



Islamabad POST

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Pope Francis on historic visit to Iraq

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PDM opposes free and fair elections

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Briefs

PDM opposes fair elections

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz Friday said the opposition did not give positive response to the PTI initiatives for open balloting to hold free and transparent Senate elections because it did not suit their ideology and priorities. The society's social and ethical values, he said, were destroyed and importance was given to accumulating wealth instead of protecting the people's interests. Both the PML-N and the PPP were responsible for moral degradation in the political culture and democratic values, ruining economy, and undermining the credibility of traditional institutions.

PM has committed contempt

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PPP Parliamentary Leader in the Senate, Senator Sherry Rehman said, "Election Commission of Pakistan is an independent and constitutional body. PM's allegations on it are an insult and undermines its authority". "The PM has committed contempt under the Election Commission Act, 2017, Section 10, Power to punish for contempt is very clear on this."

Trump faces another lawsuit

DNA

WASHINGTON: A Democratic congressman filed a lawsuit on Friday against former president Donald Trump, his son Donald Jr, his lawyer Rudy Giuliani and a Republican lawmaker for allegedly inciting the January 6 attack on the US Capitol. Trump, 74, and the other defendants waged a "campaign of lies and incendiary rhetoric" which led to the assault on Congress.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.

- Editor

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16 members of PTI sold their vote, says PM

PM took all the members of party and coalition partners in confidence over his decision to seek vote of confidence; all set to get confidence vote

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday said that he knows 16 members of ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) sold their conscience and urged the party members to vote according to their conscience as selling vote for money is dishonesty. According to sources, the prime minister said this in parliamentary party meeting. The members of PTI and coalition partners attended the meeting. Imran Khan took all the members in confidence over his decision to seek vote of confidence. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the member who does not trust me, should express himself openly. Sources said that the PTI members chanted slogans in favor of the PM while members from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa became emotional on the occasion. Earlier, PTI has finalized strategy for the National Assembly session summoned by President Dr Arif Alvi to secure a vote of confidence for Prime Minister Imran Khan.

PML-Q, MQM express full confidence

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Coalition partners of ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) on Friday expressed full confidence on Prime Minister Imran Khan and said that they stand by him. This assurance was given by the delegations of MQM and PML-Q during separate meetings with the prime minister. In its meeting with Imran Khan, MQM delegation said we have reservations about the existing system of governance but we stand by the PM. Sources said that the MQM delegation said they are convinced that

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PDM to boycott NA session, says Fazl

- says the tone in which PM addressed the nation last night "reflected his defeat"

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Democratic Movement chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said on Friday that no opposition member would attend the National Assembly session scheduled for Saturday, in which Prime Minister Imran Khan will seek a vote of confidence. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Rehman said that Yousuf Raza Gilani's victory was itself a no-confidence motion against the premier. He claimed that President Arif Alvi in his summary to summon Saturday's session had essentially stated that Prime Minister Imran had "lost the trust of the majority" and he, therefore,

Continued on Page 06

ECP not happy with PM over his remarks

IP REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan on Friday expressed disappointment over Prime Minister Imran Khan's hard-hitting speech and statements from a few cabinet members from a day earlier, stressing that the

Continued on Page 06

Govt displeased over ECP's reply

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The federal ministers on Friday expressed displeasure over the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) response, saying that they did not "like" the electoral body's press release against Prime Minister

Continued on Page 06

PM's vote of confidence and aftermath

Nobody questions and doubts honesty, commitment and integrity of PM Imran Khan, but people do expect that all those working under him shall also contribute to nation building with same zeal and spirit

COMMENT

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister is all set to get vote of confidence today from the National Assembly. Confidence vote should not be a problem for the PTI along with its allies, forms majority in the house. Besides, the confidence vote somehow shall heal wounds of ruling alliance caused by the defeat of Finance Minister Hafeez Shaikh. Another development that govt and the prime minister should take rather seriously is the reaction of the Election Commission of Pakistan to the speech of the premier on national hook-up on Thursday night in

which he chose to take the ECP to task for what he termed 'its failure in plugging horse-trading' due to which Yousaf Raza Gillani emerged victorious despite the fact the Opposition alliance did not have the required number of votes in the National Assembly. All said and done, what happened in the Senate elections is not something new, Pakistan's history is fraught with such sad incidents but as the Election Commission mentioned in its press release that if things have come to such a pass, the respective governments themselves are responsible for that. It was their duty to do legislation to put an end to such practices however they failed to do so mainly because of political expediency and vested interests. The government demand for an open ballot was more than genuine but unfortunately it seemed polit-

ically motivated. The govt wanted to get its candidate elected for it knew very well even PTI members may not vote for Hafeez Shaikh. Now when this election is over, the question is will the govt still believes in open ballot for future elections? And will the govt would like to have election of Chairman Senate through open ballot? The govt, it is believed, may not vouch for open balloting anymore. The figures show that the opposition has majority in the Senate and if everything goes well the person nominated by the opposition for this coveted slot shall sail smoothly. If the government wants to win the Senate chairman election then it has to do the same tricks which the Opposition did in order to get Yousaf Raza Gillani elected. So, situation is quite interesting. If it were a principled stand of the govt regarding open ballot then it

is supposed to stick to that principle in case of the election of the Chairman Senate as well. Regrettably, the recent happenings have cast adverse effects on already weak and fragile democratic order in the country. The opposition parties are only concerned about dislodging the government come what may. They never talk of problems the common folks are experiencing on daily basis. We, perhaps, are right in the middle of the quagmire that if we do not want to continue with this govt then who? The want of any suitable options seems to be a source concern for all and sundry and powers that be. The PTI government has a mandate of ruling or rather serving this country and countrymen for five years. It has every right to complete its term. But it has to deliver. And deliver to the satisfac-

tion of the people who voted this government to power. On international front, Pakistan is facing isolation. Our closest friends have chosen to keep a distance. Mega projects like CPEC are almost at a standstill. FATF sword is still dangling on over heads. GDP growth is not showing desired improvement. Exports targets are yet to be met. In such circumstances we need friends not foes, both at home and abroad. Nobody questions and doubts honesty, commitment and integrity of Prime Minister Imran Khan, but people do expect that all those working under him shall also contribute to nation building with same zeal and spirit. Nobody knows better than Imran Khan that how important the team work and the TEAM is to emerge as victorious out of even tumultuous times.

Two vaccines approved for senior citizens

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's drug regulator has approved two coronavirus vaccines for people above 60 years of age, as the country's infections tally nears 600,000. The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan's (DRAP) officials said the decision was made during a meeting of the body - and it was based on recommendations from a six-member specialist committee.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood had a roundtable discussion with Heads of Missions of ASEAN countries. Consistent with 'Vision East Asia' policy, FS reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthen Pak-ASEAN partnership; forge closer cooperation in political-security, trade & economic & socio-cultural domains. - DNA

Pakistan and ASEAN states mull cooperation

The meeting was attended by Heads of Missions of Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood held a roundtable discussion with the resident ASEAN Heads of Missions (HOMs) on Friday. Consistent with "Vision East Asia" policy, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthen Pakistan-ASEAN partnership in all dimensions. He specifically underscored the importance of

forging closer cooperation in political, economic, security, tourism, education and cultural domains. The Foreign Secretary underlined the high priority accorded by Pakistan to its relations with South East Asian nations and its recognition of ASEAN's centrality in the regional architecture. The Foreign Secretary recounted the range of steps taken by Pakistan to enhance engagement with ASEAN and the commitment to deepen trade and

economic linkages with ASEAN member states. He added that this was in line with Pakistan's economic diplomacy initiative and consistent with the leadership's emphasis on geo-economics. During the meeting, the vast potential in trade, mutual investments, security and defence cooperation, tourism, education, and culture discussed. It was agreed to optimally utilize the bilateral and ASEAN-wide institutional mechanisms and to explore the possibilities

presented by far-reaching initiatives like Regional Economic Comprehensive Partnership (RECP) and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The meeting was attended by the Heads of Missions of Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Pakistan is a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN since 1993 and is also a member of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) since 2004.

Iran foils plane hijacking

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: "The plot to hijack a Fokker-100 plane of Iran Air ... was neutralised on Thursday night by the vigilance of the Guards," said a statement posted on the Guards' Sepahnews website. The plane had departed Ahvaz airport in southwestern Iran for Mashhad in the northeast at 10:10pm (1840 GMT) on Thursday before the attempted hijacking was made, the Guards said. "The perpetrator of the plot" was arrested after the "urgent landing of the plane at Isfahan airport" in central Iran, the statement said, without elaborating. "The plane's passengers, who are in perfect health, flew to their [final] destination on an alternative flight," the statement said.

COAS reviews Zarb-e-Hadeed



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited field training area in Cholistan Desert on Friday. According to a statement from ISPR, the Chief Of

Army Staff was briefed about conduct modalities of 2 weeks long Corps level exercise Zarb e Hadeed. The exercise aimed at enhancing operational preparedness of formations by creating synergy among Infantry,

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COVID-19 claims 52 more lives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The national tally on Friday of total active COVID-19 cases recorded 17,117 with 1,579 more people tested positive for the deadly virus and 1,527 people recovered from the disease during the last 24 hours. Fifty-two corona patients have died during past 24 hours, 49 of them were under treatment in hospitals and three in their respective quarantines and homes on Thursday, according to the latest update issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC). During the last 24 hours most of the deaths had occurred in the Punjab followed by Sindh. Out of the total deceased 52 Covid infected patients 25 of them had perished on ventilators during their treatment. Some 37,998 tests were conducted across the country on Thursday, including 9,689 in Sindh, 15,092 in Punjab, 6,759 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), 4,803 in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), 789 in Balochistan, 263 in GB, and 603 in AJK.

Briefs

'Tourism revived in the country'

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Dr Fehmida Mirza on Friday said tourism has revived in the country and congratulated the people of Pakistan and Islamabad as the federal capital was hosting the three-day "Tourism Expo & Family Festival" here at the Fatima Jinnah Park.

"Tourism has revived in the country, Islamabad is beautiful and peaceful and one of the safest cities in Asia," she said while talking to media at inaugural ceremony of a three-day festival. She said Islamabad would host the colorful three-day event. "Sakina has especially come from Dubai for paragliding for the event. Women are playing their part to the fullest and are making fame in every sector including sports and tourism," she said and added the Public-private partnership was very important.

Dr Fehmida was of the view that air shows were being arranged in collaboration with the Armed Forces wherein civilian paragliders and skydivers would also be featuring in the event. Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz, Minister for Energy Omar Ayub Khan, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development Syed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari and Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan, besides top officials of the district administration also attended the ceremony.

'Next few days are crucial'

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: PML-Q Deputy Secretary Information Khawaja Rameez Hassan said in a press release that the next few days are very important for the country's politics but it is not possible to overcome the crisis without concrete reforms. The state-friendly policies of the powerful circles will be a milestone for the betterment. He further said that if the Prime Minister fails in the no-confidence motion, a national government should be formed immediately to determine the real direction. Eliminating unnecessary controversial amendments and strengthening federalism should be a top priority.

ECP asked to initiate contempt case against PM

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former finance minister Ishaq Dar has urged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to initiate contempt proceedings against Prime Minister Imran Khan.

In a tweet uploaded on Friday, Ishaq Dar said "There was no complaint when Imran Niazi kept hiding behind the ECP in foreign funding case for six years." He said there was no complaint when they got elected Senate chairman with 20 extra votes in ECP's presence. Now, Ishaq Dar said, they were raising hue and cry against the ECP after Dr Hafeez Shaikh was defeated in the Senate election. The former finance minister said the ECP should under Section 10 of Election Act 2017 launch contempt of court proceedings. During his televised address to the nation on Thursday night, Prime Minister Imran Khan had questioned the transparency of the Senate elections, saying that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) failed to conduct fair elections. Imran Khan said the ECP did not take measures to ensure transparent polling and held it responsible for the illegal practice of buying and selling of votes as it did not introduce traceable ballots.



LAHORE: Honorary consul of the Republic of Belarus to Lahore hosted a dinner in the honor of Andrei Metelitsa, the ambassador of Belarus to Pakistan's maiden visit to Lahore. Dinner was attended by the minister for higher education Punjab, minister for livestock Punjab, President Gujranwala chamber of commerce and industry. - DNA

President for using digital media for 'social reformation'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday said digital media could act as an effective tool to bring reformation in the society through dissemination of public awareness messages. In an interactive session with journalists-cum-digital media influencers here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, the President stressed responsible use of social media with a constructive approach to highlight issues concerning the common man in particular.

The President said though political topics drew more audience to a journalist's social media platform, however creating awareness about matters such as hepatitis, breast cancer, women's share in inheritance, population control and disabled persons was equally important. He said media giants and social media worldwide were gaining power to influence institu-



tions and even shape up the policies of States. He urged the journalists to invite debates on various social issues and invoke public opinion in a bid to educate the society. He mentioned that mere laws could not give positive results unless there was a social change to choose right over wrong. Dr Alvi lauded the role of mainstream

and social media during the coronavirus pandemic for educating the public about healthcare precautions. The President, flanked by his wife Begum Samina Alvi, also answered the queries of digital media journalists on issues including Islamophobia, presidential system and ordinances, electronic voting and cyber secu-

ity. On the issue of Islamophobia raised with France, he said Pakistan maintained the same position. However, he said, the stance "did not mean confrontation, but awareness" about a dangerous social trend in the West. Regarding electronic voting, he said, the work by his task force was in progress and a consultancy firm

would soon be hired to workout feasibility on e-voting and digital identification. He said e-voting could be an expensive venture and also required the nod of the parliament for implementation. Asked about his opinion on presidential system, he said, "a decisive leadership matters more than a specific mode of governance", adding that he had 'no tilt towards either of the systems'.

To a question on issuance of presidential ordinances, he said the prerogative was constitutional and had been a normal practice during the tenures of other ruling parties as well. He emphasized that the government had to opt other means in case the Opposition remained unwilling to run the parliamentary business. On cyber security, the President said the phenomenon was vital in the age of hybrid warfare and called for a secure system.

Jawad appointed as P&D Head of YPARD

DNA

Karachi: The Young Professionals Platform for Agricultural Research for Development" (YPARD) Global Unit appointed Planning and Development (P&D) team for Pakistan under the command of Ahmad Jawad as Head of P&D. Similarly Dr Saira Begum appointed as Secretary P&D as well as Shahila Sultana, Ahmed Raza Kirmani and Adnan Arshad appointed as Senior Managers P&D Central Board. While Ramzan Rafique will perform the duties of Program Coordinator YPARD and Muhammad Ismail Kumbhar was appointed as Advisor P&D. The appointments of Regional Representatives and Regional Manager P&D's for all provinces will formally announce later. The Spokesman of YPARD also briefed that YPARD have a presence in 72 countries and founded in New Delhi on 8th November 2006. The structure of its governance was established based on an agreement between stakeholders of agricultural research for development (ARD) and a group of donors who supported the initiative. Prior to its foundation in November 2006, YPARD traces its roots from the EFARD (European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development) meeting held in Zurich in May 2005.

Thereafter, a number of occasions allowed several young professionals to congregate and define YPARD's vision, mission, and first operational plans (Marrakech, December 2005; Wageningen, May 2006; Hannover, July 2007) of the cities of Switzerland and Germany. On this occasion; YPARD Head P&D Ahmad Jawad who previously served in FPCCI as Standing Committee Chairman on Agriculture for three years, said "we built a renewed strategic framework to respond accordingly to the new challenges and opportunities faced by the young professionals in agriculture, we all are glad to make part of this important process for the most beloved organization for the youth in the agriculture sector". He also said farmers are 65 percent of this country, but they are ignored. Jawad told I don't know why government failed to take up agriculture sector in its almost three years, despite government knew that in the ongoing GDP performance, agriculture could play a sharp role provided with implementation package. As Pakistani farmers demands, including the fixing of the minimum support price per maund (40 kilograms) of wheat at 2,000 rupees and sugarcane at 300 rupees, in addition to setting a flat electric power rate of 5 rupees per unit.

SBP launched program of end-to-end digitization

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has launched an innovative program of end-to-end digitization to ensure trenchancy and expeditious handling of the foreign exchange proceeds. This was stated by Sarfraz Ahmad Nadeem Chief Manager SBP Faisalabad while addressing an awareness session on "End-to-End Digitalization on FX cases" here Wednesday while Shakeel Paracha Director Foreign Exchange Cooperation Department SBP head office and Ahsan Waqas Senior Joint Director Exchange Policy Department (EPD) SBP head office joined the session through zoom. Mr. Sarfraz Nadeem said that SBP is a supreme authority for handling Pakistani currency affairs. It is also dealing with foreign exchange affairs through its 16 opera-

tional offices. He said that SBP has a good reputation in its service delivery under a most conducive environment and customers' problems relating to commercial banks, currency, taxes, foreign exchange, etc. are being resolved without any discrimination purely on merit basis. He said that SBP is now heading toward adoption of latest technology to speed up its service delivery so that precious time and energy of the customers could be saved. In this connection, SBP has introduced a digital regulatory approval system for Foreign Exchange on 24th March 2020 to facilitate its customers especially exporters and importers. He said that the new system which is called "End-to-End Digitalization on FX cases" will not expedite the approval process but also keep the customer updated about the status of his case at all stages. Earlier, the customers had to visit a commercial bank to submit its foreign

exchange related documents and the bank after scrutinizing the documents sent the same to SBP for approval. In this way the customers often had to visit commercial bank many times but he was also not aware of status of his application till its approval or rejection. But now the customer will have no need to visit commercial banks many times for submission of his documents or know status of his application regarding foreign exchange. Now the customer will submit his application for Foreign Exchange approval online by sitting on laptop or computer in his home. The concerned bank will scrutinize the case and send it to SBP for approval. If any discrepancy was found in the case, the customers will be intimated and he will also remove the same through online portal. He will also receive all updates about the status of his application through email or by visiting website of the concerned bank or SBP, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Chief minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar posing for a group photo along with PTI's MNAs from Punjab. - DNA

'Setting fundamentals of industrial cooperation imperative'

PESHAWAR: Minister for State and Chairman Board of Investment (BOI) Pakistan Chairman Atif Bokhari said that a "world of opportunities" is just a step away and the only thing needed is to set the fundamentals of Industrial Cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). According to Gwadar Pro, he made the remarks when addressing CPEC Industrial Cooperation Business to Business (B2B) Investment Conference held here. He added, the second phase of CPEC has commenced and BOI would continue to take lead on investment promotion, facilitation and industrial cooperation. The Government still has an arduous task of devising effective policies, laws, and efficient infrastructure, to facilitate B2B and people to people linkages. Bokhari pointed out that the Government had already launched conducive policies such as Electric vehicle policy, Mobile Manufacturing, Construction sector policies, Sole Enterprise Special Economic Zone, Regulations 2020, and SEZ Zone Enterprise Admin and Sale/Lease/Sub-lease of Plot Regulations 2021, to increase investment in Pakistan. - DNA

WhatsApp introduces calling from the desktop

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: WhatsApp has announced that private and secure one-to-one voice and video calls are now available on WhatsApp's desktop app. As per a blog on WhatsApp's official website, they stated "Throughout the last year we've seen significant increases in people calling one another on WhatsApp, often for long conversations. Last New Year's Eve, we broke the record for the most calls ever made in a single day with 1.4 billion voice and video calls. With so many people still apart from their loved ones, and adjusting to new ways of working, we want conversations on WhatsApp to feel as close to in-person as possible, regardless of where you are in the world or the tech you're using." Answering on a bigger screen makes it easier to work with colleagues, see your family more clearly on a bigger canvas, or free up your hands to move around a room while talking. To make desktop calling more useful, it has been made sure it works seamlessly for both portrait and landscape orientation, appears in a resizable standalone window on your computer screen, and is set to be always on top so users never lose video chats in a browser tab or stack of open windows. Voice and video calls on WhatsApp are end-to-end encrypted, so WhatsApp can't hear or see them, whether you call from your phone or your computer.

K-Electric consumers likely to get relief in summer

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Karachi's electricity consumers are likely to get a big relief in the summer season as NEPRA has approved additional supply of 150MW from the national grid to K-Electric.

According to details, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has decided to supply 150MW of additional power to K-Electric, for which it approved a tripartite agreement between CPPA, NTDC and K-Electric. K-Electric will be provided 150MW of electricity from three wind power plants, with Tenaga, Zephyr and Hydro China power plants supplying 50MW each. A statement issued by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) said that the federal government was already supplying 650MW of electricity to K-Electric from the national grid.

Yarn prices pushed SMEs to the brink of collapse

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Hanif Lakhany, Senior Vice Chairman Pakistan Yarn Merchants Association (PYMA) and Vice Chairman Farhan Ashrafi, has termed catastrophic for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) over not reviewing the tariff structure of polyester chain and not allowing immediate duty-free import of cotton, polyester cotton and polyester filament yarn by the government, and feared that the textile industry would be ruined if it was not possible to supply raw materials at reasonable prices as per the production demand. PYMA office bearers met with a delegation of polyester yarn users, industrialists, importers and traders, raising their concerns, they said that the government is aware that cotton production has declined this year, while the skyrocketing prices of polyester filament yarn, the main raw material for the textile industry, have pushed up production costs to an unbearable level "As a result of higher prices in the local market, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have no choice but close their units, if nothing is done to alleviate the pain of super high prices, it may be pushing a grave danger to the fragile export growth", they pointed out.

Briefs

'Govt plans awareness drive for vaccine doubters'

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary on Health Nausheen Hamid on Friday said that health ministry's communication team was preparing a strategy for a massive coronavirus vaccination drive through electronic media that will be crucial for the country to come out of the pandemic. Talking to a Private news channel, she warned the common people not to be taken in by conspiracy theories about the coronavirus vaccine which is viral on social media websites, adding, vaccination is the only way to get rid of coronavirus. She said vaccines are safe and perhaps only way to eliminate infectious disease, adding, Smallpox has been eradicated from Pakistan in Past through vaccine. She urged citizens to strictly follow standard operating procedures (SOPs) to prevent the third wave of the coronavirus, adding that it was time for everyone to "act as a mature nation." She reassured citizens that getting vaccinated for coronavirus is safe and no major reactions result from the shot.

NAHE holds training for HEC employees

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) organized a hands-on training for e-office to top-up virtual trainings provided on the subject in conjunction with the National Information Technology Board (NITB).

HEC staff was now able to benefit from a practical training with onsite instructors to answer questions and practically work through problems respective employees were facing. Members from the Faculty Affairs Division were trained in the first round - other HEC divisions will receive similar top-up training in the weeks to come.

Mr. Muhammad Raza Chohan, Director General, Faculty Affairs appreciated NAHE for conducted this training as well as Mr. SaifurRehman from NITB for conducting an interactive and effective session. E-office is an electronic system of office and operational management which will help make functions more efficient and improve accountability at HEC. The programme is being implemented across various ministries in the government and has been approved by the Federal Cabinet and the National e-Government Council.

PARC trains 23 field assistants

IMRAN TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had trained 23 field assistants from Balochistan Province in order to promote and develop the agriculture and livestock sectors of province for enhancing farm income to alleviate poverty. The field assistants were provided training under "Capacity Development of Agriculture Extension Services in Balochistan Project", which was jointly executed by the JICA, PARC and Agriculture Department of Balochistan, said a press release.

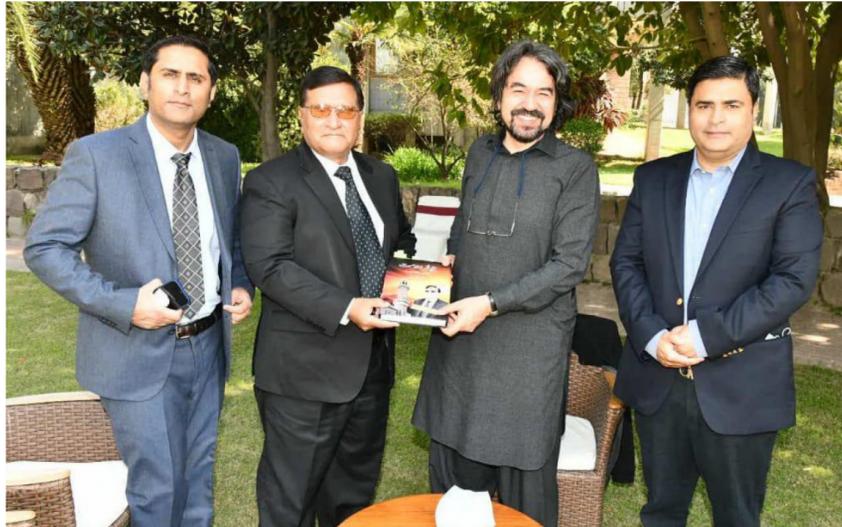
In order to evaluate the progress and outcome of the project, a meeting was held at Pakistan Agriculture Research Center, which was attended by Chairman PARC Dr Muhammad Azeem Khan, Director General National Agriculture Research Center Shamim ul Sibtain Shah and Nobuki Kojima and Kenji Nakamura along with other high officials from JICA.

Huge potential for Turkey-Pakistan cultural cooperation

Waqar Bakhtawari said on the occasion that it takes 40 days for the imported goods to reach Pakistan from Turkey via sea route

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: There is a huge potential for cultural development between Turkey and Pakistan. These views were expressed by Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul during a meeting with Pakistan Cultural Forum Chairman Zafar Bakhtawari, Ahsan Bakhtawari and Waqar Bakhtawari at Turkish embassy. Zafar Bakhtawari presented his newly published book 'Jahan Dost' to Turkish Ambassador. Turkish Ambassador said that at present there trade volume between two countries is 1 billion dollar which can be multiplied very easily through various means. He further said that Turkish dramas have played an important role in introducing Turkish culture in Pakistan and bringing the



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Cultural Forum Zafar Bakhtawari is presenting his book to Turkish Ambassador Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul. Ahsan Bakhtawari and Waqar Bakhtawari were also present on the occasion.

two countries closer. Zafar Bakhtawari on the occasion briefed him about the articles written in his book about Pakistan and Turkey relations. He also called for the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries and the restoration of the cargo train between Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. He said there is a need to set up a joint forum to bring together the writers and intellectuals of both the countries regarding Allama Iqbal and Rumi ideology. Waqar Bakhtawari said on the occasion that it takes 40 days for the imported goods to reach Pakistan from Turkey via sea route. The Turkish Ambassador said that after the cargo train, the goods will reach Pakistan in two days. Ahsan Bakhtawari also stressed on the need to introduce Turkish food in Pakistan.

ANF seized 2698 KGs drugs valuing US \$87m

ZUBAIR AHMAD

RAWALPINDI: Anti Narcotics Force Pakistan seized 2698.085 Kgs narcotics valuing US \$ 87.716 Million internationally, arrested 24 culprits including two ladies and impounded 13 vehicles while conducting 23 counter-narcotics strikes throughout the country. The seized drugs comprised of 60 Kg Heroin, 1550.61 Kg Hashish, 1084.1 Kg Opium and 3.375

Kg Amphetamine. ANF Balochistan, Police Station, Quetta intercepted a Toyota Corolla GLI Car and recovered 5 Kg Hashish from Parking area of AK Mover Bus terminal at NawaKilli road District Quetta. 1 x accused namely Abdul Ghani resident of NasirabadZhub, Balochistan was arrested. In another operation, Police Station Quetta intercepted a Hino Truck and recovered 186 Kg Hashish from Mughha-Faqirai cross KuchlakZhub Highway District QillaSaiful-

lah. In third operation, Police Station Gwadar in collaboration with Pakistan Navy, Karachi recovered 700 Kgs Hashish from Toyota Pick-up Single Cabin parked at general area of Pishukan District Gwadar. ANF Punjab, Police Station Sialkot raided near Cheema Hospital, Wazirabad road Daska and recovered 2.100 Kg Hashish alongwith motorcycle from personal possession of arrested accused persons namely Zahid Khan and Farooq Khan residents of Sialkot.

Munir Ahmed Khan joins PTI

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Leading political figure Munir Ahmed Khan in a meeting with Prime Minister Iman Khan on Friday, announced to join the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. The prime minister appreciated the decision of Munir Ahmed Khan. Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Makhdoom-KhusroBakhtiar and Federal Minister for Science and Technology Chaudhry Fawad Hussain were also present in the meeting held here at the Prime Minister's House. Munir Ahmed expressed full confidence in the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, saying Pakistan's future was linked with his visionary leadership. He lauded Prime Minister Imran Khan for his fight against corruption mafia for over two decades. Munir Ahmed Khan is the former Central Secretary Information of ARD, and also held advisory and other senior positions with various governments.

FGEHA hands over 1,003 plots to allottees of G-14

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) has provisionally handed over as many as 1,003 plots of different categories to the allottees of G-14/2 and 3 sectors Islamabad. The FGEHA had given around 354 plots in G-14/2 and 649 plots in G-14/3 of different categories, an official in the Ministry of Housing and Works told media. He said about 57 allottees have taken final possession letters and 12 allottees have applied for issuance of No Objection Certificate (NOC) for approval of building plans. The official said that only four allottees have started construction of houses in Sector G-14/2 and G-14/3. He said the Housing Scheme Phase-IV of the FGEHA was launched in 2004 in sector G-14/1, 2 and 3 Islamabad. About 4,820 kanal land was acquired through Land Acquisition Collection (LAC) under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 in March, 2004, he added. He said the consent award for sub-sector G-14/1, 2 and 3 was announced in 2005 at the rate of Rs5, 90,000 per kanal for total land 4,820 kanal and the infrastructure development work was taken up by the authority. The official said the development of sub-sector G-14/4 has been completed, while 70 percent rehabilitation work of G-14/2, 3 was in progress. The official said that overall 60 percent infrastructure development was completed and the remaining work would be completed once the issue of Built Up Properties (BUPs) was resolved for which FGEHA was striving hard. He said that consultant was hired for sub-sector G-14/1 where the topographic survey has been completed. The award of BUPs in G-14/1, 2 was yet to be made for which survey of the BUPs was underway. - DNA

SHF announces competition on "My Country My Pride"

ISLAMABAD: Sitara-o-Hilal Foundation (SHF) on Friday announced a short film and documentary competition on the theme "My Country My Pride" focusing on Pakistan Resolution Day. The last day of submission film and documentary is 20th March 2021, said a press release issued here Friday. The aim of the competition was to raise awareness about the struggle of Pakistan and motivating patriotism in the county's youth. The willing students should submit an original film and documentary no longer than 10 minutes in duration on the theme of Pakistan Resolution Day. The competition was open to all students across the country. Both individual and group submissions will be accepted. Form: Fiction, Documentary, Docudrama, Musical or Family Video (Live-Action or Animation) can be used. Title and end credits were mandatory. All submissions must be in the horizontal format of at least standard HD (1280 x 720 pixels) encoded in H264 (mp4). - DNA



ISLAMABAD: SSP Investigation conducting Khuli Kacheries in all zones, listening complainants of important cases. To solve public grievances on top priority. - DNA

Ambassador Syed Abrar appointed as VC IPS

ISLAMABAD: Senior diplomat, author, and Pakistan's former special secretary, ministry of foreign affairs, Syed Abrar Hussain, has been appointed as the Vice-Chairman (Academics), Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) by its board of governors. The former diplomat, who has been associated with the Institute for the last two years as a senior research associate and then a member of the board of governors, had an accomplished diplomatic career that started in 1983. In a period spanning over thirty-five years, Hussain served in Kuwait (1987-1989), Jeddah (1993-1995), Prague (1995-1997), Kandahar (1999-2001), Beirut (2001-2002) and Brunei (2005-2006) in various capacities. He remained Pakistan's ambassador to Nepal (2008-2011), Kuwait (2013-2014), and Afghanistan, where he first served as a Counsel General in Kandahar during the Taliban regime (1999-2001). Thirteen years later, he was appointed as an ambassador of Pakistan in Kabul in 2014. He finally retired as a Special Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2018. IPS Press has recently published his memoirs of the diplomatic service in Afghanistan. - DNA



'Aurat Azadi March to salute heroism of all women'

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Senior Journalist Fauzia Shahid on Friday said that 'Aurat Azadi March' would salute the heroism of all women and others who continue to struggle for an egalitarian, democratic and progressive society. In an interview with media in connection with Women's day to be celebrated on March 8, she said the aim of 'Aurat Azadi March' event is to highlight the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. She said that women constitute half of the population so it was very necessary to get their rights protected. She said that every woman should participate in Aurat March so that they can recognize and be well aware of their rights. She added that the majority of the women, transgender persons, persons living with disabilities, peasants, workers and minorities will participate in Aurat March, She added. She said that 'Aurat Azadi March' is an unwavering struggle to protect and promote women's rights and human rights for all. She added that feminism is not man hating movement that seek to destroy the world but its having the same rights for women as everyone else enjoy. She also said that every woman should participate in "Aurat Azadi March" to get their rights protected, she added.

ADC directs to ensure timely salaries to disabled

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Abdullah Mehmood on Friday said that the government had taken many initiatives to provide the best facilities including health care, education and vocational training to the persons with disabilities through education and rehabilitation centers established across the province. Chairing a meeting to review the progress of hiring disabled persons, he directed the officials of different departments to ensure timely payment of salaries to the disabled and make it possible to transfer them near to their residences. Abdullah said that a special quota of hiring disabled for recruitment in Govt and private institutions would be ensured, adding the Punjab Government had allocated 3 per cent quota in government jobs for disabled which was aimed to include them in the mainstream of life so that this physical imparity won't be able to make them a burden for others. The ADC also assured full assistance to officials concerned for fulfilling the legitimate demands of disabled persons.

RCB accelerates campaign

GHULAM MURTAZA

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) on the directives of Executive Officer, RCB Muhammad Farooq Ali Malik has accelerated its ongoing campaign against defaulters of Property Tax, Water Charges, Transfer of Immoveable Property (TIP) Tax and Trade Tax and collected over Rs 1.1 billion during last eight months of the current financial year. According to RCB spokesman, Qaiser Mehmood, the board collected over Rs 642 million property tax, 168 million water charges, over Rs 30.6 million Conservancy charges, over Rs 244 million TIP Tax and over Rs 8.7 million Trade License Fee while over Rs 5.5 million Professional Tax was also recovered from the defaulters during the period. The RCB teams on the directives of the CEO were conducting raids in different areas to take action against the defaulters, he added.

PRCS celebrates 'World Orphans Week'

Abrar ul Haq stresses need to show respect to orphan children and eradicate discrimination and help them become valuable members of society

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Red Crescent Society organized a ceremony to celebrate 'World Orphans Week' at the National Headquarters. Mrs. Zlatomira Yurdakul, wife of Ambassador of Turkey to Pakistan, was chief guest on the occasion, while Pakistan Sweet Home Patron-in-Chief Zamurd Khan was guest of honor. Speaking on the occasion, PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq said, "We have gathered here today to make these orphan children realize that they are not alone

and that they are in fact a very important part of our society." He said taking care of orphan and helpless children is our collective responsibility. "Every one of us has to play his part to make these children a useful citizen of the society," he said. "Involving these children in the nation-building activities by providing them with care, support and protection is need of the hour," he added. Abrar ul Haq said the PRCS is endeavoring to support orphan children to ensure a better future for them. He said the PRCS has recently launched the 'Smiling Children'

initiative in collaboration with the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation, through which thousands of food packs are being distributed among school children

in several cities. Last year, the PRCS implemented Panda Pack project, through which school bags and other stationary items were distributed among school

children, he further said. "Children are very close to our heart. Let us join hands to show respect to these orphan children and advocate their rights to eradicate discrimination and help them become valuable members of this society," he added. The PRCS chairman also appreciated Turkey's support to Pakistan in the time of need. He said the Turkish Red Crescent Society has always been in the forefront of helping Pakistani people in difficult times. He hoped that the collaboration between PRCS and TRCS will grow in the times to come. He also appreciated the

performance of Taekwondo Martial Arts by the Pakistan Sweet Home children. In her address, Zlatomira Yurdakul, wife of Ambassador of Turkey to Pakistan, said the steps taken by the Turkish Red Crescent Society for welfare of orphan children are praiseworthy. She said PRCS and TRCS are doing an exemplary work towards common goal of service to the humanity. PRCS Acting Secretary General Dr. Adeel Nawaz, Head of Delegation Turkish Red Crescent Society Ibrahman Carlos and staff and volunteers of PRCS and TRCS also attended the ceremony.



Briefs

Murad wears ranks to promoted police officers

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, on promotion to the higher grade, wore ranks to police officers in a simple ceremony organized here at CM House. The ceremony was attended by Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, Inspector General of Police Mushtaq Maher, Additional Chief Secretary Usman Chachar, PSCM Sajid Jamal Abro and others. The chief minister on promotion to Grade BS-21 wore the ranks of Additional Inspector General of Police to Amin Yousif Zai, Arif Hanif and Farhat Junejo. He also wore the rank of DIG to Pir Mohammad Shah.

The chief minister congratulating the newly promoted police officers told them that their responsibilities for better policing have increased. "You have ample experience of police service, therefore you will have to guide your juniors for better policing," he said. The chief secretary and the IG Police also congratulated the newly promoted police officers.

Islamabad's QAU improves in world rankings

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, has marked a significant improvement in the international rankings released Friday by the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) in its World University Rankings portfolio. Islamabad's Quaid-i-Azam University ranked third among the Pakistani institutes listed on the QS World University Rankings, with a score of 25.5 and ranking of 454. The fields of natural sciences, social sciences, and biological sciences have improved significantly as well. According to the QS World University Rankings, the Department of Natural Sciences ranked at 259, with a score of 68.4, while the departments of Mathematics & Physics, Environmental Sciences, Economics, and Business & Management Sciences ranking in the 201-250, 301-350, 401-500, and 451-500 ranges, respectively. The varsity, ranked "Large" in size, has 452 faculty members in total, with the student-to-faculty ratio of 33, as per the QS World University Rankings. It does not provide scholarships but has 115 international students. The vice chancellor of Islamabad's Quaid-i-Azam University, Professor Dr Muhammad Ali congratulated the faculty, students, staff, and alumni on the varsity's success. "Despite the financial deficit, the university has improved its position at the ranking agency," he said.

Anti-polio drive from March 29

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: Around 0.3 million children up to the age of five years will be administered polio drops across Attock district during a five days campaign being launched from March 29. "The five-day polio vaccination drive should be conducted under strict preventive measures for Covid-19". This was emphasized by Deputy Commissioner Attock Ali Anan Qamar while chairing a meeting in this context at Attock on Friday which was attended by Chief executive officer Health Dr Jawad Ellahi, assistant commissioners, DDHOs Health of six different tehsils, Superintendent Vaccination, Incharge Polio Control Room and representatives of World Health Organization. He urged that a 'no touch' vaccination method should be adopted so that distance is maintained between the frontline worker and child. He said health department teams must ensure that polio drops are administered to all children between the ages of one to five, adding parents must cooperate with the teams to make the campaign a success. The health officials informed that as many as 1100 teams have been constituted; they will be present at all entry and exit points of the city.

CDA chairman, MD Nika discuss new energy projects

Chairman CDA said that the project should be centralized and attractive for the citizens. CDA has restored street lights and it has been proven that the crime rate dropped in those areas. The restoration of street lights has put positive impacts on the lives of the citizens, he added

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Aamir Ali Ahmad chaired an important session regarding the energy projects at his office here on Friday. Matters regarding new energy projects in collaboration with Nika in Islamabad were discussed at the occasion. MD Nika presented his suggestions regarding the environment friendly projects of energy during the session. According to detail, Chairman CDA chaired a session

at his office which was attended by MD Nika, Dr. Sardar Muazam; Muhammad Irshaad Khan from GZE; Ahmad Husnain; Umar Sagheer; and Rana Shakeel. Nika officials briefed the session regarding the energy project. Speaking at the occasion, Chairman CDA said that such a centralized project should be initiated regarding the street lights and water supply which can help in preserving energy side by side indicating the faulty points. While briefing the session, MD Nika said: "We will give



you such a project which would be environment friendly and will preserve energy also. Pakistan Engineering Council and Nika are jointly introducing de-

signed an energy management program in collaboration with GZE. Under this program the energy audit of 10 buildings of the city will be conducted. Energy management system will be installed in these buildings. This system will save energy. It was told during the session that more energy is being used in CDA's water supply and street lights. Nika told that it will give a project under which all the street lights will be replaced by LEDs. Important decisions will be taken on suggestions of Nika in the next session.

DLA issues over 100 licenses per day

ISLAMABAD: Internationally accredited Drivers Licensing Authority (DLA) of National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP) is currently issuing over 100 licenses rather than forty licenses per day. In an exclusive interview DSP Sanam Khurram, head of the DLA on Friday told that the report about forty licenses was misleading and based on old data. Sanam Khurram also told that the Authority would soon have its regional branches. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Secretary BOI Fareena Mazhar hosted a Farewell lunch in honor of the JICA Advisor Yuko Tanaka. - DNA

Significant reduction in PMO expenditures

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: With the allocation of approximately Rs. 46 million as against the demand estimates of Rs. 218 million in the Federal Budget 2019-20 for operating expenses, the expenditures of Prime Minister Office have registered significant decrease. Similarly, a considerable reduction of approximately Rs. 10 million has been recorded under the head of "Travel and Transportation", according to an official data of the Ministry of Finance. In a recent programme on a private channel, it was claimed that the Prime Minister Office had, in contradiction to austerity measures, increased the budget/

expenditures for the fiscal years 2018-19 and 2019-20. "This news lacks factual data and devoid of any supporting evidence from official sources. In the age of social media, where misinformation spreads with the speed of light, it is expected of traditional media to dig into facts before running a story," official sources remarked. According to the official data, the expenditures for Prime Minister Office have actually been reduced significantly as pledged by Prime Minister Imran Khan. "The Federal Budget 2019-2020 volume 1 titled Current Expenditures serial No 13 PMO (page 302-310) clearly states a decrease in expenditures by PMO as compared to previous fiscal

year," the sources added. According to the official date, in addition to the above mentioned decreases, a visible reduction of budget can be seen under the head of "Entertainment & Gifts" from Rs. 1.5 million to just Rs. 1000 (that too to keep the head of account alive). As far as the expenditures on "Physical Assets" were concerned, the official sources said that a reduction of approximately Rs. 4 million was done on the instructions of the Prime Minister. Another massive cut was also placed on "Tour Expenses" of worth Rs.1.2 million. Moreover, an amount of approximately Rs. 20 million was reduced from "Miscellaneous Expenditures".

JI wing to organize conference for women

ISLAMABAD: In connection with ongoing campaign titled "Strong Family, Strong Woman, Strong Society" and International Women's Day, the Jamaat Islami (JI) Women Wing will organize a conference for women journalists here on Sunday to highlight and mitigate the issues faced by them in various media houses. Spokesperson of JI Women Wing Shabana Ayaz told APP that Deputy Secretary General JI Women Wing Sakina Shahid would chair the conference. The conference would be addressed by Ameer JI Senator Sirajul Haq wherein debates would be held to seek way out from the prevailing gender discriminations with women workers, identify and present amicable solution to them. - DNA

Timely help could save vision of 85% blind women

ISLAMABAD: For many Pakistani women, eye disease ensures a life of deepening destitution and dependency, while in 85 percent of cases timely help could prevent it, experts and activists said. Nearly 1 percent of Pakistan's 220 million population lives with blindness, last year's survey National Committee for Prevention of Blindness (NCPB) shows. The majority of the cases are of preventable blindness, in which detection of diseases such as diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, or cataract, media reported on Friday. Treatment, according to recent studies by NCPB's partner, Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF), could have saved the eyesight of over 85 percent of those who lost it, especially women. Having lost sight, they become a burden on their families, making eye disease a generational scourge among those who are often already vulnerable of the poor. But as first symptoms occur, women rarely seek treatment due to dependency that tightens the more their vision is affected. "They have to rely on husbands, fathers, children, a brother to move to any other place, whether it is a shopping area, or it is a clinic or a hospital," NCPB national coordinator Prof. Asad Aslam Khan said in an interview with media. "Most of the time they are deprived of getting to facilities at the proper time leading to a delay in detection and management of diseases. This unnecessary delay turns avoidable curable blindness into permanent blindness." To address the situation, the NCPB has been establishing ophthalmologist facilities at district hospitals outside major cities and with the help of FHF providing surgery to those whose vision can be restored. - DNA

Commissioner plants sapling at LDD

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi, Capt. Retd Muhammad Mehmood has planted a sapling here at Livestock and Dairy Development (LDD) Directorate under spring plantation drive 2021. On the occasion he urged the citizens to come forward and play a role to make the tree plantation campaign a success. The commissioner said, the students and civil society members should plant saplings and seeds in different areas, adding, they have started planting saplings to make the parks natural green areas. He urged the people to make the tree plantation campaign successful by joining this good deed. The citizens should extend cooperation for making Clean and Green campaign successful which would help improve the environment. Every citizen should plant a sapling and ensure its care as well, he said adding, though, special plantation campaigns are launched but, it's not only responsibility of the government departments, rather, every citizen has a role to play which must be fulfilled to achieve the targets. On the occasion, Director Livestock Muhammad Sarfraz and other officers were present. Later, the Commissioner visited different sections of the Directorate and inspected its laboratory. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: IG Islamabad Police Qazi Jamilur Rehman pinning badges of Inspector to Javed Iqbal Baig, during a simple but impressive ceremony. - DNA

Three-day "Tourism Expo, Family Festival" opens

The mega festival was aimed to show the true colors of the country to the whole world. The event will encompass a wide range of events from adventure sports such as Paragliding to a family event like food fest and colorful concert

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: A Three-day Mega 'Tourism Expo and Family Festival' was started on Friday, featuring different Air Shows, adventure sports like Para Gliding, Accuracy Landing, Wing Suite Flying, Trike Flying, Sky Diving and Power Para Gliding as part of Field Marshal Paragliding Championship. The mega festival organized by Pakistan Paragliding Association (PHPA) in collaboration with the Cutting Edge Group. Federal Minister for Information Broadcasting Shibli Faraz, Federal Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan, Federal Minister for Power Omer Ayub Khan,

Federal Minister for IPC Dr. Fahmida Mirza, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis Syed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari and CEO Cutting Edge

Ch. Shahzad Akhtar also attended the opening ceremony. Three days mega festival will be colored with vintage cars and bike roadshows, Horse Parade, Corpo-

rate and Educational Expos, Food Court, Concerts, and much more. The mega festival was aimed to show the true colors of the country to the whole world. The event

will encompass a wide range of events from adventure sports such as Paragliding to a family event like food fest and colorful concert. CEO Cutting Edge Group Ch. Shehzad Akhtar told Reporters that there are a few places on earth that have been blessed with the wonders of nature, and it is our duty to share such splendors with the world so that we may find unity in admiration and adventure. Islamabad is bestowed with natural magnificence and landscape, diverse culture, astounding arts and crafts, luxurious cuisine and extraordinary music that needs to be shared with the world. In the festival more than 100 food stalls, top notch desi, continental and top restaurants would be set up, the festival would continue till March 7.

Zulfi Bukhari urges masses to visit festival

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistani and Human Resource Development, Sayed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari Friday called the masses to visit the three-day long Mega Islamabad Tourism Festival with their families as family recreation was the base of tourism in the country. The event was organized by Pakistan Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (PHPA) in collaboration with the Cutting Edge Group at Fatima Jinnah Park here. Speaking in the inauguration ceremony he said it was an adventure tourism festival and Pakistan was an ideal spot of adventure tourism in the world. He asked the media to make VLOG and highlight the mega festival to show traditions of the country to the entire world. The event would encompass a wide range of events including adventurous sports like Paragliding, family food fest and colorful musical concert. Zulfi said that the government had facilitated the organizers of the event and provided full cooperation to successfully hold the festival. He also thanked the ministries for collaborating extensively and providing assistance as a team for organizing the first ever tourism festival of the Capital. - DNA

Police arrest seven more for aerial firing

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police on the special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Muhammad Ahsan Younas on Friday continued raids to net those involved in aerial firing, kite flying ban violation and managed to arrest seven more for aerial firing. According to a police spokesman, Banni police arrested an accused namely Hamid Sohail who was allegedly involved in aerial firing while celebrating win of Anjum-e-Tajrann election and Khurram Shahzad who was engaged in aerial firing on Basant. Sadiqabad police rounded up Zafar Iqbal who was involved in aerial firing during Basant after a video he posted on social media of the act went viral.

Race Course police also held three, Huzafa Jameel, Muhammad Hashar and Muhammad Jabran who were also engaged in aerial firing on Basant while New Town police nabbed Usman Sheikh on charges of aerial firing. Police also recovered weapons from their possession and registered separate cases against all the accused. Superintendent Police (SP) Rawal said, kite flying ban violators would be dealt with an iron hand and no one would be spared. No one would be allowed to violate the law and indulge in kite flying and selling, he added. He said that ban on kite flying was being strictly implemented adding police were making all out efforts to net the violators. He informed that Rawalpindi police had launched an operation to impose the ban and rounded up a large number of kite sellers and flyers. The use of metal string for kite flying results in loss of human lives therefore, it must be stopped and all out efforts were being made to control the kite flying, he added.

'PTI pursuing long term policies

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was pursuing long term policies in line with public expectations and the country would be on the path of development and prosperity soon. Prime Minister Imran Khan was a popular leader among the masses and its pro-people policies changed the life of common men, said the PTI parliamentarians while talking to media. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from Bahawalpur Farooq Azam Malik said for the first time in the history of Pakistan, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was providing equal opportunities to the people of far flung areas of the country in the journey of prosperity and development. He said his party government was moving forward with a people friendly agenda and the day was not far away when the people would be living a prosperous life. PTI Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from Bhakkar Muhammad Sana Ullaha Masti Khel said the positive change promised by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) under leadership of the Prime Minister Imran Khan would be visible soon. He said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was taking those steps for welfare of the people which were needed earlier but ignored by the previous governments. He said Prime Minister Imran Khan was fighting for true democracy and had full confidence of people of the country.

IBCC denies fake news on social media

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) Friday denied a news item floating on social media about the rescheduling of examinations. It, in a statement, said the news was fake, neither was it issued by the IBCC, nor it was the obligation of the IBCC to treat the matters in such a way. It declared that the examinations across the country would be conducted by the respective boards in accordance with their schedules and IBCC had no role in it.

Upcoming ECO summit

THE 14th summit of the 10-member Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) was held virtually on Thursday, with Prime Minister Imran Khan opening the summit. Since Pakistan was the chair of the 13th summit, which was held in Islamabad in 2017, this time around, it is Pakistan's leaders who get to give the keynote speech, as Turkey takes over as the chair of this summit. There is a lot to discuss in these rounds of meetings. It is no surprise that the theme of this year's summit is 'Regional Economic Cooperation in the Aftermath of Covid-19'—the pandemic has raised a number of economic, regional and global issues, which the regional powers, with many mutual areas of interest, could stand to benefit from cooperation. There are lessons on the pandemic that Pakistan could share with the nine other members of the ECO as well, as our country has managed the influx of the coronavirus in a more balanced way than others. Through the keynote speech, the Prime Minister could share his customary insight on the pandemic, and how to balance opening up the economy while keeping reasonable levels of lockdown. The summit holds potential for Pakistan. The world is a much different place than it was in 2017—the politics of the regional bloc have completely shifted and Pakistan has much stronger ties with Turkey and Central Asian allies than before. The pandemic too has highlighted the importance of creating more regional economic ties, as traditional strong first-world economies also suffer because of the pandemic. As a founder of the ECO, along with Turkey and Iran, Pakistan has considerable standing to push for more economic cooperation and regional diplomatic ties. Recent CPEC projects, which have pushed us closer to Central Asian members, strengthen our case. We should utilise this opportunity.

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Investigating war crimes

MANY believe that international law and institutions are tools of coercion in the hands of the powerful states. Perhaps some would change their opinion after the International Criminal Court (ICC) decided to investigate the allegations of war crimes by Israel and Palestinian militant groups. The starting point of the investigation into potential war crimes is June 13 2014, according to the ICC's chief prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda. This development became possible only after the ICC's ruling on February 5 2021 that reads that the court could investigate cases in "Gaza, the West Bank and Jerusalem." It is great seeing that ICC has finally shown its independence. While the investigation and subsequent findings of the exercise can take years, the court's decision is yet another victory for Palestinians. Indeed, the court's decision is another diplomatic blow to Israel that often evades accountability using the anti-Semitism card. As usual, the Israeli Prime Minister (PM) Benjamin Netanyahu was quick to denounce the court's announcement as "undiluted anti-Semitism." However, Netanyahu's accusations of unfair targeting of Israel are baseless. The anti-Semitism card will not work anymore. The court, as its statement reads, is not targeting Israel alone. Why is Israel so afraid of the ICC investigation? Undoubtedly, the Israeli leaders also know well that the Israeli forces' transgressions in the 2014 conflict are nothing short of war crimes. As expected, the United States (US) was quick to condemn the court's decision. The US Secretary of State Antony J Blinken assured Israel of America's commitment to Israel and its security. Mr Blinken's reassuring Israel of the US support informs us that the Biden administration is no different from Trump's. The only disparity is that the new American government is carrying on the same policies but in a sugar-coated manner. Successive US governments' all-out support to Israel that has confined the Palestinians to tiny 'bantustans' in their homeland shows that the American foreign policy does not change with the shift of political power in the White House.

Pak-Azerbaijan share rare example of friendship

Rza Talibov



The meeting between President Ilham Aliyev and President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari in Baku, in 2012, further expanded relations between the two countries. At the meeting, the Presidents expressed confidence that the XII Summit of the ECO, which was being held in Baku, will further contribute to the development

THE Islamic Republic of Pakistan, one of the largest countries in South Asia, is the sixth most populous country in the world and the second most populous Muslim country after Indonesia. With an area of 803,940 square kilometers, Pakistan is one of the largest countries in South Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea in the south, Afghanistan and Iran in the west, India in the east and China in the northeast. In international system, Pakistan successfully continues to operate as a member of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as an active member of the G-33, Group-77 of developing countries. Pakistan's political history dates back to 1947, when Britain formally divided India into two parts and Pakistan gained independence. Today, the length of the border between India and Pakistan reaches 2912 km. The only crossing point between the two countries is the village of Wagah, whose eastern part is situated in India and western part in Pakistan. With the division of Kashmir into two, a territorial dispute has arisen between Pakistan and India. The Islamic factor has a special status in Pakistan. Researchers consider Islam to be a key element of the cultural identity of the Pakistani people. Islam not only influenced Pakistan's relations with India, but also played a leading role in shaping the country's foreign policy. Pakistan's current position in the international system is also linked to this ideology. In general, the numerous military conflicts and the internationalization of the Kashmir issue have become history with several resolutions (1948, 1949) left on the UN table. Although these resolutions favored the free choice of the people of Kashmir, the claims of the parties further complicated the solution of the problem. Most countries preferred to approach to the conflict between Pakistan and India from their own political context. For example, the USSR considered Kashmir an Indian territory from the first years of the conflict and declared it "occupied", while the United States mainly defended UN resolutions and Pakistan. In this sense, Pakistan's international relations are determined by the attitude of the world community to the Kashmir conflict, and the country's position in international relations is based on the principle of "my enemy's friend cannot be my friend."

Work is underway in order to build mutual trust between Pakistan and India. As an example, step in this direction is the visit of Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari to India on April 8, 2012 may be mentioned. In response, Indian Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna visited Pakistan on September 7, 2012. The issue of visa facilitation was one of the main topics during the meeting. On October 20, 2013, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif proposed that the United States can act as a mediator in the Kashmir issue, but the Indian side strongly condemned the proposal. It should be noted that the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is also known around the world as a country carrying out peacekeeping military missions. At present, Pakistan's peacekeeping forces continue to carry out UN-defined military services in a number of countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. Overall, more than 13 percent of the world's peacekeeping forces belong to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Pakistan's main partners in international relations are the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Afghanistan. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan continues to co-operate in close relations with Turkic-speaking countries. Relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan continue to expand in almost all areas. Among the post-Soviet countries, Pakistan is improving and strengthening

its relations with Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Pakistan's consistent support extended to the Republic of Turkey and the newly established Turkic states plays an important role in the year-by-year expansion of relations between this Asian country and the Republic of Azerbaijan. Pakistan does not officially recognize Armenia's independence. This country unequivocally explains this stance by its support to Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Moreover, Pakistani officials state that they do not recognize the so-called "Armenian genocide." The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is one of the first countries to recognize the state independence of Azerbaijan. Thus, on December 12, 1991, Pakistan officially recognized the state independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This great Asian state made a decision to establish diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan on June 9, 1992, and opened its embassy in Baku on March 12, 1993. However, the history of Pakistan's friendly and cooperative relations with Azerbaijan dates back to earlier times. Thus, the people of Pakistan have never forgotten that at a time when the plague was widespread in their country in the early twentieth century, a prominent Azerbaijani philanthropist Haji Zeynalabdin Tagiyev received 300,000 ampoules of vaccines from Europe and sent them to help his Muslim brothers. In general, the establishment of relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan has become more intensive since the 60s of the 20th century. Ahmad Fana, a prominent Pakistani writer and winner of the International Lenin Prize, took part in the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Mirza Fatali Akhundzadeh in October 1962. In the same year, during a visit to the USSR, a group of Pakistani state officials led by the Speaker of the Pakistan's National Assembly Fazlullah Qadar Chaudhry visited Azerbaijan and got acquainted with the life of the country's people. The visit of the prominent Pakistani playwright, director and cinematographer Henry Chayase to Baku in April 1965 was received with great respect and esteem by the Azerbaijani film community. Prominent public figure Mirza Abel Hasan Ispahani's book named "From Leningrad to Samarkand" at that time expressed his positive impressions about Azerbaijan as well. At that time, a branch of the Soviet-Pakistani Cultural Relations Society was established in Baku to regulate Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations. In August 1967, a group of representatives of the East Pakistan Legislative Assembly, led by Jamiruddin Prodkhan, also got acquainted with the activities of cultural centers in Baku and Sumgayit cities. The organization of visits of Azerbaijani scientists, educators and artists to Pakistan also played an important role in the development of cultural relations. In those years, well-known figures of science and culture of Azerbaijan AshigPanahPanahov, head of the department of Azerbaijan State University, doctor of philological sciences, professor Farhad Zeynalov visited Karachi. However, political differences between Pakistan and the USSR in the following years also damaged its relations with Azerbaijan.

A new stage in Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations began with the collapse of the USSR. As one of the first countries to recognize the sovereignty of Azerbaijan, Pakistan in 1992 tried to rebuild political, economic and cultural relations with our country in accordance with the new historical conditions. At a time when Azerbaijan was living in a difficult war situation over Karabakh, the calls of Pakistani officials on the world community, in influential organizations such as the UN and the OIC, to recognize Armenia as an aggressor country were very important. It is no coincidence that Pakistan was actively involved in the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution No. 822 on April 30, 1993, which called for the immediate withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azerbaijani territories and recognized this country as an aggressor state. Pakistan's chairmanship of the meeting played a major role in the adoption of the resolution. Since the first years of our state independence, National Leader Heydar Aliyev attached great importance to Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations. Evaluating the relations between the two countries, prominent statesman Heydar Aliyev described these relations as follows: "Pakistan and Azerbaijan enjoy very good and friendly relations. These relations are based on our past historical traditions." After the meeting of the National Leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev with the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, late Benazir Bhutto in Casablanca in December 1994, bilateral relations between the two countries started to improve at a higher level. In October 1995, President of Pakistan Farooq Ahmad Khan Legari paid an official visit to Azerbaijan. During the visit, the parties signed an "Agreement on cooperation in science, culture and humanitarian spheres". In 1996, during the visit of National Leader Heydar Aliyev to Pakistan, the two coun-

tries signed memorandums of understanding on Friendship and Cooperation, as well as on Tourism Development. This brought Pakistanis and Azerbaijanis closer to each other. In recent years, new achievements have been made for cooperation in the fields of science and education. Thus, the Pakistani side proposed to the Azerbaijani government to benefit from its rich experience in the fields of military education, information technology and telecommunications, and practical measures have already been taken in this regard. At the VII Summit of OIC countries which was held in Casablanca in 1994, National Leader Heydar Aliyev expressed his gratitude to Pakistan for its material, moral and political support extended to the people of Azerbaijan in difficult times. On October 14, 2002, at the VII Summit of the ECO Member States which was held in Istanbul, prominent statesman Heydar Aliyev again had a meeting with President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf and took steps to further strengthen cooperation.

The intensive nature of relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan is one of the priorities in the foreign policy of President Ilham Aliyev as well. On July 8-10, 2004, President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf paid an official visit to Baku. Following this, Ilham Aliyev paid an official visit to Pakistan on April 12, 2005 at the invitation of President Pervez Musharraf. Experts observe that this visit has opened wide range of opportunities for further development of multilateral relations between the two friendly countries. Thus, during the visit, the heads of state of the friendly countries stated the existence of opportunities for the development of cooperation in the areas of communications and information technologies, culture, finance, education, transport, aviation and others, and signed the necessary documents. Moreover, during the visit, the possibilities of the assistance by the Defence Export Promotion Organization, which is under the Ministry of Defense of Pakistan, to Azerbaijan were discussed. During the visit, a number of important documents on military cooperation between the two countries were signed in Islamabad with the participation of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Shovkat Aziz. Furthermore, in December 2005, a delegation of the MilliMajlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Azerbaijan paid an official visit to Islamabad and held official meetings in the Senate of Pakistan and in the country's universities. Academician Isa Habibbalyi's books about JalilMammadguluzadeh, which were published in Urdu in Pakistan, were also discussed at the Art Museum in Islamabad.

On May 5, 2006, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev had a meeting with Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Shovkat Aziz. During the meeting matters of economic, scientific, technological, regional cooperation, as well as importance of Azerbaijan's experience in the oil and gas sector for Pakistan were widely discussed. Another significant event in 2006 was the visit of a delegation led by the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Human Rights of the Senate of Pakistan, Senator Seyed Muhammad Zafar. On May 6, Senator Seyed Muhammad Zafar presented the "Best Governed Muslim State" award to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.

The meeting between President Ilham Aliyev and President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari in Baku, in 2012, further expanded relations between the two countries. At the meeting, the Presidents expressed confidence that the XII Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization, which was being held in Baku, will further contribute to the development of cooperation among the countries of the region, as well as emphasizing good prospects for further expansion of bilateral relations and the need for joint action in this regard.

President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain paid an official visit to Azerbaijan on March 11-14, 2015. During the visit, he was awarded the title of Honorary Doctor of Baku State University. Pakistan is one of Azerbaijan's main military-strategic partners. Thus, on January 18, 2018, the 8th meeting of Azerbaijan-Pakistan working group between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Joint Staff of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was held in Baku. The current state and prospects of military cooperation, security in the region, strengthening relations and ties between the armies of the two countries, as well as holding joint exercises in 2018 were discussed at the meeting, and a relevant protocol was signed. Representatives of Pakistan also took part in the 3rd Azerbaijan International Defense Exhibition "ADEX-2018", which was

held in Baku, on September 25-27, 2018.

During these years, close inter-parliamentary relations have also been established between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. On February 11-12, 2013, a delegation of the MilliMajlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan paid a working visit to Pakistan, during which a working group on Azerbaijan-Pakistan inter-parliamentary relations was formed. On February 1, 2012, the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Senate of Pakistan recognized the events happened in Khojaly city of the Republic of Azerbaijan as genocide. In the adopted document, the Senate reaffirmed the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and declared recognition of its internationally recognized borders. The next resolution on the Khojaly genocide was adopted on February 2, 2017, at the 32nd meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In general, 30 official documents have been signed between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan so far. In the thirty-year history of mutual relations, extensive cultural ties have been established between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. The interest of the representatives of Pakistan's scientific and educational community, as well as literature and media circles in Azerbaijan remains strong. On September 20, 2018, at the meeting of Jeyhun Bayramov with the Chairman of the Senate of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Muhammad Sadiq Sanjari, the current state of relations in the field of education and future prospects for development were discussed. At present, the functioning of the Urdu language department at Baku State University is of great importance. The agreements signed between Nakhchivan State University and Qaide-Azam University and the National University of Modern Languages of Pakistan in 2012, the visit of representatives of these universities to Nakhchivan are considered as important pages of cooperation in the field of education.

With the initiative and support of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, a modern school was built and put into operation in Rara settlement of Muzaffarabad, Pakistan.

Pakistani literature is studied and researched at the Department of Azerbaijani-Asian Literary Relations of the Institute of Literature, named after Nizami Ganjavi, of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. In 2017-2018, the head of the department of Azerbaijani-Asian literary relations, doctor of philological sciences, professor Badirkhan Ahmadov and researcher of the same department, doctor of philological sciences Basira Azizaliyeva visited Pakistan several times and delivered lectures at conferences organized in different universities of this country. It should be noted that Basira Azizaliyeva's articles on Pakistani literature have been published in a number of journals and newspapers in Azerbaijan, Turkey and Pakistan. She is the author of a monograph about the national poet of Pakistan, Muhammad Iqbal. Researchers of Pakistan Institute of Islamic Studies have also delivered lectures at the conference dedicated to the great Azerbaijani poet Imadeddin-Nasimi, held at the Institute of Literature named after Nizami Ganjavi. In addition, research on mutual literary and cultural relations conducted by Pakistan Research Center established at the Nizami Ganjavi Institute of Literature continues.

Cooperation between the two countries in the field of sciences is also expanding. Thus, on September 19, 2018, experts of the International Atomic Energy Agency, researchers of the "Nuclear Institute for Agriculture and Biology" of the Atomic Energy Committee of Pakistan, Dr. Khalid Mahmoud and Dr. Sajjad Haydar visited the Institute of Radiation Problems of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. The experts delivered lectures, provided information about the research areas of the Nuclear Institute and the projects implemented there, as well as issues of mutual cooperation were discussed during the visit.

On April 10, 1996, a joint declaration on the establishment of sister city relations was signed between Ganja and Multan cities. Pakistani society is sensitive to the historical and political events taking place in Azerbaijan. One of the obvious examples of mutual interest was the seminar held on "National Leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev and Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations" and the establishment of Heydar Aliyev's corner in the National Library of Pakistan in 2013, as part of a series of events dedicated to the 90th anniversary of prominent statesman Heydar Aliyev. Speaking at the event, Director of Qaide-Azam University for Politics and International Relations, Professor Lubna Abid Ali talked about Heydar Aliyev's contribution to the improvement of Pakistan-Azerbaijan relations.

At present, Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations have entered into a new stage. It should be particularly noted that during the Second Karabakh-Patriotic War, Pakistan provided full political and resolute moral support to the just position of our country. This year, the trilateral meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan, Turkey and Pakistan held in Islamabad, on January 14, 2021 opened up wider opportunities for further improvement of multifaceted cooperation in regional and international fields. The meeting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov with the President of the Islamic Republic of Azerbaijan Arif Alvi and the new agreement signed by the Foreign Ministers on mutual cooperation created conditions for the further expansion of bilateral relations. Moreover, the words of the Chief of Army Staff of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, General Qamar Javed Bajwa stating "Pakistan has always stood by Azerbaijan and supported its rightful position" is an important indicator of trust between the two countries. Thus, the great contribution of Pakistan, one of Azerbaijan's most loyal partners and friends, to the improvement of relations with Azerbaijan in political, military and economic spheres deserves to be considered as a real example in terms of inter-state relations at the international level. Today, Pakistan, as one of the main partners of Azerbaijan on the Asian continent, makes a great contribution to the eastern partnership of our country.

— Rza Talibov is Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science



Briefs

Aisam, Rohan to partner in Tennis court

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Pakistani Tennis Ace Aisam-ul-Haq will pair up with his Indian partner Rohan Bopanna after seven years in ATP Tour 500, scheduled to start from March 15 in Mexico. In a video message, Aisam shared his excitement for pairing up once again with Rohan. "I am very excited to once again partner with Rohan whom I paired up last in 2014," he said. "We have decided to pair up during Australian open and wanted then to play together in Dubai Open. It took a bit long but no worries, we are looking forward to an exciting contest," he added. It must be noted here that Aisam and Bopanna paired up to qualify in US Open 2010 final. They last appeared together in 2014.

ECP not happy ...

From Page 01

Senate elections were held according to the law and Constitution. In a written statement, the commission said that it has "never come under any sort of pressure and God willing, will not in future as well". "We cannot ignore the law and the Constitution to please anyone," said the ECP its statement. Referring to former prime minister Yousaf Raza Gilani's victory over Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, the ECP said it "rejects" the analysis and criticism that is being levelled over one result of the Senate elections. "This is the beauty of democracy and independent elections and the secret ballot which the entire nation witnessed, which was according to the Constitution," it said. The ECP said that it had heard all delegations that had called on it to discuss election-related matters and conducted a detailed review of their concerns and recommendations ahead of the Senate polls. "The election commission hears everyone but fulfills its responsibilities in accordance with the law and Constitution and takes decisions independently, not under any sort of pressure," the statement read.

The ECP wondered why elections for the upper house of the parliament, which were held on the same day and managed by the same ECP staff, were accepted by critics where they had won but rejected where they lost. "Is this not an open case of contradiction?" asked the ECP. The ECP urged critics of the Senate elections to come forth with evidence and then accuse the commission of any wrongdoing. "Let us carry on with our work, don't sling mud on national institutions," read the ECP's statement.

Government displeased...

From Page 01

Imran Khan, Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry was speaking to the media along with Federal Information Minister Shibli Faraz and Senator-elect Barrister Ali Zafar after the ECP fired back on PM Imran's allegation of corruption in Senate elections. The science and technology minister clarified that the prime minister and the PTI respect the Election Commission and all the institutions of Pakistan.

"There is no [truth] to the rumour that PTI will be protesting in front of the ECP tomorrow. ECP is revered by us and will remain so," said Chaudhry.

The minister, however, stated that the institutions show their "independence through their actions and not through press releases". "It is irresponsible to issue a press release on Prime Minister's stance," said the minister. The lawmaker from Jhelum clarified that PM Imran Khan, in his statement, said that the responsibility to make elections free and fair was not fulfilled in the Senate elections held on Wednesday. "This is not a thing to be upset about, but measures need to be taken." He stated that PM Imran meant that the government and the ECP should work together to "develop a mechanism that will stop rigging" and ensure free and fair elections.



ISLAMABAD: Turf laying work at Naseer Bundha Hockey Stadium has almost been completed. The pitch shall be ready for use in one week after formal inauguration. – DNA

Beijing to overhaul Hong Kong electoral system

The week-long NPC will discuss the elections issue and no text has yet been made public, although Mr Wang and media sources did set out some areas to be discussed

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: China's top law-making body has unveiled plans to ensure only "patriots" can govern Hong Kong, as Beijing tightens its grip on the city with changes to the electoral system. Premier Li Keqiang, addressing the National People's Congress (NPC), warned the world not to interfere. The move follows the imposition of a tough security law. Critics say Beijing is crushing dissent and removing the "one country,

two systems" agreement it made with the UK. Under the agreement, Hong Kong, a former British colony, was allowed to continue with its own legal system and have rights including free speech and freedom of the press. Lord Chris Patten, former governor of Hong Kong, said China's Communist Party had "taken the biggest step so far to obliterate Hong Kong's freedoms and aspirations for greater democracy under the rule of law". The EU has warned that it may take "additional

steps" over the plans announced on Friday. It called on Beijing to "carefully consider the political and economic implications on any decision to reform the electoral system of Hong Kong that would undermine fundamental freedoms, political pluralism and democratic principles". Fears that Hong Kong's "one country, two systems model" was being eroded led to huge pro-democracy protests in 2019. Some turned violent and Beijing imposed the National Security Law, which it said

would target "sedition" and bring stability. Thousands of lawmakers have gathered for the annual NPC meeting in Beijing. The rubber-stamp parliament is expected to also discuss and approve economic growth targets and environmental policies from the central government. NPC vice-chairman Wang Chen announced to the NPC that changes were needed as "the rioting and turbulence that occurred in Hong Kong society reveals that the existing electoral system has clear

loopholes and deficiencies". He said "risks in the system" needed to be removed to ensure "patriots" were in charge. Premier Li warned that China would "resolutely guard against and deter" interference by external forces in Hong Kong's affairs. The week-long NPC will discuss the elections issue and no text has yet been made public, although Mr Wang and media sources did set out some areas to be discussed. The city's heavily pro-Beijing electoral committee would get new powers over

the parliament, or Legislative Council (LegCo). The committee would effectively be able to vet all LegCo candidates and elect many of its members, diluting the number directly elected by the public. Ian Chong, politics professor at the National University of Singapore, told the BBC: "In 2019, the pan-democrats did extremely well [in local elections], which was alarming to the CCP [Chinese Communist Party], because it showed that all their negative rhetoric didn't seem to be working."

Turkey rejects 'baseless' Arab League decisions

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkey on Friday "completely rejected" the decisions adopted in Wednesday's Arab League foreign ministers meeting. Underlining that the decisions targeting Turkey were "unrequited" among the people of "friendly and brotherly" Arab countries, a statement by the Turk-

ish Foreign Ministry called on some members of the league to end their "insistence on stereotypical accusations against our country with aims to cover up their destructive activities." The ministry also emphasized that some league members had noted their opposition to the decisions, which had been "adopted as a result of imposition by various actors without con-

ducting a transparent negotiation process between the member countries." With its "principled and resolute stance," Turkey is one of the countries that devotes the greatest effort to ensure "regional and global peace and stability of security," the ministry stressed. It further underscored that preserving the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political unity of the Arab

countries were among Turkey's top priorities for the region. "We again invite the Arab League to prioritize the peace, prosperity and well-being of the Arab people and to constructively contribute to the establishment of security and stability in the region, instead of targeting our country with baseless allegations," it added.

Azerbaijan, Turkey mull cultural ties

BAKU: Azerbaijan Culture Minister Anar Karimov and the Chief Advisor to the Turkish President Yalçın Topçu have exchanged views on deepening cultural cooperation between the two countries and implementing joint projects to promote a common historical heritage and values during Karimov's visit to Turkey this week. Yalçın Topçu congratulated the Azerbaijani people on the historic victory in the 44-day Patriotic War, as well as on the determination and struggle shown to the whole world. He stressed that Turkey, which has supported the brotherly country since the first day of the war, has always stood by Azerbaijan. The Minister Anar Karimov stressed the support of the Turkish state and people to Azerbaijan, especially the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He emphasized the importance of continuing this unity and cooperation in the cultural sphere. Anar Karimov noted Armenia's policy of falsification and misappropriation of Azerbaijan's cultural heritage continues. He expressed his confidence that the joint efforts of Azerbaijan and Turkey to convey the historical truth to the world community will make a significant contribution to the struggle against falsification. – DNA

Australia beat NZ by 50 runs in fourth T20I

SPORTS DESK

WELLINGTON: Australia defeated New Zealand by 50 runs in the fourth Twenty20 International to level the five match series 2-2 at Wellington on Friday, marking a perfect comeback after losing the first two matches. Aaron Finch, the visiting team's skipper, led from the front by scoring an unbeaten 79, ensuring the series reach a final match decider. The batsman hit four sixes off the final over of Aus-

tralia's innings to take his team's total to 156 for six New Zealand's bowlers, led by Ish Sodhi's 3-32, had taken wickets at regular intervals and contained Australia reasonably successfully until Finch hit Kyle Jamieson all over the ground in the final over. Finch sliced his first shot for two runs but then hit two sixes over extra cover, another straight down the ground to long-on and finished off the innings with a fourth over the midwicket boundary.



ISLAMABAD: Humanitarian aid of medicines weighing more than 200 kg from the pharmaceutical company "Bio Labs" handed over to embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Islamabad to combat the spread of coronavirus infections in the Kyrgyz Republic. – DNA

Myanmar diplomatic revolt widens

Singapore has been the most outspoken of Myanmar's neighbours and its foreign minister, Vivian Balakrishnan, told the city-state's parliament on Friday that it was a "national shame" for armed forces to use weapons against their people. He called on Myanmar's military to seek a peaceful solution

FOREIGN DESK

YANGON: Myanmar's coup leaders lost a tug of war over the leadership of its United Nations mission in New York, as well as the Myanmar embassy in Washington, as organised resistance against the coup grew at home on Friday with dozens of townships in the largest city of Yangon forming their own self-governing bodies in defiance of the military. Anti-coup protesters returned to the streets amid threats of violence, to continue their demand for the generals to step down and restore power to the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. In the country's second largest city of Mandalay, there were local media reports that one person had

been shot and killed. Earlier, a big crowd marched peacefully through the city chanting: "The stone age is over, we're not scared because you threaten us." In Yangon's Thaketa Township, protesters were also regrouping on Friday afternoon, after reportedly being hit with stun grenades in the morning, according to The Irrawaddy news website. Images posted on social media showed hundreds of protesters carrying shields and wearing hard hats, goggles and masks to protect themselves from security forces. In the city's Sanchaung Township, demonstrators were also seen setting up barricades and hanging pictures of those killed since the protests began. There were also reports of power cuts across the country.

On Friday, the civil disobedience movement also announced that at least 34 of the 45 townships in the city had formed so-called "people's governing bodies" following the direction of those who were elected to parliament but prevented from taking their seats after the generals seized power. Protesters also took to the streets in smaller numbers in the capital, Naypyidaw, according to Mizzima News. On Thursday, police broke up rallies with tear gas and gunfire in several cities but their crackdown was more restrained than on the previous day, when the United Nations said 38 people were killed in the bloodiest day of protest so far. On the diplomatic front, the United States has unveiled new sanctions targeting military conglomerates

after the deaths of dozens of civilians protesting against last month's coup. The UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet also demanded the security forces halt what she called their "vicious crackdown on peaceful protesters". Bachelet said more than 1,700 people had been arrested, including 29 journalists. Singapore has been the most outspoken of Myanmar's neighbours and its foreign minister, Vivian Balakrishnan, told the city-state's parliament on Friday that it was a "national shame" for armed forces to use weapons against their people. He called on Myanmar's military to seek a peaceful solution but acknowledged external pressure would have only a limited effect on the situation. A spokesman for the ruling mili-

tary council did not answer telephone calls seeking comment. A clash over who represents Myanmar at the United Nations in New York was averted – for now – after the military government's replacement quit and the Myanmar UN mission confirmed that Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun remained in the job. The military fired Kyaw Moe Tun on Saturday after he urged countries at the UN General Assembly to use "any means necessary" to reverse the coup. In Washington, it was unclear whether Myanmar's embassy was still representing the military government, after it issued a statement condemning the deaths of civilian protesters and called on authorities to "fully exercise utmost restraint".

PSL's '5 wanted' gamblers arrested

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Karachi police on Friday arrested five most wanted gamblers of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), local reported today. According to the report, five suspects were arrested in a Special Investigation Unit raid at Khalid Bin Waleed Road following a tip-off about the existence of the gangs involved.

Their laptops, cell phones, weapons, and drugs found at the spot were also seized. Police said that the arrested suspects include Waqas alias Vicky, Farhan, Nasir, Muhammad Ali alias Pando and Yasin. Waqas alias Vicky has been gambling through software for the last 14 years, the authority revealed.

He is the nephew of notorious gambler Abdul Qadir alias 'Bhoot'. The Dubai police also raided Abdul Qadir's casino in Dubai during which other bookies were also apprehended.

According to police, three others suspects Farhan, Nasir, and Mohammad have also been gambling through a software for the last nine years. Yasin is reportedly a relative of notorious gamblers Aftab Mithani and Qadir Mithani.

PML-Q, MQM express ...

From Page 01

Imran Khan is neither involved in the corruption nor does he like it, adding that we want a change in the system so that we can deliver to the people.

PM Imran Khan appreciated the MQM's suggestions and directed that consultation with the MQM be ensured in the affairs of Sindh and Karachi. On the other hand, PML-Q delegation also held a meeting with PM Imran and expressed full confidence on him.

According to sources, the PML-Q leaders said that they had voted for Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in the Senate elections and will now also vote for the prime minister. The PML-Q delegation include Tariq Bashir Cheema, Hussain Elahi, Chaudhry Salik and Farah Khan. Prime Minister Imran Khan thanked the PML-Q for its confidence.

PDM to boycott ...

From Page 01

needed to seek a vote of confidence. "So when the president talks about losing trust to call the session of the National Assembly, then this further strengthens the stance of the opposition," he said. After the opposition's boycott of the session, Rehman said, "this session will have no political importance" and the PTI government "will not be considered the representative government of this nation".

The JUI-F chief said the tone in which Prime Minister Imran addressed the nation last night "reflected his defeat". He said according to Imran bidding had taken place in the Senate elections and asked the premier whom he was blaming for the same. "He is saying his own PTI members as sellouts," he added. Rehman said Imran's vote of confidence on Saturday will also include the votes of 18 government MNAs who allegedly voted in favour of the opposition in the Senate polls, adding that "without this, it is not possible that he receives the vote of confidence with a majority of one or two people."

COAS reviews Zarb-e-Hadeed

From Page 01

Mechanized Forces, Combat Aviation, Surveillance platforms, Army Air Defence and Artillery while operating within defensive Operation cycle of a Corps. The troops and units participating in the exercise displayed great degree of professionalism and synergy while conducting offensive and defensive maneuvers in different phases of the exercise. Appreciating dedication and professionalism of participating troops, COAS expressed complete satisfaction over combat readiness and training standards of Bahawalpur Corps. Excellent training and commitment enhance the operational capability for effective response to all threats and challenges, COAS emphasised.

Briefs

Australian PM plays down Italy vaccine blockade

DNA

SYDNEY: Australia's prime minister on Friday played down the impact of Italy's landmark decision to block the export of 250,000 Covid-19 vaccine doses due to be delivered. Scott Morrison insisted the blocked shipment of the AstraZeneca jabs was understandable and would not affect Australia's vaccine programme.

"This particular shipment was not one we'd counted on for the rollout, and so we will continue unabated," Morrison said. Italy explained the export ban as necessary due to a shortage of vaccines in virus-hit Europe and the lack of urgent need in relatively virus-free Australia. Morrison expressed sympathy: "In Italy, people are dying at the rate of 300 a day. And so I can certainly understand the high level of anxiety that would exist in Italy and in many countries across Europe."

"They are in an unbridled crisis situation. That is not the situation in Australia," he added. Australia's chief medical officer, Paul Kelly, also offered solidarity: "My sister lives in Italy. They're at the moment having 18,000 cases a day." The European Commission has fiercely criticised AstraZeneca, an Anglo-Swedish company, for supplying just a fraction of the vaccine doses it had promised to deliver to the bloc.

US suspends tariffs on UK goods

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States has agreed to suspend millions of dollars worth of tariffs on exports from the United Kingdom, including Scotch whisky, as part of an effort to resolve a long-running transatlantic trade dispute over aerospace subsidies. The US government will suspend tariffs for four months on a range of goods, the two countries said in a joint statement on Thursday, in the latest move to de-escalate trade tensions centred around aid for Boeing and Airbus. Former US President Donald Trump's administration had slapped tariffs in 2019 on European goods worth \$7.5bn in retaliation for state support given to Airbus. Britain was targeted along with the other three stakeholders in Airbus - Spain, France and Germany - for more tariffs than other countries. The European Union retaliated with tariffs on up to \$4bn of US goods over subsidies to Boeing, but the UK offered an olive branch to the US by announcing it would suspend tariffs from January, an offer that President Joe Biden's administration has now moved to reciprocate.

NZ to end Covid-19 lockdown on largest city

DNA

WELLINGTON: New Zealand will lift a Covid-19 lockdown on nearly two million people on Sunday, as authorities say they are confident that a virus cluster in the country's largest city has been contained. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Friday the stay-at-home order for Auckland will end early Sunday, one week after it was imposed in response to a mystery case that contact tracing could not explain. It later emerged that family members of the infected person had defied isolation orders, socialising with friends who later tested positive for Covid-19. With the case's origins solved, quarantine protocols were enforced and Ardern said the cluster had been limited to 15 cases, allowing Aucklanders to leave their homes. "This plan is consistent with our cautious and careful elimination strategy," she told reporters. NZ has won widespread praise for its coronavirus response, recording just 26 deaths in a population of five million. Ardern acknowledged Aucklanders, who have endured two lockdowns in the past month, were weary but urged them to stick to rules designed to curb the spread of the virus.



COLOMBO: Pakistan Air Chief called on Sri Lanka Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. Air Chief expressed his gratitude to Sri Lankan Prime Minister for hospitality extended by Sri Lanka. He reiterated on bondage between Pakistan-Sri Lanka standing together in times of crises & national festivities. He also conveyed Pakistan resolve to further enhance civil-military cooperation. - DNA

Pope Francis embarks on historic visit to Iraq

The systematic persecution of Iraqi Christians at the hands of al-Qaeda first and then ISIL (ISIS) in more recent years has pushed tens of thousands into diaspora

FOREIGN DESK

BAGHDAD: Pope Francis began a historic visit to Iraq on Friday, the first by a pontiff to the birthplace of the Eastern Churches from where more than a million Christians have fled over the past 20 years. An Alitalia plane carrying the pontiff and his entourage, including about 75 journalists, arrived in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on Friday at about 2pm local time amid tight security. "This is an emblematic trip and it is a duty towards a land that has been martyred for so many years," Francis said in brief comments to reporters aboard his plane. The visit of the pope has a highly symbolic value given the importance of Iraqi Christians in the history of the faith and their cultural

and linguistic legacy dating back to the time of ancient Babylon, nearly 4,000 years ago. The systematic persecution of Iraqi Christians at the hands of al-Qaeda first and then ISIL (ISIS) in more recent years has pushed tens of thousands into diaspora and is threatening the community's survival. Francis will meet the dwindling Christian communities of Baghdad, Mosul and Qaraqosh, Iraq's largest Christian city in the Nineveh Plains, where, in 2014, the ISIL armed group wiped out the remnants of the Christian presence that had survived al-Qaeda's violent campaigns, causing tens of thousands to flee and find refuge in the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. In Erbil, the pope will meet the Kurdish authorities and some of the



150,000 Christian refugees from central Iraq that have found shelter there. "We hope the visit of the pope will bring some attention to the tragedy of Christians in the East and encourage them to stay," said Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, the Iraq-born patriarch of the Chaldean Church, in a news conference on Wednesday. "It will also bring a message

of fraternity to the other Iraqi faiths - that religion should not divide but unite and that we are all Iraqis and equal citizens." Before the US-led invasion of 2003, Christians of different denominations numbered about 1.6 million in Iraq. Today, less than 300,000 remain, according to figures provided by the Chaldean Church. Since then 58 churches have been damaged or destroyed and hundreds of Iraqi Christians have been killed for their faith. Under dictator Saddam Hussein, the Christian communities were tolerated and did not face significant security threats, although they were discriminated against. The diaspora started after the 2003 US-led invasion and the chaos that ensued when al-Qaeda initiated a campaign of targeted assassinations and kidnappings of priests and bishops, and attacks against churches and Christian gatherings. In October 2006, an orthodox priest, Boulos Iskander, was beheaded and in 2008 the group kidnapped and killed Archbishop Paulos Farah Rahho in Mosul. The same year, another priest and three worshippers were killed inside a church. In 2010, 48 worshippers

were killed in a Syro-Catholic cathedral in Baghdad, where the pope will hold a public meeting on Friday. In 2014, as ISIL occupied Mosul and the Nineveh Plains, the group destroyed more than 30 churches, while the remaining buildings were used as administrative centres, tribunals or prisons, many of which were later bombed as the US-led coalition fought ISIL. Upon its arrival in Mosul, ISIL asked Christians to convert to Islam, pay a tax or be decapitated. Thousands fled to the semi-autonomous Kurdish region and neighbouring countries. "When ISIL arrived people had only seconds to gather their things and flee," Father Karam Shamasha, the reverend of the St George Chaldean Church of Telskuf in Nineveh, told Al Jazeera.

Mehriban appointed as deputy chair of YAP

DNA

BAKU: Mehriban Aliyeva has been appointed as first deputy chairperson of ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP), the party's press-service told Azertag on March 5. The appointment is in accordance with the order of Chairman of the New Azerbaijan Party Ilham Aliyev and was announced following YAP's 7th extraordinary Congress held today. Mehriban Aliyeva is Azerbaijan's First Vice-President. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Chairman of the



New Azerbaijan Party Ilham Aliyev made a speech at the congress in a video format. The congress will hear reports relating to the past period, and the party's governing structures will be re-formed.

Azerbaijan's MFA Spox slams Armenian MFA

BAKU: "Accusation of a representative of the Armenian MFA Azerbaijan on violation of international law and assessment it as a threat for the region, while President of the Republic of Azerbaijan spoke about cooperation opportunities for the provision of peace and stability in the region, implementation of transportation projects, from which regional countries will be able to benefit directly at the Summit of the ECO on March 4 of this year, obviously demonstrates that official Yerevan is far from robust logic and thinking." - DNA



BANGKOK: Pakistan and Thailand sign MoU on defence cooperation. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad signed the MoU on behalf of the Government of Pakistan, whereas General Natt Intracharoen, permanent secretary of defence represented the Government of Thailand. - DNA

100 days: Indian farmers remain determined

Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government pushed through three farm laws using the governing Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) majority in Parliament, farmer unions, mainly from India's grain bowl states of Punjab and Haryana, have erupted in anger

MONITORING DESK

HARYANA: For nearly two months, Prem Singh, 65, followed a ritual he had unwittingly slipped into. He left his village in northern India's Haryana state on December 1, 2020, to join tens of thousands of Indian farmers staging sit-ins along the borders of the national capital to demand the repeal of agricultural laws passed in September last year. While camping at the protest site in Singhu - located along the Delhi-Haryana border - Prem ensured he called his son Sandeep, 34, back in the village every morning. "He did not have a phone of his own," Sandeep says, sitting in

his dimly-lit room in the village of Manpura in Haryana's Karnal district, 260km (161 miles) away from Singhu. "But he would use somebody else's mobile to check on us. I expected his call at a certain time every day. It had almost become a ritual." That ritual came to an abrupt end on January 26. Crammed on a tractor at Singhu with several others, Prem, at around six in the evening, collapsed off the vehicle. He never made it back. "I was with him at that time," says Joginder Singh, 36, a resident of Manpura. "We paid our respects to him at the protest site and took his body to the village for the funeral. He became one of the many martyrs that have laid their lives for the

cause of the farmers." Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government pushed through three farm laws using the governing Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) majority in Parliament, farmer unions, mainly from India's grain bowl states of Punjab and Haryana, have erupted in anger. Since November 26, tens of thousands of farmers have camped at three different locations around the capital, demanding the government withdraw the laws they say put them at the mercy of private companies and destroy their livelihoods. As the protest enters its 100th day on Friday, at least 248 farmers have died at the borders outside New Delhi, according to the data collected by Samyukta

Kisan Morcha (SKM), or United Farmers' Front. Some died of health issues, others by suicide, said the SKM, which on Saturday plans to stop all traffic on the six-lane Western Peripheral Expressway that forms a ring outside New Delhi for up to five hours to continue their protest. Despite mounting deaths, the farmers say their commitment towards the protest remains unshaken. But their active involvement has run into impediments. In the month since Prem's death, Sandeep has been home to welcome visitors who have come to offer condolences. "My mother is also not back to normal," he says. "She is not speaking to anyone. I need to be at home to look after her. But I plan to take my father's

place at Singhu once everything settles down. We have lost the main member of our family. We also have to worry about our income." With only an acre of farmland, Sandeep says the family's major income comes through labour work. "I work as a driver, my elder brother works as a labourer here and there," says Sandeep. "After my father's death, there is one less earning member in the family. I need to balance my work and my time at Singhu. I can't stop earning, but I can't abandon the protests either." For Sandeep Kaur, 34, the issue is not as complicated. She has two children - aged two and five - and even though she supports the agitation, there is little she can actively do about it.

Military funeral held for martyrs from crash

DNA

ANKARA: The 11 Turkish soldiers martyred by a helicopter crash were honored by a military funeral service on Friday. Besides the martyred soldiers, including one corps commander, two other soldiers were also injured when a military helicopter crashed in the eastern Bitlis province on Thursday. Contact with the Cougar-type military helicopter, which took off from Bingol for Tatvan district of Bitlis at 1.55 p.m. local time (1055GMT), was lost at 2.25 p.m. (1125GMT). The military funeral was held in the eastern Elazig province for 8th Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Osman Erbas, Technical Sgt. Nazmi Yilmaz, Col. Senturk Aydinler, Lt. Salih Sarioglu, Chief Master Sgt. Mehmet Demir, Master Sgt. Omer Umulu, Lt. Cpts. Tayfun Kures and Gokhan Uysal, Staff Sgt. Sukru Karadirek, and Specialized Sgts. Tolga Demirci and Hakan Gul. The service was attended by National Defense Minister Hulusi Akar, Chief of General Staff Gen. Yasar Guler, Deputy Interior Minister Ismail Catakli, Elazig Governor Erkaya Yirik, Bingol Governor Kadir Ekinci, other commanders, families of the martyrs, and other officials.

Azerbaijan, Qatar eye economic cooperation

DNA

BAKU: The development of economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Qatar were discussed during the business meeting between Qatar's Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Azerbaijan's Export and Investment Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO), held in a videoconference format. Qatar's Chamber of Commerce and Industry First Vice Chairman Mohammed Bin Ahmed Twar Al Kuwari stressed the importance of effective use of the existing potential to expand economic ties between the two countries. Moreover, he shared his views on the development of economic cooperation and noted the role of business meetings in this sphere. Abdullayev briefed the participants on the organization's activities, expressed his opinion on joint efforts to expand relations between the organizations and to increase mutual investment. In addition, he invited businessmen to take advantage of the favourable economic environment created in Azerbaijan. Additionally, bilateral meetings of businessmen were organized during the meeting. The meeting was attended by more than 70 representatives of companies operating in construction, industrial, food, agriculture, oil and gas and other fields.

Myanmar military detains 1,500 since coup

FOREIGN DESK

YANGON: The Myanmar military has arrested more than 1,500 people including elected leaders, lawmakers, activists, protesters, heads of election commissions and striking civil servants involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), since the Feb. 1 coup. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), which tracks detentions, at least 1,507 people had been arrested, charged or sentenced by March 4. Only 307 of the detainees were released and a total of 1,200 are still being detained, the AAPP said, adding that 61 individuals face warrants and are evading arrest. State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, President U Win Myint, Vice-President U Henry Van Thio and the Union Parliament speakers are among those detained since Feb. 1. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Win Myint face various charges and potentially long prison sentences. More than 100 NLD members are in custody, including members of state and regional branch offices and youth members. The military has issued arrest warrants for 21 elected representatives, including 17 of those who have formed the Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw to counter military rule.

Briefs

PTI Govt challenges ECP's Daska verdict in SC

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: The ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf approached the Supreme Court of Pakistan on Friday and challenged the Election Commission of Pakistan's decision to hold re-polling for Sialkot's NA-75 Daska by-elections after declaring as null and void the outcome of the February 19 by-elections. The polling is scheduled for March 18. PTI candidate in the by-election of NA-75, Daska, Ali Asjad Malhi, filed a petition in the apex court on Friday, pleading the court to nullify the ECP's decision of repolling in NA-75. In his petition, Malhi contended that the ECP did not take into account the facts while pronouncing the decision since it did not properly scrutinize the available record. "And, therefore, there is no logic behind election commission's decision of re-election in the entire constituency," the PTI candidate said, and added re-polling in the constituency amounted to again creating law and order situation for the people of that constituency. The petition further reads that the PTI candidate's rival candidate belonging to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had already tasted defeat in the by-election. PTI candidate Ali Asjad Malhi has made PML-N candidate Nausheen Iftikhar, ECP and other respondents in the case.

Pak-American to head US small businesses agency

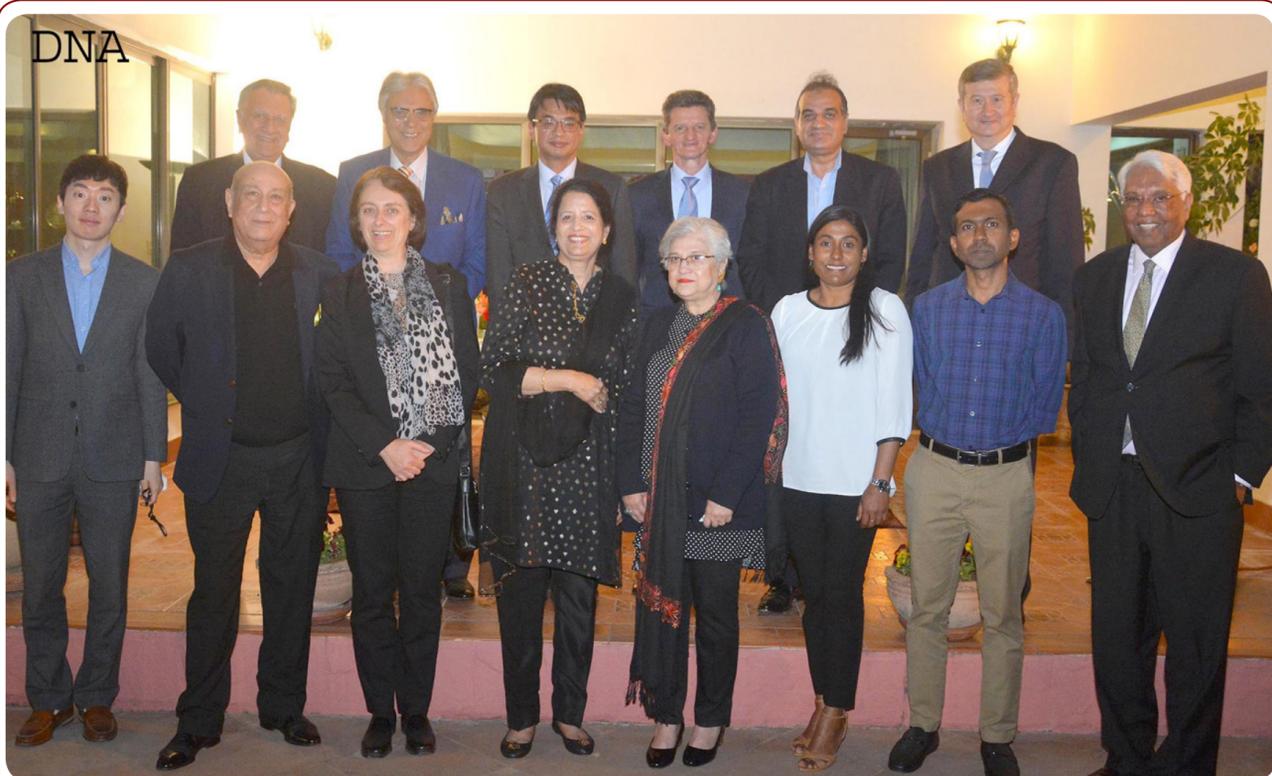
DNA

WASHINGTON: Pakistani-American Dilawar Syed has been nominated by US President Joe Biden as the deputy administrator for the Small Business Administration, according to a White House statement. The SBA is a United States government agency that provides support to entrepreneurs and small businesses. Dilawar says he is humbled and honoured by the nomination. In a brief message on Twitter, he said he will put his "heart and soul" into helping small businesses grow in these challenging times. Dilawar immigrated to the United States as a student. He is the president and CEO at Lumiata, an artificial intelligence company focused on reducing healthcare costs and improving patient outcomes.

China to increase defence budget

DNA

BEIJING: The Chinese finance ministry announced Friday that the country's military budget, which is the second-largest in the world after the US, is set to increase by 6.8% in 2021. Military tensions have dramatically increased over the past year between China and rival powers including the United States and India, with flashpoints like the Himalayan border, Taiwan and the South China Sea. Beijing plans to spend 1.36 trillion yuan (\$210 billion) on defence, which is still less than a third of Washington's military budget. The growth rate, up from 2020's 6.6%, was revealed by the ministry at the opening of the government's annual legislative meetings. In recent years, China has poured trillions of yuan into the modernisation of its military, which it aims to transform into a world-class force rivaling that of the US and other Western powers. Beijing has over the past year repeatedly used its military might to threaten the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which it claims - flying fighter jets into its airspace and staging invasion drills.



ISLAMABAD: Hon. Consul General of Lithuania Masood Khan and his wife hosted a dinner for the newly-arrived ambassadors of various countries and some Pakistani friends, at his residence. Ambassadors of South Korea Suh Sangpyao, Hungary Bela Fazekas, Belarus Markian Chuchuk and High Commissioner of Maldives Farzana Zahir attended the dinner. Among Pakistanis former Air Chief Marshal Abbas Khattak, former Ambassador Hamayum, Omar Durrani and Editor Daily Islamabad POST/CENTRELINE Ansar M Bhatti also attended the event. - DNA

Chinese envoy seeks foreign investment in CPEC zones

Pakistan and China are mutually working to ensure security, visa facilitation, and other infrastructure facilities in Rashakai SEZ. "The Chinese embassy wants to work closely with BOI and any third party to promote CPEC development"

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong has invited investors from across the world to invest in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) being established in Pakistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Addressing the CPEC Industrial Cooperation Investment Conference organised by the Board of Investment (BOI) in the provincial capital on Thursday, Nong Rong said that China would welcome the participation of other countries in the CPEC framework.

He said both Pakistan and China are mutually working to ensure security, visa facilitation, and other infrastructure facilities in Rashakai SEZ. "The Chinese embassy wants to work closely with BOI and any third party to promote CPEC development," he added. Speaking on the occasion, BOI Chairman Atif Bukhari said the second phase of CPEC has just commenced and the BOI would continue to take lead on investment promotion, facilitation, and industrial cooperation. The BOI chairman invited the business community from not only China but also from other



countries to come and invest in Pakistan's economic sectors. He noted that the government has already launched conducive

policies such as electric vehicle policy, mobile manufacturing policy, construction sector incentives, Special Economic Zone Regulations 2020, and SEZ Zone Enterprise Admin and Sale/Lease/Sub-lease of Plot Regulations 2021, to increase investment in Pakistan. "Pakistan accords top priority to the development of SEZs under CPEC," he said, adding that currently, out of the nine CPEC SEZs, two are in advance stage of development, including Rashakai SEZ in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Allama Iqbal Industrial City in Faisalabad, Punjab. Bukhari

informed that attractive fiscal incentives are being offered under SEZs such as 10-year tax holiday and custom duty exemption on import of capital goods to both the developer and enterprises housed in the SEZs. KP Minister for Finance Taimur Jhagra said representatives from a number of countries including Switzerland, and Bosnia are present in the conference which indicates that a lot of countries are showing interest to join this mega multibillion dollar project. He invited the investors to also look into tourism opportunities in the province.



BAKU: A number of fruitful bilateral meetings & discussions took place between the Chairman of the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Nadim Raza and the Ministers of Internal Affairs, Defense Industry & the Chief of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan. - DNA

CJCSC meets Azeri Defense officials

DNA

BAKU: Chief of the State Border Service, Colonel General Elchin Guliyev has received the delegation led by General Nadeem Raza, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The delegation is on an official visit to Azerbaijan, media reported. During the meeting, the sides noted with satisfaction the friendly relations and strategic partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and exchanged views on the perspectives of bilateral cooperation in the military-technical and security.

WHO to help strengthen health care in Pakistan

"I am very sure and confident that with the current political commitment and UHC related program and interventions, Pakistan will achieve the targets of UHC by 2030 and WHO will support the Government in every possible way towards this end," he said

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: World Health Organization (WHO) Country Representative in Pakistan Dr Palitha Mahipala Friday reaffirmed and reiterated the support of WHO towards strengthening Primary Health Care (PHC) in the country. Addressing a press conference, he appreciated the Government of Pakistan for the various steps taken to improve the health status of the population. He particularly mentioned the expansion in coverage of the Sehat Sahulat (Health Insurance) Pro-

gram, which will be instrumental in decreasing the financial burden on the poor and marginalized population and endorsement of the Universal Health Coverage Benefit Package. He affirmed, "I am confident that these recommendations will facilitate the government in developing strategies and plans for strengthening the PHC services and securing sustainable financing to achieve the UHC and implementation of a recently endorsed UHC benefit package." Dr Palitha Mahipala added that the WHO Pakistan is providing support to the Government of Pakistan for expansion of univer-



sal health coverage by investing in health systems, especially in PHC and is committed to providing complete and unflinching support to the Government of Pa-

kistan in implementing its agenda to achieve the target of UHC by the year 2030. "I am very sure and confident that with the current political commitment and UHC related program and interventions, Pakistan will achieve the targets of UHC by 2030 and WHO will support the Government in every possible way towards this end," he said. Dr Palitha Mahipala said that Pakistani media has always stood for any national cause. I expect and urge the media to play its vital role in raising public awareness and advocating with relevant stakeholders for it. I am thankful to all agencies

for participating in this mission and admire the efforts of all mission members." "Adaptation of Universal Health Coverage Investment Case into Provincial Plans with focus on strengthening district health governance, Lady Health Workers Programme, and robust health information system will accelerate Primary Health Care for Universal Health Coverage in Pakistan," said Ms. Aida Girma, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan. "Children and their mothers will benefit from essential health services including immunization through comprehensive primary health care."

Hafeez Sheikh's defeat jolts government

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) said the defeat of incumbent finance minister Hafeez Sheikh in the Senate elections have jolted the ruling coalition which is the outcome of unpopular policies. The defeat indicates that masses and their representatives on both sides of the political divide are not happy with the performance of the government, it said. The finance minister should accept his defeat and resign honourably while the government should stop blaming opposition for every failure, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President PEW. In a statement issued here today, he said that it seems a no-trust move against the government as economic failures have resulted in poverty, unemployment, very high food inflation, increased taxes on the poor and high price of utilities. Dr. Murtaza Mughal who has also served as Convener of the FPCCI's Central Standing Committee on Insurance said that PTI should stop the practice of putting the entire blame of everything on former rulers.

PIA resumes Lahore, Islamabad operation

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has resumed its flight services between Lahore and Islamabad as the first flight flew from the Punjab provincial capital towards the federal capital on Friday. After months-long flight suspension between Lahore and Islamabad due to the rising cases of coronavirus, the first flight has been operated by the national carriers between the cities. The airline will operate flights between Lahore and Islamabad thrice a week. The first flight PK-650 carrying 26 passengers on board took off from Lahore airport to the federal capital who have been warmly welcomed by the station manager and staff upon their arrival at the airport. A cake-cutting event was organised at the airport and later the staff saw off the passengers. Earlier in the week, PIA had announced discounted fares for domestic flights with an aim to promote tourism in the spring season. The national carrier unveiled discounted fares for flights to Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore. The passengers have been offered reduced fares to travel through PIA while carrying 20-kilogram luggage at the price of Rs7,500 for one side, whereas, Rs8,500 will be charged for travelling with 40-kg luggage.

India tops list for most internet shutdowns

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: India topped the list for the most internet shutdowns in 2020 globally for the third consecutive year, a new report by digital rights and privacy organisation Access Now said. India leveraged blockouts to crush the nationwide Farmer's Protest and the Kashmiris, the report said. It pointed that India shut down the internet more than any other nation at 109 times out of a total of 155, recorded worldwide. India was followed by Yemen with six instances. According to a new report by Access Now, a global non-profit that works on digital rights and online freedom, around 70% of cases of internet shutdowns globally happened in India in 2020, with shut down of the internet in Kashmir roughly once every two weeks. The report triggered a strong reaction from freedom of speech supporters and demanded an explanation from the government with the hashtag #modi-jawab_do, #FreedomOfSpeech, and #InternetShutdown. "In Jammu and Kashmir, the administration issued internet shutdown orders every two weeks in 2020 despite concerns".