

## Gwadar International Airport to benefit entire country's economy: PM Shehbaz

Islamabad (News Desk) The newly inaugurated Gwadar International Airport would not only benefit the economy of Balochistan but Pakistan's overall economy, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Tuesday during a federal cabinet meeting, according to Radio Pakistan.

Pakistan's largest airport, the Gwadar International Airport, became operational on Monday with the landing of the first PIA flight from Karachi carrying 46 passengers. Presiding over the federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad on Tuesday, PM She-

hbaz said the airport was constructed with the help of a \$230 million Chinese grant, adding that the airport "is a gift for Pakistan from China and we should honour it." He said the start of flight operations from Gwadar International Airport was "welcoming". The prime minister said the elements involved in killings in Balochistan were not only against Balochistan, but were the "enemies of Pakistan".

"Creating hurdles in completion of Gwadar Port is also animosity with Pakistan," PM Shehbaz said, adding that "the enemies

of Pakistan do not want [the] operationalisation of Gwadar Port." The premier also talked about other issues, including exports, electronic vehicles, and other economic indicators.

He said it was welcoming to witness a record increase of IT exports to the tune of \$346m in December last year. "We should also focus to push for more IT exports," he said. He added the government was also taking a number of steps to promote electric vehicles in Pakistan.

PM Shehbaz also welcomed the World Bank's pledge of providing \$20

billion under the country partnership framework for the next 10 years to support inclusive and sustainable development.

"Under this, country partnership framework, investment will be made in different social sectors of the country," he said.

The prime minister said all economic indicators were showing a positive trajectory, which was testament to the government's efforts to stabilise the economy.

He said the government is also making hectic efforts to provide the best facilities to Pakistani pilgrims during Hajj this year.



Prime Minister Shehbaz chairs a federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad on Tuesday said about Gwadar Airport that "is a gift for Pakistan from China and we should honour it."

## Govt in touch with UAE for Malik Riaz's extradition through legal route: NAB

Islamabad (News Desk) The federal government is reaching out to the United Arab Emirates regarding the extradition of property tycoon Malik Riaz through legal avenues, the country's accountability watchdog said on Tuesday. Riaz, the owner of Bahria Town and his son Ali Malik, who are currently said to be in the UAE, are declared proclaimed offenders in the Al-Qadir Trust case.

On January 9, 2024, an accountability court froze the properties of five co-accused in the case, including the father and son. In a cryptic post on social media last year, the property tycoon, who has a chequered history, complained that he was facing "pressure" to take a political side and was facing financial losses, but vowed not to be used as a "pawn for political motives". The statement was out of character for the Bahria Town owner, who is considered extremely well-connected with political parties, media and the country's civil and military establishment.

His past is littered with cases alleging the use of questionable and high-handed land acquisition tactics for his opulent real estate projects. He and his firm have also been at the centre of multiple court cases; most recently being ordered by the Supreme Court to pay the amount the real estate developer owed to the Sindh government for the acquisition of land for Bahria Town Karachi.

## Security forces neutralise Afghan national involved in terrorism during Zhob operation: ISPR



KPK (News Desk) Security forces have neutralised an Afghan national linked to terrorism in the country during an operation in Balochistan's Zhob district, the military's media wing said on Tuesday.

In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said, "On January 11, 2025, an Afghan national, involved in terrorism inside Pakistan, was killed in the Sambaza area of Zhob district of Balochistan." "The individual was identified as Muhammad Khan Ahmedkhal, Son of Haji Qasim Dawran Khan, resident of Village Bilorai, District Wazekhwa, Paktika Province, Afghanistan," the statement added.

## Govt swings into action after PTI threatens boycott

ISLAMABAD (News Desk) The government on Monday assured the PTI of a response to the opposition's charter of demands within seven working days, after the party warned it would boycott the next round of talks if judicial commissions were not formed to probe the May 9 and Nov 26 incidents.

"We have shared PTI's demands with all our allies in the ruling coalition and sought their suggestions on how to fulfil them," said Senator Irfan Siddiqui, a member of the government's ne-

gotiation team, while talking to media.

"We will give a serious, sympathetic response to the PTI within seven working days," he said, adding that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had formed a committee of all ruling allies to finalise the government's response, with its first meeting scheduled to be held shortly.

"We have also included some legal experts in the committee, including Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar, and asked our allies to obtain legal opinions from their respective legal teams

on the PTI demands and present their viewpoints in the committee's first meeting," he said.

"Once we gather suggestions from our partners, a unanimous reply will be prepared and presented to the prime minister." As agreed by the two sides, he said, the government will respond to the opposition within seven working days (by Jan 27 or 28), after which the reply will be presented before National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq during the next meeting.

Senator Siddiqui denied me-

dia reports suggesting that the government had refused to form a judicial commission, urging the media to avoid spreading baseless news that could undermine the dialogue process.

"Such news causes worries and uncertainty on the other side and can hamper the dialogue process," he cautioned.

Later, three members of the government's negotiation team — Ishaq Dar, Irfan Siddiqui, and Rana Sanaullah — called on PM Shehbaz to brief him on their meetings with the PTI.



Workers carrying green vegetables in wheelbarrows pass through a street during rain in Peshawar

## Miscreants' hideouts targeted in Kurram operation

PESHAWAR / KURRAM (News Desk) An operation to bring peace to the restive tribal district of Kurram entered its second day on Monday, as security forces used helicopters to target positions of miscreants in different parts of central Kurram. A curfew imposed on Jan 19 remained in place in Bagan and its surrounding regions due to the operation, which

has forced several families to move to Thall in Hangu via Chapri Phattak. Locals said two gunship helicopters carried out shelling on the suspected hideouts of militants in Pastwani, Manddara, Sangrobba and Jarni areas in the central Kurram. However, no loss on the part of miscreants was reported. Sources privy to the military-led operation against miscreants,

launched on Sunday night, said that weapons would be collected in different phases in accordance with the peace agreement signed by both groups on Dec 31. They said bunkers would be demolished, adding that the state had decided to take stern action against the miscreants in the district without any discrimination. The operation continued

even though some Kurram elders urged the police, administration, and military officials to postpone the operation owing to the cold weather, saying it would be difficult for the displaced persons to live in camps. The request however was turned down, with the officials saying the operation could not be delayed anymore for the sake of durable peace.

## 7,208 Pakistani prisoners freed from Saudi Arabia between 2019 and 2024: FO

Islamabad (News Desk) A total of 7,208 Pakistani prisoners have been released from Saudi prisons between 2019 and 2024, according to a written response from Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar shared in the Senate on Tuesday. The response was to a question from Senator Dr Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur regarding the announcement made for the release of 2,107 Pakistani prisoners in Saudi jails during the visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Pakistan in 2019 when the PTI was in power. The two-day historic visit of the crown prince in February 2019 had concluded with a significant announcement that 2,100 Pakistani prisoners languishing in Saudi Arabia's jails would be released soon. Dar's response mentioned the following breakdown provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Pakistani prisoners released from Saudi Arabia's prisons since the crown prince's visit. These included 545 prisoners in 2019, 892 in 2020, 916 in 2021, 1,331 in 2022, 1,394 in 2023, and 2,130 in 2024.

## Punjab passes bill for complete ban on kite flying

Lahore (News Desk) The Punjab Assembly on Tuesday imposed a complete ban on kite flying across the province with severe penalties for violation by enacting the Punjab Prohibition of Kite Flying (Amendment) Act, 2024.

The ban applies to "transport kites, metallic wire, nylon cord, any other thread coated with sharp manjha or any other injurious material for the purpose of kite flying."

According to the amendments, individuals caught flying kites will face three to five years in prison or a fine of Rs2 million, or both. Failure to pay the fine could result in an additional year of imprisonment.

Kite makers and transporters will face even harsher penalties, with five to seven years in prison or a fine of Rs5 million, or both. Failure to pay this fine could lead to an additional two years of imprisonment. The amended law also outlines specific penalties for minors caught kite flying. On the first offence, they will be fined for Rs50,000; on the second, a fine of Rs100,000. A third offence will result in punishment under the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018, which includes imprisonment.

## Judicial 'bad blood' in focus as SC official faces contempt

ISLAMABAD (News Desk) Three Supreme Court judges, on Monday, initiated contempt proceedings against a senior staff member for not fixing a case regarding the jurisdiction of regular benches.

Headed by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, the bench including justices Ayesha A. Malik and Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, issued a show cause notice to Additional Registrar (Judicial) Nazar Abbas under contempt of court charges. He was directed to appear in person and explain why the case was not fixed despite clear directions.

The case pertained to whether regular benches of the Supreme Court can determine the constitutionality of Article 191A of the Constitution, under which the Constitutional Bench was established after the 26th Amendment.

The question arose on Jan 13, when a three-judge bench, comprising justices Shah, Malik and Irfan Saadat Khan, heard the federal government's petition against a Sindh High Court's decision to strike down Section 221-A(2) of the Customs Act, 1969.

The applicant argued that the regular bench could not hear the case as it involved challenges to the constitutionality of laws.

During the subsequent hearing on Jan 16, the composition of the bench was changed, with Justice Abbasi replacing Justice Khan, who was on leave. However, Justice Shah ordered the case to be placed before the original bench, including Justice Khan, on Jan 20.

## Judges wonder why case related to 26th Amendment sent to constitutional bench as SC official faces contempt

Islamabad (News Desk) Two Supreme Court judges on Tuesday questioned why a case regarding the jurisdiction of regular benches was transferred to the constitutional bench, as the court took up contempt proceedings against its additional registrar over the same issue.

A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and with the other member being Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, took up the matter today.

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Court's decision to strike down Section 221-A(2) of the Customs Act, 1969. The applicant had argued that the regular bench could not hear the case as it involved challenges to the constitutionality of laws.

On Jan 16, Justice Abbasi had replaced Justice Khan as the latter was on leave. However, when the bench deferred the matter to Jan 20, Justice Shah ordered that the case be fixed before the original bench

including Justice Khan. But yesterday's hearing was presided by the bench including Justice Abbasi. Today, Justice Ayesha was not part of the hearing as the two-member bench took up contempt proceedings against SC Additional Registrar (Judicial) Nazar Abbas, which were initiated a day ago.

During the hearing, the court immediately summoned Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan for as-



sistance. It also appointed senior counsels Munir A. Malik, a former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, and Hamid Khan to assist the court.

Barrister Salahuddin Ahmed and Shahid Jameel, who were representing the respondents in the Customs Act case, also presented their arguments.