



# Islamabad POST

Wednesday, December 23, 2020

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

**COAS warns of befitting response to Indian aggression**

Detailed News On Page-01

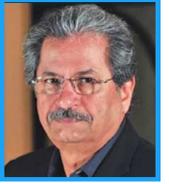
**China ready to promote CPEC cooperation**

Detailed News On Page-01



**Shafqat directs all madressahs to shut down**

Detailed News On Page-01



## Briefs

**Welfare of special persons top priority**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi says welfare of special persons is a big challenge and all segments of the society need to work for it. In his letters to the media on Tuesday, the President urged them to create awareness for the rights and issues of special persons. The President said the government is taking steps to make special persons financially independent and give them access to educational institutions and jobs.

**China to promote CPEC cooperation**

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China to Pakistan Nong Rong said that both China and Pakistan were ready to promote China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) cooperation. In his series of tweets, the Chinese envoy pointed out that in 2020, the two countries had overcome the difficulties of COVID-19 and made new head ways of CPEC. Referring to an Award ceremony for outstanding Pakistani staff of CPEC projects, Nong Rong said he felt honor to deliver a speech at the ceremony.

**Did not visit Israel: Zulfi**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Overseas Pakistanis, Zulfi Bukhari, has once again denied visiting Israel on behalf of the government. He also vowed to send a legal notice to the British think-tank propagating this rumor. Speaking at a press conference in Islamabad on Tuesday, Zulfi Bukhari vehemently denied the allegations against him, saying that he has never visited Israel and that false information was being spread about him. Zulfi Bukhari said that he is happy when he gets criticized as it means he's doing something right.

## It is time to deliver now, says Imran

"We no longer have an excuse that we're new and are learning because most of us came into power for the first time": PM

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The PTI government has to take its governance performance to much higher levels in the remaining time of its five-year tenure, Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Tuesday, telling his ministers that "the time for performance has arrived." He was addressing a special ceremony to sign 'Performance Agreements of the Federal Government for the Year 2020-21' in Islamabad attended by ministers and special assistants to the prime minister. According to the Prime Minister's Office, federal ministers of various ministries signed performance agreements with the prime minister. "We will put pressure on ourselves to take our governance performance to much higher levels in our remaining two-and-a-quarter years," the premier said. "We no longer have an excuse that we're new and are learning because most of us came into power for the first time. The time for performance has arrived," he added.

Continued on Page 06

**Cabinet allows to present Census before CCI**

RANA FARRUKH

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet has allowed presentation of the report of 6th Census before the Council of Common Interest for final approval. Briefing the media in Islamabad, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Syed Shibli Faraz said the Cabinet which met in Islamabad on Tuesday also approved clearance of encroachments along the Margalla Road in Islamabad. The Minister said the Interior Ministry has been permitted to amend the Exit Control List to implement courts' decisions. He said the final approval in amending the ECL will be taken from the cabinet committee. Shibli Faraz said today's cabinet meeting was different to that of the routine meeting in view of growing spike of COVID-19 pandemic.

## Rasheed urges early end to UAE visa curbs

The UAE Ambassador said the visa restriction on Pakistani citizens is temporary

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has called for early end to the visa restrictions on Pakistani citizens for the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Talking to UAE Ambassador Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al Zaabi in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates have long-standing ties. The Minister said 1.5 mil-



lion Pakistani workers in the UAE are valuable asset, and they send foreign exchange reserves worth about five billion dollars to Pakistan annually.

Continued on Page 06

## Australia supports inspiring street art

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: The Australian High Commission in Pakistan and I AM KARACHI today opened a series of public art murals across the streets of Karachi, painted by Australian artist Gabrielle Brinsmead and Pakistani artist Phool Ji. The project aims to foster cultural connections between Australia and Pakistan and

transform the public spaces in the city with inspiring art and positive messages. Speaking at the opening ceremony on behalf of the Australian High Commissioner, Australia's Honorary Consul in Karachi Barrister Jahanzeb Awan shared that the themes of the art murals - women's empowerment and the environment - are key part of Australia's work in Pakistan.

Continued on Page 06



WASHINGTON: The US President-elect Joe Biden received a coronavirus vaccine prepared by Pfizer-BioNTech. - DNA

## COAS warns of befitting response to India

Chief of Army Staff was briefed about latest situation, Indian Cease Fire Violations deliberately targeting innocent civilians along LOC

NAVEED MIRAJ

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Bajwa has said that Indian Army shall always get befitting response to any misadventure or aggression. The COAS stated this while visiting forward troops deployed along Line of Control (LOC). According to an ISPR press release, Chief of Army Staff was briefed about latest situation, Indian Cease Fire Violations deliberately targeting innocent civilians along LOC and recent targeting of UN vehicle by Indian troops against all international



norms and conventions. Appreciating operational preparedness and high morale of troops, COAS lauded officers and men for continued vigilance and professionalism. Indian provocations particularly recent targeting of UNMOGIP vehicles are threat to regional peace and stability, COAS emphasised. Pakistan Army shall take measures to protect innocent civilians along LOC and defend honour, dignity & territorial integrity of motherland at all costs, COAS reiterated. Corps Commander Rawalpindi Corps, Lieutenant General Azhar Abbas received COAS at the LOC.

**Woman martyred in Indian firing**

RANA FARRUKH

RAWALPINDI: A civilian faced martyrdom while three others suffered injuries after Indian Army troops resorted to unprovoked ceasefire violation at the LoC, a statement issued by ISPR stated on Tuesday. The incident occurred in Hot-spring and Jandrot sectors. The Indian soldiers targeted the civilian population with mortars and heavy weapons resulting in martyrdom to a 50-year-old woman and injuries to three civilians including four-year-old minor Nayab, the ISPR added. The injured have been evacuated to nearby health facility for medical care, it stated. Indian forces have continuously been targeting civilian populated areas with artillery fire, heavy-caliber mortars and automatic weapons along the LoC and Working Boundary.

**'Pak considers Iran an important regional partner'**

We have a strong resolve to further enhance our ties with Iran: Zobiaida

SAIFULLAH / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Defence Production, Zobiaida Jalal has said that Pakistan considers Iran as a friend and important regional partner. She said this during a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan Syed Mohammad Ali Hosseini in Rawalpindi on Tuesday. Zobiaida Jalal said we have a strong resolve to further enhance our ties with Iran and opening of the crossing at Gabb Ramdan is an important step in this regard. She said opening of the borders at various points will bring the people of both the countries close to each other and boost trade and economic activities. On the occasion, the Iranian Ambassador said government and people of Iran are very pleased and consider it as an important step.

**Shafqat directs madressahs to close**

SHAHEEN HANIF

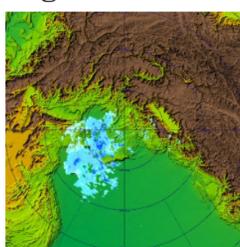
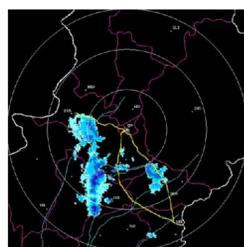
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has taken notice of madressahs remaining open during the coronavirus pandemic, despite the government's clear directives to educational institutions to remain closed. According to sources, PM Imran Khan has asked the education minister to provide an explanation on why madressahs were still open. Despite clear instructions from the National Command and Operations Centre (NCO) to close all schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions, sources said. The Ministry of Education has contacted all madressahs that are still open and holding classes. The education minister has issued directives to close all madressahs that are open across the country, confirmed sources, adding that the minister will apprise PM Imran Khan of his decision as well.

## Japanese contribution towards risk reduction

A Japanese engineer also said, "I am glad that the weather surveillance radars with the same state-of-the-art technologies as those of Japan are utilized in Pakistan"

DNA/NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is prone to natural disasters such as floods and landslides caused by heavy torrential rains, tropical cyclones, earthquakes and so on. Quite notably, every year Pakistan experiences heavy damages due to floods triggered by heavy monsoon rains during the monsoon season. Therefore, the Japanese government has been assisting Pakistan proactively, in the enhancement of weather surveillance capacity through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) since the 1980's, in order to mitigate the damage by flood. Weather surveillance radars in Islamabad and in Karachi have already been put in place and a few others are planned to be constructed in Multan and in Sukkur, in cooperation with Japan. These radars will cover almost the whole of Pakistan.



Islamabad weather radar Image (Left: old weather radar, Right: new weather radar)

In addition, in 2019 the Japanese government through JICA has assisted in establishing the "Specialized Medium Range Weather Forecasting Center" in order to enhance not only the weather surveillance capacity, but also weather forecasting capability for Pakistan. An officer from the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), mentioned that the "Capacity

of weather forecasting has been enhanced by various Japanese assistance. We can now get exact positioning information of clouds through high-resolution images as compared to previous weather surveillance system. We can also provide advance weather information to local communities, identify heavy rain areas, and issue early warning to local residents living downstream of rivers which are



Photo: Weather surveillance radar established by Japanese Grant Aid in Islamabad

expected to be flooded. Similarly, advance weather information can also be provided to the Islamabad

international airport." A Japanese engineer also said, "I am glad that the weather surveillance radars with the same state-of-the-art technologies as those of Japan are utilized in Pakistan." (The White building located on the right side is old weather surveillance radar, also previously assisted by Japan) During the monsoon seasonal floods in 2020, the "Specialized Medium Range Weather Forecasting Center" coupled with PMD's efforts enabled local residents to safely evacuate through the timely issuance of early flood warning, disseminated to local residents and related stakeholders. Meanwhile, a recently occurring new phenomenon called the "urban flooding" which has devastated urban centers is being experienced in and around Karachi City. In this regard, the Japanese government through JICA continues to support Pakistan to mitigate the risks and damages from these expected natural disasters.

**10 terrorists killed in Balochistan**

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Security Forces have conducted IBO on terrorist hideout in Gwargo, Awaran, Balochistan, killing 10 terrorists, the ISPR said on Tuesday. These terrorists were also involved in a firing incident on security forces which resulted in the martyrdom of Lance Naik Iqbal on December 20 in Awaran. As soon as security forces cordoned the area, Terrorists opened fire to flee from the area. In intense exchange of fire 10 terrorists were killed. A Cache of arms and ammunition recovered from hideout.

## Inside...

- Cabinet approves EV Policy for 4 wheelers: Hammad Azhar - Page 02
- US-Pakistan ICCI appoints President, Secy General - Page 03
- Chairman CDA directs to facilitate citizens - Page 04
- Role of youth in unifying nations across the border - Page 05
- Pakistan win final T20I by 4 wickets against New Zealand - Page 06
- Azerbaijani, Afghan officials mull further cooperation - Page 07
- Think-tanks working to improve relations with Kabul - Page 08

## Briefs

## 'Efforts underway to maximize benefits of EOBI'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis Zulfi Bukhari says

all out efforts are being made to maximize the benefits of EOBI for workers who are registered under it. Addressing a press briefing in Islamabad today (Tuesday), he said through digitalization a proper crackdown will be initiated for those employers who don't register their workers.

The Special Assistant said he is trying to increase EOBI pension by raising the government's contribution and proper utilization of its resources.

While talking about Workers Welfare Fund, he said the government as per decision of Council of Common Interest is trying to devolve it to provinces. He said a proper mechanism in this regard is being devised so all provinces can get benefits of it.

## 'Why double standard for opponents'

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Rana Sanaullah has said that

the Supreme Court has declared the whole matter of Khokhar brothers clear, now an attempt is being made to demolish their house again. He warned the rulers that they will have to endure the same things tomorrow.

Rana Sanaullah while addressing a press conference said that there is a tradition in Punjab that despite opposition, the sanctity of chador and four walls is not violated. He said that the government is declaring the women of the Sharif family as fugitives, tomorrow they will have to face all these things. The league leader said that the Khokhar family was being subjected to the worst revenge. 'Baba Rahmata' had knocked down the walls of Khokhar community.

## Masood condemns mass arrests in IIOJK.

MUZAFFARABAD: AJK President Sardar Masood Khan on Tuesday strongly condemned the mass arrests of pro-freedom leaders,

human rights activists and the youth by the Indian military and paramilitary troops across the illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and called upon the international community to take notice of the vindictive actions of the Indian rulers.

Expressing his sharp reaction over the arrests of pro-liberation leaders Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar, Mauvi Bashir and Abdur Rashid Lone, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front leader Yasin Butt, Jamaat Islami leader Farooq Ahmed Khaki and human rights activist Mohammad Ahsan Unto, and dozens of political workers and common civilians in Srinagar.



ISLAMABAD: British-Pakistani champion boxer Amir Khan calls on Prime Minister, Imran Khan. – DNA

## Cabinet approves EV Policy for 4 wheelers: Hammad Azhar

He said that the duty on import of charging equipment has been capped at 1% while the Federal Excise Duty (FED) already does not apply to EVs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Hammad Azhar Tuesday said that Cabinet has given approval to the Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy for four wheelers. In a Tweet, he highlighted the salient features of the policy, saying that it included removal of additional customs

duty and Accounting Services and Tax (AST) on imports of EV cars. He said that for manufacturers only 1% tax on import of electric vehicle parts will be imposed. The policy also included fee waiver for the registration and manual renewal for EVs in Islamabad. He said that 1% sales tax for locally made EVs up to 50 kilowatt hours (kWh) and light commercial vehicles up to 150 kWh. He said that the duty on

import of charging equipment has been capped at 1% while the Federal Excise Duty (FED) already does not apply to EVs. The government also announced duty free import of plant and machinery for manufacturing of EVs, he added.

"Cabinet has today approved the Electric Vehicle policy for 4 wheelers. Salient features: - Removal of Addn Customs duty and AST on imports of EV cars. -

For Manufacturers: only 1% tax on import of EV parts. Registration & annual renewal fee waiver for EVs in ICT. 1% sales tax for local made EVs up to 50kwh and light commercial vehicles up to 150 kWh. - Duty on import of charging equipment capped at 1%. - FED already does not apply to EVs. - Duty free import of plant and machinery for manufacturing of EVs", he tweeted.

## More JUI-F leaders voice support for Maulana Sherani

Terming Maulana Sherani, an honest man, Maulana Gul Naseeb said the parameters of authenticity have now changed in the JUI-F after the inclusion of rich members in the party



DNA

PESHAWAR: Serious differences have emerged between Jamiat Ulema-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and other leaders of the party as several more members of the party have voiced support for former Islamic Ideological Council chairman and senior party leader Maulana Mohammad Khan Sherani. As per details, former Member of National Assembly (MNA) Maulana Shuja-ul-Mulk, while supporting Maulana Sherani, said that people of JUI-F are the selected ones as there were irregularities in organizational set up of the party. He further claimed that Akhtar Sherani was sidelined for expressing reservations on narrative of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz

(PML-N). People in Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) are there to save themselves from National Accountability Bureau (NAB). On the other hand, former Jamiat Ulema-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) ameer Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Maulana Gul Naseeb has also criticized policies of Maulana Fazlur Rehman. Gul Naseeb said that tickets of JUI-F are now not distributed on narrative, character and honesty. He further claimed that ideological workers of the party are being sidelined and those people who are wealthy are being promoted in the party.

Terming Maulana Sherani, an honest man, Maulana Gul Naseeb said the parameters of authenticity have now changed in the JUI-F after the inclusion of rich members in the party. The election ticket of JUI-F was being awarded on the basis of the money after the joining of Talha Mehmood and Azeemullah, he claimed. "Old workers stated leaving the party due to confusion." He underlined the need for reforms in the ranks of the JUI-F and termed it essential for the future of the party.

## Call for joint efforts to boost Pakistan-UK trade

LAHORE (APP):-Pakistan and United Kingdom are steady trade and economic partners and have immense potential to grow their mutual trade to the new height. While talking to a two-member delegation from United Kingdom led by Farhan Farani hater Tuesday, the LCCI President Mian Tariq Misbah said that United Kingdom is a lucrative destination and can help Pakistan boost its exports to the required level. LCCI Vice President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry and Executive Committee Member Haji Asif Sehara also spoke on the occasion. A number of issues including mutual trade, investment, Brexit scenario and GSP status to Pakistan came under discussion.

The LCCI President said that Pakistan and UK enjoy strong bilateral relations and share history and

deep cultural linkages. Pakistani businessmen should grow their relations with their British counterparts to avail the available opportunities. He said that exchange of delegations and participation in each other's exhibitions were useful tools to know more about each other. Such interactions with the counterparts and other stakeholders allow embarking upon new areas of cooperation, he observed.

He said that UK was known for having strong socio-political atmosphere where the people and the government work hand in hand for the betterment of the country.

He said that United Kingdom was third largest export market for Pakistan. He said that LCCI is making all-out efforts for the cause of business community.

Mian Tariq Misbah said that UK should provide some trade facili-

tation to Pakistan. He emphasized the need for collective efforts to increase the existing trade volume between the two countries. He said, "We have to identify problems and find out solutions to the issues coming in the way of trade promotion.

He said that to enhance trade between the two countries there should be exchange of information so that both sides get updated knowledge about each other. Exchange of delegations should be linked up with events.

LCCI Vice President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry said that textile industry was an important sector and generates over 60 percent export revenue of the total. Pakistan is enjoying GSP Plus status. UK is a very big market but we are dealing in limited products. He emphasized on skill development, he added.



Islamabad: Special representative of PM on religious harmony, Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi called on President Dr. Arif Alvi. – DNA

## ACE calls up PML-N lawmaker

DNA

ABBOTTABAD: The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) has sent a call-up notice to a provincial lawmaker of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Aurangzeb Nalota over alleged corruption into development schemes. Sardar Aurangzeb Nalota, a PML-N's Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), has been summoned for investigation by the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Abbottabad on December 23. The ACE said in a statement that MPA Nalota had been issued call-up notice earlier for his appearance before an inquiry committee constituted to probe into corruption allegations against him. The statement said that legal action will be taken against the provincial lawmaker if he fails to appear before the investigators following the issuance of call-up notice. PML-N lawmaker Sardar Aurangzeb Nalota from Abbottabad is facing charges of his alleged involvement in corruption into development schemes. In another development, a team of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) personnel raided the residence of a PML-N leader Salman Khalid alias Pomi Butt, who is a younger brother of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz MPA from Gujranwala Imran Khalid Butt. Pomi Butt has not been arrested during the raid conducted by FIA officials at his residence in Gujranwala. Pomi Butt was accused of alleged tax theft and possessing assets beyond known sources of income.

## SHC extends pre-arrest bail of Manzoor Wassan

DNA

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) has extended the pre-arrest bail of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Manzoor Wassan in assets beyond income case. The Sindh High Court (SHC) heard a petition filed by Manzoor Wassan to challenge investigation against him by the National Accountability Court (NAB). The PPP leader along with his lawyer Naem Iqbal appeared in the hearing today. The NAB prosecutor told the court that the institution will submit its response to the court after getting instruction from the chairman regarding the probe against the accused.

The high court directed NAB investigation officer to present a progress report till February 16 and approved the extension of pre-arrest bail of Wassan. The hearing was adjourned. While interacting with journalists outside the SHC building, Manzoor Wassan termed 2021 more dangerous than this year. He predicted that a major development is likely to be witnessed before the organisation of Senate elections.

Wassan claimed that the situation was not going in accordance with his 'dreams' and nothing could be said with certainty regarding the forthcoming year.

The PPP leader is accused of making assets beyond his known sources of income and owns benami properties too, however, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had failed in filing reference against the PPP stalwart.

## Christmas cake ceremony held at rescue headquarters

On this occasion, Dr. Rizwan Naseer wished the greetings of Christmas with Masih Rescuers serving across Punjab

DNA

LAHORE: The Director-General of Punjab Emergency Service, Dr. Rizwan Naseer has said that Christmas is a day to renew the pledge to promote mutual love, brotherhood, tolerance, and social justice. He said that the teaching of Jesus is a beacon for all humanity. He expressed that all Masih employees in the service are equally contributing to the provision of timely emergency care to victims of emergencies without any discrimination. He expressed these views while addressing a Christmas Cake-cutting ceremony held at Rescue Headquarters here on Tuesday. It was organized by Emergency Services Academy in collaboration with Masih employees of Rescue Head-

quarters and District Lahore. Deputy Director HR, Dr Foad Shahzad Mirza, Registrar, Dr Muhammad Farhan Khalid, Social Welfare Officer Ms Sumaria Liat, and a great number of Masih employees from Rescue Headquarters, Academy and District Lahore also participated in the ceremony.

On this occasion, Dr. Rizwan Naseer wished the greetings of Christmas with Masih Rescuers serving across Punjab. He also appreciated all Masih brothers for rendering their valuable contribution to the development of Pakistan in various fields. He acknowledged the role of Christian employees and lauded their contribution to the uplift of Rescue 1122. He advised them to strictly follow corona pandemic standard operating procedures (SOPs) to curb Covid-19 and pray for those who are affected by

the coronavirus. Dr Rizwan Naseer also lauded the services of Masih employees during Covid-19 and acknowledged the services of non-operational to ensure the cleanliness of premises of Emergency Service Academy, Headquarters, and all Rescue offices services. He added that people of all religions living in Pakistan irrespective of race and color are all compatriots of Pakistan. We should become a nation and play our role in the development and prosperity of Pakistan. On this occasion, Pastor Eric Peter said that all human beings are equally important and you should serve humanity without any discrimination. He advised them that they should think positively and prove them a good employee of this prestigious service as every department gives value to its best employees.

DECEMBER 2020

Pakistan's Premier News &amp; Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

Find us on:

www.centrelines.com.pk

www.dnanews.com.pk

www.islamabadpost.com.pk

@Postislamabad / @Editordnanews

A sister concern of

Islamabad POST

11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,  
G-8 Markaz, ISLAMABAD-PAKISAN  
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165

## Briefs

### Capital police to get more smart cars

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police is going to plan for more state-of-the-art patrol cars soon to help curb crime in the federal capital. These cars would include cameras, megaphones, search lights, first-aid kits as well other latest equipment, said police sources here on Tuesday. They said that Minister for Interior Sheikh Rashid showed his strong commitment for providing these cars to Islamabad Police, ensuring effective patrolling in the city. They informed that few cars are already on patrol at different roads. The police sources said that overall security plan would be further improved to make Islamabad as a safe city. "Checking system through smart cars, equipped with latest technology, will also be introduced. More cars will be provided to Islamabad police for effective checking," they said. Unnecessary check posts have been removed from the city while latest technology would be used to conduct checking at various points of the city, they said.

### Current account surplus of \$447m in Nov

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Current Account Balance has posted a surplus of US \$447 million in November 2021 against a deficit of \$326 million in same month of the previous year. Likewise on average, the surplus during the period July-November (2020-21) has risen to \$1.6 billion compared to a deficit of \$1.7 bn over the same period last year. Meanwhile the State Bank of Pakistan in its official tweet said that in contrast to previous five years, current account has been in surplus throughout FY21 due to an improved trade balance and a sustained increase in remittances. In November 2020, both exports and imports picked up, reflecting recovery in external demand and domestic economic activity, the central bank added. It said "this turnaround in the current account, together with improvement in financial inflows, raised SBP's forex reserves by around \$1 billion in November 2020". At \$13.1 billion, the foreign exchange reserves are now at their highest level in 3 years. - APP

### Court defers indictment of Shaukat Aziz

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court on Tuesday deferred the indictment of former prime minister Shaukat Aziz in a case related to illegal appointments until January 19. The indictment was deferred as the co-accused Basharat Hasan did not show up before the court citing suffering from coronavirus. Later, the court adjourned the hearing of the case until January 19 for the indictment. It is pertinent to mention here that Shaukat Aziz had not been appearing before the court for long in a corruption reference filed against him by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and was declared a proclaimed offender. NAB had filed a reference against Shaukat Aziz, who served as Pakistan's prime minister from 2004 to 2007 - over misuse of powers during his tenure as prime minister. NAB contends that he had illegally appointed Mr Basharat Hasan Bashir as a consultant for the Alternative Energy Development Board (AEDB) on Management Position-II (MP-II) pay scale. The accountability watchdog maintains that the appointment of Bashir violated MP scale policy guidelines and the board's regulations. Basharat Hasan Bashir was appointed on January 1st, 2006 without open competition, NAB says.

## US-Pakistan ICCI appoints President, Secy General

The Chairman of US-Pakistan ICCI M. Siddique Sheikh and the board has approved appointment of Muhammad Ahmed as President of Pakistan Chapter for two years while Malik Sohail Hussain has been appointed as Secretary General for five years

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The US-Pakistan International Chamber of Commerce and Industry (US-Pakistan ICCI) has appointed two leading business leaders for their Pakistan chapter. The Chairman of US-Pakistan ICCI M. Siddique Sheikh and the board of the chamber has approved appointment of Muhammad Ahmed as President of Pakistan Chapter for two years while Malik Sohail Hussain has been appointed as Secretary General for five years. On the occasion, Siddique Sheikh has hoped that both the leaders will strive hard to bring business community of the US and Pakistan closer and play their due role in promoting the common cause of mutual understanding and prosperity. He said that we are looking forward to the newly-appointed office bearers to promote trade, commerce, understanding, networking, linkages, exchange of delegations and sectoral exhibitions in the both countries. Both the newly appointed businessmen said that we are thrilled



to have an opportunity to represent the respected forum of US-Pakistan ICCI which has been serving businesses since long. We will learn a lot from the talented leadership of the forum and our colleagues and help this great organization build on its success and tackle new challenges emerging on the horizon. They said that promotion of SMEs will be high on their agenda as it is the backbone of Pakistan economy but it is facing many problems which must be resolved. Muhammad Ahmed is a renowned businessman and CEO of leading Group of Companies in Islamabad who has served as President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce, rendered valuable services in fight against coronavirus, organised many successful events and strived hard to bring business community closer. Malik Sohail Hussain has served on very important positions in FPCCI, SAARC CCI, ICCI, UBG and commands vast experience in holding different events and leading delegations to different countries including the US. He is advisor to many important trade associations and chambers of commerce since a decade.

## No ties with Israel unless Palestine issue is resolved

"We all jointly form a strong and stable Pakistan," he said adding that the minority communities also stood against the disrespectful caricatures in France

ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Tuesday said that Pakistan will never accept Israel unless the Palestine issue is resolved. "We consider Palestine as the issue of the Muslim Ummah and the entire humanity," he said while disassociating the government from elements who are adding salt to the injuries of the Palestinians through their remarks on normalizing ties with Israel. It is pertinent to mention here that even Prime Minister Imran Khan on November 25 said that there was no pressure on Pakistan to recognise Israel. "Pakistan under no pressure to recognise Israel," said the prime minister while talking to media in Lahore. "Our stance is very clear from day one and Quaid-e-Azam said in 1948 had said that Pakistan will never recognise Israel until Palestine are given their due rights" he added. Further assuring the religious-minority communities, the representative on religious harmony said that the government would not allow anyone to deprive non-Muslims of their due rights in the country. "We all jointly form a strong and stable Pakistan," he said adding that the minority communities also stood against the disrespectful caricatures in France. He lauded Prime Minister Imran Khan for his remarks at global forums against Islamophobia and said that his vision was lauded by all Muslim countries. "All prophets and holy books are equally respectful for us," Tahir Ashrafi said. He said that the Christian community has played its important part in the education and health sectors of the country. - DNA

## Cold, dry weather forecast

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Tuesday forecast cold and dry weather during next 24 hours in most parts of the country. According to MET report, dense fog likely to prevail in plain areas of Punjab and upper Sindh during morning and night hours. Dry and cold waves likely to persist in the upper areas of Balochistan. A Continental air prevailing over most parts of the country. Minimum temperature's recorded in (°C): Gupis -10, Astore, kalam -07, Parachinar, Skardu, Bagrote -06, Quetta, Kalat -04 and Dir -03.

## Shah Allah Ditta caves attract visitors

ISLAMABAD: The historical sites of federal capital "Shah Allah Ditta caves" located near foothills of Margalla Hills attracted a large number of visitors from twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. An official of Directorate of Archeology and Museum (DOAM) told APO that Shah Allah Ditta known as a centuries old village. He said that the relics of the Buddhist era dating back to the 8th century could be found here along with burnt diyas and trees with amulets tied to them. These caves located next to the shrine and tomb of Shah Allah Ditta. The archaeological evidence indicated that the caves and the platform-like formations surrounding the area were first used for meditation by Buddhist monks and later by Hindu sadhus before Muslim ascetics took over during the Mughal period. The caves has a unique attraction due to its calmness and natural look. At the caves and nearby sports, one can roam around freely as people are very friendly. Shah Allah Ditta is a must-visit site for anyone visiting or living in the federal capital. The historical spot also have few food outlets which serve traditional food. An official said that number of tourists could be double while taking various measures for promotion of this ancient relics and increased facilities for tourists there. The scenic Margalla Hills hidden the gem of archaeological master piece of Shah Allah Ditta caves preserving around hundred years old Buddhist era murals. - APP

## 74% work on THQ hospital completed

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Punjab government has completed 74 per cent construction work of Tehsil Headquarter Hospital (THQ) in Potohar Town of the district to help ailing segments of the society. "The Rs.656.028 million health project, inaugurated in September 2017 will hopefully be completed by June next," District Finance and Development Officer Health Dr Ali Ahsan told APP here on Tuesday. He said that pace of the project, which was scheduled to be completed in two years, was slow due to reasons beyond their control, however, state-of-the-art facility would be ready for the area residents and people of the adjoining localities in 2021. The Director informed that in first phase the construction of 1st floor has been completed while the flooring of 2nd, 3rd floor besides Mummy,garages,canteen,laundry,boundary wall and residences for officials are being completed for which the provincial government has so far spent Rs 350.2 million. He said health department was determined to upgrade the existing health facilities in rural areas of Rawalpindi and would use all available resources to bring a visible change in the health services.

## New Year, Quaid Day sales attract women buyers

ISLAMABAD: Following the past trends, the famous brands of dresses, shoes and other accessories have started offering discount offers due to the upcoming celebrations of birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and New Year to attract more buyers especially women. December is the month when majority of the brands and fashion outlets offer sales on various items to attract the buyers who usually purchase the stock for this season as well as next assuming further rise in the prices. A number of women buyers have started visiting the popular malls and brands outlets to look into the discount offers for purchasing Winter stuff for them and their families. "Purchasing Winter stock at the advent of the season is difficult for the salaried class due to high rates. I always buy dresses, shoes and other needed items at the end of December when the New Year sale starts", Amina Farrukh, a house wife said. Talking to APP, she said the prevailing price hike situations has limited the purchasing capacity of the general public who now think twice before buying a dozen of eggs and tomatoes what to talk about dresses. She said, "It is a routine practice of the people across the world to buy from sale offers and now the trend of sale offers during the special occasions is gaining momentum in Pakistan too which is a good thing". Danish Ali, who is a father of two children said, "Some of the brands only offer sales on the unwanted items to just finish their stock which we cannot call as a sale offer in real sense however there were some brands which offer very good discounts on all their stock". - APP

## HEC announces scholarships in China

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has invited applications from Pakistani and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) nationals for studying in the Xi'an Jiaotong University China. According to HEC Official, the scholarships have been announced for specific disciplines in the Master's and PhD programmes for the academic year 2021. While talking to APP, the official said that the nominees of HEC would be considered under all categories by university award committee. The candidates could apply in the program by January 30, 2021. The HEC has asked the students to apply online before the deadline at <http://www.hec.gov.pk/site/JUSP>. The interested students were advised to complete and submit online applications on CSC Xi'an Jiaotong University and HEC portals, separately, without waiting for the deadline. - APP

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat gold on Tuesday witnessed an increase of Rs.250 and was traded at Rs.112,750 against its sale at Rs. 112, 500 the previous day. Likewise, the price of ten gram gold also increased by Rs.214 and was sold at Rs.96,665 compared to Rs. 96,451 while 10 gram 22 karat gold was sold at Rs. 88,610. The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs.1290 and Rs.1105.96 respectively. The gold price in the international market decreased by \$2 to \$1873 compared to its sale at US \$1875, the association added. - APP

## Gold prices increase Rs.250

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat gold on Tuesday witnessed an increase of Rs.250 and was traded at Rs.112,750 against its sale at Rs. 112, 500 the previous day. Likewise, the price of ten gram gold also increased by Rs.214 and was sold at Rs.96,665 compared to Rs. 96,451 while 10 gram 22 karat gold was sold at Rs. 88,610. The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained unchanged at Rs.1290 and Rs.1105.96 respectively. The gold price in the international market decreased by \$2 to \$1873 compared to its sale at US \$1875, the association added. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Sri Lanka High Commissioner to Pakistan Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama paid a courtesy call on Pakistan Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Amjad Khan and presented a souvenir to him. - DNA

## Global Al-Farabi forum concludes

Dr. Galimkair Mutanov, Rector, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University delivered special lecture in the concluding session of the forum

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Global Al-Farabi Forum concluded on Tuesday, a two-day event organized jointly by COMSTTECH and the government of Kazakhstan. Dr. Galimkair Mutanov, Rector, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University delivered special lecture in the concluding session of the forum. He said that the most important task for the humanity in this world is to recognize the creator

who made him conscious. He informed that the Islamic civilization was formed on the basis of mind. Wisdom and science are reflected in the Islam, he mentioned. Unfortunately, the golden age of Muslim scientific glory is not appreciated today, he lamented. He said that the reason of the decline in the Islamic society is the separation from the Islam. Islamic countries have lost education and science and extremism is increasing. He suggested that we should pay special attention to the Golden

age of Muslim thought and define the issues rises in the Muslim philosophy in relation to religion and science. He concluded his talk by mentioning the contribution of Al-Farabi and his teachings. After his lecture one-hour long panel discussion session was held. Dr. Ehsan Masood, from UK, Dr. Nomanul Haq, Dr. Ghazna Khalid and Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary were the experts of the discussion session to answer and discuss the questions of the scholars from the audience and Dr. Khurshid Hasan-

ain moderated this session. Number of factors that are responsible for the current decline of science, technology, philosophy and economy in the Muslim world were discussed. Questions related to science and religions, lack of interest of the leaders in the science and technology, history of Muslims, were raised by the audience and discussed in detail. This forum was attended by more than 100 participants in-person and virtually, and 15 national and international experts gave talks.

The session was concluded with the vote of thanks by Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTTECH. Dr. Iqbal said that this kind of event actually makes us to think and anything that make you think is most important. He assured that such forum on Pakistani world-renowned philosopher Sir Dr. Allama Mohammad Iqbal will be organized in central Asia. Finally, shields and certificates were distributed among the speakers and participants of the event.

## Briefs

RPO hold  
Khuli  
Kachehry

RAWALPINDI: Regional Police Officer Imran Ahmar held Khuli Kachehry in his office to address grievances of the people here on Tuesday. The police spokesman informed that the RPO issued directives to the officers concerned to submit detail report on the petitions submitted in Khuli Kachehry. A petitioner namely Zahoor r/o Chontra took a stance in his petition that some persons were trying to occupy his land illegally, on which RPO Rawalpindi issued orders to SP Sadder Division to complete inquiry within 7 days. Another complainant Mohammad Jamshed r/o Abid Majeed Road Rawalpindi urged in the petition that an inquiry should be held into the case 302 registered in Chontra police station, on which RPO Rawalpindi issued orders to the officer concerned to submit report immediately. Tassaduq Hussain r/o Chakwal, said that the local police was not conducting proper investigation into a case of 302 registered, on which orders were issued to DPO Chakwal to submit report within 10 days. Speaking on the occasion, the RPO said that security, safety and speedy justice to the people was top priority of the department. — APP

2 bike lifters  
arrested

RAWALPINDI: In a crackdown against criminal elements, the City police Tuesday busted a bike-lifter gang and arrested its two members and also recovered two stolen motorcycles, cash Rs43,000 and spare parts of motorcycles from their possession. According to a police spokesman, the police team conducted a raid and managed to net the bike lifters. As per preliminary police record, the criminals were also involved in other crimes, he added. He said other members and facilitators of the bike lifters would also be arrested following preliminary investigations with the detainee culprits. The superintendent police Rawal lauded the City police team's performance for netting the bike lifters. — APP

PMC hails  
NUMS  
examination  
process

DNA

RAWALPINDI: President of Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) Dr Arshad Taqi called on Vice Chancellor of the National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) Lt. Gen. (Retd) Syed Imran Majeed on Tuesday and discussed the matters relating to existing health infrastructure and the prevailing status of medical education in the country. During the meeting, the Vice Chancellor highlighted the achievements and initiatives of the university in medical field since its inception. He particularly gave a comprehensive account of the examination process developed indigenously by the university to ensure merit, high standards and transparency. This year, he said, around 50,000 candidates appeared for the NUMS entry test for MBBS and BDS. The test was simultaneously held in all major cities across the country and in Azad Jammu and Kashmir without involving any outside testing services, he added. The President PMC lauded the efforts of NUMS in improving medical practices through innovative, creative and ethical approaches in the health sector and medical education. The President PMC particularly praised NUMS for evolving a foolproof system of examination and making extensive arrangements for successful holding of NUMS entry test for session 2020. He expressed the hope that NUMS would make a significant contribution in the field of medical education, research and delivery of health services in the country and beyond.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Aamir Ali Ahmed chairs a session to review the performance of all the directorates of CDA. — DNA

Chairman CDA directs  
to facilitate citizens

Speaking at the occasion, Chairman CDA said that the authority should give its best to facilitate the masses of the city so that its efforts could be hailed by people

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Aamir Ali Ahmed directed the officers and off-

icials to assure all the facilities to the citizens while ensuring them the provision of required funds here on Tuesday. He expressed this while presiding over a session to review the performance of all

the directorates of CDA in Islamabad. All the Directorates briefed the chairman regarding its performance during the session. Speaking at the occasion, Chairman CDA said that the authority should give

its best to facilitate the masses of the city so that its efforts could be hailed by people. If any directorate ever faces any issue then it should inform in this regard so that its issues could be resolved

promptly. Similarly, if any department lacks funds then it should inform at once so that fund could be provided to it promptly. There will be no compromise on provision of facilities to the masses of

Islamabad, he added. Directorate of Sanitation, Street Lights, Environment, Water Supply, Road Maintenance, STP, City Sewerage, MPO briefed the Chairman at the occasion.

RINSTRAPak's  
first digital  
platform goes live

DNA

ISLAMABAD: 212 million people of Pakistan and 6th largest diaspora in the world has now its own digital platform. RINSTRAPak is Pakistan's first short-form digital media platform for on-demand streaming and for creation of user generated original content on iRINSTRAPak. RINSTRAPak provides entrepreneurship opportunities to emerging and established content creators and film makers in Pakistan and beyond. RINSTRAPak gives content creators access to a large Pakistani community around the globe. The state-of-the-art technology platform with content including Romance, Comedy, Thriller, Music, Cooking and Candid Celebrity Talk Shows, written and directed by renowned names of the industry including Haseena Moin, Mehreen Jabbar, Shah Yasir, Imran Mehboob, Erum Binte Shahid, Farheen Chaudhary, Sohail Javed, Sadia Jabbar and many more featuring established and the upcoming talent of Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion of launch, Chairman and Co-founder, Rinstra Technologies Dr. Adil Akhtar

said, "This is a milestone for Pakistan, as RINSTRAPak will enable the true creativity of the people in the emerging technological era. A person with an idea or creative skill can now impact the narratives of the media on his or her own. Artists and creative minds are ambassadors of Pakistan's cultural diplomacy; our multi-faceted technology platform will provide opportunities to the current and upcoming talent in multifaceted forms. RINSTRAPak's feature of on-demand premium content will provide entrepreneurship opportunities to emerging and established content creators in the country. Pakistan's most seasoned and diverse media professional, Amir Jahangir, Chief Executive Officer of RINSTRAPak Technologies, said that, "RINSTRAPak will prove to be a milestone for the media industry in Pakistan; he further said, "RINSTRAPak will be a pivot for the industry, where the content creators will start taking charge of their content by discovering, creating, showcasing, and monetizing." This will create a new breed of mediapreneurs in the country, which can change the narrative and storytelling techniques in the country.

ICCI delegation visits Heavy  
Machine Complex Taxila

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) leading over 30-member delegation visited Heavy Mechanical Complex (HMC) Taxila to explore collaboration of the private sector in HMC's projects. Engr. Zaheer Shah, Managing Director, HMC warmly welcomed the ICCI delegation and thanked them

for visiting HMC. Engr. Zahid Farooq Chaudhry Director Sales & Marketing and Brig. (Retd) Hamid Mahmood Director Admin & HR and other officers of HMC were also present at the occasion. Engr. Zaheer Shah briefed the ICCI delegation about the HMC's manufacturing capabilities. He said that HMC was manufacturing many high value products including sugar and cement plants, oil & gas processing plants, hydro-power plants, turbines, high

pressure boilers, cranes, overhead pedestrian bridges, steel structures and railways equipment and it was now looking for JVs and partnerships with the private sector to harness the potential of local industry for promoting indigenous production. He said that ICCI members have good potential to partner with HMC to produce high value products in order to meet the local needs and promote exports. The ICCI delegation was taken to various manufacturing

facilities of HMC including design centre, steel foundry, hydraulic press shop, heat treatment facilities, cast iron & non-ferrous foundry, forge shop, machining facilities, auxiliary and fabrication facilities. Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry appreciated the contribution of HMC towards industrial development by manufacturing industrial plants, equipment and other quality products.



Islamabad: Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry along with ICCI delegation pose for group photo with Engr. Zaheer Shah, Managing Director, Heavy Mechanical Complex during their visit to HMC Taxila. Fatma Azim Senior Vice President, Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI and others are also in present. — DNA

## NAB's policy is accountability for all: Chairman

The EBM authorised filing of corruption reference against Sarwar Javed, former Member Board of Revenue, Quetta, Shahbaz Khan Mandokhel, former senior member Board of Revenue on illegally allotting state land to Dilshad Akhtar, causing Rs 6 crore 48 lakh losses to the national exchequer

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Justice (retired) Javed Iqbal chaired the Executive Board Meeting on Tuesday and approved to launch corruption inquiries against former chief ministers of Balochistan Dr. Abdul Malik and Sanaulah Zehri. According to a press statement issued after the meeting, the meeting was attended by Hussain Asghar, Deputy Chairman NAB, Syed Asghar Haider, Prosecutor General Accountability (PGA), Zahir Shah, and senior officers. It is a yearlong policy of NAB to share the details of EBM with the public which does not aim to hurt anyone as all inquiries and investi-

gations are initiated on the basis of alleged allegations, which are not final. NAB decides to go ahead with case after obtaining the point of view of all concerned and accessing the merits of the cases as per law. The EBM accorded approval to file two corruption references. The details are as under. The EBM approved filing of corruption reference against Imran Ali Yousaf and others for misappropriation and misuse of government funds for personal gains, which inflicted Rs499,201,392 losses to national exchequer. The EBM authorised filing of corruption reference against Sarwar Javed, former Member Board of Revenue, Quetta, Shahbaz Khan Mandokhel, former senior member Board of Revenue on illegal-

ly allotting state land to Dilshad Akhtar, causing Rs 6 crore 48 lakh losses to the national exchequer. The EBM accorded approval of conducting eight investigations against the persons including Mudassar Qayyum Nehra, former MNA, Azhar Qayyum Nehra, former MNA and others, Muhammad Asif Bilal, former director Food, Punjab, Ahmed Sher, deputy director, Food, Punjab and others, management of Balochistan Development Authority and others, Balochistan Integrated Water Resource Management and Development Project, management of BDA, Haji Zarif Hussain Zai, contractor, district Musakhel and others, management of Revenue Department, district, Naushahi and others, officers/officials of

Teaching, DHQ, Hospital, Dera Ghazi Khan and others, and inquiries against MS Abdullah Sugar Mills, Limited, Depalpur, Lahore and others. The forum accorded approval of conducting 15 inquiries against various personalities including Saiful Maluk Khokar, member provincial assembly, Punjab, Dr Abdul Maaalik, former chief minister, Balochistan, Sanaulah Zerhi, former chief minister, Balochistan, Akbar Durrani, former secretary, home department, Quetta, four inquiries against Punjab public limited companies chief executives, Rahim Ziaratal, former minister, education department, Quetta, and others, Juma Khan, member provincial assembly, Balochistan, Naseebullah Bazai, former additional chief

secretary, Balochistan, Tariq Murtaza, MS Startrack Traders and others, Mehar Ejaz Ahmed Machlana, former member provincial assembly/ former member disaster management and others, Rais Ibrahim Khalil Ahmed, former Provincial assembly, officials of revenue department, Liaquatpur, and others, Arif Azim, former chairman Railways, Mohsin Raza, general manager GEPCO, Gujranwala, Mrs Rani Hafza Kanwal, former Assistant deputy commissioner, (Revenue) Gujrat, MS Abdullah Sugar Mills. The EBM approved referring inquiries against Akhtar Hussain, Sabina Semab, Shahnaz Qamar, Maqsood Ahmed, Ahsan Sarwar Butt, and others to FBR for further proceedings as per law.

PIMS  
employees  
staged  
protest

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The medical and non-medical staff of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) on Tuesday staged a continue protest in favour of their demands. Doctors and supporting staff remained absent from their duties in OPDs, various wards and administration section to express their concerns on not accepting their demands by the administration. Addressing the protesters, Chairman Grand Health Alliance Dr Asfandiyar Khan said that if their demands are not approved by the competent authorities then there will be complete strike in the hospital. He also asked to review the decision about the Medical Teaching Institutions (MTI) ordinance for better functioning of the hospital matters. He said that all departments including OPDs will remain non-functional except Corona ward and emergency department while administration, nursing college and purchase department will also remain closed. Due to protest of doctors a large number of patients had to face hurdles in their treatment while many of them requested the hospital staff to avoid giving strike call as many patients will suffer from this decision.

SNGPL  
reduces UFG  
losses by  
2.38%

DNA

ISLAMABAD, DEC 22 (DNA) — Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) is taking stern steps to control the Gas Losses resulting in significant reduction in %age UFG and volumetric losses of the Company. The Company has reduced the Volumetric Loss by 3,285 MMCF and %age UFG by 2.38% (As on October-20) against the targets of the three-year UFG Reduction Plan approved by ECC. This reduction in gas losses has resulted in financial savings of Rs. 1,572 Million. One of the major achievements of SNGPL is 43% reduction in Average Monthly gas losses in High UFG areas from 1,424 MMCF to 810 MMCF "As on October-20" with the help of law enforcement agencies. The Company has made hectic efforts and has so far removed 1,311 illegal taps in these areas while 171 FIRs have been lodged during current Fiscal year. The Company is carrying out all efforts to curtail the gas pilferage by the consumers through increased vigilance. As a result of increased vigilance, 18,748 gas theft cases have so far been detected which have resulted in booking of 519 MMCF amounting to Rs. 570 Million against consumers. The Company is also focusing on replacement of underground leaking network and 190 km network has so far been replaced in current FY 2020-21, while an overall around 900 Km Network will be replaced.

'Foolproof  
security  
arrangements  
finalized'

RAWALPINDI: District governments have finalized foolproof security arrangements in all the churches across the district on the eve of Christmas December 25th on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner, Capt (retired) Anwar Ul Haq while chairing a meeting to review security arrangements on Christmas celebrations said constitution of Pakistan fully protects the rights of all minorities and protection of life and property of minorities is also our religious responsibility. He said that the Pakistani nation also respects people belonging to minorities and people of all minorities can perform their religious rites with complete freedom and security. Zonal Chief Auqaf, Hafiz Iqbal Rizvi, Syed Izzar Bukhari, Pastor Pervez Sohail and President Central Anjuman-e-Tajirun Malik Shahid Ghafoor also attend the meeting. On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner also cut a Christmas cake with all the participants.

## Challenging days ahead

IT is sad to observe that people across the country are taking the second wave of coronavirus too lightly. People's negligence while ignoring the government's safety protocols has only made Lahore the hotspot of the pandemic. We see once again that families are going out shopping with no regard for social distancing and avoiding crowded places as Christmas is around the corner. They are not limiting themselves to their homes, contrary to the instructions of the experts. Whereas the pandemic demands from us to mute the traditional celebrations, it is hard to imagine people do so. The government must reach out to the community leaders. Their cooperation can prove instrumental in keeping people in their homes. The second wave is severe; we cannot afford instances where people intermingle without adhering to the safety guidelines. Our experiences tell us that people do show negligent behaviour while celebrating social and religious rituals and holidays. And in turn, they not only compromise on their own health but put the lives of others at risk as well.

That said, it is essential to bear in mind that the Christian community is one of the most marginalised segments of our society. Possibly, many among the Christian households do not have enough information about the deadliness of the virus. Thus, the government must go some steps beyond the new guidelines that the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) issued last Saturday. With assistance from the volunteers of the Tiger Force, the officials can raise awareness among various communities about the virus' threats to their lives. While the infection is spreading in Pakistan at an alarming rate, the government has relaxed lockdowns across the country. The country is reporting an average of more than 2500 cases per day. Acting on the time-tested adage, i.e., prevention is better than cure is what the NCOC instructions tell us. Our cooperation with the government can help it in bringing the pandemic under control.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti  
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

ABC CERTIFIED

Vol: 01 Issue: 231

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



## An ambitious target

THE Advisor to the Prime Minister (PM) on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood has set a target of exports worth \$26 billion in the next three years. The set target sounds like an ambitious one. While the general plan seems a progressive one, the devil lies in the details. If the micro policies for enhancing our export growth are complicated with bureaucratic hurdles, then achieving the benchmark will become an uphill task. Hence, the government must have an obvious path as we advance.

Mr Razak's interest in enhancing Pakistan's exports shows his understanding of the export sector's potential to serve as our economy's engine of growth. The government must come up with a strategy that creates an environment conducive to promoting Pakistan's export sector. A thriving export sector will relax constraints in our balance of payments (BoP). Also, it will end the stop-go growth and direct our economy toward a high growth trajectory.

Undoubtedly, regional trade and economic integration can play a significant part in increasing and improving our connectivity with the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, our engineering goods that the government wants to export to earn revenue are not at par with the products of even other emerging markets. In this case, regional trade and integration can help but a little. Our primary focus should be on improving the standard of our products. Similarly, Pakistan has the fourth largest pool of the world's freelancers, and our local artisans' craftsmanship is unmatched. But these two segments of production do not have the support of the government.

They need an e-commerce platform to sell their products. The over regulations in our financial set-up discourage apps like PayPal, Google Pay that are frequent choices of customers and buyers to make payments through. We must take quick steps to remove over regulations that impede our goods reach to the global digital markets. Taking such steps will help us to find new trade markets and diversify our trade.

# Role of youth in unifying nations across the border

Palwasha Nawaz



ONE is appalled to see that the media in Pakistan is not giving sufficient coverage to the now a bigger event in the history of South Asian region, i.e. the unprecedented protests of the Indian farmers against the three new laws which blatantly favour the interests of the big in agriculture sector. Had it been in Pakistan, the Indian media would have come out differently rather proactively; probably they all work in unison when it comes to working against Pakistan

THE world is amid challenges ranging from regional conflicts, terrorism, and social disruptions to economic downturns, unequal development, and climate change. These global challenges call for a global solution with cooperation among states. Obsolete and dysfunctional principles of interaction between people are replaced by modern trends and patterns. Which offers a rationale coherence for upgrading and revising the world's narratives and policies to keep up with the time. Likewise, the global structural reforms have paved the way for the states to indulge in multilateral integration in various aspects. In this context, to collaborate in multi-dimensional ways, the role of youth under the idea of community with a shared future is pertinent to highlight in present times. As this idea has become a strong narrative in transforming and integrating the globe in more domains, the youth can play a significant role in projecting this very idea to create harmony among countries. The primary contours of the idea underpin tolerance, fair relations, mutual respect, equality, and dialectical balance. Under this concept, the students and young entrepreneurs can have an ample number of opportunities to get international exposure, scholarships, participation in cultural exchange programs, and portray a better image of their country internationally. The world is a global village now, and the interaction among people is now in more diverse ways than ever before.

Through the internet, social media, and various other online platforms, the people to people contact has increased. The online educational and intellectual programs have made the way easy for the youth to collaborate and participate in different productive activities worldwide. Moreover, the vision of a shared future has also allowed intellectuals, academia, research centers, universities, and youngsters to get together under one platform and constructively integrate which would have a profound impact in establishing interconnectivity patterns. In this aspect, the paper aims to highlight the role of youth in unifying nations through their innovative ideas and skills. Also, this study gives the prospects for the students to diversify their patterns of education, constructive role, and opportunities under this very narrative of community with a shared future.

**Role of a Community: Unleashing the Potential of Youth**  
The future of humanity relies on the young generation. The countries that do not facilitate their young generation are likely to go grinding halt in the process of social development. When the young generation tends to get associated with communal activities, they develop strong abilities or skills needed for statesmanship. Their participation in the decision-making process is the key element in shaping a brighter future. In recent times, researchers, policymakers, diplomats, and governments are agreed on the view that interaction and participation of youth is a major element for robust community advancement. Youth engagement towards a constructive mechanism of cooperation is defined as "meaningful participation and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity, with a focus outside of him or herself". Furthermore, in public youth engagements, the research is amid two theories that reflect the pillars of meaningful interaction of youth in the global arena. a) positive youth development theory, and b) attachment theory.

First, the youth development theory attempts to explain the foundation of creating an effective and resilient community where the youth have interaction and positive engagement with the adults' support. In times of difficulty faced by the youth, the community will have the capacity to support youth. As the community is based on an inclusive and comprehensive vision, its role is substantial to discuss here. In this regard, the idea of a community with a shared future will give a new boost to the existing youth communities and councils. It will allow youngsters to overcome the adversities and adopt those vision which would nourish their career and lifestyle. Second, the attachment theory revolves around the concept of the long-term meaning full relationships. In the past, the theory has been used in the field of psychology to describe the bond between the mother and the infant. This can be seen in the prism of youth and the community as well. The role of community and persistent attachment of a young person with it envisaged the same relation that is to nourish youth abilities and provide them opportunities to enhance their potential. Having a strong view of the community with a shared future and the part of student councils would allow them to think in an outrightly new direction and also contribute to the sustainable development of the society. When youth are allowed to freely participate, it curtails the orthodox problems of behavior. Despite feeling disengaged, hopeless, and undervalued, young students effectively participate in the process of soil advancement. According to research, student and youth who are associated with the community activities and tasks are less likely to use alcohol or drugs, drop out of college, and to get involved in any sort of anti-social or criminal activities. They hold optimistic and practical demeanors and a healthy mindset.

**Shared Future: Role of Students and youth**  
Empowering youth, allowing them to participate, and providing them with beneficial opportunities in the community always results in a boon for social advancement. When the youth is engaged in multiple inclusive activities, it allows them to get exposure and have a focused direction to sustain. At an early stage with the assistance of the community, when students realize that they can influence the decision-making process, they eventually rise above all and come up with innovative and bright ideas. This learning and interactive process leads them to develop entrepreneurship and leadership skills.

The vision of a community with a shared future allows students to participate or interact from different platforms and take advantage of internship programs. It would allow the states to collaborate and share innovative ideas through intellectual forums. The global theme aims to eradicate prejudices and build communication grounds. It will create a coherent association among the countries and their people. Through this, a robust and standard apparatus of win-win cooperation among nations and youth can be achieved in the future. There are some prospects for the students that would help them to establish ways

to unify the nation across borders:  
*Youth Activities under the Vision of a Shared Future:*

- Hybrid conferences and sessions for soft skill development
- Interactive webinar to spark intellectual curiosity among students and staff
- Joint academic research projects on common areas of interest
- Joint cultural exchange programs to create harmony
- Constructive ideas sharing sessions
- Database to access the desired study material
- Community's tasks groups to accomplish mutual objectives

All the evolving modern political values and transformed trends i.e., Belt and Road initiative (BRI) which offers a plethora of opportunities for sustainable development across and within countries vision, the idea of a community with shared future and dialogue among civilizations have allowed countries to shed the orthodox ways of interaction and move towards a new trend of greater cooperation, collaboration, and interaction. The young generation could become the pioneer to commence the collaborative activity in an emerging new pattern. This implies huge responsibility for researchers, institutes, universities, intellectuals, and think tanks to establish such constructive ways of interactions among the youth. In this regard, China and Pakistan have been doing remarkable efforts.

A renowned Chinese university i.e., Communication University of China (CUC) has taken the initiative of creating a network of research centers for a community with a shared future. The research centers are created in collaboration with Pakistan, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Germany, Malaysia, and South Korea. One of the research centers i.e., Pakistan Research Center jointly established by the CUC delivers for this purpose. It has initiated prominent projects including an online internship program, conferences, round table discussions, etc. Also, bringing together individuals and youngsters from different backgrounds and teaching about commonalities.

Each year, several scholarships and cultural exchange programs are being offered between Pakistan and China. In present times, the ratio of students has increased significantly. Both countries are hospitable and assisting each other in almost every domain. The educational and academic domain is vital for the students, trainers, and teachers. The aim of organizing such cultural events and scholarship programs is to make the youth and people to understand the rich culture and promote people-to-people contact. In this aspect, the research centers established in other countries allow this integrated network to offer more youth scholarship programs and enhance people to people connectivity. The international interaction would allow youth to come up with innovative ideas, eliminate prejudices, and bring people together to promote peace and harmony.

— Ms. Palwasha Nawaz is Deputy Director, Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future, Communication University of China (Beijing), China

# Indian farmers' protests and our media

Farooq Alay

India hands out an estimated \$32b in subsidies to farmers annually, according to the Indian Finance Ministry. Water shortages, floods and increasingly erratic weather caused by climate change, as well as debt, have taken a heavy toll on the farmers, especially belonging to Indian Punjab. According to a Punjab government report in 2017, the northern state will use up all its groundwater resources by 2039. More than 300,000 farmers have killed themselves since the 1990s

ONE is appalled to see that the media in Pakistan is not giving sufficient coverage to the now a bigger event in the history of South Asian region, i.e. the unprecedented protests of the Indian farmers against the three new laws which blatantly favour the interests of the big in agriculture sector. Had it been in Pakistan, the Indian media would have come out differently rather proactively; probably they all work in unison when it comes to working against Pakistan. There can be quoted many instances, which lead us to believe that either our journalism is poised to local politics or they deliberately ignore the event occurring on the wider scale. One had observed that when the Indian media team, the number was in hundreds, came to Pakistan, during the former Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit and his talks with Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, the Indian media spoke in chorus as if they had been well briefed by their 'government'. But on the contrary, our media persons had answers to Indian media interviewers that were heterogeneous and not in complete harmony with the Pakistan's national interest. If one may invite the readers to browse on internet about the plight of protesting farmers of India, you will hardly see anything informative on Google, but the reports of Indian media, largely printing press and not even the electronic or social media. Is it because of the Indian control over the Google and Microsoft or is it because we in Pakistan are not giving much importance to an event worthy of reporting - what to talk of exploiting? The same is not available with reference to any Pakistani outlets but yes with reference to foreign wire news service. International media, like the New York Times, Washington Post, Guardian, BBC, CNN and other outlets are seen giving much of the due coverage to the event. Likewise, the international media in the United States, United Kingdom, European Union, Canada and Australia is giving wide coverage to the Indian peasantry who has largely won the support of people abroad and solidarity from across India, taking it to a historically new dimension. The issue warrants merit as a norm of journalism and reporting because the protests have entered the third week; the farmers have gathered in the outskirts of Delhi. Looking at the facts, it seems amazing that the farmers' plight

seems not only genuine but also politically motivated. Being a huge country, India's farming sector is vast too, but troubled either. It provides a livelihood to nearly 70 percent of the country's 1.3 billion people and accounts for around 15 percent of the \$2.7 trillion economy. The "Green Revolution" of the 1970s turned India from a country facing regular food shortages into one with a surplus and a major exporter. But for the past few decades, farm incomes have remained largely stagnant and the sector is in sore need of investment and modernization. Currently, more than 85 percent of Indian farmers have less than two hectares (five acres) of land. Fewer than one in a hundred farmers own over 10 hectares, according to a 2015-2016 Indian Agriculture Ministry's survey. India hands out an estimated \$32 billion in subsidies to farmers annually, according to the Indian Finance Ministry. Water shortages, floods and increasingly erratic weather caused by climate change, as well as debt, have taken a heavy toll on the farmers, especially belonging to Indian Punjab. According to a Punjab government report in 2017, the northern state will use up all its groundwater resources by 2039. More than 300,000 farmers have killed themselves since the 1990s. Nearly 10,300 did so in 2019, according to the latest official figures. Farmers and their workers are also abandoning agriculture in droves - 2,000 of them every day according to the last census in 2011.

Markets were set up in the 1950s to stop the exploitation of farmers and pay a minimum support price (MSP) for certain produce but now the Indian government under extremist Narendra Modi has left the poor farmers at the mercy of seasoned business houses such as the Ambanis, the Tatas, the Birlas and the Rahejas as well as the RPG Group and the Future Group. Reportedly, 28 farmers have died while protesting for their rights, but the Indian media and government are busy in picturing them as terrorists, anti-nationalists, Naxalites, leftists and proxies of Khalistan. The Modi-led BJP government doesn't even have guts to make new farm bills as per Constitution of India. Who cares about constitutional rights? They say that the India government is shame on the name of democracy! That's why, the sander elements across India including the retired bureaucrats,

teachers, educationists, youths, scientists and workers in both organized and unorganized sectors, and even sportspersons and security forces are learning and understanding the farmers' issues and have expressed solidarity with the agitating farmers. This protest has united India against the Nazi BJP government.

The BJP government has used brutal might of the state apparatus; in Haryana to prevent larger mobilization of peasants from reaching Delhi; but even that is proving to be insufficient against the surge. Indeed, there is large mobilization of peasants from across India - Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and parts of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The Indian Sikhs mostly consisting of 400 to 600 people, in nearly 50 different cities of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia are protesting with their families. Whereas the Indian government calls it their internal affair.

Worried by the use of disproportionate force against many elderly protesters, the Indian farmers have reached out to the United Nations to ask New Delhi to protect the farmers' right to peaceful protests and exert pressure on them to accept their genuine demands thereby saving them from extinction. As the army of resolute farmers keeps up its blockade of New Delhi, Modi is facing the trickiest challenge to his authority and the so called reforms agenda.

Modi made big promises to farmers vowing to double their incomes by 2022. In September, the Indian parliament passed three laws that enabled the farmers to sell to any buyer they chose, rather than to commission agents at state-controlled markets. These markets were set up in the 1950s to stop the exploitation of farmers. "The laws will harm the farmers and in turn destroy our livelihood", said Sukhwinder Singh, a farmer who cycled 400km to the protests. The system has led to farmers sometimes growing crops unsuited to the local climate, such as thirsty rice in Punjab, and can be fertile ground for corruption. "Land, cattle and farmers will be enslaved by the rich. Modi wants to finish us", he added. As an escape route, his government is dubbing the Sikhs as "hooligans, anti-nationals or separatists".

— The writer is a freelance columnist based in Islamabad

## Briefs

## Australia supports inspiring street art

From Page 01

"Art plays a major role in society, and it can be an effective and inspiring way to reach people with important messages. We hope these artworks will help to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and make us think about what we can do to help to protect our wildlife and habitats, as well as being a positive contribution to the city of Karachi," Barrister Awan said. Australian painter and artist, Gabrielle Brinsmead shared that the climate of Karachi is similar to the climate of Northern New South Wales in Australia, where she grew up. "I spent the last few months studying the intricacies of the flowers and leaves of bougainvillea, hibiscus and frangipane flowers, that are abundant in New South Wales as well as in Karachi. The more I look at, copy, sketch and paint them, the more wonderful they seem. I have combined shapes and colours of these flowers in the murals to draw attention to the richness and generosity of these plants, which grow and flower so effortlessly here," Ms Brinsmead said while talking about her artwork. Executive Director of I AM KARACHI, Ms Ambarveen Kazim Thompson said, "It is important to remember that only through tolerance and acceptance do cities and people grow strong and united. This project is a symbol of peace and harmony and a message of hope and positivity."

## Rasheed urges early end to UAE visa curbs

From Page 01

He said the UAE government's cooperation will be required for extradition of the Pakistani imprisoned in the UAE. He said efforts will be continued for promotion of bilateral ties. The UAE Ambassador said the visa restriction on Pakistani citizens is temporary. He said talks are underway, and hopefully, issuance of visas will soon resume.

He said the Pakistani community has an exemplary role in development of the UAE, and their wellbeing is among our priorities.

## Pakistan HC issues visas to Hindu Yatrees

DNA

NEW DELHI: Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi has issued visas to two groups of Indian Hindu Yatrees in December 2020 for visit to their revered sites in Pakistan.

According to a press statement issued by the High Commissioner Tuesday, a group of 47 Indian Hindu Yatrees has been issued visas. They would visit Shree Katas Raj Temples, also known as Qila Katas or complex of Katas Temples in Chakwal district of Punjab, Pakistan from 23-29 December 2020. The Katas Raj temples surround a sacred pond to Hindu devotees.

According to the press statement, another group of 44 Indian Hindu Yatrees returned yesterday from Pakistan where they participated in the 312th Birth Anniversary celebrations of Shiv Avtari Satguru Sant Shadaram Sahib, at Sukkur, Sindh from 15-21 December 2020. More than three centuries old temple, Shadani Darbar, is a holy place for devotees from across the world. The temple was founded in 1786 by Sant Shadaram Sahib, who was born in Lahore in 1708.

Thousands of Indian Sikh and Hindu pilgrims visit Pakistan under the bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974, to observe several religious festivals/occasions every year.



NAPIER: Pakistani wicket keeper batsman Mohammad Rizwan playing a bouncer during final T20 match between Pakistan and New Zealand. – DNA

## Pakistan win final T20I by 4 wickets against New Zealand

Mohammad Hafeez joined Rizwan and both played magnificently. They propelled the team past the 100-run mark in the 13th over, the same over Rizwan brought up his first T20I half-century

## SPORTS DESK

NAPIER: Mohammad Rizwan's grit saw Pakistan register a four-wicket win over New Zealand in the third T20I at the McLean Park here on Tuesday. Rizwan hit a sublime 89 off just 59 balls as the visitors avoided a whitewash. Rizwan's knock overshadowed Devon Conway's 63 which saw the hosts score 173/7 in their 20 overs. Chasing a target of 174, Pakistan opener Rizwan took charge and struck regular boundaries while Haider Ali played the role of second fiddle. Scott Kuggeleijn provided the hosts with the first breakthrough, removing Ali (11) in the sixth over. Mohammad Hafeez joined Rizwan and both played magnificently. They propelled the team past the 100-run mark in the 13th over, the same over Rizwan brought up his first T20I half-century. However, in the very next over, Kuggeleijn picked up his second wicket of the day – Hafeez (41). Although Pakistan still had eight wickets in hand, the dismissal

## Happy to see Rizwan gaining form before first Test: Misbah

NAPIER: Head Coach Misbah-ul-Haq was happy with Mohammad Rizwan playing a match-winning knock and gaining his form back before the all-important Test series. Speaking to reporters after Rizwan helped Pakistan notch a four-wicket victory over New Zealand, Misbah said Rizwan was under immense pressure and this inning gave him confidence before going into the Test series. Happy to see Rizwan under pressure, this inning definitely gave him much-needed confidence before going into the Test series. I hope he continues this performance in Tests," he said. Misbah reiterated that it was tough for players to come out of a tough phase upon arrival in New Zealand and then getting ready for T20Is in a short span of time. "It was tough for players to gell in a short time. We needed a win to gain confidence after losing the first two games. Our focus is now on Test series, we will try to not repeat mistakes in the longer format," he concluded.

slowed the pace of Pakistan's chase for a brief period. An uptick in the required run-rate saw Rizwan and Khushdil Shah shifting gears. Kuggeleijn conceded 17 runs in the 16th over, but the hosts managed to redeem themselves after James Neesham ended Shah's stint at the crease in the 17th over. The falling of wickets did not hinder Rizwan's approach to the game, as he kept Pakistan's hopes alive. Pakistan's innings witnessed a major hiccup in the final over after Kyle

Jamieson dismissed Rizwan. However, Iftikhar Ahmed struck a brilliant six as Pakistan got over the line. Earlier, after being asked to bat first, openers Tim Seifert and Martin Gupitll gave New Zealand a flying start. The duo struck regular boundaries and formed a 40-run partnership before Haris Rauf, in the fifth over, handed Pakistan with the first breakthrough. Gupitll scored 19 runs before being caught at mid-off by Shadab Khan. Faheem Ashraf bowled Kane

Williamson in the next over and struck again to send batsman Seifert (35) back to the pavilion in the eighth over. Glenn Phillips and Devon Conway then took charge and played cautiously to ensure the hosts did not lose more wickets. Phillips took the attack to Shadab in the 13th over and hammered three boundaries to take New Zealand over the 100-run mark. Shaheen Afridi put an end to Phillips and Conway's 51-run stand after the pacer got hold of the former.

While New Zealand kept losing wickets, it was Conway's attack that the visitors failed to contain until the final over of the innings.

Pakistan beat New Zealand by four wickets in the third and final Twenty20 International at Napier on Tuesday. After winning the toss, Pakistani skipper Shadab Khab opted to bowl first – a change in tactic.

The Green Shirts made three changes to the playing 11 as Husain Talat, Mohammad Hasnain and Iftikhar Ahmed replaced Abdullah Shafique, Wahab Riaz and Imad Wasim. Sarfaraz Ahmed, however, was not picked. Speaking to the commentators after the toss, Shadab said many players were facing the New Zealand conditions for the first time. "The young players are definitely learning on this tour." The New Zealand side remained unchanged. Mohammad Rizwan scored a solid 89 runs and was backed by Mohammad Hafeez's 41 while Khushdil Shah scored 13 runs. Faheem Ashraf was the lead wicket-taker with three wickets while Shaheen Afridi and Haris Rauf got two each.

## Modi vows to empowering Muslim girls

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the government is focused on the education and empowerment of Muslim girls in the country. Speaking at the centennial celebrations of India's world-famous Aligarh Muslim University via video conferencing, Modi said school dropout of Muslim girls in the country has reduced to 30%. "The dropout rate of Muslim daughters was more than 70% due to lack of toilets... the government built separate toilets for the school-going girls in mission mode under Swachh Bharat Mission and now the school dropout

rate of Muslim daughters has come down to about 30%," the premier said during his virtual address. "The government is very focused on the education of Muslim daughters and their empowerment. In the last six years, nearly one crore [10 million] Muslim daughters have been given scholarships by the government. There should be no discrimination on the basis of gender, everyone should get equal rights, and everyone should get the benefit of development of the country." Modi is the first prime minister of India in decades to address the Aligarh Muslim University. – APP

## Uzbekistan organizes int'l online conference

DNA

TASHKENT: An international online press conference was organized by the Imam Maturidi International Scientific Research Center under the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan on the topic "Imam Maturidi International Scientific Research Center: Future Plans". In recent years, extensive work has been done in Uzbekistan to study the life and rich scientific heritage of great scholars who have made an invaluable contribution to the development of world science and to convey their scientific and spiritual legacy to the general public. In particular, establishing the Imam Maturidi International Scientific Research Center on the basis of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to establish the Imam Maturidi International Scientific Research Center" dated August 11, 2020 can be considered as an important component of ongoing

religious and educational reforms. In this regard, it should be noted that the Center has a number of important tasks. For example:

In-depth study of the great scientific, religious and spiritual heritage of Imam Maturidi and his followers who made an invaluable contribution to the development of Islamic theology and kalam and the preparation and publication of encyclopedias, catalogs, books and pamphlets on the basis of results obtained. Strengthening international cooperation in the field of Islamic sciences, in particular, the history of kalam and its current significance, collecting and transmitting to future generations the legacy of great scholars in our country and in foreign libraries and archives. To study the humanitarian nature, spiritual and cultural role and directions of development of Islam on a scientific basis, to convey to Uzbek people and the international community the ideas of Islam calling for enlightenment, spiritual purity, peace,

development and creativity on the basis of the idea "Enlightenment against ignorance". Promoting the activities of the Center to the international community, establishing scientific cooperation with international research institutions, organizing exchange of experience between the leading scientists of the world and the researchers of the Center, introducing the life and scientific heritage of Imam Maturidi and the basics of Maturidiyya teachings to the world formed the main purpose of the conference. The conference was attended by prominent local and foreign scientists, government and public figures, representatives of international organizations, the staff of the Center and others. In particular, Advisor to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and also Rector of the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan Rustam Kasimov, Chairman of the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan Abdugafur Akhmedov.

## Activist Karima found dead in Toronto

TORONTO: Baloch human rights activist Karima Baloch was found dead in Toronto on Monday night, Toronto police said Tuesday.

According to the Toronto police, she was last seen in the Bay Street, Queens Quay West area of the city at 3pm on December 20 after which she went missing. Her family filed a missing person complaint at the police station.

The police had circulated Baloch's pictures and details of her appearance on their website and appealed people reach out if they had any information. On Monday [December 21] night, her family said that activist was found dead. Details regarding her death and disappearance have, however, not yet been released. The 37-year-old was living in exile in Toronto and campaigned extensively against disappearances and human rights violations in Balochistan. She was also a critic of the Pakistani government and military.

In 2016, she was named on BBC's list of 100 inspirational women. At 30, Baloch was the first woman to become the leader of the Balochistan Student Organisation. She moved to Canada seeking asylum and in 2015 terrorism charges were filed against her. Her family said she had been given death threats. After the news of her death surfaced, the Balochistan National Movement announced a 40-day mourning period.

"The death of activist Karima Baloch in Toronto, Canada is deeply shocking and must be immediately and effectively investigated. The perpetrators must be brought to justice without recourse to the death penalty," Amnesty International South Asia said in a tweet.

## It is time to deliver now, says Imran

From Page 01

Terming the signing of performance agreements "a step in the right direction", Prime Minister Imran said the performance of each ministry will be evaluated based on the contracts and every ministry will put pressure on itself to meet its targets. "After all, the public has to decide after five years whether we made their lives better or not; whether we fulfilled the promises made to them or not," he said, stressing that governance could not be delivered unless all ministries performed individually.

Among the government targets, the premier said he saw the power ministry as the biggest challenge for the country and his government, which he said sometimes "keeps me awake at night". "The power sector is such a complex and complicated sector; there are so many different things that need to be rationalised and synchronised to provide people with affordable power and not add to the rising circular debt," he said.

## Sarfaraz praises Rizwan, he replies back with 'Duas'

NAPIER: Mohammad Rizwan stunned cricket fans with his match-winning 89 runs knock for Pakistan as they beat New Zealand in the third T20I by four wickets here on Tuesday.

Rizwan, who replaced former skipper Sarfaraz last year as a permanent member of the national team, remained under immense criticism throughout. But, his today's career-best T20I inning helped him gain fans on the internet. Where entire Pakistan praised Rizwan for his eye-catching knock, his predecessor Sarfaraz also applauded his performance for Pakistan which avoided a T20I series whitewash. "Well played Rizwan, top inning boy," Sarfaraz wrote. In reply, Rizwan thanked his teammate with lots of prayers. "Shukriya Sarfaraz Bhai. Allah pak aap ko mazaad izzat dain or hamesha mohabbat, asani or karam ka muamla karain. Ameen [Allah blesses you with lots of respect, and bring love, easiness, and blessings in your every work]," he replied. It must be noted here that Pakistan won the third and last T20I against New Zealand but lost the T20I series after losing the first two games. Now, the Green shorts will play two Tests against the hosts from December 26. – APP

## UK facing lockdowns and curbs over new variant

As with other new variants or strains of Covid-19, this one carries a genetic fingerprint that makes it easy to track, and it happens to be one that is now common

## WEB DESK

LONDON: The new variant is being called VUI-202012/01 – the first "Variant Under Investigation" in the UK in December 2020. While scientists hunt for more information about the variant, its impact is already being felt. Multiple countries have now imposed restrictions on travelers from the UK. British Health Secretary Matt Hancock said Sunday that the variant was "out of control" and Prime Minister Boris Johnson chaired an emergency meeting Monday as his government tried to manage the fallout. A variant occurs when the genetic structure of a virus changes, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## "Vaccine for new variant within 6 weeks"

MUNICH: The co-founder of BioNTech said Tuesday it was "highly likely" that its vaccine against the coronavirus works against the mutated strain detected in Britain, but it could also adapt the vaccine if necessary in six weeks. "Scientifically, it is highly likely that the immune response by this vaccine also can deal with the new virus variant," said Ugur Sahin. But if needed, "in principle the beauty of the messenger technology is that we can directly start to engineer a vaccine which completely mimics this new mutation – we could be able to provide a new vaccine technically within six weeks." Sahin said the variant detected in Britain has nine mutations, rather than just one as is usually common. Nevertheless, he voiced confidence that the vaccine developed with Pfizer would be efficient because it "contains more than 1,000 amino acids, and only nine of them have changed, so that means 99 percent of the protein is still the same". He said tests are being run on the variant, with results expected in two weeks. "We have scientific confidence that the vaccine might protect but we will only know it if the experiment is done [...] we will publish the data as soon as possible," he added. – Agencies

All viruses mutate over time and new variants are common, including for the novel coronavirus. As with other new variants or strains of Covid-19, this one carries a genetic fingerprint that

makes it easy to track, and it happens to be one that is now common. That alone does not necessarily mean the mutation has made it spread more easily, nor does it not necessarily mean this

variation is more dangerous. However, the UK government's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group said it had "moderate confidence" that this new variant "demonstrates a

substantial increase in transmissibility compared to other variants." Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer, said this particular variant "contains 23 different changes," which he described as an unusually large number. Whitty said the variant was responsible for 60% of new infections in London, which have nearly doubled in the last week alone.

On Monday, Chief Scientific Adviser Patrick Vallance added that he anticipated the spread of the new variant would increase after Christmas. "Given that we're entering a period of inevitable mixing, I think there will be some increases in numbers over the next few weeks," he said, adding that local restrictions are likely to be tightened rather than eased in the new year.

## Briefs

## Journalist shot dead in Afghanistan's Ghazni city

DNA

GHAZNI: Gunmen have murdered an Afghan journalist in the eastern city of Ghazni, the third reporter in the violence-plagued country to be killed in the last two months. Rahmatullah Nekzad was shot dead with a silenced pistol by unknown gunmen near his home while he was travelling to a nearby mosque, Ghazni province's police spokesman Ahmad Khan Seerat told AFP news agency on Monday. No group has claimed the murder so far but the Taliban denied responsibility. "We consider this killing a loss for the country," said Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. Nekzad, in his late 40s, worked on a freelance basis for The Associated Press news agency and the Al Jazeera broadcast network, according to the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee. "AJSC strongly condemns the serial killing of Afghan journalists," the committee, which reports on threats to media workers in the country, said on Twitter. In a tweet, the Al Jazeera Media Network said it was "shocked at the news of the killing" and strongly condemned "any act of violence against journalists and attempts to silence them".

## Germany against arms embargo on Turkey

DNA

BERLIN: Germany is against Greece's demands of imposing an arms embargo on Turkey due to tension in the Eastern Mediterranean, the German foreign minister said Tuesday. Heiko Maas told the DPA news agency that he finds the arms embargo on Turkey "strategically incorrect". It is not easy to do this to a NATO member, he said, adding that Turkey easily purchased missiles from Russia when it could not get them from the US. Sharing his hopes that the dispute in the Eastern Mediterranean could be solved through diplomatic channels, Maas said: "Of course, we continue to believe that there is a solution to the conflict and that we do not have to permanently remove a NATO partner from the arms cooperation." Greece called for an EU arms embargo on Turkey due to recent tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean ahead of the EU leaders summit on Dec. 10-11. But a majority of the European leaders opposed the idea of an arms embargo or economic sanctions, opting instead for a softer line. Turkey, which has the longest continental coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean, has rejected maritime boundary claims of Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration, and stressed that these excessive claims violate the sovereign rights of both Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots.

## US sanctions Cuba-related companies

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday imposed sanctions on three Nicaraguan officials over their support for left-wing President Daniel Ortega's government. President Donald Trump's administration has kept up a steady stream of sanctions announcements since the November election that handed Democrat Joe Biden a win. President-elect Biden is to be sworn in to office on January 20. The US Treasury Department said it blacklisted officials including the vice president of the Nicaraguan Supreme Court in an effort to target those continuing to assist the Ortega government's efforts to undermine democracy. "This Administration remains committed to targeting the Ortega regime by seeking out and exposing those who continue to suppress the democratic will of the Nicaraguan people," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in the statement. The officials blacklisted are Marvin Ramiro Aguilar Garcia, vice president of the Nicaraguan Supreme Court of Justice; Walmaro Antonio Gutierrez Mercadeo, a National Assembly deputy; and Fidel De Jesus Dominguez Alvarez, chief of the national police in the city of Leon.



SOFIA: Ambassador of Pakistan to Bulgaria, Mariam Madiha Aftab met with Tsvetan Simeonov, president of the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. – DNA

## Azerbaijani, Afghan officials mull further cooperation

Stressing that Afghanistan has always supported Azerbaijan's position, based on the international law, the minister said that the fraternal country's political support was clearly demonstrated during the 44-day Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh War

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan's foreign and national security ministers have discussed bilateral cooperation in the field of economy, security, transport and other spheres with the visiting high-ranking officials from Afghanistan. At their meeting in Baku on Monday, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Afghan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib and Chief of Staff to the Afghan President Mohammad Shaker Kargar focused on the established bilateral Azerbaijan-Afghan relations, as well as cooperation within international organizations. Bayramov noted that there is a great potential for the development of cooperation between

the two countries, the Foreign Ministry reported. Stressing that Afghanistan has always supported Azerbaijan's position, based on the international law, the minister said that the fraternal country's political support was clearly demonstrated during the 44-day Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh War. The minister added that the Azerbaijani people highly appreciate this support. The parties exchanged views on cooperation in the field of economy, security, transport and other spheres, including those on the development of the Lapis-Lazuli international transit route and the Trans-Caspian fiber-optic communication line, as well as opportunities for the Afghan youth to study in Azerbaijan and other regional issues of mutual interest, the min-

istry said. Mohib noted with satisfaction his meeting with President Aliyev and stressed that personal relations between the two countries' leaders played a special role in the development of bilateral relations. Congratulating Azerbaijan on the victory, Mohib stressed that Afghanistan has always supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. At a meeting in Baku on December 21, Azerbaijani State Security Service Head Colonel-General Ali Nagiyev and Afghan National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib, Chief of Staff to the Afghan President Mohammad Shaker Kargar, and Director-General of the National Directorate of Security of Afghanistan Lieutenant-General Ahmad Zia Saraj discussed further cooperation in the sphere of protecting the two

countries' security interests, the State Security Service reported on its website. Ambassador of Afghanistan to Azerbaijan Amanullah Jeyhun also attended the meeting. Nagiyev briefed the guests about the policy of successful socio-economic progress and reforms in the law enforcement sphere, the fight against international terrorism, and measures taken to strengthen stability and security in general. The sides stressed that friendly relations developing between the peoples of the two countries through the Azerbaijani and Afghan presidents' joint efforts also serve to strengthen the security partnership between the countries. Colonel-General Ali Nagiyev highlighted the political and diplomatic support provided by Afghanistan to

the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity in the Great Patriotic War and expressed confidence that such continuous contacts would contribute to the further development of cooperation between the two countries, as well as between the relevant security structures. The guests thanked for the attention and the conditions created for discussions on topical issues in the field of protection of security interests of Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. They noted the importance of expanding cooperation between the two countries' relevant authorities in combating common threats to create favourable conditions for the policy of stability, security and development pursued by the Azerbaijani, Afghan leaders for the progress of the two nations.

## Indonesia, Turkey concur on continuing negotiations

DNA

JAKARTA: The Indonesian and Turkish governments are on the same page to continue negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IT-CEPA) that is targeted for completion by 2021, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi stated. "We agreed to continue the Indonesia-Turkey Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IT-CEPA) negotiations, with the hope that it will be

completed in 2021, as mandated by the two leaders of Indonesia and Turkey," Marsudi noted after meeting Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here on Tuesday. Indonesia and Turkey commenced negotiations on IT-CEPA in January 2018 in Jakarta, a few months after President Joko Widodo undertook a state visit to Ankara in July 2017. Both nations have, so far, concluded the fourth round of IT-CEPA negotiations held on January 30-31, 2020,

in Ankara, Turkey. During the meeting, the delegations of both nations discussed plans to lower and eliminate tariffs, as well as various issues related to customs, quarantine of goods, legal affairs, trade facilities, and security. IT-CEPA is projected to help Indonesia and Turkey increase the value of bilateral trade that is currently not considered optimal. Minister Çavuşoğlu stated that the total trade volume between both nations had only reached US\$1.5 billion

(some Rp.21.2 trillion). "1.5 billion US dollars ... is still far from our true potential," Çavuşoğlu stated. Both nations agreed to boost the total trade value to US\$10 billion (some Rp141.45 trillion) through IT-CEPA. Çavuşoğlu also highlighted that Turkey had agreed to boost the value of investment in Indonesia. "Turkish companies are interested in investing in Indonesia even in the midst of a pandemic," he stated. Marsudi highlighted that the Indonesian government had welcomed the interest of Turkish investors in investing more in Indonesia. The two countries are currently holding discussions on several cooperation projects in the fields of shipping, agriculture, and infrastructure.

"After the virtual meeting between the minister of public works and public housing of Indonesia and the minister of trade of Turkey last July, we have seen the high interest of Turkish construction companies to invest in infrastructure development in Indonesia, especially in toll road and dam projects," she noted.

## Canada pledges \$70m in aid to UN agency

WEB DESK

OTTAWA: Canada has pledged 90 million Canadian dollars (\$70m) in aid to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, which has been reeling from two years of funding cuts from the United States and other donors. Karina Gould, the Canadian minister of international development on Monday, said the aid will be distributed over three years and will "help respond to the rising needs of vulnerable Palestinian refugees" in the West Bank, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. The aid comes after the agency's chief warned last month it was facing its "worst financial crisis" ever. Known as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the organisation runs schools and provides health services as well as other humanitarian aid to an estimated 5.7 million Palestinians with refugee status. "The needs of Pal-

estinian refugees are undeniable, especially during a global pandemic: they face high rates of poverty, food insecurity and unemployment," Gould said in a statement, adding that responding to the needs of Palestinian refugees was "part of the path towards peace and prosperity in the Middle East". The funding will provide emergency life-saving assistance to an estimated 465,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria and Lebanon and contribute to meeting the basic education, health and livelihood needs of Palestinian refugees, the statement said. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government restored aid to UNRWA in 2016 after it had been cut four years earlier by his conservative predecessor Stephen Harper. From 2016-2019, Canada spent 110 million Canadian dollars (\$85.5m) in support for the agency. It also provided 1.5 million Canadian dollars (\$1.1m) in April to help it respond to the pandemic.



## US Congress passes \$892bn in COVID relief

Among the provisions in the bill, it provides \$3.36bn for GAVI, the international vaccine alliance, a partnership of the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, the World Bank and the The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that provides vaccines to people in low-income countries

DNA

WASHINGTON: After months of partisan conflict, the United States Congress has approved a nearly \$900bn emergency spending bill to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 relief bill provides \$284bn for loans to small business to keep workers employed and \$166bn for \$600 one-time payments to most US citizens among other measures. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the top Democrat in the US Congress, called the bill "a first step" towards giving incoming President-elect Joe Biden the resources

needed to "crush the virus". The House approved the measure by a vote of 359-53 and the Senate voted 91-7 to send the bill to President Donald Trump who is expected to sign it. Terms of the bill were agreed in marathon negotiations among congressional leaders and the White House that ended with agreement over the weekend. Among the provisions in the bill, it provides \$3.36bn for GAVI, the international vaccine alliance, a partnership of the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, the World Bank and the The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that provides vaccines to people in low-income

countries. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a US television interview the Treasury Department would be sending out \$600 checks to US citizens as soon as next week. "It's money that gets recirculated in the economy, so people go out and spend this money and that helps small business and that helps getting more people back to work," Mnuchin told broadcaster CNBC. The bill includes short term unemployment benefits, aid for the US airline industry, funding for vaccine distribution and help for urban and poor communities hit hardest by the virus. It does not go as far as a \$3 tril-

lion COVID-19 relief package the House approved in May that was rejected by Republicans who control the US Senate. Among the sticking points, Democrats had sought \$160bn in federal bailout funding for states and localities now seeing budget shortfalls because of precipitous declines in tax revenue from virus-related economic slowdowns. Democrats and labour unions opposed a liability shield against COVID-19 related lawsuits that corporate interests and the Republicans wanted. The liability shield and funding for states and localities were left out of the compromise bill. The legislation

was attached to a larger, must-pass \$1.4 trillion spending fiscal 2021 measure providing funding for the US government. Biden in a statement applauded the bipartisan deal in Congress and called it "a lifeline" for millions of US citizens struggling with the pandemic. And he signalled he will be asking Congress for more funding to address the virus when he takes office on January 20 "Our work is far from over," Biden said. House Majority Whip James Clyburn, a Democrat, called the bill "woefully incomplete" and said: "This package must be viewed only as a down payment".

## 'Coronavirus vaccines 'morally acceptable'

FOREIGN DESK

VATICAN: The use of Covid-19 vaccines developed using cell lines derived from aborted foetuses is "morally acceptable", the Catholic Church announced on Monday. In the absence of any alternative, such vaccines "can be used in good conscience", the Vatican said. It added that this would "not constitute formal co-operation" with the terminations that took place. Several vaccine candidates were developed using cells derived from foetuses aborted decades ago. However, no foetal cells are present in any of the vaccines. "All vaccinations recognised as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that the use of such vaccines does not constitute formal co-operation with the abortion from which the cells used in production of the vaccines derive," the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith announced in a statement on Monday. The text, which was approved by Pope Francis, also said there was "a moral imperative" to ensure that poorer countries received access to effective vaccines. The issue of whether to accept a coronavirus vaccine has divided some members of the clergy, with the US Conference of Catholic Bishops arguing in favour last week.

## Palestinian teen killed by Israeli forces

MONITORING DESK

RAMALLA: A Palestinian teenager was shot dead by Israeli forces after he was accused of firing at soldiers in the Old City of occupied East Jerusalem on Monday night. According to Israeli police, the teen, identified by local media as 17-year-old Mahmoud Omar Kameel, approached a police post near the Lion's Gate entrance to the Old City and shot at them. "The police and border guard fighters working in the Old City chased him on foot, while he was shooting at them," the Israeli police said in a statement. Witnesses said Israeli forces shot Kameel multiple times after chasing him and surrounding him in the area. Immediately following the shooting, Israeli forces closed the gates leading to the Old City and barred access to the Al Aqsa Mosque compound. Kameel belonged to the village of Qabatiyeh near the occupied West Bank city of Jenin. There was no immediate comment from Palestinian officials following the incident.

## US reinstates Sudan's sovereign immunity

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States Congress has passed a bill that includes largely restoring Sudan's legal immunity, days after the country was formally removed from the US list of states sponsoring terrorism (SST). However, the legislation, passed on Monday, does include an exemption that allows lawsuits filed by the families of victims of the September 11 attacks already under way in US courts to move forward. The state sponsor of terrorism designation, which was in place for almost three decades, had weighed on Sudan's economy and restricted its ability to receive aid. For investors, the reinstating of sovereign immunity removes another layer of financial risk. Sudan had been engaged in talks with the US for months, and paid a negotiated \$335m settlement to victims of al-Qaeda attacks on US embassies in East Africa in 1998 who had been awarded much higher damages by US courts. The Sudan sections in a massive bill including a coronavirus stimulus package passed includes \$150m for naturalised citizens in the US embassy bombings. It also includes \$700m in economic assistance for Sudan, with \$600m going to a government programme supported by the World Bank known as the Family Support Program and \$100m to USAID for humanitarian assistance in the country.

## Briefs

### Iraq inks deal for Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine

DNA

BAGHDAD: Iraq has signed a preliminary deal to receive 1.5 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine in early 2021, the health ministry said. The country has been among the hardest-hit in the Middle East, with more than 580,000 reported cases although numbers have dropped dramatically in recent weeks. Health ministry spokesman Seif al-Badr told state television late Monday that Iraq had "formally signed a preliminary deal with Pfizer... which will arrive in stages early next year". "Iraq has reserved its share of these vaccines," he said, with troops and the elderly prioritised for vaccinations. Each person requires two injections of the vaccine so the order will cover just 750,000 of Iraq's 40 million people. President Barham Saleh has said Iraq aims to provide the jab for free to its citizens. Badr did not put a price tag on the deal.

### Pak High Commission in UK to remain closed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's High Commission in London and its sub-missions at Birmingham, Bradford, Glasgow and Manchester will remain closed on December 25 and 28, and January 1. The High Commission in a statement urged the applicants to schedule their visits accordingly due to closure of general visa section and other consular services during the holidays. The holidays will be on account of Christmas and birthday of Quaid-i-Azam (Dec 25), Bank Holiday/Boxing Day (Dec 28) and New Year (Jan 1).

### Five killed in Kabul attack

WEB DESK

KABUL: At least five people, including four doctors, were killed after a magnetic bomb attached to their car exploded in the Afghanistan capital, Kabul. The doctors were heading to the Pule-Charkhi prison, located on the eastern outskirts of Kabul, which hosts hundreds of Taliban fighters, according to Kabul police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz. It was not immediately clear if the doctors were targeted in Tuesday's attack. The fifth person killed in the explosion is yet to be identified. Two others were injured in the explosion, said Faramarz. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack which damaged nearby buildings and shops.

### IHC approves Capt Safdar's appeal for hearing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Tuesday approved an Intra-Court Appeal of PML-N leader Capt. (ret'd) Safdar for hearing and issued notice to the government. Earlier, Capt Safdar's counsel said that an application was given to the Ministry of Interior for security but his client was not provided the same. "What you had written in the application," Justice Amir Farooq asked. "The interior ministry had yesterday stated about security threat to 20 politicians," the counsel replied. "The Supreme Court has given its verdict with regard to security," Justice Amir Farooq said. "Perhaps you wouldn't be in that list of the interior ministry," the Justice further said. "The ministry should inform about the people who have serious threat," the lawyer said. "You people don't recognize the interior ministry," Justice Farooq said in an interchange with the counsel. "We recognize the state and security is responsibility of the state," the petitioner's counsel replied.

# Think-tanks working to improve relations with Kabul

Complex issues accumulating over years would take some time for resolution, said Ambassador Muhammad Sadiq, PM Special Representative for Afghanistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: There is certainly a positive trajectory with regards to Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral relations. In the last few months both sides have achieved significant progress, though there is a lot still to be done. For the first time, the parliaments on both sides are playing a very active role in addressing issues of mutual interest. Complex issues accumulating over years would take some time for resolution. This was said by Ambassador Muhammad Sadiq, Prime Minister's Special

Representative for Afghanistan. He was speaking to the 7th Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Committee (PAJC) meeting, spearheaded by Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) and Organization for Economic Studies and Peace (OESP). Trade is and should always be the connecting link between the two nations. It also promotes people to people contacts, along with a lot of economic opportunities for the people, particularly the ones residing in border areas. We are also looking into investing into each other countries, which reinforces our push for increased



trade, paving way for shared stakes and mutual interests. This in turn would materialize into durable peace and sustainable development in the region, stated Sadiq. He further stated that Is-

lamabad's seriousness in mending trust deficit and starting a new chapter in the bilateral relationship with Kabul reflects in the number of steps the Government of Pakistan have

initiated within last six months. These include: introduction of liberal and friendly visa regime for Afghanistan, making it easy for Afghans to do business and open bank accounts inside Pakistan, decision to open 12 border markets with Afghanistan, and pipeline projects like tele-medical centers in Afghanistan and railway link between the countries. Sadiq assured that the progress on bilateral front would pick pace in coming months. Later in the afternoon, PAJC members called on Dr. Moeed Yusuf, SAPM on National Security and Stra-

## Govt yet to adopt serious attitude

DNA

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Senator Sirajul Haq has chided the PTI government for doing nothing for the welfare of people in half of its tenure in government except to build some shelter houses and provide 'free consultation service' to public about poultry and buffalo farming. The JI chief, who reached Mansoor after concluding his week-long visit of Sindh, said here on Tuesday, the majority of the people of the interior Sindh and its capital Karachi were passing a difficult life due to the policies of the party which had been in-charge of the affairs of the province for many decades. The federal government, he said, also announced huge packages for the port city but the claims remained limited to mere hollow slogans. He said the masses were fed up from the agents of imperialistic forces and wanted to get rid of them. The JI chief regretted that after spending half of its tenure the PTI government yet to adopt serious attitude towards the public welfare agenda. The prime minister and his team, he said, spent all their energy on war of words against the opposition parties, turning a complete blind eye toward the problems of a common man. He said the severe gas shortage crisis gripped many parts of the country but the government seemed busy in tackling the opposition protests instead of developing plan to mitigate the energy challenge.

## China to confer Prof. Iqbal Choudhary

DNA

KARACHI: The People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, China has decided to confer famous Pakistani scientist Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary the 2020 Guangxi Golden Silkball Friendship Award for his outstanding contribution to the economic and social development of Guangxi province of China. According to a letter of the Chinese officials, written to Prof. Iqbal Choudhary, on the recommendation of Guangxi Normal University, the People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region has made a review and decided to award Prof. Choudhary, and to present him with the medal and 100,000 RMB bonus. The spokesman of the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi (UoK) said that the prize-awarding ceremony will be held in March 2021. Prof. Iqbal Choudhary, the Director of ICCBS - University of Karachi and COMS-TECH Coordinator General has been awarded this honor in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the economic and social development of Guangxi province of China, he said.

## Economic reforms being made

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh has expressed government's firm resolve to correct the fundamentals of the economy through effective policy making and targeted reforms with the objective to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth in the long run. Speaking at a Webinar titled "Making Pakistan Prosper: Strategy for Economic Growth and Development" organized by the Institute of Policy Reforms, he said, despite COVID-19 various economic indicators including remittances, FDI and exports and large scale manufacturing have shown progress. The Finance Minister said the resurgence of Covid 19 in Pakistan and world over has posed new challenges and the world economy is passing through an unprecedented crisis and according to IMF there will be 4.4 per cent contraction in it.

## 150,000 visas issued to Afghan nationals

ISLAMABAD: In order to facilitate movements of Afghan nationals to Pakistan, Pakistan Embassy in Kabul and its Consulates in Afghanistan have ensured implementation of Pakistan government's new liberal visa policy for Afghan nationals in letter and spirit, the Pakistani embassy in Kabul said on Tuesday. The new policy was enacted on Sept. 29. The Pakistani embassy has issued details about the measures for facilitative visa processing of a large number of Afghan applicants for Pakistani visa. An embassy statement said the number of windows for collection of visa application forms has been increased from 7 to 17, which has resulted in enhanced visas processing capacity for the applicants. The embassy and diplomatic missions now issue long-term multiple entry visas to all categories of visitors (one to five year visas). Taking a forward-looking friendly step, Embassy of Pakistan in Kabul and its Consulates in Jalalabad, Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif at the instruction of the government have introduced online visa/E-visa for Afghan nationals. This enables the applicants to apply for visas online from the website visa.nadra.gov.pk on a 24/7 basis. Separate windows have been designated for applicants for medical treatment, students and business people. Separate windows have been designated for female visa applicants. Students are being issued visas for their entire duration of studies according to the education programme in Pakistan. As a result of these concrete measures, the Embassy and Pakistani Consulates have issued 150,000 visas during the months of October and November alone. In addition to this, around 12,000 online E-visas have been issued by the Embassy during the past one and a half month. "We have been able to manage the large number of visa applicants in a dignified manner due to the facilitative steps taken by the Embassy," Pakistani ambassador in Kabul Mansoor Khan said. "In this regard, the Embassy would like to advise the visa applicants to come to the Embassy during visa hours in the morning where enough visa processing capacity is available to entertain them. The visa applicants do not need to wait for visas outside the Embassy during night hours. The Embassy and our Consulates will continue to process visas of Afghan nationals in a dignified and honorable way," Khan said. - DNA

## NAB seizes assets of Shahbaz Sharif family

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The National Accountability Bureau has seized the assets of PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif's family in a money laundering reference. An accountability court heard on Tuesday the reference against Shehbaz's family and the PML-N leader was presented in court. "Those who have come to meet Shehbaz Sharif, please leave the room. The noise is interrupting court proceedings," the judge said, expressing the court's displeasure over the chaos that erupted during the proceedings. The judge said every question the court has is worth a million dollars. "If you people don't stop, I will get up and leave," he warned. The NAB Lahore director-general submitted



a report during the proceedings. The report said that NAB had frozen the assets of Shehbaz Sharif's wife Nusrat Shehbaz, son Sulaiman Shahbaz, daughter Rabia Imran and son-in-law Haroon Yousaf. Earlier, accountability court Admin Judge Jawadul Hassan had issued a two-page reserved verdict, directing the concerned authorities to present an implementation report over seizing properties of Shehbaz's family.

## Organizer of CSA expo to promote Pakistani products

DNA

KUNMING: The organizer of China-South Asia Expo (CSA Expo) has planned to hold various special events for each country in specific months. "Taking Pakistan as an example, they plan to hold Pakistan Week, Pakistani Specialty Food Festival, Pakistani Commodity Promotion Conference, etc. According to Gwadar Pro, the organizer also plans to arrange domestic and international tour exhibitions, not only to promote Pakistani products throughout China but also to promote Pakistani products to other countries, said Cao Kejian, deputy general manager of

ECSAE Trading Co., Ltd. The company is currently looking for an organization that can be responsible for the operation of the Pakistan National Image Pavilion. "We have contacted Pakistan's Consulate General in Chengdu and many Pakistani companies. Because of the epidemic, the construction of the Pakistan National Image Pavilion is relatively slow." Cao Kejian said adding there are two kinds of organizations that can operate the National Image Pavilion. He told the Gwadar Pro that their goal is to increase imports from South and Southeast Asian countries to China. In the national image pavilions of

18 countries, high-quality products, enterprises, investment projects and tourism resources introduced to the China-South Asia Expo (CSA Expo) will be presented there throughout the year. About seeking the support to this effect, he said one is the consulate general of the country, such as the consulate general of Vietnam. The other is the Chamber of Commerce authorized by the consulate general or government department of the country. "Authorizations from the Consulate General, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Trade, and Ministry of Tourism are all acceptable," he said.

## Active taxpayers list crosses 3m

DNA

KARACHI: For the first time in Pakistan's history, the number of active taxpayers surged past the three million benchmark, media reported Tuesday. The Federal Board of Revenue's weekly updated active taxpayers list (ATL) revealed that for the year 2019, the number of return filers was at 3,000,453 on the basis of returns filed up to December 20. Previously, the highest returns were recorded at 2.85 million for the tax year 2018, as per the taxpayers directory issued by the FBR in October. The FBR issues its ATL every year on March 1 on the basis of returns filed by the due date of the tax year. The number of returns filed by February 29 for the tax year 2019 was 2.53 million. It means the FBR added 470,000 more returns since then to its list. The number of income tax returns increased despite the coronavirus-led lockdown during March - June this year. The date to file income tax returns for 2020 was December 8, which was not extended. The FBR received 1.8 million returns for 2020 up to the due date. However, another 300,000 taxpayers applied for an extension on the last date. Therefore, the number of returns filed for the tax year reached 2.1 million.

## China praises Sukkur-Multan motorway's completion

BEIJING: China on Tuesday said that the completion of Sukkur-Multan Motorway epitomised the ongoing success of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) development against Covid-19 impact. "The completion of this project epitomises the ongoing success of CPEC development against Covid-19 impact," Chinese Foreign Ministry's Spokesperson, Wang Wenbin said during his briefing in response to handing over of Sukkur-Multan Motorway by the Chinese constructor to the authorities in Pakistan. The spokesperson said, "I noted this good news. Peshawar-Karachi motorway is an early harvest and also the largest transportation infrastructure project under CPEC. Now, the Sukkur-Multan part of this motorway has been completed and handed over to Pakistan." He said that the project had reduced the transport time from 11 hours to four hours while over 29,000 jobs were created during its construction. Wang Wenbin remarked that this motorway passed through the cash crop producing areas in Pakistan which would boost the economic development of areas along the route. "China also built some public welfare projects including schools, bridges, water channels and wells etc," he added. He said that the Chinese side would continue to work with Pakistan to further focus on projects in livelihood, industry and agriculture to build the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) a demonstration process and bring more benefits to two people. - DNA

# Air Chief hails Chinese military aviation technology

He also said that in modern times competition in the air domain centers not only around mastery of technology, but also on its artful application in both strategy and tactics

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force has said that Chinese Military Aviation Technology is at par with contemporary requirements and has full capacity to meet the challenges of modern warfare. He was expressing his views after flying an air superiority sortie in a Hi-Tech Chinese fighter aircraft during ongoing exercise Shaheen IX. Lauding the professionalism of PLAAF pilots, the Air Chief said that the outstanding air combat skills of PLAAF pilots are reflective of robust and modern combat training program of PLAAF. Expressing his satisfaction over the conduct of the exercise, the Air Chief said that it was heartening to see the two Air Forces



inter-operating across a wide spectrum of airpower employment options. He also said that in modern times competition in the air domain centers not only

around mastery of technology, but also on its artful application in both strategy and tactics. He added that Shaheen series of exercises will go a long way in

enhancing the professional skills and operational preparedness of both the Air Forces in addition to developing mutual understanding of each other's combat skills and

promoting inter-operability. It is pertinent to mention that the joint Air Exercise Shaheen IX that commenced on 09 Dec, 2020 has now entered its last phase.