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MATSUDA confers Japanese decoration on Ms. Toshiko Orita

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PDM will get nothing, says Shibli Faraz

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Briefs

Govt not afraid of long march

BUREAU REPORT

MULTAN: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said that the government is not afraid of long march by opposition's Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). Talking to media persons, Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) is currently in turmoil and asked political opponent that why they are hesitant if they are really want to resign from assemblies. The foreign minister said that government has refused to get pressurized by opposition and claimed that PDM wanted to reach a deal for their personal interests.

Malik for national emergency

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Interior A. Rehman Malik on Wednesday demanded the government to impose national emergency amid fast spread of second wave of COVID-19 terming it dangerous. He said new strain of Coronavirus was more dangerous as it was animal mutated having been originated from Holland, said a press release issued here. Rehman Malik said Spain has already implemented emergency till March and European countries seemed restricting inter-country movement.

Trump may veto covid-19 relief bill

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Tuesday lashed out at lawmakers over the newly approved 900-billion-US-dollar COVID-19 relief package, threatening not to sign the bill if changes are not made to increase the amount of stimulus checks. The outgoing Republican president said in a video posted on Twitter that "the bill they are now planning to send back to my desk is much different than anticipated." "It really is a disgrace," Trump said, arguing that the 5,000-plus-page bill contains many measures that almost have nothing to do with COVID-19. - APP

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BENAMI TRANSACTIONS

FBR files references against 'mafia'

The 27 references were submitted by the Benami Zones at Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore before the Adjudicating Authority

NAVEED MIRAJ / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Benami Transactions Adjudicating Authority has confirmed 27 references involving amount of Rs. 7.4 billion filed against Benami Transactions by the three Anti-Benami Zones at Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore which include movable as well as immovable benami properties. These include 5 cases of Benami shares in which Benami transaction of Rs. 159.644 million was identified, 6 references of Benami immovable properties worth Rs. 5,849.4million, one case of Benami bank accounts worth Rs. 1040.0 (M), and 16cases of Benami vehicles worth Rs. 351.55 (M). As per law, the Ant-Benami Zones submit references in cases of suspected Benami assets before the Benami Transactions Adjudicating Authority for confirmation/

revocation of attachment of assets and then initiate confiscation proceedings. The Adjudicating Authority, an independent authority established under the law, after due deliberation provides opportunity of being heard to the alleged benamidars and beneficial owners and the referring department as well. The Adjudicating Authority after completing all legal and administrative requirements/ formalities either confirms or revokes the attachment orders issued by the Initiating Officers. The 27 references were submitted by the Benami Zones at Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore before the Adjudicating Authority which were confirmed involving Benami assets worth of Rs. 7.4 billion shall be confiscated after confirmation of orders from the Federal Appellate Tribunal as per law by the Federal Government.

Norwegian envoy lauds Pakistan's energy policy

Talking to Norwegian Ambassador, Kjell Gunnar Eriksen, Omar Ayub says the govt has set a target to introduce 25% renewable energy by 2025

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Division, Omar Ayub has said that Pakistan's new Renewable Energy Policy would bring opportunities for investors due to transparent policies of the government. Talking to Norwegian Ambassador, Kjell Gunnar Eriksen in Islamabad on Wednesday, he said the government has set an ambitious target to introduce 25 percent renewable energy by 2025, and 30 percent



by end of 2030 including 40 percent share of hydel power generation into energy mix of the country. The Minister said that renewable energy-based power

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Australia keen to explore Pakistan's trade potential

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, H.E. Dr. Geoffrey Shaw, in his virtual remarks, has said Pakistan is at the heart of a regional market with a large population, diverse resources, and un-

tapped potential for trade and would like to explore further opportunities for enhancing trade relations between the two countries. He stated this while talking to the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh on Wednesday. The Minister extended a warm welcome to High Commissioner and commended the support extended by the Government and people of Australia to Government of Pakistan and its people and hoped that the positive sentiments will continue in future for the benefit of both the countries.

Continued on Page 06

Ms. Toshiko Orita awarded Japanese decoration

Ambassador MATSUDA, while speaking on the occasion, congratulated Ms. ORITA for receiving prestigious decoration

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan has conferred the 2020 Spring Decorations "The Order of the Rising Sun, Silver Rays" upon Ms. ORITA Toshiko, Vice President of the Pakistan-Japan

Cultural Association (PJCA), Islamabad, in recognition of her significant contribution to the promotion of long-term cultural exchanges and friendly relations between Japan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. MATSUDA Kuninori, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, on behalf of the

Government of Japan conferred the decoration "The Order of the Rising Sun, Silver Rays" upon Ms. ORITA. The conferment ceremony was held at his official residence with limited participants, including Ms. ORITA's family and her close friends, Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, Federal Minister on Finance & Revenue, and Mrs. Nadene Shaikh, while taking infection prevention measures against COVID-19. Ms. ORITA, also laureate of Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation, has been serving as Vice President of the PJCA since 2003. She also worked in the Embassy of Japan in Pakistan as a senior staff in the past. As a fluent speaker of the Urdu language well-versed with Pakistani culture, Ms. ORITA has worked diligently over the years both independently and from the platform of PJCA to promote Japanese culture.



Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan lays floral wreath at the Shuhada Monument at Police Line Headquarters. - DNA

Police to be given health cards: PM

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The government wants to provide the Islamabad police health cards and affordable housing, Prime Minister Imran Khan said Wednesday, announcing the provision of both to facilitate the law enforcers of the federal capital city. Addressing a passing parade at the Police Line Headquarters in Islamabad, the premier paid tribute to officials and said that no nation can prosper without proper law and order situations and that the lives and property of the nation should be protected at all costs. "The army is the protector of borders and the police are the protector of common citizens," he said.

Govt to get vaccine at the earliest

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Center (NCO) on Wednesday was apprised that the government was in close liaison with leading Covid-19 vaccine manufacturers including those from China to ensure early availability of the vaccine. The Forum during the daily morning session was briefed that the government authorities were regularly reviewing developments including data from phase 3 trials. The Forum was informed that these steps would lead to a final decision about early availability of the coronavirus vaccine in Pakistan.

No rest until govt is removed: Fazl

Maryam Nawaz lashed out at the government for playing "musical chairs" with the federal cabinet

BUREAU REPORT / DNA

MARDAN: PDM chief Maulana Fazl ur Rehman has said that the PDM will march to Islamabad with the nation to demand the premier's resignation. "We will not rest till we remove the government," he said. Addressing the Mardan rally, the PDM chief said that opposition has been saying that the current government is inept, but now the premier himself has admitted his failure. "The premier says that I will have to answer, but I want to say to him that he is in the grip of my accountability," he said. "First get yourself off the hook, then talk about us." He said that Pakistan had become "isolated" in the region while Saudi Arabia and China "were cross". China gave you a loan to repay your debts to the Saudis at an interest rate of 14 per cent, he said, adding that China did this because the government had "treated them badly". He added that currently the economy of Afghanistan, Iran, Malaysia and Indonesia was better than Pakistan. "Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal are moving ahead while Pakistan is sinking.

Continued on Page 06

PDM will get nothing: Shibli

RANA FARRUKH / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz Wednesday said the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), an alliance of opposition parties, would get nothing but disgrace in its anti-government move as they were following the agenda of personal gains, setting aside national interests. The minister, in a tweet, said the alliance was badly exposed in the daylight and destined to meet disgrace in public due to their personal interests and lack of trust in each other, saying "Yeh Saanjh Ki Handiya Beech Chorahay Phoot Rahi Hay." He said the recent statements of veteran leaders of (JUI-F) Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl Maulana Muhammad Khan Sherani and Hafiz Hussain Ahmed were conspicuous examples. Shibli Faraz said a self interested component group, having divergent directions and destinations, had fully been exposed.

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Briefs

'Sindh to raise gas crisis issue with Centre'

KARACHI: Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday directed provincial energy minister to prepare Sindh's case over the gas crisis. "The issue of unjust distribution of gas will be raised with the federal government," chief minister said in a session over gas crisis in the province. Chief Minister Shah was presiding over a meeting over the gas crisis in province, attended by Sindh's Energy Minister Ihtiaz Ahmed Shaikh and other concerned officials. The chief minister was briefed about acute gas shortage in the province. "Industrialists as well as domestic consumers are facing hardships in the gas crisis," Murad Ali Shah said. "Sindh is country's largest gas producing province, still the people here have been deprived of it," chief minister said. Sindh should be given priority in consumption of the gas being produced here, chief minister said. "Depriving the province from its gas is violation of the Article 158 of the constitution," Shah observed. The chief minister directed the energy minister to prepare Sindh's case over the gas crisis. "The issue of unjust distribution of gas will be raised with the federal government," the chief minister said. — APP

'LB polls in IIOJK attempt to validate illegal actions'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: While describing the local bodies election held in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) as farcical and stage-managed, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan has said that Indian rulers cannot get the validation of their illegal actions taken since August 2019 by holding such sham polls. Commenting on the self-proclaimed victory of the ruling BJP and Farooq Abdullah's pro-India National Conference in the Districts Development Councils' elections in occupied Kashmir, the state president said that these elections were held under the supervision of an occupation army which is engaged in massacring and ethnic cleansing of the Kashmiri people amidst detention of hundreds of political leaders, thousands of political workers, civil society leaders, journalists and human rights activists. In this climate of fear and uncertainty, the B. J.P. has made a big push into the Kashmir Valley, the centre of the separatist struggle, unleashing 300,000 party workers and bringing Muslim politicians in Kashmir into its fold for the first time.

'PPP to contest by-polls with full force'

ISLAMABAD: PPP senior leader Qamar Zaman Kaira has said the party is not in favour of boycotting the elections and will contest the by-polls with full force. Appearing on a private channel, the PPP stalwart said the government would get a walk-over if the field was open for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government. If the PPP is to go for the Senate elections, it would have to maintain its majority in the Sindh Assembly, he said. PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal said his party had held discussions about taking part in the by-polls and Senate elections. The party, he said, will issue a policy statement after consultation with the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) leadership. PML-N had not asked the party senators to submit their resignations yet, he said, adding that discussions were also underway with the PDM leaders about taking part in the by-elections. He said a consensus statement will be issued in a day or two. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for information and broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz calls on President Arif Alvi. — DNA

APNS bags excellence award at Beijing advertisement moot

Hameed Haroon, President and Sarmad Ali, Secretary General All Pakistan Newspapers Society have congratulated members on Wining Excellence Award

DNA

KARACHI: "Hameed Haroon, President and Sarmad Ali, Secretary General All Pakistan Newspapers Society have congratulated members on Wining Excellence Award at the 2020 Beijing International Public Service Advertisement Creativity Competition. The All Pakistan Newspapers Society bagged the Excellence Award at the 2020 Beijing International Public Service Advertisement Conference Creativity Competition.

for their public service campaign on Covid-19. This was the second Beijing International PSA Creativity Competition in which countries from across the globe participated. The 2020 Beijing International Public Service Advertisement Conference Creativity Awards was organized by the Publicity Department of Beijing Municipal Committee of CPC and Beijing Municipal Radio and Television Bureau. Last year, the conference and the awards were held at Beijing. However this year, keeping in mind the Covid-19 situation, the

conference as well as the awards were held online. The entries were emailed while the jury sessions were held through video link across continents. It was after rigorous jury sessions, APNS won the Excellence Award for their public service during the tough times of the pandemic. The awards are specifically organized to recognize organizations that are contributing towards betterment of society by spreading awareness and playing their part. The campaigns were welcomed from Print, Audio, Video and Interactive media. APNS

submitted in both Print and Video, and won the Excellence Award for both categories. APNS launched a print campaign earlier this year informing masses about the pandemic, busting myths and providing people with information to stay safe and healthy. The print campaign was supported by newspapers across Pakistan so that the word reaches out to the corners of the country and help people. The same was adapted for TV in the form of a 40 seconds promo and was aired on various national channels as public service message.

Webinar on maritime tourism in Pakistan held

DNA

KARACHI: National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) Karachi organized a webinar on the topic of "Promotion of Maritime Tourism in Pakistan" on Wednesday to identify and explore the potential of maritime tourism industry for Pakistan's economy and to draw attention on the various issues and challenges in the growth of this sector. Muhammad Aslam Ghauri, Secretary, Environment Climate Change & Coastal Development Department, Government of Sindh greeted the occasion as the Chief Guest, whereas, eminent International and national speakers gave an insight on various aspects of maritime tourism. Vice Admiral (Retired) Abdul Aleem HI(M), Director General NIMA welcomed all the worthy speakers and participants in the webinar and highlighted the importance of maritime tourism with sustainable environment and its impact on the socio-economic development of the coastal communities. Commander Muhammad Akhtar PN Deputy Director NIMA set the stage by highlighting the significance of the topic and the prominence of maritime tourism and its prospects for Pakistan.

'Sialkot airport become center of attention to world'

DNA

SIALKOT: Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited Mian Naem Javed has said that there are vast opportunities for growth in the aviation industry. Sialkot International Airport has become the center of attention of the world after the visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan visit of Sialkot where international flights from different are under operation and Gujranwala Division as well as Azad Jammu and Kashmir large numbers of people from other adjoining areas are availing domestic and international flights from Sialkot Airport. This was stated by Chairman Sial Mian Naem Javed during a briefing here today. He said that Sialkot International Airport like other airports of the country could play an important role in the promotion of tourism. He said that possible facilities and incentives should be announced by the government so that the citizens could be attracted towards domestic and international travel. He said that Sialkot, Gujranwala and Gujrat are well-known industrial cities and flights from Sialkot International Airport to other countries are being operated on international routes which could be significantly increased. Mian Naem Javed said that for the development of aviation industry, it is necessary to implement tourism promotion programs which will bring multi-currency exchange to Pakistan and increase investment in aviation industry as well as innumerable jobs and businesses. Opportunities will arise.

Another doctor dies of corona in Karachi

DNA

KARACHI: After the positive report of Dr. Sarwar was shifted to the hospital and went on ventilator few days ago after his condition deteriorated. As per details, the number of doctors who died from the coronavirus has risen to 48. On the other hand, Pakistan has reported 84 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 462,814. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 9,557. According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), 2,142 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Sindh remains the worst-hit province by the pandemic in terms of cases followed by Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. Punjab has overtaken Sindh in most number of casualties Till now 206,489 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 133,179 in Punjab 55,811 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 36,483 in Islamabad, 17,980 in Balochistan, 8,040 in Azad Kashmir and 4,832 in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Textiles become first sector to recover from virus onslaught

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group of FPCCI, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Wednesday said textile is the first major sector which has recovered from the pandemic. Supportive policies, timely import of cotton and trade tensions between the US and China has infused new life in this most important sector of the economy, he said. Mian

Zahid Hussain said that textile exports jumped by nine percent over the exports of Nov 2019 to reach 1.28 billion dollars while the value added sector played a major role in it. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that failure of cotton crops has reduced exports of yarn and grey cloth but the exports of all value added items except for readymade garments has jumped. If cotton imports would have been delayed it would have been a disaster for the largest industrial sector but timely decisions helped the industry, he added.

UBG hails DGTO, FPCCI

DNA

LAHORE: Chairman United Business Group (UBG) and veteran trade leader Iftikhar Ali Malik Wednesday hailed the categorical assurances of the authorised representatives of Director General Trade Organization (DGTO) and Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) that 34 bogus votes of 17 fake trade bodies of Balouchistan will not be included in the final voter list of FPCCI. Talking to a delegation of voters from Jhang, Gujranwala and Sialkot here today he said that it will pave the way for fair, free, transparent and impartial annual

election of the apex body of chamber being held on December 30. He said that we will also be successful in getting exclude another two bogus votes of Loralai Chamber of Commerce and Industry by submitting undeniable lawful documentary evidence. UBG Presidential candidate for FPCCI Khalid Tawab said that engineer Daroo Khan Achakzai former President FPCCI and Haji Jamal Uddin Achakzai had challenged bogus votes in Balouchistan High Court on the grounds that these 17 trade bodies are not existing anywhere in the entire province and how their bogus votes can be included in the final list?

KCCI for duty free zone at Pakistan-Iran border

DNA

KARACHI: Vice President Karachi Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines & Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari, Pakistan's Ambassador in Iran Rahim Hayat Qureshi, Consul General of Iran in Karachi Ahmed Mohammadi, Director General of International Cooperation, Iran Customs Administration Hossein Kakhki, Deputy for International Affairs TCCIMA Hessemeddin Hallaj and others. Vice President KCCI Shamsul Islam Khan pointed out that although a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) exists between Pakistan and Iran while numerous Mem-

orandum of Understandings (MoUs) have also been inked from time to time and a Free Trade Agreement was also currently being negotiated but all these agreements and the MoUs have not yielded positive results as the trade volume remains stubbornly low while the smuggling flourishes, hence it was really essential to bring down the exorbitant tariffs and establish duty free common economic zone and industrial park where the business communities of both countries could easily set up their business units and warehouses which, if provided, would surely give a boost

to two-way trade. "Setting up the proposed common economic zone will prove to be the first step in the documentation of the economy", he added. He said, "It is high time that Pakistan and Iranian governments, besides looking into the possibility of implementing a paper visa regime, must also agree upon giving duty free access to numerous products and we can start from any 5 to 10 items having immense trade potential in the beginning and after seeing the impact, this list can be enhanced further by adding more items being traded between the two brotherly countries."

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HYDERABAD: Labors busy in loading vegetables into delivery truck. — DNA Photo by Jan Ali Laghari

Christians are patriot Pakistanis: Rasheed

Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed congratulated the Christian community and directed the Chief Secretaries to ensure the security of churches. The Chief Secretaries of all the provinces should serve the churches. Christian community is loyal to Pakistan, he added

FIAZ CHAUDHRY / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Christmas is the message of love, Christians are patriot Pakistanis, said the Federal Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed here on Wednesday. He expressed this while addressing a special cake cutting ceremony held in the connection of Christmas at the office of Capital Development Authority (CDA) in Islamabad. Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed congratulated the Christian community and directed the Chief Secretaries to ensure the security of churches. The Chief Secretaries of all the provinces should serve the churches. Christian community is loyal to Pakistan, he added. He said that after getting the charge of the Ministry of Interior he wants to give the most important message to end the smuggling of petrol in the country with in the time period of 7 days. Substandard petrol is damaging the vehicles and the national exchequer is also facing the loss of



2 billion dollars every year. FBR has taken a remarkable step by stopping the smuggling of mobile phones. The Prime Minister Imran Khan has ordered to take strict action against the smuggling

of petrol. The petrol pumps selling the smuggled petrol will be sealed, he added. Chairman CDA, Aamir Ali Ahmed; Board members, Directors, and officers of CDA were also present at the occasion.

Briefs

'Joint efforts needed to fight COVID-19'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque Wednesday emphasized the need of joint efforts to cope the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic. The role of IT was vital for tackling coronavirus and the ministry was taking every possible measure in this regard, the Minister said while chairing a meeting here.

Amin Ul Haque appreciated the role of telecom industry and assured full cooperation in resolving the issues of cellular mobile operators. The Federal Minister asked cellular mobile operators to offer special bundle offers especially for students to provide them assistance in online education.

Secretary IT Shoab Ahmad Siddiqui, Chairman PTA Maj Gen (Retd) Amir Azeem Bajwa and representatives of IT companies were also present in the meeting.

PCF to hold cycling races on Quaid Day

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Cycling Federation (PCF) on Wednesday announced to hold road cycling race in different parts of the country in connection with Quaid-i-Azam Day. "We've planned to hold road races to mark the Day in a befitting manner. We've issued instructions to our all provincial associations as well as regional associations to finalize preparations for that," Syed Azhar Ali Shah, the president of PCF said in a statement. He said competitions would take place in Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar, Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. According to Azhar the race in Peshawar would be held on Thursday under the aegis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cycling Association. "This will be an open race wherein peddlers from all the divisions and clubs will take part," he said. - APP

'PPP govt looting people for decades'

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi on Wednesday said that PPP government and its bureaucracy has been looting people for decades in Sindh province. In a tweet, he said "In reality, PPP Govt & it's bureaucracy is just a crime syndicate of Sindh, looting the people for decades!" "Just unbelievable! Sindh Government employees, 500 of them, still able to keep their jobs despite plea bargain", he added. - APP

Scientists talk about crises of poor air quality

COMSATS Centre for Climate and Sustainability (CCCS) in the partnership of Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) holds seminar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A webinar was held on the topic, "Air Quality under South-South Cooperation: What Works for Developing Countries, through the Lens of Science, Technology and Governance?" jointly organized by COMSATS Centre for Climate and Sustainability (CCCS) in the partnership of Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) at Islamabad with the aim to elucidate newer efforts to increase awareness, foster connectivity and implement solutions in developing countries on air pollution and

work with partners in the Global South to chart the way forward for this decade. This webinar was 9th webinar of CCCS Webinars Series. Webinar initiated with the welcome remarks of Amb. Shahid Kamal, Head CCCS, he talked about importance of Air Quality research for policy formulation, followed by message of Dr. Raheel Qamar, Head of Science and Technology, ICESCO. Webinar was moderated by Mr. Hassan Sipra, Senior Research Officer, COMSATS University Islamabad. Participants in the webinar include: Dr. Johann Antoine, Head of the Nuclear Analytical Lab and Project Lead



for Air Quality Programme, Jamaica, Dr. Eric Zusman, Senior Policy Researcher, and Institute for Global Environmental Studies (IGES) in Hayama, Japan, Dr. Hassan Kchih, Head of Air Monitoring Section Environmental Protection and Control

Department (EPCD) Royal Commission Jubail and Yanbu, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Professor Jalal Halwani, Head of Health & Environment Department, Director of Water & Environment Lab, Lebanon, Dr. Foued El Ayni, Environmental Expert

at Directorate of Science & Technology of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), Morocco, Dr. Jacob Sonibare, Professor of Chemical Engineering at the University of Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, Mr. Abid Omar, Founder of Air Quality Initiative, Pakistan, Professor Gabriel Filippelli, Professor of Earth Sciences, Director, Center for Urban Health, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, U.S.A. Scientists from different regions of world talked about crises of poor air quality and health issues especially in global south countries.

They emphasized on health issues mediated from poor air quality. To achieve Sustainable Development Goals, clean air plays very important role in the context of, SDG 3 Good Health, SDG 7 Clean Energy, SDG11 Sustainable Cities and SDG13 Climate Action. Scientists talked about research in the area of air monitoring, developing countries and even developed world are lacking research in this area. Scientific and evidence-based knowledge is very important for policy formulation. Experts showed interest to conduct collaborative research projects with CCCS Network institutions

Police team to investigate lawyer's murder

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have constituted a special team to investigate into the murder case of a lawyer who was shot dead in sector G-10 by unidentified motorcyclists last day, police source said. According to details, a lawyer identified as Shah Alam, was shot dead in G-10 by two persons on a motorcycle when he was in his car. The victim died on the spot and his body was shifted to the hospital for legal procedure. He was resident of Bannu and cause of his murder was apparently old enmity. Soon after the incident, DIG (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed has constituted a police team including Station House Officer of Ramna Police Station SI Turabul Hasan. Police source said that Bannu police has been also approached to get details about the cases registered there over rivalry of the deceased with other group. Further investigation is underway into the matter, the source maintained. - APP

NEPRA hosts webinar on CTBCM model

ISLAMABAD: National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Tuesday hosted a webinar on Competitive Trading Bilateral Contracts Market (CTBCM). A large number of renowned national and international experts and stakeholders of the electric power sector participated in the same, said a press release issued. Chairman NEPRA, Tauseef H. Farooqi opened the webinar by thanking the participants and highlighted the objectives of webinar on the CTBCM model. He expressed that CTBCM will prove to be a game changer for the Power Industry of Pakistan. He stated that NEPRA has approved the detailed design and implementation plan of the CTBCM that will usher in a competitive environment in power sector benefiting the country. He further said that to fully understand the implementation, the webinar on CTBCM has been arranged to disseminate and develop understanding of the different stakeholders on the Wholesale Electricity Market (WEM) as well as to inform the participants on power sector reforms, challenges and objectives expected to result due to CTBCM. - APP

Capital police arrest 1756 drug pushers this year

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have arrested 1756 drug pushers during the ongoing year and recovered cache of narcotics. Following directions and guidance of Inspector General of Police Islamabad Muhammad Aamir Zulfiqar, a police official said renewed efforts were made to curb bootlegging and drug peddling activities in the city.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) (Operations) Waqar Ud din Syed conducted special meetings with heads of police stations to brief them about accelerating efforts against such anti-social elements. Islamabad police, he said, launched special crackdown against drug pushers and bootleggers. A total of 1756 persons were held for having narcotics and liquor while 1641 cases were registered against them besides

recovery of 571.835 kilogram hashish, 171.076 kilogram heroin, 10.515 kilogram opium, 2.293 gram ice, 271 gram cocaine and 20,284 wine/liquor bottles. Police also held four persons involved in supplying narcotics at educational institutions and recovered 2.120 kilogram hashish, 1.140 kilogram heroin and 115 gram ice from them. While reviewing this performance, DIG (Operations) Waqar Ud din Syed appreciated

it saying that it was prime responsibility of police to provide relief to citizens and every possible effort would in this regard. DIG has urged all police officials to adopt decent attitude for success in policing affairs and said sluggish attitude towards resolving public affairs would not be tolerated. He said utmost efforts should be made to curb the menace of drug, putting at risk the future of our generation.

IHC nullifies hike in property taxes

The high court directed the authorities to collect tax at previous level and also clarified that tax collection is duty of MCI instead of the CDA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) has nullified the notification of 200 percent increase in property taxes in federal capital. The high court directed the authorities to collect tax at previous level and also clarified that tax collection is duty of Metropolitan Corporation of Islamabad (MCI) instead of the Capital Development Authority (CDA). Earlier in last year, the court had suspended the notification after hearing a plea against the hike. The petition argued that MCI had made a 200 percent increase in the property tax in Islamabad while misusing its powers and asked the court to set aside the decision of the MCI regarding increase in the property tax. The MCI approved the increase in property tax, making it applicable from July 1, 2019, but tensions between the MCI and CDA over who would control the revenue directorate responsible for collecting property tax meant that the distribution of property tax bills was delayed.

Cop injured in firing by drug pusher

ISLAMABAD: A head constable of Islamabad Police was injured in firing during encounter with drug pusher, police source said. He said that head constable Afzal, constables Raqeb and Athar from Nilore police were on patrolling at bikes when they intercepted a drug pusher Safaris alaias Kodu near 'Char Bridge'. The drug pusher managed to escape under the cover of firing and one bullet hit head constable Afzal in his forehead. The injured policeman was shifted to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) where is struggling for his life. DIG (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed has taken notice of this incident and assigned task to SP (Rural) Amjad Farooq Butar to ensure arrest of criminal at earliest. Special teams have been constituted to arrest the absconding drug pusher while every possible treatment is being provided to the injured cop, police source maintained. - APP

Role of think-tanks vital to counter anti-CPEC propaganda: Experts

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: China-Pakistan Study Center (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted Second Pakistan-China Think Tank Dialogue via videoconferencing on Wednesday. The dialogue focused on the emerging strategic environment, regional dynamics, and Pakistan-China cooperation to advance peace and stability. The dialogue was addressed by Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director-General Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad and Ms Pan Chunxue, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of China in Islamabad. The dialogue brought together eminent experts of Pakistan-China relations including Dr Fazal ur Rehman, Director Pakistan Institute of China Studies, Dr Wang Shida, Deputy Director China Institutes of Contemporary



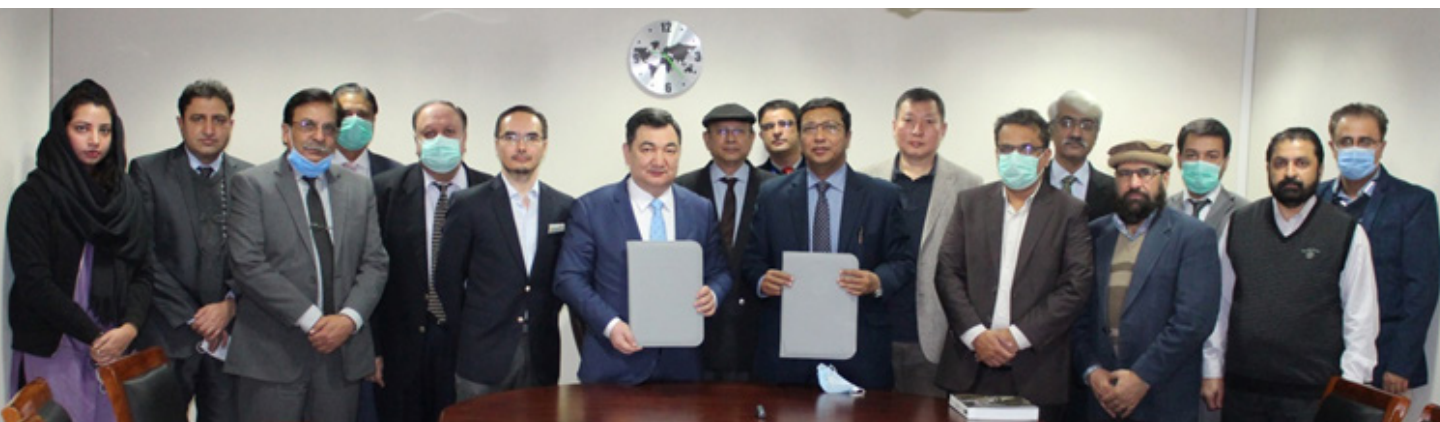
International Relations, Mr Amir Rana, Director Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies and Prof Zhang Jiadong, Director Center for South Asian Studies, Fuda University. Dr Talat Shabbir, in his introductory remarks, thanked the esteemed speakers and highlighted the changing regional dynamics. He underlined that amid change, Pakistan-China relationship remains a constant as both sides continue to maintain close political and strategic communication and coordination to stabilize the regional environment. Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad

Chaudhry, Director-General ISSI, in his welcome remarks, underscored that China is not interested in strategic competition; rather focuses on economic competition for its peaceful rise. Pakistan-China friendship is an important element for maintaining peace in South Asia. US and India are not in favour of China's BRI and CPEC and that's why the role of think-tank is important in building a positive narrative and these dialogues are significant and Pakistan-China both have to counter that propaganda against CPEC.

CIA police arrest two criminals

ISLAMABAD: The Criminal Investigation Agency (CIA) of Islamabad Police has arrested two gangsters involved in bike lifting and drug peddling and recovered stolen motorbike, heroin as well as weapons from their possession. According to details, SP (investigation) Malik Naeem Iqbal constituted special police team under the supervision of Sub-Inspector Imran Haider which nabbed two criminals involved in motorbike lifting and drug peddling. Police recovered stolen motorbike, heroin and weapons from their possession. The accused has been identified as Baber Khan & Waheed Khan. During the preliminary investigation, they confessed to their involvement in incidents of motorbike lifting and drug peddling in various areas of city. Cases have been registered against them and further investigation is underway from them. DIG (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed has appreciated this performance and directed all police officials to ensure effective policing measures in their respective areas. - APP

COMSTech and Int'l Turkic Academy ink MoU



DNA

ISLAMABAD: International Turkic Academy and COMSTech sign MoU at COMSTech Secretariat on December 23 to strengthen cooperation and collaboration for the promotion of science & technology in OIC member states. On the occasion of MoU signing ceremony, President of the Int'l Turkic Academy, Dr. Darkhan Kydyrali, appreciated COMSTech for holding Al-Farabi forum successfully. Dr. Kydyrali said that our relations are not only limited to the relations between institutions, we have great relationship between nations. He assured that on his return he will meet with the president of Kazakhstan to share these activities with him. He said we have signed many MoUs with different institutions of Pakistan. He said that he strongly believes that COMSTech will play a strong role for further enhancing the Pak-Kazak relations.

Coordinator General COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary appreciated the organization of OIC Science Summit by Kazakhstan in 2017. He said that we will soon organize an international forum on Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal in collaboration with international Turkic Academy, Kazakhstan. Dr. Iqbal assured that we will be partner in these activities. Both institutions have agreed to be engaged in various joint activities such as organizing forums on Al-Farabi, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, and Ulugh Beg Mirza and establishing Turkic Academy Library at COMSTech and incorporating leading universities of Pakistan in the network of universities of International Turkic Academy. The Turkic Academy was founded on 25 May 2010 at the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation in the capital of the Republic of Kazakhstan. COMSTech is Islamabad based OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation.

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Briefs

Commissioner congratulates Christian community

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi, Capt (R) Muhammad Mahmood on Wednesday said that Pakistan is a peaceful society where all citizens have complete rights for celebrating their religious festivals with freedom and security. Addressing a function on eve of Christmas at his office, he congratulated the Christian community on Christmas and said that such festivals promote religious harmony in society. Commissioner said that minorities including Christian community have played an important role in in different walks of life and their services are praiseworthy. He also distributed Christmas gifts and cut a cake among the employees belonging to the Christian community. — APP

City to get 3 parking cum commercial plazas

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Capt. (Retd) Muhammad Mehmoood on Wednesday said administration would construct three state of the art parking cum commercial plazas in the city. Chairing a meeting held here to review progress about the parking plazas he said, the projects would be constructed on public-private partnership (PPP) mode while three more stories would be constructed on RDA parking plaza. He informed that the parking plazas would help address traffic congestion problems in commercial hubs. He said seven-storey plazas having state of the art computerized parking system facility and mosques would be constructed in Banni Market, old Rawalpindi Metropolitan Corporation office site and Commercial market area. Dedicated parking space would also be available in these projects for disabled persons, he added. He said, administration has also planned to construct shops, hotels and godowns in commercial parking plazas with an aim to get maximum revenue from the space. The projects would be completed within two years period and would be run on PPP model, he added. The commissioner informed the meeting that maps of the plazas, financial models and construction cost estimates had been finalized and soon an investors conference would be held. He said the rooftops of the plazas would also be utilized for commercial purposes and food courts, hotels and cinemas would be established atop of plazas. The meeting was attended by Director Finance and Development, Nazia Parveen, Chief Officer, RMC Ali Abbas Bukhari and other officers concerned.

'SECP focusing on MSMEs'

ISLAMABAD: Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) Chairman Aamir Khan on Wednesday said the SECP has placed significant focus on serving the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as they play a vital role in the economic development of the country.

To improve access to finance for the MSMEs, agri borrowers and rural enterprises, SECP has already operationalized the Secured Transaction Registry (STR), the SECP chairman said this while addressing to the interactive session on impact and approach in digitizing the Small and Medium Enterprises and MSMEs. He said so far, more than 125,000 security interests have been recorded in the registry. The SECP chairman said this has allowed small businesses to obtain credit against their movable assets. He said SECP is focusing on simplifying the Private Equity and Venture Capital (PE&VC) regime so that the high growth and knowledge-based start-ups can have access to long term capital, required to grow and expand. He said the most significant measure of SECP has been the introduction of the regulatory sandbox, under which six concepts were approved in the first cohort. — APP

Experts discuss prospects of the Intl academic network

University China (CUC), Beijing, and Center for Global and Strategic Studies Islamabad jointly organized an Online International conference on "Working together towards a community with shared future"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Research Center for Community with a Shared Future, Communication University China (CUC), Beijing, and Center for Global and Strategic Studies Islamabad jointly organized an Online International conference on "Working together towards a community with shared future". The conference aimed to analyze international academic networks and bringing nations together through regional integration, the concept of creating harmony resulting in a strong social foundation to counter challenges faced by the global community. Prof. Hualing Li, Dean, Institute for a Community with a Shared Future, Communication University of China, Beijing, China discussed prospects of the International academic network for a community with a shared future. He stated that in 2020 the world has witnessed two major events, one of them is the

ASEAN agreement, which embodies the agreement of ASEAN countries and it tells us that the countries of Asia wish to live independently, they do not wish to choose between China and America. Another big event of 2020 is Brexit that has weakened the American influence on Europe. Keeping in view the recent developments we can devise that our world is now multilateral. The concept of a community with a shared future envisions multilateralism in politics, security, development, civilization, environment and solidarity in all kinds of problems being faced by the mankind such as the pandemic, terrorist, climate change and drugs. He further suggested that in the current wake of the pandemic it is important that all countries join hands to form a human bond. According to Professor Li, international think tanks play an important role and they should focus on enhancing academic dialogue to erase existing prejudices, promote dialogue between communities and work to-



wards achieving mutual understanding. Think tanks in western countries accuse the Belt and Road initiative of being a death trap, which is wrong. The BRI advocates joint contributions and shared benefits for all its member countries. He emphasized that through the concept of a shared future we aim to plan exchange programs for scholars across the world and to connect them on common goals and objectives. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, Pro-Vice-Chancellor,

University of the Punjab, Lahore, briefly discussed the way of enhancing regional connectivity through the global concept of a community with a shared future. He shed light on the establishment of the Regional Integration Center in collaboration with CGSS and how it will contribute towards the regional cooperation and the idea of a community of a shared future.

He further commented, that this initiative of sharing resources and ideas will be beneficial for all partners and will create a win-win situation for all those who are working together. Mentioning the effective role played by China in helping the communities, Dr. Mazhar highlighted that China's policy of non-interference and its aim to respect other cultures, norms and civilizations has played an important role in bringing the regional countries together. China has always promoted that our future is together. He also mentioned that Punjab University, Lahore welcomes this initiative and is ready to have a shared bright future under this concept introduced by China and accepted by Pakistan. Mr. Tan Sri Ong Tee Keat, Chairman of ASEAN Research Center for a Community with a Shared Future, Malaysia highlighted work-

ing towards an inclusive world and the global concept of a community with a shared future. He stated that in the American perspective the rise of China and its increasing role and weightage in global geopolitics has been labeled as a potential threat. In the present context of escalating polarization, the concept of forging a community with a shared future, as was espoused by China, is no doubt a timely wake-up call for the international community. More so, in the wake of increasing existential cataclysms that no single nation-state could ever handle singlehandedly. He further commented that in this regard, universities or research-based institutions of BRI participating countries can play meaningful roles in shaping an inclusive world. Prof. Dr. Iram Khalid, Chairperson, Political Science Department, University of the Punjab, Lahore, presented a comprehensive presentation on the concept of Dialogue of Civilization.

PMC appreciates NUMS examination process



DNA

RAWALPINDI: President of Pakistan Medical Commission Dr. Arshad Taqi called on Vice Chancellor of the National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) Lt. Gen. Syed Imran Majeed (Retd.) in his office here Tuesday. During the meeting, the matters relating to existing health infrastructure and the prevailing status of medical education in the country were discussed. The Vice Chancellor highlighted the achievements and initiatives of the university in medical field since its incep-

tion. 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/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. 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.

IIUI's engineering programs re-accredited

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Civil and Mechanical Engineering programs of International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) have been re-accredited by Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC). The council has also granted permission to admit students in these programs. The decision was taken in a PEC meeting held at its head office in which the council took a decision of re-accreditation of the Civil and Mechanical Engineer-

ing programs in addition to permission for intake of students in these programs. The decision was taken on the basis of physical verification and assessment after a conformity visit. IIUI President Dr. Hathal Homoud Alotabi has congratulated the IIUI community on this achievement, while he also hailed the efforts of the team that worked hard for the re-accreditation process of engineering programs. The IIUI community has thanked President IIUI for his untiring efforts for re-accreditation of the programs.

Experts call to foster solar prosumage growth

They discussed at length how several barriers including regulatory bumps at inter-connection phase, tech trust deficit, finance issues, and inertia at the level of distribution companies (DISCOs)

ABRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Experts have laid stress on solid and broad consensus among key stakeholders for curbing coal-based power generation in Pakistan and diverting 60 per cent of the total energy mix to renewable energy by 2030. They laid emphasis at a moot held to deliberate upon Institute of Policy Study's subject of barriers surrounding distributed generation. IPS Executive President Khalid Rahman

chaired the event that was moderated by former water and power secretary Mirza Hamid Hasan and addressed by Asad Mehmood from National Energy Efficiency Conservation Authority (NEECA). Aftab Ahmad Awan from the Planning Commission of Pakistan, Neshmiya A. Khan, Hamza Butt and Maryam Arshad from World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Zeeshan Ashfaq from World Wind Energy Association Pakistan (WWEA), Mushtaq Gaadi from Quaid-i-Azam University, and Dr Azhar Lashari

and Haneea Isaad from Rural Development Policy Institute (RDPI) were among the participants. IPS team consisting of Naira Saleh, Hamza Naeem and Sara gave the briefings. The speakers termed solar prosumage as an irresistible and most promising solution to simultaneously advance renewable energy uptake vis-à-vis address chronic bottlenecks plaguing the national power sector. They discussed at length how several barriers including regulatory bumps

at inter-connection phase, tech trust deficit, finance issues, and inertia at the level of distribution companies (DISCOs) Overall great emphasis was made on the alignment of distributed generation growth in IGCEP, significant stakeholder consultations and support, and consolidated changes for overcoming the identified challenges. They took up the environmental impact assessment of coal power generation in the country that was not easily accessible.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary, Sohail Mahmood cut the Christmas cake with Christian members of the Foreign office of Pakistan. FS wished Merry Christmas to them and extended best wishes for health, happiness and success in the New Year. — DNA

NAVTTTC and ITEES, Singapore sign MoU

This partnership is expected to be of great value for revamping Pakistan's TVET sector as Singapore has one of the most innovative and well established TVET systems in the world

RANA FARRUKH

ISLAMABAD: National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) and Institute of Technical Education Services (ITEES), Singapore agreed to build cooperation by signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for development cooperation in the area of technical trainings and skill development with special focus on TVET staff and student development, TVET academic development and quality assurance in the domain of TVET. The MoU signing took place at the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training. This MoU was signed by Chief Executive Officer, ITEES Mr. Bruce Poh and Executive Director, NAVTTTC Dr. Faheem Mohammad. The MoU will contribute significantly to overhaul the skill training system in Pakistan and to develop a highly skilled, dynamic and internationally competitive youth workforce as envisaged by

the present government. This collaboration will also be fruitful in achieving the objectives of Prime Minister's Hunarmand Pakistan (Skills for All) program. This partnership is expected to

be of great value for revamping Pakistan's TVET sector as Singapore has one of the most innovative and well established TVET systems in the world. The Institute of Technical Education

Services (ITEES), Singapore offers 98 pre-employment and highly technical courses in its three colleges with enrolment of more than 28,000 students. The Institute has 200 active industry

partnership and 3,500 co-training partners.

The ceremony was witnessed by Mrs. Farah Hamid Khan, Federal Secretary Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Mrs. Farhana Asif, Deputy High Commissioner Pakistan to Singapore, Syed Javed Hassan, Chairman, NAVTTTC, Dr. Faheem Mohammad, Executive Director, NAVTTTC and Mrs. Aisha Qazi, Director International Co operation, NAVTTTC from Pakistani side where as from Singapore side it was witnessed by His Excellency OngKeng Yong, Singapore's Non-Resident high Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr. Mitchel Lee, Deputy Director South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa Directorate, Mr. Bruce Poh, Chief Executive Officer, ITEES, Mr. Lim Boon Tiong, Chief Operating Officer, ITEES, Ms. Yeo ZhiHui, Assistant Manager South Asia, Middle East, Africa & Latin America, ITEES and Mr. Roy Teo, Senior Executive South Asia, Middle East, Africa & Latin America, ITEES.



Pakistan's IT exports increase by 51% in Nov

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Commerce on Wednesday informed that Pakistan's Information Technology (IT) and IT-related services exports have witnessed an increase of 51% in the month of November 2020, as compared to the corresponding month of last fiscal year.

Pakistan's IT-exports increased by 38.9% during the period July to November of 2020-21 on a year-on-year basis, said a press release issued by Ministry of Commerce here. This was informed during a consultative meeting of the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood.

For promotion of the IT sector exports, Ministry of Commerce is actively engaging in a dialogue with the stakeholders of the IT sector. According to press release, Pakistan is the new destination for startups venture capital as youth are engaged in entrepreneurship and geared to find innovative solutions. Growth in domestic market will further ramp up exports in the coming quarters. As a testimony of this policy, the British American Tobacco (BAT) is going to set up its Business Shared Services organization hub—the BAT "Global Business Services" for Asia Pacific and Middle East Region in Pakistan. This will serve as a talent incubator and will give boost to Pakistani IT exports. Business Shared Services are a specialized form of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO). He was informed that the National E-Commerce Council (NeCC) has held three meetings so far to ensure enabling environment for e-Commerce.

45 water channels okayed to boost irrigation in ICT

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Agriculture Department has approved construction of around 45 water channels aimed at boosting irrigation activities in different parts of the federal capital. The approval has recently been given in a meeting of District Implementation Committee (DIC) of National Programme for Improvement of Water Courses and Enhancement of Command Area in Barani Areas, Director Agriculture, ICT told APP on Wednesday. Commenting on the time-line, he said the project would be completed during the current financial year at a cost of Rs 60 million that had already been released. Feasibility study of the sites had been conducted by the ICT Agriculture Directorate, based on the criteria given in the PC-1 of the project, he said, adding "the sites were selected keeping in view the principle of best utilization and value of money."

Debt relief

AS part of the larger Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) to help neutralise the economic hardships brought upon by the pandemic, another installment of \$526 million was rescheduled for Pakistan by the G-20 club. This has resulted in an overall debt relief worth \$1.7 billion for the country. It is imperative that we take this opportunity and make the most of it by focusing our efforts on revitalising the economy. The debt rescheduling agreements were made on Monday with France, China and Switzerland by the Economic Affairs Division of the respective countries. This should bode well for the country considering that our exports have experienced a steady incline for the past few months. In fact, November showed an increase of 7.67 percent, \$2.161 billion, in foreign revenue through the export of commodities like textiles. Furthermore, the potential of trade is expected to increase especially when taking into account the prospective market in China—worth \$23 billion to be exact. Securing even one percent of this market would require the country to focus on exporting raw materials and intermediate goods to the neighbour. As the government works on targeting newer markets, and reinvigorating existing ones, the country's economic environment might be on the path to recovery. Debt suspension has been one of the good things to come as a result of the pandemic and it is vital that the government does not take this for granted. Enormous pressure has been lifted off of the economy and now we are in a position where we can invest in our strengths and capitalise on them so as to be in a stable position in the future when we will have to return the debt.

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On neutrality

INDIA'S attempts to deflect blame from their recent attack on unarmed and neutral observers from UNMOGIP on the LoC are laughable. There are bullet holes in the vehicle that carried the UN officials—it is clear that the attack came from across the border—how can India even claim innocence? The sheer scale of the lies being propagated on the other side of the eastern border is staggering. It is practically impossible for Pakistan to have staged this; a simple forensics analysis can determine where the bullets were fired from. India's refusal to acknowledge UNMOGIP's authority and consistently violate the ceasefire indicates the deliberate attempts to cause an uptick in violence, and subsequently blame Pakistan for all the problems. The UN has now confirmed that their vehicle came under fire, but the language used by the international peacekeeper, as always, is wishy-washy. The UN uses its principle of neutrality to steer clear from taking any sides, but what the policymakers in the body do not realise is that their silence only helps the instigator. The principle of neutrality entails that things must be called out for what they are without bias. But when there is one clear aggressor and there is silence on its actions, this means that there is tacit support for these reprehensible actions. The international community has a part to play in this conflict, one that it has shirked from for decades. But enough is enough. Innocent civilians are losing their lives—every Kashmiri on the Indian side of the body has been disenfranchised and marginalised. International powers have the ability to bring India to the negotiating table, but they have neglected to do so. Pakistan's diplomats must call out this partisan behaviour. The UN must at the very least, report the truth. Anything less is essentially allowing for an aggressive party to continue its lawless actions.

Countering hybrid warfare thru content management

Iqbal Khan

Electronic media thrives on online content. It has mind boggling attributes, its speed is near real, while reach and clientele is global. Its impact on governmental and societal functioning is instantaneous. Younger offshoot—the Social Media—has by and large evolved as an informal entity, without requisite operational ethics, and accountability. While an instance of minor personal defamation on a TV channel would invariably attract a law suit by the victim, the sufferer of much graver instances on social media find themselves helpless due to insufficient legislation. Individual's personal privacy is under continuous pressure

EVERY state adopts and enacts set of laws that conform to its ideology, all domains of national security and foreign policy aims. Treatment of Edward Snowden and Julian Assange by President Obama's administration is just a recent happening. Edward Joseph Snowden is an American whistle-blower who copied and leaked highly classified information from the National Security Agency (NSA) in 2013 when he was a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employee and a subcontractor. Julian Paul Assange is an Australian editor, publisher, and activist who founded WikiLeaks in 2006. WikiLeaks came to international attention in 2010 when it published a series of leaks provided by US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning. Information technology minister, Amin-ul-Haque, said the government supported freedom of speech, but would not tolerate certain forms of content. "The government of Pakistan will not tolerate three things in any form," he told Al Jazeera. "Hate speech, number one. Number two is anti-state content, and number three is vulgarity." Minister said that a consultative committee "took all stakeholders on board". Need for regulation of social media content in Pakistan was long overdue. Pakistan needs to defend itself against this speedy invasion of chaotic cyber space, rather allowing an unhealthy ingress impacting societal fabric of its society. Recently promulgated "Online Content Rules 2020" is a step toward filling this void. Electronic media thrives on online content. It has mind boggling attributes, its speed is near real, while reach and clientele is global. Its impact on governmental and societal functioning is instantaneous. Younger offshoot—the Social Media—has by and large evolved as an informal entity, without requisite operational ethics, and accountability. While an instance of minor personal defamation on a TV channel would invariably attract a law suit by the victim, the sufferer of much graver instances on social media find themselves helpless due to insufficient legislation. Individual's personal privacy is under continuous pressure, as an irresponsible tweet could cause irreversible damage that subsequent revelation of truth cannot reverse. At social level, some of such setbacks become lifetime agony and scar. In the time of crisis, while truth is just putting on its boots, the false hood ends up enveloping the entire World. By the time truth effectively reaches its intended audience, it's immaterial and irrelevant as crisis is already over; all decisions for handling the crisis have already been made on the basis of perceptions

generated by inaccurate/false information content. Keeping in mind this potential, in addition to legitimate usage, ever evolving software applications are also explored by criminal community for negative usage. Intent could vary from: peeping into a bank account; hacking an e-mail trail; a jilted lover's revenge; manipulating a bourse; disturbing a logistical chain; causing instant social disturbance; changing the post launch trajectory of a hypersonic missile being directed by an adversary; injecting false data into nuclear command and control centre of a hostile state. Most of such actions do not require an extra ordinary skills; amateurs could comfortably do it. Necessity of framing laws to regulate the content on electronic media becomes all the more necessary for the countries who are victims of "Hybrid Warfare" of the order of "Fifth Generation" and have fragile societies perpetually on the edge to start acting like a tinderbox on slightest pretext. Pakistan qualifies to have such laws in place, as it is in double jeopardy with regard to both these fault-lines. Pakistan is on the receiving end of an unprecedented onslaught of Hybrid Warfare due to ongoing regional and extra regional re-alignments. Social media platforms are being exploited by various quarters in Pakistan to spread fake and false narratives triggering chaos in society and adversely impacting our social, cultural and religious norms. Electronic crimes are dealt with under "Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016(PECA)". Section 37 of the Act lays down a requirement for making Rules to ensure smooth implementation of the Act. On November 18, the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MOITT) made public the "Online Content Removal Rules" for social media, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Users". These rules have been approved by the federal government. An earlier version of these Rules had surfaced in February 2020, titled the "Citizens' Protection (Against Online Harms) Rules, 2020". As is usual with such rules, the comments from various quarters vary from supportive to hostile. Some stake holders have complained of non-consultation. Rules were frame by taking on-board all national and international stake holders. New statute defines boundaries to protect masses from various online negativity i.e. blasphemy, discrediting state, abusing institutions / appointments/individuals, inciting sectarian or ethnic hate and harassment etc. According to the rules every person or organization shall have the right to express and disseminate any Online Content on an online system as guaranteed un-

der Article 19 of the Constitution of Pakistan: "Every citizen shall have the right to have access to information in all matters of public importance subject to regulation and reasonable restrictions imposed by law". PTA shall not restrict, disrupt the flow or dissemination of any online content unless it is necessary for the reasons as prescribed in Section 37(1) of the Act. These rules outlaw the online criticism of the government and public office holders; allow the government to ban online platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube; and require all platforms – including messaging apps like WhatsApp – to share users' decrypted data with authorities without judicial oversight. New rules have drawn some stern negative response from internet watchdogs, NGOs and Rights activists. Most of their concerns are misplaced. Their objective is to just stir up a controversy. Some local NGOs and activist, mostly foreign funded, are projecting a theme that global technical companies may be forced to shut down their operations in Pakistan. Pakistan's digital economy is likely to grow to the tune of US\$ 5.5 billion. In some of the sectors such growth is almost 100 percent per annum. Therefore, due care has been taken that new rules do not impact the E-Commerce negatively. Rights groups have decried the laws as an attempt to muzzle free speech and online dissent. A perception is being floated that new laws may be used to target journalists and rights activists who express dissent against the government. Government has stated that it was withdrawing the explicit ban on criticising the government, while maintaining other provisions. Extensive consultative process was followed. Technical outfits, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), digital watch dogs, legal fraternity and general public were engaged for their input. Since March, the PTA held several consultations with technology companies on the rules, including social media giant Facebook, and the Asia Internet Coalition, a regional organisation that represents Google, Facebook, Twitter, Amazon and other tech giants. All nations take security of information seriously and regulate the content to mitigate its impact on state and society. Every country has firm laws in place to control its media content in print and electronic media— including social media. The objective of Pakistan's new content laws is to reduce the quantum and minimise the adverse impact of fake, false, immoral, unethical, anti-religious news / rumours/posts / analysis etc. to ensure a chaos free society.

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Crucial stage in the Afghan peace process

Luke Coffey



In a statement Mohib stated "Peace talks within Afghanistan will help create a credible exclusive security zone and enable the Afghan people to own and oversee peace and negotiations. Negotiators will be better aware of the grievances and demands of their countrymen and will avoid additional costs in the process"

THIS week a Taliban delegation, led by its deputy leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, met with Pakistani officials in Islamabad. While in Pakistan it is expected that Baradar will meet with senior Taliban leadership too. This visit to Pakistan comes on the heels of a mutually agreed 20 day pause in the ongoing intra-Afghan peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Even though peace talks have been largely stalled since commencing in September, in the past few weeks there have been some positive developments. Since September there has been a disagreement on which version of Islamic Law would govern the talks. The Taliban favored a version largely observed by Sunni Muslims and not Shiite. Since Shiite Muslims form a sizeable minority in Afghanistan, the Afghan government was reasonably concerned by this. After months of negotiations, both sides finally agreed to the legal framework in which to conduct the intra-Afghan talks. It is unclear when the talks will next begin again in earnest. There has been no specific date announced for the resumption of talks after the 20 day hiatus ends. Regardless of when the next round of talks might be, there has been calls by some, led by Afghanistan's National Security Adviser, Hamdullah Mohib, to have the talks moved from Doha to somewhere in Afghanistan. In a statement Mohib stated "Peace talks within Afghanistan will help create a credible exclusive security zone and enable the Afghan people to own and oversee peace and negotiations. Negotiators will be better aware of the grievances and demands of their countrymen and will avoid additional costs in the process." While this position might seem perfectly reasonable to most, the Taliban has rejected this proposal outright. Even so, the Afghan government has said they will not let this disagreement postpone the next round of talks. The U.S.

has encouraged both sides to get back to the table as quickly as possible. One of President Trump's most surprising, if not courageous, decisions of his presidency was seeking a negotiated settlement with the Taliban. While his two predecessors paid lip service to a negotiated settlement in the past, only President Trump was able to get the process started in any meaningful way. It is likely that the next round of intra-Afghan talks will take place near the time of the presidential inauguration in the U.S. on January 20. In order to build on the progress from the Trump administration there are four steps a Biden administration should take. Firstly, the next administration should pause any remaining troop withdrawals already in the pipeline from the previous administration. While President Trump was right to start negotiations with the Taliban, he has proven a little too keen to remove U.S. troops before deadline next April. With violence still at relatively high levels in Afghanistan withdrawing US forces from before the deadline would send the wrong signal. Secondly, the next administration needs to plan for a strong US-Afghanistan bilateral relationship in the future regardless of the outcome of the intra-Afghan talks. A major focus on this relationship will be on security. Put simply, the US must continue to fund, at least in part, the Afghan military for the foreseeable future. The cost to the US taxpayer of doing so is far less than having tens of thousands of US troops on the ground. For example, at the height of the U.S. fighting in Afghanistan in 2011-12 Americans were spending \$120 billion a year. For 2021 the U.S. plans to spend only \$4 billion on funding the Afghan Ministry of Defense—or about the same amount it was spending in Afghanistan in 2011 every 12 days. Thirdly, the next administration needs to continue the progress made on connecting Afghanistan to the broader region through economic and trade

integration. Landlocked Afghanistan suffers from a lack of connectivity with its neighbors. Thankfully, there is a growing realization of this in Washington. The Trump administration's strategy for Central Asia published last February placed an important focus on Afghanistan's role in the region. Two of the six "policy objectives" directly deal with Afghanistan: "Expand and maintain support for stability in Afghanistan" and "Encourage connectivity between Central Asia and Afghanistan." The next administration should embrace the strategy continue regionally backed economic and trade initiatives like insert information. Finally, the next administration should not be afraid to acknowledge failure if the intra-Afghan talks breakdown. The US has legitimate national security interests in Afghanistan and the region. If a lasting peace cannot be brought through a negotiated settlement then America will need to take steps alongside the Afghan government to develop a new strategy. The incoming administration should not hesitate to make this point crystal clear to the Taliban. Right now, the Taliban think that no matter what happens in the talks come April 2021 all foreign troops will be gone. A genuine negotiated settlement is the only realistic way for Afghanistan to experience stability and peace. After almost 40 years of fighting, your average Afghan wants peace and the international community must help them along the way. There will be no enduring and meaningful deal unless there is an agreement between the Afghan government and the Taliban. In the long term it matters less what the U.S. agrees to with the Taliban; what matters most is what the Afghan government agrees to with the Taliban. The intra-Afghan talks is the most crucial stage in the peace process. There will be ups and downs but both sides, along with the international community, must stick with it.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Australia
keen to
explore

From Page 01

The High Commissioner said that the Australian Government invests in the people of Pakistan through Australian Aid Programs in the spheres of health and education. He reiterated to continue the cooperation especially when Pakistan is making efforts to successfully ward off the effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the High Commissioner added.

The Minister thanked the High Commissioner for his cooperation and wished that the bilateral relations will further strengthen especially when the pandemic is over and the world trade will return to normalcy.

No rest
until govt is
removed: Fazl

From Page 01

The more days the government stays in the power, the more the country will continue to sink." PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz lashed out at the government for playing "musical chairs" with the federal cabinet and questioned why the premier assumed office when he wasn't prepared for the challenges.

Addressing the 'Mehangai March', she said: "Before the election, [the prime minister] used to say that he has a team of 200 fantastic individuals. Where is that 200-person team now?"

"You weren't prepared to give the jobs you promised but you were prepared to bring in your friends and give them jobs."

Maryam said that coronavirus patients had died at Khyber Teaching Hospital after there was a delay in procuring oxygen cylinders. "You were not prepared to provide medical services, but you were prepared to raise the prices of medicines?" She added that the premier was prepared to throw the sisters and daughters of his opponents in jail but was prepared to give an NRO to his sister.

Norwegian
envoy lauds
Pakistan's
energy policy

From Page 01

plants would be inducted through open and competitive bidding in a transparent manner. He said the government would also encourage the transfer of technology in these projects as it was focusing on manufacturing and assembling of wind turbines and solar panels in Pakistan. The Norwegian Ambassador appreciated the newly promulgated Renewable Energy Policy of Pakistan and expressed hope that Norway will forge cooperation with Pakistan in the field of renewable energy. The envoy apprised the minister of the ongoing Norwegian's projects in energy sector and deliberated upon the outlook of Pakistan's emerging market and business opportunities in view of the newly approved Alternative Energy Policy.

Shadab Khan
ruled out of
first Test

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan all-rounder Shadab Khan has been ruled out of the first Test against New Zealand due to a thigh injury following the conclusion of his side's four wickets victory in the third T20I in Napier on Tuesday. Shadab will now undergo MRI scans in Tauranga tomorrow, Thursday, following which a further update on the exact nature of the injury and time needed to return to competitive cricket will be provided, said a spokesman of the Pakistan Cricket Board here on Wednesday. "As Shadab is not available for, at least, the 26-30 December Test at Mount Maunganui, the team management has included left-arm spinner Zafar Gohar as a reinforcement. Zafar has joined the Test side from Hamilton where he was preparing with the Pakistan Shaheens for Sunday's T20 match against the Northern Knights. "In the 2019-20 first-class Quaid-e-Azam Trophy, Zafar was the third most successful bowler with 38 wickets, including five four-fers and one five-fer for Central Punjab.



ISLAMABAD: Egyptian ambassador to Pakistan, Tarek Mohamed Hussein Dahroug calls on Chairman Senate standing committee on interior Senator A. Rehman Malik. – DNA

Roshan digital accounts hailed by
overseas Pakistanis: Amb Malik

'It is therefore, vital that an adequate mechanism is evolved by the Board of Investment as well as the provincial investment promotion departments with a special focus on attracting investment by Overseas Pakistanis' he added

DNA

DUBAI: Chairman UK Pakistan Business Council and former Ambassador of Pakistan, Javed Malik has welcomed the introduction of Roshan Digital accounts by the state bank of Pakistan and said that it will open new avenues of investment into Pakistan by the Overseas Pakistani Business community because it allows greater flexibility and transparency to invest and repatriate investments. He was speaking at an International webinar organized by UK Pakistan Business Council in collaboration with Pakistan Stock Exchange and Pakistan High Commission in London. Javed Malik said that irrespective of where they reside, the hearts of Overseas Pakistanis are always beat with Pakistan and they can play a key role not only in investment into Pakistan but also in enhancing the scope of trade between Pakistan and other countries. 'It is therefore, vital that an

adequate mechanism is evolved by the Board of Investment as well as the provincial investment promotion departments with a special focus on attracting investment by

Overseas Pakistanis' he added. Javed Malik also said that UK Pakistan Business Council and other similar bodies are working in various countries to promote business

linkages with Pakistan and he will be leading the initiative to unify these efforts in the coming year so that overseas Pakistani business community can extend all possible

support to Pakistan in its economic recovery in a post Covid world. The International webinar entitled "Investment Opportunities in Pakistan's Capital Markets" was attended by Pakistani businessmen from United Kingdom, Europe, Pakistan, Gulf countries as well as senior officials from Pakistan High Commission including Minister Trade, Mr Shafiq Shahzad who highlighted the scope of investment in Pakistan. Special presentations were also given by the Chief Executive of Pakistan Stock Exchange, Farrukh Khan and Chairman Islamabad Stock Exchange, Mr Zahid Latif Khan on the investment opportunities in Pakistan's capital markets whereas Prime Minister's spokesperson for investment in UK, Shahibzada Jehangir was the special guest, other speakers included Badiuddin Akbar, Khursheed Barlas President Pak Chapter, Ata ul Haq, General Secretary and Ahmed Chinoy

Indonesian
cabinet reshuffled
amid COVID crisis

DNA

JAKARTA: Indonesia's president on Wednesday appointed the mayor of a major city and a businessman to replace two former government ministers ousted in an ongoing graft investigation. President Joko Widodo assigned Surabaya Mayor Tri Rismaharini as social affairs minister, replacing Juliani Batubara, who was named a suspect in the probe involving the distribution of social aid amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. He also appointed businessman Sakti Wahyu Trenggono as minister of maritime affairs and fisheries to replace Edhy Prabowo jailed in another corruption case. Widodo also replaced "controversial"

Health Minister Terawan Agus Putranto, a military radiologist and former personal doctor to the president's deceased mother, for allegedly being unable to adequately handle the pandemic, appointing instead Budi Gunadi Sadikin, the deputy state-owned enterprises minister. The president replaced the ministers of religious, tourism, and trade affairs. Religious Affairs Minister Fachrul Razi, was replaced by Indonesia's largest Muslim organization's leader, Yaqut Cholli Quomas. Muhammad Luthfi, a former ambassador to the US, was appointed as minister of trade, replacing Agus Suparmanto, while business tycoon Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno became minister of tourism and creative economy.

Emirates skycargo transports
first batch of COVID vaccines

DNA

DUBAI: Emirates SkyCargo has notched yet another milestone by flying in COVID-19 vaccines manufactured by Pfizer-BioNTech to the UAE for the first time for the Dubai Health Authority (DHA). The vaccines were transported from Brussels on Emirates flight EK 182 on 22 December 2020, arriving at Dubai International Airport (DXB) at 22.15 local time.

HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive, Emirates Group said: "Emirates is proud to be transporting the first batch of Pfizer vaccines for COVID-19 into the UAE for the Dubai Health Authority. Our healthcare ecosystem has played an absolutely

critical role in every step of the fight against COVID-19. I would like to thank everyone who has worked unceasingly over the last year to protect the lives of those most vulnerable against the disease. In recognition of their immense contribution for the wellbeing of everyone in the UAE, it has been our honour to transport these vaccines free of charge on our flight."

Nabil Sultan, Emirates Divisional Senior Vice President, Cargo said: "At Emirates SkyCargo we are doing our part to join Dubai's efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to the effective management of the pandemic by Dubai's visionary leadership, the city has retained its position as a global logistical hub for connecting vital cargo including PPE, medi-

cal supplies, vaccines, food and other essential items. Emirates SkyCargo has set up the world's largest airside hub dedicated to distributing COVID-19 vaccines and we stand ready to support not just Dubai, but countries around the world, including markets with limited cool chain infrastructure with our advanced capabilities. By transporting COVID-19 vaccines across our extensive network, we look forward to helping people around the world get back on their feet after the devastating impact of the pandemic." On arrival at DXB, the containers with the vaccines were unloaded on priority from the aircraft and then taken to Emirates SkyCargo's dedicated pharma facility Emirates SkyPharma to await clearance for delivery.



No obstacles to resolving Gulf crisis: Qatar FM

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

DNA

MOSCOW: There are no obstacles to resolving the Gulf crisis at the political level, Qatar's foreign minister has said, days after confirming there was movement on easing the diplomatic dispute that has pitted the Gulf neighbours against each other. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt imposed a diplomatic, trade and travel boycott on Qatar in June 2017, accusing Doha of supporting terrorism and having ties with Iran that were deemed too close. Qatar has repeatedly rejected the accusations as baseless while highlighting its readiness for dialogue. Speaking on Wednesday during a press conference with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Moscow, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani said the Gulf crisis should be re-

Qatar begins COVID vaccination campaign

DOHA: Qatar has launched a free coronavirus vaccination campaign after the first batch of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine arrived in the country on Tuesday. The vaccine will be administered in two doses, three weeks apart at seven primary health centres in the country. The priority will be given to people who are aged 70 and above, people with multiple chronic conditions and key healthcare staff working in close contact with COVID-19 patients. The first vaccine was successfully given to 79-year-old Abdullah Al Kubaisi, former Qatar University president, on Wednesday. The first vaccination phase will run until January 31, 2021 and the government has said it expects to have enough vaccines to cover the country's entire population in 2021. It has also signed a deal to acquire the Moderna as well as the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines. Amid the global pandemic, Qatar has been able to restrict its number of cases and deaths by extensive testing. On Wednesday, the health ministry announced 140 new confirmed cases of the coronavirus in the last 24 hours, taking the country's total positive cases to date to 142,448 including 243 deaths. Qatar has tested more than 1.2 million people since the start of the pandemic, almost half of its population. "They've been able to provide healthcare to those in need and they are making sure there is a robust contact tracing system in place, including an app which monitors the movement of people in case they come in contact with anyone who has been infected with the virus," Bin Javaid added. – DNA

solved by dialogue, respect of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states. He also stressed the importance of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) united front, adding that

Qatar views the issue of Gulf security as a priority and believes that an escalation is not in anyone's interest. "We will all emerge victorious from the crisis if we rebuild confidence in the GCC as a region-

al institution," he said, adding that talks to resolve the crisis were with Saudi Arabia which represented the blocking quartet. "Right now, there is a movement that we hope will put an end to

this crisis," the Qatar foreign minister said earlier this month. "We believe the end of the crisis is important for the security of the region and for sake of our people. This crisis needs to end based on mutual respect and the rights of all people of the Gulf. "Qatar is not differentiating between any of the countries. We hope things will move in the right direction but we cannot yet predict if it will be imminent and if it will be resolved in one day." Earlier this month, sources told that Qatar and Saudi Arabia were close to striking a preliminary agreement to end the dispute. The expected deal comes after United States President Donald Trump's adviser Jared Kushner toured the Gulf region earlier this month as part of a last-ditch effort to resolve the Gulf crisis before the Trump administration leaves office in January.

Ms. Toshiko
Orita
awarded

From Page 01

After her arrival in Pakistan in the 1960's, she hosted numerous lectures and exhibitions of Ikebana and fabric flowers, becoming the pioneer of these Japanese art in Pakistan. Through her teaching, many Pakistanis acquired the art and became Ikebana artists themselves. In addition to cultural activities, she provided support for the socially vulnerable in Pakistan through PCLAPA, Pakistan Cleft Lips and Palate Association. She devoted herself to care for the victims of the earthquake in 2005 and contributed to various projects in Gujrat in the field of health and medical care. Ambassador MATSUDA, while speaking on the occasion, congratulated Ms. ORITA for receiving this prestigious decoration by the Government of Japan which is an acknowledgement of her dedicated efforts for the promotion of Japan-Pakistan cultural relations. The Ambassador deeply appreciated her long years of service in consolidating Japan-Pakistan cultural relationships.

"I believe that cultural exchanges, in particular, contributes significantly to deepen mutual trust and understanding among the people which should be the very foundation of any relationship between the countries," said the Ambassador. He expressed his sincere hope that this contribution will further promote and strengthen the cultural relations as well as people to people contacts between the two friendly nations.

Expressing her gratitude upon receiving prestigious decorations, Ms. ORITA said, "I feel great honor today for receiving 'The Order of the Rising Sun, Silver Rays' from His Majesty the Emperor of Japan. My journey in Pakistan started almost sixty years ago and it has always been my dream to bring the people of Japan and Pakistan further closer through deepened cultural relations." Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, while speaking on the occasion stated that Ms. ORITA is an excellent Ambassador of Japanese culture in Pakistan and this award is not only an honor for her but also an honor for Pakistan as well. He deeply appreciated the services rendered by her on promoting relations between Japan and Pakistan which are based on affection and combined interests.

Messi breaks
Pele's record
with 644
goals

FOREIGN DESK

BARCELONA: Lionel Messi broke Pele's all-time scoring milestone for their clubs by netting his 644th career goal in Barcelona's 3-0 win over Valladolid on Tuesday. After receiving the ball near the edge of the area, Pedri deftly rolled his boot over the ball to push it behind him to meet the Argentine's run. The slick pass left Messi clear to beat goalkeeper Jordi Masip, who had denied him twice. "When I started playing football I never thought I'd break any record, especially not the one I achieved today that Pele held," Messi wrote on Instagram after the match. "I can only give my thanks to everyone who helped me during these years, my teammates, my family, my friends, and everyone who supports me every day." It is yet another record for Messi, who joined Barcelona at age 13 and made his competitive debut at 17 in 2004. "It proves that, with a calendar packed with games, we can rest some players. We got this win by playing good football. The team was focused from the start." "Like you, I know what it's like to love wearing the same shirt every day. Like you, I know that there is nothing better than the place we feel at home. "Congratulations on your historic record, Lionel. But above all, congratulations on your beautiful career at Barcelona. Stories like ours, of loving the same club for so long, unfortunately will be increasingly rare in football. I admire you very much, Leo Messi." Pele, 80, made his debut at Santos in 1956 at the age of 15 and played for the club until 1974, featuring in a total of 665 competitive games. Messi, 33, tried to force his way out of Barcelona in the summer but was frustrated as then-president Josep Maria Bartomeu refused to let him walk away for free.

Briefs

Israel to hold snap election in March

WEB DESK

TEL AVIV: Israel's parliament was dissolved on Wednesday after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's fractured ruling coalition failed to pass a budget, triggering the country's fourth election in two years amid public anger over Netanyahu's handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

Netanyahu and his former election rival, Defence Minister Benny Gantz, established a unity government in May in the wake of three inconclusive elections held since April 2019, but the coalition had been inching towards collapse for weeks, undermined by mutual acrimony and mistrust. Under the three-year coalition deal, Netanyahu was supposed to serve as prime minister for 18 months, with Gantz taking over in November 2021. Gantz had demanded the government pass a budget covering 2020 and 2021, arguing Israel, and the coalition, needed stability.

But Netanyahu refused to endorse the spending plans for 2021. "The reason we're heading to an election is because Netanyahu refused to pass a budget as required by law and honour political agreements so that he can remain in power for the duration of his trial," Yohanan Plesner, the head of the Israel Democracy Institute (IDI) think-tank, told the AFP news agency.

Turkey reiterates support for Rohingya

DNA

DHAKA: Turkish foreign minister on Wednesday reiterated his country's support for the vulnerable Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. "As Turkey, we have been supporting these vulnerable people and Bangladesh from the beginning. In the future we will continue to offer support," Mevlut Cavusoglu said at a joint news conference with his Bangladeshi counterpart AK Abdul Momen.

Cavusoglu also announced Turkey's plan to build a hospital of international standards in Bangladesh in the near future. The Rohingya, described by the UN as the world's most persecuted people, have faced heightened fears of attack since dozens were killed in communal violence in 2012. According to Amnesty International, more than 750,000 Rohingya refugees, mostly women and children, fled Myanmar and crossed into Bangladesh after Myanmar forces launched a crackdown on the minority Muslim community in August 2017, pushing the number of persecuted people taking shelter in Bangladesh above 1.2 million. Underscoring that it is necessary for the Rohingya people to return to their homes, Cavusoglu said: "We will continue making efforts at every level, and we need to also continue working with Myanmar for safe, voluntary and dignified return [of Rohingya]."

About the relocation of Rohingya to a remote island Bhasan Char, the top Turkish diplomat said Bangladesh government should work with the international community, especially with the UN, UNHCR and other agencies on the matter.

Iran opens center for spatial innovation

TEHRAN: The Iranian Space Research Center (ISRC) launched on Wednesday its Center for Spatial Innovation, semi-official Mehr news agency reported.

"The main goal of the center is to orientate the powerful financial and human capital flow of the private sector and university graduates toward profitable space services and technology," said Rouhollah Dehghani Firouzabadi, a faculty member of Sharif University of Technology and founder of the new institution. In statements published by the ISRC's official website, he explained that the center was established and equipped during the past three months. The professor said space-related activities encompass most aspects of human life, from agriculture and cattle breeding to security, environment issues, climate, mining and even oil pipe monitoring. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Malaysian High Commissioner Ikram Bin Mohammad Ibrahim called on Abdul Razak Dawood, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce & Investment. — DNA

Erdogan urges Joe Biden to boost relations with Turkey

"We do not view our versatile political, economic and military ties as an alternative to our well-established relations with the US. We also hope that EU gets rid of the strategic blindness that moves Turkey away

DNA

ANKARA: Turkey's president on Wednesday urged US President-elect Joe Biden to pay due attention to Turkish-American relations. "We believe that the new president of US, Mr. Biden, will also pay due attention to Turkish-American relations. We have no prejudice, hostility or animosity toward anyone," Recep Tayyip Erdogan told his Justice and Development (AK) Party's parliamentary group in the capital Ankara. "To this day, we have gone running to those who took even a single step toward us. We maintain the same sincerity and optimism," he said.

The president added that Turkey would continue to work for peace,

'European court's ruling hypocritical'

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday that a call by the European Court of Human Rights for the release of Kurdish politician Selahattin Demirtas was hypocritical and only Turkish courts can rule on his case. The Grand Chamber of the ECHR ruled on Tuesday that Turkey must immediately release Demirtas, the former leader of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) who has been jailed for more than four years on terrorism-related offenses. It said justification for his detention was cover for limiting pluralism and political debate. Lawyers for Demirtas called the ruling "historic" and Western allies urged Ankara to act. But while such rulings are legally binding, Turkey has not implemented them in several past instances, including a previous chamber ruling on Demirtas's case. Speaking to members of his ruling AK Party, Erdogan said the court was defending a "terrorist" and repeated his view that Demirtas is responsible for the deaths of dozens in 2014 protests that are at the heart of the charges against him. "If the ECHR wants to be respected by Turkey, its needs to question its own contradictions," he said. "The discussion concerns a person wearing a politician's mask who is intimate with the PKK and with the blood of tens of people on his hands." The president said Demirtas was guilty according to Turks for not being able to distance himself from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which is considered a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the European Union and the United States. — Foreign Desk

justice and prosperity in the region. Erdogan also said that Turkey hoped to open a new chapter in its relations with the EU and the US in the new year. "We do not view our versatile political,

economic and military ties as an alternative to our well-established relations with the US. We also hope that EU gets rid of the strategic blindness that moves Turkey away [from the bloc]." On Dec. 14, the US imposed sanctions on Turkey over its acquisition of the Russian S-400 missile defense system. US officials have voiced opposition to the deal, claiming the S-400s would be incompatible with NATO systems and would expose F-35 jets to possible Russian subterfuge. Turkey, however, stressed that the S-400s would not be integrated into NATO systems, and pose no threat to the alliance or its armaments. Turkish officials have repeatedly proposed a working group to examine the technical compatibility issue.

Venezuela, China censure latest US sanctions on Cuba

FOREIGN DESK

CARACAS: Venezuela and China have censured the United States' latest anti-Cuba sanctions as illegal coercive measures and an excuse for foreign interference in the small island country. "From Venezuela, we reject the new and always illegal unilateral measures by the agonizing US government against the brotherly people of Cuba,"

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza wrote in a Twitter post on Tuesday. "In the past four years, not even the most eager [US] hawks could cope with the dignity and fighting capacity of the Cuban people. They failed," Arreaza added. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin also slammed the US sanctions on Monday, accusing Washington of politicizing human rights issues to promote its policy of pressure

and meddling in Cuba's internal affairs. Wenbin further highlighted Beijing's position that Washington must respect Cuban sovereignty and independence, and also eliminate the economic, financial, and commercial blockade that it has unilaterally imposed on the Caribbean nation for more than 60 years.

The development came after the administration of lame-duck US President Donald Trump

on Monday blacklisted three Cuban companies — Grupo de Administracion Empresarial S.A., Financiera Cimex S.A., and Kave Coffee, S.A. — alleging that they were managed by the Cuban military. Venezuela and China have censured the United States' latest anti-Cuba sanctions as illegal coercive measures and an excuse for foreign interference in the small island country.

Russia expels 2 Colombian diplomats

DNA

MOSCOW: In a tit-for-tat move, Russia on Wednesday expelled two Colombian diplomats. Columbia's Ambassador Alfonso Caballero was summoned to the Russian Foreign Ministry, where he was handed a protest note over his country's decision to expel two Russian diplomats from Bogota.

Biden blames Trump for cyberattack



FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: United States President-elect Joe Biden warned the recently uncovered cyber-"assault" on government computers had compromised US national security and would not "go unanswered" once he becomes president.

"This attack constitutes a grave risk to our national security," Biden said on Tuesday at a news conference in Wilmington, Delaware, in which he blamed President Donald Trump for "downplaying" the seriousness of the hack and failing to attribute it to Russia.

"This assault happened on Donald Trump's watch when he wasn't watching," Biden said. US officials blame Russian hackers for the infiltration and fear the US may have lost vital secrets while also becoming exposed to future cyberattacks that could shutdown

main computer networks and weapons systems. Russian President Vladimir Putin denied any Russian involvement in the cyber-intrusion. The data breach, which reportedly infiltrated more than 40 federal agencies and went undetected for months, was first reported by the Reuters news agency and The Washington Post newspaper on December 13. It "was carefully planned and carefully orchestrated ... using sophisticated cyber-tools" and caught the US "off-guard and unprepared", Biden said. US intelligence agencies are scrambling to determine the depth of the damage and have asked Congress for money to address the problem.

"We can't let this go unanswered," Biden said. "That means making clear and publicly who is responsible for the attack and taking meaningful steps to hold them to account. Biden, who will take office on January 20, said he would "impose costs" on those who conducted the cyber-espionage once an official US government determination is reached and said he expects to have bipartisan support in the US Congress for any action he may take.

Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations these days

Yet last year it appears the Saudis were more successful in pressuring Pakistan, as this country stayed away from a summit in Malaysia that Riyadh saw as an alternative to the OIC

ISLAMABAD: THE relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is indeed a strong one that goes back decades. While Pakistanis have a special regard for the kingdom due to its position as the custodian of Islam's holiest cities, political, economic and military ties are also robust. However, the relationship has experienced turbulence over the past few years, mainly because of changing geopolitical realities in the region, and the varying responses Islamabad and Riyadh have given to meeting these challenges.

The most recent manifestation of

unease in ties was the Saudi demand for timely repayment of part of a loan Pakistan had taken from the kingdom. Though the money was returned to the Saudis with China's help, in the past such demands were unthinkable from Riyadh. But in an apparent effort to smoothen ties after this episode, the Saudi ambassador in Islamabad on Monday called upon the prime minister. Though officially it was stated that "bilateral cooperation and the Covid-19 situation" were discussed, it is safe to assume that attempts were made to prevent the situation from

deteriorating further. This assumption is substantiated by the fact that the Saudi foreign minister is due to visit Pakistan next month.

In the modern era, perhaps the height of Pakistan-Saudi cooperation came when both states were on the same side helping the US give the Soviets a tough time in the Afghan 'jihad'. Of course, the cooperation has continued thereafter, especially on the military and economic fronts, with the kingdom currently hosting over a million Pakistani workers, who in turn have over the decades played a major role in transforming

Saudi Arabia into a modern state. However, the relationship was jolted in 2015 when — against presumed Saudi wishes — parliament voted against entering the Yemen war. While the move had earned Riyadh's ire, the collective wisdom of parliament has proved correct, keeping Pakistan away from a conflict that is an unmitigated humanitarian disaster. Yet last year it appears the Saudis were more successful in pressuring Pakistan, as this country stayed away from a summit in Malaysia that Riyadh saw as an alternative to the OIC. (Courtesy DAWN)

UN right expert asks Trump to pardon Assange

Assange's health has seriously deteriorated behind bars in Britain "to the point where his life is now in danger", Melzer, a high-profile Swiss human rights scholar and former Red Cross official, said

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: A top UN human rights expert Tuesday urged the departing United States President Donald Trump to pardon Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, while he awaits a decision on his extradition to the US. Nils Melzer, who monitors torture and other forms of inhuman treatment around the world, issued an open letter to Trump ahead of a British court ruling on January 4 that will determine whether Assange will be extradited from Britain to the United States. Australian national Assange is being held in the Belmarsh high security prison in London. He could face up to 175 years in prison in the US, on charges of publishing classified material on military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which exposed

war crimes by US soldiers.

"In pardoning Mr Assange, Mr President, you would send a clear message of justice, truth and humanity to the American people and to the world," Melzer wrote. "You would rehabilitate a courageous man who has suffered injustice, persecution and humiliation for more than a decade, simply for telling the truth." Assange's health has seriously deteriorated behind bars in Britain "to the point where his life is now in danger", Melzer, a high-profile Swiss human rights scholar and former Red Cross official, said. "Mr. Assange has been arbitrarily deprived of his liberty for the past ten years", Melzer said, adding, "This is a high price to pay for the courage to publish true information about government misconduct throughout the world". Incarcerated since the authorities ar-

rested him inside London's Ecuadorian Embassy in April, 2019, a British court is set to rule on 4 January as to whether

or not Assange should be extradited to the US. The UN expert "respectfully" requested Assange's release after visit-



ing him with two independent medical doctors in Belmarsh High Security Prison in London.

"I can attest to the fact that his health has seriously deteriorated, to the point where his life is now in danger", Melzer said. "Critically, Mr. Assange suffers from a documented respiratory condition which renders him extremely vulnerable to the Covid-19 pandemic that has recently broken out in the prison". If extradited to the US, the Wikileaks founder faces criminal prosecution and up to 175 years in prison for the 2010 publication of secret documents through his platform which publishes leaked military, diplomatic, and other files categorized as State secrets. The UN expert asked that Assange be pardoned, saying, "he is not, and has never been, an enemy of the American people".

Britain and France reopen cross-border travel

FOREIGN DESK

PARIS: France and Britain reopened cross-border travel Wednesday after a snap 48-hour ban to curb the spread of a new coronavirus variant threatened UK supply chains. Much of Europe swiftly banned British travellers and UK freight entering their nations after the discovery of a more transmissible variant of Covid-19 in Britain. On Tuesday dramatic images showed hundreds of lorries backed up in Dover, with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson facing growing pressure to resolve the deadlock even as the post-Brexit trade deal deadline loomed.

Late Tuesday, UK Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced Britain and France had settled on a protocol that "will see the French border reopen to those travelling for urgent reasons, provided they have a certified negative Covid test". However, he urged lorry drivers not to head to the southern county of Kent in expectations of boarding a ferry or train. French Transport Minister Jean-Baptiste Djebbari also confirmed that air travel, boats and Eurostar trains would "resume service as of tomorrow morning". "French nationals, people living in France and those with a legitimate reason will have to be carrying a negative test," he said. Despite the breakthrough in talks congestion around the key southern port of Dover remains unlikely to recede in the short term. Late Tuesday, the major British transit hub said it would reopen from midnight local time (2300 GMT) for travellers with a negative result.

The measures imposed on hauliers have caused concern over shortages of some fresh food products over a Christmas period already marred by strict coronavirus restrictions. More than 2,800 lorries remain stranded in the southern English county of Kent, unable to make the crossing to France, with drivers having spent a second night sleeping in their cabs.

Briefs

Ijaz Shah to wipe out drug dealers

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Narcotics Control, Brig (R) Ijaz Ahmad Shah met with the Country Representative of UNODC Mr. Jeremy Milsom at the Ministry of Narcotics on Wednesday. The Minister welcomed the Representative and appreciated the role of UNODC in drug eradication process. "The role of UNODC in fighting this menace is worth appreciation" the Minister said. Country representative of UNODC briefed the Minister about the functioning and operations of the organisation in regards with drug eradication. "Just like global world, Pakistan is trying its best to get rid of this menace" the Federal Minister said. The government's primary focus is on the crackdowns against drug dealers, we certainly cannot let our youth fall victim to this menace" the Federal Minister said. "Furthermore, the treatment and rehabilitation of the victims is also our utmost priority" he added. Mr. Milsom appreciated the interests of the government and said that the 3rd Country plan will commence from 2021, while the previous two have been quite fruitful. He also ensured full cooperation in efforts of government to fight this evil. The meeting concluded with the promise of working together to fight this evil and make Pakistan a drug free society in the near future. "We will try our best to completely eliminate this menace of drugs from our society" the Federal Minister for Narcotics control, Ijaz Ahmad Shah said.

Govt likely to hike power tariff by Rs 1.52

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government is likely to increase the price of electricity by Rs 1.52, which will put an additional burden to the already suffering people. The Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) has requested to increase the price of electricity by 57 paise per unit for October and 95 paise per unit for November under the fuel price adjustment. In October, the production cost of electricity was Rs 4.11 per unit while the reference fuel cost was Rs 3.75 per unit, while in November, the production cost of electricity was Rs 3.42 per unit and the reference fuel cost was Rs 2.48 per unit. The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) will hold a public hearing on December 30.

Sindh records 40 virus deaths

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: Sindh recorded as many as 918 new cases of the coronavirus and 40 more fatalities overnight, taking the provincial tally of infections to 207,407 and deaths to 3,419. According to a statement issued from the CM house, a total of 11,643 samples were tested, out of which 918 turned out to be positive. 807 patients recovered over the past 24 hours, taking the number of recoveries to 184,999 patients. He said 18,989 patients are under treatment at present, 18,159 of whom are in home isolation, 13 at isolation centres and 817 at different hospitals. He added the condition of 722 patients is stated to be critical while 85 of them have been put on ventilators. Out of 918 fresh cases, 635 were detected from Karachi, including 203 from District South, 270 District East, 92 Central District, 19 Korangi, 22 West and 29 Malir. Hyderabad reported 80 new infections, Shaheed Benazirabad 52 infections, Kamber 20, Khairpur 10, Ghotki and Umerkot nine each, Badin and Larkana seven each, Sujawal and Thatta six each, Jacobabad, Jamshoro, Matiari and Tando Allahyar two each, and Sanghar and Sukkur one each.

PRCS facilitates voluntary repatriation of 24 Bangladeshis

Abbar ul Haq said that the RFL is a key programme under which the PRCS endeavours to restore contacts between family members separated as a result of any situations requiring a humanitarian response

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A ceremony regarding voluntary repatriation of Bangladeshi nationals was held at Governor House Karachi that was attended by Governor Sindh Imran Ismail, PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq, PRCS officials and others. The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in coordination with all the parties involved facilitated the voluntary repatriation of a group of 24 Bangladeshi nationals detained in places of detention in Karachi. The detainees were charged under the Foreigners Act and had completed their respective sentences. Based on the request received from the Government of Pakistan and Bangladesh, the PRCS coordinated with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) who extended their support in the voluntary return of 16 of the individuals who have left for Bangladesh while the Bangladeshi High Commission in Karachi was able to arrange flight tickets for the others scheduled to depart on Thursday.



In his remarks on the occasion, PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq said the PRCS within its mandate is ready to assist the government for return of Pakistani migrants detained abroad and, in coordination with its Movement partners, facilitate exchange of news between the detained nationals and their families. Abrar ul Haq, while referring to his recent visit to Saudi Arabia, said that the PRCS raised the humanitarian concerns of vulnerable Pakistani migrants in detention and is in contact with the relevant government ministries to address their situation including possibility to repatriate those who completed their sentences.

Abbar ul Haq said that the RFL is a key programme under which the PRCS endeavours to restore contacts between family members separated as a result of any situations requiring a humanitarian response. He said that the PRCS as an effective member of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is in a unique position to undertake such initiatives due to its extensive reach as well as potential to assist people who are separated from their families, wherever they may be. The Honorary President of PRCS Sindh branch and Governor Sindh Imran Ismail commended the efforts and sincere cooperation of the Sindh Home department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bangladeshi High Commission in Karachi and the IOM and remarked that through a well-coordinated response, these vulnerable Bangladeshi migrants were able to go back home and rejoin their families. PRCS Sindh branch Chairperson Shahnaz S Hamid and Provincial Secretary Kanwar Waseem were also present on the occasion.

PIA reduces fares for GB

GILGIT: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has reduced fares from Gilgit/Skardu to Islamabad on both sides. General Manager PIA has submitted a report to the Supreme Court regarding the reduction in fares. During the hearing General Manager Pakistan International Airlines Islamabad told the Court on Wednesday that on the order of Court Pakistan International Airlines has reduced fares on both sides from Gilgit/Skardu to Islamabad and Islamabad to Gilgit/Skardu. During the hearing, the court ordered that Gilgit-Balistan to be exempted from the automation system set up for obtaining Pakistan International Airlines tickets. The Court also directed that at the next hearing, the Chairman Competition Commission of Pakistan DG Pakistan International Airlines and the Chairman of all the commercial airlines should appear with a detailed report. - APP

More than 2,100 new cases reported

ISLAMABAD: The national tally of total active COVID-19 cases in Pakistan on Wednesday reached 37,905 with 2,142 more people tested positive for the deadly virus and 6,267 people recovered from Coronavirus during the last 24 hours. Eighty Four corona patients, 73 of whom were under treatment in hospital and 11 in their respective homes or quarantines died on Tuesday, according to the latest update issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC). During the last 24 hours most of the deaths had occurred in Punjab followed by the Sindh. It added that during last 24 hours that out of the total 84 deaths 47 patients died on ventilators. No COVID affected person was on ventilator in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Balochistan and Gilgit-Balistan (GB) while 319 ventilators were occupied elsewhere in Pakistan. The maximum ventilators were occupied in four major areas including Multan 55 percent, ICT 33 percent, Peshawar 25 percent and Lahore 34 percent. Some 35,621 tests were conducted across the country on Tuesday, including 10,914 in Sindh, 15,214 in Punjab, 4,480 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), 3,770 in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), 380 in Balochistan, 396 in GB, and 467 in AJK. - APP

China supports Pak to achieve sustainability in transport

The Guidance proposes a measure to classify projects into three categories of "red", "yellow", and "green" according to their positive and negative impact on the three environmental dimensions

DNA

BEIJING: China supports Pakistan to achieve sustainability in transportation industry, says a White paper issued by the State Council Information Office of China, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. The White paper, titled "Sustainable Development of Transport in China," provided a full picture of the country's achievements in the field and share its strategy and activities in building a sustainable transport system. It summarized the development and achievements of China's transport sector in 2020 and highlighted the development of transport projects under China, Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). According to the White Paper, China has been strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries in the field of transportation connectivity. China has actively propelled ML-1 project and completed the Lahore Orange Line project. The paper quoted former Railway Minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed as having said that ML-1 railway project under CPEC is a revolutionary project that will transform the entire railway structure in Pakistan, meanwhile to help controlling railway accidents and creating 150,000 jobs. It says, subway is an important means of transportation in



China and total number of passengers exceeded 28 billion in 2019. This October, the Orange Line opened, welcoming more than 40,000 passengers on its first day, marking the beginning of the "Metro Era" in Pakistan. It means that the Pakistani people can also enjoy China's advanced mode of transport. The White Paper also mentioned the Peshawar-Karachi Expressway and the Second phase of the Karakoram Highway. On the port side, China participated in the construction and operation of Gwadar Port. With Pakistan's active participation and joint efforts, the international connectivity architecture has basically taken shape. An all-dimensional and multi-level infrastructure network, with a focus on railways, highways, shipping and aviation, is taking shape at a faster pace, and the cost of goods transactions and flows between regions is gradually being reduced, thus promoting the orderly flow and optimal allocation of resources across regions, the White Paper stated.

The white paper also deliberated upon the country's energy development, titled "Energy in China's New Era". According to the white paper, China has been working on enhancing international energy cooperation and green development. This development also provides experience and benefit to Pakistan. CPEC projects including hydropower, wind power and photovoltaic power have not only solved power shortage in Pakistan, but also accelerated the transformation of energy structure and cultivated a huge number of professional talents in this field for Pakistan. The Karot Hydropower station and Jinnah Photovoltaic Park are mentioned in the White Paper as successful samples. China has already set out to further expedite constructing Green BRI this month. The Guidance proposes a measure to classify projects into three categories of "red", "yellow", and "green" according to their positive and negative impact on the three environmental dimensions of climate, pollution, and biodiversity. According to the White Paper, China will continue to carry out extensive cooperation with BRI countries in clear energy sector including trade, investment, production capacity, equipment, technology and standards, and support Pakistan and other developing countries in enhancing their capacity to cope with climate change.

Moeed stresses for integrated economies

The SAPM chaired a session of Pakistan-Afghanistan Track-II dialogue where the peace process in Afghanistan was discussed, said a press release

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on National Security Division and Strategic Policy Planning Dr. Moeed Yusuf on Wednesday said Pakistan and Afghanistan should have integrated economies to gain maximum benefits for mutual peace and prosperity. The SAPM chaired a session of Pakistan-Afghanistan Track-II dialogue where the peace process in Afghanistan was discussed, said a press release. An Afghan delegation arrived in the federal capital amidst signs of improving relations between the two countries. Dr Moeed said Pakistan and Afghanistan were neighboring countries with shared interests. "Pakistan has an unwavering belief that economic prosperity for both nations is interlinked." Dr Moeed affirmed Pakistan's support for an economically thriving Afghanistan and reiterated Prime Minister Imran Khan's belief that there was no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. He mentioned that Pakistan was working on an economic security agenda which consists of three pillars: connectivity, development partnerships, and peace within the region and beyond. He added that peace in Afghanistan was vital for connectivity with Central Asia, which would help both the countries to prosper. He highlighted the steps being taken by Pakistan to strengthen economic relations and people-to-people exchanges comprising of visa facilitation, enhancing trade, and assisting transit for the welfare of Afghan people by creating two border markets at Kurram and Chitral. The Afghan delegation appreciated Pakistan's efforts to ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan. The meeting conveyed a great deal of hope for further progress in trade relations and people-to-people contact between the two countries. - DNA

Mandviwalla claims NAB kills people

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's anti-graft watchdog is engaged in human rights violations, Senate Deputy Chairperson Saleem Mandviwalla claimed on Wednesday, criticising the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for "killing people and dropping off their bodies at hospitals". Mandviwalla said he spoke to civil liberty bodies about the anti-corruption watchdog's alleged malpractices but they feared highlighting that their alleged human rights violations would tarnish Pakistan's image around the world. "NAB accuses everyone of being thieves and robbers", he said, asking: "How dare it level such allegations against people?" "Women call and narrate what the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has done to them and their families. This institution is killing people and, when they die, it leaves their bodies in the hospital. "NAB is violating human rights. I spoke to human rights organisations about it but they are afraid that talking about it will ruin Pakistan's image. Not a day goes by when I do not receive a call about the NAB's [alleged atrocities] and its actions," he said. The Senate official claimed he had received calls from abroad wherein people told him they left the country due to the anti-graft body's harassment. "We have made the NAB into a monster," he added, challenging the watchdog's representatives to appear in front of a committee if they had done nothing wrong. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Leader of house in senate Dr Shahzad Waseem meeting with Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser. Upcoming Senate elections and other parliamentary Affairs were discussed. - DNA

UAE wants economic roadmap with Pakistan

RANA FARRUKH

ISLAMABAD: Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Alzaabi, Ambassador of UAE to Pakistan said that Pakistan and UAE have great potential to further improve bilateral trade and his country wanted to work on a new economic roadmap with Pakistan to take bilateral trade and economic relations to higher levels. He said this while exchanging views with Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry during his visit to ICCI. Fatma Azim Senior Vice President and Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI were also present

at the occasion. The UAE Ambassador said that he visited Faisalabad and Sialkot and saw that Pakistan has great potential to export many products to UAE. He urged that Pakistani manufacturers should do proper marketing of their exportable products to boost exports up to their actual potential. He said that Pakistan helped UAE in food security during Covid-19 pandemic. He said that Pakistani meat products were going to Jordan and other countries from UAE, which showed that Pakistan could make a significant increase in its exports by getting better penetration in the UAE market. He said that UAE-India bilateral trade was around

\$75 billion, but UAE-Pakistan bilateral trade was around \$14 billion, which was quite less than the actual potential of both countries and more efforts were needed to enhance it. He said that Pakistan should improve its legal framework and formulate more business friendly policies to attract more FDI from UAE.



He said that Pakistan Business Council UAE should play a more proactive role in improving bilateral trade and investment relations between the two countries. He said that over 7000 Pakistani companies were registered in UAE and he was ready to play a role to address the challenges being faced by them in his country. He said that ICCI should form a delegation for UAE and he would cooperate in connecting them with right counterparts in his country. Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that the UAE has always stood with Pakistan and provided crucial support to it in times of need that was appreciable. He said that Pakistan and UAE enjoyed close friendly relations that should be transformed into growing trade and economic relations. He said that production cost in Pakistan was quite low, therefore, UAE investors should explore more JVs and investment in Pakistan that would help in promoting exports to Middle East, Europe and other countries. He said that despite great potential for trade cooperation, the communication gap was holding back the entrepreneurs of both countries from realizing their actual trade potential.

Afghan election activist dies

KABUL: A prominent Afghan activist who led an independent election monitoring organisation died Wednesday after being ambushed by gunmen in Kabul, an aide and police said, the latest targeted killing in the restive capital. Mohammad Yousuf Rasheed was attacked in a southern suburb of the capital as he headed to work in his car. Rasheed's murder follows a similar pattern of recent weeks, where prominent Afghans have been ambushed during the often-chaotic morning traffic. Rasheed was head of the Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan (FEFA) which, according to its website, has worked since 2004 to promote democracy, good governance and human resource management. "He was wounded and later died in the hospital," colleague Abdul Wahab Qarizada told AFP. He said Rasheed's driver was wounded in the ambush. Kabul police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz confirmed the attack. Rashid's murder comes a day after five people - including two women doctors working for a prison on the outskirts of Kabul - were killed by a bomb affixed to their vehicle. It comes two days after a prominent Afghan journalist was shot dead in the eastern city of Ghazni. Rahmatullah Nekzad was the fourth journalist to be killed in two months, and seventh media worker this year. - APP