



# Islamabad POST

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## China bails out Pak to repay Saudi debt

This is the second time China has come to Pakistan's rescue. Earlier this year, Islamabad repaid \$1 billion to KSA in the first quarter of the current fiscal year

NEWS DESK / DNA

ISLAMABAD: China has agreed to immediately provide \$1 to \$1.5 billion financing line to Pakistan, allowing Islamabad to repay \$1 billion to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia this week. This is the second time China has come to Pakistan's rescue. Earlier this year, Islamabad repaid \$1 billion to KSA in the first quarter of the current fiscal year. With the latest repayment, Pakistan has so far repaid \$2 billion out of the total \$3 billion debt. Islamabad had paid mark up of over 3 per cent on SAFE deposit. The last tranche of \$1 billion will be repaid next month. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme and the lending body had sought written and verbal guarantees that these bilateral financing ar-

### Hyderabad Chamber sets up office in China

BEIJING: The Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) opened its representative office in Chongqing City, China. According to China Economic Net (CEN), Zhang Yang is the chief representative of Chongqing office, who is also the president of the Pakistan-China Cultural Exchange Center (Hyderabad). According to Zhang, taking the opportunity of celebrating the 70 anniversary of the establishment of China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations in 2021, Chongqing representative office of HCCI will build a stage to facilitate the extensive communication and investments between the bilateral governments and civil societies. These activities aim to strengthen the exchange and cooperation between Pakistan's industry and commerce, culture and tourism circles and relevant governments, sectors and organizations in southwestern China. - DNA

rangements would be rolled over during package period. IMF Mission Chief for Pakistan Ernesto Ramirez Rigo had flown to Beijing to get Chinese endorsement to make it a part of financing plan at the time of signing of the IMF agreement.

The money had been deposited in State Bank of Pakistan on December 15 2018 with a three years maturity period. Islamabad is repaying the amount ahead of schedule. The country's financial account has already turned negative of

\$1.33 billion because of outflow of dollars. So far, increased remittances helped Islamabad to avoid an eruption of fully fledged balance of payment (BoP) crisis as remittances from abroad remained over \$2 billion over the last consecutive five months. With new facility, Pakistan's reliance on China shall increase. Sources say Chinese government is keen to further expand relations with Pakistan. In this regard Chinese are ready to help Pakistan whenever there is a need for that. This development also belies impression as if the Chinese were not happy with the incumbent government and that progress on CPEC has slowed down. Sources told DNA News Agency that all CPEC projects are running at same pace and as per the commitment of the Chinese and Pakistani officials, shall be completed on time.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi presenting a souvenir to Prime Minister Imran Khan during the latter's visit to Naval headquarters. - DNA

### Pakistan condemns attack on Saudi vessels

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday strongly condemned terrorist attacks on oil transport vessels in Jeddah and Al-Shuqaiq, and on petroleum distribution station in Jizan in Saudi Arabia. According to a press release issued here, these attacks threaten peace and security of Saudi Arabia, as well as the region. Pakistan calls for their immediate cessation. The statement further added that Pakistan reiterates its full support and solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia against any threats to its security and territorial integrity.

### Senior Indian diplomat summoned

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: A senior Indian diplomat was summoned to Foreign Office today to register Pakistan's strong protest over ceasefire violations by the Indian occupation Forces along the Line of Control on Sunday which resulted in serious injuries to two innocent civilians. The Indian side was called upon to respect the 2003 Ceasefire Understanding, investigate this and other such incidents of deliberate ceasefire violations and maintain peace along the LoC and the WB. The Indian side was also urged to allow the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan to play its mandated role as per the UNSC Resolutions.

## PM lauds Navy's role in defense

The Premier said the government would continue to provide all possible assistance to the Pak Navy

RANA FARRUKH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday was briefed on regional maritime security and the measures taken by Pakistan Navy for the development of maritime sector during his visit to Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. The Prime Minister said the government would continue to provide all possible assistance to the Pakistan Navy and was working to

### PDM badly exposed after rally, says PM

KHAYAM ABBASI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that after the Lahore rally of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) opposition parties have been badly exposed and the complete truth of their fake statements has come before the people. According to sources, Prime Minister Imran Khan said this at an important meeting of party leaders chaired by him. "The reality of [the opposition's] false narrative divulged to the public," Prime Minister Khan said. Addressing the meeting, PM Imran said that the entire PDM was confused over the issue of resignations. The government's decision not to intervene in the PDM's rally was right.

Continued on Page 06

### Zalmay lauds Pakistan's role for peace

NAVEED MIRAJ / DNA



RAWALPINDI: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad appreciated Pakistan's untiring efforts for facilitating the process towards the mutual objective of peace in the region. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation & General Austin Scott Miller, Commander Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), on Monday. According to a press release issued here, matters of mutual interest including overall regional security situation with particular reference to ongoing Afghan reconciliation process were discussed during the meeting. COAS appreciated role of RSM for peace and stability in Afghanistan and assured that Pakistan will continue to play its positive role for peace and stability in the region.

### CTD foils possible attack on ISE

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Counter-Terrorism Department said on Monday that it had foiled a possible militant attack on the Islamabad Stock Exchange after the arrest of three terrorists involved in the Rawalpindi bomb blast. A statement issued by the CTD said the militants admitted to carrying out four terrorist attacks in Pakistan and planned to bomb the Islamabad Stock Exchange. It said militant organisations operating from Afghanistan had provided financial support. The CTD-Lahore said it seized explosives during the operation. At least 25 people were injured in an explosion near the Ganj Mandi police station in Rawalpindi on Sunday. Initial reports suggested it was a hand grenade attack.

### Briefs

#### Vaccine to be available in 2 months

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The coronavirus vaccine will be available in Pakistan in the next two months, says Prime Minister Imran Khan's National Task Force on Science and Technology Chairperson Dr Atta-ur-Rehman. Dr Rehman said on Monday that the richer and bigger countries have already paid for the COVID-19 vaccine. "It will take time for smaller countries to procure the vaccine," he said.

#### Stability in Afghanistan crucial

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Vladimir Norov, Secretary-General of SCO has said the SCO member countries see stability in Afghanistan as a need for regional peace and development. "Mr Norov said, adding that Afghanistan share borders with four SCO member states and its stability is crucial for peace.

## PDM MPs to submit resignations by Dec 31

Fazl says that the final date for long-march, despite the February 1 announcement, would be finalised later

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said Monday that the 11-party alliance's lawmakers would hand in their resignations from the provincial and national assemblies on December 31. "Today, we want to make it clear: The government should resign till January 31. If it does not, then the [PDM leadership] will announce a long-march on February 1," Fazl said as he

Continued on Page 06

### PDM leaders look dejected: Shibli Faraz

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Shibli Faraz Monday termed the Pakistan Democratic Movement's Lahore public meeting a 'flopped' power show, said that people of Lahore had outrightly rejected their leaders along with their narrative. In a series of tweets, he said those who had different direction could not have same destiny. Contrary to their claim of 'Now or Never', the PDM got ridiculed in Lahore as it had failed to attract residents of Lahore and Punjab. "PDM leaders looked dejected after people of Lahore and Punjab did not show up [in the public meeting]," the minister noted. He said the opposition spewed venom against the Pakistan Army during Gujranwala public gathering and desecrated Quaid-e-Azam mausoleum in their Karachi rally. - DNA

## Chinese envoy assures to solve students' issues

The SAPM apprised the Chinese ambassador of the construction of Buddha corridor

A.M.BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong has said that due to the second wave of Corona Virus, his country has tightened its visa policy and students who are in the middle of their degree can continue their online classes. He said this while meeting Special Assistant on Overseas Pakistanis Sayed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhar in Islamabad on Monday.

Continued on Page 06

### Pakistan-China border opened

ISLAMABAD: Pak-China border crossing at Khunjrab Pass will be opened tomorrow for next ten days. According to a notification, the border is being opened to evacuate stranded containers from China to Gilgit-Baltistan. Tourists will not be allowed to travel through border crossing during this period. - DNA

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## PDM rallies and their impact on the government

As many as 65 per cent senators would retire on March 2021, majority of them belonging to PML N and PPP. PML N has 30 Senators out of which 17 would retire. Similarly PPP has 21 Senators and 08 would retire

THE Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) struggle to dislodge the sitting government seems to have entered the final phase as the alliance announced to march on Islamabad in the end of January or beginning of February 2021. While there are conflicting figures as to how many attended the Lahore gathering, one thing is clear that from the face of it, the opposition has made its mind to take the movement to its logical end- that is long march towards the Capital and then dharna, albeit the PDM did not mention staging a dharna in any of its rallies, nevertheless possibility of it cannot be ruled out.

The Opposition parties' threat to resign from assemblies and long march towards Islamabad ostensibly can pose serious threats to the government provided the parties are able to keep their unity intact. The PDM virtually spearheaded by PML N and PPP, the two mainstream parties, has successfully set the momentum for even a bigger movement in the coming days, however the question is will they be able to sustain this tempo? As I pointed out earlier, the Opposition is playing pranks with its voters and people at large. Unlike Maulana Fazlur Rehman wants the Opposition parties to take a clear cut stand when it comes to giving tough time

to the government. One view is that the opposition presumably cannot afford to dislodge the federal government because then it will lose its nuisance value and relevance that is has being the members of the parliament. The Opposition parties have complete knowledge of the fact that they can be more effective and relevant as long as they are part of the system. The problem of Pakistan People's Party is that it cannot go beyond a certain point in its criticism of the government or when it comes to sending the federal govt packing. The reason is obvious that if it happens, PPP will surely lose its government in Sindh also.

### COMMENT



Ansar M Bhatti

Prima facie major thrust of opposition movement seems to be on upcoming Senate elections and an impression is being given as if the PDM wants to disturb these elections, but there is more to it than meets the eye! Senate elections, ostensibly is a worrying factor for the

Opposition especially PML and PPP because they are going to be the potential losers. As many as 65 per cent senators would retire on March 2021, majority of them belonging to PML N and PPP. PML N has 30 Senators out of which 17 would retire. Similarly PPP has 21 Senators and 08 would retire. Since PTI has majority in Punjab and KPK assemblies therefore it is likely to get more Senate seats and thus getting majority in the Upper House. Coming back to rallies, the govt and other stakeholders, unlike, would want the opposition to exhaust all its options before wooing it into talks. So basically it is all a game of nerves right

now. PML N leaders are directly hitting at the establishment with a view to coerce it into a deal. While the other side remains steadfast in its resolve not to bow to any pressure and keep itself aloof from what is going on at the national stage. All said and done, there are question marks on the performance of the incumbent government. Price hike, lawlessness, bad governance are really taking a heavy toll on the hapless people. Even those who voted for this government now have serious reservations when it comes to good governance. The government lackluster performance in fact instilled added vigour and force into the PDM movement. People

know it very well what these parties have done to this country but performance of the PTI government has forced them to willy-nilly support these rallies. It is indeed a tragedy that since independence this country has been facing leadership deficit. Democracy has always been struggling in Pakistan. We have introduced a number of amendments in Constitution only to cater for the elite of this country. Never ever an amendment was introduced that sought to address grievances of ordinary people. All our ills would continue to haunt us even in the prospect if we do not follow what is written in the Constitution and that too in letter and spirit!

## Briefs

## 8 more die of coronavirus in Faisalabad

DNA

FAISALABAD: Eight more coronavirus patients lost their lives to coronavirus during the last two days, and the number of deaths reached 288 since March this year. Deputy District Officer Health Dr Asif Shehzad told APP on Monday that 795 coronavirus tests had been carried out in public and private sector laboratories of Faisalabad during the same period, out of them 20 tested positive. He said that at present, the total active COVID-19 cases in Faisalabad were 481, while 6,113 patients had so far recovered from the disease. He said that total 635 beds, 550 at Allied Hospital and 85 at DHQ Hospital, were allocated for COVID-19 patients. Dr Asif said that 81 patients including 34 confirmed patients were under treatment at Allied Hospital while 29 including 7 confirmed patients had been admitted to the DHQ Hospital.

## Pattoki man arrested for raping niece

DNA

PATTOKI: A 53-year-old man was arrested for raping his 10-year-old niece in Kasur's Pattoki, the police said on Monday. On December 11, the suspect, identified as Muhammad Younis, took his niece out saying that they were going to get garlic from the nearby fields. When they didn't return after over three hours, the 10-year-old's family went out in search of them.

"When we reached to the fields, I heard the cries of my daughter," the survivor's mother said. "We caught Younis raping my daughter red-handed. He fled when he saw us," she said. Following this, the family immediately registered an FIR at the Sarai Mughal police station. On Sunday, the police arrested the perpetrator in a raid. The child's medical reports corroborated the rape. DNA samples of Younis have been taken and sent to a laboratory as well. A case under Section 376 (punishment for rape) has been registered under the Pakistan Penal Code. The police have said that the suspect will soon be presented in court.

## Two citizens tortured

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Two citizens have been tortured by the officials of Dolphin Force in Faisalabad over allegedly not stopping their motorcycle over their orders. The Dolphin Force personnel have reportedly stopped the men riding a motorcycle over finding them suspicious in Faisalabad's Taj Colony. After the motorcyclists tried to go away from the site, the officials starting torturing the citizens brutally after chasing and stopping them. A footage has also surfaced which was obtained by a private channel which showed two of the four personnel of Dolphin Force were beating the men with slaps, fists and kicks the men surrounded to a wall. An official was also seen hammering the motorcyclists' head with the gun. Later, the wounded citizens were shifted to an undisclosed location. Earlier in February, Punjab police had apprehended five persons for allegedly subjecting Dolphin Force personnel to torture in a Lahore neighbourhood. The police had said the arrested men had engaged in a clash with the Dolphin Force personnel after the latter restrained the former from indulging in one-wheeling in Mughalpur area. Afterwards, they called in their friends and tortured the personnel along with them, said the police, adding that the incident occurred when the personnel were on their way home, they said.



LAHORE: Participants holding a banner in a rally organized by 'Extremely Together Pakistan' to promote interfaith harmony. – DNA Photo by Shahbaz Sindhu

## CDA plants 22000 saplings under plantation drive

The administration of CDA is taking remarkable steps to restore the green character and enhance the beauty of capital. Saplings are being planted across the city side by side ensuring their safety

SAIFULLAH/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Plantation drive of Capital Development Authority (CDA) is underway. 22000 saplings have been planted at various sites including F-9 park, Lake View park, Rose and Jasmine Garden, Play Land, Ankara Park, Punjab House, G-6, G-5, and other parks, public places, and green belts. According to detail, the administration of CDA is taking remarkable steps to restore the green character and enhance the beauty of capital. Saplings are being planted across the city side by side ensuring their safety. The environment department of CDA planted 3700 saplings at Lake View Park, 1166 at Rose and Jasmine Garden, 350 at Play Land, 410 at F-6 park, 300 at Ankara Park, 144 at G-5 Punjab House, 335 at F-7 and E-7, 126 at G-7 park, 105 at PM House G-5, 170 at Shehzad town and Rawal town, and 105 in G-6.



## 52 fire-fighting vehicles exported to Pakistan

DNA

BEIJING: A Chinese company has exported a batch of 52 state-of-art fire-trucks to Karachi to enhance fire-fighting and rescue level of the port city. This batch of fire vehicle, manufactured by Guangdong Yongqiang Aolinbao International Fire Truck Co., Ltd is different from traditional fire trucks that can only stop and spray water. These vehicles are convenient and available, flexible, and easy to operate, according to Sina.com, a Chinese news website here on Monday. A demonstration of vehicle functions and a demonstration of high-pressure water gun fire extinguishing were conducted during the send-off ceremony. The project is part of the infrastructure development

of Karachi, the largest city in Pakistan and it is the largest fire truck procurement project in Pakistan in the past 30 years. The project, supervised by Prime Minister Imran Khan, adopted global bidding. The companies from different countries competed on the same stage to win this goal. It said, the successful export this time is not only a testimony of the friendship between China and Pakistan, but also will accelerate the pace of Dongguan's manufacturing of fire-fighting equipment to go abroad and serve the global fire-fighting industry, demonstrating the strong strength of Dongguan manufacturing to the world. According to the report, the export of the fire-fighting vehicle will contribute to a sound China-Pakistan relationship.

## FPCCI for linkage with academia for research

He proposed signing of MOU with IBA for continued cooperation for research studies and proposed the next study to be commenced on agriculture sector particularly on cotton

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: "FPCCI will continue to cooperate and patronize the academia for study and research on various sectors of the economy", this was stated by Shaikh Sultan Rehman, Vice President the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) at a certificate award ceremony held at Federation House Karachi in honour of the students of Institute of Business Administration (IBA) to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of the five students of IBA who

completed the research study on "Potential of Halal Food Industry in Pakistan". He further elaborated that the data collected by the students can support the industry for proper planning to achieve enhanced productivity and exports. He further said that strong linkage of academia with trade and industry could prove vital for sustainable development of the economy. He proposed signing of MOU with IBA for continued cooperation for research studies and proposed the next study to be commenced on agriculture sector particularly on cotton as it

is one of our main crops contributing significantly to textile value chain. Assistant Professor Shahid Mir of Institute of Business Administration Karachi thanked FPCCI for its patronage and offered complete support of IBA, its faculty, analysts and researchers in future studies or the promotion of trade and industry of Pakistan. Masood Alam Rizvi, Secretary General FPCCI shared his experience of the industry and agriculture and recommended various topics for research, particularly for obtaining clean cotton, as the cotton picking and

processing methods in Pakistan are not up to international standards, resulting in poor quality and contaminated cotton. Shaikh Sultan Rehman, Vice President FPCCI congratulated Dr. Shahid Mir and his students for the completion of the comprehensive research report. He also thanked the staff of FPCCI, Mehar Alam Khan and Ms. Amber Fatima for guiding and supervising the students throughout the research project. He said the report will be widely disseminated and hoped the industry would benefit from its quality data and findings.

## Alvi for steps to address needs of PWDs

The president said it was highly imperative to ease the process of registration and conduct a survey on PWDs so as to devise a strategy by the government to address their needs in an effective manner

RANA FARRUKH/DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday stressed the need of taking effective measures to address special needs of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) and encourage their active participation in various spheres of life. He also underlined the need of simplifying the process of registration of PWDs to facilitate the differently-abled people. The president expressed these views while chairing a meeting about registration of PWDs, here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. The meeting was attended by Special Assistant to the PM (SAPM) on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Dr

Sania Nishter, National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) Chairman Us-

man Yousuf Mobin and other senior officials. The meeting was briefed by the

SAPM and NADRA chairman on the steps taken for the registration of PWDs.



The president said it was highly imperative to ease the process of registration and conduct a survey on PWDs so as to devise a strategy by the government to address their needs in an effective manner. Dr Sania Nishter informed the meeting that the survey on PWDs, under the Ehsaas Programme, was being carried out, which would be completed by June 2021. The president asked the stakeholders concerned to take measures to mainstream education system for the economic uplift and integrating the PWDs. He also appreciated the steps taken by NADRA and the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation for the registration of PWDs.

## Another KP doctor dies

DNA

PESHAWAR: Novel coronavirus has claimed life of another doctor in the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As per details, Dr. Almas Begum Afridi was admitted in a private hospital after testing positive for the virus. According to provincial doctors association, the novel coronavirus has claimed lives of 31 doctors in the province.

Earlier, the coronavirus also claimed life another Peshawar lady doctor, who was head of Pathology Department at Khyber Medical College and admitted in a hospital after testing positive for the virus.

On the other hand, Pakistan has reported 36 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 440,787. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 8,832 on Monday. According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), 2,362 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Sindh remains the worst-hit province by the pandemic in terms of cases followed by Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. Punjab has overtaken Sindh in most number of casualties. Till now 195,702 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 127,541 in Punjab 52,449 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 34,840 in Islamabad, 17,745 in Balochistan, 7,719 in Azad Kashmir and 4,791 in Gilgit-Baltistan. Furthermore 3,365 individuals have lost their lives to the epidemic in Punjab 3,158 in Sindh, 1,473 in KP, 371 in Islamabad, 191 in Azad Kashmir, 175 in Balochistan, and 99 in GB.

## 14 out of 36 corona deaths reported in Punjab

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The statistics of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) showed that most of the COVID-19 deaths were reported in Punjab province up to 14 during the last 24 hours.

19 out of 36 deceased patients were on ventilators who succumbed to COVID-19. According to NCOC, 64 per cent ventilators are being used for coronavirus patients in Multan, 47 pc in Islamabad, 36 pc in Lahore, 28 pc in Rawalpindi.

In Islamabad, 44 per cent of oxygen beds are being used for COVID-19 patients, 50 pc in Multan, 56 pc in Rawalpindi, 61 pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) capital Peshawar Pakistan recorded 36 deaths and 2,362 new cases due to the COVID-19 in the last 24 hours.

In the past 24 hours, 36 more people succumbed to the disease, taking the death toll to 8,832. 1,719 patients have recovered from the virus during the last 24 hours and 2,456 patients are in critical condition, however, no patient has been declared critical on Monday. The total count of active cases is 47,236.

## LHC orders to public report on POL crisis

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday ordered to immediately public the commission's report on the petroleum crisis.

A report of the commission that was formed to investigate the petroleum crisis was presented in Lahore High Court (LHC). The hearing was presided over by the LHC Chief Justice Qasim Khan, in which deputy attorney general of Pakistan appeared before the court. Meanwhile, the LHC Chief Justice Qasim Khan remarked that the report should be automatically made public as per the law. Being asked about the report, the deputy attorney general said that he has been informed that the report has been presented before the federal cabinet. The chief justice LHC remarked that the commission was formed on the directions of the court in this scenario the court enjoys more entitlement. "Report would be made public even if the whole cabinet oppose it." During the hearing, the head of the inquiry commission Abu Bakar Khuda Bux was asked to come on the rostrum.

## Briefs

### IWMB assures IHC to shift bears abroad

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday disposed of a case after the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) assured the bench regarding shifting of Muragzar Zoo's two bears to abroad in animal sanctuary.

On the query of the bench, the IWMB's official informed the court that it had decided to shift the animals to abroad for certain time. The animals would be brought back once the sanctuary was set up here.

Chief Justice Athar Minalah remarked that the court only wanted to give natural environment to the bears. The court always gave chance to IWMB to take decision on the matter, he said. "We should proud on that the animals rights are protected in Pakistan," Justice Minalah said, adding that the court appreciated the decision of board.

The bench asked that who was responsible for the mistreatment of animals since July 2019. The court had given charge of the zoo to Climate Change Ministry because there was politics on the issue. The question was that whether the ministry fulfilled its responsibility, he said.

The ministry's lawyer adopted the stance that the ministry had never tried to influence the decision of IWMB. The court said that there was everything in the decision dated July 5, 2019, adding that unfortunately the pair of lions was killed due to poor arrangements but no one took responsibility of it. - APP

### Rs299.7 bn released for social sector projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government has released Rs 299.7 billion for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects till date under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2020-21.

The released funds include Rs198.344 billion for federal ministries, Rs76.46 billion for corporations, Rs24.15 billion for special areas, and Rs750 million for the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA), according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform.

The total PSDP allocation for ERRA for the year 2020-21 is Rs1.5 billion. Similarly, Rs. 53.4 billion out of PSDP allocation of Rs. 118.67 billion has been released for the National Highway Authority, Rs. 23 billion out of Rs. 158.3 billion for the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC), and Rs. 43.2 billion out of Rs. 81.2 billion for the for the Water Resources Division.

Likewise, Rs. 14 billion out of allocated fund of Rs. 29.4 billion has been disbursed to the Higher Education Commission, Rs. 175 million out of Rs. 350 million to the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority.

### Petroleum Commission report to be made public

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior Barrister Mirza Shahzad Akbar on Monday said Petroleum Commission report would be made public after getting consent of the federal cabinet.

In a tweet, he said the report of the Commission, constituted by the federal government, has been received and would be presented before the federal cabinet on Tuesday. He said transparency and accountability is hallmark of the government of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI).



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan in a group photo with Naval Chief Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi, Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Haider Zaidi and others at Naval Headquarters. -DNA

## SC seeks details of 29 fake bank accounts case

A three-member bench of the apex court headed by Justice Mushir Alam and comprising Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and Justice Yahya Afridi heard the bail plea filed by Muhammad Umair accused in fake bank accounts/money laundering case

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday directed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to submit details of 29 fake bank accounts case along with details of accused associated with these accounts in two weeks.

A three-member bench of the apex court headed by Justice Mushir Alam and comprising Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and Justice Yahya

Afridi heard the bail plea filed by Muhammad Umair accused in fake bank accounts/money laundering case. During the course of proceedings, the counsel for the accused said that no action was taken against the main accused. He said that one of his client's accounts was targeted.

The NAB Prosecutor said that it was a Rs five billion fraud case. Justice Yahya Afridi asked why no action was taken against other accused. The Prosecutor responded

that investigations were underway against the other accused.

The counsel for the accused said that there were no signatures of his client on the alleged fake cheques. Justice Mushir Alam said that the accused assisted others in the theft.

Justice Yahya Afridi said that the main accused were out on bail and the co-accused were in jails. He said that the NAB did not challenge the bail plea of Faryal Talpur. The Prosecutor said that the NAB rules

regarding women were different. Some of the accused in the fake accounts case had been hidden in Kacha area, he added.

He said that some of the accused were deported abroad and Umair was also arrested from Dubai.

He said that Umair was a naib qasid and Rs 580 million transaction was made through his account. The counsel for the accused said that his client did not sign any cheque. Justice Tariq Masood said that according to NAB, all fake ac-

counts were run by Arif Khan.

Justice Yahya Afridi asked there were 29 fake accounts whose names were the other 28. The Prosecutor responded that no other accused had acknowledged their accounts. So far 32 cases had come out of two fake accounts, he added. He said that another 27 fake accounts were under investigation and ten references had been filed. Later hearing of the case was adjourned for two weeks.

### Islamabad police recover 40 kg heroin

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Tarnol police have foiled a bid to smuggle narcotics from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to down parts of the country recovering 40 kilogram heroin during a car check. According to a police spokesman on Monday, SP (Saddar) Sarfaraz Ahmed Virk, on a tip off, constituted a special team under supervision of DSP (Saddar) Sajjad Haider Bukhari for special checking in the area. The team including Station House Officer of Tarnol police station Inspector Muhammad Rasheed, Sub-Inspector Muhammad Khan Marwat and others cordoned off area near old Toll Plaza on motorway and started checking. A car (LEA-5437) was intercepted by the police team but its driver tried to speed away. Police chased the car following which it met with accident and police succeeded to overpower the driver of the car. Upon search of the vehicle, the police team recovered 40 kilogram heroin from it while the driver identified as Saeed Qil confessed to smuggle heroin from KPK to Islamabad and various districts of Punjab. Case has been registered against the nabbed person and further investigation is underway from him to arrest those involve with him in this heinous crime. Inspector General of Police Islamabad Muhammad Aamir Zulfiqar and DIG (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed have appreciated overall performance of police team and announced special prizes and commendation certificates for its members. They also directed all police officials to intensify vigilance and curb activities of anti-social elements. - DNA

### Book launching ceremony held at PUCAR

RAWALPINDI: The launching ceremony of the book "Kharame Khama" by famous poet and critic Dr. Farhat Abbas held under auspices of Punjab Council of the Arts, Rawalpindi (PUCAR) in collaboration with 'Halqa Illem-e-Adab' Pakistan. The ceremony was presided over by the Chairman Academy of Literatures, Pakistan Dr. Yousuf Khushk, while special guests of the function were Dr. Munawar Hashmi and Dr. Shafiq Asif. Ms. Samina Gul and Ms. Bushra Saeed attended the function as the guests of honor. Dr. Farhat Abbas addressing the participants said, "We have a deep connection with literature and poets of the Sub-Continent conveyed their message to the world through literature. The identity of any strong society is its rich literature and fine arts". - APP

### 3-day moot on Pakistan-UK Education Gateway begins

The conference will discuss key issues facing the sector in the 'new' normal, the role of leadership in building resilient HE systems

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: As COVID-19 has transformed the entire world systems, the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan and the British Council, Pakistan will hold a three-day virtual conference on December 15-17 to discuss the future of the higher education sector in the post-pandemic world.

The conference entitled "Pakistan-UK Education Gateway: Rethinking and Reshaping a Resilient Higher Education System" will discuss key issues facing the sector in the 'new' normal, the role of leadership in building resilient HE systems, and lessons

learnt from the pandemic.

It will celebrate some of the concrete contributions that the Pak-UK Gateway programme has made so far. Federal Minister for Education Shafiqat Mehmood, Chairman HEC Tariq Banuri, Executive Director HEC Dr. Shaista Sohail, British High Commissioner to Pakistan Christian Turner, Director Education, British Council, Nishat Riaz, Vice Chancellors, faculty, and students from both the UK and Pakistan will attend the conference. The British Council in Pakistan and the HEC launched the Pak-UK Education Gateway in 2018, with an aim to enhance partnership between the higher education sectors of Pakistan and the

UK. The key areas of collaboration under the joint programme include, innovative and collaborative research, higher education leadership, quality assurance and standard setting, distance learning, international mobility, transnational education, and community engagement.

In addition to bringing partners from the Pakistan and UK together to share best practices and lessons learnt during the pandemic and promote cooperation and partnerships between both countries, the recipients of the HEC-British Council joint Research Grants shall be announced along with the upcoming British Council Scholarship schemes for young women in Pakistan.

### IHC reserves decision on CDA cases

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Monday reserved its judgment on miscellaneous petitions filed by Capital Development Authority (CDA) affectees seeking lands compensations, and directed the respondents to submit written comments in it.

Chief Justice Athar Minalah, hearing the case, remarked that there was no rule of law in just 1400 square miles area of federal capital. Only the rich and elites were being served in Islamabad, he said.

The chief justice remarked that violations of the rights of affectees were admitted facts. The court noted that the elected representatives of Islamabad were also involved in the matter but nothing availed. The bench said these were about 70 years old issues that required to be addressed.

The court asked the respondents to submit written comments till December 21, and reserved its judgment into the case.

### DHO urges citizens to follow SOPs

ISLAMABAD: District Health Officer of Islamabad, Zaem Zia urged citizens to strict follow health expert's recommendation regarding Covid-19. He said that it has been observed that people have adopted a casual attitude towards following the SOPs despite the resurgence of second wave of COVID-19, reported by Radio Pakistan.

Zaem said at national level, the percentage of infection is 6.5-9% at this point and in Islamabad the positivity of COVID-19 is 5.3%. The spaces in hospitals have reduced and everyday people are dying of this pandemic. The older people and the masses with weak immunity should be more careful.

Till the time the vaccination of this fatal disease is available in the country, the people have to adopt precautionary measures. Maintaining social distancing and wearing masks can help protect people against the COVID-19. The government is making all out efforts to ensure the availability of COVID-19 vaccine in the country, he added. - APP

### Fashion, designing classes from Dec 19

ISLAMABAD: Rung School of Music and Arts to start an online Fashion and Textile designing classes to explore creative skills while sitting at home from Dec 19. The classes will offer students to come across the intellectual, and practical demands of the printing and textile industry. The course would basically comprise of the method to generate designs for knitted, printed and surface ornamented fabrics. According to an official, they will offer three months short course, six months short course and also one year diploma.

He said that the brilliant designers and experienced professionals will be instructors to teach learning skills to students. He said that do not let your skills deteriorate, join our classes and resume learning. - APP

### Construction work in CDA hospital underway

ISLAMABAD: Work on extra block in Capital Development Authority (CDA) Hospital was underway while grey structure of under construction five stories block and the frame work of three stories has been completed. Chairman CDA, Aamir Ali Ahmed has directed to expedite the work on the construction of extra blocks.

According to detail, like a number of other projects of CDA the work on extra blocks in CDA hospital was also delayed for a long time. The current administration of CDA released funds for this project considering the importance of the project. - APP

## ICCI for allowing indoor dining in restaurants

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, ICCI was of the view that hundreds of people were daily travelling in commercial flights and were given regular meals in flights

IBRAR KHAN / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) leading a delegation held a meeting with Amir Ali Ahmed, Chief Commissioner ICT and Chairman CDA in his office and discussed the problems being faced by the restaurants due to the ban on indoor dining. He said that UAE and other countries were allowing indoor dining in restaurants by maintaining sufficient gaps between tables with glass/acrylic sheets partition to ensure social distancing and this arrangement should also be allowed in the federal capital as ban on indoor dining in restaurants was causing great business loss to this sector. Hamza Shafiqat Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Magistrate ICT



and Director DMA were also present in the meeting. Khurram Khan President Islamabad Restaurants Association, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi former President ICCI, Atique Khattak and others were in the delegation. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan was of the view that hundreds of people were daily travelling in commercial

flights and were given regular meals in flights. He said that if meals could be served in a closed environment of flights, there was no justification to ban indoor dining with social distancing in restaurants. He said that due to lockdowns in the past, restaurants, wedding halls and marquees remained closed for a long period

due to which these businesses have already suffered huge losses. n, President Islamabad Restaurants Association said that thousands of workers were employed in restaurants, wedding halls and marquees, but putting a ban on indoor dining and indoor functions would render hundreds of workers jobless due to shrinkage in business activities

and create more social problems. He said that the business community of restaurants and wedding halls should be taken on board to ensure implementation of SOPs and indoor dining/indoor functions should be allowed to save these businesses from further losses.

Amir Ali Ahmed, Chief Commissioner ICT and Chairman CDA thanked the ICCI President and delegation members for sharing useful proposals to save restaurants from more losses. He said that saving businesses from losses due to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic was a high priority of the government and ICT Administration would allow outdoor dining on sidewalks and footpaths of restaurants, however, dining in the parking areas would not be allowed. He said the fines would not be imposed on outdoor dining on footpaths and sidewalks.

## Briefs

**“AIOU renders invaluable educational services”**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) enjoys a very unique and privileged position in the field of distance education in both national and international scenarios, said Prof Dr Abdul Razzaq Sabir, Vice Chancellor, University of Turbat, Baluchistan during his visit of AIOU regional office, Gawadar. On this occasion Majid Hussain, Director Regional Office, AIOU Gawadar, briefed Dr. Abdul Razzaq Sabir about the academic projects of AIOU in Baluchistan. He shared with Prof Dr Abdul Razzaq the vision of the VC, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum regarding educating the youth of Pakistan and expansion of regional offices network in Baluchistan. Prof Dr Abdul Razzaq paid glorious tributes to the Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum for his dedication and commitment to the cause of education and expressed hope of future cooperation and collaboration between both the national institution for uplift of the educational standards.

**IHC summons Shahzad Akber in person**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday summoned Advisor to Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior Mirza Shahzad Akber on December 24, in a case pertaining to delay provision of justice to public. Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the case pertaining to rising crimes and the establishment of a prosecution branch in federal capital. During the course of proceeding, the chief justice remarked government was bound to provide early justice to the people under the constitution. Addressing the deputy attorney general, the court remarked that see the situation of courts and how people facing problems there. The court had no interest with the reports submitted by the government instead it should inform the court regarding practical steps, Justice Minallah noted. He remarked that the state had failed to ensure early provision of justice to the people. The federal capital should have been model for other parts of country, the chief justice added. The court directed Shahzad Akber to appear in person on next hearing and satisfy the court that what steps were being taken in this regard. The court asked that why the suggestions given by the bar councils and other respondents were not implemented. The hearing was adjourned till December 24. — APP

**Police arrest 4 members of a criminal gang**

ISLAMABAD: Bhara Kahu police team Monday arrested four members of a criminal gang involved in incidents of dacoity and street crime and recovered snatched mobile phone and weapons from their possession, a police spokesman informed. According to details, a police team headed by station house officer Bhara Kahu police station sub-inspector Shaukat Mehmood arrested four members of a criminal gang involved in snatching mobile phones and other valuables at gunpoint from the citizens. The gangsters was identified as Abdul Basit Abbasi, Noor, Hazir Muhammad and Manaz Muhammad. During the preliminary investigation, they confessed their involvement in several incidents of dacoity and snatching valuable at gunpoint from various areas of Bhara Kahu and city zone. Cases had been registered against them and further investigation was underway, the spokesman said. DIG (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed had appreciated this overall performance and directed all police officials to ensure effective policing measures in their respective areas, he added. — APP

# Responsible citizenry key to mountains biodiversity

Pakistan Mountain Festival Founder and Director Munir Ahmed made these remarks while addressing the interactive seminar organized by the Pakistan Wildlife Foundation, Mivida Pakistan and Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan) for youth and mountain communities

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ISLAMABAD: The conservation of mountain resources and biodiversity conservation is the responsibility of every citizen either living in the mountains or downstream. Community empowerment to protect and conserve the mountain biodiversity resources and use them more wisely is the key solution to fast degrading mountain ecosystems. Pakistan Mountain Festival Founder and Director Munir Ahmed made these remarks while addressing the interactive seminar organized by the Pakistan Wildlife Foundation, Mivida Pakistan and Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan) for youth and mountain communities in connection with 10th Pakistan Mountain Festival on Monday. Munir Ahmed said mountain communities should have strong networking with the citizens' organizations and environmentalists downstream to become a strong voice against the cartels of timber and land mafia. The mountain biodiversity conservation and protection is the responsibility of local communities because their life and livelihood depend on these resources. He also urged the federal and provincial governments to take stern action against the



land and timber mafia causing irreparable loss to the mountain biodiversity. The communities shall refrain from changing the land-use of their real estate assets rather develop them environmental friendly abode for homestay of visiting tourists. The government shall also take action against the changed land-use that is mostly in violation of the respective legislation and international treaties and conventions.

We need to protect our mountain communities and the population downstream from disasters originating from the mountains, decrease the Glaciers Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF), land-sliding and promote eco-tourism, he said. Mivida Pakistan Director Eco-conservation initiatives Safwan Shahab said community youth should be empowered to take the mountain conservation responsibility by putting small but significant

local initiatives. We need to educate mountain communities and engage in conservation efforts to decrease the mountain's biodiversity loss that is causing disasters and increasing local impact of climate change. Young environmentalist and junior ambassador Pakistan Wildlife Foundation Minahil suggested the youth to develop social media platforms to highlight the mountain treasures and challenges confront-

ing the local communities. Islamabad Devcom Centennial Leo Club founder Shaaref Munir urged the citizens to reduce carbon footprint by reducing consumption of goods and resources, and Greenhouse Gas emissions. A young environmentalist Saima Khan asked the women to adopt the conservation practices by reducing domestic consumption of daily consumables. To stop migration of mountain communities, she urged the government to provide local youth and women with skills to package and market the local horticultural, agricultural products, and handicrafts. Development Communications Network (Devcom Pakistan) and DTN in connection with 10th Pakistan Mountain Festival organized a national webinar the other day. The panel of experts included Senior Scientific Advisor Ev-K2-CNR Ashiq Ahmed Khan, FAO Pakistan Deputy Country Representative Farrukh Toirov, World Bank Senior Technical Advisor on tourism Kiran Afzal, Water and Climate Change Expert Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, WWF Pakistan Senior Director Biodiversity Rab Nawaz, AKRSP former General Manager Muzaffaruddin, SDPI Director Environment Dr. Imran S. Khalid, and Executive Director Devcom-Pakistan Munir Ahmed.

**RDA directed to prepare report**

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Captain (r) Muhammad Mehmood Monday directed the Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) to prepare a feasibility report of the proposed Special Economic Zones (SEZs) on the ring road project and said that the project was not just a road but it was a multifaceted project, which would resolve traffic problems in the city besides improving the economy, boosting industry and creating jobs. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting on the ring road project here. The meeting was also attended by Director Finance and Planning Nazia Parveen Sudhan, Project Director Ring Road Muhammad Abdullah, RDA officers and other concerned officials. The commissioner said that consultation with Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry regarding SEZs was underway and cooperation with business community would be continued in all phases of feasibility. He said that after the survey of land acquired for the project under the supervision of Revenue Department, the process of delimitation and identification was in full swing. He directed the concerned revenue authorities to expedite the process. The commissioner said that the draft agreement with National Highway Authority regarding the project about CPEC route was being reviewed and with the addition of this route the importance of the project would multiply. He said that there was a plan to buy land in and around the loops of interchanges on the project which the government could use for commercial purposes to increase revenue. On this occasion, the commissioner gave a detailed briefing on various technical and financial aspects of Korang Road project.

**Expats supporting Pakistani economy**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President ICCI Shahid Rasheed Butt on Monday said the World Bank has forecasted a 20 percent drop in remittances due to coronavirus and lockdowns but overseas Pakistanis have increased remittances by 27 percent beating the estimate. Overseas Pakistanis can change the fate of the country, strengthening currency, reducing budget deficit and reducing unemployment if security of their hard-earned money is ensured, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that

the Pakistanis have proved the estimate of the World Bank wrong as they have increased remittances by 27 percent from July to November and the trend will continue during the rest of the current fiscal year. Emigrants are sending more money to their families due to inflation and unemployment in Pakistan, shrinking informal channels and the construction package which has triggered some economic activity. Our exports have stagnated and imports are consistently moving up while remittances have filled the gap for which overseas Pakistanis deserve a tap on the back.

## SC denies permission for stone crushing in Margalla

“In the first step they make a hill barren with tree cutting and then entire hill detonated,” the top judge remarked. “The court’s order to ban stone crushing was in the best national interest,” Justice Gulzar Ahmed said

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan Monday denied a petition seeking permission for stone crushing in Margalla Hills. “Entire Margalla Hills will be crushed to the ground if permission issued for crushing,” Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed said while refusing the plea. “While traveling on the motorway the view of the crushed Margalla Hills causes a heartache,” the chief justice said. “In the first step they make a hill barren with tree cutting and then entire hill detonated,” the top judge remarked. “The court’s order to ban stone crushing was in the best

national interest,” Justice Gulzar Ahmed said. “The best limestone found in these hills for construction of the CPEC road,” petitioner’s counsel Aitzaz Ahsan said. “permission for removing stone from here is also in the best national interest,” the lawyer argued. “You are not talking about the interest of the nation but financial interest of the crusher,” the CJP remarked. Stones required for the project could be arranged from a far-flung area,” Justice Gulzar said. “If allowed they could even evaporate the K2,” he said. “We have to protect our national asset. The hills not crush anywhere in the world like here,” the chief justice said. “Minerals are our national asset,

which should be properly utilized,” the counsel said. “Because it is the national asset the court has ruled for its protection,” Justice Gulzar retorted. “It is like preventing fisherman from fishing,” the counsel further argued. “Fishing not being prohibited as the fish born again but when a hill crushed it could not emerge again,” Justice Jazul Ahsan, another member of the bench said. The machinery, equipment and other material have been trapped in the area after the court order, the counsel said. The apex court allowed the crushers to remove their machinery from the area and rejected all petitions filed against ban on crushing in the Margalla Hills. .”

## UNICEF and Facebook launch digital campaign

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted life for many, including children in need of lifesaving, routine immunizations. In countries like Pakistan, additional roadblocks as a result of the pandemic have been compounded by an existing hesitancy in some communities to vaccinate children as well as global disruptions to the delivery of immunizations. That’s why Facebook’s Data for Good team recently worked in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to better understand constraints to vaccine adoption in Pakistan with the objective to help the development sector have better insights for

effective, local outreach. The campaign reached 7.2 million people in Pakistan, with post-campaign survey results showing that those exposed to the campaign were more inclined to vaccinate their children at a healthcare center. “Interruption of health services due to COVID-19, has resulted in a large number of children missing out on their routine immunization increasing the risk of outbreaks of diseases in Pakistan, says Aida Girma,” UNICEF Representative in Pakistan. As the services have now resumed, collaboration with Facebook is helping us reach the most vulnerable children and those who were missed, through improved data services and an aggressive awareness campaign, she adds.”



ISLAMABAD: Senator Shibli Faraz, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting in a meeting with H.E Mr. Kuninori Matsuda, Ambassador of Japan. — DNA

## Steel sec in crisis due to high cost raw material

The last few years have been incredibly tough for the steel industry, facing massive increase in costs. The PKR has depreciated by 45% against the USD since January 2018, having a massive impact on raw material and energy costs for the steel industry.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The drastically increasing prices of raw material is creating crisis like situation for the struggling steel sector of Pakistan. During the last two years, when major players declared heavy losses, largely the steel sector absorbed the impact of increase of inputs without passing it on to the end consumer. However, it is becoming extremely difficult for the steel sector to absorb the latest impact of growing price of raw material internationally. In this situation, Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers urge the govt to remove all duties on the raw material to offset the impact of drastic increase in the cost of raw material which is crossing 400 USD per ton. Contrary to the misleading statement on the part of a body of developers, the domestic steel bar prices have dropped over the past

two years by 8% in dollar terms, from USD 806 in 2018 to USD 746 today. The reason steel prices have increased since 2018 in PKR terms is primarily due to a 45% depreciation of the PKR against the USD, which resulted in increased prices of imported raw materials. The last few years have been incredibly tough for the steel industry, facing massive increase in costs. The PKR has depreciated by 45% against the USD since January 2018, having a massive impact on raw material and energy costs for the steel industry. Since 2018, electricity costs have risen by 56% and the cost of gas has risen by 116%! Between January 2018 and early 2020, interest rates had doubled from 6% to 13%, increasing financial costs of an industry that is highly leveraged by nature. Finally, the Covid-19 lockdowns exaggerated the losses made by the steel industry and led to a large increase in trade debts, resulting in higher borrowing and

financial costs. Despite the above challenges, the steel industry did not pass through a large portion of these cost increases but reduced profit margins to continue supplying steel bars at a competitive price point to the construction sector. This is evident from profit margins of steel bar manufacturers that shrunk from approximately 8% to 3% between 2018-2020. While facing severe challenges, industry leaders have also invested billions in bringing latest European technology to reduce energy consumption and improve product quality. Many players have increased capacity to attain benefits of economies of scale and cater for local demand. These are some examples of how the steel industry has been able to reduce steel prices in USD and is now in discussion with various government ministries to start exporting steel bars to regional countries as well. Looking forward, it seems that steel prices are on the rise world

over. Due to global supply chain disruptions due to the second wave of Covid-19, raw material supply is becoming increasingly constrained and steel scrap prices have risen from USD 305 in August 2020 to USD 405 today. This translates to a cost increase of over PKR 15,000/-. With industry margins as low as 3%, companies have no choice but to pass on these increases to consumers. However, steel companies also believe this is a temporary phenomenon. As the Covid-19 disruptions ease, raw material prices will also normalize. With over 300 companies manufacturing steel bars, the steel bar market is highly competitive and reduction in costs are very rapidly translated into lower prices in the local market. Even amidst an increasing pandemic, everything is not doomed. The industry is upbeat over rising steel demand from the housing and infrastructure sector, which has

been spurred by the government’s resolve to kick start the economy. Steel bar manufacturers have spent billions to increase capacity in anticipation of catering to the increased demand from projects such as the PM’s Naya Pakistan Housing initiative. Contrary to recent statements by a developer, the steel industry is working on extremely low margins to provide cost effective steel bars to the construction sector. In order to make the construction industry more cost effective, the PM’s office should undertake an analysis to see what profit margins the builders and developers are working on and whether some further regulation in this area will help reduce housing prices. In Pakistan, there are approximately 300 manufacturing units that provide steel to the construction sector, jobs to approximately 100,000 people, government revenue in excess of PKR 100 billion per annum, and have invested over PKR 150 billion in the industry.

**RWMC starts awareness campaign**

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) and Albayrak initiated an awareness campaign on anti-dengue and Covid-19 in UC 30-Chah Sultan and Jamia Masjid road on Monday. The campaign was started in connection with Clean and Green Punjab, to aware masses about the dengue virus and keep the surroundings clean. According to a spokesman, the purpose of this activity was to educate public about the fundamental standards of cleanliness. The teams appealed to the people to extend cooperation with the staff, wear face masks, keep social distancing, avoid gatherings and keep their houses and workplaces dry and clean. “Keeping our surroundings clean will help improve cleanliness in society,” he added.

## Tourism in KP

**T**RAVEL Responsibly for Experiencing Ecotourism (TREK) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has finally been launched by PM Imran Khan, in collaboration with the World Bank Group, KP Government and Nestle Pakistan. This new initiative to promote responsible and ecological tourism within the country is not only grounded in achievable reality but will also go a long way in preserving the sanctity of the region. If authorities, along with the local population, remain committed to the cause, the potential of expanding the project seems promising. TREK places a strong emphasis on preserving the northern environment through undertaking waste management schemes, like recycling plastic, across the province. Furthermore, it entails that the local population be educated and made aware about the importance of maintaining a healthy atmosphere not only for the sake of their livelihoods but also to protect the landscape. As such, waste collection and minimisation is expected to become an integral part of the tourism industry in Pakistan. Addressing this narrative in Pakistan is a major step forward for the government, both federal and provincial. For far too long, the tourism industry has remained neglected despite having made substantial contributions to the environment. One aspect that could, perhaps, be worked towards is reducing the level of air pollution caused primarily by high powered jeeps needed for transportation in the area. Leaving behind a trail of thick smoke, the increased use of these vehicles is bound to be detrimental to the population residing in the area, even if it is momentary. Fortunately, this problem is also one that can be countered fairly easily. Long-term infrastructure improvement along with strict fitness standards for vehicles are avenues worth exploring. As far as TREK is concerned, all relevant bodies have done well in bringing forward and solving an issue that was previously unacknowledged by the country. Now, all effort must go towards ensuring stern implementation.

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## Increased sales

**T**HE predictions made about growth in the automobile industry earlier this year have come true, as the 48 percent increase in sales of the local car manufacturers compared to last year shows. Two factors explain this rise. First, the overall improvement in the macroeconomic indicators and low-interest rates are enabling people to afford private cars. Second, the increase is also a possible result of the stagnancy in the market during the first phase of the coronavirus pandemic when Pakistan brought down its economy to almost a complete halt. While the local manufacturers enjoy good protection against the foreign competition through tariff and non-tariff barriers, the recent increase in sales is a let-up for the industry which has often looked to be exploitative for the consumers. The aim behind the protection was to enable the industry to achieve the desired level of indigenisation. However, the industry could not achieve the set target and indulged in short term objectives of maximisation of profit. Today, the prices of vehicles in Pakistan are now roughly the same as their international market rates. But our automobile sector is dull and uncompetitive. There is evidence of a lack of innovation in terms of changes in models, quick availability, fuel efficiency, increase in user efficiency and cost-cutting. It is up to the government to correct the wrong practices of the manufacturers and protect the interests of the customers. The state must direct the carmakers to either lower their prices or provide better products. Clearly, the protection regime that the government had erected for making our automobile sector competitive has not achieved what we wanted. It is about time for the government to open the local market for not only more local competitors but also start negotiating with foreign carmakers to increase the competition among the manufacturers and protect the consumers from the exploitative practices of the select few.

# Mountains and well-being of world's population

Vladimir Norov



SPECIAL TO ISLAMABAD POST

The SCO is interested in interacting with the UN Environment Programme to jointly implement the environmental component of sustainable development. The organization will promote integrated management and protection of mountain ecosystems, taking into account the activities of relevant international and regional organizations. Global climatic changes, widespread warming, are posing a direct threat to the ecosystem of mountains which urgently require the activation of efforts of the world community

**D**ECEMBER 11 is International Mountain Day established by the UN General Assembly in 1992 and adopted by Agenda 21 during the UN Conference on Environment and Development. The main purpose of this holiday was to educate the general public about the need to effectively use and protect mountain ecosystems and biodiversity in order to solve global environmental problems in mountain areas and rural development besides to strengthen the achievements of mankind in this sphere. International Mountain Day is celebrated in many countries around the world, where people care about mountainous areas. Each year is dedicated to a new theme. The theme for this year's celebration is mountain biodiversity. On this day the UN General Assembly encourages the world community to organize conferences, seminars, round tables, and other events at all levels. Mountains, including mountain ranges and mountain systems, occupy nearly one-fourth of the planet. It includes a huge part of the world's freshwater reserves and endangered species of fauna and flora. Mountains are also a popular destination for hiking and mountain climbing. Half of the world's biodiversity areas are located in mountains and mountainous areas, where more than 15% of the world's population lives. About half of the world's population depends on the water, food, and energy resources that mountains contain. Most of the people of the Earth inhabiting mountain valleys live below the poverty line, constantly suffering from natural disasters. In the absence of developed infrastructure, they are at risk of food security and employment opportunities, as well as has no access to adequate health care, education, and quality public services. As a rule, the inhabitants of these areas, feeling their insecurity in the face of modern challenges, are forced to migrate to the cities. There is a decline of agriculture, degradation of arable land and loss of cultural diversity, knowledge, and dying national traditions and historical heritage. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization fully supports the celebration of International Mountain Day. With the continued degradation of life-sustaining natural resources of mountains: water, land, biological, mineral, recreational, and others, their protection and rational use are at the forefront of the national security system of the SCO countries. Undoubtedly, mountain systems in the SCO area are an invaluable source of water, energy, and biological diversity. Our countries contain vast uplands, the main mountain systems of the Earth, where large glaciers are located. In recent decades, there is an increasing trend of melting of mountain glaciers and their catastrophic reduction, which may lead to their disappearance in many areas of the world. The melting of glaciers has become particularly noticeable in the Tibetan Plateau. Glaciers in the Himalayas are losing up to 8 billion tons of ice annually, and the rate of melting is increasing at an alarming rate. The glaciers of the Tien Shan mountain system, which stretches from east to west across China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, have lost about 27% of their mass and more than 18% of their area in the last half-century. Of the 8,200 glaciers in the Tien Shan, more than 2,000 have melted in the recent past. The in-

ternational experts using the newest methods of climate forecasting have pointed the fact that half of the ice cap of Tien Shan will melt by 2050. According to scientists, global warming will melt the ice caps of all mountains and glaciers in the next hundred years. Scientists note that the melting of many glaciers has accelerated in recent years. For example, the Jacobsen Glacier on Greenland Island has doubled its rate of melting after six years and is now shrinking at a rate of about 12 km per year. A group of European scientists said that Everest could lose up to 96 percent of its glaciers by 2100. Such scientific research was published in the journal "The Cryosphere". All this is due to the development of industrialization, the neglect of human nature, expressed by an increase in emissions of harmful substances into the atmosphere, drying up of rivers and reservoirs, as well as deforestation, which is a natural shield against pollution. Scientists and environmentalists are seriously concerned about these phenomena, since such destruction of the ice cover may contribute to other environmental problems throughout the region, including a significant reduction in freshwater supplies. It is also worth mentioning that one of the most well-known and at the same time major environmental problems - the drying up of the Aral Sea, which is closely related to this phenomenon. Scientists note that the salt from the bottom of the Aral Sea is carried by wind currents towards mountain ranges and settles on glaciers, thereby accelerating melting of the glaciers. Restoration of the Aral Sea ecosystem is a very difficult task, requiring financial investment and considerable efforts on the part of the world community. The disappearance of glaciers can completely change the climate of the region, which will have a negative impact on the animal and plant life, as well as on many aspects of the socio-economic life of the population of mountainous areas. Member States attach great importance to the integrated solution of mountain development problems. In particular, at the plenary session of the UN General Assembly, which was held on December 19, 2019, a resolution "Sustainable Mountain Development" presented by Kyrgyzstan and Italy was adopted. The resolution was also co-sponsored by 80 UN Member States including the SCO countries. The resolution stresses the importance of preventing glacier melting, reducing biodiversity and environmental degradation to ensure and maintain an acceptable standard of living for the residents whose economic activities depend entirely on the natural resources of mountain ecosystems. The resolution also mentions initiatives of UN Member States to promote sustainable development of mountain areas, such as the proclamation, on the initiative of Kyrgyzstan, of the International Mountain Day in 2003 and the International Year of Mountains in 2002, the establishment of the Group of Friends of Mountain Countries, created in August 2019 in New York. Considering the need to intensify work on systematic monitoring of mountain glaciers in 2009 at the conference on climate change in Copenhagen, Tajikistan initiated the establishment of the International Fund for the Protection of Glaciers and invited developed countries and international organizations to provide financial and technical assistance to developing countries to monitor and protect glaciers. The importance

of this initiative was also noted during the meeting of the Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) of SCO Member States held on November 30, 2020. It is important for our Organization to comprehensively study the interconnectedness of environmental problems, exchange information and experience between specialized institutions, take conservation and restoration measures, diversify mountain economies, preserve specific mountain ecosystems, conduct scientific environmental research in mountain and hilly areas, and identify vulnerable mountain areas. In this context Kazakhstan's initiative to make a register of environmental problems in SCO is timely. An undoubted priority for the preservation of mountain ecosystems and the improvement of the well-being of the local population of mountainous areas is the use of environmentally safe technologies. The parties are considering Uzbekistan's initiative, the SCO Green Belt Program, which is designed to unlock our countries' potential for the use and priority implementation of modern resource-saving and environmentally friendly technologies, exchange experience in manufacturing, installation, operation, and maintenance of modern energy-saving equipment, use of environmentally friendly technologies, creating new jobs, and improving the quality of life of the citizens. Currently, one of the main normative documents of the Organization is the Concept of Cooperation of SCO Member States in Environmental Protection, which contributes to maintaining the ecological balance, ensuring environmental safety, promoting "green" development, and financing environmental projects and programs. It should be noted that in 2019, for the first time, the SCO launched a mechanism for the Meeting of Heads of Ministries and Agencies of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States Responsible for Environmental Protection. During the meeting held in Moscow on September 27, 2019, the member states discussed a wide range of environmental issues and agreed on the possibility of establishing thematic Expert Groups of SCO Member States in the field of biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, and mitigation, waste management. The parties stressed the need to raise the level of environmental education and awareness at all levels, and to carry out environmental research, including in mountainous areas. The SCO is interested in interacting with the UN Environment Programme to jointly implement the environmental component of sustainable development. The organization will promote integrated management and protection of mountain ecosystems, taking into account the activities of relevant international and regional organizations. Global climatic changes, widespread warming, are posing a direct threat to the ecosystem of mountains which urgently require the activation of efforts of the world community to adopt a set of socio-political, environmental, economic, and other measures to mitigate the consequences of this phenomenon. To address these problems, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, together with the international community, will contribute to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- The writer is the Secretary General of SCO

## A world cry over Kashmir

Farooq Alay

**Sexual violence and Torture: In Imroz's study sample of 50 villages, more than 2,000 extreme cases of torture by army and paramilitaries were practiced since 1989. The frequent rape of Kashmiri women routinely goes unpunished. HR groups state that 150 Indian officers of the rank of major or above participated in sexual violence**

**H**OW long shall this brutal massacre, rape and arson continue in the India occupied Kashmir? Isn't there an end to repression, over one and a half years long curfew, arrests, tortures, sieges and abductions? There is a long list of Indian atrocities; may I present here for record? There are recorded incidents of massacre, mass graves, extrajudicial killings, torture, sexual violence, suicide and psychological problems, disappearances and human rights violations. In Gawakadal massacre, on 21 January 1990, 51 civilians were killed by Indian troopers during protests against earlier raids in which wanton arrests and molestation of wom-

en were conducted. On January 25, 1990, two BSF patrolling parties in Handwara indiscriminately fired at peaceful protesters and killed 25 people. Indian forces killed 33 protesters and injured 47 on 1 March 1990 at Zakoora Crossing and Tengpora Bypass Road in Srinagar. At the funeral of Mirwaiz Muhammad Farooq on May 21, 1990 over 60 civilians were killed by paramilitary forces and hundreds injured in the indiscriminate firing on the funeral procession. On 6 January 1993 Indian troops killed 55 civilians in the town of Sopore and set many homes and buildings on fire. On 22 October 1993 the Indian Army killed 51 civilians during protests over the siege of the Hazratbal Mosque. 25 of those killed were students. On 27 January 1994 the Indian Army killed 27 civilians, mainly traders, in Kupwara district. Survivors say that the soldiers carried out the massacre to punish people for observing shutdown on January 26. Mass Graves: a state HRC inquiry in 2011 confirmed there were thousands of bullet-ridden bodies buried in unmarked graves in IOK. Out of 2730 bodies, uncovered in 4 of the 14 districts, 574 bodies were identified as the missing. Total number of unmarked graves was more than 6,000. Likewise, extrajudicial killings at the hands of Indian security personnel were recorded by AI in its 1995 report, that hundreds of civilians had been victims of extrajudicial killings, which were often claimed by officers as occurring during "encounters" or "cross-fire". 95,623 brave Kashmiris were killed between January 1989 and June 2020, and 11,207 women gang raped or molested, according to the J&K Coalition of Civil Society. In October 2002, 300-500 people were killed during the election campaign. Sexual violence and Torture: In Imroz's study sample of 50 villages, more than 2,000 extreme cases of torture by army and paramilitaries were practiced since 1989. The frequent rape of Kashmiri women routinely goes unpunished. HR groups state that 150 Indian officers of the rank of major or above participated in sexual violence. One of the most horrific incidents is of gendered violence mass rapes committed by ISF in 1991; they raped 150 women and tortured nearly 200 men, during CASO in the region is the Kunan Poshpura. According to a survey in 2012, 17,000 people, mostly wom-

en, have committed suicide during the past 20 years in the Valley. Sexual violence has been routinely perpetrated on Kashmiri women, with 11.6% of respondents saying they were victims of sexual abuse. Due to the impact of the conflict, a number of people in the valley suffer from various psychological problems like stress, anxiety, mood and post-traumatic disorders. In 2016, the hospital is said to have been overcrowded with more than 100,000 patients. Disappearances: As per local rights bodies, there are over 8,000 Kashmiri youth, who were killed in custody and were later buried in unmarked graves in these graveyards. In occupied Kashmir, boys aged 14 and 16 are held under dreaded Public Safety Act and sent to jails in India or bring them in the areas near the Line of Control and martyred them in fake encounters. Scratch a little deeper and the wounds of decades of conflict sweeping across the region open up when its 1500-odd widows and 'half widows' describe the pain of losing their husbands in course of the ongoing freedom fight. In June 2018, the United Nations, in its first-ever human rights report on Kashmir, wrote that there is also almost total impunity for enforced or involuntary disappearances, with little movement towards credibly investigating complaints, including into alleged sites of mass graves in Kashmir. According to APDP report, people are being detained under the mechanisms of a plethora of existing laws as well as many are held outside the purview of law, in order to suppress any form of political expression by the Kashmiri people. HR Violations After Article 370 and 35A Abrogation: Since the unrelenting military siege and crippling lockdown imposed by the fascist Modi on August 5, 2019, Indian troops have martyred 235 Kashmiri, at least 1321 people were critically injured. Indians damaged over 2900 houses and structures and molested 74 women during 2001 CASOs and arrested 13562 across the occupied territory. The Indians in quite violation of the international laws, started a new practice of burying the bodies of the martyred youth secretly, without religious funeral, at distant locations places in unmarked graves in the territory. World HR organizations like Amnesty International, International Committee of the Red Cross and Asia Watch to take notice of the plight of illegally detained innocent youth, lodged in various jails of

India and Kashmir. As per local rights bodies, there are over 6,000 Kashmiri youth, who were killed in custody and were later buried in unmarked graves in these graveyards. During all the CASO's a common practice can be seen that Indian troops forcibly enter the houses, harass the inmates, arrest the youth and ransack their properties. It can be seen that after the abrogation of article 35A and 370, there was increase in the number of injured youth by pellet bullets and other deadly means. By injuring the youth with irreversible damages ISF are creating a whole generation of crippled and paralyzed Kashmiris with lots of mental health crisis, who want to be productive for their society. A 2010 UN State Department report cited extrajudicial killings by security forces in areas of conflict such as Kashmir as a major human rights problem in India. Christ of Heyns, a special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, has warned India that "all of these draconian laws had no place in a functioning democracy and should be scrapped." On 14 June 2018 for the first time ever UNHRC released a report of 49 pages on human rights violations in Kashmir and accused India on the issue. Secretary General of AI Kumi Naidoo urged the Indian government to act in accordance with international human rights law and standards towards the people living in occupied Kashmir. New British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told the House of Commons that the human rights situation in IHK following the lockdown of the region by the Modi government is "an international issue". Antonio Guterres: "I go on with a clear opinion that human rights must be fully respected in the territory. Dialogue between India and Pakistan is an absolutely essential element for the solution of the Kashmir". Geneva spokesperson OHCHR, Rupert Colville Tuesday 29th October 2019 says: "We are extremely concerned that the population of IHK continues to be deprived of a wide range of Human Rights and we urge the Indian authorities to unlock the situation and fully restore the rights that are currently being denied." Likewise, UAE Ambassador Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al Zaabi said that 177-day lockdown in occupied Kashmir is complete violation of human rights and the Indian Army's atrocities have caused serious concerns.

- The writer is freelance columnist

## Briefs

PDM MPs  
to submit  
resignations

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addressed a press conference along with PML-N vice-president Maryam Nawaz and PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto. However, Fazl said that the final date for the long-march, despite the February 1 announcement, said that a date for it would be finalised later. The PDM chief appealed to the people to start preparing for the long march. Fazl said that following Sunday's successful public rally, the 11-party alliance has signed on a joint statement. "The schedules issued to the provinces by the steering committee will remain intact," he said.

Responding to Prime Minister Imran Khan's statement of not giving an NRO to the Opposition, Fazl said: "He is making such statements as he is under pressure." Meanwhile, Maryam said that some "media houses were spreading false reports" and that she had appreciated her party leaders for their works that had led to a "successful" Lahore jalsa. "I have not seen such a jalsa in my life, that despite such cold weather, even chairs were not visible [...] People were standing and hearing the party leaders," she said. "I have never seen such a jalsa where people had participated with such enthusiasm," Maryam said, adding: "Despite government's tactics [the audience was huge]." Moreover, Bilawal, responding to a question, said that the 11 parties were on the same and that the decision would be made through consultations. Bilawal reiterated that the time for talking was over and that now, it was PM Imran Khan's time to submit his resignation. "The senior party leaders have their own opinions, but once the party makes a decision, they abide by it."

Chinese  
envoy  
assures

From Page 01

The meeting focused on Pakistani students, tourism and manpower. The SAPM apprised the Chinese ambassador of the construction of Buddha corridor saying that corridor that is being built from Northern Swat to Punjab and Baluchistan will be an important and sacred corridor for the Chinese tourists. He said for the first time, community welfare attachés are being sent to China to further enhance the welfare of the Pakistani community in China and to increase manpower demand. The ambassador pledged China's full cooperation at the ministerial level on the Buddha Corridor said that the Buddha trail will be promoted at the 70 years anniversary celebration day of Pak-China Bilateral relations.

Singapore to  
provide free  
vaccines for  
Singaporeans

SINGAPORE: Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said on Monday that the city state will make vaccinations free for all Singaporeans and the long-term residents who are currently staying here. Lee said the government has approved the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for pandemic use, and has accepted the vaccination strategy recommendations from a committee of doctors and experts.

He said these recommendations include that Singapore's entire adult population should be vaccinated, but to make vaccinations voluntary, and that first priority will be given to those who are at greatest risk, with immunization to be processed progressively to the rest of the population, to cover everyone who wants a vaccination by the end of next year. According to a press statement from the Ministry of Health, vaccine supply will be limited globally at the outset and will arrive in Singapore in batches over several months as manufacturers ramp up production of vaccines.

In progressively vaccinating Singapore's entire population, the ministry said that it defers vaccinating pregnant women and children under 16 until more data on safety and efficacy for these groups are available.



KUWAIT CITY: Clean beach save environment campaign organized by Pakistan women's forum Kuwait &amp; green hands environmental team Kuwait. – DNA

Azerbaijan urges Yerevan to  
strictly adhere to peace deal

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan has urged Armenia to strictly adhere to the trilateral peace statement signed by the Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders on November 10, 2020 to stop the Nagorno-Karabakh war. "We would like to remind that the Statement adopted as a result of great efforts envisages a complete ceasefire and the cessation of all military operations. We call on Armenia to strictly adhere to the requirements of the trilateral statement and to refrain from destructive activities that could impede its implementation. Azerbaijan, acting within the framework of joint cooperation with Russian peacekeepers, will take appropriate measures to ensure peace and security in the region," the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry

stated in a statement on its official website on December 13. The statement was issued after an anti-terrorist operation was carried out by the Azerbaijani State Security Service to render harmless a group of Armenians in Hadrut settlement of Khojavend region. "In recent days, the State Security Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan has been conducting an anti-terrorist operation against the terrorist and sabotage actions of the Armenian armed forces remaining in the forest area around Hadrut settlement of Khojavend region of Azerbaijan. These territories were recently liberated from long-term Armenian occupation by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan. A joint statement issued by the State Security Service and the Defence Ministry of Azerbaijan on December 13, 2020 provided detailed

information on the issue," the Foreign Ministry added. The ministry noted that "official Yerevan's claims against Azerbaijan are baseless and unacceptable. Thus, the provocative activity was committed by the remnants of the Armenian armed forces. In their turn, the Government of Azerbaijan and the peacekeeping mission of the Russian Federation are taking all necessary measures to maintain peace in accordance with the provisions of the trilateral statement of November 10". In their joint statement on December 13, the Azerbaijani State Security Service and the Defence Ministry said that the security agency was forced to conduct the anti-terrorist operation in Hadrut as the Armenian armed groups had not left the territory, had created combat positions and had committed acts of terror and sabotage against

Azerbaijani civilians and servicemen in the area. Three Azerbaijani servicemen were killed and two were wounded in the Armenians' sudden attack on November 26, 2020 in Sur village of Azerbaijan's Khojavend region, which was liberated from the Armenian occupation. On December 8, one Azerbaijani serviceman was killed and an employee of Azerbaijan's Azercell company was severely injured during the installation of communication lines and transmission equipment near Hadrut settlement in the same district. "In general, the peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation performed their duties responsibly and professionally to maintain the ceasefire regime and to evacuate the so-called "missing" Armenian servicemen... It is unacceptable for some Armenian officials and the Armenian media to

make baseless allegations against the Russian peacekeeping forces and the Azerbaijani side in such case," the State Security Service and the Defence Ministry said in their joint statement. The Azerbaijani security and defence agencies urged Armenia to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the tripartite declaration on complete ceasefire and cessation of all hostilities, support the maintenance of the ceasefire regime and peace, refrain from provocations through the remaining Armenian armed groups or the armed forces, deliberately aggravating the situation and using such cases for domestic political purposes. They noted that Azerbaijan "continues to make efforts to ensure peace in the region in close coordination and cooperation with the peacekeeping forces of the Russian Federation".

Vaccination can halt  
COVID-19 spread  
in Indonesia

FOREIGN DESK

JAKARTA: The vaccination program to be implemented by the government can lower and also end the transmission of COVID-19 in Indonesia, Dr. Daeng M. Faqih, Chairman of Executive Board of the Indonesian Doctors' Association (IDI), stated. "This vaccination program offers huge hope for us all, not only for healthcare workers but also for all people. Vaccine is our biggest tool to reduce as low as possible and also stop the transmission of COVID-19," he stated during a press conference at the PB IDI office, monitored online here on Monday. The ongoing intervention efforts to reduce the cases of COVID-19 transmission in Indonesia by implementing health protocols are deemed to not be sufficiently effective since the daily confirmed cases have continued to increase by the day, he pointed out. Faqih attributed the in-

creasing number of positive cases of COVID-19 in Indonesia to the fact that the Indonesian people had not implemented health protocols in a strict and disciplined manner. Hence, the vaccination program is another effort expected to be more effective in reducing the transmission of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia that continue to increase. The effectiveness of vaccines in suppressing the transmission of COVID-19 cases in Indonesia undoubtedly depends on how successfully the vaccination program is implemented in Indonesia, according to Faqih. The vaccination program can be successful if all Indonesians are willing to actively participate in COVID-19 vaccination to form herd immunity. Herd immunity against the SARS CoV 2 virus that causes COVID-19 can be obtained as long as 60 to 70 percent of Indonesia's population has immunity to fight the virus.

Azerbaijan, Italy mull  
coop for liberated areas

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan and Italy have discussed the latter's involvement in electricity supply to Azerbaijan's new-liberated territories after three decades of the Armenian occupation. Italian company Ansaldo Energia and Azerbaijan's largest electricity producing company Azerenergy discussed the joint cooperation in electricity supply to Azerbaijan's liberated territories at a meeting held on December 11. The meeting was aimed at creating a new modern type of electricity infrastructure in the liberated Azerbaijani territories, Head of Azerenergy Baba Rzayev said, adding that the company cooperates with a number of international giant companies. "For 30 years, Armenian occupants seriously damaged entire infrastructure, including power

plants in these territories, which are the ancient historical lands of Azerbaijan. Now there is almost no energy infrastructure in these territories," Rzayev said. Rzayev briefed the participants on the possibilities of cooperation in a number of projects, including the creation of a working group among the companies and the Ansaldo Energia office in Baku. Moreover, the parties discussed the joint implementation of small hydropower projects in Kalbajar and Lachin regions in order to create new capacities in the liberated territories, and Ansaldo Energia's participation in the construction and supply of high-voltage substations in these territories. Furthermore, the cooperation with Ansaldo Energia in the construction project of a new 390 MW power plant in the frequency regulation format (in Sangachal

near Baku), the application of software and new technologies to improve the management of the transmission system of Azerenergy by the operator and the creation of a training center based on Ansaldo Energia equipment in the scientific and educational laboratory complex of Azerenergy were discussed during the meeting. Director General of Ansaldo Energia Giuseppe Marion highly appreciated the initiative to create the Ansaldo Energia office in Baku. Earlier, prospects of cooperation between Ansaldo Energia and Azerbaijan in the field of electricity supply to the liberated territories were discussed during the meeting of Deputy Energy Minister Elnur Soltanov, Energy Regulatory Agency Chairman Samir Akhundov, Energy Minister Advisor Javid Abdullayev, Director General of Ansaldo Energia Giuseppe

Marino and Italian delegation which included Italian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Augusto Massari. Ansaldo Energia is one of the leading companies in Italy and the world in the field of energy production, and offers services in this area, along with the construction of power plants, the production of electrical equipment (gas and steam turbines, generators and microturbines). The Azerenergy OJSC was established in 1996 under the Azerbaijani presidential decree. By enabling the activity of the electro energy system of the country, Azerenergy realizes the coordination of the electricity production and transmission, single center-controlled electric stations, substations, system-organizing high-voltage - 110, 220, 330, 500 kW electricity transmission lines and their dispatcher management tools.

## Suga for 'bold action' to fight climate change

Achieving carbon neutrality, or net zero emissions of carbon dioxide, by 2050 – a goal Suga announced in October shortly after taking office – is a key target for Japan and will also help spur economic growth, the prime minister said

FOREIGN DESK

TOKYO: Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on Monday called for the world to take "bold action" in the fight against climate change, touting Japan's plans to reduce carbon emissions and waste while making significant investments in green technologies. "We have a responsibility to pass on a beautiful Earth to the next generation," Suga said at an international conference on environmental issues in Tokyo. Climate change and other environmental issues are becoming a "growing threat" internationally, he said, adding "it is crucial that all countries take bold action." Achieving carbon neu-

trality, or net zero emissions of carbon dioxide, by 2050 – a goal Suga announced in October shortly after taking office – is a key target for Japan and will also help spur economic growth, the prime minister said. Also at the conference hosted by the Global Environmental Action, Emperor Naruhito said it is important for "each of us to take action to bring about the future we want." The Environment Ministry is looking to include the net zero target in a bill to be submitted to the Diet next year, underscoring the urgency the current administration places on the issue. The bill, a revision to a law aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, is also expected to include a reference

to efforts under the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit increases in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius, and preferably 1.5 C, above pre-industrial levels. Suga reiterated at the conference that Japan will help firms develop green technol-



ogies such as carbon capture and recycling, hydrogen fuel and next-generation batteries through a new 2 trillion fund, and will also commit to reducing ocean plastic waste. During a separate international meeting on climate change held Sunday, Suga said Japan will review progress toward its 2030 target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions with an eye on achieving its more ambitious goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050. At the online meeting of the Climate Ambition Summit, co-chaired by the United Nations, the U.K. and France, Suga said Japan will this year provide roughly \$11.8 billion (1.2 trillion) in public and

private funding to support global decarbonization and contribute up to \$3 billion to the Green Climate Fund for helping developing countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The U.K. will host the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) on climate change in November 2021. "Regarding Japan's efforts toward 2030, we will proceed with discussions based on our new target, and we aim to submit the results to the United Nations by COP26," said Suga in a pre-recorded video message. "Japan is determined to lead the efforts to realize the decarbonized world that the Paris Agreement aims for in cooperation with other countries," he said.

Japan set to  
approve new  
ships and  
missiles

WEB DESK

TOKYO: Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga's Cabinet will formally approve on Friday the strengthening of Japan's defenses through the construction of two new Aegis-equipped destroyers and an extension to the range of surface-to-ship missiles, in order to potentially strike from beyond the range of an enemy. But addressing controversy over the larger question of whether Japan should acquire the ability to strike enemy bases has been put off, due to concerns from ruling coalition partner Komeito and questions about the legality of such capabilities under the Constitution. Last week, Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi announced that the government would build the two new destroyers with Aegis missile interceptors. They will serve as a replacement for two Aegis Ashore systems Japan was forced to cancel earlier this year due in part to local opposition in Yamaguchi and Akita prefectures, where it was planned for them to be deployed, amid fears booster rockets released after a missile launch could fall on a populated area. Unlike Aegis Ashore, the two new ships will not have the ability to guard against missile attacks 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Cost issues could also be a concern. The government estimates that introducing the two ships will require between 480 billion and 500 billion – between 20% and 30% higher than the estimated costs of Aegis Ashore.

PM lauds  
Navy's role in  
defense

From Page 01

promote the maritime sector in terms of its usefulness in economic growth. He mentioned that the government's announcement of 2020 as the Year of Blue Economy was a reflection of the efforts to develop maritime economy. The Prime Minister lauded the efforts of Pakistan Navy in defending the country's maritime borders and providing security to China Pakistan Economic Corridor including Gwadar port and for regional peace. Earlier, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi received the Prime Minister on his arrival at the Naval Headquarters. A contingent of the Pakistan Navy presented a guard of honor to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister laid flowers at the memorial at Naval Headquarters. Admiral Niazi thanked the Prime Minister for appreciating the capabilities of Pakistan Navy and said Pakistan Navy would be ever-ready to protect the country's maritime borders and interests. Defence Minister Pervez Khattak, Minister for Economic Affairs Dr. Abdul Hafeez Sheikh, Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Haider Zaidi, Special Assistant on National Security Dr. Moed Yousaf and senior officers were also present.

Haris trying  
to learn  
from Waqar

KARACHI: Emerging pacer Haris Rauf has been working hard with bowling coach Waqar Younis in the nets and is trying to learn maximum in his presence. While talking to a group of journalists from Queens-town, the 27-year-old Haris said that the players have trained well ahead of the T20I series after spending 14-day in a quarantine period. "He (Waqar) was a specialist in yorkers and I am also trying to learn from him on how to use the crease and bowl those yorkers. I try to emulate that in the matches too as you don't have to be predictable in modern-day cricket," he said. "We played three practice matches which have helped us to progress our skills. The management is backing and helping players to come back to their groove," he added. Haris who has made his debut in T20I and ODI for Pakistan is now aiming to make his debut in Test cricket. "Every player dreams to play Test cricket and my goals is also the same. I'm trying to learn fast and soon make my name in Test cricket too," he concluded. – APP

## Briefs

## Trump cancels early vaccines for WH staff

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has rejected a plan for early COVID-19 vaccines for the White House staff. Trump's remarks came after multiple reports said that senior US government officials will lead the nation by getting vaccinated. "People working in the White House should receive the vaccine somewhat later in the program, unless specifically necessary. I have asked that this adjustment be made," Trump said late Sunday on Twitter. "I am not scheduled to take the vaccine, but look forward to doing so at the appropriate time. Thank you!" he added. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Friday authorized Pfizer/BioNTech virus vaccine for emergency use. The vaccination drive will start Monday. Trump's statement comes at a time when deaths from coronavirus in the country have crossed 300,000.

## 'Ready to resume Palestinian unity talks'

FOREIGN DESK

GAZA CITY: Palestinian group Hamas has signalled readiness to resume talks for healing the inter-Palestinian rift with the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA) government in the occupied West Bank. Over the weekend, five Palestinian factions called for the resumption of inter-Palestinian dialogue to achieve Palestinian national unity. "We reiterate our readiness to continue dialogue to restore unity and rebuild Palestinian national institutions based on partnership," leading Hamas member Hossam Badran said in a statement. Last month, the PA announced the resumption of security coordination with Israel after cutting off relations in May in response to Israel's plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank.

The move was criticised by other Palestinian factions, with Hamas saying the PA resuming talks with Israel had stalled the inter-Palestinian dialogue.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniya said the PA's decision "formed an intense barrier" to achieving reconciliation with Fatah. "The about-face carried by the Palestinian Authority in returning to relations, cooperation and speaking to the [Israeli] occupation [...] constituted a strong impediment to achieving the breakthrough in reconciliation that we were hoping for," he said on Sunday, in a televised speech aired by the Hamas-run Al-Aqsa TV on the 33rd anniversary of movement's establishment.

Haniya, however, stressed that "Hamas is ready to build a Palestinian national unified scene to confront the obliteration projects to the Palestinian cause". Representatives from the two movements held talks in Cairo last month, to try to work towards Palestinian unity. In September, the two groups also met in Turkey, where they agreed to hold legislative and presidential elections. Fatah, however, said last month that disagreements remain with Hamas regarding the proposed dates for the polls.



PHNOM PENH: Briefing Session for OIC ambassadors/heads of the missions at the newly inaugurated Phnom Penh Islamic Center established by the Royal government of Cambodia chaired by Oknha Datuk Dr.Othsman Hassan, senior minister in charge of special mission-islamic affairs. - DNA

## Indian farmers on hunger strike as protests intensify

However, the sector has been facing a crisis, driving thousands of debt-ridden farmers to take their own lives in recent years. Amid the coronavirus pandemic that has further disrupted the country's economy, the right-wing BJP government passed the three farm laws in September

FOREIGN DESK

NEW DELHI: Indian farmers are holding a day-long hunger strike to put pressure on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to repeal a set of new farm laws passed recently. Tens of thousands of farmers across India began their hunger strike at 8am (02:30 GMT) on Monday and end it at 5pm, as farmers' unions intensified their agitation for the 19th day. The new laws seek to deregulate India's enormous agriculture sector by allowing farmers to sell their produce to private buyers beyond government-run wholesale markets, where farmers are assured a minimum price for their crops. But the farmers say the laws threaten their livelihoods and will

only benefit big corporations, leaving growers at the mercy of a free market. "Today, we have given a call for protests in all the districts all over India. Main leaders belonging to different farmer organisations will observe fast as a means of protest against the new agriculture laws," Darshan Pal, a farmer leader, told Al Jazeera, adding that if the government invited them again for talks, "we will consider it positively". This is the second time in two weeks the farmers have called for nationwide protests, asking people to hold sit-ins outside district offices across the country. The protests are being spearheaded by thousands of farmers camping outside the Indian capital, New Delhi, and blocking several highways leading to the city. Delhi state's Chief Minister Arvind

Kejriwal and his Aam Aadmi Party (Common Man's Party) have extended support to the farmers by fasting with them on Monday. Kejriwal urged his party's supporters to join the agitation and urged Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to "shun arrogance" and agree to the demands of the farmers. A BJP spokesperson refused to comment, saying the party has "advised" them not to talk to the media on the protests since the ministers are holding talks with the farmers' representatives. Last week, a group of opposition leaders including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi met India's President Ram Nath Kovind and told him the laws should be revoked. Agriculture contributes nearly 15 percent to India's \$2.9-trillion economy and employs more than half

of the country's 1.4 billion people. However, the sector has been facing a crisis, driving thousands of debt-ridden farmers to take their own lives in recent years. Amid the coronavirus pandemic that has further disrupted the country's economy, the right-wing BJP government passed the three farm laws in September. Modi said the legislation was needed to boost the agriculture sector, and that the new laws would benefit the farmers and "liberate" them from the tyranny of middlemen. But the farmers, mostly from Haryana and Punjab states - considered the "grain bowl" of India - have slammed the laws as "anti-farmer". Several rounds of talks between the farmers' representatives and

the government have failed. The farmers demand complete revocation of the three laws and a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their produce guaranteed by the government. Last week, the government sent a written proposal to the farmers' unions, laying out a series of amendments, including written assurances over MSP. But the farmers rejected the offer. "The government's proposal was just an eyewash," said farmer leader Hanan Mullah. "It's been months now since the farmers started protesting against the three laws. We have sent several memorandums to the prime minister, agriculture minister showing our resentment to the farm laws but the government doesn't care," he said.

## Khojaly genocide museum to open

DNA

BAKU: National History Museum will open its branch in Shusha. It is also planned to open the museum of the Khojaly Massacre to mark the killing of 613 Azerbaijani civilians by Armenian forces during the war in the early 1990s. The plan for the museum was prepared by the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) upon the action plan for scientific research in the country's liberated territories. In addition, Karabakh Geological Fund's museum will be created as part of the action plan which covers 2021-2035. The action plan includes the preparation of infrastructure for organizing tourism in the area near Azykh Cave, the research on the "Red Book" of the liberated territories, proposals for the restoration

of reserves and wildlife sanctuaries as well as the creation of the Botanical Garden and the Karabakh Scientific Department of the Institute of Bioresources. The plan also reflects such issues as the study of the hydrofauna of the Sugovushan, Khudaferin and Gyz Galasy reservoirs, the Okhchuchay, Khakari and Bargushad rivers, documenting historical and cultural monuments, museums, exhibits and artifacts plundered and falsified by the Armenians, systematized demonstration of information about destroyed as well as actual analysis of archaeological and biological data. At the same time, it is planned to include in the UNESCO register "Memory of the World" stored at the Institute of Manuscripts named after Azerbaijani poet Mahammad Fuzuli of the "Flower notebook" manuscript of Khurshidbanu Natavan,

restoration of the Karabakh branch of the National Museum of Azerbaijani Literature named after Khurshidbanu Natavan, which once functioned in Shusha, as well as the creation of the Karabakh Archaeological Center. On the night of February 26, 1992, Armenian armed forces, directly supported by the 366th regiment of the former USSR, stationed at that time in the town of Khankendi in Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan attacked, from five directions, the town of Khojaly. Some 613 civilians mostly women and children were killed in the massacre, and a total of 1,000 people were disabled. Eight families were exterminated, 25 children lost both parents, and 130 children lost one parent. Moreover, 1,275 innocent people were taken hostage, and the fate of 150 of them remains unknown.

## Japan's symbol of year nods to no-lockdown

TOKYO: A written character that evokes everything people in Japan were urged to avoid this year - crowds, confined spaces and close contact with others - was on Monday voted the country's top linguistic symbol of 2020. Although new infections have recently hit record highs, Japan has seen a relatively small coronavirus outbreak overall and never imposed a strict lockdown like those seen elsewhere in the world. Instead, residents were strongly advised to use their own judgement and steer clear of situations described as "mitsu" - meaning dense, crowded and close - to limit the spread of the respiratory disease. The social distancing message quickly gained a tongue-in-cheek popularity, with the Tokyo governor's call inspiring viral manga strips, techno remixes and even a video game. Now "mitsu" has been chosen as the character of the year in an annual public ballot organised by the Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation. It took around 14 percent of over 208,000 votes. - APP

## Turkey appoints envoy to Israel

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkey has appointed a new ambassador to Israel after a two-year absence, reports say. In May 2018, Ankara withdrew its envoy over deadly attacks against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip who were protesting US President Donald Trump's decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The move to appoint Ufuk Ulutas, 40, as the new Turkish ambassador is part of an attempt to improve ties with incoming President-elect Joe Biden's administration, a report by Al Monitor quoting "well-placed sources" revealed last week. Ulutas, described as "very polished", "very clever" and "very pro-Palestinian" by sources quoted in the report, studied Hebrew and Middle Eastern politics in the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is also an expert on Israel's regional rival, Iran, but is not a ca-

reer diplomat. Turkey first broke off diplomatic ties with Israel in 2010 after 10 pro-Palestinian Turkish activists were killed by Israeli commandos who boarded a Turkish-owned flotilla trying to deliver aid and break Israel's years-long maritime blockade of Gaza. They restored ties in 2016, but relations soured again in 2018 in the aftermath of the US embassy move. Ulutas's appointment also comes as a number of Arab countries - Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates - agreed to normalise diplomatic ties with Israel in deals brokered by outgoing US President Trump. The Palestinian leadership has slammed the deals as grave betrayals by the Arab states that further undermine Palestinian efforts to achieve self-determination. Earlier this year, Trump proposed a so-called Middle East plan that overwhelmingly favoured Israel and was categorically rejected by the Palestinians.

## Turkey ends nationwide virus curfew

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkey ended a nationwide weekend curfew early Monday aimed at helping to stem the spread of the coronavirus. The curfew began on Friday at 9 p.m. (1800GMT) and ended on Monday at 5 a.m. local time (0200GMT). President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Nov. 30 announced new coronavirus restrictions, including a curfew on weeknights and full weekend curfews. Some sectors including production, supply, health and agriculture are exempt, said Erdogan. Supermarkets, grocery stores, butchers and dried fruit shops operate between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. on week-ends. Bakeries are also open during weekend curfews. Restaurants, meanwhile, only offer delivery service between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The announcement came after a surge in the number of COVID-19 cases in Turkey.

## ADB approves \$ 93m loan to boost inclusive growth in Uzbekistan

At least 60,000 people, including 48,000 unemployed job seekers and 500 people with disabilities will benefit from the project

DNA

TASHKENT: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) today announced that it has approved a US\$93 million loan to help enhance competitiveness in Uzbekistan and boost inclusive growth by improving market-relevant skills development for young people and unemployed job seekers. "Uzbekistan has significant potential to drive economic growth and create jobs but a lack of skills has been a critical constraint for private sector growth and economic diversification," said ADB Senior Social Sector Specialist Xin Long. "This project will play a significant role in helping to boost employment in Uzbekistan, particularly for young people, and will help students and job

seekers pick up the relevant skills they need to thrive in the job market of the 21st century." The Skills Development for a Modern Economy Project seeks to develop a skilled workforce in five priority trades: construction; textiles and garments; information and communication technology; agribusiness and food processing; and machinery-repair and maintenance. At least 60,000 people, including 48,000 unemployed job seekers and 500 people with disabilities will benefit from the project. The project will also benefit industries seeking skilled workers and returning migrants who pursue reskilling or recognition of prior learning in the target domains. By upgrading the facilities of six technical and vocational educational institutions, the project will turn these

into resource-centers for competency-based training. This will in turn benefit other training institutions not covered under the project, seeking learning resources. "The project also represents a timely response to the coronavirus disease pandemic by supporting government expenditure on social assistance and labor market interventions," said ADB Country Director for Uzbekistan Cindy Malvicini. "It will promote e-learning for students, trainees, teachers, and government officials." The project will also establish industry collaboration at key stages of skills development—from curriculum development to workplace training and job placements—while introducing skills gap surveys to enable training service providers to dynamically plan ahead to fit the future skills needs in the market.

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**Briefs**

**First vaccine given in US**

WEB DESK

**NEW YORK:** The first Covid-19 vaccination in the United States has taken place, as the country gears up for its largest ever immunisation campaign. An intensive care nurse in Long Island, New York is believed to have been the first person to be given the jab. Millions of vials of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine are being distributed, with 150 hospitals expected to receive doses on Monday. The US vaccination programme aims to reach 100m people by April. Covid-19 fatalities are nearing 300,000 in the US, which has by far the world's highest death toll.

**Sugar prices raised by Rs 4 in Sindh and Punjab**

DNA

**ISLAMABAD:** The ex-mill price of sugar in Sindh and Punjab has abruptly gone up by Rs 4 per kg with Karachi wholesale sugar now costing Rs 76 instead of Rs 72g. According to industry sources, the ex-mill price of sugar came down to less than Rs 70 per kg last week due to new crushing season and improved supply, but out of nowhere, prices in Sindh and Punjab were increased by Rs 4 per kg on Monday. The ex-mill price of sugar in Sindh and Punjab has come close to Rs 74 per kg due to which sugar in the Karachi wholesale market has gone up to Rs 76. Experts say that the possible reason behind price rise in Punjab might be increased fog in the province, which could have affected the supply but in Sindh, there is no justification for the sudden price rise. There are concerns that if the price of sugar continues to rise at the wholesale level, retailers might also increase prices from the current level of Rs 80.

**Country to move towards political stability**

IBRAR KHAN

**ISLAMABAD:** Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhary has said the country will now move towards political stability following the failure of the movement of opposition parties. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Monday along with Special Assistant on Political Communication Shahbaz Gill, he said the opposition parties have failed to secure the support of the masses. He said the people of this country value the sacrifices rendered by the armed forces for the defense and security of the country. The Minister said the parties which are part of the parliament should now review their confrontation strategy. He said the government is not going anywhere but we want to keep our doors of negotiations open especially on electoral reforms. He said we want an open and transparent Senate election and for this purpose, we are bringing a constitutional amendment.

**Rs1.11 per unit hike in power tariff approved**

SHAHEEN HANIF

**ISLAMABAD:** The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) approved on Monday a per unit hike of Rs1.11 in the power tariff as fuel readjustment "on account of variations in the fuel charges for the month of September 2020." The increase will be collected in December bills, Nepra said. It is, however, not applicable on electricity prices charged by K-Electric. Lifeline consumers will also remain unaffected by the new power tariff. The authority said during the period, the production cost of electricity was Rs3.95 per unit while the reference cost of electricity in September was Rs2.84 per unit.



**ISLAMABAD:** Ambassador of China Nong Rong called on SAPM on climate change Malik Amin Aslam. – DNA

**China to support PM's vision for green Pakistan**

**Both sides also agreed to make China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a model green belt and road initiative by calling it China-Pakistan Green Economic Corridor**

DNA

**ISLAMABAD:** Three-member delegation led by the China's Ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong Monday called on the Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam and discussed various matters of bilateral interest including environmental sustainability, climate resilience and renewable energy, according to a press statement issued here Monday. "We have discussed in detail various matters for enhanced bilateral cooperation and opportunities pertaining to the fields of post-Covid-19 green economic recovery in Pakistan by enhancing investment in nature-based solutions and green job creations, environmental sustainability, climate resilience, forest management, air pollution, water conservation and disaster risk reduction," Malik Amin Aslam said. Meanwhile, China's ambassador said that his government is also committed

to extend support to the green vision of Prime Imran Khan and his remarkable green initiatives including the Green Stimulus, a post-COVID-19 green recovery initiatives for restoring people's lives and livelihood affected by the pandemic. Chinese Ambassador told PM's aide Malik Amin Aslam that it's heartening that Prime Minister's Imran Khan's vision for green Pakistan is perfectly aligned to the Chinese President Xi Jinping's vision for green China. "However, we as a Chinese government see a huge scope and opportunities of working jointly to promote the common green vision for enhanced environmental sustainability and climate resilience against various adverse impacts of climate change on water, energy, food, health and education sectors," the Chinese ambassador said. Both sides also agreed to make China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a model green belt and road initiative by calling it China-Pakistan Green Economic Corridor, so that environment is taken care of while

implementing the game-changer project of regional connectivity and economic development. Malik Amin Aslam informed the ambassador that an ambitious Protected Areas Initiative, approved by the Prime Minister, has been already launched under the umbrella programme "Clean Green Pakistan", which is the present government's historic milestone for nature conservation and promotion of nature-based solutions and creation of green jobs in the country. It aims to expand the country's protected areas cover from 13 percent to more than 15 percent by 2023 and create 5,000 green jobs across the country that are viewed as crucial in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, while at the same time safeguarding the country's natural resources. While sharing more details of the green and clean Pakistan initiatives launched under the Prime Minister's Imran Khan's vision for Clean and Green Pakistan, Malik Amin Aslam told the Chinese envoy Nong Rong that the climate

change ministry has kicked-off several flagship programmes and projects including the world's largest afforestation programme of 10 Billion Tree Tsunami Programme, Clean Green Pakistan Programme, Protected Areas Initiative, Plastic-Free Pakistan Initiative, Recharge Pakistan Initiative as a part of the country's efforts to achieve environmental sustainability and climate resilience through conservation and protection of environment, forests and wildlife, wherein community and youth engagements are being assigned the top priority. The Chinese envoy appreciated the present government's green and clean initiatives, ambitious 10 Billion Tree Tsunami Programme, protection and conservation programmes of environment, wildlife and Pakistan recharge programme for enhancing country's resilience against deleterious fallouts of climate change on water, energy, agriculture, food security, energy, health, education and lives and livelihoods of the vulnerable rural

and mountain communities. China's ambassador Nong Rong remarked that Pakistan's green and clean initiatives are truly inspiring and have led to creation of thousands of green jobs for those rendered unemployed due to COVID-19 pandemic," the ambassador stressed during the meeting with PM's aide Malik Amin. He told the PM's aide that the Chinese government, however, would deploy its financial, technological and knowledge resources to support Pakistan through its experiences in overall COVID-19 crisis management and post COVID-19 green recovery through enhanced investment in green sectors including forestry environmental protection and climate change resilience through mitigation and adaptation initiatives in the country's climate-vulnerable socio-economic sectors.

**Two cases registered against PDM**

ABID RAZA

**LAHORE:** Two cases were registered against the Pakistan Democratic Movement's Lahore jalsa for forcibly entering the Greater Iqbal Park in Lahore and holding a public rally. Both cases have been registered at the Larri Adda police station on the complaint of security staff. One of them was registered on the complaint of Zeshan Haider Naqvi and the other on the complaint of supervisor Muhammad Yousuf. In the FIR, it is stated that PDM leadership and workers broke locks and forcibly entered the park to make arrangements for a public gathering. The PDM held its rally in Lahore despite the authorities denying permission for it.

**Fog causes traffic suspension on motorways**

DNA

**ISLAMABAD:** Fog has engulfed the plains of Punjab and Sindh causing poor visibility and closure of several sections of the motorway for vehicular traffic. The fog has engulfed plains in Punjab and Sindh causing visibility problem due to which M-V motorway from Multan to Sukkur has been closed for traffic, a spokesperson of the motorway police said. Several other sections of the motorway were closed due to poor visibility, as motorway M-JV was closed from Faisalabad to Shamkot, motorway M-III from Faizpur to Abdul Hakeem, while traffic at Multan to Khanawal motorway section was suspended due to thick fog causing poor visibility in the area. According to reports at most of the highways the visibility was as low as 100 meters. Thick fog engulfed Multan, Sahiwal, Harappa, Cheechawatani, Mean Channu and Khanival. Meanwhile the fog also causing visibility problem at Tabba Sultanpur, Zahir Pir, Lodharan, Bahawalpur, Khanpur, Shahkot, Ahmadpur East, Rahim Yar Khan and Sadiqabad.

**Firdous terms jalsa a wake-up call for PDM**

**LAHORE:** Special Assistant to Chief Minister (SACM) Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan has said the people of Lahore showed no interest in the PDM public meeting, and the failed power show of 11-party alliance should serve as a wake-up call for it. In a statement issued on Monday, she said that heir-apparent of the house of Sharifs and her bondwomen should read the writing on the wall as the last nail had been put in the political coffin of the corrupt cabal. Participation of a few thousand spectators was a slap in the face of the PDM as



December 13 had passed after Dec 8 and nothing had happened, she added. She advised the PDM to shun negative politics if it had some shame as the failed Lahore meeting had again exposed it.

The PDM has been cut to size as the meeting place gave a deserted look, she said. It was illogical to hold a public meeting in the backdrop of corona surge and the cabal was facing the consequences of its foolishness, she added. Meanwhile, 14 patients died and 329 new cases were reported during the last 24 hours while the number of patients reached to 62,228 in Lahore only. The total number of corona patients in Punjab is 127,541, and 3,365 have lost their lives due to corona, concluded the SACM. – APP

**2,362 new cases reported**

RAJA PERVAIZ

**ISLAMABAD:** The total active COVID-19 cases in Pakistan on Monday were recorded 47,236 as 2,362 more people tested positive for the deadly virus during the last 24 hours. Thirty six corona patients, 32 of whom were under treatment in hospital and four in their respective homes or quarantines died on Sunday, according to the latest update issued by the NCOC. During the last 24 hours most of the deaths had occurred in Punjab and followed by KP. It added that out of the total 36 deaths during last 24 hours 19 patients died on ventilators.

**US takes Sudan off sponsor of terror blacklist**

WEB DESK / DNA

**KHARTOUM:** The United States has formally removed Sudan from its state sponsor of terrorism blacklist, its Khartoum embassy said Monday, less than two months after the East African nation pledged to normalise ties with Israel. The move opens the way for aid, debt relief and investment to a country going through a rocky political transition and struggling under a severe economic crisis exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. US President Donald Trump had announced in October that he was delisting Sudan, 27 years after Washington first put the country on its blacklist for harbouring militants. "The congressional notification period of 45 days has lapsed and the Secretary of State has signed a notification stating rescission of Sudan's State Sponsor of Terrorism designation," the US embassy in Khartoum said on Facebook. The measure "is effective as of today (December 14), to be published in the Federal Register." As part of a deal, Sudan agreed to pay \$335 million to compensate survivors and victims' families from the twin 1998 al-Qaeda attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and a 2000 attack by the jihadist group on the USS Cole off Yemen's coast. Those attacks were carried out after dictator Omar al-Bashir had allowed then al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden sanctuary in Sudan. Bashir was deposed by the military in April 2019, following four months of street protests against his iron-fisted rule and 30 years after an Islamist backed coup had brought him to power. Protesters stayed on the streets for months after Bashir's removal from office, demanding a military council that seized power hand over to a civilian government, before a precarious power-sharing administration was agreed in August last year.

**Media's role vital during pandemic: Dr Faisal**

**ISLAMABAD:** Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Dr Faisal Sultan on Monday said the role of media was important in creating public awareness about adopting preventive measures and sharing relevant accurate information about COVID-19. Addressing the participants of a day-long online workshop for health journalists on 'COVID-19: understanding and reporting the pandemic', he lauded the role of civil society and media for keeping the public informed about the coronavirus. The workshop was organized here by The Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability (TDEA) in collaboration with Ministry of National Health Services. The SAPM said the risk of COVID-19 related misinformation and stigmatization posed a critical challenge that would require a concerted effort on the part of all stakeholders, especially the media. He particularly reinforced the need for careful timely reporting with the additional challenge of fact checking for the media to pursue. – APP

**Yasmin Rashid suggests PDM jalsa attendees to self quarantine**

**LAHORE:** Punjab Health Minister Dr Yasmin Rashid on Monday advised the participants of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) rally to quarantine themselves given the escalating coronavirus positivity rate that has seriously concerned health professionals over the last months. The provincial minister said that the PDM rally had doubled the fears of coronavirus spread in Punjab, urging that everyone who attended the jalsa should quarantine themselves for at least for 14 days in order to keep their families and dear ones safe. She lamented that despite the government's incessant efforts to prevent mass gatherings from taking place, the Opposition still went ahead with their jalsas to put the lives of its workers at stake. "The PDM has carried out a deadly attack on the health of its workers under the guise of its lustrous politics and in a bid to hide [their] corruption," she lambasted. "People will never forgive PDM, who has become the enemy of their well-being," she asserted. – DNA

**Pak exhibitors get logistics discount at China's expo**

**According to Hao Yishan, this year's exhibition maintained its popularity and influence, and the number of exhibitors in each country has exceeded its numbers in previous years**

DNA

**BEIJING:** Pakistani exhibitors received logistics discount at China's Kunming expo, to start their business in China, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. There are only two South Asia pavilions and two Southeast Asia pavilions in the offline China-South Asia Expo. Only less than 1,000 foreign exhibitors could participate, while online expo has no such limitation," said Hao Yishan, deputy director general of the Department of Commerce of Yunnan Province, who is chiefly

responsible for the organization of The Everlasting China-South Asia Online Expo 2020. "Every year, Pakistani traders are always active participants, and TDAP and FPCCI give great support to us," Hao Yishan told Gwadar Pro that there were 168 Pakistani booths in the year 2018 and 224 booths in 2019. "As per the latest statistics, there are 218 Pakistani exhibitors this year, including 192 companies and 26 professional buyers. JD Logistics also provides Pakistani exhibitors with freight subsidies for the logistics within China." He said.

According to Hao Yishan, this year's exhibition maintained its popularity and influence, and the number of exhibitors in each country has exceeded its numbers in previous years. "In the following years, we plan to hold China-South Asia Expo in both online and offline format. When the exhibitors register for the offline expo, we will also provide online expo services for them, like buy one get one free." "Holding a 7-day expo with 365-day online service is our aim." Hao Yishan said that his team is discussing how to provide and maintain online services after the

exhibition. "Participating in our exhibition is almost equivalent to having an online store. There are currently 10,000 companies on our online platform. We hope that as our services develop, the number can exceed 20,000 or 30,000," he added. Meanwhile, the Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) opened its representative office in Chongqing City, China. According to China Economic Net, Zhang Yang is the chief representative of Chongqing office, who is also the president of the Pakistan-China Cultural Exchange Center (Hyderabad).

According to Zhang, taking the opportunity of celebrating the 70 anniversary of the establishment of China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations in 2021, Chongqing representative office of HCCI will build a stage to facilitate the extensive communication and investments between the bilateral governments and civil societies. These activities aim to strengthen the exchange and cooperation between Pakistan's industry and commerce, culture and tourism circles and relevant governments, sectors and organizations in southwestern China.

**WB offers new funds to Pakistan**

DNA

**ISLAMABAD:** The World Bank on Monday agreed over providing funding to Pakistan for advance purchases of coronavirus vaccines. According to sources, the World Bank has offered Pakistan providing new funds for the vaccine procurement which was reportedly rejected by Islamabad. According to sources Pakistan has requested WB to allow utilizing funds issued for Pandemic Response Effectiveness Project (PREP) for the purchase of Covid vaccine which was accepted by the World Bank.