister's presser also encompassed Pakistan's participation in D-8 summit and appointment of Ambassador Sohail Ahmed as its secretary general. PM Shehbaz's visit to China and Kazakhstan, participation in UN General Assembly session, where he highlighted Kashmir and Gaza issues besides interacting with dozens of world leaders.

diplomatic outreach and work for dispute resolution and upholding the UN Charter.

Responding to a question, Ishaq Dar told the media that Pakistan had eliminated terrorism in 2023 but it resurfaced due to the previous government's policy of opening the Afghan border and releasing the hardcore criminals. We want good trade ties with Afghanistan as it will pave the way to connectivity with other neighboring states like Uzbekistan.

Regarding trade ties with India, he said "It takes two to tango" calling upon India to create an environment to help improve the relations.

Later, responding to a question about a Washington Post story on Indian involvement in

killing foreign nationals, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said Pakistan had already expressed concerns about the Indian involvement in extraterritorial killings, not only in Pakistan but also in other countries.

She said Pakistan desired good ties with Afghanistan but at the same time, Pakistan's people and the security forces were capable enough to thwart any internal and external threat.

To another query, she clarified that Pakistan's ports including Gwadar Port were purely meant for trade and development and the country had no design to offer any military bases to any foreign government.



# South Africa seeking ruthless edge against Pakistan in second test

**ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN**

**CAPE TOWN:** South Africa have already sealed their place in this year's World Test Championship (WTC) final ahead of the second and final test against Pakistan at Newlands on Friday but will want to keep their momentum going in the longest format.

South Africa beat Pakistan by two wickets in a tense first test in Pretoria and have won their last six red ball matches in a row, their joint best run since a team record nine victories in succession in 2002 and 2003.

This form has propelled them into the WTC final at Lord's in June but questions around their brittle batting line-up will be a major focus on

what has recently been a perilous Newlands pitch. The previous test played there against India 12 months ago lasted only 107 overs as the visitors won by seven wickets inside two days, the shortest test that has had a winner in history.

The wicket should be better this time round, but at a ground that used to be a fortress for the home team, they have lost two of their last three tests in Cape Town.

"We definitely haven't been clinical or ruthless when the opportunity or the situation as it called upon," South Africa captain Temba Bavuma said. "But I think what we've done is that we've found ways to make sure that the result is on our side."

"If I look at our batting group, we don't have



batters that are averaging 45-plus. All of us are mid-30s, late-30s, which shows that at some point guys are going to make some contribution to the team."

Pakistan will rue not closing out the first test having reduced South Africa to 99-8 chasing 148 on a tough Centurion Park wicket, only for all-rounder Marco Jansen and fast bowler Kagiso Rabada to carry the hosts to victory. Pakistan captain Shan Masood has also spoken of the need for his side to be more ruthless when on top, both with the bat and the ball.

"We keep making the same mistakes but we have to get over the line and seize moments," he said. "There are moments where you get that extra

cushion and we have to finish off games. We have to finish off our batting and bowling innings well."

Pakistan have won only two of their previous 16 tests in South Africa, and none since 2007. They have lost all four previous visits to Cape Town.

There is likely to be a bumper holiday crowd and they should enjoy the occasion with a sparse home calendar over the next 18 months.

According to the ICC's Future Tours Programme as it currently stands, this will be South Africa's last home test until the visit of Australia in September 2026, and their only home international across all three formats in 2025.

# Salman Agha optimistic about Pakistan's redemption against Proteas

**SEHRISH NAZ**

**LAHORE:** All-rounder Salman Agha expressed confidence that Pakistan can bounce back and secure victory against South Africa in the second and final Test of the two-match series at Newlands, Cape Town, commencing from January 3. Talking to media ahead of a practice session on Wednesday, Salman highlighted the team's resilience after narrowly losing the first Test in Johannesburg. "The team's morale is very high. We lost the first Test by a close margin, but our convincing win in the three-match ODI series gives us confidence heading into the Newlands game." He described the first Test as "anyone's game", crediting the Proteas' tenacity, particularly from Kagiso Rabada and Marco Jansen, for their narrow win. Discussing the Newlands pitch, the all-rounder hinted at his potential contribution from Johannesburg's grassy strip, suggesting a likely role for



a specialist spinner. "The team management will decide on including a spinner after assessing the pitch. Statistics do favour a spinner here," he explained. Salman, who is also a spinner, hinted at his potential contribution. "I looked at the pitch and thought I could bowl in this

match. I haven't bowled in the past three Tests I have played, but my role as an all-rounder will be crucial," he added. He reserved special praise for Muhammad Abbas, describing him as "very accurate" and pivotal in Johannesburg. "Abbas brought us back into the game with his six wickets in the second innings, especially when we tried to finish the match. It was incredible to see him bowl through the entire first session on the fourth day," he remarked. Salman also acknowledged South Africa's strength as a team, emphasizing their formidable batting and bowling line-up. "Their qualification for the World Test Championship (WTC) final speaks volumes about their quality," he said, while reiterating Pakistan's belief in its ability to succeed on South African soil. Salman promised fans an exciting contest in Cape Town, describing the upcoming Test as a potential "cracker". He emphasized the importance of carrying the team's fighting spirit from the ODI series and the first Test into the Newlands match, underlining Pakistan's readiness to turn the tide and finish the series on a high.

# Local Tennis Stars shine in National Ranking Championship

**SAMRA ATHAR**

**ISLAMABAD:** The 10th Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan National Ranking Tennis Championships continued today at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex, showcasing top tennis talent from across Pakistan.

According to press release issued here on Thursday, the tournament named in honor of Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan, mother of PTF Patron Senator Salim Saifullah Khan, saw impressive performances in multiple categories.

In Men's Singles 2nd Round matches, Abdullah Adnan defeated Uzair Khan 6-3, 6-0 while Musazamil Murtaza dominated Omar Jawad with a 6-0, 6-1 victory. Other notable winners included



Aqeel Khan who defeated Saqib Hayat 6-2, 6-3 and Muhammad Shoaib who overcame Hamza Asim 6-2, 6-2. The Ladies Singles 2nd Round featured Mahrukha Sajid beating Natasha Zaman 6-2, 6-0 and Lalzarah Salid edging out Laiba Iqbal 6-1, 7-5. Young talents also made their mark in the

Boys 18 and under Quarter-Finals with Muhammad Yalya staging a comeback against Ahtesham Humayun, winning 2-6, 6-4, 7-5. The tournament continues to provide a platform for emerging tennis players to showcase their skills and compete at a national level.

# POA President for revival of int'l sports in Pakistan

**PEAK POINT**

**LAHORE:** The newly-elected President of Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) Arif Saeed has vowed to gear up efforts for the revival of international sports in the country and improve country soft image globally through sports. Chairing the executive committee meeting of the POA here on Thursday, he stressed the need for restoring the trust of international sports community through consolidated efforts, adding that he would foster harmonious relations with all stakeholders including Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) and international sports sector in the country. "Pakistan held



world titles in sports like cricket, hockey, snooker and squash during its heyday but ups and downs are natural part of sports as no one

remains at the top forever," President Arif Saeed remarked, adding continuous efforts were needed to improve. He also emphasized his

commitment to put up efforts so that sports and athletes get due recognition in the country. Urging the office bearers of various sports federations, the POA President invited proposals for promoting sports at national and international levels within the first 100 days, adding that their proposals would be key to outlining actionable steps for the advancement and development of sports in Pakistan.

He said the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was actively supporting well-being of athletes worldwide, and similarly, the POA and National Sports Federations (NSFs)

should strive to do the same. He stressed the need for benefit from and learn from the programs offered by the IOC and International Sports Federations.

The meeting was attended by POA Secretary General Muhammad Khalid Mahmood, Vice Presidents Maj (R) Majid Wasim and Andleeb Sandhu, Executive Vice President of the National Rifle Association of Pakistan Javed Lodhi, President of the Softball Federation of Pakistan Asif Azeem, and Secretary General of the Islamabad Olympic Association Rizwan ul Haq Razi.

# Pakistan likely to make one change for second South Africa Test

**KOMAL BUTTI**

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan is likely to drop pacer Aamir Jamal for second game of the two-match Test series against South Africa.

Sources said the team management is most likely to pick Mir Hamza as his replacement in playing XI for the match, which will start from Friday at Cape Town.



It is expected that left-arm spinner Nauman Ali, who took 13 wickets at an average of 18.85 in the two Test matches against England in October 2024, will not be included in the playing XI due to pitch conditions. Protease lead the

series 1-0 after they beat the Team Green by two wickets on the fourth day of the first Test at the SuperSport Park in Centurion.

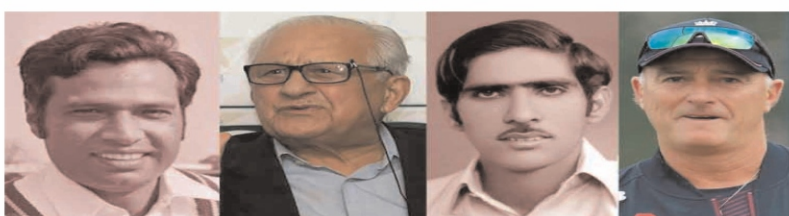
Following the win, South Africa have also qualified for the final of the ICC World Test Championship scheduled next year at the Lord's.

# Cricket icons we lost in 2024

**JAVED KHAN**

**ISLAMABAD:** The year 2024 witnessed the cricket world bid farewell to some of its beloved players and officials who left an indelible mark on the game.

Their contributions to cricket will be remembered for years to come. Nazir Jouni (Pakistan) Born on March 8, 1949, in Rawalpindi, Nazir began his Test career on October 24, 1969, against New Zealand and played his final Test against Australia in December 1983. He represented Pakistan in 14 Tests and four ODIs.



A talented off-spinner, Nazir made history as the first bowler to take seven wickets in his maiden Test innings, finishing with figures of 7 for 99, and ended his Test career with

37 wickets. He made his ODI debut on November 21, 1980, against the West Indies, and played his last ODI on January 10, 1984, against Australia. Nazir also left a mark

in umpiring, officiating in 15 ODIs and five Test matches. Shaharyar Khan (Pakistan) Shaharyar Khan, born on January 19, 1937, is a

former Pakistani cricketer and notable cricket administrator. He served as the Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) from 2003 to 2006 and again from 2014 to

2018. Under his leadership, Pakistan won the 2017 ICC Champions Trophy. Besides cricket, he also served as Pakistan's Ambassador to the US and

the UK, making significant contributions to both diplomacy and cricket administration. Saeed Ahmed (Pakistan) Former Pakistan captain and all-rounder Saeed Ahmed passed away on March 20, 2024 at the age of 86 in Lahore after a brief illness.

Over his career, Ahmed played 41 Test matches for Pakistan between 1958 and 1973, accumulating 2991 runs at an average of 40.41, including five centuries, three of which were against India.

He made his debut at the age of 20 against the

West Indies, in the same match where Hanif Mohammad played his marathon innings of 337 lasting 90 minutes on the pitch. Khalid Ibadulla (Pakistan) New Zealand-based former Pakistani Test cricketer Khalid Ibadulla passed away on July 12, 2024 at the age of 88.

Khalid represented Pakistan in four Test matches between 1964 and 1967 and made history as the first Pakistani batsman to score a century on his Test debut, achieving the feat in 1964 against Australia in the first Test played in Karachi.

# World's first Sufi Opera Singer Saira Peter embarks on her maiden tour to Saudi Arabia, explores burgeoning music scene

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: British-Pakistani World's first Sufi Opera Singer Saira Peter on her maiden tour to Saudi Arabia expressed her passion to explore Kingdom's rich music heritage. In an exclusive interview with leading English-language daily Arab News (Riyadh), Saira Peter remarked on the great warmth of Saudi people and their enthusiastic response to her performances. She praised their intrinsic grasp of rhythm, performing a wide variety of songs including the Saudi National Anthem, each time drawing a burst of cheers from listeners. During her inaugural visit of the Kingdom Saira Peter and her team were given a special tour of Tarik Abdulhakim Center (Jeddah), dedicated to composer Brig Gen Tarek



Abdul Hakim (1920-2012), composer of the Saudi National Anthem. There they viewed a collection of artefacts spanning his prolific career and his unwavering mission to preserve and promote Saudi music culture globally. She also had opportunity to play the world's first laser qanun, housed at the museum. In Jeddah Saira Peter also visited Saudi Music Hub, where her performance for

music students from Saudi National Orchestra met with rapturous applause and even some tears. She commended the young artists, acknowledging Arab music's unique beauty with its microtones and ornamentation and admiring the nation's rapid growth in the cultural industries. As a gesture of appreciation for her skill, internationally renowned Saudi majas singer Mohamed Radi Alsharif (Saudi National Orchestra) performed a majas especially for Saira Peter and her team. The London-based singer is the director of J Arts (Noor Jehan Arts) London, opened by global megastar Sir Cliff Richard OBE, who remained patron until his retirement. There she also trains vocalists and has starred on many stages across the globe including Pakistan,

often performing with her husband, musician Stephen Smith. British soprano Saira Peter lives in London. She has performed internationally, singing in seventeen languages, and is trained in Eastern and Western classical music. An academic background in the sciences provided her with the skill of singing. Her subsequent MA in History from Queen Mary,



University of London brought her to an awareness of the transformational power of celebration to bring together diverse communities, as seen in the Iberian Peninsula under Arab rule and elsewhere. She became convinced that the Arts can promote social cohesion in our fractured world. More recently Saira Peter has taken her biggest step toward connecting the

two great traditions of opera and Sufi music. She is currently working on the world's first Sufi-Opera production, Marvi's Tears, with Opera Director Jonny Danciger MA (Oxon) (Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro; Leonard Bernstein's Candide; Puccini's Tosca.), Composer Paul Knight (Macbeth; Christmas Carol; Treasure Island; Much Ado About Nothing.) and British Librettist Zafar Francis MA PGDip (London). The work is specially created for her in the role of the heroine, Marvi. Marvi's Tears is based on a story by renowned suffi poet, Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai. Marvi is one of Latif's seven heroines, who through her bravery, saves her village, securing justice and peace throughout her nation. The story's themes of harmony, women's leadership and consequent social transformation deal with contemporary issues facing the modern world. For the first time, Marvi's Tears puts Latif's story on stage in English, through an exciting new fusion of western opera and eastern classical music, for a global audience.

## Rawalpindi Police Seize 8.5 kg Drugs in Major Anti-Narcotics Crackdown

NADEEM TANOLI  
RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Police have carried out extensive operations across the district, resulting in the arrest of multiple suspects involved in various criminal activities, highlighting their commitment to maintaining law and order. The Ganjmandi Police apprehended two suspects, Junaid and Murad, and their involvement in the

murder of Fahim in Ganjmandi two days ago. The accused, who killed Fahim over a personal grudge, were arrested using technical and human intelligence. In another operation, the Ganjmandi Police arrested Shahid, accused of stealing PKR 105,000 from a citizen's pocket in a local market. The stolen money was recovered. Under the directives of CPO Syed Khalid Hamandi, a

crackdown on drug peddlers continued across Rawalpindi. Seven suspects and the seizure of over 8.5 kilograms of hashish. Notable recoveries included 2.2 kg from Babar, 1.65 kg from Shehzad, and 1.46 kg from Imran. The suspects will be prosecuted with concrete evidence, and operations to curb drug trade will persist. The police also targeted violations of the Tenancy Act, arresting four individuals—Umar, Mutabar, Sor, Kafge, and Jawad—for failing to comply with the law. CPO Hamandi emphasized that these operations aim to monitor criminal elements and ensure public safety. A crackdown on liquor suppliers led to the arrest of 10 individuals and the recovery of 38 liters of liquor and 4 bottles of alcohol. Prominent arrests

included 10 liters of liquor from Danish and 8 liters from Rashid. The suspects have been charged according to the law. The fight against illegal weapons continued, with 13 suspects arrested and various firearms seized, including pistols and ammunition. Police teams from different areas, such as Sadiqabad, Wahid, Khan, and Taxila, led successful operations, with divisional SPs vowing to

sustain their crackdown on aerial firing and illegal arms possession. In a bid to enhance community-police relations, SP Potohar Nasir Nawaz held an open court at the Police Lines Headquarters, where citizens presented their grievances. SP Nawaz issued directives to relevant officers for prompt resolutions. He emphasized the priority of ensuring public welfare and safety.

## Rawalpindi Cantonment Board to Make 1,103 Daily Wage Employees Permanent

PEAK POINT  
RAWALPINDI: Following directives from Major General Irfan Ahmed Malik, Director General of Cantonment Board and Military Lands, the Rawalpindi Cantonment Board has taken a significant step by initiating the process to make 1,103 daily wage employees permanent. This decision has brought a wave of joy

among long-serving workers according to sources within the Cantonment Board, lists have been posted for employees to check their names and details regarding the regularization process. Provisions have been made for employees to raise objections or submit applications for discrepancies arise. The initiative benefits employees who have served on daily wages for 15 to 20 years, finally addressing longstanding concerns regarding job security. The Executive Officer of the Cantonment Board expressed gratitude to the Board and lauded this employee-centered move. This development underscores the commitment of the Cantonment Board and Military Lands to improve job stability and morale among their workforce.

# Opinion Editorial

Rohina Khan Arif Mehmood

DAILY PEAK POINT ISLAMABAD

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## Foreign policy grey rhinos

Sherry Rehman  
This year – 2025 – promises to be one defined by extraordinary disruption, in an era of staggering shifts in human history. Countries like Pakistan will need to map change to respond to strategic global shifts that threaten stability, impacting both predictability and management of risk. None of this crisis trendlines can be called black swans because they are not unexpected or in a category of event that arises as a bolt from the blue. They are instead called grey rhinos. Not surprises, but still the cause of shocks when they actually erupt.

The biggest trendline reshaping history is not an evolutionary positive. Geopolitics has not only come back, it is red hot and is being weaponised to match the politics of this rules-lite era. It has also returned to dominate national responses and leads resources from broader existential trends like climate stress and the high levels of machine learning on less developed economies.

Most notable is the dangerous surge in conflict at a scale not seen since the last world war. The cause of political liberalism and a growing spillover in hot and simmering wars in at least two theatres, Europe and the Middle East, should definitely give us cause for concern. The European war theatre has already led to challenges in energy and food security, triggering a cost-of-living crisis in many countries, especially those struggling with high levels of inflation like Pakistan.

## Climate resolutions 2025

Ali Tauqeer Sheikh  
2025 will be a year of new openings and possibilities for Pakistan. Several initiatives started during the outgoing year will approach completion and offer opportunities to integrate economic and climate priorities. For Pakistan, economic and climate vulnerabilities reinforce each other and hence they must be addressed simultaneously. We will learn from our constraints while building upon our commitments and national resolve to strengthen our climate action. In 2025, we will have a chance to demonstrate our political will.

## Missed targets

The buzzword of 2024 on the economic front was taxes. Ever since the then newly elected government announced the budget, there were clear warnings that the authorities would go all-out to increase tax revenue, launching a crackdown against those who evade taxes with impunity. It set an ambitious tax revenue goal of Rs13 trillion for FY2025, marking a nearly 40 per cent increase from FY24. But these aspirations have not led to desirable outcomes. According to the FBR, it collected Rs5.62 trillion in the first half of FY2025 (July-December), falling short of its Rs6.01 trillion target by Rs386 billion. This raises concerns for the finance team as the country's failure to meet the IMF-mandated fiscal targets may reflect badly during the review meeting scheduled in February. We are still unsure if this shortfall will end up convincing the authorities to raise taxes even more or revise its targets. It seems in our case, only governments change – but economic challenges remain the same. This time, the government said that it would expand the tax net, but conveniently missed big agriculturalists who enjoy hefty yields but do not have to bear the burden of taxes. Under the constitution, the federal government cannot tax agricultural income. Provinces collect taxes from the agriculture sector, contributing 24 per cent to the economy but only 0.1 per cent of total taxes nationwide. The IMF has suggested provinces adopt non-salaried business individuals' income tax rates (up to 45 per cent net income) on agricultural income, but so far only the Punjab government has introduced measures to tax agricultural income; it will now be using super tax rates on farmers to impose taxes on high earners in the agricultural sector. Then we have an informal, undocumented economy where businesses continue to charge extraordinarily high prices and hide their revenue to pay taxes at a lower price.

With proxies take on a life of their own? Entirely possible, as they often do. Pakistan will do best to hedge its close ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two energy titans of the Middle East, so any conflict escalation will present challenges. Pakistan can certainly play a role in mitigating this conflict but will need to continue balancing the diplomatic tightrope between the two powers, each with deep ties to the US and China respectively.

At the same time, history tells us that egregious imbalances in the exercise of power yield unresolved conflict, not stable endgames. The Taliban resistance is a clear case in point. The forgotten war in Afghanistan, which has left deep aftershocks on our part of the world, continues to impact the daily lives of citizens, first responders and military personnel in border provinces, as well as casting a shadow on foreign investment. With an uptick of 40 per cent in militancy, Pakistan's internal conflict spectrum is already responding to current spikes in terrorist activity originating from our western border. This trendline should materially trigger a red alert for institutional national responses to this alarming resurgence since the US exit from the Soviet war. A new NAP is needed. While the

Biden administration's parting sanctions on Pakistan's ICBM programme ring up to the seventh such entity-sanctions, they are to be taken seriously. Despite the fact that Indian ICBMs obviously possess a higher strike range than Pakistan's, the enduring neuralgia in the American defence establishment with the US is entirely warranted. A series of strategic dialogue rounds with the US is entirely called for in 2025, with a new administration.

During this year, we will have the opportunity to make our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and other sectoral policies climate-resilient by aligning them with our five-year plans. We will begin to implement some of the new tools and instruments to accelerate climate action. We will address the credibility gap by becoming good at doing what we say we would do, and honour our commitments to our lenders and the global community under climate agreements. We must move to consolidate democracy by electing and allowing local governments (LCs) to function and make way for addressing resilience for our communities.

Back in what we all continue to call South Asia, entrenched maximalisms over unresolved conflicts, including the Kashmir issue, will keep the region at a standstill on substantive peace-making, even on transboundary pollution, water, trade, and deterrence regimes. Perhaps the most dangerous dynamic between India and Pakistan will continue to be a shared overconfidence in their own ability to control escalation and a surety that the other will exercise strategic restraint, preventing the ramping up of a small-scale conventional conflict to the nuclear level.

Here are five strategic opportunities we will need to seize during the year. Realigning policy priorities: In 2025, Pakistan will release two five-year plans: the 13th Economic Development Plan and the third NDC. It is essential that the NDC is fully aligned with, and gets its legitimacy from, the five-year plan, lest they work at cross purposes. Five strategic opportunities will need to be seized during the year. Because of the 18th Constitutional Amendment (2010) and the preoccupation with macroeconomic indicators under various IMF programmes since 2013, the five-year economic planning has lost its centrality in the country's economic planning. Now that it is being revived, it should serve as the north star for economic planning and climate actions. Neither Pakistan's global commitments under the Paris Agreement nor the targets committed in the NDC have found space in the draft five-year plan. The NDC hangs in the air as it is not anchored in the quintessential provincial climate planning documents. Almost 60 sectoral policies developed in the country after the 18th Amendment in absence of the five-year plans will need to be revised and synchronised with the Extended Fund Facility and the climate targets set in the NDC. Clearly, the chief economist's office at the Planning Commission has no climate or environmental economists, nor is there any provision for them to reflect on Pakistan's international obligations under climate, biodiversity, and desertification conventions and about 30 environmental, trade and climate agreements and protocols.

## Saudi envoy inaugurates scenic photo display celebrating Pakistan-Saudi friendship

**ARSHAD MALIK**  
**ISLAMABAD:** The Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, on Thursday inaugurated an amazing display of Pakistan's scenic photos on the boundary wall of the Diplomatic Enclave opposite the Saudi Embassy, symbolizing the enduring friendship and cultural ties between the two brotherly nations.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by the Chairman of Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, along with other dignitaries and officials.

Speaking to the media, Ambassador Al-Malki described the initiative as a

tribute to Pakistan's vibrant culture and rich heritage. "This effort highlights the beauty and diversity of Pakistan to the world while celebrating the deep-rooted brotherhood between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan," he stated.

The photo display captivated participants with its vivid portrayal of Pakistan's cultural and natural diversity. Among the highlights were the majestic Badshahi Mosque, the lively Shandur Polo Festival, the rustic charm of desert life, the architectural wonder of the mosque located within the Khewra Salt Mine and K2, the second highest mountain on earth.

Other initiatives showcased traditional activities, such as jaggery-making, and featured Pakistan's unique wildlife, including the partridge and cheetah providing a window into the country's lifestyle and biodiversity.

The event underscored the profound and enduring relationship between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, rooted in shared values and mutual respect. This initiative forms part of a larger effort to promote cultural exchange and strengthen the historic ties between the two nations, further enriching their long-standing partnership.



**ISLAMABAD:** Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb meets with Mr Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States of America, who called on the Minister at Finance Division.

## Governor Kundi emphasizes support for talented youth

**PEAK POINT**  
**PESHAWAR:** Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, on Thursday highlighted the importance of encouraging the province's talented youth, saying that the Governor should be actively working towards supporting young individuals.

The Governor made these remarks while interacting with a representative delegation from the 71st Harvard National Model United Nations Pakistan at the Governor House in Peshawar. The delegation was led by Fahad Malik, consisted of young people from various cities of Pakistan.

Governor Kundi highlighted that when Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhattu Zardari visited the Governor House for the first time, a representative group of talented athletes from the province was invited on short notice.

He praised the excep-

praised the recent achievements of the Blind Cricket Team for bringing honor to the country during a meeting with the Peshawar Cricket Club for the Blind, led by Habubullah Khattak.

During the meeting, the Governor was informed that two players and one coach from the club participated in the T20 Blind Cricket World Cup, held in December 2024, where Pakistan emerged as the world champion. Additionally, one player from the club served as the head coach of the Afghanistan Blind Cricket Team.

The club representatives presented their demands to the Governor, including the request for jobs, grounds, the organization of the Governor's Cup and financial support for sports activities.

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi acknowledged the exceptional talent in Pakistan's sports community, citing the success of the Blind Cricket Team as a prime example.

**PEAK POINT**  
**MARDAN:** Demonstrating exceptional performance throughout 2024, the Traffic Warden Police in Mardan issued 346,511 challans to drivers violating traffic laws. The enforcement drive, carried out under the special directives of District Police Chief Zahoor Babar Afridi, targeted various violations to ensure road safety and smooth traffic flow. Most of the violations included parking vehicles within 10 meters of each other, obstructing emergency vehicles, breaking traffic queues, driving without a license, and parking in "No Parking" zones. Drivers who parked with less than 0.5 meters of space between vehicles or misused turn indicators were also penalized. These measures aimed to reduce accidents and maintain orderly traffic across the district. In addition to enforcement, the Traffic Warden Police organized

paigns throughout the year to highlight the importance of adhering to traffic laws. These initiatives focused on educating citizens about safe driving practices and reducing accidents, ensuring safer roads for everyone.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Traffic Mardan, Saeed Khan, stated that the primary objective of these efforts was to create a safer environment by enforcing traffic regulations. He emphasized that such actions would continue to be implemented consistently. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Traffic, Saadat Khan, remarked that the operations aimed to reduce accidents and improve traffic management. He urged the public to comply with traffic rules to ensure safer travel for all. Traffic in-Charge Imran Khan appealed for continued cooperation from the public, highlighting that adherence to laws is essential for preventing accidents and enhancing the overall traffic situation.

## Ahsan stresses need for a clear roadmap to drive Pakistan's development

**PEAK POINT**  
**ISLAMABAD:** Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday highlighted the importance of a comprehensive roadmap to ensure Pakistan achieves sustainable development.

Speaking to a private news channel, he reflected on the country's past efforts and outlined the way forward under the new vision of progress.

He emphasized that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government had introduced Vision 2020-25 in 2013, a strategic plan aimed at placing



Pakistan among the top 25 global economies by 2025.

planned period for Pakistan's economic development," he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif lauded "Uraan Pakistan," a homegrown five-year national economic transformation plan.

"This plan is aimed at steering the country towards sustainable growth from the macro-economic stability," he added.

He said that "Uraan Pakistan" aims to place Pakistan on the path of sustainable high growth, moving towards a stronger and more prosperous future.

## Serena chowk interchange near completion

**PEAK POINT**  
**ISLAMABAD:** Another public welfare project in Islamabad is nearing completion at an incredible pace. The Serena Chowk Interchange project which comprises of three underpasses is being carried out day and night.

Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi visited the project site and directed its completion within the deadline.

Minister reviewed the beautification plan of Serena Chowk and accorded its approval. He highlighted that the under-



pass will be completed in the next 5 days but it will be opened 7 days after the completion of work on sewer.

He directed to complete the work on sewer immediately. He said that the work on the project started with a delay of 10 days but it should be completed within the stipulated time by making all out efforts.

On the occasion, Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa gave a briefing about the construction activities of the project.

Interior Minister also inspected the ongoing construction work of the project, directing that all possible resources be utilized for the timely completion of the project.

Mohsin Naqvi directed that the surroundings of the project should be decorated with plants and flowers. He added that all possible efforts should be made to save the trees around the project.

## Senate Committee Deliberates on Solar Policy, Electric Vehicles, and Industrial Challenges

**PEAK POINT**  
**ISLAMABAD:** The Senate Standing Committee on Industries, Commerce and Production, chaired by Senator Aon Abbas, met at the Parliament House to discuss critical issues in solar energy, electric vehicles, and industrial growth. During a briefing on the Solar Policy by the E n g i n e e r i n g Development Board (EDB), Senator Aon Abbas raised concerns about the regulation of solar panel prices and the imbalance between demand and supply. He questioned whether undue pressure from Independent Power Producers (IPPs) or the government were impeding progress. Ministry officials clarified that the government was committed to advancing solarization in the country. In discussions on the Electric Vehicle Policy, Senator Abbas proposed installing electric chargers at every fuel station to encourage eco-friendly practices. The EDB Director assured the committee that these chargers would be made available within the stipulated time by making all out efforts.

Senate Committee Deliberates on Solar Policy, Electric Vehicles, and Industrial Challenges

He lamented the suffering of local representatives in the province.



Muqam further accused certain quarters in the provincial setup of misappropriating NFC funds, calling for accountability and transparency in their utilization.

He recalled that when the current Prime Minister was in opposition, efforts were made to initiate dialogue on a charter for peace and economic development in the country. However, the PTI government of the time, he claimed, squandered these opportunities and brought only losses to the nation through prolonged protests.

Muqam criticized the PTI's governance, alleging neglect of critical developmental projects during their tenure.

"Projects like Dassu and Bhasha dams were now receiving billions in funding after being sidelined by the previous government," he stated, highlighting his government's commitment to sustainable progress.

## Mardan Hosts 2-Day Family Festival and Expo to Welcome New Year

**ATIQ ULLAH YOUSAFZAI**  
**MARDAN:** A two-day "Family Festival and Expo" was inaugurated at Zamang Park, Mardan, marking the New Year celebrations. The event was jointly organized by the Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the City Local Government Mardan, attracting a large business community and residents. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mardan, Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, Mayor Mardan Himayatullah Mayar, and Central Organization of Traders Provincial General Secretary Zahir Shah officiated the opening ceremony by cutting the ribbon. More than 30 stalls, set up by local traders, showcased a variety of products including local food, clothing,



cultural items, decorations, and household goods such as detergents and soaps. Speaking at the event, DC Mardan Dr. Azmatullah Wazir emphasized the administration's commitment to the development and prosperity of the city. He assured attendees that the district administration would address the concerns of the business community, promising solutions at their doorstep. Mayor Himayatullah Mayar highlighted the importance of such events in promoting local culture and boosting the economy. He appreciated the collaborative efforts of the Chamber of Commerce and local traders in organizing the festival, which he described as a positive initiative to strengthen the city's community spirit. The festival provided families with an opportunity to enjoy food, shopping, and cultural exhibitions, while also supporting local businesses. It underscored the collective efforts of local authorities and the business community in fostering growth and unity in Mardan.



**ISLAMABAD:** Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb meets with Mr Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States of America, who called on the Minister at Finance Division.