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Dar stresses national consensus to address economic challenges

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing relief to the public amid global economic challenges during a meeting with a Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) delegation led by Liaquat Baloch to discuss petroleum prices and measures to ease the financial burden on low-income citizens.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday met with a delegation of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) to discuss petroleum prices in the country, with both sides agreeing to "continue their consultations over the coming days to formulate a way forward on energy pricing and public relief," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

"Dar met with the JI delegation led by Liaquat Baloch, holding candid discussions on practical measures to provide relief to the common man, with a specific focus on easing the economic burden on low-income citizens," said the Foreign Office in a post on X.

The meeting came after the government and JI, on October 27, agreed to form a six-member committee to finalise recommendations on expanding the existing petrol relief scheme and preparing proposals for a phased reduction in the petroleum levy. Under the agreement, three members each from the government and JI would examine measures to broaden the scope of the ongoing PM fuel relief scheme to ensure that the maximum number of deserving people benefit from it. Agreeing to continue consultations, Dar also "reiterated the government's commitment to prioritising public welfare and facilitating ordinary citizens amidst global economic challenges."

He also "emphasised that sustained cross-party dialogue remains key to addressing national economic challenges effectively." The Foreign Office stated that the meeting was attended by the Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Inter-Provincial Coordination Rana Sanaullah, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Bajwa, along with the finance secretary and the Special secretary for petroleum.

Background

JI's campaign against the petroleum levy intensified in August, when the party organised demonstrations and sit-ins across the country against rising fuel prices, inflation and what it described as an additional tax burden on consumers. On August 16, JI workers staged sit-ins outside governors' houses in the provincial capitals, demanding the withdrawal of the levy and a reduction in petrol prices.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar meeting a delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), led by Mr. Liaquat Baloch, to discuss petroleum prices in the country



QUETTA: Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail chairs 3rd Senate meeting of Balochistan University of Engineering and Technology Khuzdar

Fight against terrorism requires united national response: CM Bugti

Terms elimination of 17 terrorists as a significant achievement in ongoing campaign against terrorism

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has described the reported killing of 17 militants during security operations in different parts of the province as a significant achievement in the ongoing campaign against terrorism. In a statement, the chief minister commended security personnel for demonstrating professionalism, courage and operational capability while confronting militant elements.

Bugti said the fight against terrorism required a united national response, stressing that attempts to disrupt peace, stability and public security would be met with a firm response.

He alleged that the militants were receiving backing from India, saying the latest operations reflected the preparedness and resolve of security forces to confront militant threats. The claim of foreign support was not independently verified.

The chief minister paid tribute to soldier Hikmatullah, who lost his life while confronting militants during the operations. He said the sacrifice of the fallen soldier in the line of duty would remain a lasting reminder of the courage displayed by security personnel in protecting the people.

He noted that security forces were continuing to discharge their responsibilities under challenging conditions to safeguard citizens and protect the country's security.

Reiterating the provincial government's resolve to combat militancy, Bugti said counterterrorism operations would continue until militant threats were brought under control and durable peace was restored across Balochistan.



QUETTA: Opposition Leader in Balochistan Assembly Mir Younis Aziz Zehri and others meeting with Provincial Ameer JUI Seantor Maulana Abdul Wasey.

Dr Rubaba vows to facilitate women's meaningful participation in Balochistan's development process

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister's Adviser on Women's Development Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi has emphasized that lasting social and economic progress in the province cannot be achieved without ensuring women equitable access to education, healthcare, employment, economic resources and decision-making forums.

She was speaking at a two-day training workshop on the National Gender Equality Indicators Framework, where she underscored the importance of reliable data, evidence-based policymaking and effective implementation in translating commitments to gender equality into measurable outcomes.

The workshop was jointly organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Balochistan Women Development Department, National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) and UNICEF.

Dr. Buledi said the National Gender Equality Indicators Framework would provide a mechanism for identifying gender disparities and tracking progress in areas including education, healthcare, economic participation, political representation, leadership and decision-making.

Referring to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey 2020–21, she said female labour force participation among women aged 15 and above in Balochistan was approximately 8 percent, compared with 43.6 percent among men. She also referred to findings contained in the Balochistan Gender Equality Report 2024.

The adviser stressed that improving women's economic participation required greater access to market-oriented skills, entrepreneurship opportunities, financial resources and secure workplaces.

She maintained that gender-related policies should take into account the diverse circumstances of women living in urban and rural communities as well as differences among districts and socioeconomic groups.

Dr. Buledi also advocated stronger safeguards against gender-based violence, improved protection of women's legal and inheritance rights and greater representation of women in government and administrative institutions.

She said the workshop would help enhance the capacity of government officials to collect, organize and analyze gender-disaggregated information in accordance with national indicators.

Security forces achieving significant successes against terrorism: PM

PM Shehbaz lauds security forces for killing 17 terrorists in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday paid tribute to the security forces for successful operations against India-backed Fitna al-Hindustan terrorists in Balochistan's Kachhi and Kharan districts, in which 17 militants were killed.

The prime minister commended the security forces for the operations, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

The prime minister also paid tribute to Sepoy Hikmatullah of the Pakistan Army, who was martyred during an operation against terrorists in Kharan. He prayed for the elevation of the martyr's ranks and offered condolences to his family.

The prime minister said the security forces were achieving significant successes against terrorism under the vision of Azm-e-Istehkam.

He reiterated the government's resolve to eliminate terrorism from the country in all its forms.

Govt taking measures to promote competition in LPG sector: Tarar

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday said the government was taking measures to promote competition in the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) sector by ending monopolistic practices and abolishing the long-standing discretionary quota system. Addressing a news conference alongside Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, he said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had directed the introduction of a merit-based and transparent system in the LPG sector to ensure fair competition and facilitate consumers. Tarar termed the initiative a historic step, saying no previous government had attempted to dismantle the monopoly of a few individuals and introduce a competitive mechanism based on merit.

He said the government had also taken an unprecedented initiative by transferring profits generated by oil refineries to the public for the first time in the country's history.

Easier financing key to unlock Balochistan's economic potential

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Board of Investment and Trade (BBoIT) Vice Chairman Bilal Khan Kakar has called on the Export-Import Bank of Pakistan (EXIM Bank) to introduce easier and more accessible financing facilities for traders, industrialists, exporters and importers in the province to accelerate economic activity and expand investment.

He made the appeal during a meeting with EXIM Bank President and Chief Executive Officer Shahbaz H. Syed, where the two sides reviewed financing constraints confronting Balochistan's business community and discussed prospects for increasing trade, investment and export-oriented activities.Kakar said restricted access to credit remained among the key challenges faced by businesses in Balochistan, particularly entrepreneurs seeking to expand their operations, establish new industries and compete in national and international markets.

He stressed that affordable financing and business-friendly financial services could enable local entrepreneurs to overcome capital constraints, attract investment and enhance the province's role in domestic and international trade.

The BBoIT vice chairman urged EXIM Bank to develop financing mechanisms tailored to the requirements of businesses operating in Balochistan and play a more proactive role in facilitating the province's private sector.

Off-duty violence against wife constitutes misconduct by civil servant: Supreme Court

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Supreme Court has ruled that serious misconduct by a civil servant in his private life, including violence against his wife, can constitute service misconduct even if the act is committed outside office hours and has no direct connection with official duties.

Dismissing a petition filed by an Intelligence Bureau (IB) employee, the apex court held that acquittal in a criminal case does not automatically invalidate departmental proceedings if misconduct has been independently established through evidence. The court upheld the compulsory retirement of Jawad Abbasi, who was serving as a cook in the IB and was accused of setting his wife on fire.

He had challenged the Federal Service Tribunal's decision maintaining the departmental penalty imposed on him.

17 Indian sponsored terrorists killed in intelligence-based operations in Balochistan

RAWALPINDI, (APP): Security Forces killed 17 Indian sponsored terrorists in two intelligence based operations in Kachhi and Kharan Districts of Balochistan, on reported presence of terrorists belonging to Fitna Al Hindustan and Fitna Al Khwarij.

"An intelligence based operation was conducted in Sanni area of Kachhi district, during the conduct of operation terrorists attempt to establish road block in the city was thwarted by proactive action of security forces, resulting in killing of 10 Indian sponsored terrorists. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered, " said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). In another intelligence based operation in district Kharan, security forces busted terrorists hideout and after an intense fire exchange, seven Indian sponsored Khawarij were sent to hell. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered. However, during the intense fire exchange, Sepoy Hikmat Ullah (age: 25 years, resident of District Karak) having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced shahadat, the news release further said. "Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Indian sponsored terrorist found in the area. Relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under vision "Azm e Istehkam" (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out menace of foreign sponsored and supported terrorism from the country," it said.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister's Adviser on Women's Development Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi speaking at a two-day training workshop on the National Gender Equality Indicators Framework

Establishment of new universities should be guided by genuine educational requirements, local needs: Governor

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has raised alarm over the growing exodus of highly qualified academics from the province, revealing that more than 100 PhD scholars have left Balochistan amid restrictions on permanent faculty recruitment.

The governor made the remarks while presiding over the third Senate meeting of the Balochistan University of Engineering and Technology, Khuzdar, where he called for a comprehensive strategy to retain experienced professors and researchers and attract qualified academics to universities across the province.

He cautioned that the continued departure of senior faculty and PhD scholars could weaken the quality of higher education, teaching standards and research capabilities in Balochistan.

Governor Mandokhail emphasized that the establishment of new universities and campuses should be guided by genuine educational requirements, local needs and the availability of financial and human resources rather than individual preferences.

He also proposed a comprehensive assessment of existing university campuses to determine their effectiveness and sustainability.

Based on the findings, institutions could be retained, merged or closed under a transparent and clearly defined policy. The governor pointed out disparities in faculty deployment, noting that several emerging and modern disciplines were facing shortages of senior teachers, while some traditional departments had more faculty members than warranted by their student enrollment.

He stressed the importance of sound human resource planning, prudent utilization of public funds and institutional reforms to enhance the overall quality of higher education and research in the province.

Mandokhail also appreciated the efforts of Vice Chancellor Professor Maqsood Ahmed and his team, while emphasizing that additional measures were needed to address the structural challenges confronting the higher education sector.



QUETTA: Activists of Balochistan Union of Journalists protesting against PECA Act in front of Quetta Press Club.

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Netanyahu must be arrested

What is happening in Gaza can no longer be seen as simply the result of war. It is an immense destruction of humanity happening before the world's eyes: killing, displacement, humanitarian suffering, and grave allegations of crimes under international law.

The international community faces a fundamental question: Will international law apply equally to everyone, including powerful political leaders?

On Nov. 21, 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, alleging war crimes and crimes against humanity. In theory, these warrants mean that no individual, regardless of political power, is above the law.

The enforcement of the arrest warrant issued against Netanyahu is not only about arresting one individual. It is also a test for the future of international law.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is severe. Tens of thousands of people have lost their lives. Children and women were killed, hospitals were bombed, families lost their homes, and millions have been displaced. The international community's silence, while a society's basic means of survival are destroyed, further widened the gap between law and power.

The ICC warrant also creates a striking contradiction. Netanyahu's address from the United Nations podium also has symbolic importance in this regard. On one side, an international court has ordered his arrest on allegations of serious crimes; on the other, a head of government speaking from the podium of the world's largest international organization.

Where does law begin, and where does political power end? If international law is applied only to weak states, then what we have is not a legal order but a power order.

Pakistan has not approached the Palestinian question as a regional issue but as one concerning the common conscience of humanity. This understanding lies at the foundation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's political stance on Palestine.

What must be done today is to ensure that what happened in Gaza is not allowed to be forgotten. When the images of war fade from the agenda, the suffering of children, women, and civilians will not disappear.

Will the law of the powerful overcome the power of law?

As Netanyahu began speaking, delegates from 77 countries walked out of the United Nations General Assembly chamber. Their departure left large sections of the hall visibly empty, in protest against Israel's military campaign in Gaza and in support of the growing international recognition of Palestinian statehood. The scene was more than a diplomatic action; it was a powerful expression of the conscience of humanity.

Law is a matter of conscience. Netanyahu is being condemned not only by the decisions of the ICC, but also by the conscience of the nations of the world.

Netanyahu must be arrested. Because the issue is greater than Netanyahu. The issue is whether the common law of humanity can endure, as it is clearly approved by the conscience of humankind.

The ecology of civic spaces

Marvi Mazhar

In Karachi, development is often imagined as an upgrade in scale — a quiet residential zone becomes commercial chaos, and an informal, difficult-to-maintain civic place is replaced by a larger, safer, more manageable and programmable space. On paper, this looks like progress. In urban life, the equation is complicated. Cities, particularly in South Asia, have a habit of mistaking expansion for continuity. The expansion of a building means that public mission has grown. When a facility offers more amenities, such as rooms, equipment, parking and programming, it is seen as advancement. But civic spaces do not live by square footage alone. They live through democratic access, repetition, informality, memory and the possibility of arrival.

This is where the debate between preservation and development in Karachi needs to be rethought. Preservation is not only about old buildings, stone façades, carved balconies or colonial-era elevations. It is also about the preservation of relationships: between a place and its street, between a room and its regulars, between a threshold and the people who feel they can cross it without permission, and without an agenda. Development, likewise, is not automatically the enemy. Cities must repair, rebuild, expand and adapt. But development turns destructive when it preserves the name while displacing the ecology that gave that name meaning. Karachi has already perfected the language of superficial preservation. We hold up façades while hollowing out interiors. We have seen this in Kanji Building, Duarte Mansion, and many more. We retain the front elevation but erase the spatial memory behind it. We allow history to remain as a surface while new commercial logic occupies the depth. This is not preservation. It is heritage as costume. The same danger exists with cultural and civic institutions. One can preserve a brand, a plaque, a founding story, even a commemorative wall, and still lose the urban life that made the institution matter.

The main characteristics between event-based large infrastructure arts councils, corporate institutions and informal community projects is that a neighbourhood-level cultural space depends on a delicate network of conditions. It needs public transport, walkability, evening life, mixed-use surroundings, casual visibility, porous thresholds, and a sense of familiarity. People must be able to drop in, not just arrive by invitation. Students, artists, writers, activists, young professionals, neighbours and strangers must feel that the space is part of their mental map of the city. Such spaces are not only attended; they are inhabited. Therefore, they are community projects and not corporate or state councils.

Karachi's grassroot community institutions understood this instinctively. Mehr Ghar in Lyari, Rangoonwala Community Centre in Bahadurabad and Ghalib Library in Nazimabad are not only buildings with programmes. They are embedded in neighbourhood histories. Their value comes from the way they sit within communities that already have their own rhythms, languages, anxieties, memories and forms of gathering. They do not need to become monumental in order to matter. Their scale is part of their intelligence. Lyari, for example, cannot be understood in isolation. It is a dense urban world of cultural production, political memory, sport, music, migration and resilience. A community space there carries a different meaning from the same programme placed elsewhere. It is not simply 'service delivery'; it is recognition. Similarly, a library in Nazimabad or a community centre near Bahadurabad belongs to a geography of everyday use. Its users are not only audiences. They are neighbours, students, families, passers-by and repeat visitors who build attachment over time.

This is also visible in newer Karachi spaces that have emerged with modest means but strong civic imagination. The Centre For Art-based Methodologies and Well-being and Nani Ghar, Darham/Marham, Kitab Ghar and Danish-o-Ramish represent a different model of public culture: smaller, intimate and community-facing. Once upon a time so was T2F. They are not trying to become grand cultural complexes. Their significance lies in creating rooms for reading, conversation, collective care, arts practice, learning, reflection and belonging. In a city where public space is scarce and often hostile, such areas become civic infrastructure on a neighbourhood level. They are not insulated from the city; they absorb it. They allow people to enter without the intimidation of institutional grandeur. They survive through trust, informality, shared labour, borrowed furniture, public generosity, uneven funding and the fragile ethics of care. They remind us that Karachi's cultural future may not only lie in large master-planned facilities, but in a constellation of smaller spaces rooted in different localities.

An industrial or employment-dominated district works differently. Its rhythms are shaped by work-hour mobility, production, institutional destinations, transport corridors and commuting patterns. It may contain communities, mixed-use pockets and important public institutions, but its dominant urban logic is not the same as that of a porous civic neighbourhood.

For want of a nail

Arifa Noor

Are the days of the government numbered? This is a question (or gossip) in Islamabad these days; I call it 'a question' because it is not the only one, which in itself reveals that it has its takers and its critics. Though this is an issue never far from anyone's mind in this city (or Pindi) no matter which government is in place, this particular session of the debate in public was sparked by the column of senior journalist Sohail Warraich. The operative part of the column was his prediction that the government's downfall would begin in July. Since then, he has been clarifying or explaining this prophecy in articles as well as interviews.

Many are eager to latch on to his views while others argue against it equally passionately. The former point out, as did the column writer himself, about the government's lack of success on the economic front and its inability to gain popularity. The government has little to offer other than its mantra of stability for five years or so. And this is frankly of little consolation to people who have experienced back-breaking inflation and a slower-than-a-tortoise economy for the past so many years. Even less needs to be said about the PML-N's lack of popularity. Even those who can't stop waxing lyrical about the 'success' of Maryam Nawaz as chief minister cannot argue that she has made the party popular.

On the other hand, those who feel the government is on solid ground point out the comfortable relationship between the prime minister and the military leadership. This is more than a hybrid regime now; it is one in which the civilian side takes no risks and asserts no power. There is only one side writing on the page, the other is simply following the moving finger. The 'same page' is far too dicey a proposition. They also point out the disaster that is the PTI, bereft of any political strategy to woo over those in power. So why would there be any rift or disagreement, ask those on this side of the argument.

However, it needs be said that even those who don't think the government is in any danger concede the economic fragility in the country. The docility of the prime minister and his generosity in giving credit where it is due might be unprecedented but perhaps so are the economic challenges facing the country and the pressures on the more vulnerable classes. And this is exactly why arguments such as those made by Sohail Warraich, and others, might sound credible, even if — as he himself says — he has no information, just analysis. Those who disagree with this sound far more confident, for they have spoken to the powers that be and heard their assurances with reference to the strong position of the government. But the argument that the government is in danger could simply be an assessment based on experience rather than knowledge.

The Pakistani establishment has considerable institutional expertise in managing public expectations and anger. Or so it had always seemed in the past (other than 1971). And this has manifested itself in two ways. The first is their ability to accept popular parties into the mainstream. This was true of the PPP in 1988, after the death of Ziaul Haq. Despite distrust of the party, which meant forcing Benazir Bhutto to accept certain cabinet choices and hindering her government, she was allowed to take power.

And this was equally true in 2007. In other words, unpopular governments or those with a questionable mandate are not kept in power indefinitely and popular parties are accepted, regardless of misgivings, which then causes considerable instability in civilian governments. It usually happens when the institution becomes uncomfortably aware of its unpopularity and feels the need to assert its more 'professional' role to gain acceptability.

This decision is linked to the second factor — governments especially those brought into power through questionable elections don't necessarily complete their terms. Back in the 1990s, the first PML-N government (brought to power in a heavily rigged election) was sent home and replaced with the PPP which, too, was sent home before time. Post Musharraf, governments completed their terms but only till the elections were largely seen to be fair, till 2018, when the electoral exercise became far too controversial and unfair. The resultant PTI government was sent packing in 2022. There are specific political issues for why each government was sent packing but it can also be argued that these quick changes prevent the building up of a pressure cooker like situation.

Unpopularity in itself doesn't necessarily lead to organised outrage; longevity also acts as a catalyst that brings disparate forces and organisations to join hands. The riots which led to the ouster of Sheikh Hasina didn't just happen because she had become unpopular but also because of her long reign of nearly 15 years. Similar longevity was linked to the widespread protests against Hosni Mubarak, which the military he had led did not push back against.

In Pakistan, the populace perhaps has a shorter tolerance level and the establishment understands that. Musharraf was struggling with unpopularity within seven years, a fact his institution took advantage of.

As a result, those who remember what has happened in the past are now asking questions about what the Shehbaz Sharif government has to show after presenting five budgets. And other than not picking a fight with those who brought the government to power, it has also done little to bring any legitimacy to the set-up. So the steam continues to build up. And despite the 'sab acha hai' (all's well) mantra on news channels, it is evident to everyone.

It is a simple assessment that should also not escape some of those ruling Pakistan right now; and this includes those in Islamabad, Pindi and some of us who watch politics. Whether it shapes policy is another matter — and better known by those who have powerful zaraaye (sources).

Temple heist and Hindutva

Jawed Naqvi

Every religion has its moral code. Hinduism, better still Brahminism, has a clutch of dos and don'ts enshrined in its classical scriptures. Does Hindutva, distinct from Hinduism, subscribe to the moral code? There's a political critique of the fascist movement, which requires it to be fortified and addressed urgently, but increasingly there's an equal need for a moral probe of Hindutva. Stealing gold and priceless treasures from a temple was explicitly categorised as one of five deadly sins — mahapatakas — in classical Hindu scripture.

The ancient caution remains a compelling pointer to the reality that temples were regularly targeted in old India by robbers whether from within the precincts or without.

Some Hindu kings in southern India plundered temples for treasure, others sacked the ones of rival kings and took home the deities as trophies. Kashmir, too, records a similar experience of plunder by an ancient king. In the mediaeval era, Mahmood Ghaznavi joined the raids and his sacking of the temple of Somnath is all too well recorded.

A Persian chronicler is cited as asserting that Mahmood had a religious purpose in the raids even if Sanskrit sources of the region at the time do not express any such trauma that matches the Persian boast. Somnath, a name for Lord Shiva, according to the Persian chronicler was conflated with Manat, one of several idols expelled from Makkah as Islam advanced belief in a single invisible God. The scriptural censure in ancient texts is not the only evidence of stealing the riches offered to the temples by devotees. Other historical evidence also points to a possibly routine malaise.

Gambling, while condemned as a severe moral vice in the Vedic texts, didn't qualify as a deadly sin though drinking was. Drinking was listed among the serious mahapatakas. Gandhiji, a pious Hindu, condemned drinking but slammed tribal peasants in Gujarat for violently opposing Hindu and Parsi vendors for selling alcohol to their communities. Today, BJP-ruled Gujarat and Bihar formally observe prohibition to express cursory respect for Gandhi. The ban has created a thriving parallel market for liquor. The moment you drive out of Gujarat and into Rajasthan, a bevy of liquor shops lure clients by announcing their brands and prices in Gujarati.

The other three unforgivable mahapatakas, listed in Chandogya Upanishad and Manu Smriti, were killing a Brahmin and committing adultery with the wife of the guru. The fifth commandment, to borrow a phrase from the Old Testament, forbade keeping the company of those that participated in the committing of the first four sins.

One of the most prevalent sins today is described in the Rigveda in the famous 'Dice Hymn', where a gambler laments losing his family, wealth and respect, warning others to "play no longer with dice, but till thy tillage". The central conflict of the epic Mahabharata occurs because King Yudhishthira succumbs to a gambling addiction, losing his kingdom, brothers and wife in a rigged game of dice. Gambling, the scriptures warn, breeds dishonesty, greed and chaos. Texts like the Bhagavata Purana define gambling as one of the major pillars of 'adharma' (unrighteousness) because it destroys truthfulness. Gambling under Hindutva rule, though not exclusively because of it, has become a serious scourge with families succumbing to the addiction of their own loved one to online gambling. Sports have not been spared the merciless guile of the bookies.

A lore among the children in our predominantly Hindu neighbourhood in Lucknow was that houses needed to be more carefully watched after Diwali since it had become an occasion for serious gambling, evidently with contrived religious sanction. The losing parties were accused of often pillaging private homes to make up for their losses.

In the larger world of agrarian India, the Marxian class struggle stalks the peasantry dressed as a friend or a facilitator of monetary support at times of distress. Indira Gandhi was wary of Sukhi Lala, the uncouth and wily moneylender featured in the movie Mother India. She had barred the weather bureau from sharing monsoon forecasts with the press. The role of satellites in monitoring the climate patterns would arrive in India later. In Mrs Gandhi's calculation, the baniya exploited his insights into the pattern of the arriving rains to manipulate the helpless peasantry. David Hardiman in his amazing book on usury in colonial western India — Feeding the Baniya — records instances where the moneylender prays for drought, using tantric help to drive away rain. He maximises his profits from a peasantry in crisis. Gambling is a tradition. Will it rain? Will it not? The baniya wagers on his insight. The monsoon rains this year are said to be worryingly low, creating a loaded political possibility. Mrs Gandhi lost her grip on power after two successive failures of monsoons in the mid-1970s undermining her victory in the 1971 war.

The recent theft of large quantities of gold and ornaments from the heavily guarded Ram temple at Ayodhya is of a piece with the ancient Indian phenomenon. Someone seems to badly need the plundered wealth amid deliberate opaqueness. Reports allege that senior officials of the temple trust decreed by the supreme court and appointed by the Modi government are being spared the probe while some junior staff were arrested.

There are reports also of someone linked with high officials of the trust often leaving the temple with a loaded sack. He preferred to travel by train instead of flying out of Ayodhya.

Elections are due in Uttar Pradesh next year, which represents the most politically influential state accounting for 80 MPs. The temple heist may or may not become an electoral issue. The rural distress caused by a failed monsoon and the Iran war, however, offers a likelier chance to drub the BJP government in its stronghold state.

Qatar's Emir calls for accountability over Gaza genocide perpetrators

DOHA, (Agencies): Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani called for accountability for Israel's ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip since October 2023.

"What happened in the Gaza Strip is unquestionably genocide, and its perpetrators must not be allowed to escape accountability," Tamim said during an address opening the 55th annual session of Qatar's Shura Council in Doha.

Qatar has played a mediating role in efforts to end the Israeli war in Gaza. Israel has killed more than 74,000 Palestinians and injured over 175,000 in Gaza since October 2023, most of them women and children, while around 90% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to Palestinian authorities.

In November 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant over war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the UN's principal judicial organ, is also hearing a case brought by South Africa and joined by several countries accusing Israel of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.

"We will continue working with our brothers and our international and regional partners to keep our region stable and secure," the Qatari emir added.

Qatar, Egypt and Türkiye mediated a ceasefire agreement in Gaza that took effect on Oct. 10, 2025, as part of a plan proposed by US President Donald Trump.

Despite the agreement, Israel's genocide has continued, killing 1,493 Palestinians and injuring 5,299 others, most of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Israel has also continued to restrict the entry of agreed quantities of food, medicine, medical supplies, shelter materials and prefabricated homes into Gaza, where around 2.4 million Palestinians live, including some 2.15 million displaced people, amid severe humanitarian conditions.



People carry portraits of Iran's former supreme leader Ali Khamenei as a giant poster depicting US President Donald Trump, US Vice President JD Vance, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US Special Envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff looking distressed is hung at Enghelab (Revolution) Square in Tehran, Iran



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attends a formal dinner hosted in his honor at the Presidential Palace in Seoul, the capital of South Korea

Spain's king, queen visit Spanish enclave in Africa for first royal trip in 19 years

MADRID, (Agencies): Spain's King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia visited Spain's North African exclave of Ceuta, marking the first royal visit to the enclave since 2007. The monarchs were welcomed by hundreds of residents waving Spanish flags and chanting patriotic slogans before attending an official ceremony at the city's Assembly Palace, Spanish daily La Vanguardia reported.

Juan Jesus Vivas, Ceuta's president, presented the king with the keys to the city, describing the enclave as a meeting point between Europe and Africa.

The visit comes as Ceuta continues to recover from a major migration crisis from this July, when tens of thousands of people entered the city from neighboring Morocco. Vivas described Ceuta as wounded but determined to overcome the crisis, calling for establishing foundations that ensure "a future of security, stability and well-being for Ceuta and its citizens".

UN chief urges US, Russia to negotiate new nuclear treaty amid growing arms risks

UNITED NATIONS, (Monitoring Desk): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday called on the US and Russia to negotiate a successor framework to the New START Treaty, warning that growing nuclear arsenals and weakening safeguards are increasing risks to global security.

"The United States and the Russian Federation must negotiate a successor framework to New START," Guterres said at a UN General Assembly plenary meeting marking the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

The New START Treaty expired earlier this year, leaving, for the first time in more than half a century, no binding limits on strategic nuclear arsenals, according to Guterres.

"This undermines not only the security of those who possess nuclear weapons, but the entire international community," he said.

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) was signed on April 8, 2010, in Prague by the United States and Russia and entered into force on Feb. 5, 2011. It replaced the 1991 START I treaty, which expired in December 2009, and superseded the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), which terminated when New START entered into force, according to the US-based Arms Control Association.

Guterres warned that nuclear arsenals are being expanded and modernized while technological advances are increasing the risks of mistakes and miscalculations. "Nuclear arsenals are being expanded and modernized.

IMF warns AI market correction could threaten global financial stability

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): The International Monetary Fund warned on Tuesday that a correction in artificial intelligence-related markets could threaten global financial stability if investment and profit expectations disappoint, with existing financial vulnerabilities potentially amplifying the shock.

Presenting its October Global Financial Stability Report during the IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings in Bangkok, the fund said financial stability risks remain elevated despite the resilience of markets to repeated shocks and heightened uncertainty. Athanasios Vamvakidis, an official in the IMF's Monetary and Capital Markets Department, said stronger-than-expected economic growth, robust corporate earnings and optimism about AI had helped support global markets.

That resilience, however, should not be interpreted as evidence that the financial system is safe, he cautioned.

The IMF identified an AI-related market correction as one of three major risks that could spark financial stress, alongside rising sovereign bond yields and cyber incidents capable of disrupting financial services or undermining confidence.

An AI correction could emerge if expectations for investment or profitability are not met. Meanwhile, inflation pressures, fiscal imbalances and large volumes of government and private-sector borrowing are contributing to risks in sovereign bond markets.

Although the threats could be manageable individually, weaknesses already present in the financial system could magnify their effects, the fund warned.

The IMF said its banking-sector stress test, incorporating severe shocks related to AI, bond markets and energy, showed that banks remained broadly resilient.

Nevertheless, a group of weaker banks would face insufficient capital under that scenario, and the share of vulnerable institutions has been increasing.

The fund also highlighted risks in nonbank financial institutions, including insurers, pension funds, private credit providers and hedge funds.

Insurers and pension funds hold more illiquid assets, which could expose them to greater difficulties during a downturn. Private credit faces rising borrower leverage and liquidity pressures that could constrain lending.

Hedge funds can help support markets, but their borrowing and concentration in similar trades could amplify stress when conditions deteriorate. Emerging markets have also demonstrated resilience, although weaker policy buffers in some economies and less transparent alternative financing sources in certain frontier markets remain concerns.

The IMF urged policymakers to strengthen financial resilience before further shocks materialize, noting that high public debt and limited policy space could complicate their response.

Its recommendations included placing public debt on a sustainable path, preserving central bank independence, maintaining a commitment to inflation targets and communicating policy clearly.

The fund also urged stronger cyber resilience.

Yemeni government forces claim 1,200 Houthis neutralized in 'Dawn of Yemen' operation

SANAA, (Agencies): Yemeni government forces said they intensified offensive operations against the Houthis on the eastern and southern fronts as part of the ongoing "Dawn of Yemen" operation, claiming around 1,200 Houthi fighters had been neutralized.

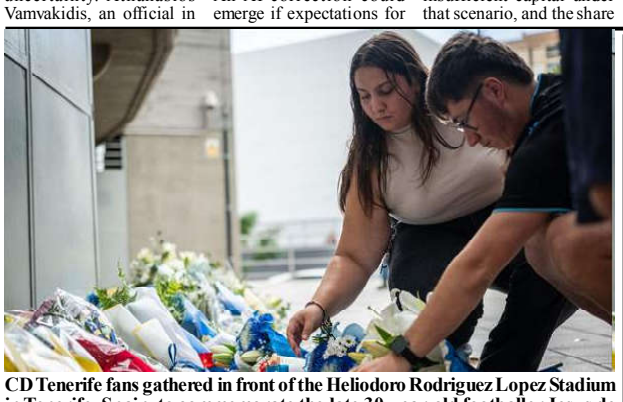
Military spokesman Brig. Gen. Majed Abdullah al-Nadhib said government forces carried out 2,200 strikes using warplanes, drones, field artillery, rocket launchers and sniper units. He said the strikes targeted command and control centers, fortifications, firing positions, observation and reconnaissance points, troop concentrations, weapons and ammunition depots, supply routes and other military targets.

In Taiz, concentrated strikes targeted Houthi convoys and reinforcements and disrupted their ability to support and reorganize their forces, according to the spokesman.

Initial battlefield estimates indicated that around 1,200 Houthi fighters had been "neutralized," while more than 440 military vehicles and pieces of equipment were destroyed or damaged across the operational fronts, he added.

Military engineering units were also continuing mine-clearing operations in recaptured areas on the western front and securing roads and passages to facilitate the return of civilians, the statement said.

The developments come amid a broader escalation in Yemen between government forces, backed by the Saudi-led coalition, and the Houthis.



CD Tenerife fans gathered in front of the Heliodoro Rodriguez Lopez Stadium in Tenerife, Spain, to commemorate the late 30-year-old footballer Jesus de Miguel Alameda, laying flowers in his memory.



The United States is holding elections for all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 35 of the 100 seats in the Senate. Voting has begun in Illinois for the midterm elections. Voters cast their ballots at a polling station in Chicago.

US VP Vance says he had no advance notice of federal search at Rep. Ilhan Omar's home

WASHINGTON DC, (Agencies): US Vice President JD Vance said Tuesday that he had no advance notice of federal agents' search of Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar's home, and that authorities would investigate allegations against the congresswoman based on the facts.

"I did not have advance notice that her home was being raided," Vance told reporters before departing for Texas. Vance said the administration sought to ensure that the Justice Department operated fairly and independently in criminal investigations.

"We try to run our Department of Justice in a fair and honest way. We try to let the law follow the facts rather than creating facts just to prosecute people we don't like," he said.

Vance added that he and President Donald Trump generally sought to avoid involvement in Justice Department investigations and prosecutions.

He acknowledged that there were "some serious allegations" against Omar but stressed that any further action would depend on the evidence.

"If there's a real case there, we're going to follow the facts. If there's not a real case there, then we won't," he said. Trump said Monday that federal authorities are looking at Omar "very carefully," while denying any personal involvement in the investigation into the Minnesota congresswoman.

"I've always found her to be totally crooked, personally, but that has nothing to do with me. I think she's a terrible person, but that's really up to the DOJ — I have nothing to do with it," Trump said, referring to the Department of Justice.

Federal agents executed a court-approved search warrant at Omar's Washington, DC residence at 6 am local time (1000GMT) on Monday.

The Justice Department said the enforcement action "is part of an ongoing federal criminal investigation.

Eastern Mediterranean hardest hit by attacks on healthcare, funding cuts: WHO chief

CAIRO, (Agencies): The Eastern Mediterranean faces mounting threats to healthcare from widespread attacks and severe funding cuts affecting nearly 2,000 facilities, the World Health Organization (WHO) chief warned. Addressing the 73rd session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean in Cairo, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said: "This region has recorded more attacks on health facilities, health workers, and patients than any other."

He stressed that hospitals, ambulances and health workers are protected under international humanitarian law and "must never be a target."

He praised WHO teams operating in Gaza, Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon and Afghanistan, often at considerable personal risk.

"The best medicine is peace," he said, urging an end to regional conflicts. Tedros also warned that sudden and severe funding cuts have affected nearly 2,000 health facilities across the region, and called for greater domestic investment in healthcare to reduce dependence on international aid.

White House says Kimberly Guilfoyle asked to resign as US ambassador to Greece

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): The White House said on Tuesday that it has asked Kimberly Guilfoyle to resign as US ambassador to Greece amid reports of alleged misconduct involving gifts and claims that she sought money in exchange for access to administration officials. In her first news conference, Katie Zacharia, who succeeded Karoline Leavitt as White House spokeswoman, was asked about the timeline for Guilfoyle's dismissal and possible replacements. "We have asked Ambassador Guilfoyle to resign. She has been a wonderful asset to the team, and we wish her well," said Zacharia.



Zacharia's comments come one day after US President Donald Trump said his administration is considering removing Guilfoyle from her position. The allegations against Guilfoyle include claims that she accepted lavish gifts while serving as ambassador and sought money in exchange for providing access to administration figures before her confirmation, according to media reports.

The State Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) is investigating Guilfoyle amid the allegations, a source familiar with the inquiry told CNN on Monday.

Lassa fever kills 268, spreads to 119 local govts in 24 Nigerian states

LAGOS, (Agencies): Nigeria has recorded 268 deaths from Lassa fever, with 1,138 confirmed cases reported in 24 states and 119 local government areas in 2026, according to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC).

The figures were contained in the agency's latest situation report covering Sept. 28 to Oct. 4, corresponding to epidemiological week 40. The case fatality rate stood at 23.6%, compared to 18.6% during the corresponding period in 2025.

The NCDC said confirmed cases increased from 924 during the same period in 2025 to 1,138 in 2026, while deaths rose from 172 to 268.

Nigeria recorded 8,414 suspected cases during the first 40 weeks of the year, compared to 8,041 in the corresponding period last year.

Despite the rise in cumulative infections and deaths, new confirmed cases declined to three in week 40, down from 13 in the preceding week. The latest cases were reported in Bauchi and Benue states, with one death recorded during the week.

Five states: Ondo, Bauchi, Taraba, Edo and Benue accounted for 88% of confirmed cases recorded in 2026. Ondo had the largest share, at 36%, followed by Bauchi with 23%, Taraba with 12%, Edo with 11% and Benue with 6%, according to the NCDC.

The agency attributed the high fatality rate partly to late presentation at health facilities, high treatment costs and poor health-seeking behavior in affected communities. Lassa fever is an acute viral illness primarily transmitted to humans through contact with food or household items contaminated by infected rodents. Human-to-human transmission can also occur through contact with infected bodily fluids, particularly in health care settings without adequate infection-prevention measures. The NCDC has urged residents to keep their surroundings clean, store food in covered containers and dispose of waste properly to reduce contact with rodents.



British comedian and actor Russell Brand arrives at Southwark Crown Court in London, United Kingdom, amid accusations of rape and sexual assault.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Farah Naz Akbar, President of the Pakistan Girl Guides Association (PGGA), ICT Chapter giving away shield to Girl Guide during a visit by the Girl Guides at Yadgar-e-Fatah to pay tribute to Pakistan's martyrs and celebrate the victory of Marka-e-Haq.

Trump faces major political test as Americans vote in midterms

WASHINGTON, (Monitoring Desk): American voters will deliver a verdict on the first two years of President Donald Trump's second term in Tuesday's midterm elections, with polls and nonpartisan analysts favoring Democrats to wrest the House from Republicans while control of the Senate remains uncertain. The battle for the Senate is unfolding across nearly 10 closely contested statewide races, most in Republican strongholds. History is against Trump's Republicans: the sitting president's party has lost ground in Congress in all but two midterm elections since World War Two. Trump's approval rating is hovering near his all-time lows, dragged down by deep voter frustration over the war with Iran and the resulting rise in fuel prices.

There is little doubt this year's election is all about Trump, the central US political figure for most of the last decade. Trump himself has told his supporters repeatedly to "pretend I'm on the ballot," a message Democratic leaders have happily echoed.

The president has held more than two dozen campaign rallies since the start of October, the vast majority in states he easily won in 2024, underscoring the extent to which Republicans are playing defence.

Led by Trump, Republicans have portrayed Democratic candidates as radical, un-American and even communist.

"The Democrat Party has nominated the most extreme and dangerous slate of candidates in American history," Trump said on Monday during a speech in Washington.

But opinion polls show voters are most concerned about affordability and disapprove of Trump's handling of the issue, after his sweeping tariff policy and his decision to attack Iran in February increased domestic costs. Republican candidates, meanwhile, have struggled to distance themselves from a president who demands fealty and rarely acknowledges mistakes.

All 435 seats in the US House of Representatives are up for election, along with 35 of the Senate's 100 seats, though the majority of contests are not considered competitive. Democrats must flip at least three House seats and four Senate seats to win a majority in each chamber. A Democratic House or Senate could launch investigations into what Democrats describe as self-dealing by the Trump administration and demand concessions to approve legislation.

A Democratic Senate would also have the power to block Trump appointments, including US Supreme Court nominations if vacancies arise.

But while Democrats have put Republicans on the defensive on much of their home turf, they have little margin for error. The party must defend all of its current seats, including a tight race in Michigan, while winning at least two states that voted for Trump by a double-digit margin two years ago: Alaska, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Ohio, South Carolina and Texas.



ISTANBUL: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan addressing the 42nd Session of COMCEC of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), emphasizing stronger trade integration, innovative export financing, digital cooperation and enhanced economic partnerships among OIC member states



QUETTA: MNA and Chairman NAVTTC Qamar ul Islam Raja called on Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

President Zardari lauds forces for killing 17 terrorists in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday paid tribute to the security forces for killing 17 terrorists in Balochistan's Kachhi and Kharan districts, in operations against Fitna al-Hindustan and Fitna al-Khawarij militants.

The president said the militants were backed by India. He praised the forces for foiling an attempt by terrorists to block a road in Kachhi, calling their response timely and effective. He also lauded a successful operation against a terrorist hideout in Kharan, a Presidency's news release said.

"The professionalism and alertness of the security forces in defeating the nefarious designs of terrorists is commendable," the president said.

He expressed deep grief over the martyrdom of Sepoy Hikmatullah, who was killed during the operations, saying the soldier's sacrifice for the defence, peace and security of the country would always be remembered.

NHA directed to prioritise ongoing development projects; strengthen workforce in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The National Assembly Standing Committee on Communications on Tuesday directed the National Highway Authority (NHA) to prioritise ongoing development schemes, ensure timely completion of delayed projects and take measures to strengthen its workforce in Balochistan.

The committee, which met under the chairmanship of MNA Aijaz Hussain Jakhrani at the NHA Headquarters, reviewed matters relating to road infrastructure, implementation of previous recommendations, progress on major motorway projects, road safety and the performance of the Motorway Police.

The meeting commenced with the confirmation of the minutes of the Committee's 19th meeting, held on September 2, 2026.

The Committee reviewed the implementation status of its previous recommendations. The NA panel also considered Starred Question No. 55, moved by Syed Rafiullah, MNA, regarding the deterioration of roads shortly after their completion due to substandard construction and inadequate planning.

The Mover expressed dissatisfaction with the response furnished by the NHA and observed that the absence of proper surveys, load evaluations, soil investigations and other essential technical tests before the commencement of road construction projects was contributing to the premature deterioration of roads.

Water dispute much broader than sectoral or security issue

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Water experts have called for shared efforts to address common water security challenges in South Asia, particularly between Pakistan and India, stressing that cooperation, effective water management and respect for international agreements were essential to prevent further tensions and safeguard the region's future.

Speaking at a discussion titled "Water Security, Hydro-Diplomacy & Regional Peace", organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), the speakers emphasized that Pakistan needed to pursue its rights under the Indus Waters Treaty at bilateral and international forums while strengthening its domestic water governance, implementing existing policies and improving conservation practices. Chairperson of the Board of Governors of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Ambassador Shafqat Kakakhel, described water as an existential issue, saying it was the fundamental prerequisite for all forms of life.

He said the Indus Waters Treaty was an extraordinary agreement negotiated at a time when international water law was still underdeveloped. The treaty not only prevented a potentially devastating conflict between Pakistan and India but also established principles that were subsequently incorporated into the United Nations Watercourses Convention.

Former chairman of the Federal Flood Commission under the Ministry of Water Resources, Ahmed Kamal, said Pakistan could not afford to treat the Indus Waters Treaty as a matter of history, particularly when India was pursuing projects on the ground.

"If we say that now it is going to be history, probably then we are going to put ourselves into trouble rather than, you know, what India is going to have, because they have got their own plans," he said, adding that India had eight projects on the ground, including one for which a bid had already been made and civil works were probably underway.

National Defence University academic Dr Shaheen Akhtar said regional cooperation had considerable potential to strengthen water security, although the suspension of SAARC's activities and strained relations between Pakistan and India had weakened prospects for collective action.

She said the Indus Waters Treaty remained the strongest water-sharing framework in the region, containing detailed provisions governing the rights of both countries and technical requirements for run-of-the-river projects.

Global development leader Nabeel Goheer said the water dispute was much broader than a sectoral or security issue, linking it to economic development, human welfare, climate change and relations between the two countries.

Speaking at another session, titled: SPHF – The World's Largest post - Disaster Housing Reconstruction Programme, the World Bank Country Director for Pakistan Bolormaa Amgaabazar has said completing one million houses within a few years was an unprecedented achievement, and it is hoped that the Sindh People's Housing for Flood Affectees (SPHF) programme would meet its overall target of approximately 2.1 million homes.

Representatives of the European Union (EU), World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) described the initiative as an example for other countries struggling with climate disasters, poverty and inadequate housing.



ISLAMABAD: Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Rajeh bin Thami Al-Buqami in a meeting with Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf

Saudi Arabia always stood by Pakistan like elder brother during difficult times: Sardar Yousaf

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Rajeh bin Thami Al-Buqami visited the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, where he held a detailed meeting with Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf to discuss bilateral relations, cooperation in the religious sector and arrangements for facilitating Pakistani Hajj pilgrims and Umrah visitors.

Federal Secretary for Religious Affairs Abrar Ahmed Mirza and Joint Secretary Hajj Syed Abdul Waheed Shah also attended the meeting.

Welcoming the Saudi ambassador on his appointment to Pakistan, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf said that relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had entered a new era. He observed that the two countries enjoyed exceptionally strong religious, historical and fraternal ties, adding that Saudi Arabia had always stood by Pakistan like an elder brother during difficult times.

The minister said the Makkah Accord represented the voice of the people and that Pakistan's spiritual and religious bond with the Haramain (the two holy mosques in Makkah and Madinah) would remain intact forever.

He added that the people of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were connected through enduring bonds of devotion, love and brotherhood, which continued to strengthen relations between the two countries.

Sardar Muhammad Yousaf appreciated the exemplary measures being taken under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to provide maximum facilities to Hajj pilgrims.

He also commended the Saudi government's efforts to improve Hajj arrangements and introduce modern facilities for pilgrims.

Describing the Route to Makkah initiative as an excellent project, the minister said it had significantly facilitated Pakistani pilgrims and made their journey for Hajj more convenient.



QUETTA: Parliamentary Secretary Engineer Majeed Badini meets Provincial Advisor for Sports and Youth Affairs Meena Majeed at her office.

Pak, Bangladesh discuss measures to address fuel supply challenges

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik and Bangladesh's Advisor on Finance Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir discussed the evolving global energy situation, its impact on international energy markets, and measures to address fuel supply challenges on Tuesday.

During a meeting, both sides discussed their strategies to manage the unprecedented energy crisis, ensure uninterrupted fuel supplies and reduce the impact of rising uncertainty in energy markets on their economies, according to a press release.

Ali Pervaiz Malik briefed the Bangladeshi advisor on Pakistan's efforts to secure fuel supplies amid challenging global circumstances.

He also shared details of the government's initiatives, including targeted fuel subsidies, to provide relief to the public while managing the impact of the crisis.

Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir shared the steps taken by Bangladesh to ensure fuel security and address emerging challenges.

He said the current crisis had brought energy security to the forefront of policymaking. He stressed the need to make it a central part of national energy strategies.

He also highlighted the importance of diversifying energy sources and supply routes to strengthen resilience against global disruptions.

The Bangladeshi advisor appreciated Pakistan's diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the conflict involving Iran.

He said de-escalation was essential for global economic stability, as the crisis was affecting economies and energy markets worldwide.

He also appreciated Pakistan's efforts to secure LNG cargoes from Qatar through the Strait of Hormuz despite challenging circumstances.

BISP, German Development Cooperation vows to strengthen Pakistan's social protection system

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and German Development Cooperation have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening Pakistan's social protection system, with a particular focus on developing adaptive mechanisms to respond to climate-related risks, disasters and emerging vulnerabilities.

A high-level German delegation, comprising representatives of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), German Embassy, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and KfW Development Bank, visited BISP's One Window Centre in Islamabad to learn about the programme's progress and the impact of Pakistan-Germany cooperation in expanding access to social protection.



Chairperson BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid warmly welcomed the German delegation. Dr. Asim Ijaz, Director General (NSER), and Muhammad Idrees Mian, Director General (CT), were also present on the occasion.

The visit highlighted the growing importance of adaptive social protection, not only in addressing poverty but also in enabling vulnerable communities to prepare for and recover from economic and climate-related shocks.

As Pakistan faces increasing exposure to floods, extreme weather events and other climate risks, strengthening the capacity of social protection institutions to respond to crises has emerged as an important development priority.

Through Pakistan-Germany cooperation, BISP's 647 Dynamic Registry Centres and 32 Mobile Registration Vehicles have supported the registration and updating of information for 38.7 million people

Sri Lankan delegation briefed on Pakistan's Gandhara Buddhist legacy, religious tourism

ISLAMABAD, (APP): A 20-member Sri Lankan delegation, comprising academics, Buddhist monks, religious leaders and media representatives, visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here on Tuesday.

Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Sajjad Haider Khan and Director General Strategic Communications Tariq Wazeer briefed the delegation on Pakistan's rich cultural and religious heritage, particularly its Gandhara Buddhist legacy, religious tourism opportunities and initiatives such as the Kartarpur Corridor.

Ambassador Khan also highlighted the longstanding friendship between Pakistan and Sri Lanka and warmly welcomed Sri Lankan visitors to Pakistan.

Discussions covered several potential areas of cooperation, including academic partnerships, enhanced connectivity, updated MoUs, joint archaeological explorations and cultural exchanges.

Ambassador Khan appreciated the contributions of the Coordinator of the Prime Minister's Taskforce on Gandhara – Cradle of Buddhism Strategy Imran Shaukat, and the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Pakistan, who also attended the meeting.



QUETTA: Chairperson NCSW Naureen Lehri presenting a souvenir to Provincial Advisor for Women Development Dr Rubaba Khan Buledi.

Exports must remain central to country's growth strategy: Finance Minister

LAHORE, (APP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) President Ali Hussam Asghar discussed key priorities, including export-led growth, improved access to financing for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and a predictable business policy environment.

During the meeting, they focused on strengthening role of private sector in economic growth, addressing business community concerns and introducing measures to improve competitiveness, investment and exports, according to LCCI spokesman here.

The finance minister welcomed Ali Hussam Asghar and highlighted the government's commitment in achieving sustainable economic growth through greater private-sector participation, enhanced competitiveness and an expanded export base.

He said that exports must remain central to the country's growth strategy and that policies should facilitate exporters in becoming more competitive in regional and international markets. The meeting was also attended by Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kiyani, Governor of State Bank of Pakistan, Federal Secretary Finance, and senior representatives from the Tax Policy Office, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and Finance Division.

Emphasizing the importance of an improved business environment, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said that ease of doing business requires a facilitative and predictable policy framework, simplified regulatory procedures and effective coordination among relevant institutions.

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