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SHAHID LEGAL GROUP

SLD NEWS UPDATES

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FBR ALLOWS REFUNDS OF INPUT TAX UNDER SALES TAX ACT

December 26, 2024

Karachi, December 26, 2024 – The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has authorized refunds of input tax under Section 10 of the Sales Tax Act, 1990, bringing relief to registered persons who face an excess of input tax over output tax during a tax period. This provision, as clarified by the FBR, aims to streamline the refund process and ensure smoother tax compliance for businesses.

According to Section 10 of the Sales Tax Act, if the input tax paid by a registered person on taxable purchases exceeds the output tax on zero-rated local supplies or exports during a specific tax period, the registered person is entitled to a refund of the excess input tax. The FBR mandates that the refund must be processed within forty-five days from the submission of the refund claim. However, the refund procedure is subject to specific conditions that the FBR may prescribe through an official notification in the Gazette.

In cases where the input tax exceeds the output tax for supplies other than zero-rated or exports, the excess input tax may not be refunded immediately. Instead, the registered person can carry forward the excess input tax to the next tax period. This carried-forward input tax will be treated as input tax for the following period, alongside any input tax that remains unadjusted as per Section 8B. The FBR may also set out procedures for claiming refunds of such excess input tax through notifications.

Additionally, the FBR has the discretion to direct that refunds of input tax related to exports will be paid at fixed rates and according to specified methods, as determined in an official notification. This ensures clarity for exporters regarding how to process input tax refunds for export transactions.

However, the FBR also stipulates certain conditions that can affect the refund process. For instance, if a registered person has outstanding tax liabilities, including default surcharges or penalties, these amounts will be deducted from any input tax refund. The refund of input tax will only be made after the adjustment of such liabilities, ensuring that the registered person settles any unpaid dues.

To safeguard against fraudulent claims, the FBR has outlined a strict procedure for investigating refunds of input tax. If there is reason to believe that a person has claimed input tax credit or a refund that was not admissible, the FBR is required to complete the inquiry, audit, or investigation within sixty days. In complex cases, this period may be extended up to one hundred and twenty days by an officer not below the rank of Additional Commissioner Inland Revenue. Furthermore, the FBR may extend this period for up to nine months in exceptional cases, provided that the extension is justified in writing.

Through these measures, the FBR aims to create a transparent and efficient process for the refund of input tax, ensuring that businesses receive their due refunds while maintaining compliance with the law.

FBR EXPLAINS JOINT AND SEVERAL LIABILITY ON UNPAID TAX

December 26, 2024

Karachi, December 26, 2024 – The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has issued a detailed explanation regarding the joint and several liability of registered persons within the supply chain when taxes remain unpaid. This clarification is provided under Section 8A of the Sales Tax Act, 1990.

According to Section 8A, a registered person who receives a taxable supply from another registered person is considered jointly and severally liable for the unpaid tax in certain circumstances. Specifically, if the recipient of the supply knows or has reasonable grounds to suspect that some or all of the tax due on the supplied goods, or any previous or subsequent supply, will remain unpaid, both the recipient and the supplier are responsible for settling the unpaid tax. The burden of proof in these cases lies with the FBR, which must demonstrate that the unpaid tax is indeed owed.

The FBR further clarified that the joint and several liability applies not only to the immediate supplier and recipient but extends across the entire supply chain, potentially involving multiple parties. This provision ensures that the tax authorities can pursue any party in the supply chain when taxes remain unpaid, promoting greater accountability and compliance.

Additionally, the FBR retains the power to issue exemptions to specific transactions or classes of transactions under this provision. Through an official notification in the gazette, the FBR can exempt certain supplies from the joint and several liability rules outlined in Section 8A, offering some flexibility to businesses under specific conditions.

This clarification by the FBR is expected to provide better transparency and understanding for businesses operating within the supply chain, ensuring that all parties are aware of their responsibilities in relation to unpaid taxes. The FBR's emphasis on accountability aims to reduce tax evasion and improve compliance across the board.

In conclusion, the FBR's explanation on joint and several liability underscores the importance of vigilance within the supply chain and highlights the shared responsibility of registered persons for ensuring the full payment of taxes due.

FBR ANNOUNCES SPECIAL YEAR-END TAX COLLECTION MEASURES

December 25, 2024

Karachi, December 25, 2024 – The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has taken an unprecedented step by deciding to keep its collection windows open on the last Saturday and Sunday of December 2024.

This initiative is aimed at maximizing tax collection for the second quarter of the fiscal year ending December 31, 2024.

The FBR has issued clear directives to the Chief Commissioners of its field formations, including the Large Taxpayers Offices (LTOs), Medium Taxpayers Office (MTO), Corporate Tax Offices (CTOs), and Regional Tax Offices (RTOs). These offices have been instructed to ensure that their teams remain operational and observe regular working hours on Saturday, December 28, 2024, and Sunday, December 29, 2024.

According to the FBR, this decision is a proactive enforcement measure designed to facilitate the achievement of revenue collection targets for the second quarter of FY2024-25. The organization has stressed the importance of taking every possible step to ensure taxpayers are supported and motivated to meet their tax obligations within the stipulated timeline.

Sources within the FBR revealed that the authority is grappling with a significant shortfall in revenue collection for the current fiscal year. This shortfall has prompted the revenue body to implement aggressive strategies to optimize tax inflows before the end of the quarter.

By keeping its collection offices operational over the weekend, the FBR aims to provide taxpayers with additional opportunities to fulfill their tax obligations, thereby contributing to a stronger fiscal performance for the government. This move also reflects the FBR’s commitment to achieving its broader revenue goals for FY2024-25.

The FBR’s decision underscores its determination to adopt innovative solutions to address revenue collection challenges. By focusing on extended operational hours and proactive enforcement, the FBR is ensuring that both taxpayers and tax offices have the necessary support to meet critical deadlines.

This measure is part of a series of steps the FBR has introduced to streamline its operations and bolster compliance, ultimately strengthening Pakistan’s tax collection framework.

FBR ACHIEVES 135% GROWTH IN CAPITAL GAINS TAX COLLECTION

December 25, 2024

Karachi, December 25, 2024 – The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has recorded an impressive 135% increase in the collection of capital gains tax (CGT) during the first five months of the fiscal year 2024-25 (5MFY25).

This substantial growth underscores the FBR’s effective enforcement measures and improved tax compliance mechanisms.

According to FBR sources, CGT revenue surged to Rs 12.14 billion, a significant rise from the Rs 5.16 billion collected during the same period of the previous fiscal year. This remarkable performance reflects the government's strategic efforts to enhance tax collection and broaden the revenue base.

The CGT is levied under Section 37A of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001, which governs the taxation of capital gains arising from the disposal of securities. The FBR applies this provision to a wide range of financial instruments, including public company shares, Modaraba certificates, corporate and government debt securities, exchange-traded funds, and derivative products.

Key Features of Section 37A

Section 37A outlines the key rules for computing and taxing capital gains:

1. Applicability and Tax Rates

o The FBR taxes capital gains on the disposal of securities, except for transactions explicitly exempt under the Income Tax Ordinance.

o Exemptions include certain listed shares disposed of outside registered stock exchanges or IPO shares not reported to the National Clearing Company of Pakistan Limited (NCCPL).

2. Calculation Formula

o The formula for computing capital gains is the difference between the consideration received (A) and the cost of acquisition (B).

3. Holding Period

o The holding period is determined by the interval between the acquisition and disposal dates.

4. Loss Offset Rules

o Losses from securities disposal can only be offset against gains from other securities during the same tax year. Unused losses may be carried forward for up to three years.

5. Defined Securities

o Instruments classified as securities include shares, Sukuk, Treasury Bills, Pakistan Investment Bonds, and derivative products traded on platforms like the Pakistan Mercantile Exchange.

Implications of FBR's Performance

The 135% growth in CGT collection highlights robust market activity and the FBR's success in fostering a transparent tax environment. By improving regulatory frameworks and enforcing compliance, the FBR has taken a significant step toward achieving its fiscal objectives.

This enhanced performance not only bolsters Pakistan's financial stability but also underscores the FBR's pivotal role in strengthening investor confidence and optimizing revenue generation.

TAX BARS CALL ON FBR TO ABANDON PASSWORD EXPIRY POLICY

December 25, 2024

Karachi, December 24, 2024 – Tax bars across Pakistan have strongly criticized the recently introduced password expiry policy by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), urging its immediate revocation. The policy, which mandates password changes every 60 days for users accessing the IRIS tax portal, has been denounced as an unnecessary complication for taxpayers and practitioners alike.

Under the FBR's policy, users are required to reset their passwords using the 'Forgot Password' or 'Change Password' options once their credentials expire. However, leading tax bars argue that this measure creates undue inconvenience without delivering substantial benefits.

The Lahore Tax Bar Association (LTBA), in a letter addressed to the FBR, highlighted the impracticality of this policy. "Income tax returns are filed annually, making a 60-day password expiration cycle redundant," stated the LTBA. It further criticized the policy for imposing undue hardship on taxpayers and practitioners, diminishing user convenience, and offering no tangible improvements to system security. The LTBA urged the FBR to reconsider this policy to ensure a smoother and more user-friendly experience for all stakeholders.

Similarly, the Sialkot Tax Bar Association expressed its concerns in a formal communication to the FBR chairman. While acknowledging the intention to enhance cybersecurity, the association noted the absence of a transparent rationale or detailed guidelines for implementing the policy. "The policy, as it stands, undermines taxpayer confidentiality and the fundamental right to privacy," it emphasized. The Sialkot Tax Bar also highlighted the disproportionate burden placed on non-resident taxpayers, who often face greater challenges in complying with frequent password resets.

The Multan Tax Bar Association raised additional objections, citing the low levels of digital literacy among a significant portion of Pakistan's taxpayers. "Many taxpayers lack the technical knowledge to reset passwords, compounded by unreliable internet connectivity in various regions," it stated. The association also pointed out the operational difficulties stemming from system downtimes and failures in receiving one-time passwords (OTPs) via email or SMS. Such issues, it argued, make compliance with the 60-day password reset requirement virtually unfeasible for a large segment of taxpayers.

Moreover, the Multan Tax Bar noted that the password reset process is often cumbersome and time-intensive, detracting from the efficiency of tax filing. "This policy exacerbates the challenges faced by already compliant taxpayers and erodes trust in the digital tax system," it asserted.

In unison, tax bars across the country have urged the FBR to reconsider the policy, arguing that a more balanced approach is needed—one that ensures system security without imposing undue burdens on taxpayers.

CITIZENS RELUCTANT TO ENGAGE WITH TAX AUTHORITIES: AURANGZEB

December 25, 2024

Islamabad: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has highlighted a growing sentiment among citizens, who are willing to pay higher taxes but are reluctant to interact with tax authorities.

Speaking during a review of the Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 a day earlier, at the Senate Standing Committee on Finance held at the Parliament House on Tuesday, the finance minister emphasized the pressing need to restore credibility and trust in tax authorities.

“Many people approach us, expressing their willingness to contribute more to the national treasury. However, they prefer not to deal directly with the tax authority. Restoring this trust must begin with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). It’s not sustainable for citizens to avoid interacting with their country’s tax system,” Aurangzeb remarked.

The session was chaired by Senator Saleem Mandviwalla and attended by PTI Senators Mohsin Aziz and Shibli Faraz. The committee deliberated on sales tax provisions within the proposed bill, with further discussions scheduled for the next meeting.

Under the FBR’s transformation plan, Aurangzeb explained that top priority is being given to rebuilding confidence in the tax system. Technology will play a pivotal role in this transformation, aiming to curb corruption and harassment while broadening the tax base. The minister noted that the Tax Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, seeks to address revenue leakage and under-filing.

“The salaried class bears a heavy tax burden, including super tax and CVT on income,” the minister acknowledged. He stressed the importance of rationalizing the tax structure by targeting segments of society that currently evade taxes. “The bill introduces mechanisms to ensure compliance and expand the tax net,” he added.

Aurangzeb also mentioned ongoing efforts to downsize federal ministries, with updates expected by January 2025. This rightsizing initiative aims to optimize government operations and reduce expenses.

To enhance tax policy formulation, the finance minister announced plans to establish a Tax Policy Unit separate from the FBR. This unit, expected to launch within six months, will analyze the economic impact of tax policies. FBR Chairman Rashid Mahmood Langrial clarified that tax officials’ primary role remains tax collection, while the new unit will handle policy analysis.

Langrial assured the committee that the amendment bill would not introduce new taxes but would address non-filing and under-filing issues. He emphasized that 95% of households would remain unaffected by the proposed changes.

Aurangzeb expressed confidence that the reforms could raise Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio from the current 10.3% to 13% within five years, noting that neighboring countries boast ratios as high as 18%. He stressed the importance of ensuring contributions from traditionally non-compliant sectors to avoid further burdening taxpayers like the manufacturing sector and salaried class.

"If we fail to tax non-compliant sectors, how will we manage future budgets? Should we continue increasing the burden on already overtaxed groups?" Aurangzeb questioned, underscoring the necessity of broad-based tax reforms to ensure economic sustainability.

Stock & Commodity

DOLLAR STAYS RESILIENT, ASIA SHARES GET FESTIVE LIFT

Reuters Published 14 minutes ago

SINGAPORE: Asia shares rose slightly in holiday-thinned trade on Thursday, extending gains from earlier in the week with little news or data in the way to alter their direction of travel, while the dollar was perched near a two-year high.

As the year-end approaches, trading volumes have begun thinning out and the main focus for investors remains that of the Federal Reserve's rate outlook. Markets in Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand were closed for a holiday on Thursday.

Asia shares rise, dollar underpinned by elevated bond yields

Since Fed Chair Jerome Powell primed markets for fewer rate cuts next year at the central bank's last policy meeting of the year, traders are now pricing in just about 35 basis points worth of easing for 2025.

That has in turn lifted U.S. Treasury yields and the dollar, with the greenback's renewed strength a burden for commodities and gold.

The benchmark 10-year yield was last steady at 4.5967%, having risen above 4.6% for the first time since May 30 earlier in the week. It is up roughly 40 basis points for the month thus far.

The two-year yield similarly firmed at 4.3407%.

"Given December's hawkish cut, we believe the Fed will skip at the January FOMC meeting and wait for more data before definitely resuming, or potentially ending, this cutting cycle," said Tom Porcelli, chief U.S. economist at PGIM Fixed Income.

"Given the Fed's shift to less accommodation paired with continued focus on both sides of the dual mandate, we believe the market will have more intense emphasis on economic events in the new year."

In currencies, the dollar was perched near a two-year high against a basket of currencies at 108.15 , and was on track for a monthly gain of more than 2%. The Australian and New Zealand dollars were meanwhile among the biggest losers against a dominant greenback on Thursday, with the Aussie falling 0.45% to $0.6241.

The kiwi slid 0.51% to $0.5650.

The euro eased 0.18% to $1.0398, while the yen languished near a five-month low and last stood at 157.45 per dollar.

Japan's government is set to compile a record $735 billion budget for the fiscal year starting in April due to larger social security and debt-servicing costs, adding to the industrial world's heaviest debt, a draft seen by REUTERS showed.

Ending on a high

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan, ticked up 0.04% and was headed for a weekly rise of nearly 2%, taking a cue from its counterparts on Wall Street earlier in the week.

S&P 500 futures edged 0.02% higher, while Nasdaq futures advanced 0.13%. EUROSTOXX 50 futures rose 0.04%.

World stocks, looked set to end the year on a high with a second consecutive annual gain of more than 17%, unfazed by escalating geopolitical tensions and various economic and political headwinds globally.

That is mostly thanks to a second year of huge gains for shares on Wall Street as artificial intelligence fever and robust economic growth sucked more global capital into U.S. assets.

"At first glance, markets appear to suggest exceptional exuberance that has presided over 2024," said Vishnu Varathan, head of macro research for Asia ex-Japan at Mizuho Bank.

"Notably, U.S. bulls high on American exceptionalism have not trampled on ebullience elsewhere."

Japan's Nikkei umped 0.38% and was on track to end the year with a more than 17% gain.

China's CSI300 blue-chip index, fell 0.26% while the Shanghai Composite Index, lost 0.22%, though both were headed for yearly gains of more than 10% each, helped by a step-up in support from Chinese authorities in recent months to shore up an ailing economy.

Elsewhere, bitcoin last traded 0.5% higher at $98,967, having fallen from a record high above $100,000 on the back of the Fed's hawkish repricing.

Russian companies have begun using bitcoin and other digital currencies in international payments following legislative changes that allowed such use in order to counter Western sanctions, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said on Wednesday.

In commodities, Brent crude futures rose 0.18% to $73.71 a barrel, while U.S. crude gained 0.21% to $70.25 per barrel.

Spot gold ticked 0.5% higher to $2,626.36 an ounce.

DUBAI HITS OVER A DECADE HIGH; MOST GULF EQUITIES END LOWER

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

Dubai's benchmark share index jumped on Wednesday to its highest level in more than a decade, while most other markets in the Gulf were subdued as investors anticipated fewer rate cuts by the U.S. Federal Reserve in the coming year.

Dubai's benchmark stock index extended its gain to a second straight session, rising 0.1% to 5,084, its highest in 10 years and three months. Emirates NBD rose 1.2% and supermarkets operator Spinneys 1961 Holding advanced 1.3%.

Shuaa Capital rose 1.4% to its highest in over three months. The investment bank's board approved on Friday a deal with a senior creditor to restructure 208 million dirhams ($56.64 million) in debt facilities.

The Qatari benchmark index slipped for a third straight session and ended 0.6% lower, with almost all stocks in the red. Qatar National Bank, the region's largest lender, fell 0.8% and Qatar Gas Transport dropped 1.5%.

Most Gulf markets end flat

Saudi Arabia's benchmark stock index was down 0.2%, with most of its constituents posting losses. Al Rajhi Bank fell 0.7% and media giant MBC Group slipped 3.3%.

Red Sea International climbed 6.5% after the developer said on Tuesday it had saidned a 318.9 million riyals contract with Modern Building Leaders Co.

"The market is expected to maintain its volatile pattern this week, with attention shifting to potential fourth-quarter results at the beginning of the new year and ongoing IPOs", said Joseph Dahrieh, managing principal at Tickmill.

The Abu Dhabi benchmark index snapped its three-session winning streak and fell 0.2%, pressured by a 1% decline in conglomerate International Holding and a 0.9% loss in Alpha Dhabi Holding.

Fed policymakers lowered their rate cut projections for 2025 to 50 basis points, from 100 basis points, and increased their inflation forecast. Traders are pricing in about 35 basis points of easing for 2025.

The Fed's decisions have a significant impact on the Gulf region's monetary policy, as most currencies there are pegged to the U.S. dollar.

Outside the Gulf, Egypt's blue-chip index edged up 0.1%, aided by a 4.7% rise in Alexandria Container and a 0.9% gain in El Sewedy Electric.

The International Monetary Fund reached a staff-level agreement with Egypt, potentially unlocking a $1.2 billion disbursement.

SAUDI ARABIA down 0.2% to 11,892

KUWAIT up 0.3% to 7,866

QATAR fell 0.6% to 10,466

EGYPT up 0.1% to 30,005

BAHRAIN down 0.1% to 1,985

OMAN lost 0.1% to 4,488

ABU DHABI fell 0.2% to 9,415

DUBAI rose 0.1% to 5,084

JAPAN'S NIKKEI INCHES DOWN, TRADING MUTED BEFORE WALL STREET HOLIDAY

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

TOKYO: Japan's Nikkei share average inched down on Wednesday as investors avoided active bets with Wall Street closed for the Christmas holiday.

The Nikkei was down 0.12% at 38,990.56 by the midday break, after rising as much as 0.37% after the open. "The market struggled to find direction with foreign investors away for the holiday season," said Fumio Matsumoto, chief strategist at Okasan Securities.

"This time of the year, local individuals were the only ones active in trading but they do not want to place active bets when large stocks do not move actively with the absence of foreign investors."

Japan's Nikkei rises as tech shares gain

Entertainment company Konami fell 1.74% to drag the Nikkei the most.

Drugmaker Daiichi Sankyo lost 1.41% and phone company KDDI slipped 0.59%.

The broader Topix fell 0.62% to 2,710.25, dragged lower by Toyota Motor's 0.88% fall.

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group lost 0.91%. Honda Motor slipped 0.77% after surging 12.2% in the previous session following the announcement of a share buyback on Monday.

Local firms' share buybacks have supported Japanese equities, but the buying is paused at the end of the year, which is also weighing on the Nikkei, said Okasan's Matsumoto.

Nissan Motor erased early losses to surge 8.6% to become the top percentage gainer on the Nikkei. Heavy machinery maker Kawasaki Heavy Industries jumped 4.78%.

All but two of the 33 industry sub-indexes of the Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE) fell.

Steelmakers rose 0.36% and energy explorers inched up 0.6%.

Of more than 1,600 stocks trading on the TSE's prime market, 19% rose and 77% fell, with 3% trading flat.

CHINA STOCKS EDGE DOWN, DRAGGED BY SMALL-CAP SHARES; HK MARKET CLOSED

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

SHANGHAI: China stocks edged down on Wednesday, dragged by small-cap shares, as thematic concept sectors pulled back, while Hong Kong market is closed for a local holiday.

China stocks mixed as banks rally

- China's blue-chip CSI300 Index dropped 0.1% by the lunch break, while the Shanghai Composite Index was down 0.3%.
- The CSI 2000 index, which tracks small-cap stocks, fell 2.7%.
- Chinese retail investors often favour small concept stocks, primarily for speculative purposes, attracted by potentially quick gains despite the risks involved.
- Some AI and e-commerce concept stocks fell sharply, with Hydsoft Technology down nearly 10%, while bank stocks extended rallies.

- China's central bank conducted a medium-term loan operation on Wednesday while keeping the interest rate unchanged.
- Efforts will continue in 2025 to stabilise China's real estate market, China Construction News reported, citing a work conference held by the housing regulator.
- The CSI real estate shares were down 2.2%.
- Financial markets in Hong Kong will be closed through Thursday for the holiday.
- Looking ahead to 2025, AllianceBernstein maintains a cautiously optimistic outlook on China's onshore stocks.
- "With policy stimulus guiding the way, the domestic economy is anticipated to emerge from its downturn and gradually stabilize, leading to a recovery in the earnings of listed companies," said Huang Senwei, senior market strategist at AllianceBernstein.
- Reuters reported on Tuesday that Chinese authorities have agreed to issue 3 trillion yuan worth of special treasury bonds next year to ramp up fiscal stimulus.

ENERGY, MINING STOCKS LEAD GAINS IN EUROPE'S HOLIDAY-THINNED TRADE

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

FRANKFURT: Europe's main stocks index rose on Tuesday, with mining and energy stocks leading gains amid light trading volumes ahead of the Christmas break.

The pan-European STOXX 600 was up 0.2%, with many markets either shut or working reduced hours for Christmas Eve.

Most European markets will be closed for the next two days.

With just a few more days to the New Year, investors are looking out for any developments related US President-elect Donald Trump's White House inauguration on Jan. 20. Trump has threatened import tariffs against crucial economies including China and Mexico.

The incoming president's expected policies are considered inflationary and have already been factored in the Federal Reserve's monetary policy outlook. The European Central Bank, which has delivered back-to-back rate cuts this year, flagged prospective trade tensions with the US under Trump.

"Our relatively optimistic take on Germany rests on an assumption of limited new US trade restrictions vis-à-vis Europ," Morgan Stanley analysts said in a weekly note. "Spain is likely to continue its outperformance of the euro area. For one, it is less trade dependant than other euro area economies." Despite hitting record highs this year, the STOXX 600 is up just around 5% so far in 2024, with momentum stalling in the face of Trump's proposed measures, lacklustre Chinese spending, geopolitical tensions and a weak domestic economic picture, among other factors.

The auto sector, expected to be the worst-hit under Trump, is set to be the top laggard of the year, while defence and banks are on track to be the biggest gainers.

On the day, basic resources index, which includes most of Europe's mining firms, rose 0.6%. Energy, too, was up 0.4%, tracking higher oil prices.

Among individual movers, British homebuilder Vistry slumped 16.3% after warning on its fiscal 2024 profit for the third time, citing delays to expected year-end transactions and completions.

Elsewhere, France unveiled a new government that Prime Minister Francois Bayrou will hope can oversee the passage of a 2025 budget and prevent a deepening of crisis. The CAC 40 was last up 0.1%.

WALL STREET ADVANCES IN SHORT CHRISTMAS EVE SESSION

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

NEW YORK: Wall Street's main indexes advanced on Tuesday, as gains in a handful of megacap and growth stocks bolstered benchmarks in a truncated trading session before Christmas.

With megacap stocks having outsized influence on markets, their performance is often a key driver of indexes. When coupled with reduced trading volumes and few other catalysts, as many investors take time off for the holidays, this is even more pronounced.

All the so-called Magnificent Seven megacap stocks climbed on Tuesday, led by the 5.1% advance by Tesla.

The automaker's rise helped push the Consumer Discretionary 1.9% higher. It was the top gainer among the nine S&P sectors in positive territory.

Elsewhere, chip manufacturers were also buoyant. Broadcom and Nvidia were up 3% and 1.1%, respectively, while Arm Holdings climbed 3.9%, on course to regain much of the ground lost in the previous session when it was hit by a lost court verdict.

Stock markets will shut at 1:00 p.m. ET on Tuesday and will be closed for Christmas on Wednesday.

At 11.22 a.m. Eastern time, the S&P 500 gained 41.80 points, or 0.70%, to 6,015.87 points, while the Nasdaq Composite rose 197.63 points, or 1.00%, to 19,962.51. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 173.43 points, or 0.40%, to 43,080.38.

"Investors are breathing a sigh of relief that maybe the hawkish rate cut last week combined with the softer PCE reading indicate that inflation is not that big of a re-emerging threat," said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist of CFRA Research.

"As a result, maybe this market will end up creeping higher between now and the end of the year." After a stellar run to record highs following the November election, which sparked hopes of pro-business policies under US President-elect Donald Trump, Wall Street's rally hit a bump this month as investors grappled with the prospect of higher interest rates in 2025.

The US Federal Reserve eased borrowing costs for the third time this year last Wednesday, but signaled only two more 25-basis-point reductions next year, down from its September projection of four cuts, as policymakers weigh the possibility of Trump's policies stoking inflation.

Traders expect the Fed to leave rates in the range of 4% to 4.25% by the end of 2025, from between 3.75% and 4% about 10 days ago, according to CME's FedWatch tool.

Markets are currently in a historically strong period called the "Santa Claus rally". The S&P 500 on average has gained 1.3% in the last five days of December and first two days of January, according to data from the Stock Trader's Almanac going back to 1969.

CHINA, HK STOCKS GAIN AS BANKS EXTEND RALLY

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

HONG KONG: Chinese and Hong Kong stocks rallied on Tuesday, driven by banking gains, after reports of Beijing's planned $411 billion special treasury bond issuance for 2025.

The Shanghai Composite index added 1.3% to 3,393.53 and the blue-chip CSI300 index jumped 1.3% at close.

Gains widened in the afternoon session after Reuters reported that Chinese authorities have agreed to issue special treasury bonds worth 3 trillion yuan ($411 billion) next year, the highest on record, as Beijing ramps up fiscal stimulus to revive a faltering economy.

The proceeds will be used to boost consumption via subsidy programmes, equipment upgrades by businesses and funding investments in innovation-driven advanced sectors, among others.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index closed 1.08% higher to 20,098.29 - a near two-week high - in holiday-thinned week.

Financial markets in Hong Kong will be closed from this afternoon through Thursday for a local holiday. Trading will resume on Friday.

Banks extended Monday's rally, leading gains onshore, as investors continued to seek shelter in high dividend-yielding assets amid falling bond yields. The gauge tracking the sector added 1.3% to over a two-month high.

China's four biggest state-owned banks - Industrial and Commercial (ICBC), Bank of China (BOC) China Construction Bank (CCB) and Agricultural Bank of China (ABC) - gained between 1.2% and 1.9% to hit multi-year highs.

Adding to the gains, chips pared losses to rise 1.7% after the Biden administration announced a last-minute trade investigation into older China-made "legacy" semiconductors that could heap more US tariffs on Chinese chips.

INDIAN EQUITY BENCHMARKS END LOWER AS IT, METALS DRAG

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

MUMBAI: Indian benchmark indexes settled lower on Tuesday, dragged by information technology and metal stocks, with trade expected to be rangebound for the next few sessions due to the lack of triggers in a holiday-truncated week.

The Nifty 50 shed 0.11% to 23,727.65 points, while the BSE Sensex settled 0.09% lower at 78,472.87. The indexes rose as much as 0.5% earlier in the session.

Indian financial markets will be closed on Wednesday for Christmas.

The benchmarks are unlikely to see significant gains through early January before the December-quarter earnings start trickling in, analysts said.

"Trading volumes will be thin in the next few sessions due to this being a holiday-shortened week and as the year comes to an end," Vikram Kasat, head of advisory at PL Capital, said.

Nine of the 13 major sectors declined on the day, with heavyweight financials losing 0.2%.

The broader smallcaps rose 0.2%, while midcaps closed flat.

IT companies, which earn a major share of their revenue from the US, declined 0.4%. Their shares have been under pressure since last week as Federal Reserve's policymakers lowered their rate cut projections for 2025.

The metal index shed 0.8%, as a stronger US dollar made metals more expensive for holders of other currencies.

The Indian rupee slipped to a lifetime low during the session.

Auto stocks snapped a five-session losing streak, to gain 0.6%, led by a 1.9% rise in Tata Motors.

Shares of Interglobe Aviation, the operator of airline IndiGo, rose 3.9% to post their best session in four months after the carrier's market share jumped to another record high in November.

City gas distributors Mahanagar Gas and Indraprastha Gas gained about 2% each on media reports that the oil ministry has re-submitted a proposal to halve the excise duty on compressed natural gas.

US STOCKS OPEN HOLIDAY-SHORTENED SESSION HIGHER

AFP Published December 24, 2024

NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks were modestly higher early Tuesday in a holiday-shortened session amid hopes for a year-end "Santa Claus rally."

The term marks a seven-day stretch that encompasses the final five trading days of one year and the first two days of the next, an historically robust period for equities.

Traders were hopeful about gains this holiday season, although a jump in US Treasury yields loomed as a challenge.

About five minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up a hair at 42,916.03.

The broad-based S&P 500 gained 0.2 percent to 5,987.91, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index gained 0.4 percent to 19,847.55.

US stocks mostly fall as Treasury yields climb

Among individual companies, American Airlines fell 2.1 percent after it experienced about a one-hour ground stop early Tuesday on US flights due to a technical issue. However, the Christmas Eve travel snag has been resolved.

United States Steel dipped 0.2 percent after a government panel did not reach consensus on whether the company's $14.9 billion proposed acquisition by Japan's Nippon harms national security, setting the stage for a decision on the deal by President Joe Biden.

FINANCE MINISTRY OFFICIAL CALLS FOR ROADMAP TO BOOST PAKISTAN'S WEIGHT IN MSCI FM INDEX

BR Web Desk Published December 24, 2024

Advisor to Finance Minister, Khurram Schehzad on Tuesday urged the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) and Securities Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) to develop a roadmap aimed at increasing Pakistan's weight within the MSCI Frontier Markets (FM) Index.

This should ultimately lead to Pakistan's inclusion in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index, said Schehzad during his visit to the PSX, to discuss strategies for enhancing the depth and performance of the capital market, read a press release issued by the PSX.

In September 2021, Pakistan was downgraded from its status as an emerging market, a little over four years after it was reclassified from the FM Index by MSCI.

The MSCI had said then that while the Pakistani equity market meets the requirements for market accessibility under the classification framework for Emerging Markets, it no longer meets the standards for size and liquidity.

MSCI adds 8 Pakistani companies to Small Cap, removes TRG Pakistan from Frontier Markets Indexes

Meanwhile, during the meeting, Schehzad received a comprehensive overview of PSX's strategic initiatives.

Farrukh Sabzwari, CEO of PSX, emphasized that, despite challenges, Pakistan's capital markets possess immense potential. He expressed confidence that through a well-formulated strategy, PSX could realize this potential and significantly contribute to the economy.

Meanwhile, Schehzad reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting capital market growth, recognizing its role in stabilising as well as underpinning growth in the country's economy.

As per the statement, Schehzad urged the PSX management to formalize recommendations for structural changes and privatization of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), which could advance governmental goals and boost market capitalization.

The advisor also recommended rebranding and repositioning the GEM board to function as a platform for venture capital and startup fundraising.

Moreover, key initiatives were also discussed including taking steps for high-value listings to increase market capitalization and attract foreign investment.

PSX sees volatility, KSE-100 gains over 700 points

An ambitious target was also discussed to increase the investor base to 2% of the national population within three years.

Schehzad endorsed the recommendation to form a formal committee comprising PSX, SECP, and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to leverage each entity's strengths.

He said that collaboration with Chinese capital markets is critical to facilitate cross-border investment opportunities, broaden market access, and stimulate investor participation.

Business & Finance » Money & Banking

CHINA'S YUAN NEARS 13-MONTH LOW

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

SHANGHAI: China's yuan hovered near a 13-month low against the US dollar on Tuesday, pressured by bond yields near record-lows amid a slow economic recovery at home and higher-for-longer US rates dominating investors' minds.

The yield gap between 10-year Chinese and US bonds widened to the largest since November 2000, prompting investors to plow money into dollar-donominated assets for higher returns.

Yields on China's long-dated government bonds, including 10-year and 30-year, hovered near record lows at 1.69% and 1.95%, respectively, as investors head for 2025 betting there will be no sharp recovery in the economy. The spot yuan opened at 7.2950 per dollar and was last trading 14 pips lower than the previous late session close at 7.2984 as of 0230 GMT, close to levels last seen in November, 2023.

The onshore yuan has been trading just below the key 7.3 level in recent sessions.

Prior to the market opening, the People's Bank of China (PBOC) set the midpoint rate, around which the yuan is allowed to trade in a 2% band, at 7.1876 per dollar, 1,155 pips firmer than a Reuters' estimate.

DOLLAR EDGES HIGHER

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

NEW YORK: The dollar edged higher on Tuesday in thin holiday trading as the expected slower path of interest rate cuts from the US Federal Reserve compared with other global central banks continued to command market direction.

The greenback has jumped more than 7% since the end of September, powered in part by growing expectations the US economy will see accelerated growth under policies from President-elect Donald Trump, while sticky inflation has dampened expectations on how aggressive the Fed will be in reducing interest rates.

Those expectations for the US stand in contrast to growth forecasts and the interest rate views for other global economies and central banks, which have led to expanding interest rate differentials.

The Fed last week projected a more measured path of rate cuts than the market had been anticipating, providing another boost to US Treasury yields, with the benchmark 10-year note yield reaching a 7-month high of 4.629% on Tuesday.

"The markets are all having a little bit of a Christmas bonus with the election and they're expecting positive things," said Joseph Trevisani, senior analyst at FX Street in New York.

"Certainly that's true for the dollar because we've seen a pullback in the expectations for further rate cuts, and as we all know, the most important factor for the currency markets is the rate structure between the central banks."

The dollar index, which measures the greenback against a basket of currencies, rose 0.14% to 108.24, with the euro down 0.15% at $1.0389. The index is on track for its fifth gain in the past six sessions.

Trading volumes are likely to be thin through next week as the year draws to a close, with the economic calendar very light, and analysts expect rates to be the main driver for the foreign exchange market until the US employment report on Jan. 10.

Sterling weakened 0.06% to $1.2527.

Against the yen, the dollar strengthened 0.1% to 157.34 as the Japanese currency remains near levels that have recently prompted Japanese authorities to intervene in an effort to support it.

Minutes from the Bank of Japan's meeting last week showed policymakers agreed in October to keep raising interest rates if the economy moves in line with their forecast, but some stressed the need for caution on uncertainty over US economic policy.

Trump's return to the White House has brought about uncertainty over how his expected policies for tariffs, lower taxes and immigration curbs might affect policy.

ASIAN CURRENCIES MUTED AS DOLLAR NEAR 2-YEAR PEAK

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

BENGALURU: Emerging Asian stock markets were higher on Tuesday and currencies traded broadly flat against a stronger dollar as investors braced for fewer rate cuts by the Federal Reserve in the coming year.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose up to 0.6%, tracking overnight gains on Wall Street. The MSCI index of international emerging markets equities also rose 0.3%.

Equities in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand added between 0.3% and 0.5%.

"Positioning levels have remained relatively subdued in Asia, with most markets near neutral. The recent trend, however, remains consistent, with rising bearish flows, which has rapidly reduced net positioning," analysts at Citi said in a note. Fed policymakers lowered their rate cut projections for 2025 last week to 50 basis points, from 100 basis points, and increased their inflation forecast.

Markets are now pricing in just about 35 basis points of easing for 2025, which has in turn sent US Treasury yields surging and the dollar to new highs.

Against a basket of currencies, the US dollar was perched near a two-year peak. US Treasury yields also rose overnight, with the 10-year yield reaching its highest level in nearly seven months.

Higher US rates could lead to currency and capital flow problems for emerging markets. The dollar's yield advantage could drive capital out of their markets while weakening their currencies, potentially spawning inflationary pressures and market volatility.

The Indonesian rupiah was last down 0.2%, still hovering near the 16,200 per dollar level, and the Chinese yuan was near a 13-month low.

Business & Finance » Industry

WEXNET 2025: A CELEBRATION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Press Release Published 7 minutes ago

LAHORE: The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), is thrilled to announce the 12th edition of WexNet 2025. This premier event, exclusively organized to showcasing the exceptional talents of Pakistan's women entrepreneurs, will be held at the Lahore Expo Centre from January 10 to January 12, 2025.

WEXNET 2025 is dedicated to empowering women entrepreneurs in Pakistan, with over 200 participants displaying a diverse range of products and services, surpassing last year's turnout.

The exhibition features textiles, apparel, jewellery, handicrafts, cookware, herbal skincare, e-commerce, and export-ready goods. Esteemed participants include members from trade bodies like the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Women Chambers of Commerce and Industry from Lahore, Multan, Rawalpindi, Karachi and many more, representing the talent and innovation of women-led businesses.

Vocational training institutions like Sanat Zar and Qasr-e-Bahbood will also contribute, offering attendees an inspiring glimpse into heritage crafts, contemporary designs, and sustainable solutions, reflecting the vibrant creativity of Pakistan's women entrepreneurs.

TDAP, as a key driver of Pakistan's economic growth, is committed to supporting women entrepreneurs and providing them with a platform to showcase their products and connect with potential buyers. By organizing WexNet, TDAP aims to foster business partnerships, facilitate market access and empower women to contribute to the nation's economic development.

WexNet 2025 invites families, businesses, and individuals to join in celebrating the achievements of Pakistan's talented women entrepreneurs. With free entry for families and extended hours from 10 a.m to 9 p.m, this event offers a unique opportunity to experience the finest of Pakistani women's entrepreneurial excellence, craftsmanship and innovation – all under one roof.

PISMIDA TEAM VISITS JCC, TCC

Recorder Report Published 11 minutes ago

LAHORE: delegation from the Pakistan Industrial Sewing Machine Importers and Dealers Association (PISMIDA), led by Muhammad Umair Head of International Trade Affairs, visited the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Tokyo Chamber of Commerce to discuss opportunities for collaboration between Japan and Pakistan.

The PISMIDA delegation met with Yoichi Tomizawa, the Chief Manager of the International Division of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Tokyo Chamber of Commerce. During the meeting, Umair outlined potential areas of collaboration, including joint startup programs, conferences, seminars, and Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) services from Pakistan.

The discussions centered on creating business facilities to enhance trade relations between the two countries, with a particular emphasis on opening doors for Pakistani traders to access the Japanese market. A key outcome of the meeting was the agreement that Pakistani traders would have the opportunity to exhibit their products in Japan, paving the way for further strengthening bilateral trade and business relations.

The delegation's visit marks a significant step in promoting greater economic cooperation and fostering long-term partnerships between Japan and Pakistan.

The Pakistan Industrial Sewing Machine Importers and Dealers Association (PISMIDA) is a leading industry body dedicated to supporting the interests of businesses in the industrial sewing machine sector. The association advocates for trade facilitation and promotes business growth opportunities both locally and internationally.

IMTIAZ REELECTED PAK-US BUSINESS COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

Recorder Report Published 33 minutes ago

KARACHI: Renowned businessman Shaikh Imtiaz Hussain has once again been elected as Chairman of the Pak-US Business Council FPCCI for 2025, reaffirming his leadership and commitment to fostering bilateral business relations between the two countries.

Imtiaz is MD of Imtiaz Enterprises, President America Pakistan Business Development Forum, Pakistan Youth Parliament, President Trade and Industry Pakistan Excellence Club, Secretary General Swiss Business Council and President Pakistan Agriculture and Horticulture Forum.

He has also served as Deputy Governor Rotary International, President Rotary Club of Karachi Avenue and other important positions. Imtiaz is also working to promote trade, cultural and economic relations between Pakistan and US and other countries.

On his reappointment, Imtiaz has assured to play an important role in promoting business relations and foreign investment with the US. He is determined to further promote bilateral trade during the visit of the newly elected US President Donald Trump.

He informed that with the efforts of Pak-US Business Council, US State of Georgia and Pakistan's Sindh province have established sister state province relations under a resolution passed by Georgia's legislature. The resolution was introduced by State Representative Farooq Mughal, a Democratic party leader of Pakistan origin, he added.

He said that the Pak-US Business Council of FPCCI has consistently strived to promote mutual trade and commerce while enhancing the potential for educational, environmental, and cultural ties between Pakistan and the United States. He further assured that the Pak-US Business Council FPCCI will continue to play a pivotal role in strengthening bilateral trade between the two nations.

Imtiaz expressed his gratitude to S.M. Tanveer, the Group Patron-in-Chief of the United Business Group (UBG), Atif Akram Sheikh, President of FPCCI, and the other esteemed leaders for their unwavering support and encouragement.

PAK-US TRADE VOLUME CROSSES $7BN MARK IN 2023: FPCCI

Press Release Published December 25, 2024

KARACHI: Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has apprised that U.S. is one of the few countries in the world with which Pakistan enjoys a bilateral trade surplus; and, Pak – U.S. trade volume had crossed $7 billion mark in 2023 and continues to increase in 2024 as it has crossed $6.3 billion in the first 10 months of January – October 2024.

President FPCCI added that, from the perspective of the business, industry and trade community, we believe that this volume can potentially be doubled within a short-span of few years – given the demand of Pakistani products in the U.S.; surging information technology exports and anticipated diversification of Pakistani exports basket for the U.S.

Atif Ikram Sheikh informed that Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, Ambassador of Pakistan in the U.S., has started a consultative process with FPCCI – aimed at exploring ways and means to achieve exponential growth in exports to the U.S. It is pertinent to note that Hanif Channa, Minister for Trade & Investment in Embassy of Pakistan, Washington DC, gave a detailed briefing on the outreach initiatives being undertaken with the U.S. Congress, Senate, federal administration and various states for trade promotion.

Atif Ikram Sheikh maintained that U.S. GSP Program may be renewed and expanded; and, Pakistani exporters should remain agile and committed to make full use of the opportunities the enormous export market of the U.S. has to offer to Pakistan. He maintained that 55 percent

Pakistani exports to the U.S. comprise of textiles; however, other sectors are catching up as IT exports to the U.S. have crossed the $1 billion psychological mark.

Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI, emphasized that, apart from textiles, Pakistan should focus on IT, pharma, jewelry and human resource exports to the U.S. – like our neighboring India has done on a mega-scale. Pakistani exporters need to maintain quality, standards and compliance of their exports and the Pakistani government needs to ensure regionally-competitive cost of doing business – specifically, vis-à-vis access to finance and electricity tariffs, he added.

Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, Ambassador of Pakistan in the U.S., stressed the facts that Pakistan has a very large and influential diaspora of 1 million Pakistani-Americans in the U.S.; Pakistan is the largest importer of American cotton in the world; 40,000 Pakistani doctors are working in America; 5,000 Pakistani nursing staff will soon be exported to the U.S. and pharmacists are expected to follow; U.S. considers Pakistan a strategic partner in the war against terror; bilateral defense ties remain strong and U.S. continues to be one of the top countries from where Pakistan receives foreign remittances.

Ambassador Sheikh explained that only the economies of California and Texas alone are the world's 4th and 6th largest economies respectively – and, that pretty much sums up the importance of economic, trade, industrial, investment and B2B relations with the U.S. Things which seem impossible in political diplomacy can be achieved in economic diplomacy; and, that is where our emphasis is, he added.

TDAP HYDERABAD ORGANISES 'NATIONAL EXPORTERS TRAINING PROGRAMME 2024'

Recorder Report Published December 25, 2024

HYDERABAD: Acting President of Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry, Ahmed Idrees Chohan, stated that the chamber has always been at the forefront of promoting small and medium-sized enterprises.

He emphasized the significance of training sessions for the establishment and growth of new businesses in Hyderabad, as these not only provide essential information but also offer exporters opportunities to enhance their skills to meet international standards. He expressed these views while addressing the "National Exporters Training Program 2024" organized by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Hyderabad.

Chohan highlighted the pivotal role of digital marketing in exporting Pakistani products abroad. He pointed out that in today's era, international platforms evaluate exporters' company profiles on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, and their market value is determined by their digital presentation. Therefore, he urged all exporters in Hyderabad to ensure their company profiles are complete and updated on digital platforms.

He commended the efforts of TDAP Hyderabad's in-charge, Salahuddin Abbasi, stating that such training programs serve as milestones in educating new entrepreneurs and exporters about their responsibilities and opportunities. Through these initiatives, the business environment in Pakistan can be further strengthened, paving the way for economic growth.

Afshan Aroos, Deputy Manager and Coordinator of TDAP Karachi, delivered presentation on formal exports and export fund generation. She stressed the importance of selecting a single market, understanding product HS codes, and using proper banking channels to advance exports. She added that TDAP annually organizes multiple exhibitions in engineering, healthcare, automobiles, and textiles, providing exporters' opportunities to connect with buyers from Asia, Europe, and African nations. Additionally, TDAP's website contains details of over 5,000 international buyers from various countries. She pointed out that Pakistan has approximately 17,000 exporters, of which only 1,799 are major exporters, while the majority is small exporters. Sindh's share of exporters is relatively low, and TDAP is actively collaborating with all stakeholders to address this.

She emphasized the demand for halal product certificate holders in markets like Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim countries. She urged new exporters to explore this sector. She also mentioned funding opportunities for exports, highlighting that the State Bank of Pakistan and National Bank have launched several easy loan schemes, including loans of up to 5 million PKR on flexible terms for new businesswomen.

Salahuddin Abbasi, In-charge of Sub-Regional Office TDAP, Hyderabad's noted that the agricultural production in the Hyderabad region is worth trillions of rupees. However, according to traders, Hyderabad does not receive the same priority from the government as Karachi and Lahore when it comes to exports. He explained that the session aimed to address the concerns of traders in the Hyderabad region. He acknowledged the collaboration of the Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry, along with other stakeholders, in making the program successful. The program aimed to resolve issues related to buyers and banking channels in exports and facilitate funding for exporters.

On this occasion, organizations such as Pakistan Single Window and SMEDA, which provide facilities for various businesses in Pakistan, also delivered presentations.

Business & Finance » Companies

ALIBABA ANNOUNCES LAUNCH OF TRADE ASSURANCE IN COUNTRY

Recorder Report Published December 25, 2024

ISLAMABAD: Alibaba. com, a leading global business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce platform, Tuesday announced the launch of Trade Assurance in Pakistan, enabling local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to trade with enhanced confidence.

With this launch, Pakistan joins the ranks of a select few markets where Alibaba.com has introduced this valued service for suppliers.

The launch was announced at the 2025 Alibaba.com Pakistan Supplier Export Summit, held in Sialkot, a hub of industrial excellence. At the event, Alibaba.com shared insights into the growth opportunities and emerging trends within the global apparel industry, which is projected to reach a market size of $1.79 trillion in 2024, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 2.81% from 2024 to 20281.

"Alibaba.com's decision to hold the Pakistan Supplier Export Summit in Sialkot underscores the city's industrial importance and potential," said IkramUl Haq, President of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "This event has brought immense value to our local businesses by connecting them with global opportunities and introducing the tools needed to succeed in international markets. Initiatives like this reflect Alibaba.com's dedication to supporting Sialkot's SMEs to grow and thrive on a global scale."

Global B2B trade can be fraught with challenges, including concerns over costs, product quality, shipment timelines, and more. Trade Assurance, a proprietary order protection service offered by Alibaba.com, alleviates some of these risks, providing both suppliers and buyers with confidence throughout the entire transaction process. Suppliers who opt for this service can conduct business with peace of mind, knowing that their transactions are securely safeguarded by a trusted platform. The service stipulates that the buyer makes payment at the time of purchase, with the funds held in escrow by Alibaba.com until the buyer confirms the satisfactory receipt of the order within a reasonable timeframe.

"Pakistan represents a high-potential supplier market for Alibaba.com, boasting robust production capabilities and a diverse range of product categories that capture substantial global buyer interest. To capitalize on this potential, we have introduced the Trade Assurance service in Pakistan. This service is designed to foster trust between suppliers and global buyers while streamlining transaction processes. Our goal is to enhance efficiency and unlock new business opportunities for Pakistan suppliers to support their growth and success," said Roger Luo, Head of Southeast Asia at Alibaba.com.

Participating suppliers stand to benefit significantly from Trade Assurance, as the service not only enhances buyers' trust in them but also allows them to build a robust online transaction history. By enhancing their online profile, suppliers can improve their ranking and visibility on Alibaba.com, ultimately leading to a wealth of future business opportunities.

"Trust is the foundation of success in international trade. When dealing with buyers from different parts of the world, ensuring that both sides feel secure is critical. Trade Assurance bridges this trust gap by offering payment protection and transparent processes, which are crucial for fostering long-term relationships. With this service, buyers feel confident placing large orders, and sellers like us can focus on delivering quality products without worrying about payment risks," said Tayyub Hussnain, Founder of Norwich Streetwear, a Sialkot-based verified supplier on Alibaba.com specializing in custom apparel. In 2023, the company secured more than $1 million's worth of orders through Alibaba.com.

"We are thrilled to bring Trade Assurance to Pakistan. Conducting transactions through this service will enable Pakistani SMEs to build a robust online transaction history, bolster their credit ratings, and enhance their reputation with global buyers. We believe the comprehensive order protection it offers can reduce trade barriers for SMEs, opening pathways for them to flourish in the global marketplace," said Summer Gao, Head of Global Supply Chain Services at Alibaba.com.

The 2025 Alibaba.com Pakistan Supplier Export Summit brought together more than 500 SME representatives from Sialkot to explore emerging business trends, innovative technologies and future-ready solutions poised to redefine their operations in the digital era. Recognizing Pakistan's strong position in the apparel sector, Alibaba.com highlighted the potential for local businesses to penetrate international markets, driven by global demand for quality apparel products.

To bolster Pakistani clothing suppliers, Alibaba.com has recently introduced a suite of services tailored specifically for the apparel industry, offering tools and resources that enhance product visibility, streamline operations and facilitate connections with buyers worldwide. This strategic focus on the apparel sector aims to help Pakistani businesses maximize their growth potential and strengthen their presence in the competitive global market.

OGDCL REVIVES WELL IN SINDH, ACHIEVES OIL & GAS PRODUCTION

BR Web Desk Published December 24, 2024

Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), the country's largest exploration and production (E&P) company, has revived an oil well located in Tando Allah Yar district, Sindh.

Following the revival, OGDCL achieved hydrocarbon production. The company announced this development in its notice to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Tuesday.

"OGDCL is pleased to announce the successful revival of Dars West-2 Well, achieving hydrocarbon production from a new interval; the B-Sand of the Lower Goru Formation," stated the notice.

The E&P was of the view that the achievement underscores its commitment to maximising hydrocarbon recovery through innovative and efficient rigless interventions.

"As previously announced by the company on December 8, 2023, Dars West-2 Well was completed in the C-Sand of the Lower Goru Formation and integrated into the production system on 31st January 2024.

"However, due to a decline in wellhead production, the well ceased to flow on September 24, 2024,"it shared.

OGDCL added that subsequent analysis, including a Bottom Hole Pressure & Temperature (BHP&T) survey, revealed no further production prospects in the C-Sand interval.

"Following this assessment, the C-Sand was isolated, and the well was successfully perforated and completed in the B-Sand of the Lower Goru Formation.

"Currently, Dars West-2 Well is contributing 200 barrels per day (bpd) of oil, 8 million standard cubic feet per day (mmscfd) of gas, and 37 metric tons per day (mtd) of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)," stated the company.

OGDCL said that the produced gas is being processed at its Kunnar Pasakhi Deep-Tando Allah Yar Plant and is integrated into Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL) network, supporting the national gas supply.

Located in Sindh, the Dars West-2 Well lies within the Dars West Development and Production Lease (D&PL), with OGDCL serving as the operator (77.5% working interest) and GHPL as a joint venture partner (22.5% carried).

Recently, OGDCL revived a heavy oil well within its northern region field located in Punjab.

As per the company's latest financial results, OGDCL reported a profit-after-tax (PAT) of Rs41.02 billion for the quarter ended September 30, 2024, a decline of over 16% as compared to Rs49.03 billion in the same period of the previous year.

Earnings per share (EPS) were recorded at Rs9.54 in 1QFY25 as compared to EPS of Rs11.40 in the same period of the previous year.

SAUDI ARABIA'S FLYADEAL TO SERVE PAKISTAN IN MAJOR EXPANSION DRIVE

Monitoring Desk Published December 25, 2024

KARACHI: Saudi low-cost carrier flyadeal announced Tuesday plans to launch scheduled flights to Pakistan's commercial capital, Karachi, starting February 2, 2025. According to an airline statement, this marks the start of a major international expansion drive by the budget carrier and heralds the airline's first scheduled service to Pakistan and South Asia.

Starting February 2, Karachi will be served twice weekly by the Saudi capital, Riyadh, and the commercial hub of Jeddah. According to CEO Steven Greenway, more cities are in the pipeline. "I would like to applaud the Pakistani authorities and our planning team for working diligently to bring a new market into flyadeal's family of year-round destinations, with more cities in Pakistan in the pipeline," Greenway added.

Technology

CHINA'S XIAOMI KICKS OFF EV CHARGING PARTNERSHIPS WITH NIO, LI AUTO AND XPENG

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

BEIJING: Chinese upstart electric vehicle maker Xiaomi announced partnerships on Wednesday with local EV specialists Nio, Li Auto and Xpeng on charging services.

China's Xiaomi to start deliveries of its first EV model

More than 6,000 charging piles from Li Auto, over 9,000 from Xpeng and more than 14,000 from Nio will be accessible in Xiaomi's charging map, Xiaomi posted on China's Weibo platform.

SAIC SAYS ITS EV BRAND IM MOTORS SECURES $1.3BN IN SERIES B FUNDING

Reuters Published December 25, 2024

BEIJING: China's SAIC Motor said on Wednesday its EV brand IM Motors has completed a Series B fundraising round, securing 9.4 billion yuan ($1.3 billion), although details about the investors were not disclosed.

Chinese firms take on EV truck challenges

IM Motors will launch two pure electric models and two extended-range models, totalling four new products, in 2025, SAIC said in a statement.

GLOBAL CONNECTIVITY: PTA MAKES STRIDES

Tahir Amin Published December 25, 2024

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has made significant strides in enhancing international connectivity through the facilitation of Transworld Associate (TWA), the landing partner of 2Africa Submarine cable for Pakistan.

As one of the world's largest submarine cable systems, the 2Africa cable spans 45,000 kilometres and connecting 46 locations across Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Utilising SDM1 technology, it offers 180Tbps capacity.

Supported by a global consortium of eight partners, including Meta and Vodafone, the 2Africa cable is set to go live in Pakistan by Q4, 2025.

Commencement of Phase 1 of the project, involving Pre-Lay Shore End (PLSE) installation, began on December 1, 2024, with the cable landing at Hawksbay, Karachi. Phase 2, the deep-sea cable lay will commences on April 1, 2025.

This project will improve Pakistan's international telecommunications infrastructure and enhance connectivity.

Pakistan's international connectivity is underpinned by a strong network of undersea fibre optic cables and terrestrial links. The country boasts seven submarine cable connections and the Pak-China Optical Fibre Cable, complemented by 21 cross-border terrestrial links. With an installed capacity of 16.4 Tbps, this network ensures redundancy, reliable Internet access, and resilience against disruptions.

The impact of this infrastructure is evident in a significant increase in the quality and availability of digital services, with data usage rising by 24.2 percent to 25,141 petabytes (mobile: 13,021 petabytes, fixed: 12,120 petabytes) for fiscal year 2023 24. To further enhance connectivity, four additional submarine cables are currently under development.

Markets » Energy

OIL PRICES EDGE HIGHER ON HOPES FOR MORE CHINA STIMULUS

Reuters Published 29 minutes ago

TOKYO: Oil prices edged higher on Thursday in thin holiday trading, driven by hopes for additional fiscal stimulus in China, the world's biggest oil importer, while an anticipated decline in U.S. crude inventories also provided support.

Brent crude futures rose 11 cents, or 0.2%, to $73.69 a barrel by 0148 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude was at $70.25 a barrel, up 15 cents, or 0.2%, from Tuesday's pre-Christmas settlement.

China plans to boost fiscal support for consumption next year by increasing pensions and medical insurance subsidies for residents and expanding trade-ins for consumer goods, according to a finance ministry announcement on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Chinese authorities have agreed to issue 3 trillion yuan ($411 billion) worth of special treasury bonds next year, Reuters reported on Tuesday, citing two sources, as Beijing ramps up fiscal stimulus to revive a faltering economy.

"Hopes for China's stimulus measures are supporting the market," said Satoru Yoshida, a commodity analyst at Rakuten Securities.

"Expectations that fossil fuel production and demand will expand after Donald Trump takes office as U.S. President next month are also bolstering oil prices," he added.

An anticipated decline in U.S. crude and fuel inventories was also supporting the market.

An extended Reuters poll showed on Tuesday that crude inventories are expected to have fallen by about 1.9 million barrels in the week to Dec. 20. Gasoline and distillate inventories are seen falling by 1.1 million barrels and 0.3 million barrels, respectively.

U.S. crude oil and distillate stocks fell last week, market sources said, citing American Petroleum Institute figures on Tuesday.

Oil prices rise in thin pre-holiday trade

The latest data from the Energy Information Administration, the statistical arm of the U.S. Department of Energy, is due at 1 p.m. EST (1800 GMT) on Friday.

On the supply side, Libya's National Oil Corp (NOC) said on Wednesday that the country's average crude production in 2024 exceeded its target of around 1.4 million barrels per day.

SNGPL CLARIFICATION

Published about 2 hours ago

LAHORE: This is with reference to news published with subject "Local gas cuts cause $194m loss to economy in 4 months" published in some sections of media on Wednesday, December 25, 2024)

The recent claims regarding the closure of indigenous gas fields in favour of imported RLNG require clarification. The gas was closed in some part of December when power was not off taking RLNG per its demand. All the gas producing fields are open and producing gas per optimum production. Power has started picking up RLNG per demand since last 4-5 days.

It is highlighted that SNGPL system can store up to a maximum of 2 days of unutilized RLNG supplies in the pipelines as there is no separate gas storage facility available in the country.

The total curtailment undertaken in last 4 months is less than 100 MMCFD while the figure of 329 MMCFD curtailment indicated in the The News today under the heading "Local gas cuts cost $ 194 million loss to the economy in 4 months" is not correct.

The curtailment is only undertaken in the low demand/ lean months of the years when the Power sector fails to pick up in accordance with firm demand given by it. The gas fields operate optimally during the most parts of the year while the circular debt has also been addressed thru adjustment in gas prices. E&P companies are now getting regular payments for their gas supplies owing to GOP intervention in the matter.

INDIAN STATE REFINERS MAY BUY MIDEAST SPOT OIL TO REPLACE RUSSIAN SHORTFALL

Reuters Published about 2 hours ago

NEW DELHI: Indian state refiners are considering tapping the Middle East crude market as spot supply from their top supplier Russia have fallen, three refining sources said, in a move that could support prices for high-sulphur oil.

The three large state refiners- Indian Oil Corp, Bharat Petroleum Corp and Hindustan Petroleum - are short of 8-10 million barrels of Russian oil for January loading, the sources told Reuters.

The refiners fear continued problems in securing Russian oil in the spot market could continue in coming months as Moscow's own demand is rising and it has to meet commitments under the OPEC pact.

However, they added that they can draw from their inventories to meet crude processing needs in March.

Two of the sources said their company may lift more crude from Middle East suppliers under optional volumes in term contracts or to float a spot tender for high-sulphur oil.

IOC, the country's top refiner, previously floated spot tenders to buy sour grades in March 2022.

The companies did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

India became the largest importer of Russian crude after the European Union, previously the top buyer, imposed sanctions on Russian oil imports in response to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Russian oil accounts for more than a third of India's energy imports.

Russia's spot crude exports have fallen since November as its refineries resumed operations after the maintenance season and poor weather disrupted shipping activities, traders said.

"We have to explore alternative grades as Russia's own demand is rising and it has to meet its commitments under OPEC," said another of the three sources.

Russia, an ally of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, promised to make extra cuts to its oil output from the end of 2024 to compensate for overproduction earlier.

Also, most supplies from Russia's state oil firm Rosneft are tied up in a deal with Indian private refiner Reliance Industries, Reuters reported earlier this month.

The new deal accounts for roughly half of Rosneft's seaborne oil exports from Russian ports, leaving little supply available for spot sales, sources told Reuters earlier this month.

CCP HIGHLIGHTS INEFFICIENCIES OF STATE MONOPOLIES OF DISCOS

Recorder Report Published December 25, 2024

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) Tuesday highlighted the inefficiencies of state monopolies of power distributing companies, a global issue that often leads to a lack of transparency and accountability.

The CCP organised a dissemination session at its head office to present key findings and actionable recommendations from its recently published Competition Assessment Study on the power sector.

The session, led by CCP Members Saeed Ahmad Nawaz, Salman Amin and Bushra Naz Malik, focused on the study's insights and discussed the next steps for improving competition within the sector.

Saeed Ahmad Nawaz, Member CCP, emphasised the need for corporate governance to address these inefficiencies. Drawing comparisons with the telecommunications and banking sectors, he noted "how competition has provided consumers with more choices and reduced government control." He stressed that decentralization are key to fostering efficiency and attracting foreign investment.

The session was specifically designed to elaborate on the regulatory framework, market structure and barriers to competition while offering strategic recommendations to promote a more competitive environment in the power sector. Among the key recommendations discussed was the implementation of the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contract Market (CTBCM) model. This model enables power generation and distribution companies to establish direct contracts for electricity sales, marking a significant step toward introducing retail competition in Pakistan's electricity market.

Senior officials from various organizations attended, including the Ministry of Energy (Power Division), National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), Privatization Commission, Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA), Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (Pedo), Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco), Lahore Electric Supply Company (Lesco), Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco), Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco), Gujranwala Electric Power Company Limited (Gepco), Punjab Power Development Board, and the Energy & Power Department KPK.

Kishware Khan (Director General) and Samiullah Jan Afridi (Assistant Director) delivered an in-depth presentation on the Competition Assessment Study, outlining its methodology, key findings and actionable recommendations.

The session saw active participation from stakeholders, with numerous questions and valuable comments, all of which were addressed by CCP officials. Through its research and advocacy, CCP aims to create a fair, efficient, and competitive marketplace that benefits consumers and businesses alike.

US NATGAS PRICES HIT 23-MONTH HIGH ON INCREASED LNG FEEDGAS, HEATING DEMAND

Reuters Published about 2 hours ago

NEW YORK: US natural gas futures hit a 23-month high on Tuesday in thin pre-holiday trading, supported by an increase in the amount of gas flowing to liquefied natural gas export plants, and forecasts for more cold weather in January than previously expected.

Front-month gas futures for January delivery on the New York Mercantile Exchange settled 29 cents higher, or 7.9%, to $3.946 per million British thermal units, their highest close since January 2023.

“As most of the marginal demand comes from the residential and commercial sectors due to heating needs, weather is the most important factor that determines the gas price in winter. We still have a lot of winter left and the uncertainty about weather tends to push up gas prices,” said Zhen Zhu, managing consultant at C.H. Guernsey and Company in Oklahoma City.

Financial firm LSEG estimated 376 heating degree days over the next two weeks, compared with 370 estimated on Monday.

“Much of today’s rebound appears prompted by less bearish temperature outlooks within the 6–14-day portion of the NOAA forecast,” energy advisory firm Ritterbusch and Associates said in a note.

Mild temperatures are expected to subside later next week in limiting downside possibilities, Ritterbusch said.

The amount of gas flowing to the eight big US LNG export plants rose to an average of 14.6 billion cubic feet per day so far in December from 13.6 bcfd in November. That compares with a monthly record high of 14.7 bcfd in December 2023.

LSEG said average gas output in the Lower 48 US states rose to 103 bcfd so far in December from 101.5 bcfd in November. That compares with a record 105.3 bcfd in December 2023.

It also forecast average gas demand in the Lower 48, including exports, rising to 132.6 bcfd this week from 124.7 bcfd in the prior week.

Meanwhile, Venture Global LNG wants to extend the force majeure at its Calcasieu Pass LNG plant in Louisiana to 2025, delaying first supplies under long-term contracts to three years after starting production, according to its initial public offering document.

Dutch and British wholesale gas prices were slightly up on Wednesday in thin trading ahead of Christmas holidays across Europe, as uncertainty remains over Russian gas flows when the Ukraine gas transit deal expires at the year-end.

OIL PRICES RISE IN THIN PRE-HOLIDAY TRADE

Reuters Published about 2 hours ago

NEW YORK: Oil prices rose more than 1% on Tuesday, reversing the prior session's losses on a brightening short-term outlook tied to the prospect of slightly tightening supplies as trade thinned ahead of the Christmas and Hanukkah holidays.

Brent crude futures settled at $73.58, rising 95 cents, or 1.3%. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures settled at $70.10, rising 86 cents, or 1.2%. FGE analysts said they expect the benchmark prices will fluctuate around current levels in the near term "as activity in the paper markets decreases during the holiday season and market participants stay on the sidelines until they get a clearer view of 2024 and 2025 global oil balances."

Supply and demand changes in December have been supportive of their current less-bearish view so far, the FGE analysts said in a note. "Given how short the paper market is on positioning, any supply disruption could lead to upward spikes in structure," they added. Some analysts also pointed to signs of greater oil demand over the next few months. "The year is ending with the consensus from major agencies over long 2025 liquids balances starting to break down," Neil Crosby, Sparta Commodities' assistant vice president of oil analytics, said in a note.

"The EIA's short-term energy outlook recently shifted their 2025 liquids to a draw, despite continuing to bring back some OPEC+ barrels next year," Crosby said.

US crude oil and distillate stocks were seen falling last week by 3.2 million barrels and 2.5 million barrels, respectively, while gasoline stocks were seen rising last week, market sources said, citing American Petroleum Institute figures.

Gasoline inventories were seen rising by 3.9 million barrels. The figures come ahead of data from the Energy Information Administration, the statistical arm of the US Department of Energy, at 1 p.m. EST (1800 GMT) on Friday.

Also supporting prices was a plan by China, the world's biggest oil importer, to issue 3 trillion yuan ($411 billion) worth of special treasury bonds next year, as Beijing ramps up fiscal stimulus to revive a faltering economy.

China's stimulus is likely to provide near-term support for WTI crude at $67 a barrel, said OANDA senior market analyst Kelvin Wong. Markets will also be watching the US economy, the world's largest oil consumer, which released a mixed bag of data.

While consumer confidence weakened in December, new orders for key US-manufactured capital goods surged in November amid strong demand for machinery and new home sales rebounded, suggesting the US economy was on a solid footing as the year closes out. US markets will be closed on Wednesday, Dec. 25, and there will be no global oil market report for the day.

'POWER BUREAUCRACY DISCOURAGING CONSUMERS OF SOLAR ENERGY'

Recorder Report Published December 25, 2024

KARACHI: The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, Mian Zahid Hussain, said that the power bureaucracy is systematically discouraging domestic, commercial and industrial consumers of solar energy, which is regrettable.

He said that due to the unaffordable electricity prices, the public and business community are increasingly inclined to use solar energy. Still, instead of cooperating in this regard, power distribution companies are putting up obstacles.

He said that a domestic consumer has to pay an additional cost of forty to sixty thousand to install a green meter. Some reports suggest that the reading of a single-phase meter is taken from the front, where the consumed units are visible. At the same time, the camera is tilted while reading a green meter so that the reading is not visible, and the consumer can be easily deceived.

He said that there is a huge difference between the electricity production of the inverter of solar consumers and the production reported by the power company, and the user always loses.

The business leader said that the billing system for green meters has been kept so complicated that 99% of the users don't understand it.

He said that officers of various power distribution companies take six to eight months to grant industrial users permission for solar energy, and many cases have been pending for years.

Similarly, industrial users using solar energy are not even allowed to expand power generation. They are forced to increase the number of solar panels independently; they have to face raids and power disconnections, which destroy their businesses.

He said that the laws made in this regard are one-sided, and consumers are not heard. The power sector bureaucracy is forcing them to use expensive and irregular grid electricity.

He noted that by closing industries, industrialists have to bear the loss of production and reputation, the government suffers a huge revenue loss, and people working in these industries become unemployed.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the government should review these issues and balance them by amending the laws so that violations of the rights of domestic, commercial, and industrial consumers are stopped.

Renewable energy sources are being encouraged all over the world. Governments support and encourage those who use solar power. Until some time ago, the same was happening in Pakistan, too, but now it is being reversed, which is condemnable.

OGDCL REVIVES DARS WEST-2 WELL, BOOSTING HYDROCARBON OUTPUT

December 24, 2024

Karachi, December 24, 2024 – The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has successfully revived hydrocarbon production from the Dars West-2 Well by tapping into a new interval, the B-Sand of the Lower Goru Formation. This significant milestone showcases OGDCL's innovative approach and its commitment to enhancing hydrocarbon recovery through advanced, rigless interventions.

In a statement to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), OGDCL highlighted that the Dars West-2 Well, initially completed in the C-Sand of the Lower Goru Formation, had been integrated into the production system on January 31, 2024. However, following a decline in wellhead pressure, the well ceased production on September 24, 2024.

Detailed analysis, including a Bottom Hole Pressure & Temperature (BHP&T) survey, revealed no further production potential in the C-Sand interval. Acting swiftly, OGDCL isolated the depleted C-Sand and perforated the B-Sand interval, successfully bringing the well back online.

Currently, the Dars West-2 Well is producing 200 barrels per day (BPD) of oil, 8.0 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of gas, and 37 metric tons per day (MTD) of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). The gas output is being processed at OGDCL's Kunnar Pasakhi Deep-Tando Allah Yar Plant and seamlessly integrated into the Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGC) network, ensuring a steady contribution to the national energy supply.

Located in Sindh's Tando Allah Yar district, the Dars West-2 Well lies within the Dars West Development and Production Lease (D7PL). OGDCL operates the field with a 77.5% working interest, while the Government Holdings Private Limited (GHPL) holds a 22.5% carried interest.

This revival underscores OGDCL's expertise in optimizing production from mature wells. By leveraging innovative technologies, OGDCL continues to play a pivotal role in bolstering Pakistan's domestic energy output. The success of the Dars West-2 Well is yet another testament to OGDCL's strategic focus on maximizing resource recovery and reinforcing its position as the nation's leading exploration and production company.

PPL ANNOUNCES SIGNIFICANT GAS DISCOVERY IN JAMSHORO, SINDH

December 24, 2024

Karachi, December 24, 2024 – Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) announced a major gas discovery in the Jamshoro district of Sindh Province, marking a promising development for the nation's energy sector.

In a statement to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), PPL revealed that the Kotri North Joint Venture, which includes United Energy Pakistan Limited (Operator with 50% working interest), PPL (40% working interest), and Asia Resources Oil Limited (10% working interest), has successfully uncovered hydrocarbons at the exploratory well Takri-1.

The Takri-1 well, situated in Jamshoro, Sindh, was spudded on November 11, 2024, and drilled to a total measured depth of 4,156 feet to evaluate the hydrocarbon potential of Late Cretaceous and Early Paleocene sands. Encouraging results from wireline logs and drilling data prompted the team to conduct Modular Dynamic Testing (MDT) on promising zones. The tests confirmed the presence of hydrocarbons in the interbedded sandstones of the Khadro Formation, dating back to the Paleocene Age.

Following the MDT results, the well was perforated and completed in the Khadro Formation. Completion Integrity Testing (CIT) confirmed the well's productivity, with hydrocarbons flowing at a rate of 2.4 million standard cubic feet per day (MMscfd) of gas at a flowing wellhead pressure (FWHP) of 1,053 psig, using a 20/64″ choke.

This discovery not only highlights the potential of the Khadro Formation's Paleocene sands but also underscores PPL's strategic commitment to expanding Pakistan's indigenous energy resources. The Takri-1 find is expected to contribute significantly to the nation's hydrocarbon reserves, helping alleviate the ongoing energy crisis and reducing reliance on costly imported fuels.

PPL's collaboration in the Kotri North Joint Venture demonstrates its continued leadership in exploration and production. By unlocking new reserves through cutting-edge exploration techniques, PPL reinforces its role in supporting the country's energy needs. The Takri-1 discovery is a testament to the company's expertise and dedication to addressing Pakistan's energy challenges while boosting economic stability through reduced foreign exchange expenditures.

Markets – Rates

OPEN MARKET FOREX RATES

Updated at: 26/12/2024 7:43 AM (PST)

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	174.75	177.00
Bahrain Dinar	735.65	743.65
Canadian Dollar	194.60	197.00
China Yuan	37.99	38.39
Danish Krone	39.15	39.55
Euro	288.35	291.10
Hong Kong Dollar	35.44	35.79
Indian Rupee	3.19	3.28
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.92
Kuwaiti Dinar	896.01	905.51
Malaysian Ringgit	61.59	62.19
NewZealand $	155.37	157.37
Norwegians Krone	24.41	24.71
Omani Riyal	719.50	728.00
Qatari Riyal	75.7	76.4
Saudi Riyal	73.80	74.35
Singapore Dollar	204.99	206.99
Swedish Korona	24.92	25.22
Swiss Franc	311.45	314.25
Thai Bhat	8	8.15
U.A.E Dirham	75.45	76.10
UK Pound Sterling	347.40	350.9
US Dollar	278.10	279.60

INTER BANK RATES

Updated at: 26/12/2024 7:43 AM (PST)

Currency	**Bank Buying TT Clean**	**Bank Selling TT & OD**
Australian Dollar	173.41	173.72
Canadian Dollar	193.32	193.67
China Yuan	38.07	38.14
Danish Krone	38.74	38.81
Euro	288.97	289.49
Hong Kong Dollar	35.79	35.86
Japanese Yen	1.7706	1.7738
Saudi Riyal	74.03	74.17
Singapore Dollar	204.63	205.00
Swedish Korona	25.15	25.20
Swiss Franc	309.18	309.73
Thai Bhat	8.13	8.15
UK Pound Sterling	348.48	349.11
US Dollar	278.05	278.55

GOLD RATE

Bullion / Gold Price Today

As on Thu, Dec 26 2024, 02:58 GMT

Metal	Symbol	PKR for 10 Gm	PKR for 1 Tola	PKR for 1 Ounce	
Gold	XAU	233,845	272,467	727,350	
Palladium	XPD	85,136	99,197	264,807	
Platinum	XPT	84,488	98,442	262,792	
Silver	XAG	2,651	3,088	8,244	

for local market Gold Rates in Pakistan

Gold Price in Pakistan

As on Thu, Dec 26 2024, 02:58 GMT

Gold Rate	24K Gold	22K Gold	21K Gold	18K Gold
per Tola Gold	Rs. 272500	Rs. 249790	Rs. 238438	Rs. 204375
per 10 Gram	Rs. 233600	Rs. 214132	Rs. 204400	Rs. 175200
per Gram Gold	Rs. 23360	Rs. 21413	Rs. 20440	Rs. 17520
per Ounce	Rs. 662200	Rs. 607012	Rs. 579425	Rs. 496650

Gold Rate

FOREX.pk offered latest and upto date Gold Rate in Pakistan as per International market for today gold rates in Pakistan you can visit GOLD.pk, We update international market gold rate in every fifteen minutes from authentic sources, Gold rates may be different in every city of Pakistan. Karachi is the main hub of gold market, in Pakistan, Karachi is leading for gold rate, every city follow Karachi Sarafa Bazar Association for gold price, Today gold prices for different cities including Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta are also available on Gold.pk. FOREX.pk is not liable or responsible to any transactions made on the basis of above mentioned gold rate.

* Above Gold rate are taken from International Market so there may be some fluctuation from Local Market you can visit GOLD.pk for uptodate today gold price in Pakistan.

Gold Rates in other Major Currencies

Currency	Symbol	10 Gm	1 Tola	1 Ounce	
China Yuan	CNY	6,135	7,148	19,083	
Euro	EUR	810	943	2,518	
Japanese Yen	JPY	132,291	154,141	411,479	
Saudi Riyal	SAR	3,154	3,675	9,810	
U.A.E Dirham	AED	3,089	3,599	9,608	
UK Pound Sterling	GBP	672	782	2,089	
US Dollar	USD	841	980	2,616	