

Briefs

Govt will complete its tenure, says CH Sarwar

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Governor Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar on Wednesday said everybody will witness that the incumbent government will complete its tenure, and the opposition which has failed outside the parliament will also fail inside. The governor held meetings with party delegations and said it is not easy to conduct a long march and the opposition cannot do it. The opposition's deadlines will continue extending and the government will present budget in June, he said. "The opposition neither tendered resignations nor held long march. It will also not be able to table the no-confidence motion and has no option but to accept the government's mandate. "Prime Minister Imran Khan will not back off from his stance, and the credit of saving Pakistan from bankruptcy goes to him. The government is taking practical steps to strengthen all departments and will foil conspiracies against the national progress."

Additional contingents of Rangers called for IHC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The spokesperson of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) said on Wednesday that a letter was sent to the Ministry of Interior for enhancing security measures after a group of lawyers stormed the high court's building on February 8. The spokesperson said that the decision was taken to further increase security measures for the IHC building and the interior ministry was sent a letter for the deployment of more contingents of Rangers.

Additional contingents of 2,000 personnel of Rangers have been summoned at the Islamabad High Court (IHC) by the interior ministry following the request of the high court. The new contingents will arrive in Islamabad from Lahore on Wednesday, the spokesperson said. A total of 200 Rangers officials and hundreds of police personnel are currently deployed in the high court's premises. On Tuesday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had ordered the demolition of illegally constructed chambers of lawyers on the premises of district courts in the capital in F-8 Markaz. An IHC larger bench, headed by Chief Justice Athar Minallah, had ruled: "The encroachments on any state land and any construction thereon in violation of the Ordinance of 1960 and the rules or regulations made there under are illegal, void and liable to be removed forthwith."

The court had ordered that in case the playground is not restored by or before March 28, then the federal government and the Capital Development Authority (CDA) will restore the playground for public use.

On February 8, the demolition of illegal chambers in district and sessions court in Islamabad had made lawyers furious who later stormed the Islamabad High Court (IHC) building and tortured police officials, staff and journalists.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Information Mrs. Shahera Shahid addressing to the participants and winners of 5th National Pur-Azm-Pakistan Awards 2021 organised by Pakistan Peace Collective (Strategic communication project of the Ministry) at the Information Service Academy. – DNA

EU ambassador Androulla, CEO SMEDA discuss SMEs

The meeting was also attended by Nadia Jahangir Seth, GM Policy and Planning Division and Sheheryar Tahir, Director External Affairs Department of SMEDA. Whereas, the Ambassador, on this occasion was accompanied by her First Secretary Sven Ruesh and Consular Trade and Communication Mr. Daniel Claus

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LAHORE: European Union's Ambassador to Pakistan, Androulla Kaminara said on Wednesday that delegation of the European Union to Pakistan would help local SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises Development) to get maximum benefit from GSP Plus status. She expressed these views in a meeting with Hashim Raza, Chief Executive Officer of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) here at SMEDA head office.

The meeting was also attended by Nadia Jahangir Seth, GM Policy and Planning Division and Sheheryar Tahir, Director External Affairs De-

partment of SMEDA. Whereas, the Ambassador, on this occasion was accompanied by her First Secretary Sven Ruesh and Consular Trade and Communication Mr. Daniel Claus. The Ambassador said that the EU had provided GSP Plus status under 27 conditions as many of these conditions had already been ratified by Pakistan. Since 2014, Pakistan's exports to EU had increased to a substantial level and it had a bright scope for further enhancement through SMEs. She said that Pakistan's major exports to the EU were textiles and leather. There were many other areas that could be accessed under the GSP Plus status. She mentioned that Pakistani entrepreneurs could focus on the other sectors like

Handicrafts and Gems and Jewelry. She further said that there was great potential for women entrepreneurship through SMEs, which were central to value addition. She expressed serious



intention to have a persistent consultation with SMEDA to lay down special initiatives to support SME development process in Pakistan. Earlier, SMEDA CEO Hashim

Raza gave a warm welcome to the Ambassador and apprised her about the services, projects and special initiatives developed by SMEDA for growth and sustainability of the SMEs in Pakistan. He added that SMEDA was a group of about 120 professionals working across the country on SME development. SMEDA functions also included assistance in business pre-feasibility & planning, accounts & book-keeping and tax & regulatory affairs, besides developing and implementing a number of projects to fill in the missing links in value chain of the SMEs production and marketing. He specially referred to the Agro-food plant set up at Multan as a success story in this regard.

Motorcycle industry overburdened with customs duty

DNA

KARACHI: The motorcycle industry is overburdened with customs duty and additional excise duty on motorcycle spare parts. The government has levied a total of 85.5 per cent duty on commercial importers on auto parts, leaving legal importers of motorcycle spare parts in trouble and encouraging spare parts smugglers. The motorcycle spare parts industry is contributing to the strengthening of the country's economy. The Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) has been urged to voice for motorcycle spare parts importers and agitate their issues in concern government departments and minis-

tries resolve their long pending issues. These views were expressed by Khalid Waheed, Chairman All Pakistan Motorcycle Spare Parts Importers and Dealers Association (MASPEDA) along with former Chairman Faisal Khalil and others during a meeting with FPCCI President Mian Nasir Hayyat Magoo. Former Vice Presidents of FPCCI Khurram Ijaz and Khurram Tariq Saeed, Shabir Mansha Chhara, Nasir Maqbool, Liaquat Ali Sheikh, Waqar Ahmad Sheikh, Khurram Riaz, Sohail Usman, Arif Siddiqi, Anjum Kamal, Amir Chhara, Furqan Arshad, Syed Riaz Ali, Suleim Faisal Khalil said that they have been repeatedly appealing to the government to reduce the duties and taxes on motorcycle spare parts and abolish the additional duty so as to

encourage the importers of motorcycle spare parts and discourage smuggling. Faisal Khalil further said that the rate of customs duty was low till a few years ago due to which there was a significant reduction in smuggling but due to increase in taxes smuggling surged. Khalid Waheed told FPCCI President Mian Nasir Hayyat Magoo that the government has imposed 35% customs duty, 11% additional customs duty, 17% sales tax, 3% additional sales tax and 5.5% income on motorcycle spare parts importers. Faisal Khalil sought the help of FPCCI to agitate these issues so the government should minimize these taxes and duties in coming budget for the year 2021-22 to encourage legitimate imports of spare parts.



ISLAMABAD: Tomas Smetanka, ambassador of Republic of Czech in Pakistan called on Omar Ayub Khan, federal minister for energy in his office. – DNA

Pak, Thailand agree to enhance cultural co-op

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and kingdom of Thailand have reaffirmed their resolve to enhance the Cultural cooperation and museum exchange programme on the occasion of 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations of two countries. It was agreed between the Federal Minister for Educa-

tion, Professional Training and National Heritage and Culture Shafqat Mahmood and the Minister of Culture of Thailand, Mr Ittiphol Kunplom during an online meeting on Wednesday. Shafqat Mahmood said that Pakistan gives significant importance to cultural cooperation and exchange programmes with Kingdom of Thailand and soon bilateral agreements would be signed in this regard for the years 2021-2025.

Both sides agreed on enhancing their cultural ties through exhibitions, cultural and arts performances, dance, film, Radio and TV programmes. People to people contacts and cultural troops exchange between two countries also agreed upon. Federal Minister Shafqat Mahmood said, these joint projects will also provide an opportunity to meet the businessmen and business groups of both sides and hence promote the trade relations and tourism sectors of both countries. To enhance the mutual collaboration between Thai National Museum Bangkok and Taxila museum also came under discussion. Shafqat Mahmood has highlighted that Pakistani museums have priceless collection of artifacts and Buddha's relics and Thai people visit to Pakistan in this regard is very appreciable. Both sides also discussed the impact of Covid-19 on cultural and art sector and field of education. They also exchanged the experiences in dealing with this crisis and the relief measures for supporting the art industries. Federal Minister Shafqat Mahmood extended the invitation of Pakistan's visit to his Thai counterpart which the latter accepted with the remarks, he has heard a lot about Taxila museum and very keen to visit it in-person.

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Khi: Island dedicated to Tahir Qureshi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Sindh Forest Department, Government of Sindh, organized an event at Shah Bander to dedicate an island to Tahir Qureshi – Baba-e-Mangroves (Father of Mangroves) in recognition of his services rendered towards conservation of mangroves along the Pakistan coast. The event was attended by a large number of Forest Department officials, IUCN staff members, admirers and family members of Tahir Qureshi.

Tahir Qureshi, a forester by profession, having worked in Sindh Forest Department and then at IUCN, dedicated his entire life to the conservation of mangroves in Pakistan. He was later known as the 'father of mangroves'. He passed away recently on December 29, 2020 in Karachi. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Riaz Ahmad Wagan, Chief Conservator Forest described Tahir Qureshi as a "true conservator who worked for conservation of mangroves as his religious duty. He was instrumental in planning millions of mangroves during his career." He said that the Sindh Forest Department in recognition of his services for conserving the mangroves is dedicating a part of the Island as Tahir Qureshi Garden.

He further said that the services of Tahir Qureshi will always be remembered. Tahir Qureshi's commitment to conserving Pakistan's mangroves will always be an example for others to follow who are engaged in the area of conservation. Mr. Qureshi, presented the idea to the Government of Sindh to compete in the Guinness World Records by planting most mangroves in a day. He also takes the credit for data gathering of technical information for seven of the Ramsar Sites in 2000. Shahzad Sadiq, Divisional Forest Officer said that Tahir Qureshi is an excellent example for experts who are engaged in the field of conservation and sustainable development.

EFP to develop 5-year strategy

KARACHI: An integrated approach of partnership with multi-stakeholders is the dire need of the hour for implementing sustainable strategic policy framework particularly in the lower tiers of cotton supply chain. This was stated by Ismail Sultar, President Employers Federation of Pakistan while addressing the Multi-stakeholders meeting organized by Employers Federation of Pakistan in collaboration with ILO under the INDITEX funded Project on Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in the Cotton Supply Chain (FPRW). This consultative meeting of multi-stakeholders comprising of all key actors in the cotton supply chain was organized to develop a sustainable strategic policy framework on 10 February 2021 in Local hotel at Karachi-Pakistan. – DNA

CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

STREET LIGHTS DIVISION-II

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are hereby invited on percentage basis for the following works from contractors / firms duly enlisted with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in appropriate category & Codehaving validity / renewal of PEC license/Electrical License issued by Electrical Inspector Islamabad for execution of Electrical & Mechanical Works in Rawalpindi / Islamabad and NTN & GST registration with FBR.

S.#	Name of works	Estimated cost	Earnest Money	Date & time of receipt of tender	Date & time of opening of tender
1.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system in various streets & galleys sector F-6/4 and SLO1 to 08 sector F-6/3, Islamabad	Rs.3,046,346/-	Rs.91,390/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
2.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system in different streets & galleys sector F-7/1, Islamabad	Rs.3,041,332/-	Rs.91,240/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
3.	Up-gradation / Renovation of existing traffic signal at Park Road with Shahzad Town, Islamabad.	Rs.1,545,451/-	Rs.46,364/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
4.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement & Replacement of old damaged street lights with LED lights at Hamak Town Phase-I, Islamabad.	Rs.2,579,744/-	Rs.77,392/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
5.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system Jinnah Avenue Service Road both side, Islamabad.	Rs.4,068,837/-	Rs.122,065/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
6.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system at various streets in sector G-8/2, Islamabad.	Rs.2,899,714/-	Rs.86,991/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
7.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system at Class-III Shopping Centre in sector F-11, Islamabad.	Rs.1,979,376/-	Rs.59,381/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
8.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system at different streets of sector F-1/1, Islamabad.	Rs.2,997,508/-	Rs.89,925/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
9.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system at different streets of sector F-1/3, Islamabad.	Rs.2,699,856/-	Rs.80,996/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
10.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system in Street No.118 to 124, 70,71,72 & Service Road sector G-9/3, Islamabad.	Rs.2,899,836/-	Rs.86,995/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
11.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system at I&T Centre G-9/4, Islamabad.	Rs.1,999,710/-	Rs.59,991/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
12.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system at Lake View, Islamabad.	Rs.4,899,286/-	Rs.146,979/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
13.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system Super Market F-6, Islamabad.	Rs.2,550,022/-	Rs.76,501/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
14.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system at Major Roads / Service Roads of sector H-8, Islamabad.	Rs.4,699,862/-	Rs.140,996/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
15.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system in different streets & galleys sector E-7, Islamabad.	Rs.3,588,300/-	Rs.107,649/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
16.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system at Service Road (West) from Khana Interchange to Korai Interchange, Islamabad.	Rs.5,648,201/-	Rs.162,964/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
17.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of Street Light System In F-9 Park Near Mega Zone Restaurant, Islamabad.	Rs.937,882/-	Rs.28,136/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
18.	Rehab / Renov / Improvement of street light system at different streets of sector F-10/4, Islamabad.	Rs.1,499,804/-	Rs.44,994/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM
19.	Rehab/Renovation of existing Traffic signal In-e-Sima Road "T" Junction Mangli Road Islamabad	Rs.999,263/-	Rs.29,978/-	10-03-2021 11:30AM	10-03-2021 12:00PM

- Tender Documents can be purchased on payment of Rs.1,000/- for S.No.3,7,11,17,18 & 19 and Rs.2,000/- for rest of each tenders (Non-Refundable) in shape of cash from the office of Deputy Director Street Light Division, Shop No.01, Bazar No.08, Street No.57, Sector-G-6/4, Islamabad upto 04-03-2021 before closing hours.No application for tenders will be received after schedule date and time.
- Tenders will be issued to those firms who provide copies of valid PEC License for the current financial year having appropriate Category / Codes EE-04, EE-06 and valid Electrical License issued by Electrical Inspector Islamabad renewed for the current financial year 2020-21 and NTN & GST registration certificate along with written request on original letter pad of firm / contractor. In case of representative, copy of CNIC alongwith authority letter/ original power of attorney may also be attached with application PEC Certificate, Electrical License & Professional Tax Certificate 2020-21 in original will also be seen before issuance of Tender document.
- Bid Security / Earnest Money shall also be accompanied with the request in the shape of Deposit at Call (CDR) clearly indicating the Name of Firm issued by local scheduled bank in favor of Deputy Director, Street Light Division-II, CDA and should be generated only from firm's account. Cash / Cheque or open CDR without indicating name of firm will not be accepted and No application without Bid Security / Earnest Money will be accepted for issuance of tender.
- The tender will be issued only to those firms who provide at least 03 work orders for last 02 financial years in the relevant field including satisfactory completion / performance certificate issued by head of any government department along with application otherwise tender will not be issued to firm.
- The tender will be issued only to those firms who provide an undertaking on Stamp Paper worth not less than Rs.50, that the firm / contractor are neither involved in any litigation nor black listed by any government, semi government or autonomous body in Pakistan and also undertakes that if any information or document provided by firm for issuance of tender document is found incorrect or fictitious the firm is liable for legal action under the law. Without the undertaking tender will not be issued to firm.
- If the contractor wants to participate in the tendering through representative, the contractor will provide general / special power of attorney duly attested by representative court and only to legitimate attorney holder would be allowed to get tender documents.
- Relative of tendering authority may not be entertained for participation in the tenders.
- If the contractor or his authorized representative does not sign the tender opening register, their call deposit will be liable for forfeiture.
- In case of the total bid amount is less than 10% below the NIT amount, the bidder shall submit call deposit as performance security equal to the difference between NIT amount and total quoted amount less 10% of NIT amount. The performance security of the successful bidder shall be released after completion of project.
- Tenders at S.No.01 to 16 will be opened by Director E&M (Maintain) S.No.17 to 19 test will be opened by undersigned located at Room No.05 Ground Floor P Block Pak Secretariat Islamabad on schedule date and time.
- CDA may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal. The CDA shall upon request communicate to any supplier or contractor who submitted a bid or proposal, the grounds for its rejection of all bids or proposals, but is not required to justify those grounds.
- In case of any Gazetted / Occasional Holiday(s), the tenders will be opened on the next working day.
- The additional valid documents mentioned in Clause-16 of tender document must be submitted by the firm while submitting the tender, otherwise tender will be liable for rejection.
- The Bid Security / Earnest money and Performance Security of unsuccessful bidders will be retained / deposited in CDA bank account and released in the favor of firm's account only after acceptance of contract.
- Tender Notice can be seen on both CDA website www.cda.gov.pk and PPRPA website www.pprpa.gov.pk, whereas, tender Notice can be downloaded from CDA's website www.cda.gov.pk.

Deputy Director,
Street Lights Division-II, CDA.
Contact No.0300-9189525

PID (I) No. 4422/20

Briefs

CTP provides license facility

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi have provided driving license facility in Gujar Khan to provide all driving licensing services to the citizens at local level. According to a CTP spokesman, CTP on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Ahsan Younas and Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Rai Mazhar Iqbal, have inaugurated the driving licensing facility in another tehsil of Punjab province, Gujar Khan after Taxila, where the driving licensing facility was provided recently. Assistant Superintendent Police (ASP) Gujar Khan Hina Naik Bakht on Wednesday formally inaugurated the facility at Gujar Khan Kidmat center. According to Ahsan Younas, out of over 300 tehsils of Punjab province, the facility which is first of its kind has been provided at tehsil level at Taxila and Gujar Khan to facilitate the citizens. The center would cater to the needs of local residents and surrounding areas and the citizens would get all licensing services under one roof at the Kidmat center, Gujar Khan. He said, in order to ensure merit and transparency, computerized signal and driving tests are being taken under automated driving test video system. CTO said that the CTP were issuing computerized driving licenses under a transparent procedure. - APP

3 references against Zardari adjourned

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Wednesday adjourned hearing on three graft references pertaining to mega money laundering, Park Lane and Pink Residency against former president Asif Ali Zardari and others. The hearing was adjourned without further proceeding due to the lawyers' strike. AC-II Judge Muhammad Azam Khan heard the graft reference filed by National Accountability Bureau (NAB) connected with fake bank accounts scam. NAB prosecutor Waseem Javed and witness Ahsan Aslam appeared before the court. At the outset of hearing, the court granted one-day exemption from hearing to former president Asif Zardari, his sister Faryal Talpur and Omni Group's Anwar Majeed.

After this, the court adjourned hearing on mega money laundering and Park Lane references till March 5, while the hearing on pink residency reference was postponed till March 4, due to lawyers' strike. - APP

Task force proposes amendments to PECA

ISLAMABAD: A newly formed Task Force of Wafaqi Mohtasib (WM) has proposed a set of amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act (PECA) to effectively curb cyber crimes against children. According to Task Force Convener Syeda Waqar un Nisa Hashmi, the amendments were prepared and proposed by its sub-committee, which recently met here to review the existing laws dealing with the cyber crimes against children. She told APP on Tuesday that the amendments included replacement of the term 'child pornography' as used in the PECA with the term 'child sexual abuse', insertion of definition of 'complainant', addition of more offences like commercial sexual exploitation of children; cyber enticement, solicitation and grooming; and others, and to make all offences against children under PECA cognizable and non-bailable.

The convener, who also holds portfolio of Commissioner for Children and Transgender at Wafaqi Mohtasib, said amendments in procedural laws were also proposed, aimed at authorizing the Federal Investigation Agency or police to take cognizance of the offence (especially dissemination of pornographic material on social media, CDs, etc.) regardless of the complaint made by the aggrieved) on its own; and / or if the case is referred to it by any agency, person and others. She said a draft of the proposed amendments would be presented in next meeting of the task force to get its final approval. Once approved, it would be forwarded to the quarters concerned for further necessary action. - APP



ISLAMABAD: PML N Vice President Maryam Nawaz visits families of disappeared persons, at D Chowk on Wednesday. - DNA

HEC signs ETA with Microsoft to accelerate digital transformation

Microsoft Teams platform also works well with Moodle, which most universities use as their Learning Management System

ISLAMABAD: Microsoft Pakistan and Higher Education Commission (HEC) has signed an Education Transformation Agreement (ETA) to help academic institutions leverage new technologies in the learning process. The agreement was signed between the HEC, Chairman Dr Tariq Banuri and Mark East, Vice President Education, Microsoft, Europe Middle East Africa and other key executives from both sides at a virtual meeting held on Wednesday, said a press release issued here.

Under the ETA framework,

Microsoft collaborates with Universities helping them in their digital transformation journey through a strategic technology framework implementation that helps them build a secure and connected campus, promotes teaching and learning activities, creates opportunities for academic research and increases chances of student success through easy access to knowledge and latest tools. "There are multiple programs that are part of this framework impacting student and faculties' academic lifecycle.

Programs such as the Student Hackathon, focused Technology boot camps, Imagine Cup and multiple online training sessions for 200+ institutions across the country directly help with technology adoption and help build the workforce for the future," it added. During Pandemic, HEC has been providing remote learning solutions to drive continuity for academic activities in universities. To support the same initiative, Microsoft collaborated with HEC to bring more than 100 universities and 500,000 plus students to a digital hub of Microsoft Teams

that brings conversations content, assignments, and apps together at one place, letting educators create vibrant learning environments. Microsoft Teams platform also works well with Moodle, which most universities use as their Learning Management System. Microsoft Teams has also recently introduced new features that allow the faculty to take online exams in a secure environment enabling teaching faculty to conduct online assessments and create quizzes with ease to minimize chances of errors. Through this agreement, Microsoft's

cloud computing platform, Azure, will be accessible to the Universities and will provide the ability to transform their IT infrastructure with the latest cloud offerings, manage their cyber security through cloud-native SIEM, build their high performance research clusters that are resilient and scale when needed, host their learning management solutions and innovate their on-premise applications using the platform's easy-to-use Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning capabilities. Microsoft will also provide consultancy to universities

to adopt Microsoft Dynamics 365 platform for their Finance and Operations and Campus Management solution requirements. It is a robust, feature-rich platform to help universities, colleges, and educational organizations in moving their core administrative and IT functions to the next generation Microsoft technologies ensuring the best outcomes for students with a 360-degree view of students and activities by providing the right services and support at the right time. - APP

AIOU to hold workshops for religious scholars

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) took decision to organize training sessions and workshops for the religious scholars at national level to create awareness and inculcate values of mutual coexistence, tolerance and inter religious harmony in the country. Being a prestigious national institution, it was obligation of AIOU to play its key role in minimizing conflict and tension and maximizing peace and harmony among different social, ethnic and religious segments of the Pakistani society. These views were expressed by

Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum while approving publication of a course book developed by the Department of Islamic Thought, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies. He said that it was the need of hour to make Pakistan a role model and an exemplary society of the world, therefore, we were required to design a comprehensive policy and framework for a training program. He appreciated the efforts of Chairman, Department of Islamic Thought, Prof Dr Mohuddin Hashmi for the preparation of an outstanding training syllabus. - APP

SC directs CDA to submit zoning rules for Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to submit zoning details for Islamabad. A three-member SC bench headed by Justice Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Sajjad Ali Shah sought zoning details from CDA while hearing a case of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader, Aleem Khan's Housing Society - "Park View City" against the IHC's judgment. At the outset of hearing, the court also sought report on road dispute between Park View Society and CDA.

The court also directed the Additional Attorney General to assist the court on the matter of public interest. Justice Bandial said that the CDA was not fulfilling its responsibility. If CDA itself did not provide housing facility, it should not harass private investors, he added. The counsel for the CDA said that the Park View Society built an illegal road from Kurry Road to its society. The counsel for the society said that the civic agency did not issue any notice to the housing society regarding construction of road despite passing two years.

Justice Bandial said that Park View was accused of political interference, policing and encroachment on private land. A private land owner said that the Park View Society not only took over their land but also attacked them. The employees of Park View killed one man and injured another. The court asked the land owner to hire a counsel. The court refused to grant stay against the Islamabad High Court (IHC)'s judgment to restore the NOC of the Park View City. - APP

Replying a query, he said electoral reforms were part of the PTI's manifesto and Prime Minister Imran Khan would not retract from them at any cost. He said the PTI was the only democratic party that took bold step and expelled 20 of its members after founding them involved in selling votes in Senate election 2018. He said the PTI government was aimed at ensuring transparency in the Senate elections to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions in the country. He made it clear that horse-trading and sale and purchase of votes in the Senate elections would not be tolerated and Prime Minister Imran Khan would never compromise with such elements if found selling their political loyalties for monetary gains.

IGP to formulate police training policy

ISLAMABAD: The Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Qazi Jameel-ur-Rehman on Wednesday said the law enforcement best practices would be adopted to formulate police training policy to strengthen the force mentally and physically. People from all walks of life, including judiciary, media, civil society, educational institutes, retired senior police officers, as well as citizens through social media would be approached to bring innovation in police training programme, the IG said while chairing a meeting here. The police board policy meeting was attended by top officials including DIGs, AIGs, SSPs, and SPs. Rehman said the new training policy was aimed at changing the traditional approach of the force, promoting community policing and eliminating corruption within the department to provide maximum relief to the masses. He sought suggestions from the board members regarding the police training policy within two weeks. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts and Culture Department Gilgit-Baltistan has signed a MoU to promote regional culture - PNCA director general Dr. Fauzia Saeed and Gilgit-Baltistan minister for culture, sports and tourism Raja Nasir Ali signed the memorandum of understanding at a simple ceremony held at the PNCA. - DNA

ICCI urges FBR for withdrawing of notices

He said that due to difficult and cumbersome taxation system and the tough approach of tax machinery, many potential taxpayers were preferring to stay out of tax net as by remaining out of tax system, they were spared of the problems being faced by the existing taxpayers from the tax department

ISLAMABAD: President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is issuing notices under Sec-182 to the taxpayers to penalize them for late filing of income tax returns. However, this approach would be counterproductive as it would discourage the new taxpayers from coming into the tax net and thwart government's efforts for improving the tax revenue of the country. He said this while addressing a delegation of Traders Welfare Association, Blue Area, Islama-

bad during their visit to ICCI. Yasir Ilyas Khan said that the number of taxpayers was already very low in Pakistan and one of the main reasons of low tax-to-GDP ratio was high tax rates and coercive measures of the tax department against the taxpayers. He said that due to difficult and cumbersome taxation system and the tough approach of tax machinery, many potential taxpayers were preferring to stay out of tax net as by remaining out of tax system, they were spared of the problems being faced by the existing taxpayers



from the tax department. Mian Akram Farid, Chairman Founder Group said that the taxpayers were already facing great difficulties due to the Covid-19

pandemic in running businesses and in these tough times, they needed the cooperation and support of FBR in discharging their tax responsibilities. Therefore, he urged that FBR to adopt a soft approach towards the taxpayers and those who were late in filing income tax returns, FBR should facilitate them in fulfilling their tax obligations. Yousaf Rajput, President, Blue Area Welfare Association, Trade Area, Islamabad and other members of delegation said that traders wanted to pay tax, but they needed facilitative measures

from FBR as issuing notices under Sec-182 was creating harassment in trading community and disturbing their peace. They called upon the government to bring drastic reforms in the existing difficult taxation system to make it simple and easy for compliance. They said that the high tax rates and high tax compliance cost were promoting tax evasion in the country and urged that FBR should rationalize all tax rates to make them affordable for taxpayers that would also promote tax culture and expand the tax base of the country. - APP

ICT police formulates night patrolling plan

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police on Wednesday finalized a patrolling plan to combat crimes during night time. Deputy Inspector General of Police (Operations) Afzal Ahmed Kausar has devised the plan, following the directions of IGP Islamabad Qazi Jamil Ur Rehman to reduce house burglaries and auto theft incidents in night hours, said a news release. As per plan SPs, SDPOs, SHO's, Additional SHO's and other officers will patrol in their respective areas in two shifts from 08 pm to 12am and from 12am to 08am. Ploce pickets would be erected at entry and exit points of residential areas to search the suspects persons and vehicles. Each SP, ASP DSP and Zonal Incharge will visit four police stations and ensure the deployment of important Guards and night staff. In an emergency situation, the concerned SP will call SDPO, patrolling officers on the incident place and will generate a comprehensive report. The DIG (Operations) has appealed the citizens to cooperate with police personnel to improve law and order in the city, news release quoted DIG as saying. - APP

'PTI to secure major chunk in Senate elections'

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information Raof Hasan Wednesday expressed the hope that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) with its allied partners would secure major chunk of Senate seats in the upcoming elections to be held on March 3. Talking to PTV, he said all PTI aspiring candidates would win in the Senate elections and the party would emerge as the largest party in upper house of the parliament and above all, the government would complete its constitutional term. He said those who had been involved in buying and selling votes in the past were the ones objecting the open ballot move but the government was committed to eradicate corrupt practices from the country like horse-trading in the Senate elections. He said for that purpose, the government had tabled a constitutional amendment in the National Assembly for open ballot in the Senate elections. Replying a query, he said electoral reforms were part of the PTI's manifesto and Prime Minister Imran Khan would not retract from them at any cost. He said the PTI was the only democratic party that took bold step and expelled 20 of its members after founding them involved in selling votes in Senate election 2018. He said the PTI government was aimed at ensuring transparency in the Senate elections to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions in the country. He made it clear that horse-trading and sale and purchase of votes in the Senate elections would not be tolerated and Prime Minister Imran Khan would never compromise with such elements if found selling their political loyalties for monetary gains.

IHC suspends FDE's order for teachers

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday suspended the notification of Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) Islamabad dated December 11, 2020 pertaining to repatriation of teachers on deputation and summoned director general FDE in person on next hearing. The court said that the apparently the order of FDE couldn't be sustained and asked its DG to explain on next hearing that why such notification was issued. Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the case on petition moved by deputation teachers against their repatriation. The chief justice observed that the deputationist teacher could join their duties from tomorrow under wedlock policy. The court issued stay order against the FDE notification which had directed the teachers to go back to their parents departments in provinces. Expressing annoyance, the court observed that director legal FDE had no knowledge of law, adding that the director had been trying to misguide this court. - APP

Briefs

Time has come to send govt packing: Maryam

From Page 01
Pakistan Peoples Party, JUI-F, Maulana Fazlur Rehman and especially Maulana Ata-ur-Rehman for cooperating with PML-N and withdrawing candidate in favor of PML-N and also for respect and encouragement. Referring to the by-elections, she said that it is not possible for me to go to Daska and not to Nowsheera, adding that she loves Pash-tu language. She said that she has more sympathy for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as compare to Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan because the province has been enduring other issues including incompetence, theft and robbery for 8 years. Maryam Nawaz said that the stove of the poor was burning in the era of PML-N, in the previous government flour, sugar, pulses, eggs were cheap including gas and petrol. She said that the growth rate in Nawaz Sharif's government was 5.8 percent, in the PTI government it is not negative but the growth has gone underground. In our government, the price of flour was Rs 35 per kg, now it is Rs 80 per kg, price of Rotti was Rs 5 and now it has gone up to Rs 20.

PM wants swift legislation

From Page 01
Prime Minister Imran Khan in the chair. The Minister said the government wants that Overseas Pakistanis also take part in the next electoral process and cast votes. He said Overseas Pakistanis have an important role in economic progress of the country. He said the Prime Minister emphasized on ensuring transparency in elections so that everyone has confidence over the electoral process and no one could raise objections over it. Shibli Faraz said the PTI government has been making efforts to introduce electronic voting system in the next general elections to ensure transparency and impartiality in elections. The Minister said the Prime Minister issued directives for the departments concerned to take effective steps for checking incidents of rape and sexual assault against women and children. He said the Prime Minister expressed concern that such incidents have not substantially decreased. Shibli Faraz said the recently passed Inheritance Bill has made the process of acquiring succession certificates easy for legal heirs.

Mbappe hat-trick gives PSG decisive win

MADRID: FC Barcelona's chances of winning this season's Champions League all but evaporated on Tuesday night after they suffered a 4-1 home defeat to Paris Saint Germain. PSG striker Kylian Mbappe helped his side's supporters forget the absence of Neymar and Angel Di Maria with a hat-trick that leaves Barca needing to score four goals in the return leg to highlight the club's recent decline. Barca coach Ronald Koeman took a big risk in bringing Gerard Pique back into his starting 11 after over four months out with a knee injury, while Sergio Dest was also back at right-back after injury. Barca actually took the lead from the penalty spot on 27 minutes, with Leo Messi slotting home after Frenkie de Jong had his heel clipped in the PSG area and Ousmane Dembele then missed a chance to make it 2-0 for Barca as Keylor Navas made a good save in the 29th minute. That was as good as it got for Barca as Mbappe equalized three minutes later after taking a pass from Marco Verratti. Pique and Dest's lack of match fitness looked to be a factor when Mbappe put his side ahead in the 65th minute as he got in behind the Barca defense to net their second of the game. Moise Kean netted PSG's third of the night five minutes later and with Barca thrown into chaos, Mbappe rounded off a perfect counter-attack to add a fourth goal and complete his hat-trick in the 86th minute. Last season saw Barca humiliated by Bayern Munich 8-2 in the Champions League, although this defeat is not as humiliating, it is not far off and shows the deep problems at the club.



KARACHI: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki hosted a dinner in honor of the delegation of the Royal Saudi Navy headed by Major General Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Braikan, Assistant Commander of the Eastern Fleet. – DNA

World-class commentators to call Pakistan Super League

A panel of world-class foreign commentators including Gower, Simon, Mbangwa, Duminy, Morrison, Dominic Cork, and Alan Wilkins will complement their Pakistani counterparts in the T20 cricket extravaganza which has become one of the most popular yearly tournaments in the cricket calendar

DNA

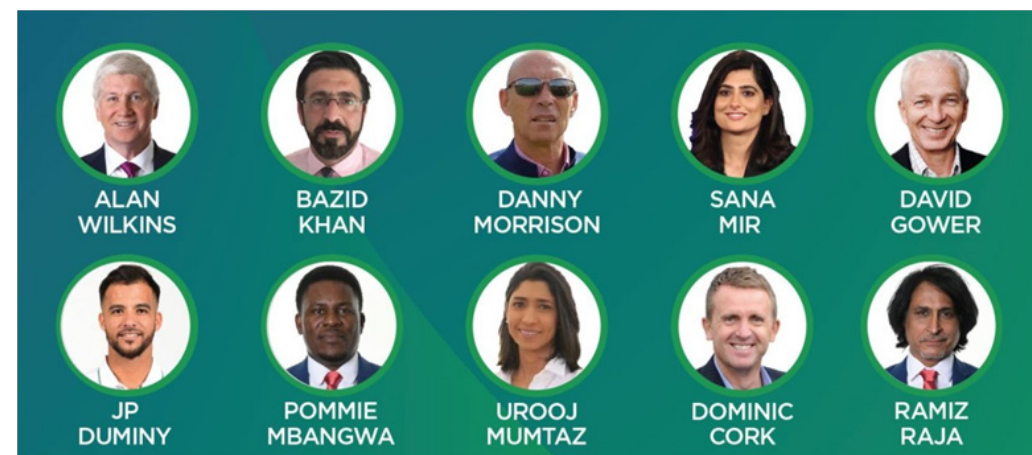
LAHORE: Some of the most popular cricket commentators will be commenting at this year's HBL Pakistan Super League. The commentary panel for the month-long event that starts at the National Stadium Karachi on Saturday, 20 February, was unveiled on Wednesday. Pakistani commentators synonymous with the league including Bazid Khan, Ramiz Raja, Sana Mir and Urooj Mumtaz will be doing bi-lingual commentary while renowned Urdu commentator Tariq Saeed and Sikandar Bakht will be part of the panel as Urdu commentators. A panel of world-class foreign commentators including David Gower, Simon Doull, Pommie

Mbangwa, JP Duminy, Danny Morrison, Dominic Cork, and Alan Wilkins will complement their Pakistani counterparts in the T20 cricket extravaganza

which has become one of the most popular yearly tournaments in the cricket calendar. New Zealand's former fast bowler and star commentator Simon

Doull will be part of the HBL PSL commentary panel for the first time along with former South African all-rounder JP Duminy, who will join the com-

mentary box for the second leg in Lahore. Pommie Mbangwa is another fresh entrant in the HBL PSL commentary box this year and he will be joining the commentary team in Lahore. Alan Wilkins who has been one of the most popular HBL PSL voices, will be calling the tournament along with former England fast bowler Dominic Cork. Former England captain David Gower will also be part of the HBL PSL 6 commentary panel for the first time, joining the star-studded commentary roster for the Karachi leg of HBL PSL 6. Another popular HBL PSL voice, New Zealand's former fast bowler Danny Morrison will be commenting in the 20-match Karachi-leg that runs from 20 February to Sunday 7 March.



Overwhelming response to United's UnitedWeTech initiative

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad United, the most successful franchise in HBL PSL history and the winner of the first and third editions, is proud to receive overwhelming response from Tech Start-ups for the second year in a row under its UnitedWeTech initiative. An initiative that was launched last year and is being carried through in partnership with P@SHA (Pakistan Software Houses Association for IT and ITES) via the Nest/IO and National Incubation Centres, Karachi and Peshawar. Since its inception in 2016, apart from

focusing on cricket, AAN-Leonine – the proud owner of Islamabad United – has focused on utilizing the popularity of cricket to bring positive social, cultural and economic change to Pakistan. The company focuses on its mission statement by implementing a strategy built around the principle of 4Es – Excellence, Empowerment, Education and Environment. In continuation of this strategy, the company relaunched its initiative last month for bringing focus to Entrepreneurship and technology. This initiative will address one of the biggest challenges faced by start-ups: getting visibility and brand recognition.

The start-ups chosen under this project benefit from unparalleled reach of Islamabad United, PSL and the sport of cricket, as a whole. Islamabad United has, by far, the largest social media presence in the PSL – with over four million followers across social media platforms. Under this initiative applications were invited from aspiring entrepreneurs and founders with proven minimum viable products (MVPs), demonstrated traction, having a large TAM and/or with a strong positive social aspect to it. More than 130 applications were received, and a team of experts screened, short-listed and chose the 8 most exceptional disruptive ideas.



DOHA: Pakistani ambassador to Qatar, Ahsan Raza Shah met with Sri Lankan ambassador, Mafaz Mohideen at Pakistan embassy Doha. Ambassador congratulated the new Sri Lankan Ambassador on recent assumption of office and wished him a successful tenure. They discussed matters of bilateral and common interest. – DNA

Du Plessis announces retirement from Test cricket

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: South Africa's veteran batter Faf du Plessis has decided to announce retirement from Test cricket. The 36-year-old Du Plessis confirmed his decision through an Instagram post and wrote, "My heart is clear and the time is right to walk into a new chapter." Former Proteas captain started his Test career back in 2012 at Adelaide against Australia where he made headlines with an emphatic match-saving inning in

fourth innings of unbeaten 110 off 376 balls. He went on to appear in 69 Tests for his country and scored 4163 runs at an average of 40.02, involving 10 centuries and 21 fifties. "If someone had told me 15 years ago that I would play 69 Test matches for South Africa and captain the side, I wouldn't have believed them. I stand in a place of utmost gratitude for a Test career full of blessings bestowed on me," he added. Du Plessis has decided make the shortest format his priority for now as 2021 and 2022 are the T20 World Cup years.

Emirates SkyCargo to work with UNICEF for vaccine distribution

DNA

DUBAI: Emirates SkyCargo has signed an agreement with UNICEF to prioritise the transport of COVID-19 vaccines, essential medicines, medical devices and other critical supplies to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The announcement is the latest in a series of measures undertaken by the freight division of Emirates to support global

communities in recovering from the devastating impact of COVID-19. Watch a video announcing Emirates SkyCargo's participation in UNICEF's initiative. The Humanitarian Airfreight Initiative spearheaded by UNICEF brings together a number of partners collectively capable of distributing essential supplies to more than 100 markets in support of the COVAX Facility, the global effort aimed at equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

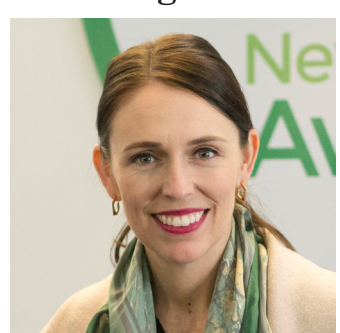
NZ troops to leave Afghanistan after 20-years

The numbers of forces deployed has been steadily reduced in recent years. It currently has six personnel remaining – three with the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy

FOREIGN DESK

WELLINGTON: New Zealand has announced that it will withdraw its last remaining troops from Afghanistan by May, concluding a 20-year deployment that was the country's longest-running one. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Wednesday that Afghanistan's internal peace process represented the best prospect for an enduring political solution in the troubled country, meaning the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) was no longer required. "After 20 years of a NZDF presence in Afghanistan, it is now time to conclude our deployment," she

said in a statement. "The deployments to Afghanistan have been one of the longest running in our history." New Zealand had deployed more than 3,500 defence and other agency personnel to the country since the US-led invasion in 2001. The numbers of forces deployed has been steadily reduced in recent years. It currently has six personnel remaining – three with the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy and three deployed to the NATO Resolute Support Mission Headquarters. Ardern's statement said the decision to end the deployment had been discussed with "key partners". Foreign Affairs Minister Nanaia Mahuta said that despite New Zealand's withdrawal, Auckland will continue to support the Afghan peace efforts. "New Zealand will continue to be supportive of the Afghan Government and its people in the years to come, including as they work through the intra-Af-



ghan peace process in an effort to resolve the decades-long conflict." The New Zealand Herald newspaper also quoted Defence Minister Peeni Henare as saying that New Zealand troops had helped create the current conditions in the country. "We've supported regional security, and helped to improve the lives of the people of Afghanistan, particularly in Bamiyan Province. "Another important element of New Zealand's support for Afghanistan has been our contribution to training and mentoring a new generation of officers in the Afghanistan Army." New Zealand's deployment in the war-torn country was not without controversy. Last year, investigators in New Zealand

concluded that the country's military repeatedly misled government ministers and the public for years over civilian casualties in a deadly special forces raid in Afghanistan 10 years ago. Operation Burnham was carried out by New Zealand troops and allied forces in Afghanistan's Tirgiran Valley on August 21-22, 2010. An inquiry was launched in 2018 after the publication of a book, which said the operation resulted in civilian deaths. Most of the Kiwi troops were assigned in Bamiyan Province, with 10 people killed in the line of duty. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said this week that the alliance would not withdraw troops from Afghanistan "before the time is right".

PSL 6's opening day tickets sold out within three hours

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Tickets for the opening day of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season six have been sold out within three hours, media reported. The first match of Pakistan's biggest cricket tournament will be played between defending champions Karachi Kings and Quetta Gladiators while the fans will also be mesmerized with a pre-recorded opening ceremony before the opening clash. On the other hand, more than 25,000 tickets have been sold in two and a half hours while more than 300,000 individuals are at the e-ticketing platform 'Bookme.pk' to get the online ticket. Note, the online tickets sale of PSL went live at 10.00 am earlier today. The tickets for Karachi-leg is on sale while Lahore-leg's tickets will go live later.

Sohaib, Shan lead Sultans to victory

KARACHI: Sohaib Maqsood (46) and Shan Masood (42) led Multan Sultans to seven wickets victory against Lahore Qalandars in a practice match ahead of Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 6. Set to chase 182 runs in 20 overs, openers Maqsood and Masood provided an 85-run opening stand to empowered Sultans. Maqsood struck five boundaries and two sixes while Masood smashed three boundaries and as many sixes as his partner. While batting first, Qalandars, scored 181-4 in their respective 20 overs. Fakhar Zaman and Ben Dunk scored 42 runs each whereas Ahmed Daniyal made 31. Sohaib Tanvir bagged two wickets for Sultans. In reply, Sultans were off to a strong start with the openers. Down the order, Rilee Rossouw and Khushdil Shah did the job for the chasing side. Rossouw remained not-out for 37 runs while Shah got run-out after scoring 41 runs. For Qalandars, Farouq Jaffery bagged a wicket. – APP

'Tough for Shan but Rizwan as leader in our Long-term plan'

KARACHI: Multan Sultans head coach Andy Flower accepted that it was difficult for Shan Masood to be removed from captaincy for Pakistan Super League (PSL) season six, however, looking at Mohammad Rizwan's success in past one year led them to appoint leader of the franchise. The 31-year-old Shan captained Sultans in PSL 5 and guided them to the playoffs stage for the first time in the franchise's history whereas the 28-year-old Rizwan was picked by Sultans in the draft in the silver category, held on January 10. "I really enjoyed working with Shan Masood as he captained and played well but nothing is permanent in life," Flower said while talking to reporters in a pre-tournament virtual presser. "We empathize with Shan and it is not easy for him after being removed from captaincy. But, he has seen a lot of hurdles in his young career and this is yet another for him. I am certain that he will take this in that way," he added. "Shan is still part of the Multan group and will play a huge part as a batsman and internal leader but at the moment, we are very much looking forward to Rizwan leading the side and getting is in the playoffs again," he maintained. Flower stated he researched Rizwan's role as the captain and identified that he has all the qualities to become a successful leader. "Rizwan has shown leadership qualities when Babar [Azam] was injured. He also has a very good record in domestic cricket where he won [National] T20 tournament for his state [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa]. Flower said. Flower said that Rizwan's appointment as Sultans' leader is not short-term. "We would like to be part of his development for his own good but also good for Pakistan cricket." Sultans will play their first practice match ahead of PSL 6 against Lahore Qalandars today while on February 19, they will take on Peshawar Zalmi. Sultans' first match is scheduled to take place on February 21 against Islamabad United. – APP

Briefs

Uzbekistan certifies Sputnik vaccine for mass use

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan on Wednesday became the latest country to certify Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine for mass use, saying it planned to purchase one million doses for the country of 34 million. Two-shot Sputnik V is leading the vaccine race in Central Asia, a five-country former Soviet region with close political and economic ties to Moscow. Uzbekistan's state coronavirus commission said Sputnik V was "certified and approved for mass use in Uzbekistan" and the country was "taking practical measures" to secure an initial batch of one million doses. The news comes after a pharmaceutical factory in neighbouring Kazakhstan said on Tuesday that it had gained approval from Kazakh authorities to produce and distribute Sputnik V. The factory expects to distribute 90,000 doses by the end of February.

EU to purchase 200M extra doses

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: BioNTech has announced Wednesday that the European Union will buy an additional 200 million doses of coronavirus vaccine from the company, and these are planned to be delivered throughout this year. Dr. Ugur Sahin, the co-founder of BioNTech, said they have taken additional steps together with their American partner Pfizer to significantly boost their production capacity in Europe. "We will initiate production at our Marburg facility this month and have strengthened our manufacturing network with additional partners. We are continuing to evaluate, together with governments, authorities, and partners at all levels, how we might address an even higher future supply requirement for our vaccines," he said. BioNTech/Pfizer's new agreement with Brussels brings total supply to the EU to 500 million doses, with an option for an additional 100 million doses. The new manufacturing site of BioNTech in Marburg, Germany has an annual production capacity of up to 750 million doses of coronavirus vaccine. BioNTech/Pfizer's mRNA-based vaccine, known as COMIRNATY, was the first coronavirus vaccine approved for use in the European Union. It also received emergency use or conditional marketing authorization in more than 45 countries, including the UK, Canada, and the US.

South Africa launches vaccine campaign

CAPE TOWN: President Cyril Ramaphosa was among the first to be inoculated Wednesday as South Africa launched its coronavirus vaccine campaign using Johnson & Johnson jabs, after the rollout was delayed. South Africa earlier this month received a million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca formula but halted administering it over concerns it would not protect against a widespread variant. A nurse who works in a maternity ward at a hospital in Khayelitsha township in Cape Town was the first to be immunised, hours after the first batch of 80,000 doses landed in the country late Tuesday. She looked relaxed as she received the jab, which was broadcast on live television. After five healthcare workers got their jabs, it was Ramaphosa's turn. Before taking off his jacket and rolling up his white shirt's long sleeves for the injection, he asked the nurse who was administering the jab if there would be any side effects. "This day represents a real milestone for us as South Africans that finally the vaccines are here and they are being administered," he said as he left the hospital to go to parliament. He was upbeat that the rollout will be "flawless". "This is a new era for us," he said. South Africa late Tuesday took delivery of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccines at an event that was closed to the press, in contrast to the fanfare two weeks ago when it received the Oxford/AstraZeneca jabs. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for energy Omar Ayub Khan met Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, ambassador of United Arab Emirates in Pakistan. — DNA

Protesters create gridlock in Yangon amid fears of violence

"We love democracy and hate the junta," Sithu Maung, an elected NLD member told tens of thousands of people at the Sule Pagoda, a central protest site in the main city of Yangon. "We must be the last generation to experience a coup"

FOREIGN DESK

YANGON: Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets of major cities in Myanmar, protesting the military's power grab amid rising concern of violence in the troubled Southeast Asian nation. Wednesday's protests marked one of the largest in Myanmar since the February 1 coup, and came after protesters urged people to turn out en masse and shatter the military's claim that the public backed its decision to seize power from civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD). "We love democracy and hate the junta," Sithu Maung, an elected NLD member told tens of thousands of people at the Sule Pagoda, a central protest site in the main city of Yangon. "We must be the last generation to experience a coup." The NLD had swept a November 8 election as widely expected, but the army alleges

there was fraud. At a news conference on Tuesday, Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun, spokesman for the ruling council, maintained that the military's seizure of power was in line with the constitution and said it remained committed to democracy. He also said 40 million of the 53 million population supported the military's action. Sithu Maung poked fun at that saying: "We're showing here that we're not in that 40 million." The turnout in Yangon appeared to be one of the biggest so far in the city. Along with the larger crowds, some people also stopped their cars in the streets or at key junctions — their bonnets open in mass 'breakdowns' — as a way of blocking off streets from security forces. In Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw, thousands including private bank employees and engineers marched down its wide boulevards, chanting for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint. Protesters also poured into the streets of

Mandalay, where on Monday security forces pointed guns at a group of 1,000 demonstrators and attacked them with slingshots and sticks. Local media reported that police also fired rubber bullets into a crowd and that a few people were wounded. Tom Andrews, the United Nations' special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, said earlier he was "terrified" of an escalation in violence, saying he had received reports of troop movements around the country and feared the protesters were facing real danger. "I fear that Wednesday has the potential for violence on a greater scale in Myanmar than we have seen since the illegal takeover of the government on February 1," Andrews said in a statement. "I am terrified that given the confluence of these two developments — planned mass protests and troops converging — we could be on the precipice of the military committing even greater crimes against the people of Myanmar." Myanmar's military has a

history of violence and impunity during the decades that it ruled the country before the transition to democracy began 10 years ago. Armed forces chief Min Aung Hlaing, who led the coup, also directed the 2017 crackdown on the Rohingya in the western state of Rakhine, which the United Nations has said was carried out with "genocidal intent". "The security forces' approach could take an even darker turn fast," the International Crisis Group warned in a briefing released on Wednesday. "Soldiers and armoured vehicles have begun to reinforce the police lines and, should the generals become impatient with the status quo, could easily become the sharp end of a bloody crackdown, as has happened in the past." The February 1 coup has brought an abrupt halt to Myanmar's fragile progress toward democracy, as Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD was about to begin a second five-year term after winning a landslide in November's election.

US sells \$200m in weapons to Egypt

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States approved an arms sale worth nearly \$200m to Egypt but vowed to press human rights issues after an American activist reported his family had been harassed. The Biden administration — which has vowed to end support for Saudi Arabia's offensive operations in Yemen's devastating war and is reviewing a major jet sale to the United Arab Emirates — said it approved the sale of 168 tactical missiles to Egypt. The \$197m sale of the Raytheon-made Rolling Airframe Missiles was requested by the Egyptian navy to improve defence in coastal areas and around the Red Sea, the US Department of State said.

The department said in a statement it approved the sale, subject to congressional review, as Egypt "continues to be an important strategic partner in the Middle East". Biden has vowed a tougher stance on human rights after his predecessor Donald Trump courted Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, whom he reportedly called "my favourite dictator", in part for his cooperation with Israel. A lawyer for Mohamed Soltan, a US citizen who has filed a lawsuit alleging torture in Egyptian custody, said plainclothes officers raided the homes of six of his family members on Sunday, detaining two cousins. Department of State spokesman Ned Price said the US was aware and "looking into" the account. "We take seriously all allegations of arbitrary arrest or de-

tion," he told reporters. "We will bring our values with us into every relationship that we have across the globe. That includes with our close security partners. That includes with Egypt." In Egypt, pro-el-Sisi television hosts greeted the statement about the arrests with disdain — neither confirming or denying their veracity — with some such as Nashaat al-Deehy bluntly calling Soltan "a terrorist". Soltan, the son of a leading member of the now-outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, was arrested in August 2013 after el-Sisi led the military overthrow of elected President Mohamed Morsi. In 2015, Soltan was released and deported to the US after renouncing his Egyptian citizenship.

Mexican President invites PM Imran Khan to visit Mexico

DNA

MEXICO CITY: Ambassador Dr Aman Rashid presented his credentials to President Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the United Mexican States on 16 February 2021, in a simple but graceful ceremony held at the National Palace, Mexico City. Following the ceremony, a meeting was held with President López Obrador wherein he conveyed greetings of the leadership of Pakistan to the President and to the friendly people of Mexico. Ambassador

thanked the President for the warm welcome extended to him on his arrival and reiterated the resolve to strengthen the bilateral relationship, not only in areas of commerce and trade but also at the international forums and promote people to people contacts. Mexican President reiterated his invitation for Prime Minister to participate in the celebrations to be held in Mexico City in September 2021, commemorating three historical milestones in the formation of the Mexican nation.

'Iran will only accept action, not talk, on nuclear deal'

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Iran will only accept and react to positive action by other parties to its 2015 nuclear deal as it has seen promises broken before. Khamenei said during a televised speech on Wednesday that Iran has heard a lot of "good talk and promises" that were not only violated, but their opposite came to be. "This time only action. If we see action from the other side, we will also act. The Islamic Republic will not be satisfied with promises of ac-

tions," he said to the people of Tabriz on the anniversary of their 1978 protests that are considered one of the events that led to the revolution a year later. The administration of current US President Joe Biden has said it wishes to restore the historic deal but insists Iran must return to all the commitments it started to roll back in 2019 before sanctions can be lifted. In early February, Khamenei said the "definitive policy" of Iran on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the deal is formally known, is that the US must verifiably lift sanctions first since it unilaterally violated the deal.



SOFIA: Pakistan ambassador to Bulgaria, Mariam Aftab held a detailed meeting with Roussi Ivanov, Foreign Policy Secretary of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria. During the meeting, the two dignitaries reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Bulgaria and discussed proposals for further enhancing them in diverse fields, especially trade, economy, and investment. — DNA

'China's help for agri sector could boost our GDP'

He said Kinnow (Mandarin) have always been considered as a traditional symbol of good fortune in China. This is mainly because the word orange, when spoke in mandarin, sounds similar to the word 'wealth'. The orange hue of the fruit is also said to symbolise 'gold' which makes it a very auspicious fruit

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan with the assistance of China should grow non-traditional products, under the agricultural and industrial cooperation information platform (AICP) between two countries, as China's progress in the agriculture sector was worth emulating for developing countries in an official statement on Wednesday. Pakistan Business Forum, Vice President Ahmad Jawad said despite several attempts to invest in the drip irrigation system, we still lagged behind. "Now is the time to analyse why has the system become a success throughout the world and not in Pakistan. Similarly there are six main areas of concern that require critical attention through AICP. In each area, seeking foreign funds and foreign expertise is a must. First, our food crop yields are low and food processing industries lag behind in value addition.

Second, livestock productivity is low and meat processing industry is at a nascent stage. Third, fields, farms and orchards producing vegetables, pulses, oilseeds and fruits are yet to be organised and maintained in line with the national requirement. Fourth, fisheries and poultry sectors suffer from lack of modern farming and processing practices. Fifth, there is a need to ensure food security for a large and growing population. And sixth, country may increase the export of agricultural commodities to earn foreign exchange after taking care of growing local demand. In this regard PBF official recommended the finance and revenue division to provide fiscal incentives to the farmers and amendments in the banking companies ordinance to facilitate payments of loans to the farmers by the banks including ZTBL. Further, Jawad has also urged the Pakistan Customs and Commerce Ministry officials to arrange special arrangements for the exports of

kinnows to China in the celebrations of Chinese New Year. He said last year Pakistani kinnows shipped to China with little quantity, however the prices up to 18 times high which was an excellent indicator, as China is a market for a minimum 100,000 tons of Pakistani kinnow due to their higher demand of consumption and it totally depends how we penetrate. He said Kinnow (Mandarin) have always been considered as a traditional symbol of good fortune in China. This is mainly because the word orange, when spoke in mandarin, sounds similar to the word 'wealth'. The orange hue of the fruit is also said to symbolise 'gold' which makes it a very auspicious fruit. Ahmad Jawad briefed that Pakistan managed to find out two new markets last year for citrus export as Philippines and China are open for Pakistan's citrus fruits now. "It is very heartening to note that Pakistan has targeted China and Philippines markets for kinnow export and ex-

pected boost in kinnow export this year." He suggested that Chinese authorities must allow kinnow on their all entry points so that horticulture trade may facilitate in a bigger volume; as the protocol on phytosanitary requirements for the export of citrus fruit from Pakistan to China was signed 15 years ago on April 5, 2005 between General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of People's Republic of China, now merged into the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China and Ministry of National Food Security (MNSFR). "Though CPEC is poised to give tremendous boost to the horticulture industry in Pakistan, which has a promising outlook," Jawad added. "However, presently we are facing many challenges internationally as European Union and other developed countries of the world are creating barriers for our agro exports."

Baku, Tehran mull Karabakh restoration

DNA

BAKU: The Azerbaijani and Iranian parliamentary delegations have discussed further efforts to develop bilateral cooperation and anti-corruption participation in rebuilding territories liberated from Armenia's occupation in a 44-day war in 2020, Trend reported. The meeting, which took place on February 16 between the Azerbaijani parliament's defence, security and anti-corruption committee chairman, Ziyafat Asgarov, and the Iranian parliament's national security and foreign policy committee chairman, Mojtaba Zonnour, also focused on the major role of the two countries' presidents in developing high-level political relations. Ziyafat Asgarov said that the documents signed during the presidents' mutual visits created a solid legal basis for the development of bilateral ties. He noted the importance of mutual visits and the role of parliamentary friendship groups in boosting relations. Asgarov stressed the need to resume mutual visits, which were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that joint projects serve the well-being of both peoples.

Lukashenko rival in court as Belarus sees new crackdown

MINSK: A leading opposition figure went on trial Wednesday in Belarus, where authorities are pursuing a series of criminal cases against activists and journalists following months of anti-government protests last year. Viktor Babaryko had planned to run against strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko, but was arrested in June ahead of elections and charged with bribery and money laundering. Lukashenko has ruled Belarus with an iron fist for two decades and claimed a landslide victory in polls in August, sparking huge protests that swept the country for months. Babaryko was accused by KGB security services of receiving bribes and "laundering funds obtained by criminal means" when he was head of Belgazprombank, the Belarusian branch of a bank belonging to Russian energy giant Gazprom. "Darkness, malice and lies cannot last forever. The dawn will come and light up the vastness of our Belarus," 57-year-old Babaryko said through his lawyers on the eve of the trial. The hearing opened in the capital Minsk at a courthouse cordoned off by police and closed to independent journalists. Babaryko appeared in court behind white bars in a cage for defendants. He was photographed joining his hands to form the heart symbol popular at protests last year. The charges against him were seen as part of a broader authoritarian sweep to clear Lukashenko's path to a sixth term, and several other Belgazprombank senior executives are also being prosecuted.

UN condemns Iraq rocket attack

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: The United Nations has warned tensions in Iraq could escalate after a rocket attack killed a foreign contractor for the US military and wounded at least 14 others in Erbil. The raid was condemned by the United States and its European allies. The attack in the Kurdish regional capital of northern Iraq late on Monday was the first in nearly two months which was directed at Western military or diplomatic installations in Iraq, after a series of similar incidents blamed on pro-Iranian Shia factions. "Such heinous, reckless acts pose grave threats to stability," the UN's top representative in Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert wrote on Twitter, calling for "restraint" on all sides. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken earlier said he was "outraged" and pledged American support in holding those responsible to account. In a separate statement later on Tuesday, Blinken and his counterparts from France, Germany, Italy and the UK condemned "in the strongest terms" the attack, and promised to support the Iraqi investigation.