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Oil prices among major causes of inflation, says Atta Tarar

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said the new auto policy would promote local vehicle manufacturing and exports, ensuring affordable, quality and environment-friendly vehicles for a common man.

Addressing a press conference along with the Prime Minister's Adviser on Industry Haroon Akhtar, the minister said the new auto policy had been awaited with great anticipation. He said all stakeholders were consulted during its preparation, technical data was analysed, and models followed in different countries were studied and compared.

He said that for decades Pakistan kept import duties on vehicles high to protect the local industry. Unfortunately, despite all the protection, the industry failed to introduce the innovation and features available to ordinary consumers elsewhere. The purpose of protection was to improve the quality and facilities of vehicles for the common man.

The minister said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed that facilities be created for the middle class in the auto sector. He noted that girls and women are increasingly using electric scooters to reach schools, colleges and offices, and that the use of electric motorcycles and scooters is growing fast, which he called a need of the hour.

Tarar said the prime minister has paid special attention to the sector, and that promoting EVs will benefit the environment.

He added that it will also reduce the country's growing oil import bill, the burden of which ultimately falls on the poor. He said the nation is aware of fluctuations in petroleum prices, but prices are now coming down and the fuel relief scheme is continuing.

If the oil import bill falls, he said, the savings can be spent on public facilities, infrastructure, health and education.

He described the new auto policy as comprehensive, with special incentives for EVs, while promoting local manufacturing is also essential. He said the local industry cannot be fully beneficial until vehicles are exported after manufacturing and jobs are created.

The minister said the policy does not affect petrol-driven vehicles of up to 800cc used by the common man, which remain under existing facilities. He said it takes into account the environment, the import bill and the economy.

To promote clean energy, those setting up charging stations have been exempted from customs duty, and sales tax on them has also been reduced. Tarar said Pakistan has big opportunities in fully electric vehicles.



KARACHI: A young man sets off fireworks during Diwali celebrations at Swaminarayan Temple.



QUETTA: Khuzdar-based social worker Amina Shafi meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.

CM Bugti vows to provide tangible relief to public; address longstanding healthcare challenges

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan has moved a significant step closer to establishing its first modern, specialised cardiac care facility, with the Balochistan Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (BICVD) entering the final stages of completion.

The 150-bed state-of-the-art hospital is expected to be inaugurated later this month, according to Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti. The announcement was made during the inaugural meeting of the Board of Directors of the Balochistan Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases, chaired by the chief minister. The meeting reviewed progress on the hospital's completion, the provision of medical services, the administrative framework, and measures required to make the institution fully operational. Speaking on the occasion, Sarfraz Bugti described the project as a landmark development for the province's healthcare sector, particularly for the diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular diseases. He said the establishment of the institute would enable patients to access advanced cardiac care within Balochistan, reducing the need to travel to other provinces for specialised treatment. "The people of Balochistan will soon have access to modern facilities for the diagnosis and treatment of heart diseases within the province," the chief minister said, adding that the project would ease both the financial and logistical burdens often faced by patients seeking treatment outside Balochistan. During the meeting, the board approved the appointment of renowned cardiologist Dr Jalal Khan as the interim head of BICVD.



QUETTA: General Secretary PML-N Balochistan, Jamal Shah Kakar, Ehsanullah and others express solidarity during an induction gathering.

Diwali symbolises triumph of light over darkness of hatred: PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif extended his heartfelt felicitations and warmest wishes to the Hindu community across the world, particularly those residing in Pakistan, on the joyous and auspicious occasion of Diwali.

In a message on the occasion of Diwali, he said, "Diwali symbolises the triumph of light over the darkness of hatred, intolerance and despair."The festival of lights conveys a profound message of promoting peaceful coexistence in human relations and social life. The enduring belief in a bright, prosperous and hopeful future is one of the most cherished attributes of Diwali," he added.

He said, "The Hindu community of Pakistan is a valued and integral part of our national fabric. Its invaluable contributions to the social, cultural and economic development of our country are worthy of the highest appreciation."

He said, "The diverse cultural and religious traditions within our society constitute a valuable social asset. Pakistan takes immense pride in its religious and cultural diversity."

"The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the protection of the religious and civil rights of minorities. The Government remains firmly committed to safeguarding the rights, dignity and religious freedoms of all citizens, irrespective of religion, faith, colour or ethnicity. Promoting religious harmony, mutual unity and respect is our shared responsibility," he noted.

He said, "Our collective resolve is to build a peaceful, inclusive and prosperous nation. A society that embraces diverse cultures and traditions and upholds the principles of peaceful coexistence is one that ensures equal educational and economic opportunities for all its citizens." He said, "On this special occasion, let us renew our collective commitment to fostering interfaith harmony, strengthening the bonds of fraternity and brotherhood, and working together towards a brighter future founded on peace, tolerance and mutual understanding."

He expressed hope that all Pakistani Hindus celebrating Diwali will enjoy the vibrant and festive traditions of this joyous occasion to the fullest and share with society a message of peace, goodwill, happiness, prosperity and hope.

Pak, IMF agree to extend 200-unit electricity subsidy for protected consumers

ISLAMABAD (INP): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has agreed to extend electricity subsidies for protected consumers using up to 200 units per month for another six months, sources said.

According to sources, the understanding was reached during negotiations between Pakistan and the IMF last month, following the government's efforts to provide further relief to consumers on the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Under the proposed arrangement, the subsidy on electricity consumption of up to 200 units, scheduled to end on December 31, 2026, may now remain in place until June 30, 2027. This means the government could delay the withdrawal of the subsidy to July 1, 2027.

The IMF had previously set a target for ending subsidies on electricity consumption of up to 200 units from January 1, 2027. However, the government reportedly succeeded in securing a six-month extension.

PPP's position rests on respect for democratic mandate; unwavering resolve against terrorism, says Bilawal Bhutto

LARKANA (APP): Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari he urged the federal government to keep its doors open for talks with the opposition, give up its habit of picking fights with everyone, and engage with all stakeholders. He laid foundation of 600-Bed hospital in Chandka Medical Hospital Larkana and talking with media person and said that when he was first elected to the National Assembly from Larkana, his meetings with doctors and staff at Chandka Medical Hospital made him realise how heavily that hospital, established by Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for the people of Larkana in 1970, was now burdened. A growing population, a vast catchment area, and patients coming from Balochistan had stretched its capacity to an extraordinary degree. It was with this need in mind He said, that he decided to give Larkana the gift of a new hospital. He said he was pleased to see the project for himself today and to learn that construction of the 600-bed hospital is on course to finish a month ahead of schedule. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that providing free, quality healthcare, and especially bringing world-class treatment to underprivileged communities and deprived areas, has always been among the PPP's priorities.

He pointed out that the Sindh government has given special attention to the health sector across the province. He expressed hope that the proposed SIUT facility in Larkana will also play an important role in providing free treatment to the people of the city and surrounding areas.

Educated youth true architects of Pakistan's bright future: Syedaal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan Nasir has emphasised that education is the cornerstone of national progress, prosperity and economic stability, stressing the need to nurture young talent and provide opportunities for knowledge and skills development.

He said educated and talented youth were the true architects of Pakistan's bright future and national development.

He expressed these views while presenting the first-ever degree of Alhamd Islamic University to Rubab Tabassum.

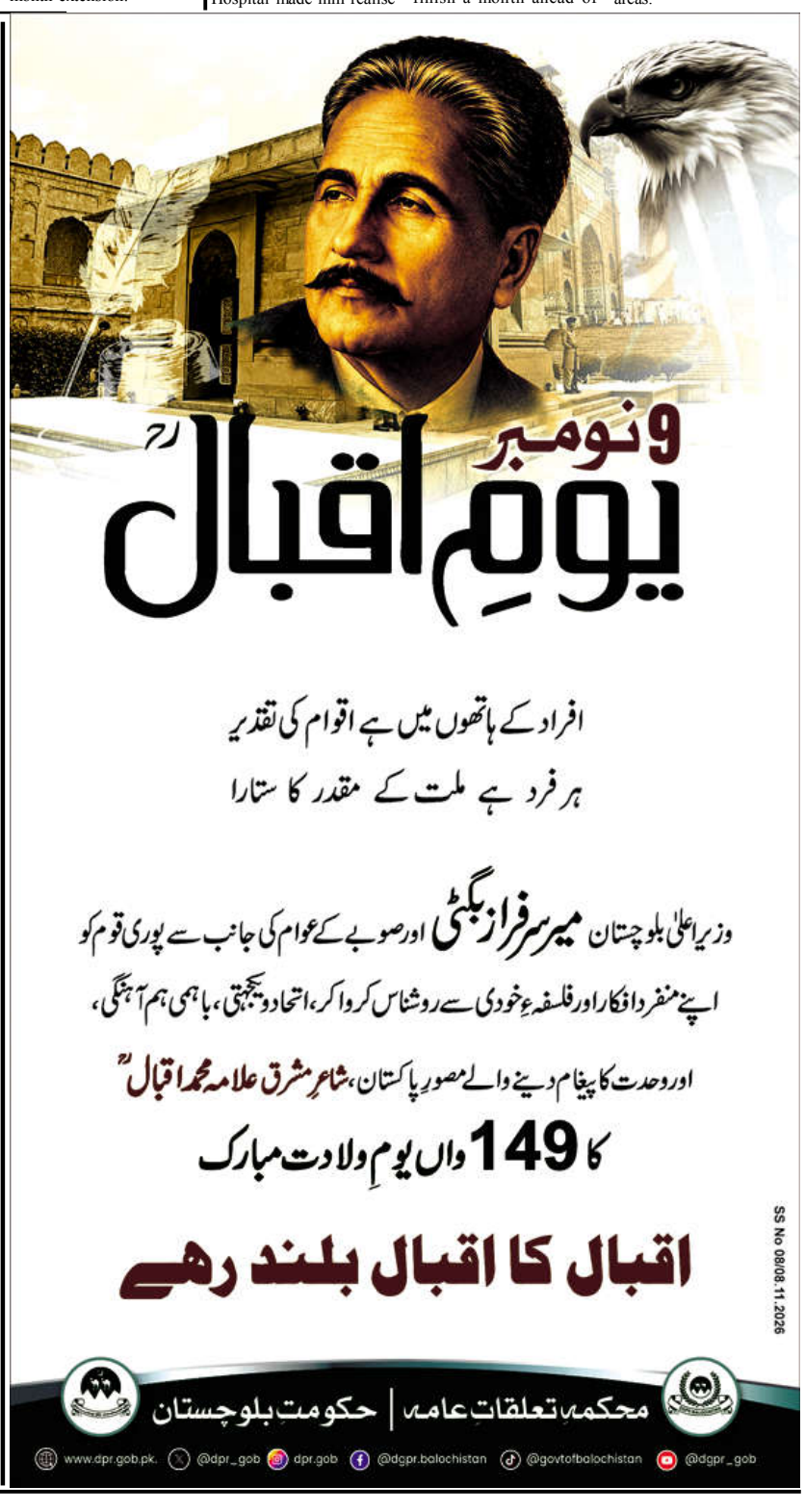
He congratulated her on the academic achievement and extended his best wishes for her bright and successful future.

On the occasion, the deputy chairman also congratulated President of Alhamd Islamic University, Prof Dr Shakeel Roshan, the university administration, faculty members and staff on achieving an important milestone in the institution's academic journey.

Pakistan, Sudan ink visa-free travel pact, agree to boost cooperation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry held talks with Sudanese Interior Minister Lieutenant General Babaker Samra Mustafa Ali, agreeing to expand cooperation between Pakistan and Sudan in security, internal affairs, cybercrime, police training, institutional coordination and civil registration.

The agreement was reached during a meeting between the two sides, followed by delegation-level talks. Both countries also decided to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in cybercrime. Speaking during the meeting, the Sudanese Interior Minister said his country wanted to benefit from Pakistan's experience and expertise in tackling cybercrime. He described Pakistan as a brotherly country and said Sudan attached great importance to cooperation with Pakistan in all fields.



THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

Monday November 09, 2026

A costly cut

Pakistan is confronting a growing climate threat at precisely the moment it has reduced spending on the institutions tasked with managing it. The decision to cut the climate ministry's PSDP allocation from Rs3.5bn to Rs2.48bn is difficult to justify given the challenges ahead. Climate risks are increasing and public investment should reflect that reality. Suparco has identified 130 potentially dangerous glacial lakes in Pakistan's northern regions, with downstream communities exposed to the risk of glacial lake outburst floods. While only 24 of these lakes are currently unfrozen and under observation, the findings show that our glaciers are under increasing stress. Rising temperatures are accelerating glacial melt in a country that contains one of the largest concentrations of ice outside the polar regions. The concern extends beyond the immediate flood danger. As glaciers retreat, the long-term reliability of river flows that sustain agriculture, hydropower generation and drinking water supplies comes into question. Then there is the climate outlook. Suparco has warned that El Niño conditions may bring weaker monsoon rainfall, more frequent heatwaves, drought conditions and warmer winters. Such shifts threaten crop yields, livestock production and water availability. Extreme heat already imposes economic costs through lost labour productivity, increased energy demand and mounting public health burdens. Droughts can damage food security and raise inflationary pressures, while erratic rainfall continues to expose vulnerable communities to both flooding and water shortages.

Climate change is increasingly a fiscal challenge. Governments are forced to divert scarce resources towards emergency relief, reconstruction and compensation instead of development priorities. Repeated climate shocks discourage investment, disrupt supply chains and place additional strain on an economy already grappling with tight public finances. Our experience in recent years demonstrates how quickly climate shocks can overwhelm public resources. The devastating floods of 2022 caused losses estimated at over $30bn and left a recovery bill that continues to burden public finances. The lesson is that preparedness costs less than reconstruction. Investments in climate monitoring, early warning systems, resilient infrastructure and disaster management are not discretionary expenditures. They are economic safeguards. The budget debate also raises questions about priorities. Senator Sherry Rehman was right to question why climate spending is being cut while hundreds of billions of rupees continue to flow towards loss-making SOEs. At a time when climate-related hazards are multiplying, reducing support for adaptation and resilience amounts to a costly policy error. Pakistan cannot control global emissions trends, but it can strengthen its capacity to cope with their consequences. That requires sustained funding, stronger institutions and long-term planning. The country's climate vulnerabilities are becoming more visible with each passing year. Ignoring them today will prove more expensive tomorrow.

From legislation to institution building

A Year of Reform and Transformation in the Home Department, Government of Balochistan

For decades, Balochistan has faced a unique combination of challenges, including terrorism, violent extremism, organized crime, narcotics trafficking, illegal migration, weak institutional capacity, and the complexities arising from its vast geography and strategic location.

Addressing these challenges requires more than routine administration. It requires strong institutions, modern legal frameworks, technological innovation, and a long-term commitment to strengthening the writ of the State.

Over the past year, under the leadership of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the Home Department, Government of Balochistan, embarked upon an ambitious programme of legal, institutional, and administrative reforms aimed at transforming the province's security and governance architecture.

The reforms undertaken during this period were not limited to managing day-to-day law and order. They focused on building permanent institutions, modernizing governance structures, strengthening criminal justice mechanisms, and enhancing public safety across the province.

Strengthening the Legal Framework

One of the foremost priorities of the Home Department was the modernization of Balochistan's legal and criminal justice framework.

A series of important legislative reforms were initiated and implemented, including amendments to the Witness Protection framework, reforms in the Balochistan Forensic Science Agency legislation, legal provisions enabling Faceless Courts for high-risk terrorism cases, reforms relating to detention centres, enactment of the Safe City Authority framework, the Balochistan Prison and Correctional Service Act 2026, and the Probation and Parole Act.

These reforms represent a significant step towards building a modern, efficient and secure criminal justice system capable of responding to contemporary security challenges.

Turning Laws into Functioning Institutions

Legislation alone does not create change unless it is accompanied by implementation.

One of the defining achievements of the past year has been the operationalization of institutions and legal frameworks that had remained dormant or underutilized for many years.

The Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism was made fully functional and is now serving as a policy, research and analytical platform supporting evidence-based decision making and counter-extremism initiatives.

Similarly, detention centres were operationalized for the first time under the relevant legal framework. The Quetta facility is functional while a modern facility in Turbat is under development. These initiatives have strengthened the State's ability to manage high-risk detainees within a lawful and structured framework.

Building Institutions for the Future

Perhaps the most significant achievement of the Home Department during the past year has been institution building.

The Provincial Intelligence Fusion and Threat Assessment Centre (PIFTAC) was operationalized to enhance intelligence sharing, threat analysis and inter-agency coordination.

The Balochistan Integrated Security Architecture (BISA) was established to create a unified security coordination framework involving multiple departments and agencies.

The Balochistan Charities Registration Authority (BCRA) was activated and a province-wide process was initiated to regulate and register charities, NGOs, and religious seminaries in accordance with applicable laws.

Several specialized units were also established, including the Red Notice Cell, Anti-Illegal Spectrum Cell, Anti-Subversion Cell, Anti-Extortion Coordination Mechanism, and Human Trafficking Cell.

Together, these initiatives represent a shift towards proactive, intelligence-driven and institution-based governance.

Safe City and Technology-Based Security

Modern policing increasingly depends on technology.

During the past year, Safe City systems were reorganized under a unified provincial framework and institutional oversight was strengthened through the appointment of dedicated leadership.

Advanced surveillance systems, digital monitoring tools and technology-based enforcement mechanisms were introduced to improve crime prevention and law enforcement.

Within a short period of operation, these systems facilitated the recovery of more than one hundred stolen vehicles and contributed to the arrest of numerous criminal suspects.

Plans are also underway to expand Safe City initiatives to additional urban centres across the province.

Protecting Vulnerable Establishments

For the first time, the Security of Vulnerable Establishments framework was implemented in a comprehensive manner across the province.

Security audits were conducted for government offices, educational institutions, hospitals and other critical facilities.

More than 1,500 locations were equipped with modern CCTV surveillance systems, significantly strengthening protective security arrangements and improving emergency response capabilities.

Modernizing Counter-Terrorism Capacity

The Home Department continued to invest in modern counter-terrorism capabilities.

A dedicated drone unit was established to support surveillance, intelligence gathering, counter-terrorism operations and anti-narcotics campaigns.

Bomb disposal capabilities were further strengthened, while work also progressed on the implementation of video-link and faceless trial mechanisms for high-risk terrorism cases.

These measures aim to improve both operational effectiveness and the protection of judges, prosecutors and witnesses.

Repatriation of Illegal Foreign Nationals

One of the largest administrative and logistical exercises undertaken during the year was the implementation of the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan.

Working in close coordination with district administrations, police, Levies, Special Branch, Frontier Corps and other stakeholders, the Home Department oversaw the organized and lawful repatriation of approximately 1.1 million illegal foreign nationals from the province.

Temporary holding and transit facilities established for this purpose were gradually phased out following completion of their mandate.

The initiative strengthened the rule of law, improved regulatory oversight and reduced pressure on public resources and service delivery systems.

Historic Anti-Poppy Campaign

The Home Department also led an unprecedented campaign against illegal poppy cultivation.

Using modern technology, drone surveillance, field verification and coordinated enforcement actions, thousands of acres of illegal cultivation were identified and eradicated.

The campaign represents one of the most significant anti-narcotics efforts undertaken in the province and has contributed substantially towards disrupting the illicit drug economy.

Action Against Illegal Tobacco Trade

A large-scale enforcement campaign was also launched against illegal tobacco cultivation, transportation and trade. Record quantities of illegal tobacco were seized, helping curb tax evasion, disrupt illicit markets and strengthen the formal economy.

Administrative Reforms

The year also witnessed important structural reforms within the province's security architecture. The Levies Force was successfully merged into the Police Department, while Civil Defence was integrated into the Special Branch.

Brutes & brutalised

Shahzad Sharjeel

Nothing seems to be working, especially when it comes to character building and instilling humane traits, particularly among men. In-person congregations of millions at tableeghiijtima, hundreds, if not thousands, of urs ceremonies around the country at shrines and mausoleums, televangelists, and social media platforms with a combined following of hundreds of millions gush morality and piety 24/7, and yet men go about brutalising women, other men, and animals. Something's got to give.

We have become a 250-million-strong, growing-by-the-minute, cursing, lashing-out mass — bent upon auto-cannibalisation. It is impossible to determine whether the brutality on display, ever-disgusting in its daily manifestations, is innate or a reaction of a systematically brutalised society. I, for one, am unable to stop imagining ways to inflict the worst possible pain on the criminal who attacked Dr Mahnoor with acid in a Quetta hospital.

The rage that is stirred within by the many instances of brutality even brushes aside criticism of 'encounter' killings as one finds oneself unsatisfied with the ultimate punishment dispensed by courts of law.

I may not be alone in this; many others must be racking their brains to devise severe deterrents to stop men from gouging out a camel's eyes or amputating the limbs of a cow that strayed into their field of crops. While I am at it, let me acknowledge the lack of imagination, as my mind keeps returning to the collective punishment practised by another set of brutes, such as the white colonialists, their brown successors and the Zionist Israeli regime.

Would confiscating movable and immovable assets and razing houses deter the would-be criminal? What if they have nothing to lose? OK, how about denying them their last rites? Notwithstanding the extremity of the idea, it assumes the culprit has died, legally or not. What if he is never apprehended? What form of collective punishment would compel him to surrender and/or serve as a deterrent to prevent the crime in the first place?

All these schemes may appear satisfying at first; however, we are also burdened with a conscience; else, why would we be discussing any of it? No amount of rage can stop one from asking, 'but how could you punish his family for his crimes?' An equally angry response could be 'but whose responsibility is it to raise him properly and ensure he stays on the straight and narrow?' The logic of 'it takes a village to raise a child' doesn't hold, for the villages — and the cities — are run by men dispensing jirga justice.

So then, how does one cultivate law-abiding, engaged citizens? This question may hold at least one key to the multiple cells we have locked ourselves in. To be engaged, people need to have a stake in the system and to know that breaking the law has consequences. Otherwise, no number of religious congregations, fulmination of the morality brigade on social media, or, for that matter, letting off steam at raves and jamming at private parties would temper the brute within us.

Those who don't have anything to look forward to in life could become a danger to themselves and society, but Zahir Jaffer had everything going for him, yet he brutally murdered Noor Mukadam. The logical conclusion of his trial would be a step towards establishing accountability and put a tiny dimple in our collective belief that the powerful go scot-free in Pakistan. As for those brutalising women and children, one really hopes for the worst of both worlds: first, jaza-saza sab yaheen pay hogi; yaheen azab-o-sawab hoga (all reckoning in this life) type rep-ay-m-ent; plus the lowest rungs of eternal hell in the hereafter. Now that we have the condemnations out of the way, let us turn to tangible measures and the state's responsibility. The euphemisms of 'waste band bullet' and the 'half' and 'full-fry' do not change the nature of extrajudicial measures. They have had no deterrent effect on would-be criminals.

A state that does not itself raise and harbour criminals for any policy gains will not allow any segment of society to do so. A state that does not manipulate the courts to secure favourable decisions can insist that the judiciary set its house in order. Only a state that does not use the police for political expediency could improve its investigative and prosecutorial capabilities, leading to convictions and, hopefully, some measure of deterrence.

Salute to Abdul Razzaq, a hospital staff member who came to Dr Mahnoor's aid, and to his family, who raised him right. Salute to the polio vaccinators who continue to risk their lives for Pakistan's children, knowing another band of brutes lies in wait.

Parliamentary budget office

Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

While the budget session in the federal and provincial assemblies is in progress, some members of the two Houses of parliament have again raised the need for an independent office within parliament to provide an unbiased analysis of the annual budget to the legislators.

The argument is that if members of parliament have to debate various aspects of the budget as informed legislators and exercise oversight on the executive's produced budget, they need support from an entity which is outside the control of the executive so that the numbers produced by the Ministry of Finance for the budget and by the Ministry of Planning and Development for the Public Sector Development Programme can be scrutinised and independently verified before the parliamentarians provide their feedback and input during the budget debate.

In fact, a member of the National Assembly had introduced a private member's bill titled the 'Parliamentary Budget Office Bill, 2025', in the Assembly last year. The bill was referred to the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance which asked its sub-committee chaired by Dr Nafisa Shah to examine the proposal in depth.

As one can gather from media reports, the bill was strongly opposed by the representatives of the finance ministry who complained to the sub-committee that the bill granted excessive powers to the proposed budget office. The ministry also objected to the suggested direct reporting relationship of the proposed office to parliament without taking the ministry into confidence.

While the bill was not passed in its original form, it was agreed that the ministry's finance and revenue divisions would come up with an amended draft for consideration of the sub-committee and the full committee.

As the debate on the 2026-27 budget commences, there is no sign that such a draft has been placed before the committee or that the committee has taken that into consideration.

A parliamentary budget office is not a novel idea; a number of countries around the world have established such offices to support the independent character of their respective parliaments but most of them are mature democracies in the developed world. Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, South Korea and US are among those with independent budget offices within their respective parliaments. Some developing or mid-level countries like Kenya also have a parliamentary budget office.

The only exception seems to be Afghanistan during the pre-Taliban period when USAID and development agencies from many developed democracies were working hard to transform Afghanistan into a democracy. USAID supported the establishment of a parliamentary budget office in Afghanistan in 2007, which continued to function right up to the Taliban takeover in 2021. In keeping with the overall democracy project in Afghanistan, there is no evidence that the Afghan parliamentary budget office reported any meaningful success.

A typical office of this kind requires highly skilled and professional staff ranging from 15 to 45 members — depending on the scope of work. The cost of establishing a typical parliamentary budget office ranges from $3 million to $10m with an annual operational cost ranging from $5m to $10m for a country like Pakistan. In comparison, America's Congressional Budget Office employs hundreds of professional staff and its operational cost is in the vicinity of $65m. The Netherlands spends around $8m to $10m per year.

It is normal to expect that there will be some level of tension or even confrontation between the parliamentary budget office and government.

For example, Canada's parliamentary budget officer recently released the highly scrutinised Economic and Fiscal Outlook — June 2026 that revealed that the federal deficit had essentially doubled to 72 billion Canadian dollars in the last fiscal year, putting the government's fiscal targets in jeopardy. The office's reports have frequently challenged the government's financial management as the nation approached an election, embarrassing the ruling party and putting at risk its electoral prospects. It is, therefore, understandable that the government in Pakistan has resisted the idea of such an independent institution.

Confrontations are not limited to those with governments.

The Canadian parliamentary budget office, in the past, has also crossed swords with the Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons and defied his explicit instructions to submit its reports to the Speaker's office or the finance committee before making it public. There was a long-standing confrontation between the first parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page and the Speaker at the time.

This writer witnessed the state of relations between the two while conducting three study visits of Pakistani parliamentarians to the Canadian parliament from 2009 to 2011. This example could serve as a reminder to all concerned that when an 'independent' entity is created, it may not accept dictation even from its creator. All those advocating for an independent parliamentary budget office may read the book Unaccountable: Truth and Lies on Parliament Hill authored by Kevin Page.

While Pakistani legislators may continue to seek the creation of an independent parliamentary budget office, a practical compromise solution may be to strengthen the staffing of the Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue, both quantitatively and qualitatively. By inducting qualified professionals on the basis of merit, the committee can significantly enhance its research and analytical capacity, while avoiding endless argument with the government.

Sadly, our standing committees relating to various divisions of the federal government lack the capacity to undertake any meaningful oversight of the concerned ministries and divisions. In fact, the entire committee system may need to be strengthened by providing it with dedicated researchers and analysts in addition to physical infrastructure such as offices and dedicated meeting rooms.

Compared to the creation of a parliamentary budget office, it may be more practical and attainable to strengthen parliamentary committees.

Iranian lawmaker says indirect talks with US continuing through Qatar, Oman

Tehran, Washington have exchanged conditions for negotiations as Iran awaits US response, says parliamentary committee member

TEHRAN, (Monitoring Desk): Indirect talks between Iran and the US are continuing through mediation by Qatar and Oman, an Iranian lawmaker said, as Tehran-Washington tensions remain high, according to local media.

Yaqoub Rezazadeh, a member of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, told the ILNA news agency that both sides had presented conditions through the mediators.

"We have presented a set of conditions, and the other side has also presented a set of conditions. We are now waiting to see whether the conditions we announced will be accepted by the Americans," Rezazadeh said.

He said the contacts were being conducted with the involvement of Qatar and Oman.

Rezazadeh said the negotiations were being overseen by Iran's Supreme National Security Council, adding that issues under discussion were handled with the council's approval.

The lawmaker also played down speculation about an imminent new conflict between Iran and the US, saying predictions based on betting markets or reports of a possible preemptive Iranian attack were unfounded.

He said he did not expect another war before US congressional elections and elections in Israel, while acknowledging that renewed fighting remained possible.

Rezazadeh said Iran would not launch a preemptive attack but would respond if attacked, claiming that Tehran's military, air defense, and naval capabilities had significantly improved compared with the previous two rounds of fighting.

The latest reported contacts come after Iran and the US reached an understanding in Islamabad in June aimed at ending hostilities and opening the way for negotiations, with Pakistan and Qatar involved in mediation.

Under the understanding, the sides were expected to pursue further talks, but tensions subsequently resurfaced amid disputes over implementation and continuing military activity in the region.

Qatar and Oman have also maintained diplomatic contacts with Tehran and Washington as regional actors seek to prevent another escalation between the two sides.



WASHINGTON: U.S. President Donald Trump walks to speak to press members as he departs the White House South Lawn. Trump is traveling to Cape Canaveral, Florida, to address the UP.Summit technology showcase at NASA's Kennedy Space Center before spending the weekend at his Mar-a-Lago club.



Venezuelan opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Corina Machado met with the families of political prisoners near Rodeo 1 Prison in Miranda state, Venezuela.

Yemen coalition downs 4 drones over Riyadh, eastern, southern KSA

SANAA, (Agencies): The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen said on Sunday that its forces intercepted and destroyed four drones.

"We intercepted and destroyed four drones over the past few hours in the Riyadh, Eastern and Southern regions," spokesman Turki al-Maliki wrote on the US social media platform X.

No additional details were immediately available.

Yemen has been engulfed in conflict since the Houthis seized the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, and several provinces in 2014. That prompted the Saudi-led coalition to intervene in 2015 in support of the internationally recognized government.

Fighting has escalated since July and spilled into neighboring Saudi Arabia, where Houthis have targeted energy and aviation sites including airports.

EU asks Israel to reverse illegal settlement plans, warns businesses

BRUSSELS, (Agencies): European Union leaders called on Israel to immediately reverse plans to expand illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank and warned businesses against bidding for construction contracts, citing serious legal, economic and reputational risks, according to a statement issued following a two-day summit in Brussels.

In conclusions adopted at the European Council meeting, EU leaders condemned Israel's continued expansion of illegal settlements and escalating violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians in the occupied West Bank.

The leaders specifically demanded that Israel abandon plans for new settlement construction in the E1 area, a controversial development project that threatens to further fragment Palestinian territory and undermine prospects for a viable Palestinian state.

The European Council also urged companies and financial institutions to refrain from participating in construction projects linked to illegal Israeli settlements, warning that involvement could expose them to serious consequences under international law.

"It reiterates that businesses should not bid for construction contracts for E1 or other settlement developments," the declaration said.

The statement highlighted the legal, economic and reputational consequences facing businesses and financial institutions involved in illegal settlement construction, including the risk of serious violations of international law.

Moscow welcomes Trump's sanctions waiver as Ukraine voices alarm

MOSCOW, (Agencies): Russia welcomed U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to waive new sanctions targeting Moscow, calling it a historic move as Ukraine warned that easing economic pressure would encourage Russian President Vladimir Putin to continue the war.

Trump signed an executive order Saturday suspending the application of sanctions provisions under the Lindsey Graham Act, a law designed to increase pressure on Russia's energy and defense sectors, its officials and the network of tankers Moscow uses to circumvent Western restrictions.

The decision comes as Russian forces intensify attacks on Ukrainian cities and diplomatic efforts led by Washington remain deadlocked, raising concerns among Kyiv and its European allies that the Trump administration is easing pressure on Moscow without securing meaningful concessions.

Kirill Dmitriev, Putin's special envoy for investment and economic cooperation, praised the decision on social media, describing the suspension of the law as an "important and truly historic moment."

Dmitriev argued that the sanctions would have caused serious damage to the U.S. economy and global markets. The Kremlin and Putin had not publicly commented on the decision as of Saturday.

The waiver followed an arrangement between Trump and Putin under which Moscow agreed to release substantial quantities of diesel onto global markets amid mounting pressure on fuel prices. Trump's decision to suspend the new measures marks a diplomatic gain for Russia as Washington struggles to broker an end to the war.

The Graham Act, named after the late Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, was designed to tighten restrictions on Russia's energy and defense industries, officials linked to Putin and its so-called shadow fleet of tankers. It also included provisions targeting countries that continue to buy Russian oil and gas.

Trump's order suspends the application of the new measures under a national-interest waiver. It does not automatically remove sanctions imposed on Russia under earlier U.S. measures.

The decision has intensified concerns in Kyiv that Washington could weaken its leverage over Moscow while Russian forces continue their offensive.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy criticized the waiver Saturday, arguing that easing sanctions would reward Russia despite its continued attacks.

"A U.S. sanctions blackout, easing pressure on the aggressor, financial rewards for Putin, all of this only encourages him to keep attacking," Zelenskyy said on social media, urging Ukraine's allies to maintain pressure on Moscow.

The sanctions decision came as Russia stepped up its attacks on Ukraine, including repeated strikes on the capital, Kyiv, as the war enters its fifth year.

Russian forces struck the southern city of Kherson on Saturday, killing one person and wounding 22, local officials said.



Activists, affiliated with the environmental movement Geef Tegengas, demonstrate at the construction site of a Microsoft data center to protest against the facility's build and call for an immediate halt to the project, in Amsterdam, Netherlands

Cockroach Janta Party emerges as source of political pressure on Modi

NEW DELHI, (Agencies): Indian police arrested Abhijeet Dipke, founder of the youth-led Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), according to multiple media reports, a day after detaining him ahead of a rally in Delhi that drew hundreds of protesters waving national flags and demanding the resignation of the country's election chief.

Dipke was arrested to prevent a breach of the peace and was due to appear before a special executive magistrate. Delhi police did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. The CJP, opposition groups and student organizations have staged near-daily protests this month, calling for Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar to resign over a revision of voter lists that they allege favors Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP. More than 130 million voters were deleted from the lists during the revision. The Election Commission has denied favoring any party and said voters who were wrongly removed can re-enroll. The BJP has accused its rivals of trying to undermine democracy by questioning legitimate electoral processes. Student activist Neha Bora, a prominent face of the protests, was also detained as she tried to reach central Delhi with dozens of supporters. She was released later. "Please, spare the people of India. Impeach Gyanesh Kumar and halt SIR (special intensive revision), so that the ordinary citizens of this country can breathe a sigh of relief, feel at ease, and have their voting rights ensured," Bora told the media after her release.



People gather at Osloer Street and march to Wedding as they stage a demonstration in solidarity with Palestine in Berlin, Germany

Iran denies role in Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia, offers mediation

TEHRAN, (Agencies): Iran dismissed Saudi Arabia's accusations that Tehran was involved in Houthi attacks targeting the kingdom, with its Foreign Ministry offering to mediate between Riyadh and the Yemeni group to help ease tensions.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran rejects any claim that Iran has played a role in Yemeni (Houthi) operations," foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said in a statement, reiterating Tehran's offer to act as a bridge between the Houthis and Riyadh.

Baqaei said Tehran "has always been ready to use its good offices to help end the hostilities" and remained prepared to use "all its capacities for this purpose at the request of both sides".

The Houthis are part of Iran's so-called "Axis of Resistance," which also includes Lebanon's Hezbollah and Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq, all united in opposing Israel.

Tehran has repeatedly denied directing Houthi operations, saying the Yemeni group acts according to its own interests.

The Houthis have repeatedly attacked Saudi targets in recent weeks, including vessels in the Red Sea, oil facilities and Riyadh's international airport, where 13 people were killed in a single attack last week.



Couples are seen during a mass wedding ceremony supported by the United Arab Emirates in Gaza City, Gaza, Palestine

Bangladesh struggles to contain world's worst measles outbreak

SYLHET, (Monitoring Desk): Bangladesh is struggling to contain the world's largest measles outbreak this year, with more than 1,100 deaths exposing serious gaps in vaccination coverage, emergency planning and efforts to reach vulnerable children.

The country reported 202,000 suspected measles cases, including 22,000 laboratory-confirmed infections, between mid-March and Oct. 9, according to the World Health Organization. Of the 1,147 reported deaths, 94% were children younger than 5.

The outbreak follows a decline in routine immunization coverage in 2025, reversing years of progress against a highly contagious disease that vaccines can prevent. Experts say unreliable data, inadequate preparation and failures to reach parents have further weakened the response.

A review of WHO documents, combined with interviews with more than a dozen scientists, health workers and officials, found that millions of children may have been missed by an emergency vaccination campaign launched in April.

The crisis offers a warning to other countries about the consequences of declining vaccination rates and underprepared health systems.

"This is a real warning to every country," said Mark Jit, a WHO vaccine adviser and professor at New York University's School of Global Public Health.

Preventing an outbreak through vaccination is easier, cheaper and safer than responding after infections spread, Jit said.

"The response will stop the outbreak eventually, but in the meantime, many will have had measles, and some will have died," he said.

Ziauddin Hyder, special assistant on health affairs to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, told Reuters in September that the government was doing everything possible to end the outbreak.

US Rep. Ilhan Omar challenges legality of FBI home search

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): The defense of US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar have challenged the legality of a search of her Washington home, demanding that federal prosecutors immediately return all seized property and provide recordings made during the operation, The Wall Street Journal reported on Sunday.

In a letter sent late Saturday, the Minnesota Democrat's legal team argued that the search, conducted by Homeland Security Investigations agents early Monday under a federal judge-approved warrant, was "neither justified nor lawful."

According to the Journal, the investigation focuses partly on how Omar, 44, obtained US citizenship after arriving from Somalia decades ago.

"There is no legitimate basis for any suggestion that she has violated any law concerning her citizenship status," the letter said.

Her lawyers alleged that agents failed to follow the judge's instructions, including a requirement to notify the US House general counsel before executing the warrant. They also said Omar and her attorneys were not given a copy of the warrant beforehand, as ordered by the judge.

The letter claimed agents prevented Omar from contacting her lawyers for more than an hour after the search began.

A Justice Department spokeswoman rejected the allegations, describing the letter as "riddled with false allegations and inaccuracies. Our attorneys and law enforcement partners complied with all court orders and legal obligations, as they always do."

Jeanine Pirro, the US attorney for Washington, defended the operation earlier this week, saying it had been approved by a federal judge mindful of constitutional protections.



ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attends 'TRT World Forum 2026 Official Opening Ceremony' at the Istanbul Congress Center.

Illegal Israeli settlers attack European diplomatic delegation in West Bank

RAMALLAH, (Agencies): Illegal Israeli settlers attacked a European diplomatic delegation visiting the occupied West Bank, injuring several people as representatives from France, Belgium and Poland toured the Palestinian town of Taybeh.

The attack took place after an official ceremony marking the signing of a twinning agreement between the Palestinian town of Taybeh and the French town of Saint-Pierre, Taybeh Mayor Suleiman Khourieh told media.

The ceremony was attended by the French and Belgian consuls, a Polish representative whose name was not disclosed, and Saint-Pierre Mayor Christian Ravain.

The attack targeted the delegation in the western part of the town, as well as Palestinians who were picking olives.

It left several town residents injured and shattered the window of a vehicle belonging to the Belgian delegation, Khourieh added.

Israeli Army Radio, citing witnesses and footage, also said that the occupiers hurled stones at one of the diplomatic vehicles, smashing its window.

A Washington Post journalist was also attacked by violent Israeli occupiers, in an incident condemned by the U.S. State Department.

Footage showed a member of the delegation lying on the ground after the attack. The person shown lying on the ground beside the diplomatic vehicle was Bernard Boudot, a French politician and mayor of Aulnoy-lez-Valenciennes in northern France, the broadcaster said.

Israel's Channel 12, citing the Israeli military, reported that the incident was "under review" and none had been arrested immediately.

Khourieh described the attack as "a flagrant violation of the sanctity of diplomatic and humanitarian work" and part of ongoing restrictions imposed on Palestinian farmers.

Pakistan's Hindu community integral part of our national life: President Zardari

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari extended his warm greetings to the Hindu community in Pakistan and around the world on the auspicious occasion of Diwali. In a message on the occasion of Diwali, he said, "The festival of lights celebrates the symbolism of triumph of good over evil, light over darkness and hope over despair. Its message of compassion and renewal reminds us that each of us can bring light into the lives of others through kindness, understanding, compassion and care."
He said, "Pakistan's Hindu community is an integral part of our national life. Its contributions to education, healthcare, business, public service, social welfare, arts and culture have enriched our country." He said, "On this occasion, I pay tribute to these contributions and reaffirm that Pakistan belongs equally to all its citizens."
"Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah envisioned a country where faith, caste or creed would be no barrier to equal citizenship and equal rights. We must honour that vision by ensuring that every citizen can practise their faith freely, live in dignity and enjoy equal protection under the law," he stressed.
He said, "For me, Quaid-e-Azam's promise of equal citizenship is a sacred national commitment. The Pakistan Peoples Party's tradition, carried forward by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, also calls upon us to defend that promise without fear or favour. No Pakistani should ever have to prove their belonging because of their faith. This country is their home, its freedoms are their right, and its future is theirs to shape."
"Diwali is also an occasion to strengthen the bonds that unite us as Pakistanis. By sharing in one another's celebrations, standing together in times of difficulties and rejecting prejudice and discrimination, we can build a more just and compassionate society. Our diversity is not our weakness but a great strength. It should be clear to all of us that protecting the rights of religious minorities is our shared responsibility," he remarked.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Aurangzeb Khan Khichi, offering Fateha at the mausoleum of the national poet, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, on the occasion of the inauguration of the celebrations marking his 150th birth anniversary.



QUETTA: Executive member APMMA Chaghi Madad Khan Sinjrani meets with president National Party and former CM Balochistan Dr Abdul Malik Baloch.

Constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights; religious freedom to all citizens: Ayaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah have extended their heartfelt greetings to Hindu Members of Parliament and the Hindu community across Pakistan on the auspicious occasion of Diwali.
In his message, Ayaz Sadiq said that Diwali is an important religious festival of the Hindu community, symbolizing the triumph of light, happiness and hope. He said the festival provides an opportunity for the Hindu community to celebrate its religious traditions and cultural values and to share the message of peace, harmony and goodwill. The Speaker said that Pakistan is a diverse country enriched by different religions, cultures and traditions, where every citizen has the right to practice his or her faith freely.

Pakistan ready to extend all possible support to Sudan in maintaining peace: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry held talks with Sudanese Interior Minister Lieutenant General Babaker Samra Mustafa Ali, agreeing to expand cooperation between Pakistan and Sudan in security, internal affairs, cybercrime, police training, institutional coordination and civil registration. The agreement was reached during a meeting between the two sides, followed by delegation-level talks.
Both countries also decided to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in cybercrime. Speaking during the meeting, the Sudanese Interior Minister said his country wanted to benefit from Pakistan's experience and expertise in tackling cybercrime. He described Pakistan as a brotherly country and said Sudan attached great importance to cooperation with Pakistan in all fields.
He expressed his country's desire to expand bilateral cooperation and thanked Pakistan for its willingness to assist in different sectors. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said Pakistan was ready to extend all possible support to Sudan in maintaining peace and supporting its reconstruction process.
He said that, with the assistance of NADRA, 36 million citizenship cards, nine million national identity cards, 18 million birth certificates and 500,000 death certificates had been issued in Sudan.
Naqvi said NADRA was ready to continue supporting Sudan's civil registration system in the future.

Int'l law can't be invoked vigorously in one situation, disregarded in another: Pakistan

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Denouncing ongoing foreign occupations, Pakistan has called on the United Nations to implement its long-standing resolutions guaranteeing the right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir and Palestine.
"International law cannot be invoked vigorously in one situation and disregarded in another," Ambassador Usman Jadoon, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, told the General Assembly's Third Committee, which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural issues. The Pakistani envoy spoke as the Committee began a general debate in which speakers focused on the threats to human rights and warned of poverty and climate pressures affecting social development.
"For nearly eight decades," Ambassador Jadoon said, "Kashmiris have awaited implementation of Security Council resolutions providing for the final disposition of the State of Jammu and Kashmir through a free and impartial plebiscite under UN auspices."
Since 5 August 2019, when India illegally annexed Jammu and Kashmir, repression and restrictions have intensified on fundamental freedoms as also attempts to alter the demographic and political character of the occupied territory. "Arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, restrictions on expression and peaceful assembly, and demographic engineering cannot become acceptable merely because they persist over time," Ambassador Jadoon said, adding, "Rights delayed for generations do not become rights denied."
Ambassador Jadoon's remarks drew a predictable response from an Indian delegate who, while exercising his rights of reply, insisted that the Kashmir dispute was India's "internal matter", a claim that a Pakistani representative swiftly countered, saying that the State was an internationally recognised disputed territory, whose final status remains to be determined in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people, as enshrined in numerous UN resolutions. In his remarks, Ambassador Jadoon also drew attention to the suffering of the Palestinian people, particularly in Gaza, saying it remains a "defining test of our collective conscience."
Civilians, he said, must be protected; humanitarian assistance must reach those in need without impediment; international law must be upheld; and accountability must be ensured. "Above all, the Palestinian people must finally realize their inalienable right to self-determination," the Pakistani envoy added.
On human rights, Ambassador Jadoon said that the developing countries confront shrinking fiscal space, unsustainable debt, climate shocks and widening technological divides, with the international financial architecture often perpetuating rather than correcting these inequalities. The right to development must occupy its rightful place on the human rights agenda, he said



Ameer Jamat-e-Islami Pakistan Hafiz Naeemur Rehman addressing participants during inauguration of roads in UC-8 TMC Model Colony.

Pakistan moving towards new heights on diplomatic, economic fronts: Atta Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said that traditional sports like tent pegging reflect Pakistan's cultural identity and soft image, attracting attention of global influencers.
Addressing the tent pegging competitions held at F-9 Park under the Pakistan Tourism, Sports and Family Festival, he said extensive activities are underway to promote sports, culture and tourism in the country.
Flanked by Prime Minister's Coordinator on Tourism Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, the minister told the media that Pakistan is moving towards new heights on the diplomatic and economic fronts under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision and the efforts of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir.
He thanked the tent pegging clubs and participants and praised Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan for organizing a splendid tourism festival, which, he said, is giving the people of Islamabad and surrounding areas a chance to take part in healthy activities.
Tarar said the prime minister stressed on arranging more events of this kind, adding the major events will take place in the future, including meetings of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).
Describing tent pegging as a traditional sport and cultural symbol, he said such games connect the younger generation with its heritage.
"Whether it is horse riding or other sports, Pakistanis are second to none, and in several fields they hold the edge," he said. He added that the skill with which women and girls are competing in tent pegging sends a positive message to the world and serves as a guiding light for millions of women.



LAHORE: Federal Minister Raza Hayat Hiraj calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sahrif.

Hafiz Naeem urges govt to scrap petroleum levy to ease burden on consumers

KARACHI (INP): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman demanded that the government abolish the petroleum levy, warning that JI would launch another protest movement if no concrete steps were taken to provide relief to consumers.
Addressing a press conference at Idara Noor-e-Haq in Karachi, Hafiz Naeem alleged that oil refineries' profits had increased by 1,000 per cent despite worsening economic conditions for the public and the country.
He said the government should review the extraordinary profits earned by refineries. He said the JI highlighted refineries' windfall levy, under which any profit exceeding a prescribed threshold would be used to provide relief to consumers. "The people's conditions have deteriorated to their worst, while their profits have increased by 1,000 per cent," he said.
The JI chief alleged that a handful of owners of refineries and oil marketing companies (OMCs) were benefiting at the expense of 250 million people, accusing them of working in collusion with the government and bureaucracy.
He described the prevailing economic structure as an exploitative capitalist system that benefited a few at the expense of the wider population.
Hafiz Naeem said the government was collecting approximately Rs150 billion every month through the petroleum levy and urged it to abolish the charge to reduce the burden on consumers.
He said the government had resisted the proposal, arguing that the petroleum levy had already been incorporated into the federal budget.
The JI chief said his party had presented both short-term and long-term alternatives to the government

Pakistan urges ethical AI adoption to safeguard journalism's credibility

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Dr Syed Ali Asad Gillani, highlighted the significant role of Xinhua News Agency in strengthening Pakistan-China friendship and promoting mutual understanding between the two countries, while underscoring the need for responsible use of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies in journalism.
Addressing the 7th World Media Summit, held under the theme "Media in the Intelligent Age: From Consensus to Action," on the occasion of Xinhua News Agency's 95th anniversary, the ambassador congratulated the Chinese news agency on its remarkable milestone on behalf of the Government and people of Pakistan.
He acknowledged Xinhua's longstanding contribution to international journalism and communication, particularly its role in connecting China with the world and fostering greater understanding among nations.
Dr Gillani said that throughout the 75 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, Xinhua had played an important role in nurturing the enduring friendship between the two countries. He highlighted Xinhua's longstanding institutional partnerships with the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP), Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) and Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation



The 31st Conference of the Parties (COP31) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the world's most important organization in the fight against climate change, is underway at the Antalya COP31 site, with Türkiye hosting it for the first time. There was activity in the pavilion sites in the Blue Zone as part of COP31. The Indonesian Pavilion presented a traditional dance performance for the guests at the site.



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