

PM Shehbaz thanks World Bank for placing faith in Pakistan, inking new partnership programme

Islamabad (News Desk) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday thanked the World Bank for placing faith in Pakistan after pledging to provide \$20 billion under the 10-year country partnership framework (CPF) last week.

According to a World Bank statement, the new framework for the country aimed to "support inclusive and sustainable development through a strong focus on building human capital", in addition to fostering durable private sector growth.

On Saturday, World Bank executive directors em-

phasised the importance of effective partner coordination among the World Bank Group, the IMF and other key development partners to continue supporting the implementation of critical reforms in Pakistan, including those in the energy sector and domestic revenue mobilisation and to strengthen donor alignment. While addressing a ceremony in Islamabad today, PM Shehbaz highlighted Pakistan's "very strong relation with the World Bank" over the years.

He emphasised various projects undertaken in Pakistan through the world

bank's support, including hydropower generation in the water sector and reforming various important organisations such as the Federal Board of Revenue.

He expressed his gratitude to World Bank Vice President for South Asia Martin Raiser, who was in attendance at the ceremony, World Bank President Ajay Banga and the World Bank team in Pakistan.

While addressing Raiser, he said: "Your presence here is a message to the people of Pakistan that the World Bank has faith in Pakistan's system, which is now attaining vibrancy

and has become functional and operational, undertaking deep rooted structural changes which were long overdue.

"It should have been done decades ago which is being done today. But I believe in the fact that it is never too late," he said.

He noted that the digitisation of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is "rapidly on track".

Additionally, the pilot project of faceless interaction between importers and customs officials at Karachi's Port is operational, which will be replicated at all other airports, dry ports.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (left) receiving a copy of the World Bank's Country Partnership Framework for Pakistan from Martin Raiser, Vice-President World Bank for South Asia, at a ceremony in Islamabad on January 23, 2025.

FO urges world to develop 'concrete plan' to rebuild Gaza, demands accountability for Israeli crimes

Islamabad (News Desk) The Foreign Office on Thursday called on the international community to devise a "concrete plan" for the reconstruction of Gaza while demanding accountability for Israeli crimes that cost thousands of Palestinian lives.

Israel and Hamas agreed to a long-awaited ceasefire in Gaza which began on Sunday followed by a hostage and prisoner exchange, pausing the conflict after 15 months.

Estimates by the Palestinian health ministry show that more than 47,100 Gazans lost their lives to Israeli attacks since the conflict began, with the majority being civilians.

Meanwhile, about 90 per cent of Gaza's 2.3 million residents were forcibly displaced due to the conflict, with some 92pc (436,000) of housing units in Gaza destroyed or damaged, in addition to 80pc commercial facilities, according to Al Jazeera. A drone view shows Palestinians sitting next to the rubble of destroyed houses and buildings, following a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, January 22, 2025.

Security forces neutralise 6 terrorists in Balochistan's Zhob district: ISPR



Balochistan (News Desk) Security forces have neutralised six terrorists in Balochistan's Zhob district while they were trying to infiltrate into the province through the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, the military's media wing said on Thursday.

According to a statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), "On [the] night of 22/23 January, movement of a group of khwarij, who were trying to infiltrate through Pakistan-Afghanistan border, was picked up by the security forces in general area Sambaza, Zhob District."

"Own troops effectively engaged and thwarted their attempt to infiltrate. Resultantly, six khwarij were sent to hell," it said, referring to the term used by the state for the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Imran says to call off talks with govt if judicial commissions not formed today: Gohar

Islamabad (News Desk) PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Thursday said that party founder Imran Khan directed to call off talks with the government due to a delay over the formation of judicial commissions.

The PTI and the government had been engaged in talks to bring down political temperatures. After two rounds of meetings, the third round was held seven days ago (Jan 16) in which the PTI formally presented its demands in writing.

Despite weeks of negotia-

tions, the dialogue process has hardly moved forward on major issues — the formation of judicial commissions and the release of PTI prisoners.

On Monday, the government 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 November 26 incidents.

Speaking to reporters outside Adiala Jail today after

meeting Imran, Barrister Gohar said that the government had promised to form the requested judicial commissions within seven days, but it failed to do so.

"The PTI founder (has) said to call the talks off over the government's failure to form the judicial commissions," he said.

He added that the PTI was hopeful of continuing the talks but they have to be called off "due to non-cooperation from the government."

"Negotiations cannot move forward if the commission

is not announced today," he said.

He noted, however, that negotiations could continue if a three-judge commission was formed.

"According to the PTI founder, the party will continue its efforts under the law and Constitution," Gohar said. "On the instructions of [Imran], we will join various opposition parties and struggle together."

The government had urged the opposition a day ago to remain part of the dialogue, promising to respond to its demands in the fourth round of talks on Jan 28.



FO spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan speaking at the weekly press briefing with media on Jan 23, 2025

NA passes controversial Peca amendment bill amid walkout by PTI, journalists

Islamabad (News Desk) The National Assembly on Thursday passed a controversial amendment bill to the country's cybercrime laws amid a walkout by PTI lawmakers and journalists from the proceedings. The latest draft of changes to the cybercrime laws, seen by Dawn.com and titled "The Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill, 2025", was tabled in the

National Assembly a day ago by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar and referred to the standing committee.

Journalists staged a walkout today from the press gallery in protest of the bill's passage after it was presented by Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain. Lawmakers from the opposition Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Fazl also opposed the bill.

The National Assembly also passed "The Digital Nation Pakistan Bill, 2024" which was moved by Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja. The bill aims to create a digital identity for citizens — to centralise social, economic and governance data — and to provide for the transformation of Pakistan into a digital nation, enabling

a digital society, digital economy and digital governance. The PTI lawmakers had already walked out earlier after protesting against party founder Imran Khan's incarceration and saying they would not allow the house's proceedings to go ahead. The bill, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, proposes a new provision, Section 26(A).

IHC issues notice to FIA on Imran, Bushra's acquittal pleas in new Toshakhana case

Islamabad (News Desk) The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday issued notices to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) related to the acquittal pleas of ex-premier Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi in the new Toshakhana case.

In the case, the FIA accused the couple of retaining an expensive Bulgari jewellery set gifted by a foreign leader — including a necklace, earrings, bracelets, and rings — at a low price, saying it caused significant loss to the national exchequer.

Today's hearing at the IHC was presided over by newly sworn-in Justice Inaam Ameen Minhas.

The couple were apprehended in the case on July 13, 2024, following their acquittal in the Iddat case the same day. They were indicted in the case by Special Court Central-I Judge Shahrukh Arjumand on December 15.

Call for full court to settle SC jurisdiction row

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday continued to delve into the raging controversy whether a constitutional committee — set up under Article 191A of the Constitution — could undo the effect of a judicial order by withdrawing the jurisdiction of a regular bench that had already taken cognisance of the case. The two-judge bench, comprising Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, resumed the case concerning non-fixation of the matter before the regular bench and contempt of court against Additional Registrar (Judicial) Nazir Abbas, who was removed by the court office on Tuesday. The two-judge bench appointed senior counsel Khawaja Haris Ahmed and Ahsan Bhoon as amici curiae in addition to Muneer A. Malik and Hamid Khan, who were previously appointed. The new amici were appointed when Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan pointed out that Munir Malik and Hamid Khan were already counsel in cases challenging the 26th amendment. When Hamid Khan referred to Article 176 to say that SC will include a chief justice and other judges as determined by parliament, Justice Shah while pointing towards the AGP observed in a lighter note: "Are we 'other' judges for being members of the regular bench?"

Changes to cybercrime law unveiled amid protest

ISLAMABAD: (News Desk) A bill seeking amendments to the country's cybercrime laws was introduced in the National Assembly on Wednesday, proposing three-year prison terms for spreading disinformation, dissolving the FIA's Cybercrime Wing and setting up of a new investigation agency, and establishing a new authority with vast powers, which include partial or full blocking of social media platforms.

"Whoever intentionally disseminates, publicly exhibits or transmits any information through any information system, that he knows or has reason to believe to be false or fake and likely to cause or create a sense of fear, panic or disorder or unrest in general public or society shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend up to three years or with fine which may extend to Rs2m or with both," reads the latest draft, titled the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

The proposed amendment to Peca was presented as a supplementary agenda item by Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar on behalf of the interior minister.

The introduction coincided with a noisy protest by PTI-led opposition lawmakers, who criticised the speaker for refusing to grant the floor to Leader of the Opposition Omar Ayub Khan before the question hour. The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Interior is set to convene today (Thursday) to discuss the Peca (Amendment) Bill.

Imran says neither he nor Bushra benefited from Al Qadir trust case

Rawalpindi (News Desk) Former premier Imran Khan said on Thursday that neither he nor his spouse Bushra Bibi benefited financially from the Al-Qadir Trust case, and that business tycoon Malik Riaz could testify that he was the only prime minister who "never sought anything from him for personal or financial gain."

Last week, Imran and Bushra were convicted in the £190m Al-Qadir Trust case in which Riaz and his son are also co-accused

and proclaimed offenders. Following the conviction, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Tuesday swung into action against Riaz to bring him back to Pakistan from the United Arab Emirates. A post on X from Imran Khan's account on Thursday said: "Neither Bushra Bibi nor I have financially benefited from the Al-Qadir Trust in any way.

"Malik Riaz will testify that I was the only Prime Minister who never sought anything from him for personal or financial

gain." The post comes in the backdrop of Malik Riaz's post on X, in which he had said he would "not testify".

"This was my decision yesterday and this is my decision today, no matter how much you oppress me, Malik Riaz will not testify!" the property tycoon said on his X account on Wednesday, in response to the government's decision regarding his extradition. Imran went on to say in his post that "unlike

Zardari, I did not have a Bilawal House built for me, nor did I sell One Hyde Park at double its value like the Sharif family did.

"The future of Pakistan's youth is important for me, and it was for this reason that Al-Qadir University was established," the post read.

Malik Riaz and son should face courts, present their defence: info minister As PTI and legal experts pointed to the need for accountability for all those involved, Information



Minister Attaullah Tarar had said a day ago that consultation was ongoing on how to bring the other absconders back. In a televised address on Wednesday, Tarar recalled the NAB's press release, q

uoting the accountability watchdog as saying it had concrete evidence in those inquiries. Noting that Riaz and his son had been declared absconders, Tarar stressed that if they both could have defended themselves before the courts.