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Religious leaders determined towards Inter-faith dialogue

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Businessmen backbone of country: NAB

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More sectors may be closed, says Asad Umar

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Briefs

Pakistan combating corruption

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi said that Pakistan had taken a number of measures to effectively implement International Anti-Corruption Conventions including those under the UN Convention Against Corruption. "In order to combat the scourge of corruption, Pakistan has taken effective steps by enforcing strict accountability regime that has greatly helped in curbing the menace of corruption," the president said in a message on the occasion of 'International Anti-Corruption Day' being observed on December 9. "We reaffirm our commitment on this day to eliminate corruption and promote transparency and accountability in the governance system," a press release quoted the president as saying.

PDM getting foreign funding

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Democratic Movement is receiving a "lot of foreign funding", Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari claimed on Wednesday. According to an English newspaper, which cited an exclusive interview with the minister on its TV, Shireen Mazari said the PTI regime obtained "information" about the funding of the PDM – an Opposition coalition comprising almost a dozen parties that has launched an anti-government campaign.

Afghan cargo ship uploaded at Gwadar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Representative for Afghanistan Mohammad Sadiq said on Wednesday that another Afghan transit trade bulk cargo ship carrying 22,000 tons of fertilizer was offloaded at Gwadar. Pakistan allowed the Afghan transit trade from Gwadar port in Balochistan province in October last year. "Imports of transit goods through bulk cargo significantly reduce the cost of doing business for Afghan traders."

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Some conditions on EU trade deal 'unacceptable': Johnson – Page 06

Systemic efforts needed to combat corruption: Klaus Lohannis – Page 07

Speakers stress religious harmony, inter-faith dialogue – Page 08



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi exchanging views with British High Commissioner Dr. Christian Turner, at the Naval Headquarters. – DNA

PM lauds Biden's intent to target dirty money

I will lead efforts internationally to bring transparency to the global financial system, go after illicit tax havens, seize stolen assets: Imran

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Wednesday welcomed the US President elect Joe Biden's declared intent of a policy to target dirty money – an initiative matching former's vision and key focus of decades-long political struggle. "I welcome US President elect Biden's declared intent of a policy targeting dirty money," the prime minister tweeted sharing a media report saying, "Joe Biden is expected to make a crackdown on illicit finance

both at home in the United States and abroad a centerpiece of his administration." As per an article published in US-based Foreign Policy magazine, Biden, as vice president, had also spear-

headed Obama administration's fight against corruption and kleptocracy which he also echoed in his article published in another publication this spring. "I will lead efforts interna-

tionally to bring transparency to the global financial system, go after illicit tax havens, seize stolen assets, and make it more difficult for leaders who steal from their people to hide behind anonymous front companies," Biden had said in his write up in published in Foreign Affairs magazine. Endorsing the US president elect's viewpoint, Prime Minister Imran Khan also said that the developing countries were being impoverished by their corrupt elites who launder money to richer countries and offshore tax havens.



Pakistan, Greece vow to strengthen cooperation

Interior Minister Ijaz Shah discusses illegal immigrants issue with the Ambassador of Greece; both sides agree to intensify efforts

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Greece Andreas Papastavrou Wednesday called on Minister for Interior Brig (R) Ijaz Ahmad Shah and discussed bilateral ties, economic situation and impact of pandemic on the global level. Pakistan and Greece shared good relations at government level, the am-

bassador said adding, "We have plenty of Pakistanis living in Greece and who play an important role in strengthening ties between the two countries," said a press release. Discussing the issue of illegal immigrants, Brig Ijaz said all the needful measures were being taken to eliminate this problem. He referred to a recent incident where the interior ministry processed

the Greek request for the chartered flight carrying illegal immigrants on a very short notice. "This in time and active response was to ensure that our friendly and cooperative relationship should continue in future," he said. The ambassador welcomed the positive response from Pakistan and the interior ministry. About COVID-19, the federal minister said this pandemic had taken a toll on the world economy. To which Greek ambassador said their country heavily relied on tourism and the economy had suffered due to the outbreak of this deadly virus. The duo hoped for better things to happen in near future and wished that people can have virus free lives again. The ambassador invited the federal minister to Greece. The minister warmly welcomed the invitation and hoped to visit once the pandemic situation gets better. The meeting concluded pledging the two countries would continue to work on strengthening bilateral ties and mutual cooperation.



Lahore rally at any cost: PDM

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Democratic Movement on Wednesday vowed it will hold its next rally in Lahore – which they have termed as the "final nail in the government's coffin" – despite the administration "turning the venue into a dam". PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, flanked by PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz, addressed a press conference following a meeting between the three to inform the media that the rally, due to be held at Minare-Pakistan on December 13, will be held "at all costs". "And in the coming days we will finalise the strategy for throwing our resignations in their faces," Fazlur Rehman added, referring to his call a day earlier for all Opposition parliamentarians to hand in their resignations from provincial and national assemblies to party heads by the year's end. The PDM has accused the government of deliberately attempting to prevent the 11-party Opposition alliance from holding a rally at the venue by flooding the ground with water.

More sectors may be closed: Asad

RANA FARRUKH

2,963 new new cases reported

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar has said that opposition parties making fun of coronavirus to hold public rallies is unfortunate. Asad Umar, while talking to media, said that in a democratic process, the political leadership does not endanger the lives and livelihoods of the people. He appealed to people to strictly follow the standard

Continued on Page 06

ISLAMABAD: The total active COVID-19 cases in Pakistan on Wednesday were recorded 45,324 as 2,963 more people tested positive for the deadly virus during the last 24 hours. Sixty corona patients, 57 of whom were under treatment in hospital while three patients died out of the hospital in their respective homes. – DNA



ISLAMABAD: Poland becomes a founding member of the new EU National Institutes for Culture cluster in Pakistan. The EUNIC cluster will bring together competences of 9 European countries & strengthen their cultural relations with Pakistan. The cluster remains open to further associate members, who might wish to join in the future. Ambassador of Poland, Piotr Opilinski signing the document. – DNA

India planning false operation against Pak

NAVEED MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: India is once again preparing to destroy peace in the region by starting a false flag operation against Pakistan in a bid to divert attention from internal and external pressures that it faced following its embarrassing defeat in Ladakh and Do Kalam. According to credible sources, India is preparing for an attack on the Line of Control (LoC) and on the India-Pakistan Working Boundary. Owing to the possibility of an attack, Pakistan's Armed Forces have been put on high alert. Sources said that India can resort to a border action or a surgical strike as part of its false flag operation so that it could divert attention from several of its ongoing internal problems, including the mistreatment of minorities, farmers' protests, its growing atrocities in occupied Kashmir and the resultant criticism from international media and institutions.

Launch of Air Sial beneficial for all: PM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Air Sial will create competition for other Pakistani airlines, Prime Minister Imran Khan said after he inaugurated the new airline in Sialkot on Wednesday. Air Sial is Pakistan's third private airline. Its first flight via Airbus A320 landed at the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi from the United States last month. The airline had to delay from June because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent restrictions on air travel. The airline's operations will initially rely on three Airbus A320-200s, which have been leased from AerCap, the world's largest independent aircraft leasing company, based in Dublin, Ireland. Picture on Page 02

Pakistan exports to China increased manifold

It is up to the political leadership of the two countries to sort out this issue as early as possible. That will also deepen their strategic geopolitical ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan exports to China has increased by 30% during last month, resulting in the improvement of trade balance between the two countries, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. To address issue of trade deficit, the major concern of Pakistani side, China has proactively taken a lot of measures to maintain a balanced trade relation with Pakistan between the two sides. The report says, China is keen to expand more market access for Pa-

kistani products and organizes varieties of trade promotion activities in Pakistan and China every year. Adviser to Prime Minister for Commerce and Investment Abdul Razaq Dawood had stated in a tweet that during Nov 2020, Pakistan's exports to China increased considerably. This healthy trend is an indication that our exports are re-gaining their momentum. It was advised that the exporters should aggressively market their products in geographically diversified areas. Giving a good start, the governments of the two countries had slashed tariffs on more than 300

categories of imported items that are widely used as raw material for the export of goods. According to the report, along with the constant upward trend of China-Pakistan trade, a rising concern on trade deficit with China had been echoing in the Pakistani business communities. It is pertinent to mention that the main reason behind the trade imbalance has to be the structural problems in nature between industries of two countries. China has a strong manufacturing base to export goods as compared to import. Up to now, China turns

to be the largest trading partner of more than 120 countries and regions in the world, and China has never intentionally pursued the trade surplus, not with any trade partner. Therefore, It is time to dedicate some technical and financial resources to drawing a full map to determine how exports to the entire world, and more specifically to China, can grow. It is up to the subject specialists to come up with viable options for reducing Islamabad's trade deficit with Beijing and improve trade balancing. Moreover It is up to the political leadership of the two coun-

tries to sort out this issue as early as possible. That will also deepen their strategic geopolitical ties. The outbreak of the novel coronavirus has led to economic recession in major parts of the world and year 2020 is going to end with a deeper recession than the one seen in the wake of the global financial crisis more than a decade ago. A change in trade policy factoring in all the possibilities in global trade dynamics is a must. There is perhaps a greater need for promoting intra-regional trade to take advantage of the economy of trade, the report added.

Briefs

SHC seeks reply over Karachi island

DNA

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday issued notice to the federal government seeking its reply over an agreement it signed for a desalination plant installation at Bundal island. A petition in the high court pleaded that the Attorney had earlier assured the learned court that all stakeholders will be taken into confidence over any development on the islands. "The federal government has summoned tenders for construction activities and signed an agreement for installation of desalination plant at Bundal Island," the petitioner said.

"The government's issuance of tender and MoU signing for desalination plant is a matter of concern," petitioner further said. "Presently no tenders issued only a study being conducted with regard to garbage," Additional Attorney General informed the court. "Attorney General had assured that no work took place on islands without keeping the government of Sindh in loop," the court observed. "You are signing agreements and will say tomorrow that these are international agreements and nothing could be done now," the bench further remarked. The court approved the petition for hearing and issued notice to the federal government seeking its reply by January 15, over the desalination plant agreement. Earlier in a petitioner stated in the court that the ordinance promulgated by President Dr. Arif Alvi on August 30 is illegal and unconstitutional.

24 deaths, 613 cases reported in Punjab

DNA

LAHORE: The 2nd wave of COVID-19 claimed 24 more lives on Wednesday, while 613 new cases were reported in Punjab. According to the spokesperson of the Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, the number of coronavirus cases in the province reached 124,804 while so far the total number of deaths in the province were recorded as 3,242 altogether. The P&SHD confirmed that 225 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Lahore, 1 in Sheikhupura, 1 in Nankana Sahib, 86 in Rawalpindi, 5 in Gujranwala, 2 in Mandi Bahauddin, 9 in Sialkot, 1 in Narowal, 7 in Gujrat, 38 in Faisalabad, 13 in Toba Tek Singh, 3 in Jhang, 29 in Multan, 4 in Vehari, 4 in Khanewal, 13 in Dera Ghazi Khan, 3 in Chiniot, 30 in Sargodha, 6 in Mianwali, 1 in Khushab, 2 in Jhang, 20 in Bahawalpur, 17 in Muzaffargarh, 21 in Bhakkar, 4 in Lodharan, 44 in Rahimyar Khan, 8 in Sahiwal, 3 in Okara, 3 in Bahawalnagar, 11 in Rajanpur and 1 new case of COVID-19 was reported in Pakpattan district. The Punjab health department conducted 2,115,342 tests for COVID-19 so far, while 111,720 confirmed cases recovered altogether in the province. The Punjab health department urged the masses to follow SOPs for their protection and cover their faces with masks.

10 doctors, 2 paramedics of MMC test positive

DNA

PESHAWAR: At least ten doctors of Mardan Medical Complex (MMC) have been found infected with coronavirus, the hospital's administration said on Wednesday. It said two lady doctors were also among the doctors tested positive for the virus. The medical tests of the two paramedics were also received as positive; the administration said adding all the positive patients have been asked to quarantine themselves. The ratio of coronavirus infection has reached 4 percent in Mardan district that was 1 percent in September, the administration added.



SIALKOT: Prime Minister Imran Khan addressing business community in inauguration ceremony of new private airline. – DNA

'Pak adopts pronged approach to check population growth'

Speaking about the president government's commitment to address the issue of population growth, he said Prime Minister Imran Khan soon after coming into power took up the issue of malnutrition and stunting growth and subsequently various measures were taken to address the problem.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Wednesday said that Pakistan has adopted a multi-pronged approach to check population growth and address other issues like mother child health, malnutrition and stunting growth. The multi-pronged strategy included women empowerment through financial inclusion besides creating awareness about the importance of gap in birth through various means of communication and taking on board various segments of the society including Ulema, he added.

The President expressed these views while addressing a virtual Dissemination Seminar on Population Analysis. Speaking about the president government's commitment to address the issue of population growth, he said Prime Minister Imran Khan soon after coming into power took up the issue of malnutrition and stunting growth and subsequently various measures were taken to address the problem. The President said that as compared to the previous government's tenure of 2013-18 when this issue was not taken care of, the present

government was making lot of efforts to address the issues of population growth, malnutrition, stunting growth and mother child health. He said that as frequent pregnancies led to stunting growth of child besides affecting the health of mother there was a need to create awareness among masses about the importance of gap in birth and the use of contraceptives. The President in that respect also referred to Quranic teachings which called for two-year breast-feeding of children. He said the present government's strategy to check population growth also included the fi-

ncial inclusion of women in main stream economy and providing them opportunities of jobs and businesses. The President said he had been told by the Governor State Bank that under the present government's soft loans scheme, women were also being offered loans up to Rs.5 million. Similarly, he added that poor women were being provided cash assistance through the government's Ehsaas Programme and were being encouraged to open bank accounts to receive the financial assistance. The President said as there was no authentic data of differently abled persons in the

country he has been told that the data would be made available by June 2021 through a survey by Ehsaas. About women empowerment, he said the present government was also taking measures to protect the inheritance rights of women, adding, in that respect a meeting would also be held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. The President while talking about the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic advised the people to continue to adopt the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) including keeping social distancing, frequent hand washing and use of face covering to check the spread of the virus.

'Threat of resignations is a political stunt'



LAHORE: Special Assistant to Chief Minister of Punjab for Information has said that threat of resignations from National and Provincial Assemblies is a political stunt by the opposition parties. Firdous Ashiq Awan, in a tweet on Wednesday, said that rejected group of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) leaders is using their party lawmakers as a shield to protect their looted wealth. The CM's aide said that the movement to protect corruption is bound to fail. On the other hand, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, head of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), said that by December 31, all members of the National and Provincial Assemblies would submit their resignations to their respective party leaders. He said that the Lahore rally on December 13 will be historic and will serve as the last nail in the government's coffin. If any attempt is made to disrupt the rally, it will be repulsed worse than Multan, he said. Rejecting the invitation of negotiation by the government, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the government is on the ropes, and

only needs a final push. On Tuesday, the fake Prime Minister offered to have dialogue but he is undeserving of any dialogue, he said. Talking to a Private news channel, she said the opposition's only purpose to hold rallies was to "save Sharif family' looted wealth and corruption of which they are an integral part. She said that COVID-19 is a collective issue of all the nations in the world but opposition in our country was engaged in doing politics over it. On the other side, the PTI fully understands the pain of the poor and taking all preventive, diagnostic and treatment measures to protect the people from Covid-19 infections. She reiterated that the opposition parties' public meetings posed no threat to the government but the threat to lives of common people. "Protecting the masses from the virus is the need of the hour rather than holding public gatherings", she added. Firdous said the opposition parties had put the national interests at the back burner for their petty political interests. Replying a Query, she said the PDM's threat to resign from parliament is merely a joke as these people don't have the courage to resign and the government will not fall into the trap of the opposition. The irresponsible opposition leaders are unable to understand the severity of the situation but they have only concerned to save their looted wealth, she added. – APP

CAA allows Virgin Atlantic four weekly Islamabad flights

It may be noted that for its Lahore destination, CAA had already permitted Virgin Atlantic to carry out operations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: British airline Virgin Atlantic has been sanctioned on Wednesday to fly from Manchester to Islamabad four times a week by Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) of Pakistan. A notification announcing the development has been issued to this effect earlier today bearing the signatures of Director Transport of CAA. It will be using the latest Airbus

A-332, for the flights in Pakistan. From this point on, Virgin Atlantic will operate four of its flights to Islamabad every week, while, on an overall, the airline company will route across Pakistani destinations about 11 flights a week. It may be noted that for its Lahore destination, CAA had already permitted Virgin Atlantic to carry out operations. Previously it was reported that the airline would operate its direct flight operations to Islamabad from Manchester after ap-

proval from Pakistan's aviation division as it is already allowed to operate flights from London. The aviation division has given approval for the flights from Manchester and a notification in this regard would be issued by the air transport department of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) today. It is pertinent to mention here that a cargo plane of British airline Virgin Atlantic has landed in Lahore, carrying staff and equipment ahead of beginning direct flights to Pakistan from December 13.



ISLAMABAD: Maulana Fazlur Rehman holding a press conference along with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Maryam Nawaz. – DNA

Pakistan Navy celebrates 49th Hangor Day

Submarine HANGOR remained a pride for Pakistan Navy in 1971 war and her gallant action was not only a spectacular tactical battle resulting in sinking of Indian Navy's Frigate but it was a strategic overture of Pakistan Navy

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy celebrated 49th HANGOR Day to commemorate the historic event in which Pakistan Navy Submarine HANGOR sank Indian Navy Frigate KHURKI and crippled INS KIRPAN in 1971 war in a spectacular war action. In order to pay tribute, Pakistan Navy celebrates 9th December as HANGOR Day which is reminiscent of unmatched courage and unwavering commitment of Pakistan Navy's Submarine HANGOR during 1971 war. This year also an impressive ceremony was held at PN Dockyard Karachi to mark HANGOR Day. Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the ceremony as Chief Guest. Submarine HANGOR remained a

pride for Pakistan Navy in 1971 war and her gallant action was not only a spectacular tactical battle resulting in sinking of Indian Navy's Frigate but it was a strategic overture of Pakistan

Navy which effectively thwarted and marginalized Indian aggression imposed on Pakistan during 1971 war. This heroic action took place at south east of 'Diu Head' on west coast of

India. The event is distinguished in naval history for being the first and only successful kill by a conventional submarine after WW-II. Owing to the outstanding leadership of its Com-

manding Officer, then Commander Ahmed Tasnim and the professional crew, enemy remained unable to detect the submarine as it successfully returned Karachi on completion of the mission. On the occasion, the message of Vice Admiral (Retd) Ahmed Tasnim (then Commanding Officer of submarine HANGOR) was aired. The Admiral paid rich tribute to the valiant crew for their service in defence of the motherland in general and Pakistan Navy in particular. He said that HANGOR is a luminous part of Pakistan Navy history and will always be remembered. Pakistan Navy submarine HANGOR was the first of Daphne class submarines acquired from France. Commissioned in 1969, it served Pakistan Navy with honour till her decommissioning in 2006.



FAO marks 16 days of activism to end GBV

DNA

KARACHI: Women's economic status and the gender-based violence (GBV) experienced by landless women in Sindh was the topic of a virtual panel discussion organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to mark the 16 Days of Activism to end Gender Based Violence under the global theme of this year: "Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!". Representatives from Government of Sindh, academia, civil society, UN agencies and activists, participated in the discussion. The event highlighted some of the many ways in which women in Sindh experience violence as part of their roles in the food system and rural society, and how this has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 response. Women can face violence when they attempt to obtain equal access to land, water, information, credit and other resources to produce food and earn income, and yet this access is a necessary condition to end hunger and address food insecurity. The event particularly highlighted the initiatives in better land tenure governance that are being trialed in Sindh to empower landless women farmers, and how a rights-based approach can improve the distribution of resources.

'Percentage of positive results increasing'

DNA

LAHORE: Dean Institute of Public Health, Prof. Dr. Zarfshan Tahir has said that a visible surge has been observed in the percentage of positive reports of COVID-19 PCR tests performed in the BSL-III Lab of the institute and there are chances of increasing numbers of patients in the 2nd wave of COVID-19. Therefore, doctors, laboratory staff have to work more dedicatedly with professional zeal to face the future challenges. She said that the procedure of Covid testing in PCR Lab of IPH is of international standard with 100% accuracy. So far, 40 thousands COVID tests have been performed in the Lab. She said this while addressing an Orientation Session on COVID-19 Molecular Diagnostics, personal protection, Data recording, Reporting of Lab tests etc. at IPH for the doctors, demonstrators and the allied staff, here Wednesday. ICU consultant Dr. Shakeel Azmat, Dr. Afshan Butt from National Health Services (NHS), UK apprised the participants of their experiences in UK while Dr. Obaid Ullah Qazi Incharge PCR Lab, IPH imparted training on the subject. The participants of the orientation seminar also visited the BSL-III Lab.

How 'unthink' aims to reform education

DNA

LAHORE: Red Bull Basement 2020 Pakistan winners Hira Siddiqui and Warisha Farhat discuss their prize-worthy idea, entrepreneurial plans and making educational reforms through technology in Pakistan. Experiencing the transformation of education from within the four walls of the classroom to expanding to living rooms across the world, the two IBA Karachi final-year students Hira Siddiqui and Warisha Farhat came up with the idea to solve a decades-long issue faced by the students in their 16+ years of education with the help of Red Bull Basement. The two finance students, facing similar issues in their research work, came up with the idea to develop an application, 'UnThink'. The app tends to digitize the mediums of research by bringing together an interchangeably adaptive community of millions of thoughts and connecting them with the people who want to test out the limits of their ideas. They will also have the access to advanced tools through which they can not only produce a stream of data, but the data will be automatically analyzed as well through a series of algorithms. Everyone who has been involved in the research work knows how difficult it is to find the right people for your survey.

Briefs

CDA starts work in capital city

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) on the directions of Chairman Amir Ali Ahmed has started the development and beautification work across the capital city. According to detail, the works of CDA in last one month include carpeting of important roads, lane marking, restoration of lights, restoration of lights in various parks, upgradation of more than 50 parks, addition in the facilities of clean drinking water, resolution of the issues being faced by the business community, anti encroachment operation, restoration of infrastructure and others. Upon the special directions of the Chairman, CDA is actively working on all developmental and other projects in Islamabad. The authority has conducted a number of operations against the encroachments and occupation of government land by the land mafia. In these operations the CDA successfully removed the encroachments and retrieved the illegally grabbed land. Besides this, CDA has taken remarkable steps for resolving the issue of water being faced by the masses of capital. The work of CDA to enhance the beauty of capital and maintain the cleanliness in the city is continued with full pace.

CTP accelerate campaign against beggars

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi have accelerated their on-going campaign against professional beggars and lodged 24 FIRs in different police stations against beggars caught from different areas, said Incharge Anti-Begging Squad, CTP, Adeel Abbasi. He informed that the CTP anti-begging squad on the directives of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi had launched grand operation and rounded up over 1386 during November. He said, the CTP were trying to eliminate begging from the city roads and during their efforts, professional beggars were being sent behind the bars. He said, nearly 60 percent beggars caught from city roads were healthy and fit while only 20 percent were disabled persons and 20 were drug addicts, who were brought to Rawalpindi from Southern Punjab, KPK, Sindh and other far-flung areas of the country and operating through contractors. Senior Traffic Officer, CTP, Rawalpindi, Syed Abid Abbas Shah informed that CTP had launched grand operation against professional beggars and taking action in accordance with the law. The beggar children netted from the city roads were handed over to Child Protection Bureau (CPB). The anti-beggars squad of CTP and Rawalpindi district police was conducting raids at different roads and intersections. Directives had also been issued to the squad to register cases against the beggars and the report in this regard should be sent to CTO office on daily basis, he said. - APP

Man arrested for carrying illegal weapons

RAWALPINDI: Chuntra Police claimed on Wednesday to have arrested a man for carrying illegal weapons, informed police spokesman. He said, on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Muhammad Ahsan Younis, police were keeping vigilant eye on the suspicious activities in the area, acting on a tip off, a team under the supervision of SHO Police Station Chuntra have arrested a man identified as Kamran Nawaz. Police also recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunition from his possession. - APP

Relations between Pak, Kuwait to be strengthened: Ashrafi

Both the dignitaries underlined that with exchange of delegates between Kuwait and Pakistan, cooperation between both the countries will be extended in areas of trade, economy and culture adding that employment opportunities for Pakistanis

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Bilateral relations between Pakistan and Kuwait will be strengthened in all respective sectors and areas. Reconciliation role on part of Kuwait to resolve differences between Arab countries is very appreciating and valuable, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi Chairman Pakistan Ulama Council, Special Representative to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East. In a meeting with Kuwait's Ambassador to Pakistan Nassar Abdulrahman J Al-Mutairi, Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi said that Kuwait's Government and people of Kuwait have always promoted affection, moderation and compassion. Pakistan values and welcome each and every bid and endeavour to resolve differences and misunderstandings between Muslim countries, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Special Aide to Prime Min-



ister on Religious Harmony adding that Pakistan values its relations with Kuwait. In a released statement, following the meeting of Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi and Kuwait's Ambassador to Pakistan Nassar Abdulrahman J Al-Mutairi, here on Wednesday, both the dignitaries vowed and resolve to further strengthened relations between Pakistan and Kuwait in all areas with exchange of cooperation. Both the dignitaries underlined that with exchange of delegates between Kuwait and Pakistan, cooperation between both the countries will be extended in areas of trade, economy and culture adding that employment opportunities for Pakistanis will also be generated in Kuwait. Meanwhile, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Special Representative to Prime Minister on Interreligious Harmony also held meeting with Interior Minister Brigadier (R) Ijaz Shah and held detailed discussions on Interreligious Harmony and overall peace situation in the country.

Murghazar Zoo to be transformed into Wildlife Conservation Center

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Malik Amin Aslam Wednesday announced that Islamabad Marghazar Zoo would be transformed into a world-class wildlife conservation facility center soon. According to a press release issued here, he said that a comprehensive plan has been chalked out to transform the Islamabad Marghazar Zoo into the wildlife conservation center. He said a decision to this effect has been taken by the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) during its second meeting held on December 8 presided over by its chairman Rina Saeed Khan. Named as the Margalla Wildlife Conservation Center, the facility will be a first of its kind the state-of-the-art and well-planned set-up established as a part of Prime Minister Imran Khan's clean and green

agenda for overall environmental sustainability and wildlife conservation, which will be home to local wildlife species kept in open enclosures for both public entertainment, education and research purposes, SAPM revealed. He emphasised, "This was completely a new concept rolled out under the Prime Minister Imran Khan's Clean and Green Pakistan Agenda and the incumbent government's environmental-friendly and wildlife conservation and

protection policies as a part of the biodiversity conservation efforts." Malik Amin Aslam said that the wildlife conservation facility would span over 82 acres in the foothills of Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP) and house wildlife sanctuaries, a vet hospital, rescue and trauma centre for indigenous species and research on the flora and fauna of MHNP. Due to its close proximity with MHNP, the area was a natural habitat for wildlife

species, which would be re-designed to help fulfill our national commitments regarding wildlife conservation, protection and their welfare goals, he added. "All the available resources would be utilised to develop a facility at the Margalla wildlife conservation center for rescue and rehabilitation of wildlife species in their natural habitat. It is also part of the plan to rescue and rehabilitate injured and abandoned wild animals as well as treat and feed them for their complete rehabilitation, which would be released back into their natural habitats after their recovery at the rescue-cum-rehabilitation facility within the centre. Spelling out overarching objectives, Aslam said that the proposed wildlife conservation centre would aim to promote wildlife conservation and sustainability. - APP



ICT records 359 fresh corona cases

DNA

ISLAMABAD: COVID-19 cases continued to surge in the federal capital as 359 new corona cases were reported from the city during the last 24 hours. According to an official of National Command and Operation Center (NCO) on Wednesday, as many as 245 cases were reported on Tuesday while 402 cases were reported on Monday. He said so far 33,420 cases were reported from the

federal capital while 345 deaths were reported from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). He added 26,795 patients had been recovered completely. Meanwhile, on the direction of Ministry of National Health Services, the district administration of Islamabad had continued smart lockdown in different streets of the capital to reduce transmission of the infection in the selected streets and other sectors. They also started taking actions on violation of standard operating procedures

(SOPs) related with the corona while visiting marriage halls, markets and petrol pumps by its inspection teams. The administration also sealed schools, shops, workshop and restaurants on violation of SOPs. The inspection teams also issued notices to marriage halls besides imposing fines on owners of different shops. Commenting on the situation, an official of Ministry of National Health Services said that several local level administrative decisions were made to control the disease.

NUMS postpones exams

DNA

RAWALPINDI: National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) Rawalpindi has postponed all remaining Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) & Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) Examinations 2020 of its Constituent & Affiliated Colleges due to prevailing COVID-19 situation. Fresh dates will be announced by National University of Medical Sciences in due course of time.

NCRC urges to stand up for the rights of Children

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of Human Rights Day to be observed on Thursday (December 10), Chairperson National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) Afshan Tehseen urged all stakeholders to stand up for the rights of children in Pakistan. She stressed that children's rights cannot be separated from human rights because the children of today will make the Pakistan of tomorrow. The way we bring them up will determine the future of our country. Taking care of our children by protecting their dignity and providing them their basic rights is the most important thing for bringing up citizens best prepared to serve the community, she further said in a press release issued here on Wednesday. On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR is a milestone document that proclaims the inalienable rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, gender, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights empowers everyone including children. The principles enshrined in the Declaration are as relevant today as they were in 1948. We can take action in our own daily lives, to uphold the rights that protect us all and thereby promote the kinship of all human beings. As a signatory to the UNCR, Pakistan has made significant progress to safeguard the rights of children and the country has taken practical steps to ensure the safety of her Children. - DNA

RCB issues notices to 53 non trade license holders

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) has issued 53 notices to the shopkeepers running their businesses without trade licenses in RCB areas. According to details, RCB has decided to take strict action in accordance with the law against non trade license holders. RCB, Food Control Department conducted operations against non trade license holders and served warning notices to over 53 bakeries, general stores, dairy shops, medical stores, chicken shops and others in different areas of Dhoke Syedan Road, Kalma Chowk, Bakra Mandi, Afshan Colony, Dhoke Mustakeem Road, Saham Road, Tench Bhatta, Masrial Road and other areas. The department also received a large number of applications and issued new licenses to 200 shopkeepers who had met all the requirements for the license during December and collected Rs 82,840. - DNA

SC adjourns hearing of Daniel Pearl murder case till Thursday

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan Wednesday heard an appeal of the Sindh government in Daniel Pearl murder case. A three-judge bench headed by Justice Mushir Alam, heard appeals filed by the Sindh government and parents of slain journalist Daniel Pearl, challenging the April 02 Sindh High Court verdict that overturned the sentences of four convicts in the case. Justice Mushir Alam asked, whether the email sent for ransom was verified and its geo-fencing happened? "Email could not be authenticated and geo-fencing technology was not existed in 2002," Sindh government's counsel Farooq H. Naik said. "The phone call could be traced," Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, another member of the bench, remarked. "When the email was not verified, how can be said that it was sent by the abductors," the court questioned. "It is unfortunate that the wife of the slain journalist didn't join the investigation," Justice Masood remarked. "The investigation officials should have summoned wife of Daniel Pearl to get the email confirmed," the bench further remarked. "It has been proved that Daniel Pearl was coaxed to be kidnapped," Sindh's counsel Naik said. "He was persuaded or he himself went, it has not been proved," Justice Tariq Masood remarked.

Suspect involved in killing of 24 year old girl held

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Homicide Unit of Islamabad Koral police have arrested an accused allegedly involved in killing 24 year old girl, a police spokesman said. He said that Koral police lodged First Information Report (FIR) following complaint of Allah Rakha regarding murder of his Daughter, Sonia Bibi (24) and alleged Shahzad involved in killing. Police registered the case and started interrogation into the matter. In the light of DIG (Operations) orders, SP (Rural) Farooq Amjad Butter constituted special team under the supervision of DSP Qasim Niazi including Homicide Unit's Inspector Munair Ahmed, SHO Koral Police Station inspector Malik Basher, Sub-Inspector Naveed Tahir and others from Homicide Unit. This team collected the evidences about the incident and managed to arrest Shahzad involved in killing Sonia Bibi.

IGP seeks a week time for abducted girl

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) Wednesday directed the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad to recover abducted 14-year-old girl Rukhsana kidnapped from the federal capital. A three-member bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Manzoor Ahmed Malik and comprised Justice Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhal and Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, heard the case, filed by accused involved in abduction of two girls from Islamabad. During the course of proceedings, the plaintiff's counsel said a case had been registered against the accused Imran in the police station Koral. The accused and his brother kidnapped two girls, he added. He said 18-year-old girl Naseem was rescued from Thalain Interchange after Imran's arrest. The accused also raped the recovered girl during abduction, he added. Justice Manzoor Malik ordered IGP Islamabad to immediately rescue the other girl. The IGP Islamabad requested the court to grant him a week's time for recovery of the abducted girl. Earlier, the accused's lawyer requested the court to release the accused on bail. - APP

COMSATS Partners with ILO to develop skills

SIYB is a management-training programme of ILO with a focus on starting and improving small businesses as a strategy for creating more and better employment opportunities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Commercialization of inventions, research and innovations is key to a knowledge economy and start-ups can be a strong means to strengthening it. To help develop the right skills for learning and execution of businesses, the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS), in collaboration with Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme of International Labour Organization (ILO) and IIU Business Incubation Center (IIU-BIC), Pakistan, organized an eleven-day long SIYB Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop. Senator, Sitara Ayaz, Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change, graced the inaugural of the workshop as Chief Guest. Other distinguished guests included: Executive Director COMSATS, Dr. S. M. Junaid Zaidi; ILO Country Director for



ISLAMABAD: of the participants of the training arranged by the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS), in collaboration with Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme of International Labour Organization (ILO) and IIU Business Incubation Center (IIU-BIC) - Pakistanat COMSATS Secretariat, Islamabad. - DNA

Pakistan, Ms. Ingrid Christensen; from ILO Pakistan, Mr. Saad Gilani; and SIYB Master Trainer

Developer from Sri Lanka, Mr. Gemunu Wijesena. During the modules of the work-

shop, the participants belonging to various institutions and sectors were trained on essential tools

to become a successful trainer of entrepreneurs, as well as how to tap opportunities of SIYB. The participants were also familiarized with the M&E aspects of SIYB, the relevant procedures to adopt effective tools to deploy. The trainers in making also developed action plans to conduct the Training of Entrepreneurs/ Training of Potential Entrepreneurs (ToE/ToPE) cycle in order to fulfill the criteria and become certified SIYB Trainers. The workshop, titled "Becoming Internationally Recognized SIYB Trainer", was conducted by Lead Master Trainer from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda, Engr. Muhammad Ahsen Mirza, Mr. Gemunu Wijesena, and Mr. David Katenderi, respectively. SIYB is a management-training programme of ILO with a focus on starting and improving small businesses as a strategy for creating more and better employment opportunities, particularly in emerging economies.

Briefs

Four-day long
Int'l virtual
conference
on museums

DNA

ISLAMABAD: International Council of Museums (ICOM) Pakistan will be holding four-day long International Virtual Conference on Museums from Dec 12 to 15. In collaboration with ICOM-Turkey and ICOM Malaysia each participating partner will have a separate session each day covering different yet significant topics related to Museums.

All the museum professionals and heritage managers will have a great learning opportunity in the conference. According to an official, every day professional will shed light on different topics related to Museums and Culture preservation and protection. He said that on Dec 12 "Disaster Risk Reduction in Museums" will be the topic while on Dec 13 "Prevention of illicit trade of cultural objects". On Dec 14 they will be discussing about Preservation Conservation on collection in Museums and on Dec 15 with another topic of "Museums role in achieving sustainable developments goals". Professional from different countries will participate including Sadet Giner, Nor Janati Binte Ibrahim, Sophie Delepierre, Zeneb Boz, Dr Nadeem Omar Tarar, Mahmut Aydin, Asma Ibraheem, Shakirullah Khan, Necmi Karul, Owais Malik, Ali Aykin, Fazal Durrani and Nirmala binti shariuddin.

Air Chief
expresses
grief over sad
demise of
USAF Pilot

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Air Staff Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan Wednesday expressed his profound grief over the sad demise of great US Air Force (USAF) Pilot Brigadier General (R) Charles Elwood Yeager who was the first pilot to break the sound barrier.

In his condolence message, the Air Chief acknowledged the noteworthy contributions of General Yeager during his tenure as US Representative to Pakistan, said a PAF press release. He further said that Gen Yeager's affiliation and admiration for PAF's professionalism would always be remembered. — APP

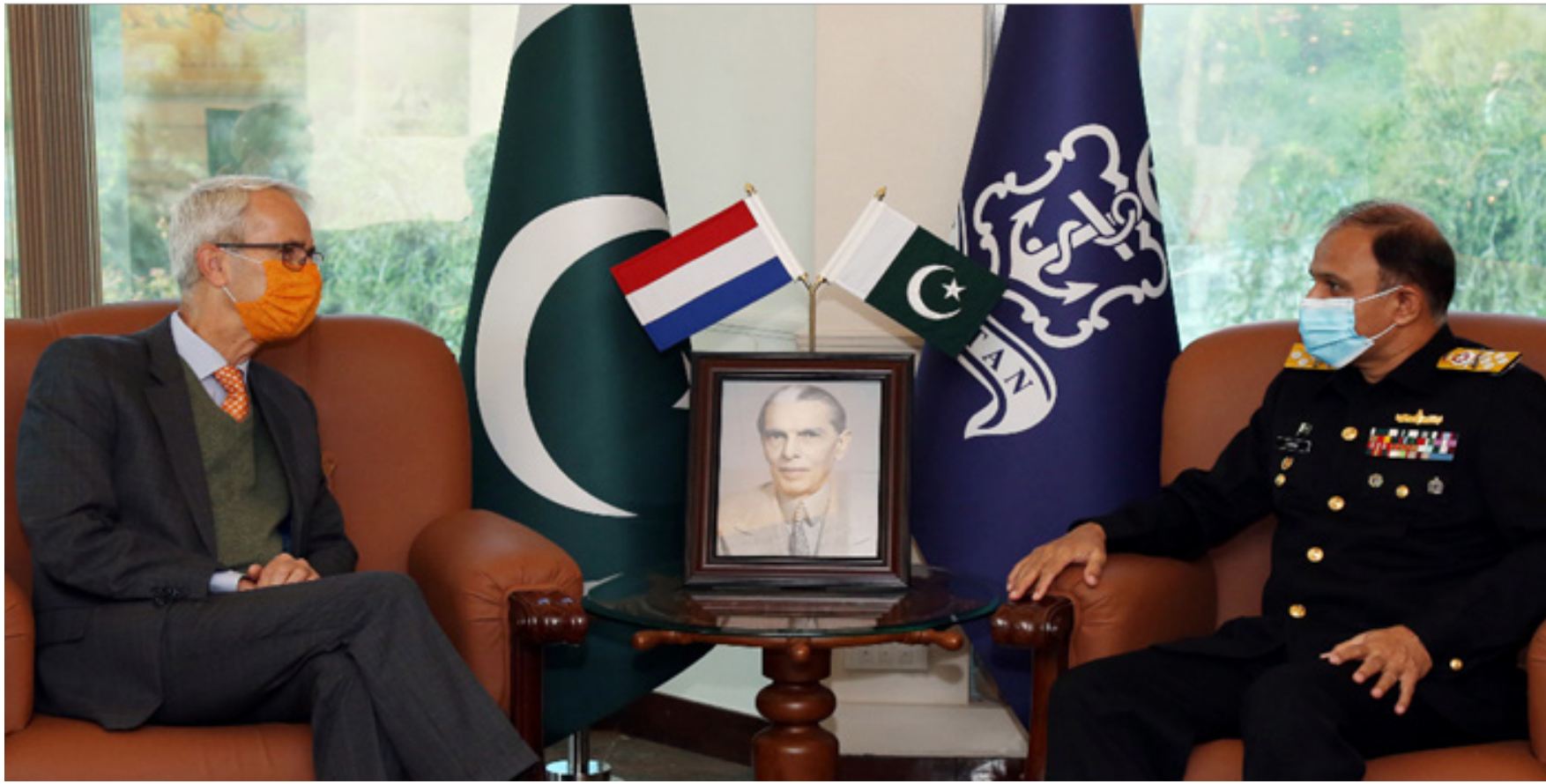
Admissions
continue
at IIUI till
24th Dec

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Admissions in more than 100 degree programs of various departments of all 9 faculties at International Islamic University (IIU) are in full swing. The applicants may apply online till December 24th, 2020.

The university has offered admissions in BS, MA/MSC, LLB, LL.M, BBA, MBA MS and PhD programs of 9 faculties including Social Sciences, Basic and Applied Sciences, Management Sciences, International institute for Islamic Economics, Shariah and Law, Usuluddin (Islamic studies), Languages and Literature, Engineering and Technology and Arabic.

The applicants can apply by visiting the IIUI website or this link <http://admission.iiu.edu.pk>. Male applicants can also call on 051-9019567 and female applicants can call on 051-9019327 for guidance and details.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval staff, Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi exchanging views with ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands to Pakistan, Wouter Plomp at Naval headquarters. — DNA

Business community demands
extension in date for filing ITR

He said that the lockdowns in the past had destroyed many businesses due to which a great number of the business community was facing difficulty in paying electricity bills, rents of shops and salaries of their workers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that December 8, 2020 was the deadline for the filing of income tax returns 2020, but the FBR system was not working properly, due to which many taxpayers had to face great problems in filing their tax returns and this situation necessitated the further extension in the last date for filing of income

tax return. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that due to the spike in the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, most of the tax consultants were unable to provide their services to the taxpayers in preparing income tax returns, therefore, it was the need of the hour that FBR should consider extension in date to facilitate maximum taxpayers in filing of income tax returns. He said that the lockdowns in the past had destroyed many businesses due to which a great number of the business

community was facing difficulty in paying electricity bills, rents of shops and salaries of their workers. In these circumstances, extending the deadline for filing income tax returns was an important necessity. ICCI President further said that out of a population of 206 million, about 1.7 million income tax returns were filed till December 8 as compared to 2.7 million last year. Thus, about 37% less tax returns have been filed this year. He said that the economic condition of

the country would not improve unless the number of filers was increased. He said that there were about 8 million commercial electricity connections in the country and advance tax was also deducted from the electricity bills but filing of only 1.7 million income tax returns should be a cause of concern for the government. He said that the government has a record of power connections so every effort should be made to take advantage of it for expanding the tax base of the country.

Ms. Fatma Azim, Senior Vice President and Abdul Rehman Khan, Vice President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that in view of the difficulties faced by the business community, it was necessary to take trade associations on board for making decisions on tax matters. They said that the date for filing of income tax returns should be further extended to provide an opportunity to the business community to file its tax returns.

CDA taking steps
for improvement
of water supply

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority's has taken solid steps to overcome shortage of water in capital city which will help to add 10 to 12 MGD water in the existing system to meet water requirements of the city. This increase will help augment the existing water system to address water shortage in the city. In this connection, the infrastructure for collection, treatment and transmission of portable water is being revamped. Water supply lines are being repaired, restored and leakages are being fixed in addition to exploration more options to strengthen the water supply system. Time line for these efforts is three to six months. In this connection, water supply wing, in line with the directions of Chairman CDA making all out efforts for ensuring provision of quality portable water in required quantity. In this context, it has been decided to obtain four million gallons per day (MGD) of water from Rawal which was abandoned nearly thirty years ago. Furthermore, planning is being made to make functional the abandoned treatment plant once used to treat Rawal dam water. Once the share of water is received through Rawal dam and plant is functional water issues in sectors I-8, I-9 and I-10 will be considerably reduced.

Similarly, work on restoration of 15 abandoned tube wells has also been taken up. In this context, in order to make functional the abandoned tube wells tenders have been issued and work in this regard would likely be initiated in next week. Authority has ensured availability of necessary funding and around 111 million rupees have been allocated for restoration of these abandoned tube wells. Similarly, it has been also decided to carry out rehabilitation work at Sangiani water treatment plant which will also help improve the overall water supply in the city. It is pertinent to mention here that since last three weeks considerable steps have been taken by the authority to improve water supply in the city. In this regard, leakages in the supply lines have been fixed in addition to replacement of pipe lines in different areas of the city. In this context, Production Division-II of water supply directorate has repaired and restored different pipelines and saved water around 1.6 MGD and water supply in different sectors including F-10, F-11, G-9, G-10, G-11, I-8, G-7, G-8, I-9, I-10 and G-5 has been considerably improved. Similarly, during the last three weeks, 10 tube wells located in Golf Course, Poona Faqeeran, E-10, F-11, I-8/4, I-10/4 and H-8/4 have been repaired which help save water 1.30 MGD. — APP

Masood thanks Muslim Ummah
for supporting Kashmir

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Masood Khan, President Azad Jammu and Kashmir, has said that the unanimous passage of a Kashmir resolution at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation-Council of Foreign Ministers (OIC-CFM) has brushed away Indian propaganda of Kashmir not being included in the agenda. The AJK President made these comments while speaking to various news networks here in Jammu and Kashmir House.

India, he said, had used diplomatic manoeuvring and made demarches to persuade fellow OIC member states to not include Kashmir in the main agenda and also not to allow the True Representatives of the Kashmiri People - led by the AJK President himself - to address the participants of the conference. He said that all these efforts of India did not see fruition as the OIC-CFM has once again extended the unwavering support of the Muslim Ummah for the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people. The President said that

the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia H.H. Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud as the Chair of the Islamic Summit also clearly stated in his inaugural speech that peace in South Asia is not possible without the resolution of the Kashmir issue. He said that this clear and bold message by the Saudi, Foreign Minister quashed all rumours that the Saudi government was not serious about the Kashmir issue. "We hope that Gulf States that enjoy close economic ties with India will use their clout to influence India into ending its tyrannical occupa-

tion in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK)", he said. The President said that the people of Kashmir have positively received the statements of US President-elect Joe Biden and US Vice President-elect Kamala Harris in support to the right to self-determination of the Kashmiris. He said that even if the US leadership does not directly engage in the Kashmiri peace process, it should, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, take up this dispute at the Security Council and bring an end to the gross human rights violations taking place in IOJK.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Sweden in Pakistan, Henrik Persson calls on federal minister for IT and telecommunication, Syed Amin ul Haq. — DNA

Parliamentarians urged to highlight Kashmir issue

He said that the political leaders and legislators in several countries, including the US, Canada and Europe, including the Chairperson of the European Parliament have also expressed their concerns on IIOJK

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir Shehryar Khan Afridi Wednesday urged for a more proactive role of the parliamentarians of the world in raising voices for the Kashmir cause and to make India accountable for its crimes against humanity in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Addressing the participants at Parliamentary Kashmir Conference held here at Institute of Regional Studies, Shehryar Afridi said that the implementation of UNSC Resolutions on Kashmir was a collective responsibility of all the member states of the United Nations Security Council.

Shehryar Afridi said, "There is growing momentum among international Parliamentarians worldwide to work together to galvanize world conscience to halt India's aggression and make it accountable for its atrocities against Kashmiris in IIOJK." He gave these remarks on the celebration of 72nd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He said that the political leaders and legislators in several countries, including the US, Canada and Europe, including the Chairperson of the European Parliament have also expressed their concerns on IIOJK. Afridi said, "Pakistan is committed for peaceful resolution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute under Prime Minister of Pakistan's emphatic narra-

tive set in the UNGA Sessions through a full spectrum of Parliamentary and diplomatic outreach, engagement with media, think-tanks, academia, intelligentsia and civil society." While advocating for the right of self-determination to People of IIOJK, Shehryar Afridi said that Indian Occupation Forces cannot strip off the right of Kashmiri people to determine its own destiny as enshrined in UNSC resolutions under the auspices of UN. He said that Kashmiris' struggle for self-determination has gained a new impetus recently under Modi's regime. Shehryar Afridi said, "India has lost currency on its narrative of foreign involvement in Kashmir. He said that BJP regime's actions

are propelled by racist ideologies of fascist RSS." Indian occupation forces are martyring innocent Kashmiris in staged encounters under the garb of so-called cordon and search operations, "India's extra-judicial killing of hundreds of innocent Kashmiris including women and children is in complete violation of the fundamental precepts of international humanitarian law," said Afridi. Afridi said, "Pakistan has been constructively engaging with the international Human Rights mechanisms at the United Nations. Nationally, Pakistan has enacted wide ranging legislation, established strong institutional machinery and is putting in place robust policy measures in the field of Hu-

man Rights." Referring to a statement given by Noam Choamsky, Afridi said that India is constantly endangering regional peace by clinging to its Hindutva expansionist ideology. Narendra Modi is crushing Muslim rights and placing Kashmir under a vicious brutal rule. He said that the world knows that Jammu and Kashmir is an international dispute whose just solution lies in plebiscite so that innocent Kashmiris are free to determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. "The demographic apartheid is aimed at affecting the outcome of a plebiscite envisaged in the UN Security Council resolutions," said Afridi.

DIRBS
aiding
economic
growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Since the implementation of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority's (PTA) Device Identification Registration and Blocking System (DIRBS), the import of mobile devices via legal channels has increased from 17.2 Million in 2018 to 28.02 Million in 2019 (63% increase). In 2020, 32.83 million devices have so far been imported. PTA has blocked 175 thousand devices'IMEI reported as stolen through DIRBS. The system has also identified and blocked 24.3 Million fake/replica mobile devices and 657,645 IMEIs which were cloned/duplicated. The successful execution of the System has led to the establishment of 29 local assembly facilities. These facilities have produced over 20 million devices since 2019 with over 1.5 million 4G smart phones. The implementation of DIRBS has been the catalyst for local mobile devices manufacturing, providing level playing field to local manufacturers. It has also unleashed potential for placing Pakistan on the map of global mobile devices exporters. Furthermore, through DIRBS, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has collected a total of PKR 90 Billion in custom duties during Jan 2019 to Nov 2020 on formal imports. This is PKR 68 Billion more than custom duties collected in 2018 i.e. PKR 22 Billion (309% increase).

'0.5mln health
workers to
receive vaccine'

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for National Health Services Dr Nausheen Hamid Wednesday said that federal cabinet has finalized the plan for initiating COVID-19 vaccination drive in three phases, where around 0.5 million essential frontline health workers would receive the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine whenever it becomes available. Talking to a Private news channel, she said in the first phase, 10 million people will be administered COVID-19 vaccines including 0.5 million frontline essential health workers and 9.5 million population over 65 years of age. She said in the second phase, all health workers and population over 65 years of age will be administered the vaccines, adding, a defined proportion of the remaining population will be given COVID-19 vaccines in the third phase of the forthcoming drive.

The continuation of the drive will be made on the quantity of the available COVID-19 vaccines during the third phase, she added. Nausheen Hamid said the five-member committee of the federal cabinet will function as an oversight body for procurement of the COVID-19 vaccine.

She further said that several companies working on the development of a vaccine have been shortlisted and initial negotiations are under discussion. Dr Nausheen said the government will consider multiple factors before procuring a vaccine, which include: the type of vaccine, its efficacy, its safety and side effects, storage requirements, cost, production capacity of the manufacturer and whether Pakistan has access to procure that vaccine. — APP

PIMS
employees
protest
continues

ISLAMABAD: The medical and non-medical staff of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) on Wednesday continued their protest in favour of their demands. Addressing the protesters, speakers were on the view that if their demands are not accepted by the concerned authorities then there will be complete strike. They also urged for reviewing the decision about the Medical Teaching Institute (MTI) ordinance what they claimed for better functioning of the hospital matters. The protest was attended by doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff. Meanwhile due to protest of doctors a large number of patients suffered a lot in getting their treatment. — APP

A blow to privatisation

IT seems that the government has been forced to learn the lesson that, when an issue is being hotly contested in the public sphere, it is better to err on the side of caution when making public appointments. The federal government must have counted it as a loss to the privatisation process when on Monday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) set aside the notification regarding the formation of the Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCoP) and ruled that unelected advisers and special assistants could not head government's committees. The ruling is a blow to the privatisation process, no matter how one looks at it. The CCoP had been formed for one year—after a series of events this year; the need for privatisation for several institutions became evident. Even if the government appeals this, as it likely will considering key matters regarding the country's economy and employment are in question, this ruling will nonetheless delay and complicate the workings for the CCoP, on matters which require transparency and a smooth process. The main issue—whether unelected advisers and special assistants can head government's committees, is a debate which has been occurring for quite some time in parliament. What the right or wrong answer is in this regard is yet to be decided, as the government will likely appeal; however, this verdict does show that considering the wide number of parliamentary matters up for discussion, political parties need to choose their candidates to political positions carefully. There wouldn't be much need for special assistants if parties had effectively planned out the composition of their parliamentarians before running, preferring at least some experts at the top. Had all parties done that, included the top experts in at least some parliamentary positions, there wouldn't be this problem of bringing in an assortment of special assistants for all the important policy positions.

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Medical tragedy

IF the same incident occurred in some other country, it would have made front-page leads and led to a national outcry. But we are a people that are almost immune to the loss of life of our own citizens. This is what we saw at the Khyber Teaching Hospital in Peshawar on Saturday night, when six patients died due to a failure in the supply of oxygen and a decline in oxygen levels available to them. According to a report by the Board of Governors of the hospital, the problem arose because there was insufficient oxygen in the supply system of the hospital and no backup to deal with the problem. There have also been reports that the oxygen vendors for the hospital had not been paid in time and therefore oxygen was not being provided in sufficient quantities. A major problem appears to also have been the lack of training of staff on duty and their failure to point out the problem in due time. This contributed to the tragedy faced by the families of the patients, six of whom five were Covid patients while one was a child. We have seen similar incidents occur at hospitals across the country over the last many years. People have died due to negligence, lack of infrastructure and medical incompetence in cities like Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad and Peshawar; and the situation at smaller hospitals in rural areas can only be imagined. It is also ironic that the board of governors at the Khyber Teaching Hospital had for seven or eight years been chaired by Dr Faisal Sultan, now adviser to the prime minister. The PTI government had promised when it came to power that it would focus on two major areas health and policing. But healthcare has only continued to deteriorate. At the Khyber Teaching Hospital, the director of the hospital has been changed. But Taimur Jhagra, who holds the additional portfolio for health, has said this is not sufficient and that more measures are required. Essentially, we need to revamp our hospitals and set them up once again on more modern lines. This can happen only if our VIPs use these facilities rather than travelling abroad for treatment even for trivial illnesses. It is also true that while the elite make sure they themselves have well-maintained health facilities at their disposal, there has been a criminal lack of attention to delivering even basic facilities to the impoverished who use government hospitals. For them there is only suffering and very often death. Despite the multiple incidents we have heard about, over the years, under every government, there's been no change and the present government seems no different.

RSS-BJP Stampedes Basic Rights of Indian People

Iqbal Khan



The Organization of Islamic Countries resolution also deplored the state-sponsored terrorism and crimes against humanity by Indian occupation forces against the people of IIOJK. This alliance of Muslim countries censured extra-judicial killings during fake 'encounters' and 'search-and-cordon' operations and demolition of homes and private properties "as a form of collective punishment"

POLICE in northern India have arrested 10 men for allegedly compelling women to change their religion after getting married, under a new controversial anti-conversion law satirically called the "Love Jihad" law. Last month, Uttar Pradesh state became the first Indian province to pass the law. At least four other Indian states are drafting laws against "love jihad". The law has prompted outrage, with critics calling it Islamophobic. India under the rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is destroying the remnants of secular democracy, crushing Muslim rights and placing Kashmir under a vicious brutal rule, Professor Noam Chomsky, one of the greatest living intellectuals, stated on December 07. India is a natural member of the "reactionary international" most bitterly attacking and destroying democracy," Chomsky said. He warned that the world at the moment is at confluence of four severe crises: threat of nuclear war; environmental catastrophe, deterioration of democracy worldwide; and, Covid-19. Due to obstinate and eternal Human Rights violation, anti-India sentiment runs deep in illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Reports by a number of Human Right Watchdogs, over the recent years, have significantly helped in highlighting the gross human rights violations in Kashmir, including the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. After the UN Human Rights Commission reports of 2018 and 2019, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, European Parliament and the All-party Parliamentary Kashmir Group of the UK Parliament have also issued separate reports on human rights violations by the Indian troops in occupied Kashmir. Most of these reports acknowledge that Indian army is using rape as an instrument of war against the Kashmiri women. Moreover, in violation of the United Nations resolutions, India is settling Indian Hindus in the internationally recognized disputed territory of Kashmir in order to turn the Muslim majority state into a Hindu majority region. India has deployed more than half a million military troops in Kashmir – home to 12 million people – making it one of the most militarised zones in the world. New Delhi says its troops are stationed to quell the ongoing popular indigenous armed rebellion, whose latest spell erupted in 1989. Most recently, the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) has also condemned "in the strongest possible terms" the human rights violations perpetrated by Indian occupation forces in the occupied territory alongside other numerous instances of Indian State sponsored terrorism that have been the source of unspeakable suffering for the innocent Kashmiri people. The OIC is the

second largest inter-governmental organisation after the United Nations, with 57 members and five observer states spanning over four continents. The OIC resolution also deplored the state-sponsored terrorism and crimes against humanity by Indian occupation forces against the people of IIOJK. This alliance of Muslim countries censured extra-judicial killings during fake 'encounters' and 'search-and-cordon' operations and demolition of homes and private properties "as a form of collective punishment." It denounced the renewed use of pellet guns by the Indian occupation forces against innocent civilians and condemned the harassment of Kashmiri women by the Indian troops. The OIC condemned that India has callously exploited the current Covid-19 pandemic to intensify its military crackdown for further advancing its unlawful occupation in IIOJK. The resolution also appreciated the visit of OIC Secretary General's Special Envoy for Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). It also reaffirmed the sentiments expressed in the unanimously adopted Communiqués of the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir in its Ministerial meetings held on 25 September 2019 and 22 June 2020. This indicates that the OIC countries remain steadfastly committed to the Kashmir cause. The meeting of foreign ministers of Muslim countries have urged India to adhere to its international human rights obligations and allow the OIC special representative on Jammu and Kashmir and the OIC Fact-finding Mission to visit IIOJK. It also "strongly" urged India to implement recommendations of the two Reports of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Jammu and Kashmir and called upon international community to review their engagements with India—the occupying power—as it is violating and disregarding the international law, the international humanitarian law, and international resolutions. The OIC emphasised that the question of Kashmir is of utmost importance for the Muslim Ummah and recognised that Jammu and Kashmir is the core dispute between Pakistan and India, and its resolution indispensable for realisation of the dream of peace in South Asia. Indian Army has violated the ceasefire line and targeted the civilian population along the Line of Control (LoC) more than 2,700 times during the current year alone. As a consequence, dozens of people, mostly non-combatants, mostly innocent women and children, were martyred, scores were injured, and the civilian household properties damaged/destroyed. Pakistan Army in response to India's aggression, targeted only Indian military positions while avoiding the Kashmiri brethren living on the other side of the LoC.

The OIC in its resolution categorically rejected illegal and unilateral actions taken by the Indian government in occupied territory since August 5, 2019. "The [OIC] Resolution demands that India cancel the issuance of domicile certificates to non-Kashmiris as well as other unilateral and illegal actions, including 'Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Order 2020', 'Jammu & Kashmir Grant of Domicile Certificate Rules 2020', 'Jammu and Kashmir Language Bill 2020' and amendments to the landownership laws", said the resolution passed during a session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the OIC held in Niamey. Rejecting the draconian policies being pursued by the ruling RSS-BJP regime, the OIC asked India to refrain from taking any steps to alter the existing demographic structure of the disputed territory. Saudi Arabia has always supported Pakistan's stance on Kashmir from the platform of OIC. In Niger, the KSA once again robustly explained its stand on the dispute and helped highlight it on the global level. Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal Bin Farhan, in his address to the Niamey conference, stated in unequivocal terms that peace and security of South Asia was not possible without the settlement of the Kashmir conflict. Statement by Prince Faisal assumed more significance because Saudi Arabia is the current chair of the OIC. The people of Pakistan, and Jammu and Kashmir had expected that the brotherly country of Saudi Arabia would adopt a strong position on the situation of Kashmir, KSA obliged. Though UAE representative did not speak much, however, with KSA back on track, return of the UAE to its traditional stance on Kashmir is only a matter of time. As usual, New Delhi has rejected the OIC's unanimous resolution. Nonetheless, the OIC Resolution is further proof that India can neither hide its gross and systematic violations of human rights of the Kashmiri people and denial of their inalienable right to self-determination nor can it escape international censure about its egregious behaviour. RSS-BJP is certainly on the wrong side of history, with a snowballing India-wide farmers' revolt, it's hey days may already be over. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and several American congressmen recently voiced support for the peaceful farmers' protests in India, the first of which elicited a strong condemnation from the Indian government. It remains to be seen whether New Delhi will lash out at Washington as well. More than likely, India will not do so. Modi knows well which side of the bread is buttered. He does not have the choice of getting on the bad side of Biden. – The writer is a freelance columnist; e-mail: Iqbal.khan9999@yahoo.com

Turkey at crossroads as EU, US consider sanctions

Osama Al-Sharif



EU foreign ministers met in Berlin on Monday, ahead of a European leaders' summit on Thursday, and they paved the way for carefully planned measures against Ankara that could include sanctions and an arms embargo. The main issue here is Turkey's infringement on the sovereignty of two EU member states

TURKEY is facing one of its biggest challenges in recent times: The threat of punitive measures from its European neighbors and US ally over what is seen as its disruptive, provocative and destabilizing policies, as well as playing into the hands of Moscow. EU foreign ministers met in Berlin on Monday, ahead of a European leaders' summit on Thursday, and they paved the way for carefully planned measures against Ankara that could include sanctions and an arms embargo. The main issue here is Turkey's infringement on the sovereignty of two EU member states – Greece and Cyprus – in the eastern Mediterranean, where Ankara has sent vessels to explore for gas in what it says are contested maritime areas. Turkey's dismal human rights record will also feature in the talks. Meanwhile, during a virtual NATO foreign ministers meeting a week ago, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo launched what was described as a parting shot against his Turkish counterpart, Mevlut Cavusoglu, accusing Ankara of undermining NATO's security and creating instability in the eastern Mediterranean. He reportedly chided Turkey for sending paid Syrian fighters to Libya and for intervening in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He said that Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 air defense system was "a gift" to Moscow. Also last week, the US Senate approved a final version of the annual defense policy bill, which mandates the president to sanction Turkey for its acquisition of the S-400. President Donald Trump had previously opted not to punish Ankara for its 2017 purchase of the Russian system, which NATO claims is designed to target the sophisticated F-35 fighter aircraft. Turkey was removed from the F-35 program as a result. Pompeo's harsh language against Turkey sig-

naled a departure from the vague and tolerant approach that Trump had adopted over the controversial policies of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan with regard to his close ties to Russia and Iran and his roles in Syria and Libya. Erdogan is worried about the EU's growing hostility. Last month, while playing down the effect of sanctions on his country, he declared that Turkey, which continues to jockey for EU membership, sees itself as an inseparable part of Europe but will not give in to attacks and double standards. Germany has been trying, with little success, to ease the tensions between Erdogan and French President Emanuel Macron, which in recent weeks have got out of hand. Both men, facing domestic challenges, have tried to demonstrate a greater regional outreach. They differ on Syria, Libya, political Islam, Ankara's ties to Moscow and its effect on NATO's unity, and now the conflict between Turkey and Greece. Amid heated verbal exchanges, Erdogan last Friday called on the French to dump their leader at the ballot box in 2022, when Macron is expected to seek re-election. However, Erdogan's aides have sent conciliatory signals to Brussels ahead of this week's EU summit. The leaders will try to avoid a head-to-head clash with Turkey. If approved, the sanctions will be measured and conditional on future provocations by Turkey. A crisis with the EU will have a negative impact on the unity of NATO. Erdogan recently suggested that the North Atlantic alliance should replace Turkey's military presence in Libya – a suggestion that did not find many takers. There is no doubt that, with Trump's imminent departure from the White House, Erdogan knows that Washington's behavior toward his country and on other regional issues will change dramatically. The next president, Joe Biden, will

seek to rebuild America's military and commercial alliance with the EU. NATO will once more emerge as the cornerstone of that alliance. Turkey will have to choose whether it wants to be an integral member of NATO or stand with Russia and Iran. It cannot do both. Erdogan's domestic challenges – a growing opposition even among former allies, a struggling economy, a bleak human rights record, and costly regional adventures – will come back to haunt him. Despite his maverick style, Erdogan is a pragmatist at heart and he is unlikely to sacrifice his country's relationship with Europe, as Turkey is the EU's fifth-largest trading partner. Furthermore, the US and Europe will not accept further Turkish infringements on the sovereignty of Greece and Cyprus, and will seek to put additional pressure on Ankara to accept a negotiated settlement. The chances are that we will see a less defiant Erdogan in the coming weeks – one who will reconsider his country's long-term regional priorities and interests, its relationships with its neighbors, and its strategic alliances as the US reverts to multilateralism under Biden. In response to the latest Turkish overtures, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell attempted to reciprocate by stating last week that the EU and Turkey share a "common interest in developing a good neighborhood." He added that the EU leaders had decided to seek engagement with Turkey and evaluate the situation according to whether a more positive approach would be seen from the Turkish side. The ball is now in Erdogan's court and his next move will be crucial to his own political survival. – Osama Al-Sharif is a journalist and political commentator based in Amman. Twitter: @plato110 – Courtesy Arab News

Briefs

Pakistani cricketers start training

SPORTS DESK

QUEENSTOWN: Members of the Pakistan squad took part in the first practice and training session after 14 days of isolation on the tour of New Zealand. The squad was allowed to train after serving their time in a managed isolation and quarantine. They practiced for three hours in Queenstown today. Pakistan team training session at Queenstown. The national team and Shaheens' squad trained respectively. Shaheens practiced under the supervision of junior head coach Ijaz Ahmed while the national team did light training under head coach Misbah-ul-Haq and batting coach Younis Khan. Pakistan Shaheens training session at Queenstown. Meanwhile, middle-order batsman Haris Sohail and leg-spinner Usman Qadir expressed their views on the sidelines of the training session. Haris said that they have missing training for the last 14 days and the boys enjoyed their first practice session. "Everyone looked excited about the first net session today and after a gap of two weeks, we did light training. Our aim is to adapt the conditions slowly." The 27-year-old Usman Qadir in awe of Queenstown's ground and its outfield and is confident that the team will get rhythm ahead of the T20I series. "It was hard to spend the quarantine period but we are pleased that time has passed," said Usman. "We can burden ourselves with excessive training but we are positive of getting used to the conditions before the first T20I," he added. Note, Pakistan Shaheens are scheduled to play a one-off four-day match against New Zealand 'A' from December 17 while the national team will play their first T20I against Black Caps on December 18 in Auckland.

More sectors may be closed: Asad

From Page 01

operating procedures (SOPs) to contain spread of the second of COVID-19. Asad Umar said Pakistan successfully overcame the first wave of the pandemic, and it can again achieve the same success by adhering to the SOPs. The Minister said the government has made some important and difficult decisions to control the pandemic, which proved quite effective. He said the government will soon announce relief package for the sectors closed in the second wave of the pandemic.

The Minister said Prime Minister Imran Khan will chair a meeting of National Coordination Committee on COVID-19 on Thursday to review the latest situation about Coronavirus in the country and take necessary decisions. He said the meeting will also be attended by the provincial chief ministers. The Minister regretted that people are not following the SOPs of Coronavirus as they did during the first wave. He said National Command and Operation Center has witnessed sixty deaths per day on average and four percent increase in Corona patients during the last two months. Asad Umar paid tributes to the doctors and paramedics who are rendering their services to help people in the pandemic.

India fined for minimum over-rate

SYDNEY: India have been fined 20 per cent of their match fee for maintaining a slow over-rate against Australia in the third T20I held at the Sydney Cricket Ground on December 8. David Boon of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees imposed the sanction after India was one over short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration, said a press release issued here.

In accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined 20 per cent of their match fees for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time. Captain, Virat Kohli pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing. — APP



ISLAMABAD: China's newly appointed ambassador to Pakistan, Nong Rong calls on federal minister for education, professional training, national heritage and culture, Shafqat Mehmood. — DNA

Some conditions on EU trade deal 'unacceptable': Johnson

"Whatever happens from January 1, this country will be able to get on with our points-based immigration system, instituting low tax free ports, introducing higher animal welfare standards, doing free trade deals and getting our money back," he added

DNA

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said some of the conditions on a post-Brexit trade deal are "unacceptable," but the "deal is still there to be done" with the EU. Johnson said the EU wants the UK to follow their rules even if the bloc have new legislation in the future and also to be the only country in the world to give up sovereignty over fishing waters. "This is not something any prime minister would agree", Johnson said in a weekly parliament session where he responds to questions from lawmakers. Those conditions are "unacceptable", he added. Johnson's remarks came hours before

he travels to Brussels to hold a last-minute meeting with EU leaders on a post-Brexit trade deal. He noted the government secured a withdrawal agreement.

"Whatever happens from January 1, this country will be able to get on with our points-based immigration system, instituting low tax free ports, introducing higher animal welfare standards, doing free trade deals and getting our money back," he added. Johnson will meet EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to discuss the sticking points of trade deal over a dinner. "I look forward to welcoming UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson tomorrow evening," von der Leyen tweeted on Tuesday.



"We will continue our discussion on the Partnership Agreement," she wrote. Britain said on Tuesday it will drop articles of its Internal Market Bill, which contradict the UK Withdrawal Agreement. Cabinet Office Minister Michael Gove said "agreement in principle" on all issues in the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement Joint

Committee was reached following a meeting with European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic. The trade deal needs to be finalized and ratified should it be agreed upon before the transition period ends to avoid chaos for businesses. The UK left the EU at the end of January but a transition period to allow the parties to work on a trade deal kicked in until the end of the year. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Boris Johnson was headed for Brussels on Wednesday, with hopes for a post-Brexit trade deal hanging on crisis talks with EU chief Ursula von der Leyen. Johnson's dash back to the city where he made his name as an EU-bashing newspaper reporter marks an almost final chance of a

breakthrough before Britain leaves the EU single market. "A good deal is still there to be done," Johnson told the UK parliament before setting off for Brussels, while insisting Britain would "prosper mightily" with or without agreement. Talks are blocked over the issue of fair competition, with Britain refusing to accept a mechanism that would allow the EU to respond swiftly if UK and EU business rules diverge over time and put European firms at a disadvantage. "Our friends in the EU are currently insisting that if they pass a new law in the future, with which we in this country do not comply, they want the automatic right... to punish us and to retaliate," Johnson said.



LAHORE: Delegation of CGSS meeting with Vice Chancellor of Punjab University. — DNA

Barca crisis deepens as Juventus win

SPORTS DESK

MADRID: Cristiano Ronaldo scored two penalties as Juventus won 3-0 away to FC Barcelona to leapfrog Ronald Koeman's side and finish top of UEFA Champions League Group G. Barca's first home defeat after 38 Champions League matches unbeaten in the Camp Nou came just four days after their 2-1 La Liga defeat to Cadiz, and another impotent display must raise questions about Koeman's future at the club.

Both sides went into the final group game assured of their place in the last 16 of the competition, with Barca favorites to finish top and have a

more favorable last 16 draw after their 2-0 win in Turin earlier in the group stage. Koeman brought Ronald Araujo into his side after injury and rested Sergio Busquets, but his side were soon trailing after a disastrous start to the game.

Only 12 minutes were on the clock when Juan Cuadrado got past Araujo, who was looking rusty after several weeks out, and the young defender pulled him down to allow Ronaldo to put Juventus ahead from the penalty spot. Eight minutes later it was 2-0 to Juventus, as Cuadrado found space down the Juventus right and his cross into the area was met by Weston McKennie, whose volley left Marc Andre Ter Stegen with no chance.

Shafqat felicitates Chinese ambassador

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China's newly appointed Ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong Wednesday called on the Federal Minister for Education, Professional Training, National Heritage and Culture Shafqat Mahmood. The federal minister felicitated the ambassador on his appointment to Pakistan and hoped that Pakistan-China ties will further deepen and strengthened based on his vast experience and professionalism. Both sides exchanged views on range of bilateral issues of mutual interest and cooperation. Shafqat Mahmood said that a large number of Pakistani students were studying and researching in China and the latter is providing scholarships generously which speaks the stronger ties of both countries in educational sector. The minister also emphasized to set-up a special working group between two countries in the fields of Education, Vocational Training that is an important part of CPEC, and the Culture. Exchanging views on first Pakistani military action movie titled "Parwaaz hey Junoon" to enter Chinese cinemas in 45 years, both sides has reiterated, it is the beginning of cultural exchange program and more movies, dramas, cultural activities and performances would be introduced in near future. The minister stressed upon the people to people contact between both the countries for promotion of cultural activities, vocational and technical training once the pandemic situation is normal. Exchanging views on COVID-19 pandemic, the minister commended the unprecedented measures of China to control the pandemic and also discussed the progress on Chinese Vaccine.

Pakistan rejects US designation

From Page 01

Systematic demonization, dispossession, marginalization and targeted violence against Muslims using the communal slur of "love jihad" in Hindutva-inspired India has become commonplace. The findings and recommendations of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom as well as the U.S. Congressional hearings on the maltreatment of minorities in India and the violation of religious freedom all over the country including in the Muslim-majority Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) were ignored by the U.S. State Department.

CL: PSG, Istanbul walk out over racism

SPORTS DESK

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain and Istanbul Basaksehir staged an unprecedented joint walkout over racism by a Champions League match official on Tuesday, prompting UEFA, the sport's European governing body, to suspend the game and launch an investigation.

The final group game between the two teams, which took place at the Princes Park stadium in Paris, was postponed until Wednesday after players walked off the field saying that fourth official Sebastian Coltescu of Romania used a racial term when identifying Basaksehir's Cameroonian assistant coach, Pierre Webo. "I strongly condemn the racist remarks made against Pierre Webo, one of our representatives in the Basaksehir's technical team, and I believe that the necessary steps will be taken by UEFA. We are unconditionally against racism and discrimination in sports and all areas of life," said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Twitter. The flashpoint came on the touchline 14 minutes into the game and an enraged Webo demanded an explanation from Coltescu, repeating at least six times: "Why you say negro?" before he was sent off for his conduct on the sidelines. "You are racist," Basaksehir coach Okan Buruk said to Coltescu. The exchanges were broadcast live around the world from football's biggest club competition. Both teams turned to Twitter to express their disapproval of the events.

SA confirms first tour to Pakistan in 14 years

This will be South Africa's first visit to Pakistan since the 2007 tour when they won the Karachi Test by 160 runs to clinch the series 1-0. The subsequent series in 2010 and 2013 were played in the UAE

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board on Wednesday announced details of South Africa men's cricket team's first tour to Pakistan in 14 years. The tour will comprise two ICC World Test Championship fixtures and three Twenty20 Internationals. South Africa will arrive in Karachi on 16 January and will play the first Test at the National Stadium in Karachi from 26-30 January. They will then travel to Rawalpindi where the second Test will be held from 4-8 February. The iconic Gaddafi Stadium, headquarters of Pakistan cricket, will be the venue of the three T20Is, which are scheduled for 11, 13 and 14 February. Upon arrival in Karachi and in the lead up to the first Test, South Africa will ob-

serve an isolation period following which they will hold training sessions and play intra-squad practice matches. This will be South Africa's first visit to Pakistan since the 2007 tour when they won the Karachi Test by 160 runs to clinch the series 1-0. The subsequent series in 2010 and 2013 were played in the United Arab Emirates. Since 1995, the two sides have played 11 Test series with South Africa winning seven and Pakistan one in 2003. In this background, Babar Azam's side will be determined to end the 18-year series win drought and move up in the ICC World Test Championship ladder. Separately, South Africa is ranked sixth in the ICC Test team rankings, while Pakistan is seventh. As for the T20Is, this will be the first time the two sides will go head to head in Pakistan, having

previously played the two series in the United Arab Emirates. South Africa won both the series. PCB Director - International, Zakir Khan: "South Africa confirming a tour to Pakistan and playing matches at the three major centres is a fabulous news for Pakistan cricket and its fans. South Africa is one of the most popular sides in Pakistan even though they last played here in 2007, but the fans have been following their performances closely and now look forward to welcoming them. "Cricket South Africa and its players have a special bonding with Pakistan as a number of their star players visited Lahore with the ICC World XI in 2017 and have appeared in the HBL Pakistan Super League with Faf du Plessis being the latest addition after featuring in the playoffs in Karachi.

"2021 promises to be a bumper and most exciting year for Pakistan cricket fans after a very long time. After South Africa, we are scheduled to host New Zealand, England and the West Indies, while our away series are against South Africa, Zimbabwe, England, Afghanistan and the West Indies. "If these high-profile and exciting series are topped up with the Asia Cup 2021 and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021, Pakistan cricket fans can brace themselves for an exciting and action-packed year. "The home series against South Africa will complete the process for full resumption and restoration of international cricket in Pakistan, which started in 2015. However, the process got the real shot in the arm in the 2019-20 season when Pakistan hosted Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Marylebone

Cricket Club as well as the HBL Pakistan Super League 2020. "2020 has been a challenging year for the world sport, but the PCB has approached the season proactively and strategically while looking at the future. Consequently, we have been able to successfully deliver nearly 60 per cent of matches in the 2020-21 season, including an international series against Zimbabwe, who returned home extremely happy and satisfied with the operational and logistical arrangements we had put in place. "As has been the case in the ongoing season, we will leave no stone unturned in the health and safety of South Africa and Pakistan sides so that players from both sides can play their best cricket in the Test and T20I series, and entertain the fans across the globe with their skills."

Briefs

Azerbaijan submits report on foreign fighters

DNA

BAKU: Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan in the UN prepared and sent a report covering the comprehensive report on foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) used by Armenia against Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, Azerbaijani media reports citing UN in Azerbaijan.

The report said that over the years, Armenia has systematically and deliberately pursued the goal of cementing the occupation and securing the annexation of the seized Azerbaijani territories. The report covers such aspects as recruitment, names, organizations, countries of origin, travel arrangement, training and deployment, payment, and benefits of the FTFs.

"Being against the political settlement, which rejects the status-quo based on the unlawful use of force, Armenia has undertaken a chain of provocative actions to undermine the peace process. The illegal transfer of settlers and foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria into the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is among such actions," the report said.

The report noted that the Government of Armenia has provided accommodation, training, and logistical maintenance of FTFs in the occupied territories to prepare them for terrorist and combat operations against Azerbaijan. "Training camps had been established by Armenia under the instruction of PKK and ASALA terrorist organizations. The transfer of FTFs intensified immediately after Armenia had perpetrated another act of aggression on 27 September 2020," the report said.

Forced displacement tops 80M: UN

MONITORING DESK

NEW YORK: Despite calls for ceasefires and compassion amid the coronavirus pandemic, violence and persecution have continued to force people from their homes, with record numbers now displaced, says the United Nations.

By the end of 2019, 79.5 million people were living uprooted and displaced, including nearly 30 million refugees - more than one percent of the world's population. The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) on Wednesday said preliminary figures showed more people had been forced to flee in 2020, pushing the number past 80 million. "We are now surpassing another bleak milestone that will continue to grow unless world leaders stop wars," UNHCR, the UN's refugee agency chief Filippo Grandi said in a statement.

In March, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had called for a global ceasefire while the world fights the pandemic, which has now killed more than 1.5 million people.

UK says will drop tariffs on US goods

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: The United Kingdom will suspend retaliatory tariffs imposed on US goods as part of a dispute over aircraft subsidies from January 1, the trade department said, describing the move as an attempt to de-escalate a damaging international trade conflict. The decision marks the start of the UK's divergence from European Union trade policy, coming into effect on the day its exit from the bloc's rules and regulations is complete and signals an ambition to forge closer ties with the United States. The trillion-dollar tit-for-tat tariff battle between the US and the EU relates to a long-running dispute over state subsidies for aircraft manufacturers Airbus and Boeing.

"Ultimately, we want to de-escalate the conflict and come to a negotiated settlement so we can deepen our trading relationship with the US and draw a line under all this," trade minister Liz Truss said in a statement. No comment was immediately available from the US government or the EU.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Kuninori Matsuda calls on special assistant to the Prime Minister on information and broadcasting, Raof Hassan at ministry of information and broadcasting. - DNA

Systemic efforts needed to combat corruption: Klaus Lohannis

"Whether we are talking about political, financial, administrative or academic corruption, corruption in the health system or in education, it is absolutely fundamental for the health of the state and society that this phenomenon be firmly combated by the responsible institutions

BUCHAREST: President Klaus Iohannis has said in his International Anticorruption Day message that it is "absolutely fundamental" to the health of the state and society that the phenomenon of corruption be firmly combated by the responsible institutions, whether it is political, financial, administrative or academic corruption. Corruption in the health system or in education.

"The progress of the Romanian society in recent years in terms of the fight against corruption is visible, but the effort of the institutions in this direction must be continuous and

sustained, fully respecting the principle that no one is above the law," said Iohannis. "International Anti-Corruption Day, established by the United Nations Convention against Corruption, is an opportunity to remind us that our efforts, of all, for a better society, in which integrity is assumed at all levels, must continue in a sustained manner. Corruption is a complex phenomenon, deeply rooted in the practices of those who seek to use public power for personal or group interest. In a broad sense, corruption is not just about taking and bribing. Bribery, nepotism,



abuse of power are all forms of this scourge that is, in fact, eroding the development of a society, "Klaus

Iohannis said in a message sent on Wednesday, on the occasion of the International Anticorruption Day. He stressed that sanctions must be such as to discourage corruption.

"Whether we are talking about political, financial, administrative or academic corruption, corruption in the health system or in education, it is absolutely fundamental for the health of the state and society that this phenomenon be firmly combated by the responsible institutions. The sanctioning dimension must, indeed, be such as to discourage these harmful behaviors that do a lot of harm to society and slow down its progress", said the head of state.

Iohannis added, however, that education plays an important role.

"At the same time, without a systemic preventive effort, focused on building a culture of integrity, fighting corruption will not be enough. The education system trains future citizens, and the assumption of behavioral values and their internalization is achieved from the first stages of youth development. It is, therefore, necessary to discuss more about values and morality in schools, in a practical, interactive way", Iohannis said. - APP

Indonesia holds nationwide poll amid coronavirus warnings

JAKARTA: Indonesia held nationwide regional elections Wednesday with more than 100 million voters eligible to cast a ballot, despite warnings the poll would worsen the nation's Covid-19 crisis.

The archipelago of nearly 270 million - the world's third-biggest democracy and fourth most populous nation - delayed the vote originally set for September as it struggled to contain soaring infection rates. From the capital Jakarta to the holiday island of Bali, polling station staff in full protective gear enforced social distancing and took voters' temperatures before polls closed at 1:00 pm local time (0600 GMT).

Abdul Rahman Wahab, 24, admitted he was nervous about turning up to vote on Sulawesi island. "Health is my priority for sure, but voting is also an important part of our life in a democratic country," he said. Islamist parties are looking to score big gains in the world's biggest Muslim-majority nation as they ride a tide of rising religious conservatism.

In the second-biggest city Surabaya workers followed the tradition of donning superhero costumes, dressing as Spiderman to lure voters in. Others were tasked with taking ballot boxes into hospitals so that Covid patients could vote from their sickbeds. "All polling

stations were disinfected," said Suprianto, head of a polling station committee in Jakarta's Ciputat district, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

"We made spaces as wide as possible to allow for social distancing. Voters were also required to wear masks. If you don't, then you won't be allowed in the polling station."

Voter Nur Oktaviani said the precautions had put her at ease. "I'm not worried," the 24-year-old told AFP. "Here, they're complying with health protocols."

- 'High risk' -

Hundreds of hopefuls - including President Joko Widodo's eldest son - are vying for 270 positions, including regional governors, district heads and mayors. Official results are not expected for several weeks.

At least four election candidates have died so far, according to independent research group Laporcovid, and more than 1,000 election agency staff were infected ahead of voting day. Over 580,000 Indonesians have contracted the illness while the death toll stands at 18,000. But the true scale of the crisis is widely believed to be much bigger, as testing rates are low. Infections could skyrocket above one million after polling day, warned Hermawan Saputra at the Indonesian Public Health Experts' Association. - APP

UAE registers China's Sinopharm vaccine

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates on Wednesday officially registered the coronavirus vaccine produced by Chinese drug giant Sinopharm, saying it was 86 percent effective according to analysis of third-phase trials. The health ministry "has announced the official registration" of the vaccine, state news agency WAM said, without elaborating on how it would now be used.

The vaccine has been undergoing third-phase trials in the Emirates since July, and it was approved for emergency use for healthcare workers in September. "The announcement is a significant vote of confidence by the UAE's health authorities in the safety and efficacy of this vaccine," WAM said. UAE health officials have reviewed Sinopharm's interim analysis of the third-phase trials

which shows it is 86 percent effective against coronavirus, the report said. "The analysis also shows the vaccine to have 99 percent seroconversion rate of neutralising antibody and 100 percent effectiveness in preventing moderate and severe cases of the disease. "Furthermore, the analysis shows no serious safety concerns." China has four vaccine products in the final stages of development,

three of which - including Sinopharm - use an inactivated form of the novel coronavirus to boost immunity. This means they only need to be refrigerated and can be easily distributed compared to jabs developed by rivals Pfizer and BioNTech or Moderna, which have reported efficacy of 95 percent and 94 percent respectively but need to be transported at minus 70 to 20 degrees Celsius. - APP



BANGKOK: Don Pramudwinai, deputy Prime Minister and minister of foreign affairs of Thailand visited the embassy and recorded a condolence message on behalf of the Thai government on the passing away of former Prime Minister of Pakistan Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali. - DNA

US blacklists Iran's envoy to Yemen's Houthis

Iran announced Irlu's arrival in Yemen's Houthi controlled capital Sanaa in October. The Iran-backed Houthi seized Sanaa in 2014 forcing the internationally recognised government to flee and sparking the conflict that has devastated the country

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: The US imposed terrorism-related sanctions Tuesday on Iran's envoy to the Houthi militants in Yemen. Despite Iran describing him as an "ambassador," Hasan Irlu operates for the overseas wing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) known as the Quds Force, the US Treasury Department said. Iran's Al-Mustafa International University was also targeted with sanctions for serving as a platform for Quds Force operations and re-

ruitment abroad. Iran-based Pakistani citizen Yousef Ali Muraj was designated for helping the Quds Force "coordinate, plan and execute operations in the Middle East and United States." Iran announced Irlu's arrival in Yemen's Houthi controlled capital Sanaa in October. The Iran-backed Houthi seized Sanaa in 2014 forcing the internationally recognised government to flee and sparking the conflict that has devastated the country. "By dispatching Irlu to Yemen, the IRGC-QF is signalling its intent to increase support to the Houthis and further compli-

cate international efforts to reach a negotiated settlement to the conflict," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said as the sanctions were announced. "The IRGC-QF is the Iranian regime's primary tool to sow chaos and destruction across the Middle East," Pompeo added. The United States will continue to take action against the IRGC-QF to disrupt its facilitation networks and cut off resources that support the terrorist group's activities." In its designation, the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control said Iran's dispatch or Irlu as an en-

voy to the Houthis made it the only country to recognise the militia as a government. "For years, Irlu supported IRGC-QF efforts to provide advanced weapons and training to the Houthis," the designation said. "He coordinated with other senior IRGC-QF leaders to support the group's operations throughout the Arabian Peninsula and Yemen." Irlu, who appeared with Houthi officials weeks after his arrival in Sanaa, is accused of helping train another Iranian regional proxy - the Lebanese group Hezbollah. He also coordinated with Iranian Quds Force commander Qassem

Soleimani, who was killed by a US strike in Baghdad in January. Al-Mustafa International University, which claims to have branches in more than 50 countries, was sanctioned for helping the Quds Force, which the US and many other countries consider a terrorist organization. The university allows its student body to serve as an international recruitment network, the designation said. "The IRGC-QF uses Al-Mustafa University to develop student exchanges with foreign universities for the purposes of indoctrinating and recruiting foreign sources," it said.

'There is 'still a chance' for Brexit accord'

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Wednesday she still saw a "chance" for a deal with Britain on leaving the European Union but warned that the bloc would reject "unacceptable" terms.

Speaking ahead of crunch talks between British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and EU chief Ursula von der Leyen, Merkel displayed cautious optimism about a post-Brexit trade agreement. "There is still a chance for a deal," said Merkel, who holds the rotating EU presidency, but warned "we must not endanger the integrity of the common market". - APP

World set for 3C warming despite pandemic: UN

PARIS: Earth remains on course to warm more than 3 degrees Celsius by the century's end despite a dip in greenhouse gas emissions due to the pandemic and pledges to curb pollution, the UN said Wednesday.

In its annual assessment of emissions levels, the UN's Environment Programme found that 2020's 7-percent fall in carbon pollution would have "negligible impact" on warming without a broad and rapid shift away from fossil fuels.

The Emissions Gap report analyses the gulf between action required under the Paris climate deal and emissions cuts currently planned by countries. It found that a "green recovery" from the pandemic, in which emerging net-zero pledges are accelerated, could shave 25 percent off of emissions by 2030. This would bring the world closer to levels required to limit warming to 2C (3.6 Fahrenheit), as stipulated under Paris. With just over 1C of warming since pre-industrial times, Earth is already experiencing stronger and more frequent droughts, wildfires and superstorms rendered deadlier by rising seas. "Obviously the world has been in lockdown. During this time we saw a 7 percent decline in emissions," UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen told AFP.

"But we also know that the answer is not to lock up the world and have 1.9 billion children out of school."

She said Wednesday's report showed that a green pandemic recovery "can take a huge slice out of greenhouse gas emissions and help slow climate change". - APP

UK investigates possible allergic reactions to vaccine

LONDON: United Kingdom regulators have had two reports of possible allergic reactions from people who took part in the first day of Britain's mass vaccination programme against COVID-19. Dr June Raine, head of the UK's medical regulatory agency, MHRA, reported those reactions as she testified Wednesday to a parliamentary committee. The UK began vaccinating elderly people and medical workers with a vaccine developed by American drugmaker Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech on Tuesday, the world's first roll-out of the vaccine. "We're looking at two case reports of allergic reactions," she said. "We know from the very extensive clinical trials that this wasn't a feature. "But if we need to strengthen our advice, now that we have had this experience with the vulnerable populations, the groups who have been selected as a priority, we get that advice to the field immediately," she said. Raine's comments came as part of a general discussion of how her agency will continue to monitor people who receive the Pfizer vaccine, which was authorised for emergency use last week. Health officials said people who have a "significant history" of allergic reactions should not receive the new vaccine while experts investigate the reactions. Professor Stephen Powis, national medical director for the National Health Service in England, said health authorities were acting on a recommendation from the MHRA. "As is common with new vaccines, the MHRA has advised, on a precautionary basis, that people with a significant history of allergic reactions do not receive this vaccination after two people with a history of significant allergic reactions responded adversely yesterday," Powis said in a statement. "Both are recovering well."

Briefs

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan decrease 12%

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's exports of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed a decrease of 12.55 percent during the first four months of current financial year (2020-21) compared to the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

The overall exports to Afghanistan were recorded at \$296.463 million during July-October (2020-21) against exports of \$339.033 million during July-October (2019-20), showing negative growth of 12.55 percent, SBP data revealed. Meanwhile, on year-to-year basis, the exports to Afghanistan October 2020 also decreased by 8.89 percent, from \$95.054 million against the exports of \$86.595 million. On month-on-month basis, the exports of Afghanistan however witnessed an increase of 0.59 percent during October 2020 when compared to the exports of \$86.083 million in September 2020.

Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed decline of 10.28 percent in four months, from \$8.173 billion to \$7.332 billion, the SBP data revealed. On the other hand, the imports from Afghanistan into the country during the period under review were recorded at \$33.138 million against \$38.815 million last year, showing decreased of 14.62 percent in four months of this year.

Meanwhile, on year-to-year basis, the imports from Afghanistan during October 2020 however increased by 14.63 percent, from \$13.362 million last year to \$15.318 million.

On month-on-month basis, the import from Afghanistan also increased by 84.42 percent during October 2020 when compared to the import of \$8.306 million in September 2020, the SBP data revealed.

Noose around PML-N leaders tightened

DNA

LAHORE: According to sources, Anti-Corruption has tightened noose around Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders and decided to investigate Khawaja Asif, Javed Latif, Khuram Dastgir, Sheikh Akram, Sheikh Rohail Asghar and Sher Ali Khan among others. According to sources, investigations have been started for illegal housing society against Khawaja Asif, illegal occupation of state land against Mian Javed Latif, illegal occupation of PCB land, illegal wagon stand, service station, 5 shops and illegal construction of plaza on highway land.

League leader Khuram Dastgir is under investigation for setting up a petrol pump, Gulistan Cinema and Plaza on government land, Sheikh Rohail Asghar for building an illegal commercial land, an illegal biscuit factory and an illegal housing society on government land.

Speakers stress religious harmony; inter-faith dialogue

The participants extended appreciations to the efforts to the conveners, Androulla Kaminara, Ambassador of the European Union, and Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khair Azad, Chairman of the Interfaith Council for Peace and Harmony Pakistan, for their tireless efforts in convening the event

A.M.BHATTI/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Interfaith and Peace Council organized a roundtable discussion for the promotion of interfaith and intra-faith dialogue and understanding today. The event was supported by the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan.

Religious leaders from all Islamic Sects and religious minorities in Pakistan, faith-based organizations, civil society organizations, human rights and legal professionals as well as academics participated in the roundtable. The discussion aimed to seek common ground between participants in order to promote religious harmony and tolerance. Following the one-day discussion, participants committed to continue working together. They vowed to work for all constitutional rights to be extended to all citizens of Pakistan



irrespective of religion, creed, colour, and race. The participants vowed to ensure that the message of inclusion and inter- and intra-faith harmony will be spread and amplified from the pulpits, places of worship of all religions and the platforms of other fora. The closing session took place in presence of the Ambassadors and diplomats of Belgium, Can-

ada, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom as well as France, Germany, Hungary, Romania and Spain.

While addressing the closing session, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Allama Dr. Peer Noor ul Haq Qadri, referred to the 'Message of Pakistan', which guarantees the protection of the non-Muslim population of the country, all civil rights and the freedom of worship and faith, and which declares suicide attacks in the name of religion as contrary to the spirit of Islam.

The participants extended appreciations to the efforts to the conveners, Androulla Kaminara, Ambassador of the European Union, and Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khair Azad, Chairman of the Interfaith Council for Peace and Harmony Pakistan, for their tireless efforts in convening the event.

Saudi envoy, FM Qureshi discuss bilateral ties



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Saeed Al Malkiy called on Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. DNA

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malkiy has called on Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in Islamabad. The two sides discussed bilateral relations and enhancement of cooperation.

The Foreign Minister said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have tremendous opportunities of promotion of bilateral cooperation in various fields, and they need to be exploited. He said the two countries have deep historical relations. He said a large number of Pakistanis have been residing in

Saudi Arabia for several decades and playing their role in progress and development of Saudi Arabia. Shah Mahmood Qureshi expressed gratitude to the Saudi Foreign Minister and Saudi government for supporting Pakistan's resolution on Kashmir at the OIC Foreign Ministers

Council meeting. He said the OIC's reiteration of its principled stance regarding Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir in Niamey Declaration is commendable. The Foreign Minister said Pakistan supports the efforts for peaceful resolution of issues in the Gulf region.

Pakistan-China joint air exercise 'Shaheen-IX' starts

Shaheen-IX is the ninth in the series of Joint Air Exercises which is conducted each year in both countries on alternate basis

ISLAMABAD: Pak-China Joint Air Exercise "Shaheen-IX" has started at an Operational Air Base of Pakistan Air Force today. The contingent of People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), comprising combat Pilots, Air Defence Controllers and technical ground crew is participating in the exercise.

The opening ceremony of the exercise was jointly witnessed by Air Vice Marshal Waqas Ahmed Sulehri, Deputy Chief of Air Staff (Operations), PAF and Major General Sun Hong, Assistant Chief of Staff, PLAAF. Major General Sun Hong said, "The Joint Exercise will improve the actual level of combat training and strengthen practical cooperation between the two Air Forces".

Welcoming the Chinese contingent, Air Vice Marshal Waqas Ahmed Sulehri said, "The joint exercise will provide an opportunity to further enhance interoperability of both the Air Forces, thereby fortifying brotherly relations between the two countries." Shaheen-IX is the ninth in the series of Joint Air Exercises which is conducted each year in both countries on alternate basis. - DNA

Norway keen to work with Biden

OSLO: Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soreide (H) sees opportunities for more cooperation with the United States when Joe Biden takes over as president. "Although we can expect a large degree of continuity in many issues of importance to us, the change of president in some areas may allow for increased cooperation with the United States, for example, related to global climate issues and global health," Eriksen Soreide said in the Norwegian parliament (Storting) on Tuesday. - DNA

WB announces \$300m for Pak natural disasters

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors on Wednesday approved \$300 million in financing for two projects in Pakistan the Sindh Resilience Project and the Solid Waste Emergency and Efficiency Project. These investments will bolster Pakistan's efforts to build resilience to natural hazards such as floods and droughts in the Sindh province, and will strengthen solid waste management in Karachi to tackle recurrent urban flooding and public health emergencies in the city. "Building resilience to natural disasters and health emergencies is an important and urgent agenda in Pakistan, that will help save lives and protect the economy," said Najy Benhassine, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan in a statement issued here. "The debilitating impact of recent floods in Karachi, droughts and extreme rainfall in Sindh, and of course the COVID-19 pandemic, make it imperative that risk reduction investments strengthen multi-sectoral dialogue and coordination at the city, provincial, and national levels to ensure protections for vulnerable communities and fight the spread of disease." The US\$200 million Sindh Resilience Project Additional Financing will help the government better manage climate and disaster risks, including floods, droughts, and public health emergencies. The project will strengthen linkages between disaster risk management and the health sector by establishing the Sindh Emergency Service to strengthen capacity for disaster preparedness and emergency response, including health crises such as COVID-19.

The project also improves irrigation infrastructure to protect vulnerable communities living in rural areas, which will directly benefit 750,000 citizens in drought-prone areas of Kirthar range hills and the Nagarparkar region in the Tharparkar District. "The establishment of Sindh Emergency Service will greatly enhance the government's responsiveness to natural disasters and emergencies, particularly in a megacity like Karachi where many lives are lost due to insufficient emergency medical services," said Ahsan Tehsin, Task Team Leader for the Sindh Resilience Project. - DNA

Mercury drops to minus 21 in Diامر

CHILAS: Temperatures dropped in upper areas of Diامر district in Gilgit-Baltistan region to intense cold after sporadic snowfall for last two days. Mercury dropped to minus-21 Celsius at Nanga Parbat base camp, according to a weather report. Babusar Top, Nanga Parbat base camp and Fairy Meadows have received heavy rainfall, according to weather report. Battugh Top and adjoining areas have also received snowfall on mountains. Babusar Top and Battugh Top have received over four feet snowfall in the snow spell. Mercury has dropped to minus-21 at Nanga Parbat base camp, at Fairy Meadows minus-11, while at Babusar Top and Battugh Top minus 12 and minus 10 Celsius respectively as the snowfall continued in the area. Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast cold weather in most of the districts in Balochistan during next 24 hours, while very cold in northern part of the province. The temperature in Quetta and Kalat has dropped to one degree Celsius, the weather office said. - DNA

NAB seeks details of foreign trips of Fazl's brother

DNA

PESHAWAR: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Peshawar has sought details of foreign trips of Ziaur Rehman, an employee of the provincial government and a younger brother of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

In a letter to the Establishment Department secretary, the anti-corruption watchdog stated that Ziaur Rehman toured more than 20 countries, including the United Kingdom (UK), Thailand and Saudi Arabia. A government employee is obliged by law to seek prior permission for travelling abroad, the bureau said, asking the department to inform whether Rehman ever asked for permission or no-objection certificate (NOC) for going abroad and if he disclosed details of how he mobilised resources to undertake these foreign trips.

The bureau has launched a number of inquiries against Ziaur Rehman on different charges, including his involvement in illegal appointments and corruption in sale and purchase of government machinery during his appointment as Commissioner Afghan Refugees (CAR) KP.

He also faces allegations of accumulating assets beyond known sources of income. It is noteworthy that he had appeared before the bureau in connection with the assets beyond means inquiry in August.

SC refuses to overturn Trump's Pennsylvania loss

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court dealt the latest blow Tuesday to Donald Trump's effort to overturn his election loss when it denied his allies' attempt to block the certification of votes in key state Pennsylvania. The nation's highest court, which includes three Trump-appointed justices out of nine, did not explain its decision, and none of the members expressed dissent. More than a month since the November 3 election, Trump still refuses to concede to Democrat Joe Biden - who has a seven million-vote lead - and continues to make baseless claims of fraud.

Trump and his allies have filed dozens of lawsuits in several key states, almost all of which have been thrown out by the courts.

One of them, brought by Republican congressman Mike Kelly, challenged the legality of mail-in ballots in Pennsylvania, a crucial battleground state.

Biden carried Pennsylvania in November's vote, four years after Trump won the state. After the case was rejected by the state supreme court, the plaintiffs turned to the national Supreme Court, asking it to freeze all electoral operations while they developed their arguments. In dismissing the case, the Court put an end to the procedure and signaled that it was not inclined to get involved in post-election litigation. - APP

Businessmen backbone of country: NAB chief

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Justice (RET) Javed Iqbal Chairman NAB said that NAB has great regard for the valuable services of the business community in the progress and prosperity of the country. Talking to a delegation of Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association led by Dr. Jassu Mal T. Leemani, Chairman Cotton Ginners Association, Mr. Sohail, Mahmood, Ex-Chairman, Ishaq, Executive Member, Alamdar Husain, Muhammad Anoub, and azal Abbas, Member at NAB Headquarters. Justice (RET) Javed Iqbal Chairman NAB said that NAB is not pursuing the sales

and income tax related cases of the business community and had transferred all the cases related to sales tax and income tax to Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) as per law. He said that the notices issued by NAB Multan and NAB Sukkur to some of the owners of Pakistan Cotton Ginners Factories are being held in abeyance. In the light of the above position, Chairman NAB will himself examine the cases as per law. He said it is only rumors that the business community is allegedly perturbed due to NAB actions which are not correct as 1240 references have been filed by NAB in the respected Accountability Courts in various parts of the country and not a single

reference against any owner of Cotton Ginning factory has been filed by NAB which negates the propaganda against NAB. He said that the Business Community is playing an important role in the economic development of the country. He said a prosperous business community makes prosperous Pakistan. He said that NAB is performing its national duties as per law and strongly believes in self respect of every person as NAB is a people friendly institution. The Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB said that the Business Community is the backbone of the country and NAB accords high priority to resolve the issues of the busi-

ness community by establishing special complaints cells at NAB Headquarters and all regional bureaus of NAB. He said that NAB had established last year a special desk headed by a Director had been established at NAB headquarters to address business community issues. NAB is trying its utmost efforts to address problems of the business community as per law. The delegation of Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association led by Dr. Jassu Mal T. Leemani, Chairman Cotton Ginners Association thanked Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB for resolving the issues of the business community and expressed confidence over NAB.

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NICOLAE GOIA
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