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Sustainable economic development depends on lasting regional peace, stability: Pakistan

DPM Dar reiterates Pakistan's desire for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan integrated with the region

DUSHANBE, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday called for greater regional connectivity, investment in energy and transport infrastructure, and enhanced economic cooperation among member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to promote shared prosperity.

Addressing the 25th meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, the deputy PM reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the organisation's principles of mutual trust, respect for diversity and regional cooperation, collectively known as the Shanghai Spirit. He appreciated Tajikistan's Prime Minister Qohir Rasulzoda, the government and people of Tajikistan for their hospitality and highlighted Pakistan's active role in the SCO, including hosting the Council of Heads of Government meeting in Islamabad in 2024 and completing its chairmanship of the SCO Anti-Terrorism Structure this year. Ishaq Dar also highlighted Pakistan's leadership of the SCO Working Group on Poverty Alleviation, saying Islamabad intends to emphasise the role of small and medium-sized enterprises in reducing poverty. Stressing the importance of economic integration, the foreign minister said targeted investments in energy and transport were essential for connecting regional economies. He also called for greater investment in agriculture, mining and minerals, and information technology to strengthen economic resilience. He described the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as an opportunity for all SCO partners to participate in and accelerate regional economic integration. The deputy prime minister said artificial intelligence, digital transformation, innovation, energy cooperation and international information security should become key pillars of future SCO collaboration.

He noted that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had unveiled Pakistan's vision for its SCO chairmanship under the theme "Turning Vision into Action: Connectivity, Innovation and Shared Prosperity."

The vision identifies five priority areas: peace, security and mutual trust; regional connectivity and trade; innovation, artificial intelligence and digital transformation; climate resilience and sustainable energy; and people-to-people exchanges.



TEHRAN: Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir meets Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian



DUSHANBE: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar calling on the President of Tajikistan, H.E. Emomali Rahmon

Recognition of hidden talents can open new avenues of development: Governor

Jaffar Khan Mandokhail says culture of encouragement should be promoted in homes, educational institutions, offices and society

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has said that recognising a person's abilities and acknowledging their hard work or services is itself a great social service.

He said researchers and teachers receiving awards should regard the honour not as their final destination but as a new responsibility, and continue striving to bring constructive change to society through their research, teaching and professional abilities. He expressed these views while addressing participants at an award distribution ceremony organised by Balochistan Women Promote Talent at BUITEMS University, Quetta. BUITEMS Vice Chancellor Dr Khalid Hafeez, Pro Vice Chancellor Dr Merowais Kasi, Principal Secretary to the Governor Abdul Nasir Dautani, and a large number of students attended the ceremony. Addressing the gathering, Governor Mandokhail said that recognising people's services and sacrifices and encouraging them should be done during their lifetime because appreciation of good work, encouragement of critical and creative thinking and recognition of hidden talents can open new avenues of development and reform. He said Balochistan Women Promote Talent had taken a commendable step by highlighting and encouraging talented individuals who are playing their role in serving society. The governor said a culture of encouragement should be promoted in homes, educational institutions, offices and society.



QUETTA: Balochistan Home Minister Ziaullah Langove addressing a press conference regarding improvement of law and order situation

Pakistan, Qatar working together to promote regional peace, stability

DOHA, (APP): Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and his Qatari counterpart, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who also commands Qatar's Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), have agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation and expand the security partnership between Pakistan and Qatar. During their meeting in Doha, the two interior ministers held detailed discussions on expanding cooperation in areas related to internal security. They also discussed the current regional situation and matters concerning regional peace and stability. Both ministers reaffirmed their



commitment to strengthening cooperation between their respective interior ministries. They agreed to enhance mutual cooperation and further develop their partnership in internal security. The meeting focused on ways to increase coordination between the two countries in security-related fields. Both sides agreed that the existing partnership should be strengthened to support their shared security objectives. The two ministers also discussed the importance of continued engagement between Pakistan and Qatar on regional developments and issues affecting peace and stability. Speaking during the meeting, Mohsin Naqvi said Pakistan and Qatar were working together to promote regional peace and stability. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to working with Qatar on matters of mutual interest, particularly those related to internal security and regional stability.

Over 250,000 displaced by Yemen conflict since August: UN

UNITED NATIONS, (APP): More than 250,000 people have now fled renewed fighting in Yemen, the UN said on Tuesday, citing particular concern for those sheltering in the southwestern city of Taiz and the wider governorate, where access is "essentially blocked".

"The Houthis' closure of the only supply route linking Taiz to Aden is placing civilians at grave risk, blocking humanitarian aid and cutting off essential supplies," UN human rights chief Volker Turk, said in a statement.

In an appeal to Houthi fighters who he said had encircled Taiz City to allow aid in immediately, the High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that 32 civilians have been confirmed killed across the governorate, including 14 children and nine women. He warned of a significant uptick in the risk of death and injury as fighting moves closer to densely populated areas of the city. The development follows the resumption last month of clashes between Houthi fighters – formally known as Ansar Allah – and the internationally recognized Government based in Aden, ending the relative calm brought about by the 2022 truce.

The situation in Taiz is particularly worrying because around half of those recently uprooted by the violence have sought shelter there.

Balochistan launches Sehat Dehleez Telehealth App

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Under the vision of Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti to provide quality, accessible and timely healthcare services to the people of the province, PPHI Balochistan has launched the Sehat Dehleez Telehealth App. The initiative aims to deliver healthcare services to people's doorsteps through modern digital technology, particularly by improving access to medical consultation for citizens living in remote areas. Through the Sehat Dehleez app, citizens can receive medical consultations from qualified doctors 24 hours a day. The facility will enable people across different parts of the province to consult doctors from their homes, receive guidance on the treatment of common illnesses and access health-related awareness.

The app also provides consultations on maternal and child health, guidance on common diseases and health awareness services.

Jattak vows to continue mission of public service with full dedication, sincerity

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Provincial Minister Haji Mir Ali Madad Jattak has said that public service, resolving people's problems and the development of his constituency are among his top priorities. He said the real purpose of public representation is to understand the difficulties faced by the people, take practical measures to resolve their issues and provide maximum relief to the public. He expressed these views during a meeting with friends and elders belonging to his constituency at Jattak House, Quetta.

During the meeting, members of the constituency informed the provincial minister about their problems, the difficulties faced by the public and various other issues. Haji Mir Ali Madad Jattak listened carefully to all matters and assured them of every possible cooperation in resolving their problems. He said that addressing public issues is his foremost priority and that he will continue the mission of public service with full dedication and sincerity.

The provincial minister said that strong contact between the public and their representatives is the foundation of effective public service. He said he believes in maintaining continuous contact with the people and friends of his constituency so that public issues can be identified in a timely manner and necessary measures can be taken for their resolution.

Protection of fundamental rights of citizens top priority: BA Speaker

QUETTA, (VoM Report): On the ruling of Speaker of the Balochistan Assembly Captain (Retd.) Abdul Khaliq Khan Achakzai, the DIG Khuzdar Range was summoned, while police authorities were directed to ensure transparent investigations, arrest the accused and provide effective security to the affected families. A meeting chaired by Speaker of the Balochistan Provincial Assembly Captain (Retd.) Abdul Khaliq Khan Achakzai was held in the Speaker's Chamber. The meeting was attended by Members of the Provincial Assembly Ali Madad Jattak, Mir Jahanzeb Mengal, Mir Zafarullah Khan Zehri, Secretary Balochistan Provincial Assembly Tahir Shah Kakar and Assistant Inspector General of Police Asif Khan. The meeting held a detailed discussion on the cases of Asma Jattak and Laiba Sattar of Kalat district, the security concerns faced by their families and the non-arrest of the accused.

CDF Munir meets senior Iranian officials as Pakistan continues diplomatic push to end conflict

TEHRAN, (Monitoring Desk): Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir met senior Iranian officials as Pakistan continued its diplomatic push to end the US-Iran conflict. According to Tehran Times, Field Marshal Munir met with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian and Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Mohsin Rezaei during his visit.

Earlier, Iranian media reported that CDF Munir arrived in Tehran on Tuesday with a delegation of officials to meet senior Iranian officials, according to Mehr News Agency. According to Tasnim News Agency, he was scheduled to meet Iranian officials to discuss diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict between Iran and the US, as well as broader regional developments.

Pakistan has played a central mediating role between Washington and Tehran during the conflict, maintaining close contact with both sides. The US and Iran signed the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding in June, establishing a framework for negotiations toward a final agreement.

However, the talks subsequently broke down over disagreements concerning security guarantees and freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic waterway vital to global energy supplies and international trade.

Negotiations between Iran and the US remain ongoing, with both sides continuing to engage as regional tensions deepen, Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said on Tuesday.

"The negotiation is ongoing. We are seeing engagement from the parties," Ansari, who also serves as an adviser to the Qatari prime minister, said at the Global Security Forum in Doha.



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail addressing participants at an award distribution ceremony organised by Balochistan Women Promote Talent at BUITEMS University, Quetta

Balochistan govt fully cooperating with armed forces, federal govt: Rana Sana

Urges opposition to hold talks on terrorism, advises PTI to come out of 'social media influence'

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Tuesday urged the opposition to set aside its other demands and sit down with the government to discuss counterterrorism.

"Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is ready to invite all stakeholders to discuss this [terrorism]," he said while speaking during a Senate session.

Pakistan is facing the problem of terrorism, he said, adding that the Zarb-e-Azb operation had been launched through consensus.

He said the government was willing to hold talks with the opposition on the issue and called on opposition parties to reconsider their positions.

Sanaullah also referred to his interactions with Senate Opposition Leader Raja Nasir Abbas, saying he had suggested that Abbas meet the prime minister or visit the National Assembly speaker's office.

According to the senior PML-N leader, Abbas declined the suggestions, saying he would not meet the prime minister and did not recognise the speaker.

Comparing the cooperation of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan governments, he said that the latter was fully cooperating with the armed forces and the federal government. Sanaullah said that the now-dysfunctional KP chief minister Sohail Afridi had repeatedly said he would not allow an operation in the province.

Separately, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said that an 11-member consultative committee was working under the leadership of KP Governor Faisal Karim Kundi.

Chaudhry blamed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) stance for the decision to take emergency measures in KP, saying the move was taken due to the party's "Stubbornness".

The minister pledged that infiltration from Afghanistan would also be controlled effectively, saying any nexus between terrorists and elements hostile to Pakistan was unacceptable. He said the federal government's efforts during negotiations with PTI had been aimed at reaching agreement on counterterrorism.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah speaks during a Senate session

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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.

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. The rattling of nuclear sabers is growing louder. Advances in technology are increasing the odds of mistake and miscalculation," he said.

He also pointed to the failure to reach a substantive consensus of the 11th Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the UN Disarmament Commission's inability to produce substantive recommendations during its latest three-year cycle.

"These are not simply diplomatic disappointments — they are warning signs. And the lights are flashing red," Guterres said.

He said nuclear disarmament is "a binding legal obligation" under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and urged all nuclear-weapon states to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies through confidence-building measures that ensure transparency.

UN General Assembly President Khalilur Rahman said the global inventory stood at more than 12,000 nuclear warheads as of January 2026.

He said between 2,100 and 2,200 warheads are kept in a state of high operational alert on ballistic missiles capable of being launched at very short notice.

"For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the global stockpile is expected to grow again, as new and more modern warheads enter arsenals faster than retired ones are dismantled," Rahman said.

He said global military expenditure reached nearly $3 trillion in 2025, marking the 11th consecutive annual increase.



Spectators watch the cricket match between the England and Pakistan teams during the ODI Tri-Nation Series at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium



A formal welcoming ceremony was held in Windsor, England, for Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman. King Charles III of England, Queen Camilla, Prince William, and Princess Catherine of Wales were also present at the ceremony.

Qatar continues US-Iran shuttle diplomacy to end Middle east war

DOHA, (Agencies): The Qatari Foreign Ministry confirmed Tuesday that it has continued shuttle diplomacy between the U.S. and Iran as part of mediation efforts to end the Middle East war. "Qatar's mediation efforts are ongoing, and we are currently relaying messages between the American and Iranian sides," ministry spokesperson Majed al-Ansari told a press conference in Doha. Asked about the possibility of a large-scale U.S. military attack on Iran, Ansari said: "We are concerned about any escalation in the region and are working to find a peaceful solution." In February, the U.S. and Israel launched a war against Iran, which responded with attacks on U.S. assets across the region before a ceasefire agreement was reached in April. Washington and Tehran later signed a MoU in June to halt hostilities and maintain navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, but implementation stalled over disagreements related to security in the strategic waterway as tensions continue to escalate between the two sides.

NATO to strengthen lower-cost counter-drone defenses: Rutte

Alliance seeks alternatives to deploying fighter jets against inexpensive drones amid repeated incidents on eastern flank

BRUSSELS, (Agencies): NATO will strengthen lower-cost counter-drone defenses so it does not have to deploy advanced fighter jets against inexpensive threats, Secretary General Mark Rutte said Tuesday.

"We will strengthen cheaper counter-drone defenses so we are not using high-end jets against low-cost threats," Rutte said at a joint news conference with Lithuanian Prime Minister Mindaugas Sinkevicius at NATO headquarters.

He said repeated drone incidents along the alliance's eastern flank showed how the threat was evolving. NATO was reinforcing its integrated air and missile defenses through a "multilayered, 360-degree approach" and adapting its posture against drones through initiatives such as Drone Edge, he added.

Rutte cited an incident two weeks ago in which Italian jets deployed by NATO from Lithuania's Siauliai Air Base shot down a drone that had violated Lithuanian airspace, calling it "collective defense in action."

Sinkevicius said air defense and preparedness on NATO's eastern flank were among the main topics of their talks. He said Lithuania remained on track to host a permanently deployed German brigade by the end of 2027.

Trump refutes sanctions relief claims as Iran voices will to talk

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): President Donald Trump said he has offered Iran nothing to end the war, rejecting reports that he was willing to ease sanctions and release frozen funds for concrete steps on its nuclear program.

"This is untrue. I offered them NOTHING," Trump wrote on Truth Social Monday.

Axios and CNN both reported, citing unidentified U.S. officials, that Trump was willing to give Iran sanctions relief and free Iranian funds as part of a final deal on the condition that Iran showed "concrete progress" on the nuclear issue. Trump has cited preventing Tehran from acquiring a nuclear bomb as a key goal of the war, along with ending its ability to attack its neighbors and creating conditions for Iranians to topple their leadership.

Iran does not have nuclear weapons and denies it wants to develop them, but argues it has the right to a domestic nuclear energy capacity.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, in an interview with the CBS show "Face the Nation," said Tehran was ready for talks on its nuclear program and other issues, but would not accept "bullying or coercion."

"Iran is not seeking war, but will defend itself against pressure, threats and attacks," Pezeshkian said, adding that it had already agreed that "we're not supposed to develop nuclear weapons."

U.S. and Iranian officials spoke separately with mediators Monday as part of a renewed effort to end the seven-month war, according to officials of both countries.

Iran insisted Sunday that only diplomacy can solve its conflict with the United States and Israel.

"Our conditions are clear, and any move toward reopening the Strait of Hormuz is contingent on these conditions being met," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi posted on social media. "Only a negotiated solution can get them out of this deadlock."

Araghchi told reporters at the U.N. Friday the proposed deal would trigger a seven-day countdown to reopening the strait and a pause in regional fighting.

Trump on Saturday rejected the plan and argued that desperation was driving the Iranians' push for an agreement on the key waterway.

"They want to make a deal to open the Hormuz Strait immediately because they're losing so badly," Trump told reporters at the White House. Araghchi said mediators facilitating Tehran's talks with Washington had not officially relayed a U.S. rejection.

"We are waiting for the mediators to convey the definitive views to us and we will make a decision based on them," Araghchi posted.

Oil prices rise

The war, which Trump launched alongside Israel in February as "Operation Epic Fury," has killed thousands of people, severely disrupted global energy supplies, pushing up oil prices and fueling global inflation. Iran and its have by extending the conflict throughout the region. Iran has struck U.S. allies in the Gulf with drones and missiles, while its Houthi allies in Yemen hit Saudi interests.



Relatives mourn during the funeral of 15-year-old Palestinian boy Majd Abdulhadi, who was killed by Israeli forces in as the funeral held outside Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, Gaza, Palestine

Brexit did 'more harm than good': British PM Burnham

LONDON, (Agencies): British Prime Minister Andy Burnham said Tuesday that Brexit had done "more harm than good," pledging to present the public with options for reshaping the country's long-term relationship with the European Union.

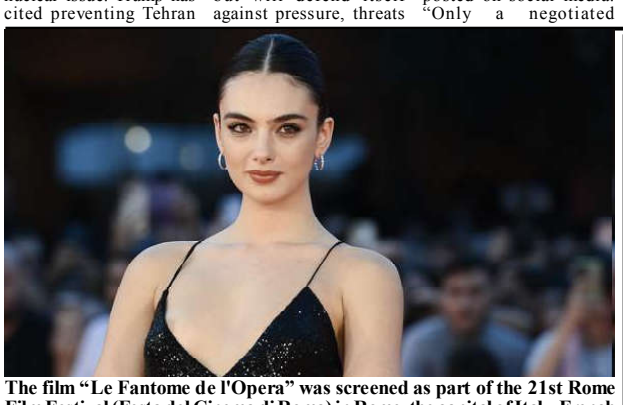
Speaking at the annual Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, Burnham said Britain could not have "the clear path we need into the rest of this century" without deciding on its future relationship with the EU, which he described as "still our largest market."

The U.K. left the EU in 2020, four years after a referendum in which about 52% of voters chose to leave. The prime minister said he would use the opportunity around the summit to set out the choices available to Britain.

"And there are different options, and I will see if we can find consensus around one, which will give us clarity about our position and the future of the continent that we live in," he said. Burnham also announced that Labour's next manifesto would contain a commitment to change the U.K.'s electoral system.

He said he was creating a "new national commission on electoral reform" and invited all political parties to take part in its work.

"In past years, you have voted twice to support electoral reform. I hear you, I agree with you," Burnham said. "We will contest the next election with a manifesto commitment to change the electoral system so that everyone's vote counts and everyone's voice is heard," he added.



The film "Le Fantome de l'Opera" was screened as part of the 21st Rome Film Festival (Festa del Cinema di Roma) in Rome, the capital of Italy. French actress Deva Cassel also attended the event.

Pakistan Girl Guides Association celebrates Int'l Day of Girl 2026

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Pakistan Girl Guides Association National Headquarters celebrated the International Day of the Girl on Tuesday, bringing together more than 600 guides and students from across the country. The event was organized in collaboration with UNICEF Pakistan and the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC).

The celebration provided girls with engaging and interactive learning opportunities focused on health, nutrition, emotional wellbeing, and leadership development. Through hands-on activities and discussions, participants explored ways to build confidence, enhance their wellbeing, and become active contributors to their communities.

Among the distinguished guests were Ms. Rabia Waseem Farooqi, Parliamentary Secretary for the Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training; Ms. Mary O'Neill, Ambassador of Ireland to Pakistan; Ms. Nadia, Member NCRC; and Mr. Elnur Aliyev, Chief of Social and Behavior Change and Officer-in-Charge for Gender and Development, UNICEF Pakistan.

Welcoming the guests, Mrs. Maria Maud Sabri, National Commissioner, Pakistan Girl Guides Association, highlighted the transformative impact of Guiding on girls' lives. She emphasized that Guiding is preparing the leaders of tomorrow by equipping girls with the confidence, skills, and values needed to step forward whenever leadership is required. She noted that Guiding is not only about acquiring knowledge and skills but also about embracing an effective learning methodology.



The triplet sisters Sabina (right), Medine (left), and Zarina (center) Hamreyava, who began their medical education in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, are continuing their journey as doctors in Türkiye.

US completes Iraq pull out after 2 decades, leaving void for Iran

BAGHDAD, (Agencies): U.S. forces are scheduled to withdraw from their final bases in Iraq by Wednesday, a departure celebrated as a victory by Iran and its allies, who now hold deep influence in the country where 4,500 Americans died during more than two decades of war.

Iraqi security experts say the withdrawal – agreed in 2024 under President Joe Biden and carried out by Donald Trump's administration even as it wages war against Iran – could give Tehran and its powerful allies free rein, while also allowing other U.S. enemies to stage a comeback, including the Daesh terrorist group.

"Iran stands to benefit strategically from the coalition's departure because it removes a military presence that for years acted as a counterweight to Tehran's influence in Iraq," said Jasim al-Bahadli, an Iraqi security analyst specializing in studying armed Shiite groups aligned with Iran.

He predicted that the pro-Iranian militia groups would not only portray the departure as a victory for their movement, but also "seek to translate that momentum into greater influence over security and political decision-making."

Abu Mojtaba al-Yasiri, a commander in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, an umbrella group of Iran-backed armed factions, described the U.S. withdrawal as "a historic victory for the Iraqi Islamic resistance groups and honorable Iraqis and a crushing defeat for the American project."

"On Sept. 30, we will celebrate the turning of a black page in Iraq's history and the failure of the occupation to impose its will on our country," he told media.

"Iraq has proven that its sovereignty cannot be secured by foreign forces, but by the resistance and the will of its people."

Maldivian FM lands in Islamabad ahead of President Muizzu's visit

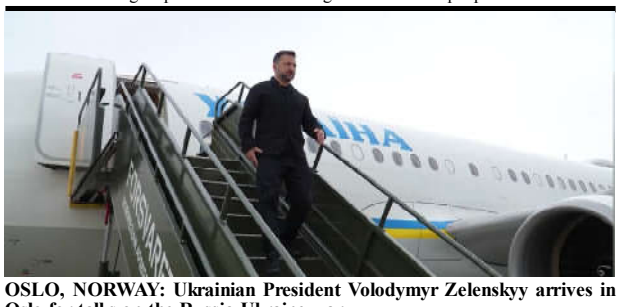
ISLAMABAD, (APP): Foreign Minister of the Republic of Maldives Iruthisham Adam arrived here on Tuesday,



ahead of the state visit of Maldivian President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu.

Accompanied by cabinet ministers and senior officials, the Maldivian foreign minister will join President Muizzu, who is scheduled to arrive later in the day.

The delegation was received at the airport by the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director General (South Asia & SAARC), High Commissioner of Maldives to Pakistan, and High Commissioner of Pakistan to Maldives.



OSLO, NORWAY: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrives in Oslo for talks on the Russia-Ukraine war.

Myanmar military strike death toll in Rakhine state climbs to 50

NAYPYIDAW, (Agencies): The death toll from a Myanmar military airstrike in Rakhine state rose to 50 Tuesday after rescuers found more bodies, according to a local aid worker and the rebel group controlling the area.

Monday's airstrike in Rakhine state's Kyauktaw town killed 50 people and wounded at least 58, said the Arakan Army, which is battling the military. The numbers were confirmed by aid worker Wai Hun Aung.

Women and children were among the bodies recovered Tuesday, according to photos shared on social media by Wai Hun Aung.

Arakan Army spokesperson Khine Thu Kha said the military "deliberately targeted densely populated markets, schools, civilians, and residential buildings through airstrikes."

A Myanmar government spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment. The military has previously said it "exercises maximum restraint to avoid civilian harm."

Myanmar has been locked in a nationwide civil war since a 2021 coup, with an alliance of armed groups, including the Arakan Army, fighting against the military.

The protracted conflict has since killed around 100,000 people and displaced over 3.5 million in the Southeast nation.

Khine Thu Kha said the Arakan Army use all available means to retaliate against the military and anyone involved in the bombing of civilians.

The Kyauktaw airstrike is Rakhine's deadliest such attack since a December hospital bombing that killed at least 30 people.

Balochistan govt supports state's position against terrorism: Danyal Chaudhry

Says sudden change in Maulana Fazlur Rehman's political position suggests some personal or political interest

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, on Tuesday said that conditions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been worsening for years, while the provincial leadership had failed to take effective measures against terrorism.

Talking to the media outside the Parliament House, he said the government had continued negotiations with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) until the last moment in an effort to resolve the issue through dialogue.

He said that governor's rule or emergency was the least preferred option for any democratic government, but the sacrifices of martyrs and the rise in terrorism had compelled the government to take this step.

He said that personnel of law enforcement agencies were being martyred daily in the fight against terrorism, while their families, widows and orphaned children repeatedly asked how many more children would be orphaned and how many more mothers would be separated from their loved ones. He said PTI was repeatedly asked to give a practical commitment against terrorism, but no satisfactory response was received. He said that coffins draped in the Pakistani flag were arriving daily in Rawalpindi and other areas, while negotiations with terrorists and a policy of leniency had further worsened the situation.

Barrister Danyal Chaudhry raised several questions regarding Maulana Fazlur Rehman and said that PTI had previously levelled various allegations against him, including those relating to permits, land of martyrs, training camps and support for terrorists. He asked whether those allegations were wrong at the time or whether Maulana Fazlur Rehman's current defence of PTI was wrong.

He said Maulana Fazlur Rehman had described PTI in 2012 as the creation of Jews and Western powers, while in 2021 he alleged that PTI founder and his party had received foreign funding. He said that in 2023, Maulana had claimed that foreign agencies had used PTI founder to bring him into power. Barrister Danyal Chaudhry said Maulana Fazlur Rehman had alleged in November 2022 that foreign funding was intended to support the long march and to cancel the visit of the Chinese president. He said Maulana Fazlur Rehman had described the May 2023 incidents as an attempt to demoralize the martyrs of the armed forces and weaken Pakistan's military. He asked that if these statements were correct, what was the basis for standing in defence of PTI today.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Danyal Chaudhry, talking to the media outside the Parliament House



ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Health Services Syed Mustafa Kamal calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Mir Raza murder case shows 'epic failure' in police investigation: judicial commission

KARACHI, (Monitoring Desk): A judicial commission investigating the death of Mir Raza Ali has described the police investigation as an "epic failure", finding serious lapses ranging from negligence and poor supervision to a failure to preserve evidence and pursue the case professionally. The single-member commission, headed by Sindh High Court judge Justice Omar Sial, said police breached required procedures necessary to withstand judicial scrutiny and support a successful prosecution, according to the executive summary, submitted to Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on October 15. The commission was constituted by the Sindh government to examine the circumstances surrounding the death of 25-year-old Mir Raza, assess the impartiality of police and medico-legal investigations and identify any professional negligence, misconduct, manipulation of evidence or cover-up.

Modern technology transforming dynamics of crime investigation

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Tuesday said the National Forensic Agency (NFA) would serve as a centre of excellence for forensic science in Pakistan and provide support to other laboratories and relevant government institutions.

The minister expressed these views during his visit to the National Forensic Agency, where he was given a detailed briefing on various departments, laboratories and forensic investigation procedures.

He said modern technology had transformed the dynamics of crime investigation, while forensic evidence was playing a fundamental role in identifying crimes, effective prosecution and securing convictions. He added that forensic science was of particular importance in the fight against terrorism.

The minister was informed that the National Forensic Agency was established on December 24, 2024 under the National Forensic Agency Act, 2024. It is the country's central federal forensic institution and provides scientific forensic services to law enforcement agencies, prosecution and courts.

The briefing highlighted that 11 forensic laboratories of the NFA were operational and notified, while Centres of Excellence for Digital Forensics and Explosive Forensics had also been established.

The Digital Forensics Laboratory had received 2,506 cases, of which 2,158 had been completed, while 3,090 digital devices had been processed.

Highlights Balochistan's economic potential

Pakistan to develop forward-looking economic partnership with US, says Jam Kamal Khan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Tuesday held a meeting with United States Chargé d'Affaires Natalie A. Baker and discussed strengthening bilateral economic relations, accelerating ongoing trade agreement negotiations, expanding market access and exploring new opportunities for cooperation in agriculture, minerals, technology and investment.

Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industries, Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul and senior officials of the Ministry of Commerce also attended the meeting, said a news release.

Welcoming the US delegation, the minister underscored Pakistan's commitment to strengthening its longstanding economic partnership with the United States, highlighting the potential to expand bilateral trade through enhanced market access, greater private-sector engagement and investment in emerging sectors.

Jam Kamal highlighted Pakistan's efforts to diversify its export markets and strengthen international commercial partnerships despite prevailing regional and global economic challenges.

He said deeper economic engagement with the US could create new opportunities for businesses, enhance industrial competitiveness and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

Both sides reviewed progress on the ongoing Pakistan–U.S. bilateral reciprocal trade agreement negotiations and expressed their commitment to advancing discussions towards a mutually beneficial outcome.

Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul informed the meeting that substantial progress had been achieved on several important provisions of the proposed agreement while a few technical points need to be discussed with the USTR.

The meeting also discussed market access opportunities for Pakistani agricultural products, particularly mangoes and dates. Jawad Paul stressed the need to expedite the visit of relevant U.S. inspection teams for mango export arrangements and sought progress on the pending market access process for Pakistani dates.

He said that greater access to the U.S. market would create valuable export opportunities, particularly for growers and businesses in Balochistan.

The U.S. delegation welcomed the discussion and indicated its willingness to follow up with the relevant American authorities on these matters.

Both sides also explored opportunities to increase agricultural trade, particularly U.S. exports of cotton and soybeans to Pakistan. The Secretary Commerce highlighted the importance of competitive pricing and trade financing in facilitating greater imports from the United States.



Chairperson PRCS Farzana Naek visiting a stall during an event "Community Voice to COP31 from Negotiations to Implementation" organized by Pakistan Red Crescent Society

Employer arrested for allegedly chasing, running over 15-year-old orphan

MULTAN, (Monitoring Desk): A 15-year-old boy was allegedly chased and run over by a man in a car at a private housing society in Multan after leaving work at the suspect's house, police said, adding that the suspect had been arrested and a murder case registered.

The victim, identified as Waseem, lived at an orphanage run by a non-governmental organisation (NGO). Multan City Police Officer Akhtar Farooq said the orphanage administration had sent him to the suspect, identified as Tauqeer, seven days earlier to learn a trade. Tauqeer, who undertook electrical work at various buildings, was teaching the boy to become an electrician, the police officer said.

According to police, the boy left the work, prompting the suspect to pursue him in his car. CCTV footage reportedly shows the teenager running away before the car strikes him.

Police said initial investigations had found no evidence that the boy had committed theft.

Dar reviews foreign policy outlook, ongoing diplomatic engagements

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister (DPM/ FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday chaired a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to review Pakistan's foreign policy outlook and ongoing diplomatic engagements.

Discussions focused on evolving regional dynamics and the diplomatic engagements ahead, a DPM's Office news release said.

The DPM/FM provided guidance on the course forward and underscored the need for close coordination and timely follow-through.

Acting Foreign Secretary Ambassador Khalil Hashmi and senior officials of the Ministry attended the meeting.

Pak, Sri Lanka vows to enhance cooperation in IT sector

ISLAMABAD, (APP): High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan Rear Admiral Fred Seneviratne (R) Tuesday called on Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja .

During the meeting, both sides reaffirmed the longstanding and time-tested bonds of friendship between the two countries and expressed their shared commitment to further strengthening bilateral cooperation in information technology and telecommunications. Both sides delved upon opportunities for greater engagement between the technology sectors of Pakistan and Srilanka, including joint ventures and partnerships between technology companies, with a view to building scale and exploring opportunities in international markets. The discussions covered a broad range of areas, including Artificial Intelligence, cybersecurity, IT and IT-enabled services, digital transformation, FinTech, startups and digital skills development. Strengthening institutional linkages between IT sectors of both countries.



Jihad Azour, Director of the IMF's Middle East and Central Asia Department, speaking at the high-level workshop on "Reforms for a Modern and Growth-Friendly Tax System in Pakistan," organised by the Ministry of Finance and Revenue in collaboration with the IMF

Pakistan making sustained efforts to promote regional peace: Musadik

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting regional and global peace, saying the country would continue to contribute to international stability amid changing geopolitical circumstances.

Addressing a reception marking the Czech National Day and Czech Armed Forces Day here Tuesday, the minister said Pakistan had made sustained efforts to promote regional peace and remained committed to contributing to stability across the world.

Referring to the defence-industrial and logistics cooperation agreement signed between Pakistan and the Czech Republic in 2021, he said Pakistan would seek to utilize the existing framework to contribute to global stability and promote peace and hope for younger generations.

"While the world has been talking about net security provider, Pakistan has taken upon herself to become the net peace provider," he said.

Musadik Malik said Pakistan's prime minister and field marshal were committed to promoting peace and that the country would continue its efforts to advance regional and global stability.

Highlighting the longstanding relations between Pakistan and the Czech Republic, he said that bilateral ties predated Pakistan's independence and encompassed commercial, technological, educational and defence cooperation. Citing Bata's presence in Pakistan and the establishment of Batapur as examples of longstanding commercial ties, the minister said the company remained widely recognized across the country.

Safe public transport essential for women's economic independence: Dr Rubaba

Says Jinnah People's Metro Service marks new era in Quetta's public transport

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Advisor to the Chief Minister of Balochistan for the Women Development Department, Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi, has termed the launch of the Jinnah People's Metro Train Service an important step towards providing modern, safe and reliable transportation facilities to citizens, particularly women. Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi said that access to safe and dignified public transport for women helps expand their opportunities to participate in education, employment, business and other economic and social activities. She said the Jinnah People's Metro Train Service would provide women with a more organized and convenient means of travelling to different parts of the city. She added that affordable and quality public transport not only facilitates citizens in their daily commute but also helps reduce travel time and transportation costs. Improved mobility for women is also important for enhancing their economic independence and effective participation in social activities.The Advisor for Women Development expressed satisfaction over the provision of free travel facilities for senior citizens and persons with disabilities, describing it as a welcome initiative. She said free transportation for these segments of society would improve their mobility and facilitate their access to essential services.Dr. Rubaba Khan Buledi emphasized that addressing the needs of women, senior citizens and persons with disabilities in urban transport projects is essential for inclusive and people-centered urban development.She said the Jinnah People's Metro Train Service would not only provide citizens with improved transportation facilities but would also contribute to strengthening Quetta's public transport system.



QUETTA: Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail distributing awards among female researchers and teachers.



SOHBATPUR: Deputy Commissioner Fareeda Tareen chairs a meeting.

Balochistan government intensifies welfare measures for deserving, vulnerable people

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Director General Social Welfare Balochistan Mir Saifullah Khan Khetran has said that, on the directives of Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, the Social Welfare Department is taking effective measures for the welfare of vulnerable, deserving, and special persons in society, to make them active members of society, and to protect their rights.

He said this while speaking to the state-run news agency APP. DG Mir Saifullah Khetran said that, along with further organizing and improving the effectiveness of social welfare programmes in the province, special attention is being given to ensuring access to government facilities for deserving people.

He said that the basic objective of the Social Welfare Department is to provide facilities to deprived and vulnerable segments of society, address their difficulties, and provide them with opportunities to lead dignified lives. In this regard, various welfare measures are underway for persons with disabilities, women, children, senior citizens, orphans, and other deserving segments.

Mir Saifullah Khan Khetran said that the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and providing them with a respectable position in society are among the important priorities of the Social Welfare Department. Various programmes are being worked on to provide persons with disabilities with assistive devices, rehabilitation, education, and access to employment opportunities so that they can utilize their abilities and lead self-sufficient lives.

He said that the Social Welfare Department, in cooperation with relevant institutions, is also taking measures to eliminate begging from society and rehabilitate beggars.

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