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Briefs

UNGA chief slams check post attack

DNA

NEW YORK: The UN General Assembly President, Volkan Bozkir, has condemned Saturday's terrorist attack on a Pakistani Frontier Corps post in Balochistan in which seven soldiers were martyred. "I express my condolences to the people and the Government of Pakistan today," he said in a tweet on Sunday. The terrorists raided the FC post located in Shahrag area of Harnai. Pakistani Ambassador Munir Akram said that while Pakistan had paid a heavy price in blood and treasure in the fight against externally sponsored terrorism, its resolve to defeat terrorism remains unwavering.

Supporters of govt are also culprits

DNA

TANK: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said on Monday that even the supporters of the "incompetent" government are culprits and involved in all the problems being faced by the country today. Addressing a gathering of JUI-F workers in Tank, Fazl said that the incumbent government did not have the right to stay in office as it was "illegitimate" and "incompetent". "This illegitimate government is a product of fraud," he said, adding that the country belongs to everyone and that it wasn't anyone's personal property.

Army not in politics: Rasheed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed on Monday emphasised that the Pakistan Army was "not involved" in the country's politics in the past nor would it be in the future. Speaking to the media in Islamabad, he questioned why the leaders of the opposition's Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) did not take the name of Gen Ziaul Haq when they talked about the alleged role of the army in politics.

PM slams people maligning state institutions

The PM also directed his government to ensure the safety of the armed forces and other institutions in the country

NAVEED MIRAJ / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday said that foreign agencies and 'sponsored people' are running a campaign against state institutions on social media, adding that the government will go after all such people. He was holding a meeting with federal ministers, special assistants and advisers, and concerned secretaries in Islamabad. Referencing the attack on the Frontier Corps in Balochistan a day ago during which seven brave soldiers embraced martyrdom while fighting with terrorists, PM Imran Khan said that the Army is a state institution and protecting it is a national responsibility, per sources. "We have to give a befitting response to the anti-military narrative," he said. The PM also directed his government to ensure the safety and security of the armed forces and other institutions in the country. The PM also directed the government to probe JUI-F's chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's assets, saying that his "corruption should be exposed," sources said. The PM also said that the Opposition does not have an interest in the welfare of this country but they are working for their own interests, sources added.

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'ML-1 project to bring job opportunities'

SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said ML-1 project will establish modern communication infrastructure of international standard in the country and create job opportunities as well as new prospects for Pakistan's industry. Chairing a review meeting of ML-1 under the umbrella of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Islamabad on Monday, he said Pakistani exports will timely reach to international markets by having better land route coordination with country's seaports, paving a way for earning precious foreign exchange. The Prime Minister said ML-1 is the costliest of CPEC projects, which will add a new chapter to the Pakistan-China relations. Railways Minister Azam Khan Swati apprised the Prime Minister about integration plan of the ML-1 project. The Prime Minister expressed satisfaction over the progress made so far on the project.

Pakistan concerned over Kashmiri leaders' health

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has shown strong concern over the continued incarceration and deteriorating health conditions of Kashmiri leaders including founding leader of Kashmiri organization "Dukhtarani-Millat" and the "Iron Lady of Kashmir", Ms. Asiya Andrabi; leader and founder of the Jammu & Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, Mr. Shabbir Ahmed Shah; and prominent leaders such as Mr. Yasin Malik; MasaratAlam Bhat;

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'Indian forces spreading fear among Kashmiris'

The Foreign Minister said unarmed Kashmiri youth are being subjected to state terrorism in fake encounters

KHAYAM ABBASI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi says Indian occupation forces have been spreading fear among the unarmed and innocent people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K) through continuous oppression and persecution. In a statement on Monday, the Foreign Minister said unarmed Kashmiri youth are being subjected to state terrorism in fake encounters. "Those killed in fake encounters are painted as terrorists and fake

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Senator Shibli Faraz called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

Shibli lambasts PDM for creating chaos

Senator Shibli Faraz has said that the government was ready for dialogue with serious minded leadership of the Opposition

RANA FARRUKH

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Shibli Faraz has said opposition's campaign is aimed at creating chaos in the country to protect their looted money. Addressing a news conference along with Minister for Science and Technology Chaudhry Fawad Hussain and Minister for Water Resources Faisal Vawda in Islamabad Monday, he said those who desire to topple an elected government



can never be in favour of democracy. Senator Shibli Faraz has said that the government was ready for dialogue with serious minded leadership of the Opposition and the forum would be the Parliament as it represented the people's will. The Information Minister said that

national dialogue was part of politics but both Mariyam Nawaz and Maulana Fazlur Rehman who were not part of the parliament would be excluded from the process. He said that the government has also given the agenda of the dialogue which would be reforms in electoral system. Criticizing the opposition, he said that they were seeking resignation of the government on the allegation of electoral rigging but has given no electoral reforms.

Continued on Page 06

Ban on UK flights extended

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday extended travel restrictions, imposed last week for inbound travel from the Britain after detection of a new strain of SARS-COV-2, from December 29 to January 4. According to a notification issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the instructions stipulated in previous letters "are hereby extended till January 04, 2021, 2359 hours, where applicable. - DNA

Pak, UAE relations historical

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Kashmir Committee Shehryar Khan Afridi has said Pakistan and United Arab Emirates enjoy historical, religious and cultural ties. Talking to UAE's Ambassador to Pakistan Hamad Obaid Alzaabi who called on him in Islamabad on Monday,

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Kazakhstan elections are important: envoy

According to the Kazakhstan constitution people aged 25 can be part of the Majlis. All the reforms made by the President are now being practically implemented

A.M.BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Akan Rakhmetulin, Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has discussed Kazakhstan's Presidential Political reforms and its important development in the country. While talking part in a seminar arranged by CGSS, the ambassador thanked all panelists for their in-depth analysis of Kazakhstan's political system and parliamentary elections. Highlighting the importance of enhanced representation of women and youth he mentioned that according to the Kazakhstan constitution people aged 25 can be part of the Majlis. All the reforms made by the President are now being practically implemented. The elections being held in 2021 will hold uniqueness in that they are held amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and the safety of our citizens is the number one priority for the government. The entire process will be conducted keeping in view the international SOPs to ensure the safety of citizens especially the elderly population of Kazakhstan. Democracy cannot be constructed overnight. In Kazakhstan, we are very sensitive about developing our political system to be more open and transparent. - (Detailed news on Page 03)



CPEC highly valued in Pakistan: Nong Rong

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong has said that as an important pilot project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and a demonstration project of China-Pakistan Cooperation, the CPEC plays a significant role to promote the in-depth development of the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership and high-quality growth of the Belt and Road Initiative. He expressed these views while speaking during a webinar organized by the CPEC Media Forum and Chinese embassy. The ambassador further said that high level and quality participation in the CPEC media forum was the testimony to the fact that CPEC has been highly valued in Pakistan. Since its inception in 2015, CPEC Media Forum has brought together the governments, business communities, media, think tanks, and other sectors of China and Pakistan to focus on the construction of the CPEC. (Detailed news on Back Page)

Djibouti delegation arrives today

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: A 12 member delegation led by Muhammad Ali Houmed, President of Djibouti National Parliament and Acting Chairman of the African Union is arriving Pakistan today. The High Level African Parliamentary delegation is also accompanied by the Navel Chief of Djibouti. The delegation is visiting on the invitation of Chairman Senate of Pakistan Muhammad Sadiq Sinjrani and will have important meetings with the

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China to remain Pakistan's top priority: FM Qureshi - Page 08

China, Pakistan resolute in promoting CPEC

Zhao said that since the outbreak of COVID-19, CPEC projects have insisted on not evacuating people, not laying off workers, and not stopping construction

BEIJING: China and Pakistan are resolute in pushing forward the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the prospects of the CPEC are bright, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Monday. Spokesperson Zhao Lijian made the remarks at a press briefing when asked to comment on a report that China will gradually end its financial support of Pakistan pledged under the CPEC. "Such reports are groundless," said Zhao, adding that as an important pilot

project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the CPEC has maintained positive development momentum since 2013. Zhao said that since the outbreak of COVID-19, CPEC projects have insisted on not evacuating people, not laying off workers, and not stopping construction. A number of key projects have been completed or inaugurated and have provided strong support for Pakistan to fight the pandemic and stabilize its economy, said Zhao. The CPEC international co-



ordination and cooperation working group held its second meeting last Friday, he said. Zhao noted that during the meeting, China and Pakistan reiterated their commitment to implementing the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries and agreed to promote CPEC cooperation in areas such as industry, agriculture, science and technology, and people's livelihoods. Meetings of other working groups under the framework of the CPEC will be held soon to prepare for the meeting of the joint committee of the CPEC, he added. Zhao stressed that against the backdrop of the global economic recession, China's overall investment in the Belt and Road, including the CPEC, has increased. He said that in the first three quarters of this year, China's non-financial outbound direct investment in countries along Belt and Road routes recorded a year-on-year increase of nearly 30 percent. China has provided assistance and support within its capacity to a number of countries participating in the construction of the Belt and Road to help them fight the pandemic and restore their economies, Zhao said. - Agencies

Briefs

AJK president slams world's silence over IOJK

ISLAMABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan has

regretted the silence of the so-called human rights champion even after the Indian occupation army itself has confessed that it had killed the ordinary civilians in fake encounters in occupied Kashmir and declared them terrorists.

While reacting over the confession of the Indian authorities that three Kashmiri youth were martyred in a fake encounter in Shopian district of occupied Kashmir in July this year, were not terrorists but the common civilians, the state president said that we already knew that most of the encounters taking place in the held territory were fake and staged in which the Kashmiri youth and the common civilians are killed by declaring them terrorists. "Fake encounters in IOJK are a common, systematic occurrence. The Shooopian incident is being highlighted to give a false impression of the occupation army's accountability. Such incidents are endemic especially during staged encounters, and cordon and search operations," Khan said. He added that it was no longer a secret that the Indian Army was engaged in naked terrorism and ethnic cleansing of the innocent Kashmiri people in the occupied region.

'Govt, PDM engaged in 'Track-II' dialogue'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) secretary general Muhammad Ali Durrani on Monday claimed the government and the opposition alliance was involved in a "Track-II dialogue" to defuse the confrontational political landscape.

A diplomatic practice, Track-II or backchannel dialogue brings together unofficial representatives on both sides, with no apparent government participation. Speaking to a private television, Durrani, while underscoring the need for defusing the heated political situation, the former minister said a dialogue [between the government and the PDM parties] has begun and it can clearly be seen.

Durrani, who remained Minister for Information and Broadcasting during the tenure of President Pervez Musharraf and is considered close to the military establishment, said the nation wanted a dialogue between the two stakeholders, adding there are people [on both sides of the aisle] who can defuse the political heat. "Instead of keeping such people behind the bars, they should be offered a chance to play a role in this situation," he said in an apparent reference to PML-N president and National Assembly Opposition Leader Shahbaz Sharif.



LARKANA: PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz along with PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Asefa Bhutto Zardari laying petals on the grave of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. – DNA

CDA plans more under passes to ease out traffic flow in Capital

According to detail, CDA has decided to take important steps for resolving the issues of traffic in Islamabad. The concerned departments including Engineering, Finance, and Planning have been directed to submit the feasibility report for the construction of flyover and underpasses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) asked the concerned authorities to prepare the feasibility reports within three days to resolve the traffic issues in the city here on Monday. In the

first phase, flyovers and underpasses will be constructed at Margala road, in F-10, and E-11 for streamlining the traffic. According to detail, CDA has decided to take important steps for resolving the issues of traffic in Islamabad. The concerned departments including Engineering, Finance, and Planning have been

directed to submit the feasibility report for the construction of flyover and underpasses on Margala road, Shaheen Chowk Sector F-10, and F-10 east road so that the work on the projects can be started in February.

Traffic issues in Islamabad were increasing day by day, therefore CDA has decided

to resolve these issues. A number of traffic issues were being witnessed at Margal road, therefore it was inevitable to resolve these issues. CDA has asked the concerned departments to prepare the first feasibility reports within three days so that the traffic issues at Margala road and its adjoining areas can be resolved.

LHC summons FBR official for harassing leading taxpayer

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: A single bench of Lahore High Court (LHC) comprising Justice Shahid Karim has summoned Commissioner Inland Revenue, RTO Lahore for harassing a taxpayer, closing down his business and ignoring orders of Appellate Tribunal Inland Revenue (ATIR) to reopen business. According to details Commissioner Inland Revenue Khaliq Farooq Mian demanded extra tax from a leading textile mill owner and unilaterally suspended his sales tax registration upon refusal hitting the business activity.

The owner of the mill moved ATIR through Qamar Abbas Advocate which granted a stay order for two months in favour of the applicant but

the FBR official ignored the orders of the tribunal after which the petitioner moved the LHC to redress his grievance. In his arguments before the court, lawyer of the petitioner Qamar Abbas Advocate said that FBR has taken an illegal, unjustified and unilateral decision by suspending sales tax registration without hearing the taxpayer. Moreover a stay order was granted to the applicant by Appellate Tribunal Inland Revenue which was also ignored by the tax official. He said that the government is doing its best to promote businesses and facilitate them to boost the limping economy and revenue but some officials of the FBR are harassing businessmen on one pretext or other which is not only resulting in widespread disappointment.

'Year 2021 to be called year of trees'

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh's minister for forests Nasir Hussain Shah said Monday in view of the committee on forests formed by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, they will mark the year 2021 as the year of trees by planting as many saplings as possible. "We welcome the forest committee by

SCP", Nasir Hussain Shah said earlier today and added that the oncoming year will be known as the year of trees in Sindh as the provincial government has recovered hundreds of thousands of acres owned by the forest department. The leases of land handed out by the department in the years 2005-06 as per to Forest Policy have now been rescinded, the provincial minister with portfolios of local bodies, information, and forests.

GB CM briefed on water, hydropower projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Chief Minister Muhammad Khalid Khurshed today called on the Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Chairman Lt Gen Muzamml Hussain (R). A briefing was made to him regarding water and hydropower projects being implemented by WAPDA in Gilgit-Baltistan during the meeting. These projects include Diamer Basha Dam, Harpo, Tangir,

Thak, Shayok Dam, Basha, Attabad Lake, Skardu Dam, Tungus and Yulbohydropower projects.

Speaking on the occasion, WAPDA Chairman appreciated the support provided by the GB Government in implementation of various projects, especially Diamer Basha Dam. The Chairman briefed that construction work on Diamer Basha Dam is continuing satisfactorily despite the difficulties owing to Covid-19 pandemic. Highlighting significance of Diamer Basha Dam in na-

tional development particularly that of GB, he apprised the Chief Minister that a hefty amount of Rs.78.5 billion is being spent on development schemes for uplift of the project area on confidence building measures (CBMs). Dilating upon the employment opportunities for the locals, he reiterated that the posts from BPS-1 to 16, as advertised in the Press on September 20 this year, will be filled in from amongst the locals of District Diamer/GB. Expressing gratitude for

arranging the briefing on WAPDA projects in GB, the Chief Minister said that the region possesses enormous water and hydropower potential. He said that construction of projects including Diamer Basha Dam would go a long way in transforming the socio-economic landscape of the country, Gilgit-Baltistan in particular. He appreciated WAPDA for implementing resettlement and social action plans for Diamer Basha Dam Project in accordance with the international safeguards.



HYDERABAD: Minister for Culture and Tourism Syed Sardar Shah and others are inaugurating the 6th Ayaz Mela at Khanabadosh. – DNA / Photo by Jan Ali Laghari

Woman who slapped cop gets bail

DNA

LAHORE: A sessions court on Monday granted interim bail to a woman accused of assaulting a policeman after he tried to stop her from consuming alcohol outside an upscale cafe in Lahore.

After an initial hearing, Additional Sessions Judge Sohail Anjum approved the bail of Kinza Rehman subject to submission of surety bonds worth Rs50,000. The court stopped police from arresting her until January 13 and summoned a report regarding the case.

Her lawyer contended before the court that the police lodged an FIR against his client in negation of the actual facts. She wants to join an investigation launched against her to prove her innocence but fears arrest at the hands of the police, he added. The counsel, therefore, pleaded with the court to grant his client interim bail. According to the FIR lodged on Dec 20, the woman and her friend had entered into a brawl with police officers when the latter tried to stop them from consuming alcohol in public. The woman got angry and slapped one of the cops. A video of the incident had gone viral on social media.

SC rejects Thatta accountant's plea

DNA

KARACHI: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday turned down a plea of a senior accountant at the education department against his dismissal from service over corruption charges. Irfan Sheikh, who was posted in Thatta district, challenged his dismissal over alleged involvement in embezzlement of over Rs70 million. An apex court bench, headed by Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed, heard the case at Karachi registry. During the hearing, the chief justice asked a lawyer representing the appellant: "Do you think we don't know what happens in government accounts?" "This is an embezzlement of Rs70 million but Rs7 billions are even embezzled," he remarked. "You say this is a human error but Rs70 million got embezzled," the country's top judge observed. The counsel said his client was a senior accountant at the Thatta education department.

National COVID positivity inches up at 6.13 %

ISLAMABAD: The National COVID Positivity Ratio on Monday was recorded 6.13 percent where 2,263 Coronavirus patients were in critical condition across the country with the number of critical patients rising at a fast pace. The positivity ratio was determined on the basis of positive cases appearing in 100 samples of COVID patients. The highest positivity ratio was observed in Abbottabad which was 15.95 percent followed by Karachi 14.81 percent and Hyderabad 14.47 percent, according to the latest update issued by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC). The positivity ratio in various federating units was as in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) was 12.54 percent, Balochistan 2.71 percent, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) 5.94 percent, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) 5.16 percent, Punjab 4.06 percent and Sindh had 8.61 percent positivity ratio.

Provinces asked to check hoarding, black-marketing

The Finance Minister noted the increase in prices of eggs, wheat flour & tomatoes and directed to take all possible measures to bring down the prices of these essential items

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Dr. Abdul Hafeez Sheikh, Monday directed the provincial governments to keep close watch on the prices of wheat in the market to avoid hoarding, black-marketing and smuggling to ensure uninterrupted supply of the commodity wheat at affordable prices. The minister was chairing the National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) meeting here, according to press statement issued by the Finance Ministry. The Finance Minister noted the increase in prices of eggs, wheat flour

& tomatoes and directed to take all possible measures to bring down the prices of these essential items. The minister stressed the need for increased coordination among all government functionaries for efficient monitoring of prices of essential items to provide maximum relief to the general public. The Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Hammad Azhar apprised the committee that they were closely monitoring the prices of sugar and edible oil to ensure uninterrupted supply at fair prices.

Earlier, the National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) reviewed the price trend of essential commodities. The Finance Secretary briefed NPMC that there has been a nominal increase in weekly SPI by 0.11%. Prices of 10 basic items decreased notably onions, potatoes and chicken whereas eggs, wheat flour and tomatoes registered a slight increase during the week. The Ministry of National Food Security and Research updated NPMC about the current status of wheat and sugar stocks. It was informed that

the improved availability has ensured steady supply of both commodities across the country while the wheat stock position was sufficient for the domestic consumption and average per day release to the provinces is also satisfactory. Among others, the meeting was attended by Minister for Industries and Production, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Revenue, Provincial Chief Secretaries, Secretary Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Secretary Industries and Production, Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). – APP

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Briefs

SI shot, robbed near Sector I-9

ISLAMABAD: A police sub-inspector was shot and then robbed by two men on a motorcycle in Islamabad's Sector I-9 on Monday afternoon. He was immediately moved to PIMS Hospital. According to the police, Rafiq was ending his duty near the Kattarian Graveyard when he was attacked by the robbers. They first asked for money from him at gunpoint and when he refused, they opened fire at him. The robbers took Rafiq's official weapon and license. A case has been registered and the police have begun investigations to arrest the perpetrators as soon as possible.

PR retrieves over 7 acres land in pindi division

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has retrieved over seven acres railway land worth over Rs116 million from the land encroachers in Rawalpindi Division in its two days' operation against land grabbers. The operation was launched under the supervision of Divisional Superintendent of Rawalpindi Division Munawar Shah on the direction of Minister for Railways Azam Khan Swati. Azam Swati congratulated the Pakistan Railways officer, who took part in the operation against the land grabbers in Rawalpindi and Karachi divisions adding that the ministry would deal with the encroachers with iron hands. The minister said that instructions have been issued to all the divisions to launch a grand operation to get rid of railway land grabbers. Azam Swati said that incompetence and corrupt elements would not be tolerated at any cost, adding that the officers who would perform in good faith be appreciated at the Ministry level. Recently, the ministry has retrieved as many as 180.754 acres of its precious land in eight divisions of the country in its anti-encroachment drive conducted during last year.

'Resting heart rate better indicator of Covid'

ISLAMABAD: While temperature measurements are widely used for screening Covid-19 patients at the entrances of many office buildings or malls, a new study suggests that a huge spike in resting heart rate is a more sensitive indicator of the disease. Physiological data from commercial wearables showed increased resting heart rate around symptoms onset date that was more severe for Covid-19, but present in milder form for flu as well, said the study published in the journal Patterns. "It's surprising to see that many screening tests at building entrances are all temperature-based since a lot of people don't develop a fever right away and there are so many things that cause fever other than COVID-19," said senior author Luca Foschini, Co-founder of US-based health and measurement company Evidation Health. "A huge spike in resting heart rate is a more sensitive indicator of Covid. And for people with activity trackers, you could ask them permission to share that information for screening purposes, just like taking a temperature reading." By analysing Fitbit data and self-reported symptoms, the researchers analysed trends in heart rate, step count, and symptom duration between patients with flu and those with Covid-19. Medical Xpress reported. While both showed similar-looking spikes in resting heart rate and decreases in average step count, Covid-19 symptoms lasted longer and peaked later, said the study. The findings confirmed that certain other symptoms are characteristic of Covid but not flu, like shortness of breath and coughing. — APP

Intellectuals discuss upcoming Kazakh Parliamentary elections

Experts were of the view that Kazakhstan is emerging as the most powerful country with a lot of opportunities in the future

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad organized an Online Conference on, "Kazakhstan's Parliamentary Election 2021: A Way Forward for Further Strengthening Democracy & Political Setup". The conference aimed to understand the Kazakhstan government's attempts to strengthen fair democratic and political values in the country to give a neutral and unbiased perspective on how such steps will be effective for free and fair parliamentary elections in the country on 10th January 2021. The conference was commenced with the speech of Dr. Mahboob Hussain, Chairman, Department of History & Pakistan Studies, University of Punjab, Lahore. He discussed Kazakhstan Parliamentary Election 2021: A Giant Step Towards Liberal and Functional Democracy. He mentioned the historical and cultural importance of Central Asia dating back to ancient times. Hundreds of poets, writers, and Sufis migrated from central Asia to South Asia, thereby contributing significantly to the literature, history, science, and culture of South Asia. Dr. Mahboob highlighted that



the upcoming elections are an important step towards the political institutionalization setup in the country. Several reforms have been introduced for the upcoming elections in terms of representation and constitutional requirements. It is a very important step in terms of institution building, especially the political institutionalization building. In the upcoming parliamentary elections, the determining factor will be the new paradigm of the relation between the state

and the society. The presidential elections of June 2019, was the first sign that new political players and new political forces are getting their share in the political landscape of the country. He further mentioned that it is the science of history that politically stable societies gain economic prosperity. Kazakhstan is one of the most economically and socially stable country of Central Asia as a result of the constitutional reforms, the election commission of

Kazakhstan has implemented effective reforms including, voter registration reforms and securing representation of women and youth. If we compare the upcoming elections with the previous elections, there are several key differences. There are new players in the political process, increased transparency, and the enhanced right to speak and participate during joint discussions, meetings of standees committees, etc. Dr. Ghazi M. Abdullah, Assistant

Professor, Department of History, University of the Punjab, Lahore discussed blessings of Political system in Kazakhstan. He highlighted that this topic is very important viz a viz the current political situation in Kazakhstan. It is a country that is economically, politically, historically, geographically and in the foreign policy paradigm is one of the most important countries in Central Asia. The upcoming elections will have a long-term impact

on the regional politics and economies of neighboring countries and their relation with China and Russia as well. Furthermore, historically its relation with Russia and the adjoining territories has always been important. It is witnessed that Kazakhstan is emerging as the most powerful country with a lot of opportunities in the future. In recent reforms, the trade relation of local traders and mercantile associations has enhanced resulting in economic development. He also mentioned that the most important element in the Kazakhstan political system is the visionary leadership and role of Nursultan Nazarbayev in introducing productive reforms in Kazakhstan, despite all western propaganda and reservations. Keeping in view the present scenario, his role and contribution cannot be kept aside, as it has proven to be a guiding star for everyone and the most important pillar of Kazakhstan's system. Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Member Board of Experts, CGSS & Regional Geopolitical Analyst discussed Vital actors of preparedness of free and fair elections in Kazakhstan in 2021. He mentioned that all actors in Kazakhstan are fully prepared for upcoming parliamentary elections according to international standards and protocols.

RCB's family festival in full swing

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The week long winter family festival organized by Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) here at Rumi Park is attracting a large number of citizens who are enthusiastically visiting the event. According to RCB spokesman, the administration was ensuring strict implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in this food and entertainment festival which will end on December 31 to avoid spread of coronavirus. The festival organized by RCB, brought scores of families to Rumi Park where they had fun and enjoyed at the stalls. They had lunch and dinner with their families at the food stalls. The spokesman said, the RCB administration made untiring efforts to make the event successful so that the citizens could enjoy with their families in a safe atmosphere. The kids also enjoyed the festival as special kids' zone was made for their enjoyment. The event includes beautiful decor of Christmas trees, lighting, game show, jumping castles, horse dance, magic show, edibles stalls and a chrysanthemum flowers exhibition. The beautiful species of Chrysanthemum are spreading autumn hues. The credit of all plantation goes to Additional Cantonment Executive Officer Maria Jabeen, Horticulturists Mehar Gul and her team which worked day and night to make the plantation campaign a success, he added.

CPO holds 'Khuli Kutcheri' at CPO office

DNA

RAWALPINDI: City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi, DIG, Muhammad Ahsan Younas on Monday held a 'Khuli Kutcheri' here at CPO office. The 'Khuli Kutcheri' was attended among others by a large number of citizens while on this occasion, the police officers concerned were also present. 38 citizens on this occasion recorded their complaints and presented applications to the CPO. The CPO also listened to the complaints of the citizens and issued orders on phone to the police officers concerned. According to a police spokesman, the CPO is holding Khuli Kutcheri on daily basis to provide relief to the citizens. The police officers had also been warned of strict action on negligence and directed to address complaints of the citizens particularly marked by the CPO within shortest possible time frame, he added.

IIUI extends admission date till Dec 31st

ISLAMABAD: International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) has extended the last date for submission of application forms for admission (Spring 2020-21 semester) till December 31st, 2020. According to IIUI on Monday, the decision has been taken to facilitate more candidates who intend to apply for admission. IIUI has also been allowed to invite applications for the civil engineering program as university has been accredited by Pakistan Engineering Council. IIUI has offered admission to BS/MS/PhD programs in 09 faculties including Social Sciences, Basic and Applied Sciences, Management Sciences, International Institute for Islamic Economics, Arabic, Usuluddin, Languages and Literature, Engineering and Technology and Shariah and Law. Applicants may apply online by visiting the IIUI website or this link <http://admission.iiu.edu.pk>. Male applicants may call at 051-9019567 and female applicants may call at 051-9019327 for guidance and details. — APP

Criminals' gang busted, motorbikes, weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Ramana police team has arrested five members of a criminal gang involved in incidents of dacoity as well as street crime and recovered, motorbikes mobile phones and weapons from their possession, a police spokesman said. According to details, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Aamir Zulfiqar Khan ordered crackdown against criminal elements. Following these orders, DIG (Operations) has directed all zonal officers

to accelerate their efforts to curb the crime in the city. SP (Saddar-zone) Sarfraz Virk constituted police team under supervision of DSP Zulfiqar Ahmed to ensure arrest of criminals. On a tip off, Police team including SHO Ramana Police station Sub-Inspector, ASI Haider Shah along with others successfully arrested five members of a criminal gang involved in snatching mobile phones and other valuables at gun point from the citizens. — DNA

AIOU spring admissions begin from January 15

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) commences admissions for the programs offered in the 1st phase of spring 2021 semester including matriculation, intermediate, ATC, BS (face to face) as well as MS/M Phil and PhD from January 15, 2021 across Pakistan, AJK and northern areas. According to the admission department, university

has taken special measures to ensure availability of the admission prospectuses at the doorsteps of the students. In this regard, prospectus sale points are being established at the union council level throughout the country. The information about the prospectus sale points would be uploaded on the university website soon. Prospectuses for all the programs will be available online on the

university website (www.aiou.edu.pk). The university has recently signed MoUs with the telecom operators of Pakistan to facilitate the students in fee depositing. In accordance with these agreements, students would be able to deposit admission fee through Jazz cash, Easypaisa, Upaisa mobile application *786# sticker, retailer agent, franchises and Mobilink, Telenor and U bank branches. Ad-

missions in the 2nd phase of spring 2021 semester will be commenced from March 1, 2021 and will continue till 15 April, 2021 for the programs including BA (Associate Degree), BS and B Ed. The Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, has instructed the relevant admission authorities to take special measures to provide admission facilities in the nearest and approachable vicinities of the students.

PNCA to launch Seen Studio to remix old songs

ISLAMABAD: PNCA will launch a mega musical series titled "Seen Studio" to remix old songs by emerging singers on January 1st. The series named "Sur Sargam Sangeet" aimed to medley old song into modern tunes like all kinds of musical genres like pop, classical, folk and fusion. This opportunity would provide a platform to new singers to show and discover their hidden talent in appropriate way. Different recording sessions would be held with limited audience, an official said on Monday. He said that the trend of remixing old classics is a way of keeping the songs relevant and remixing them to make them popular among the youth who have not heard them before. He said that musical sequel was meant to provide a recreational platform to audience trapped by the 2nd wave of pandemic which restricted the music lover's mobility. — APP



RAWALPINDI: Jugglers along with their pets on the way to show tricks to earn livelihood. — APP

COVID-19 workshops held at Panahgahs

According to detail, CDA's work on various residential projects is underway while considering the residential requirements of the city. Park Enclave II is one of these residential projects

ISLAMABAD: With a steep increase in the coronavirus cases, the smooth functioning of twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad's 'Panahgahs' becomes crucial as it provide shelter, food and healthy lifestyle to the daily wage migrant workers on daily basis. The situation also prompts the shelter homes' management to take effective steps for reinforcing the standard operating procedures (SOPs) that play important role to avert the chances of virus outbreak at crowded plac-

es like 'Panahgahs'. Prime Minister's Focal Person on Shelter Homes Naseem ur Rehman, who is playing a lead role in ensuring full implementation at all the facilities, told APP on Monday that at least 12 workshops had been conducted recently to effectively communicate health messages to the service providers of both the cities' 'Panahgahs'. He added that every service provider had been assigned to sensitize at least 10 dwellers each day about the anti-COVID SOPs in a face-to-

face interaction. As of now, six shelter homes are operational in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, located at various places including Peshawar Mor, Tarlai, Bara Kahu and Fawara Chowk. Each of them has staff strength of over six. Naseem said the management had started screening for the coronavirus at all of six 'Panahgahs' of twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad to ascertain the prevalence of infection in dwellers and service providers. To a query, he said the re-

sults of all the service providers' COVID test came negative. "All the SOPs including mask-wearing, sanitization, hand washing and physical distancing are being reinforced at the twin cities shelter homes to ensure that the dwellers stay safe during the second wave of coronavirus," he remarked. The focal person said physical sites of all the 'Panahgahs' had been improved under its remodeling project. Besides, hand-washing booths had been installed to

help the residents fight the coronavirus second layer. Soap kits and masks were also being distributed among the visitors of 'Panahgahs' on regular basis, he added. He said the management was seriously considering to use treated water in hand-washing booths to help the dwellers to wash off the coronavirus from their hands. "Our main aim is to transform the scope of Panahgahs from provision of food and shelter to the fostering healthy lifestyle among the daily wage earners," he stressed. — APP

Briefs

Govt readies draft of new national power policy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has prepared the draft of its new national power policy, to be presented by June 2021. It will seek approval of the policy from the Council of Common Interests (CCI). According to details, the draft proposes six guidelines, including timely decision on adjustment of electricity prices, avoiding delay in quarterly and monthly tariff adjustment as well as competition, transparency and efficiency. Environmental responsibility and local research and development are also included in the guidelines. The integrated energy plan for the power sector is part of the policy draft, which will focus on power generation and transmission. The policy will promote competition and transparency in the sector.

Police devise security plan for new year night

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have made an elaborate plan for security on eve of new year night in the city and decided to ensure special deployment to maintain peace and tranquility.

Around 2000 police personnel would be deployed to ensure foolproof security and keep vigilant eye during possible celebrations on New Year night. The plan was finalized by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Muhammad Aamir Zulfikar in a meeting here on Monday which was attended by DIG (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed, SSPs Security, Traffic, CTF, Safe City, AIG (Special Branch), AIG (Operations), Additional SP and Zonal SPs. Muhammad Aamir Zulfikar issued directions to deploy police contingent at important places, shopping centres, main markets for the safety of public on the eve of New Year Night. He said that people should act as civilized citizens and avoid from any irresponsible activity on the occasion. The IGP directed all police officials to ensure special deployment in their respective areas including shopping centers and main markets for the safety of the public during the night. Police Commandos will be also deployed at different places apart from patrolling by police officials. All police stations have been directed to keep foolproof security arrangements in their area of responsibility while special ITP teams have been made to ensure smooth flow of traffic on the occasion. DIG (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed would overall monitor traffic arrangements while Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) Commandos, Lady Commandos, all DSPs and Inspector would perform patrolling duties in various areas. He also directed for strict action against those involved in one-wheeling, racing, fire-works and aerial firing. — APP

Bookme.pk and Telenor Pakistan join hands

ABRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Bookme.pk, one of Pakistan's most widely used platforms for booking tickets online, has partnered with Telenor Pakistan, one of the country's leading telecom operators. Through this partnership, over 46 million users of Telenor Pakistan will be able to recharge their mobile balance and buy packages and bundles through the Bookme.pk app/website. Telenor Pakistan and Bookme.pk are nurturing cross industry partnerships to further strengthen the country's digital ecosystem. This collaboration enhances customer experience through smooth and seamless transactions. "We're continuously exploring new channels to facilitate our customers and this partnership is a testament to that commitment, shared Umair Mohsin, Chief Marketing Officer, Telenor Pakistan. "During the pandemic, social distancing is highly recommended so in collaboration with Bookme.pk we're addressing the fast-evolving needs of today's digital citizens whereby flexibility of recharge and a product/bundle purchase is becoming a necessity not only for ourselves but also for our extended friends and family circle.



ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyas, president Islamabad chamber of commerce and industry and Raja Tariq Mehmood, Chairman Rawalpindi development authority are exchanging documents after signing MoU of cooperation to establish a new industrial estate in the region. — DNA

ICCI, RDA sign MoU for developing industrial estate

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, ICCI said that Pakistan's progress and prosperity was linked with industrialization and hoped that the signing of this MoU between ICCI and RDA would be instrumental in setting up a new industrial estate to boost investment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and the Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a framework of cooperation between the two organizations to carry out joint efforts for the establishment of an industrial estate alongside the Rawalpindi Ring Road (R3) project on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model, to be known as the "ICCI Islamabad Industrial Estate". Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President ICCI and Raja Tariq Mehmood, Chairman, RDA signed the MoU during a ceremony held at Chamber House. Fatma Azim Senior Vice President, Ab-

dul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI, Khalid Javed Convener ICCI Committee on New Islamabad Industrial Estate, Mian Akram Farid Chairman Founder Group, Muhammad Junaid Taj, Deputy Director RDA and others were present in the ceremony.

Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Pakistan's progress and prosperity was linked with industrialization and hoped that the signing of this MoU between ICCI and RDA would be instrumental in setting up a new industrial estate to boost investment and start a new era of rapid industrial growth in the region. He urged that the government should extend the

construction package for another year to attract maximum investment. He further said that the government should also set up a real estate regulatory authority in order to regulate the activities in the construction and real estate sector and promote regulated businesses in this field. Raja Tariq Mehmood, Chairman RDA said that his organization would make all possible efforts for the establishment of ICCI Industrial Estate as this project was in the best national interest and would be helpful in attracting local and foreign investment to the region. He said that the project would also create plenty of new jobs and contribute towards tax revenue of the country, therefore, its early materialization would support the efforts for stabilizing the

economy. By signing this MoU, ICCI shall arrange preparation of technical and financial feasibility for industrial estate project and submit them to RDA for evaluation and approval. ICCI shall also help in generating partial funding for acquisition of land for industrial estate while RDA shall acquire the required land from the land owners and commit industrial plots to the investors who will be providing funding for land acquisition. ICCI shall mobilize investors for investment in the industrial estate to set up small, medium and large-scale industries in order to produce manufactured and export-oriented products. ICCI shall also assist RDA towards formalization of the industrial estate by holding meetings with the relevant departments of the Punjab and Federal

governments. Moreover, ICCI in consultation with RDA shall help finalize modalities and SOPs for the sale/purchase of plots in the industrial estate.

RDA shall acquire required land for the ICCI Industrial Estate and shall get notified of the acquired land from the Punjab Government. RDA shall earmark the land after approval of feasibility for ICCI Industrial Estate project and determine sizes and modalities for sale of industrial plots in consultation with ICCI. RDA will also negotiate with the Punjab Board of Investment to acquire approval for this industrial estate under SEZ model and will be responsible for developing its master plan in consultation with ICCI which will then be proposed to the potential investors for investment.

Zhuang honors Prof. Iqbal with friendship award

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the recommendation of Guangxi Normal University, the People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, province of China has decided to honor Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary the 2020 Guangxi Golden Silkball Friendship Award for his outstanding contribution to the economic and social development of Guangxi. The award comprises upon a Medal and RMB 100,000 bonus and the prize-awarding ceremony will be held in China in March 2021. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary is world renowned medicinal chemist. He has published 1,175 research papers in the fields of organic and bioorganic chemistry in international journals, 76 books and 40 chapters in books published by major US and European press. He has secured 40 US patents so far. Dr. Iqbal's work has been cited by the researchers from around the world by 27,407

times and his h-index is 70. By now 94 national and international scholars have completed their PhD degrees under his supervision. Dr. Iqbal is D.Sc., Ph.D., and C. Chem. He has been awarded by different governments of Pakistan with Hilal-e-Imtiaz, Sitara-e-Imtiaz, and Tamgha-e-Imtiaz. He has been elected fellow by world renowned science academies named Academy of Sciences for the Developing World, Islamic World academy of Sciences, Pakistan Academy of Sciences, Royal Society of Chemistry, and Chemical Society of Pakistan. Prof. Iqbal has been honored by the President of Iran with Khwarizmi International Award, President of Azerbaijan, with ECO Award in Education and the Prime Minister of Pakistan with COMSTECH Award in Chemistry. He has been given the prestigious title of "Distinguished National Professor" by the Higher Education Commission in 2004 and Meritorious Professor by the University of Karachi in 2013.

Ufone committed to prioritize its customers

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani telecom operator, Ufone reiterates its commitment to ensure the safety, security and happiness of its customers as it ends the year 2020 on a positive note. Despite the year being particularly tough for businesses with the COVID pandemic affecting companies across the world, the telecom sector stepped up to play a very important role. Ufone lauds the role of its fraternity in connecting people and developing agile strategies promptly adapt to the new normal during this period. In the course of these challenging times, Ufone adopted a multi-pronged strategy to facilitate its customers by providing convenience and satisfaction. As a principal approach, to curb the spread of virus, digital services to facilitate online transactions and subscriptions for customers, such as recharging balance using

My Ufone App, UPaisa and via Ufone's website were introduced. The Super Family continued to be the most sought-after product in 2020 as well. Due to its customer centric approach, Ufone was able to introduce new denominations for its customers. In the Postpaid segment, new packages were introduced that address postpaid base requirements. A positive word of mouth was experienced on social media about the simplicity offered in the new Prime Packages. In parallel, Ufone undertook a comprehensive Coronavirus relief and support effort worth PKR 1.9 Billion for the PM Relief Fund. The package aimed to help people across the country to stay connected and provide access to facilities, mainly food and healthcare, to the most vulnerable communities. The real challenge emerged during COVID-19 outbreak due to a rapidly evolving landscape, but the brand was quick to pivot.

As the demand for on-line connectivity surged following a lockdown, Ufone came to the forth with messages of hope and practical steps needed to ensure wellbeing of our employees, partners and customers. It was clear that in those difficult times people needed encouragement, especially the frontline workers. On the occasion of Independence Day of Pakistan, Ufone dedicated 2020 to the Real Heroes of the country, encouraging resilience and services of the frontline workers during Covid-19. This campaign garnered appreciation from the public and helped Ufone further its corporate reputation and the connection with its customers. The brand also collaborated with Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) to create widespread awareness about Coronavirus, and assisted in volunteer registration through its helpline 1030. Likewise, it partnered with MicroEnsure to bring financial security in times

of need by offering financial safety net to customers against costs of hospitalization at any hospital across Pakistan. In recognition of their efforts for customer empowerment, Ufone won two prestigious Effie Awards in 2020. Ufone won a Gold award for Best in Internet & Telecom category for its SuperCard campaign Budget bamuqablabefikri and a Bronze award in Best and Internet & Telecom for Balochistan Football Cup 2019. The brand also went on to win two Eventex Global Awards in Gold categories for Ufone Balochistan Football Cup this year- an initiative to create opportunities for young sportsmen of the province. Amongst 444 entries from 39 countries, the Ufone emerged as the winner in two categories i.e. People's Choice Award and Best CSR Event Award. The company joined hands with Universal Services Fund to expand its services to underserved areas of Balochistan.

'Media's role vital in protecting rights of PWDs'

The President said that as there was lack of data about special persons, the survey being conducted under the Ehsaas Program will be completed by June 2021

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Monday stressed that media can play an important role in protecting the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and eliminating the negative attitudes in the country and society. He said that the government, in order to make special persons active members of the society, was taking all possible measures including the provision of free of cost education to them from primary school to university level. The President expressed these views in an interactive session with senior journalists regarding issues of PWDs here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. He said the government had distributed health cards among over 26,000 persons with disabilities to facilitate them in access to medical facilities. The President mentioned that under Ehsaas programme, around two million disabled people would be provided financial assistance. He said that the government, under the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding



(MoU) with China for the promotion and production of assistive technology for PWDs in Pakistan. The President lauded the role of media in creating awareness about breast cancer in the country which helped in saving of precious human lives due to the diagnosis of the disease at early stage. He further said that media was also playing effective role in creating awareness about women empowerment through their financial inclusion. Special day was also observed to create aware-

ness about PWDs, he added. The President said that as there was lack of data about special persons, the survey being conducted under the Ehsaas Program will be completed by June 2021. He said though the number of special persons showed in census was 2%, but according to a survey the real number of PWDs in the country was 15%, and they lack appropriate facilities. He said with the minimum reported numbers, the special persons have to face difficulties in

registration with National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), adding, there was a need to make this procedure simple and easy. The President said that as the special persons besides difficulties in mobility also have to face discrimination and negative attitudes in the society, media can play its role to discourage such attitudes. "We have to be compassionate about special persons," he stressed. The President stressed providing education to physically disabled

and also the persons with visual and hearing impairment at regular schools instead of separate institutions, which resulted in their detachment from mainstream. He said free education for special persons from primary to university level was under consideration, while efforts were afoot to also provide them professional and technical skills. Dr Alvi said special people were playing an important role in national development and mentioned that their contribution had also been acknowledged through conferment of Presidential Awards. The President said the government through National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC) had inked a Memorandum of Understanding with China under the Belt and Road Initiative for promotion of high-quality assistive technology for disabled persons. He called upon media in the country to sensitize public about the problems faced by disabled persons and also raise awareness on being considerate towards them. — APP

CTO lauds efforts to regulate traffic

RAWALPINDI: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi on Monday appreciated the traffic wardens who worked hard to regulate traffic in Murree during Christmas holidays. According to a CTP spokesman, the CTO lauded the efforts of CTP officers as good arrangements were made for Murree and heavy traffic load was managed. He said that over 106,000 vehicles entered Murree during Christmas holidays, Dec 25 to 27 but the huge traffic load was regulated and no unpleasant incident occurred.

The CTO said that the traffic wardens deployed in Murree worked hard and remained on duty round the clock to regulate traffic. The wardens showed good performance in regulating flow of traffic on the roads of Murree, he said adding, earnest efforts were being made to facilitate the tourists. The spokesman said, Traffic Police were implementing a special traffic plan devised for the hill station. He said, action in accordance with the law was also being taken against the vehicles parked in no parking zone and double parking. He said that all the arrangements made to facilitate the tourists were being checked and supervised by senior traffic police officers. Special directives had been issued to the traffic wardens to avoid traffic jam on the roads of Murree, he said adding, CTP devised a comprehensive plan for Murree for the winter season according to which entry of heavy vehicles in the city was banned. He said a Help Line 1915 was introduced for facilitating the tourists and the citizens, having complaints, can contact the Traffic Police round the clock. — APP

Three days left to regularize illegal buildings

RAWALPINDI: The amnesty scheme for illegal domestic structures launched by Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) will end on December 31. According to a RCB spokesman, the board had launched an amnesty scheme for illegal residential buildings under which the owners had been asked to legalise their illegal structures without fines. The amnesty scheme was announced for illegal structures of domestic units, constructed before 2015, he added. The owners of the illegal buildings were paying a fee of Rs 2500 to have their building map made by an approved architect which was being submitted to the Board for formal approval, he said and informed that three field offices had been set up in Allahabad for the residents of Ward Number 1 & 10, Valley Road for Ward Number 2,3,4,8 & 9 and 'Baraf Khana, Masrial Road' for Ward Number 5, 6 & 7. He said, special awareness campaign had also been launched through banners, posters and newspapers ads. To a question he informed that a special operation against illegal constructions in commercial areas would also be launched soon. — APP

Commissioner allots 22 Kanal land for Cattle Market

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Capt (ret'd) Muhammad Mehmood has said that 22 kanals of valuable government land has been allotted for Chhani Alam Sher Cattle Market and also directed the authorities concerned to make Chhani Alam Sher Cattle Market fully functional with in shortest possible time. He said this while presiding over a meeting of Cattle Market Management Committee, Rawalpindi Division. The meeting was attended by Director Local Government Amna Rafique, EDO Finance and Planning Maleeha Jamal, Director Livestock and Dairy Development and other concerned officials. Commissioner Rawalpindi Captain (Ret'd) Muhammad Mehmood said that Chhani Alam Sher could be a successful cattle market due to its location on the main highway and it is central in Rawalpindi district so steps should be taken to make it a success. He said that all the affairs of the Cattle Market Management Committee should be carried out on merit and to the best of its ability and if there is a shortage of staff then the cooperation of the Local Government Department can be sought. — APP

Defeating polio

THE Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) for Polio, while comparing Pakistan's different strategies against COVID-19 and Polio, rightly asked our government about its inability to eradicate polio. One can only agree that the country should be able to handle polio as well, now that the government has proved that it can bring the pandemic under control. Sadly, we have recorded 82 cases of type-I and 104 of type-II poliovirus this year. The numbers will grow further as the year has yet to conclude. Since 2019, Pakistan has been struggling against the rising number of polio cases.

If the fear of COVID can prompt the government to activate all its resources against the pandemic, why is polio, which is crippling our future, not taken seriously? Our inability to curtail the spread of the type-II virus, according to the experts, is a threat to other countries as well. Iran has already become vulnerable since type-II has already been detected in sewage there. As if being the only country unable to eradicate polio was not enough, Pakistan is now blamed for spreading it to other countries. Polio eradication bodies have been saying this long ago that Pakistan's inability to curtail the virus can make neighbouring countries vulnerable.

The government needs to take extra precaution to handle the already problematic situation before it gets any worse. The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan needs to give more of his attention to the worsening numbers of polio cases in the country. The biggest hurdle in making strides against the virus are still refusals of parents to administer the vaccine. If the state can ensure vaccinating every vulnerable child, defeating polio can become a reality.

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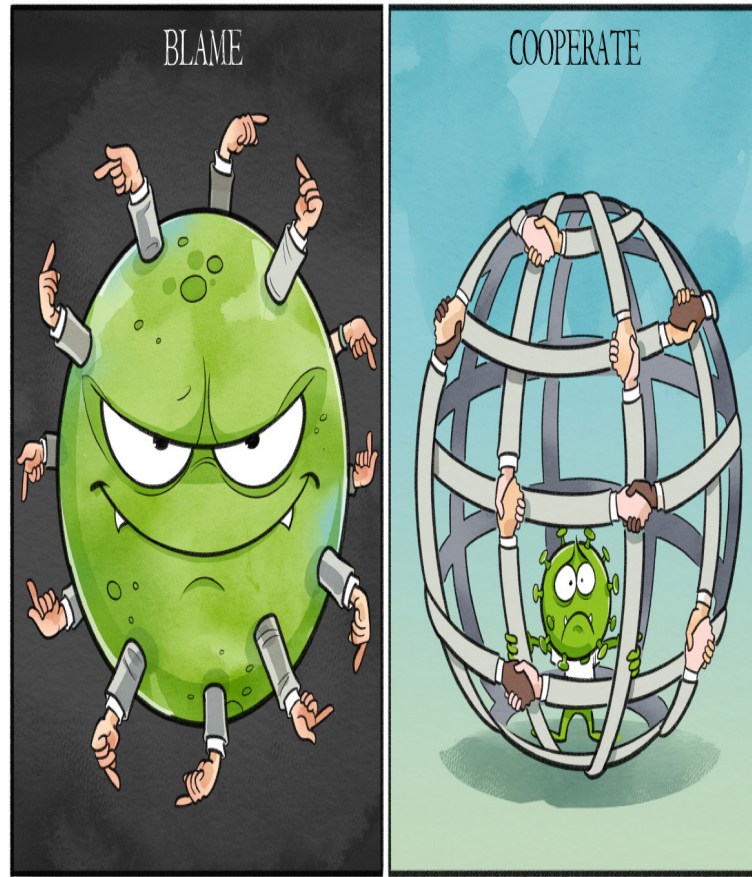
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EU ban

JUST as the Aviation Minister expressed high hopes for the lifting of the EU ban for PIA, the body itself has announced plans to extend it by another three months, at least until further inspection by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). In the end, what we see is a serious discrepancy between government perceptions of the political climate surrounding the PIA versus actual reality.

Considering the gravity of the implications of the fake pilot license issue, there is a glaring trust deficit between global aviation authorities and those of Pakistan's. If we are to see PIA become operational within the EU again, protect a rapidly eroding market and regain the respect earned through years of strife and display of competency, then more must be done by the government. However, as it stands, authorities do not seem to be on the same page as the EU, and thus may not be giving the issue the attention it requires. It is imperative for all our efforts to be focused towards mitigating the losses incurred through this unfortunate oversight. Having high hopes is one thing, but going on about the future without taking into account the actual stance of important bodies is another degree of disillusion that our government cannot practice. The status quo looks bleak for Pakistan as international flights are severely limited, and prohibited in certain areas of the world. Already, PIA is losing out on its market share and, with such travel bans, the aviation industry can barely export again for the foreseeable future. CAA's audit is needed immediately so that work can begin and the country's flag carrier can resume operations.

Peace and zero hunger go hand in hand

Prince Faisal Bin Farhan
& David Beasley

Saudi Arabia has long advocated for global attention to food security issues. At the recent G20 meeting hosted in the Kingdom, members committed to greater investments in agricultural development. At various moments in history when the WFP faced funding shortfalls, Saudi Arabia came to the rescue of those most in need by making significant contributions; in the 1970s, and during the sharp rise in food prices in 2008, the Kingdom made the largest cash donations to WFP by a single donor up to those dates, which helped the WFP implement programs aimed at lessening the impact

THE resurgence of hunger is one of the greatest problems we face today. A toxic mix of widespread civil war, poverty, and COVID-19 threatens to bring mass starvation on an unprecedented scale. Sadly, ending hunger and malnutrition is the one UN Sustainable Development Goal on which we have failed to make progress in recent years.

The World Food Programme was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2020 for "its efforts to combat hunger, for its contributions to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-afflicted areas, and for acting as a driving force to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict." Saudi Arabia has long advocated for global attention to food security issues. At the recent G20 meeting hosted in the Kingdom, members committed to greater investments in agricultural development. At various moments in history when the WFP faced funding shortfalls, Saudi Arabia came to the rescue of those most in need by making significant contributions; in the 1970s, and during the sharp rise in food prices in 2008, the Kingdom made the largest cash donations to WFP by a single donor up to those dates, which helped the WFP implement programs aimed at lessening the impact. In 2019, the Kingdom was the WFP's fifth-largest donor through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center. Last year alone, the Kingdom invested \$440 million in food assistance and agricultural development in 36 countries worldwide, the main focus being support to the WFP in Yemen for the past five years. While starvation in conflict zones easily draws attention in the media, chronic hunger does not. There are so many drivers behind it: Poverty, discrimination, envi-

ronmental degradation, and insufficient investment in agriculture.

With each passing year, climate change inflicts more harm on farmers as they struggle to cope with rising temperatures and cruel cycles of flood and drought. After harvest, an astonishing 1.3 billion tons of food simply go to waste each year.

Add COVID-19 to the global hunger equation and we could soon see another pandemic – a hunger pandemic as brutally relentless as the virus itself. COVID-19 has taken over 1.7 million lives already. If we allow it to create a second pandemic of hunger and malnutrition, the cost in lives lost will be far more devastating. Hunger and malnutrition are already efficient killers, taking the lives of over 3 million children under 5 each year. We cannot allow the spread of COVID-19 to add fuel to that fire.

The COVID-19 pandemic has eaten into harvests, disrupted supply chains, and decimated the incomes of tens of millions of households. Where food is available, each day more people lack the money to buy it. All told, 270 million people may find themselves in an extreme hunger crisis in 2021, including about 30 million already on the brink of starvation.

What is the way forward? First, we must press all parties to honor the UN secretary-general's call for a global cease-fire, which is consistent with the Kingdom's policy focused on peace as its strategic choice and one of the most important pillars of its foreign policy.

If most hunger stems from politics, we need political solutions. Brokering peace will not only curb outbreaks of hunger in war zones, it will stem the surge of refugees and economic migrants now overwhelming many host countries.

Second, we must position food in the most vulnerable regions by year's end. This is not just a task for governments. We all must help. If there was ever a time to share, it is now.

Third, we must take a strategic approach to aid working in tandem and with a true spirit of collaboration. "Smart funding" through multiyear and multisector donations can help donors have a broad impact beyond containing emergencies. Better targeting of aid to focus more on women and girls would surely pay off, as they are most often the victims of malnutrition. It is not enough for us to save lives if we do not fundamentally change lives.

Finally, we must build resilience in societies so they can better withstand shocks like COVID-19 in the future. We must start with youth. School closures have ended school meals for 370 million school children around the world and the WFP, Saudi Arabia, and other donors are already providing food assistance to strengthen nutrition and prevent disease among them. We cannot let a generation in the developing world become collateral damage in this pandemic – malnourished and uneducated, with little hope of leading productive lives.

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is empathy. Even in wealthy nations, families with jobs one day could find themselves relying on government aid or food banks the next. Tens of millions in the developed world today no longer take food for granted and share the worries of the world's poor in a way we never imagined possible. Perhaps in the pain COVID-19 has thrust upon us, we can finally come together and work toward building a world without hunger.

– Courtesy: Arab News

What we got wrong about COVID-19 and refugees

Jan Egeland

Humanitarian activists braced for disaster, but in most places, safe programming and responsible local behaviour have prevented our worst fears from being realised so far. In the world's largest refugee settlement in Bangladesh, only 356 Rohingya refugees had contracted the disease out of a population of more than 860,000, according to available testing by December. While testing in camps is much lower than in resource-rich western nations, we have also not seen the scale of sickness and death we feared earlier this year based

MIGRANTS from the Moria camp in Lesbos wait to board busses at Piraeus port in Athens following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, Greece. [Goran Tomasevic / Reuters]

Migrants from the Moria camp in Lesbos wait to board busses at Piraeus port in Athens following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, Greece. [Goran Tomasevic/Reuters]

The coronavirus has not yet decimated refugee camps or killed displaced people in significant numbers, as I and many others feared in March. To date, only 32,000 of the world's 26 million refugees have been registered as infected by COVID-19. While this figure is likely lower than the actual number due to weak testing capacity, even if it was tenfold higher, the spread of the virus in the US and many European nations still overshadow it.

Despite this, the pandemic is a much harder blow economically to the world's 80 million displaced people than for those in affluent societies. Here are three things we got wrong about the coronavirus pandemic, and how they will shape humanitarian work in the year ahead.

When the pandemic began to grip the world in March, disastrous consequences were predicted for overcrowded displacement camps in places such as Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Greece. Settlements in many of the 30 crisis countries where the Norwegian Refugee Council, my organisation, works are cramped and congested, and social distancing and stringent hygiene measures are often impossible. Humanitarian activists braced for disaster, but in most places, safe programming and responsible local behaviour have prevented our worst fears from being realised so far. In the world's largest refugee settlement in Bangladesh, only 356 Rohingya refugees had contracted the disease out of a population of more than 860,000, according to available testing by December. While testing in camps is much lower than in resource-rich west-

ern nations, we have also not seen the scale of sickness and death we feared earlier this year based on experiences in the US and elsewhere. Several reasons point to why. First, families living in camp settings often have limited contact with local populations around them. In many countries, such as Kenya and Myanmar, refugees cannot work, so mix less with people outside. These restrictions prevent much-needed integration in local economies and livelihoods but paradoxically helped prevent the spread of the disease. Many camps also experienced stricter lockdowns than the communities outside them were bound by.

In addition, aid agencies quickly shifted programming to COVID-19 prevention when the pandemic hit. Hand-washing campaigns launched. Water and soap distribution ramped up. Social-distancing messaging rolled out, in so much as distancing was possible. In Congo, our teams distributed aid in large outdoor football fields where people could spread out. Safe programming, delivered by adaptable front-line relief workers, has no doubt saved countless lives.

Eight out of 10 refugees across the world are being hosted by low or middle-income nations that often have weak health, water and sanitation systems. These systems were thought unlikely to be able to support high numbers of displaced people needing support when the pandemic hit. But this has not yet been an issue as the numbers of displaced people infected have remained comparatively low. Former refugees and migrants have also stepped up to support strained national health services, including in the United States where they are on the front lines administering COVID-19 tests. In addition, about half of the 26 million refugees around the world that have been forced to flee their homes are under the age of 18. Younger people tend to be less severely affected by the disease.

Research by the Norwegian Refugee Council carried out across 14 countries, including a survey of 1,400 refugees and crisis-affected people, found

that a staggering 77 percent of respondents had lost their jobs or income since the start of the pandemic. The remittances from relatives elsewhere had dried up. Most families said they were less likely to send children back to school when classes restart. The economic shock to already vulnerable communities has pushed them further into destitution.

Many people living in conflict settings said they were more afraid of the hunger pandemic brought on by COVID-19 than they were of being killed by the disease itself. Our report found three out of four people surveyed had had to cut meals for themselves or their families. The UN issued similar alerts on food insecurity; in one of its starkest forecasts all year, it warned about possible famine striking four countries in 2021 – Burkina Faso, Yemen, Nigeria's northeast and South Sudan.

As the new year begins, lessons must be learned from 2020. This includes a significant injection in COVID-recovery of the world's poorest communities. The initial financial response to the pandemic was fast, but there was little or no money to meet the economic devastation that followed. The UN global COVID-19 appeal was less than half funded by year-end.

2021 will start with a record 235 million people needing humanitarian aid and protection – a 40 percent increase in just a year. And still, some donor countries have signalled they will reduce aid budgets next year to help with their economic recoveries.

The world's most vulnerable people must be included in global vaccine roll outs and economic recovery plans. If they do not have access to vaccines, the virus could yet grow and spread widely in refugee camps, and will never be stamped out entirely. And if displaced people are not supported financially, they will wear the economic scars of this pandemic long after the rest of us have recovered. The international community must not punish the poorest.

Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

Indian forces spreading

From Page 01
cases are registered against them. Indian army is spreading fear among unarmed Kashmiris through oppression and hegemony," he added. The Minister said these young Kashmiris are being presented as terrorists and fake cases are registered against them to misguide the world. The foreign minister pointed out that the world has now become aware of Indian designs, adding Delhi's control over illegally occupied Himalayan region of Jammu and Kashmir is weakening. "In order to throw dust in the eyes of the world, these victims are presented as terrorists and false cases registered against them," he said. A report of a Turkish news outlet lately quoted a Kashmir police statement as saying that an Indian army officer and two others planted illegally acquired weapons on the bodies of three young men to pass them off as "terrorists" after killing them in a staged gun battle in Shopian in July, this year. The statement issued late on Sunday said the officer and two others planted illegally acquired weapons and material on their dead bodies after stripping them of their identities and tagged them as hardcore "terrorists" in possession of war-like stores.

Pakistan concerned over

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Mohammad Ashraf Sehraie and others, who have been languishing under squalid conditions in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic in infamous Tihar and other jails. Many other senior Kashmiri leaders including Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq remain under house arrest. According to a foreign office statement, these Kashmiri leaders have been illegally arrested over malicious, false and fabricated charges by the Indian Government through invoking draconian laws promulgated in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJK). The statement added that imprisonment and torturing of Kashmiri leaders on the basis of their political ideology and struggle against illegal Indian occupation is a true reflection of the extremist mindset of the RSS-BJP regime which has no respect for the human rights of the Kashmiri people. Pakistan calls upon the international community, particularly the United Nations, ICRC and human rights and humanitarian organizations, to take notice of the Indian government's inhuman treatment of the Kashmiri leaders and raise its voice for their immediate release from illegal Indian detention.

Iran warns Israel not to cross Gulf 'red lines'

TEHRAN: Iran warned Israel on Monday not to cross its "red lines" in the Gulf in the final days of Donald Trump's presidency and following a reported Israeli submarine deployment. Foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh stressed the Islamic republic would defend itself against any American military "adventure" in the run-up to the January 20 handover of power in Washington. The statement came a week after the US Navy announced a nuclear submarine was being deployed to the Gulf, in a new show of force directed at Iran. Media in Israel have since reported that an Israeli submarine has crossed the Suez Canal also headed for the Gulf, a report that has not been officially confirmed or denied. "Everyone knows what the Persian Gulf signifies for Iran," Khatibzadeh told an online news conference. "Everyone knows the policies (of Tehran) regarding security and national security... Everyone knows very well how high the risk is raised if the red lines of Iran are crossed." Tehran accuses its regional foe Israel of responsibility for several anti-Iranian operations, including the assassination last month of nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Newly elected Mayor of Federal capital, Pir Syed Asad Gillani flashes victory sign with deputy mayor, Syed Zeeshan Naqvi, leader of PMLN Tariq Fazal Chaudhry and others after won the Mayor election in Islamabad. — DNA

U.S. bolsters support for Taiwan, Tibet, angering China

China has watched with growing alarm as the United States has stepped up its backing for Chinese-claimed Taiwan and its criticism of Beijing's rule in remote Tibet, further straining a relationship under intense pressure over trade, human rights and other issues

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: China expressed anger on Monday after U.S. President Donald Trump signed into law measures to further bolster support for Taiwan and Tibet, which had been included in a \$2.3 trillion pandemic aid and

spending package. China has watched with growing alarm as the United States has stepped up its backing for Chinese-claimed Taiwan and its criticism of Beijing's rule in remote Tibet, further straining a relationship under intense pressure over trade, human rights and other issues.

The Taiwan Assurance Act of 2020 and Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 both contain language objectionable to China, including U.S. support for Taiwan's meaningful participation in United Nations bodies and regular arms sales. On Tibet, which China has ruled with an iron fist since 1950,

the act says sanctions should be put on Chinese officials who interfere in the selection of the exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama's successor. Speaking in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said China was "resolutely opposed" to both acts. "The determination of the Chinese government to

safeguard its national sovereignty, security and development interests is unwavering," he told reporters. The U.S. should not put the parts of the acts which "target China" into effect in order to avoid harming Sino-U.S. relations, he said, adding they were an interference in China's internal affairs.

'CPEC now a household word'

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International Cooperation was held in Urumqi on December 26 which agreed to broaden CPEC by inviting third country participation. Tian Yuhong, Executive Secretary of the All-China Journalists Association said that CPEC is a symbol of attachment between Pakistan and China and even a global pandemic like COVID-19 could not stop the progress of projects under its umbrella. He said that news exchange and cooperation is an important factor to promote the healthy development of bilateral relations and smooth implementation of CPEC projects. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman, Senate Foreign Affairs Committee and Pakistan China Institute commended the resilience of CPEC which progressed with full speed and vigor during COVID-19. He said that not a single Pakistani working on CPEC sites was laid off. While commenting on the recently held meeting on Joint Working Group on international coordination, he said that there will be an increased focus on media and think tank collaboration to take CPEC forward. The meeting also welcomed third party participation in CPEC. Moreover, he highlighted three objectives of conducting CPEC media forum. Firstly, it is aimed to promote and strengthen the all-weather strategic partnership between Pakistan and China. CPEC is part of BRI which is the biggest developmental and diplomatic initiative of the 21st Century. Secondly, it aims to counter

the propaganda against CPEC with facts. Ni Sivi, Deputy Director, Office of Editor-in-chief, Xinhua News Agency said that since the launch of CPEC, there has been close cooperation between the media houses of both countries. He called for airing more stories on CPEC which evoke people's engagement. Moreover, he said that the media of both countries need to highlight the importance of the 70th anniversary of Pak-China diplomatic relations in 2021. Muhammad Jahanzab Khan, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission gave a very comprehensive presentation on CPEC Phase two. He said that CPEC is a multilayered project. In the first phase which ended in 2020, the focus was on improving infrastructure and solving the issue of energy. In the second phase which will end in 2025, processing and manufacturing industries will be developed and efforts will be made to ensure improvement in people's livelihoods and balancing regional economic development. Ms. Zhao Qiao, Director, Department of Urdu, Asian & African Center, China Media Group said that the media of both countries fought misinformation regarding Pakistani students in Wuhan during COVID-19 by interviewing them and communicating the true perspective. She called for enhanced media ties between two brotherly countries and said that steps should be taken at the governmental level to increase people-to-people exchanges between Pakistan and China.

EU nations formally give nod to post-Brexit trade deal

The approval had been expected ever since the deal was announced and all EU leaders warmly welcomed it

FORIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: European Union nations have unanimously approved the post-Brexit trade deal with the United Kingdom, a prerequisite for the agreement to come into operation on New Year's Day. Germany, which holds the EU presidency, said the decision came during a meeting of EU ambassadors on Monday to assess the Christmas Eve agreement. "Green light," said Germany's spokesman Sebastian Fischer. "Ambassadors have unanimously approved the provisional application of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement as of January 1, 2021." The approval had

been expected ever since the deal was announced and all EU leaders warmly welcomed it. It still needs approval from the EU's legislature, which is expected to come in February. The UK's House of Commons is expected to approve it on Wednesday. Four days after sealing a free trade agreement with the EU, the British government warned businesses to get ready for disruptions and "bumpy moments" when the new rules take effect on Thursday night. Businesses were scrambling on Monday to digest the details and implications of the 1,240-page deal sealed by the EU and the UK on Christmas Eve. The end to Britain's mem-

bership in the EU's vast single market and customs union will still bring inconvenience and new expenses for both individuals and businesses — from the need for tourists to have travel insurance to the millions of new customs declarations that firms will have to fill out. "Businesses will need to make sure that they're ready for new customs procedures and we as individuals will need to make sure that our passports are up to date because they need to have at least six months before expiry on them in order to be able to travel abroad," said Michael Gove, the British Cabinet minister in charge of Brexit preparations. "I'm sure there will

be bumpy moments but we are there in order to try to do everything we can to smooth the path," he told the media. The UK left the EU almost a year ago, but remained within the bloc's economic embrace during a transition period that ends at 2300 GMT (midnight Brussels time, 11 pm in London) on December 31. The agreement, hammered out after nine months of tense negotiations, will ensure Britain and the 27-nation bloc can continue to trade in goods without tariffs or quotas. That should help protect the \$894 billion (660 billion pounds) in annual trade between the two sides, and the hundreds of thousands of jobs that rely on it.

Saudi Arabia extends entry ban amid new COVID-19 variant

DNA

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia on Monday said it was extending a ban on entry to the Kingdom by air, land and sea for another week. In a statement carried by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the Ministry of Interior said the decision was a precautionary measure against the spread of the new variant of COVID-19, which had

been detected in a number of countries. Exceptional cases would be exempted from the entry ban, and non-Saudi citizens are allowed to leave the Kingdom, the statement said. It added that the ministry is assessing the current situation and suspension of travel could be further extended, if necessary. The new strain of the virus emerged earlier this month in Britain and has already reached several countries

around the world, including the Middle East. On Sunday, Jordan confirmed two cases of the particularly infectious coronavirus variant in a man and his wife who had arrived from Britain. Lebanon earlier announced on Friday that it detected its first case of the new variant on a flight arriving from London. More than 50 countries had imposed travel restrictions on Britain as a result of the new virus.

Fakhar awarded honorary rank of lieutenant

Fakhar Zaman is an Ex-Pakistan Navy Serviceman. He joined Pakistan Navy in 2007 assailor in Operations Branch. During early years in Service, his excellent cricket talent was spotted and he represented Pakistan Navy in many tournaments

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to honour the achievements in cricket arena and association with Pakistan Navy, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi conferred renowned cricketer Fakhar Zaman the rank of Honorary Lieutenant in Pakistan Navy. A special epaulette award ceremony was held at Naval Headquarters to mark the event. Fakhar Zaman is an Ex-Pakistan Navy Serviceman. He joined Pakistan Navy in 2007 assailor in Operations Branch. During early years in Service, his excellent cricket talent was spotted and he represented Pakistan Navy in many tournaments. His performance in the game remained exceptional and he earned numerous laurels for Paki-



stan Navy. His International debut in cricket was in 2012 while he was serving in Pakistan Navy. He participated in International Defence Cricket Challenge Cup 2012 held at Australia and was declared Best Player of the tournament. His crickering skills were recognized and he was rewarded with Sanad-e-Tahseen by Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC). Pakistan Navy observed profound cricket skills and extraordinary talent of Fakhar Zaman and graciously provided him the opportunity to continue his career in Cricket and join Pakistan National Cricket squad. During the course of time, his major achievements in cricket field include match winning century against India in final of ICC Champions Trophy in 2017, in which he was declared as "Man of the Match".

Shibli lambasts PDM's

From Page 01
He said the opposition leadership believed that if they won, the elections were free and fair but if someone else won, elections were rigged. It was unfortunate that those who were facilitators in killing of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and tortured Shaheed Benazir Bhutto were sitting on stage with the Pakistan People's Party leadership. Shibli said that normally events to mark the death anniversaries are not used for delivering political speeches but they utilized the event for political point scoring. He said it was strange that the enemies of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto were given space to share the stage with PPP leadership. To a question about internal differences in Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, he said that those who termed Fazalur Rehman "selected" were insiders and enjoyed good reputation and status in the party. Shibli said Maulana Shirani and Hafiz Hussain Ahmed have stated that Fazal was selected whereas they were the real leaders of the party.

PM slams people maligning

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"We are not under any pressure from the Opposition's movement," he said. "Their only aim is to get the Non-Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO)." During the meeting, the premier was also briefed about several measures taken by the authorities to address the prevailing gas shortage in the country. PM Imran Khan was also appraised of the government's initiatives on reforms in the energy sector. The meeting discussed the supply of electricity and gas to industries as well as power supply and demand in the country.

Pak, UAE relations historical

From Page 01
he said Prime Minister Imran Khan has a special interest in promoting bilateral relations between the two countries. Speaking on the occasion, the UAE ambassador paid tribute to the people of Pakistan for their services in development of UAE.

Djibouti delegation arrives today

From Page 01
Present of Pakistan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Foreign Minister, Speaker National Assembly, Army Chief and Naval Chief, President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The delegation will also visit deferent areas of the country. Speaking in this regard Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sinjrani said that this visit of High powered delegation is of utmost importance to strengthen the parliamentary relations between the Pakistan and African Parliaments. He said that Pakistan gives utmost priority to its ties with the African countries and emphasised that parliamentary relations would pave the way for strong economic and trade corporation. He said that there is need to increase the parliamentary exchanges to steer the agenda of economic development in both the regions.

Shoaib grills ICC over biased picks

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Former Pakistani cricketer Shoaib Akhtar aka 'Rawalpindi Express' disapproved of the International Cricket Council (ICC) after its announcement of the Teams of the Decade, commenting that the cricket body has announced an Indian Premier League (IPL) team instead of a world cricket team. In a video on his Youtube channel, the former fast bowler said: "I think ICC has forgotten that Pakistan is also ICC's member and plays cricket internationally. They missed out on an ace Pakistani batsman like Babar Azam who is already a top T20 batsman. They did not even include a single Pakistani player." "These people left because cricket was materialised. Why did you give permission to start 10 leagues? You gave permission in order to rake money out of cricket," he said.

Briefs

Jakarta allows burial outside special cemeteries

DNA

JAKARTA: The Jakarta provincial government has allowed the burial of those dying of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outside special public cemeteries. The special public cemeteries reserved for COVID-19 victims have run out of space for graves for those succumbing to COVID-19, Pondok Ranggon public cemetery official in charge of the burial of COVID-19 victims, Muhaemin stated here on Monday. The Jakarta administration has issued several criteria for the burial of COVID-19 victims outside the Pondok Ranggon Public Cemetery in East Jakarta and Tegal Alur Public Cemetery in West Java, he remarked.

"The shortage of space for COVID-19 graves has occurred since November 8, 2020. At this moment, space has run out for the burial of COVID-19 victims," he pointed out. Hence, the management of public cemeteries has allowed COVID-19 victims to be buried in the same graves as their relatives, who had died earlier.

A COVID-19 grave should be 90 centimeters wide and 210 centimeters long in proportion to the size of coffin, he revealed. "The distance between the grave and resident's well must be at least 50 meters," he remarked.

Indonesia to close border to foreign nationals

WEB DESK

JAKARTA: Indonesia has decided to temporarily close its borders from January 1, 2021 to prevent the entry of foreign nationals in view of the spread of a new coronavirus strain in some parts of the world. "[We are] Temporarily closing Indonesian borders, from January 1 to 14 of 2021, for foreign nationals from all countries," Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, said at an online media conference on Monday. The regulation was made after a limited cabinet meeting earlier the same day, and will be officially enacted later through a new circular letter from the COVID-19 task force.

However, high-ranking foreign officials and representatives (ministers or above) from foreign countries will be excluded from the regulation on account of tight health protocols during official visits. Foreign nationals arriving in Indonesia up to December 31, 2020 may be allowed to enter the country if they show negative results on a PCR test from their point of origin. The test should have been issued a maximum of 48 hours before departure. Visitors will also have to take an additional PCR test on arrival. After the test, they will be required to undergo a five-day isolation and take another PCR test later, Marsudi informed. "If the results are all negative, then the visitors would be allowed to continue their trip," she added.

Bangladesh sends more Rohingya to remote island

FOREIGN DESK

DHAKA: Bangladesh on Monday began relocating the 2nd batch of Rohingya refugees to a remote island, amid concerns from rights groups. Speaking to Anadolu Agency over the phone, a Rohingya refugee set to be relocated said that 15 buses carrying nearly 1,000 refugees started their journey to Bangladesh's southern port City of Chottogram from Cox's Bazar on Monday noon. "We hope that Bangladesh will keep its commitment to us of providing opportunities of better life with freedom of movement, scopes of earnings, health care and education," he said, preferring not to be named. Like the previous Rohingya batch, members of the 2nd group will also stay a night in Chottogram and sail out to Bhasan Char island through the sea route by the host country's navy ships on Tuesday morning. "We are fully ready to receive the new arrivals at the Bhasan Char."



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on commerce & investment Abdul Razak Dawood addressing opening session of 8th Afghanistan-Pakistan transit trade coordination authority (apttca). – DNA

Pak, Azerbaijan mull opening Azerbaijan's trade house

It was noted that the implementation of comprehensive measures to revive Azerbaijan's liberated lands will further strengthen regional and international cooperation and increase investment opportunities in the Karabakh region

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan and Pakistan discussed the possibility of opening Azerbaijan's Trade House in Pakistan, the Economy Ministry has reported. The discussion took place during the third meeting of the Joint Working Group on Trade Cooperation between Azerbaijan and Pakistan held in a format of the videoconference. The Deputy Economy Minister, Co-Chairman of the Joint Working Group Rovshan Najaf underlined the high level of political and economic relations between two countries. He briefed the participants on the latest Armenia's military provocations

and the great victory of Azerbaijan, emphasizing that Pakistan's unwavering support and solidarity with Azerbaijan was highly appreciated in the country. It was noted that the implementation of comprehensive measures to revive Azerbaijan's liberated lands will further strengthen regional and international cooperation and increase investment opportunities in the Karabakh region. Stressing the expansion of Azerbaijani-Pakistani economic relations, the deputy minister noted that 2,085 Pakistani companies are operating in the country. In addition, he invited Pakistani businessmen to take advantage of opportunities created in the Azerbaijani industrial parks and invest in agriculture, light industry, pharmaceuticals, tourism, etc.

Moreover, the meeting covered issues on Azerbaijan's economy, measures to combat the coronavirus pandemic, the country's transportation and transit capabilities, and export potential. A number of proposals, including holding virtual business forums to intensify mutual investments and increase trade turnover, participation in business events in both countries and creation of a working group on investment cooperation were put forward during the meeting. The parties discussed the possibility of opening a joint venture, expanding the legal framework in the field of food security and trade, investment in the textile, pharmaceutical and energy sector, and the development of cooperation between small and medium-sized businesses.

Additionally, Pakistan's Commerce Minister, Co-Chairman of the Joint Working Group Muhammad Suleh Faruqi congratulated Azerbaijan on its victory, noting that Pakistan attaches special importance to the development of cooperation with Azerbaijan. The meeting was attended by the ambassadors of two countries, representatives of relevant structures, including Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry, Health Ministry, State Oil Company and Food Safety Agency. It should be noted that the trade turnover between two countries amounted to \$10 million during the period of January-October 2020. Of the total turnover, the export of Azerbaijani goods to Pakistan amounted to \$694,940, while import from Pakistan amounted to \$9.3 million.

Trump signs COVID relief bill amid pressure

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump, on holiday in Florida, has finally signed a \$2.3 trillion financial package that is crucial to millions of jobless Americans, after coming under pressure from legislators. The White House confirmed the outgoing president had signed the bill shortly after he tweeted: "Good news on Covid Relief Bill. Information to follow." Trump, who has been pictured playing golf at his Mar-a-Lago resort over the Christmas weekend, had been under pressure from legislators on both sides to stop blocking the pandemic aid and government funding bill, which had been approved by Congress last week.

The Republican president had demanded the bill be changed to increase the size of stimulus cheques for struggling Americans to \$2,000 from \$600, putting not only the enormous package of economic and public-health assistance at risk, but the basic functioning of the government itself. "I have told Congress that I want far less wasteful spending and more money going to the American people in the form of \$2,000

checks per adult and \$600 per child," Trump said in a statement announcing he had signed the bill.

White House deputy press secretary Judd Deere said the president was "sending a strong message" that "wasteful items" needed to be removed from the bill and added that a "redlined" version would be sent back to Congress with a requirement that such items be removed from the bill. Other conditions include a review and possible repeal of Section 230, under which social media giants cannot be held legally responsible for objectionable words, photos or videos that people post to their platforms. Deere says Congress also agreed to "focus strongly on the very substantial voter fraud" in the November elections. There is no evidence of such fraud and the courts have thrown out Trump's efforts to bring legal action.

The financial package passed with wide margins in the House and Senate and with the understanding of members of both parties that Trump supported it. The bill had to be signed by midnight on Tuesday (05:00 GMT) to ensure the federal government did not run out of money.

Armenia violates cease-fire again in Nagorno-Karabakh

DNA

BAKU: Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh violated cease-fire on Sunday and martyred an Azerbaijani soldier, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said on Monday. "On December 27, at about 15:30, an illegal Armenian armed group or a

detachment of six remnants of the Armenian armed forces attacked the units of the Azerbaijan Army in the direction of the Aghdam (Aka-kku) village of the Khojvend region. "A serviceman of the Azerbaijan Army, soldier Ganbarov Elmir Rayil was killed and soldier Aliyev Emin Suleyman has been injured. As a result

of the actions taken, all six members of the illegal Armenian armed group were annihilated," the ministry said on Twitter. It also warned against "firm measures" by the Azerbaijani Army if such a case happens again. Relations between the former Soviet republics have been tense since 1991

when the Armenian military occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, recognized as an Azerbaijani territory, and seven adjacent regions. When new clashes erupted on Sept. 27, the Armenian army launched attacks on civilians and Azerbaijani forces and violated several humanitarian cease-fire agreements.



BAKU: Provision of Azerbaijan Army units in liberated land of Karabakh are being improved. – DNA

Russia vows retaliation over missiles deployment

"If our call fails to meet with support and US missiles begin to be deployed in Europe, we reserve the right to take proportionate retaliatory measures," Fomin warned

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: Russia's Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Fomin has criticized US refusal to extend the New START arms control treaty as well as its plans to deploy missiles in Europe, vowing to take "proportionate retaliatory measures."

"Russia invited the United States to prolong the New START (Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Off-

sive Arms) and simultaneously get down to joint work to draft a new agreement that would take into account all factors influencing strategic stability," Fomin said in an interview with local daily Rossiyskaya Gazeta on Sunday. "In the light of the current political situation in the United States, we do not rule out that the US stance on this issue may change," Fomin added, while insisting that the American side has different priorities, for which reason it has shown little interest in extending

the treaty that will expire on February 5, 2021.

"If our call fails to meet with support and US missiles begin to be deployed in Europe, we reserve the right to take proportionate retaliatory measures," Fomin warned.

The deputy defense minister then underlined that the US had persistently pressed ahead with a policy of building up its military potential, saying, "On a variety of far-fetched pretexts, the American side has relinquished its obliga-

tions in the field of arms control that impede attempts at trying to achieve global supremacy."

"After quitting the ABM Treaty in 2002, the US terminated the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF)," he added, noting that in efforts to minimize the negative impacts of the US withdrawal from the INF, "Russia asked NATO countries to join its moratorium on the deployment of intermediate and shorter range missiles." The US suspended its compli-

ance with the INF on February 2, 2019 after accusing Russia of alleged violations. Moscow, however, dismissed all of Washington's claims while making its own counterclaims over the American non-compliance with the treaty, namely the US deployment of missile defense systems in Europe. Fomin further pointed to the growing air and naval activities by members of the US-led NATO military alliance, warning that such moves may be fraught with the risk of major incidents.

South Africa crosses one million cases of COVID-19

WEB DESK

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa has reported at least one million cases of coronavirus since confirming its first case in March, the Ministry of Health said late on Sunday, only days after a new faster-spreading variant of the virus was confirmed to be breaking out in the country. "Today, we have breached one million cumulative cases of COVID-19 in South Africa, with a cumulative total of 1,004,413 cases reported," the ministry said in a statement. The total number of deaths rose to 26,735.

The outbreak in the worst-hit country in Africa appears to be accelerating with the one million mark crossed nine days after the country reported 900,000 cases. It took two weeks for South Africa to reach 900,000 cases, compared with the 800,000 in early December. Several hospitals and medical centres have reported wards overflowing with patients with many healthcare workers cancelling their holidays to tackle a huge influx of patients. Mediclinic International, among South Africa's top three private hospital networks, said on Sunday that a severe rise in cases had placed immense strain on its healthcare resources including staff, equipment and beds for seriously ill patients.

Chinese delegation meets Nepal PM

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: A Chinese delegation reportedly held talks with Nepali Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli and President Bidya Devi Bhandari in Kathmandu on Sunday in a first diplomatic step by the neighbouring power after the prime minister dissolved parliament a week ago. The four-member delegation led by Guo Yezhou, a vice minister in the international department of the Communist Party of China, arrived in Kathmandu on Sunday to assess the political situation following the rift in the governing Nepal Communist Party (NCP). China has poured millions of dollars into Nepal in recent years in aid and infrastructure investment as it incorporates the country in President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative project. In the past few years, many Nepali communist leaders have visited China for "training programmes" amid growing engagements between the NCP and the Chinese Communist Party. Sandwiched between China and India, politics in Nepal is also influenced by the priorities of its giant neighbours.

India's COVID-19 tally rises to 10,207,871

NEW DELHI: India's COVID-19 tally rose to 10,207,871 on Monday, as 20,021 new cases were registered during the past 24 hours, the latest data from the federal health ministry showed. Sunday was the first time in six months when the number of new cases had fallen below the 20,000-mark. According to the data, the death toll mounted to 147,901 as 279 COVID-19 patients died since Sunday morning. There are still 277,301 active cases in the country, while 9,782,669 people have been discharged so far from hospitals after medical treatment. Sunday was also the first time in several months when the total Active Caseload had fallen below 280,000.

Meanwhile, the federal government has ramped up COVID-19 testing facilities across the country, even as more than 160 million tests have been conducted. As many as 168,818,054 tests were conducted till Sunday, out of which 715,397 tests were conducted on Sunday alone, according to the latest data issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on Monday. Delhi has been one of the most COVID-19 affected places in the country. As many as 757 new cases and 16 deaths were registered in the national capital through Sunday. So far as many as 10,453 people have died in the national capital due to COVID-19, the Delhi's health department confirmed.

Briefs

PML N wins Islamabad Mayor election

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League (N) has retained its Mayor Islamabad seat by winning the election. Pir Adil Shah of PML N won the Mayor seat by getting 43 votes. The seat fell vacant after the resignation of Shiekh Anser Aziz. Polling for the election on the vacant seat of Islamabad's mayor began on Monday with both the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vying for the slot. PTI's candidate for the mayor, Malik Sajid Mahmood could not defeat PML-N candidate. Meanwhile, independent candidate Azhar Mahmood was also contesting the election. The Election Commission of Pakistan had issued a list of 73 voters. The commission has ruled that deputy mayors could not contest the mayor's election. The upcoming mayor will stay in office the next two months.

'PDM's stage a hotbed of anti-Punjab parties'

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Monday lashed out at the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), alleging that the Opposition's stage is a hotbed for the anti-Punjab parties. The federal minister, known for his blunt remarks against the Opposition parties, said that the Punjab constitutes half of Pakistan's population. Fawad claimed that "so-called nationalists have swindled billions of rupees and abuse Punjab to deceive their supporters". "On average, Rs400 billion are transferred to Balochistan every year. Balochistan's population is just 10 million, where did the money go?" Fawad's comments come a day after the leaders of the 11-party Opposition alliance gathered in Larkana to mark the 13th death anniversary of former premier Benazir Bhutto. - APP

134kg of charrs recovered from ambulance

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QUETTA: As much as 134 kilograms of Charrs [hash] was recovered from an ambulance that was transferring a coronavirus patient from Quetta to Karachi. The matter came to light when the ambulance collided with a passenger coach in the Khad Koocha area of Mastung. At least three people, including the COVID-19 patient, died in the accident. The driver, along with another person, sustained injuries. Levies officials said they recovered hash from the ambulance. The drug was stored in a hidden compartment in the ambulance's roof. They said the matter is being investigated and the driver will be questioned once he recovers. Earlier this year, Interpol had issued an alert that criminal organisations are using food delivery services to transport drugs and other illicit goods as countries imposed lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic.

JUI-F expelled members to meet today

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Maulana Muhammad Khan Sherani has said that Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) expelled leaders will meet today (Tuesday) to devise future plan of action. As per details, the terminated members of the party have opened a new front against JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman by calling a meeting of other like-minded members in Islamabad on December 29. The four senior leaders include Maulana Muhammad Khan Sherani, Hafiz Hussain Ahmed, Maulana Gul Naseeb and Maulana Shuja-ul-Mulk.

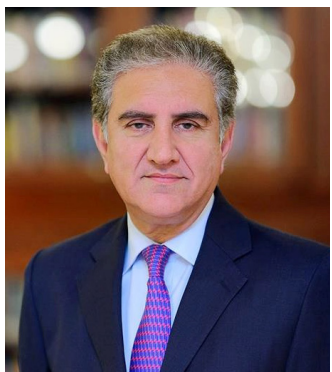
China to remain Pakistan's top priority: FM Qureshi

According to the Foreign Minister, during the last decades, Pakistan and China had come very close diplomatically, strategically and in the business sector

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Friendship and enhanced partnership with Iron Brother China will remain the top priority of Pakistan's foreign policy in the year 2021, the country's top diplomat said. Speaking to Gwadar Pro, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said Iron Brother China was a 'permanent special part' of Pakistan's foreign policy. "China is our great friend. We already have very close ties but we will try to make it even more fruitful in 2021. China is always on our top priorities list. This trend will never change. Every year, we (Pakistan and China) will only en-

hance cooperation," he said. According to the Foreign Minister, during the last decades, Pakistan and China had come very close diplomatically, strategically and in the business sector. "We are already cooperating in all sectors. In 2021, we will try to enhance trade relations and try to complete the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) projects on time," he added. FM Qureshi said the whole country was unanimous on Pakistan-China ties. "On China (ties), the whole country is one unit. There is never any question about it. All parties have the same point of view and all of them want to see the two Iron Brothers grow together," he maintained.



In recent years, Pakistan-China relations witnessed a qualitative transformation as the bilateral ties expanded from defence to the economic sphere. The cooperation under the frame-

work of CPEC is increasing China's investments in Pakistan's energy and infrastructure sectors. Expanded avenues of bilateral cooperation have led to the emergence of new dynamics in bilateral relations. With increased interdependence, both countries are also navigating major power international politics. Beijing and Islamabad have increased their coordination for peace and stability in Afghanistan as well as at the multilateral forums including the United Nations (UN) and Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Pakistan-China relations have been resilient for decades despite monumental shifts and transformations in the geo-strategic landscape of South Asia.

Islamabad-Beijing ties have maintained their strategic direction and stability due to the convergence of interests and mutual trust. With the commencement of development work under CPEC, a flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), both countries also increased their strategic coordination and converged on emerging issues in the regional security environments and at multilateral forums. In recent years CPEC-centric cooperation has been the focus of scholarly debate and analysis. Beijing has repeatedly emphasized that the Pakistan-China relationship was a 'model inter-state relationship' to be emulated by other states.

Dialogue only for national cause

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Punjab Chief Minister on Information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan on Monday said that government has given priority to national interest whereas opposition parties have always ignored the interests of Pakistan for their personal gain. Talking to a Private news channel, she said the opposition parties had only formed the alliance under PDM to protect the wealth accumulated through corruption and not for any political cause which would not be tolerated at any cost. To a question, Dr Firdous said that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has been splitting into two groups where Maryam Nawaz asking for resignations and Shahbaz Sharif was talking about dialogue but masses will not accept the monarchy of Sharifs anymore. - DNA

Saudi court jails female activist for almost 6 years

RIYADH: A Saudi court on Monday sentenced renowned female rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul to five years and eight months in prison, according to an opposition group. Hathloul, 31, has been held since 2018 following her arrest along with at least a dozen other women's rights activist. The verdict poses an early challenge to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's relationship with U.S. President-elect Joe Biden, who has criticised Riyadh's human rights record. Hathloul was charged with seeking to change the Saudi political system and harming national security, Saq and al-Shark al-Awsat newspapers said. The court suspended two years and 10 months of her sentence - or most of the time already served since her arrest on May 15, 2018 - with a conditional release to follow, the newspapers and Hathloul's sister said. She could therefore be released around end of February 2021, with a return to prison possible if she commits any crime, the newspapers. Hathloul was also given a five-year travel ban, her sister Lina tweeted, adding that both the public prosecutor and Hathloul could appeal the judge's verdict. United Nations human rights experts have called the charges "spurious", and along with leading rights groups and lawmakers in the United States and Europe have called for her release. The criminal court last week cleared the prosecution of torturing Hathloul in detention, saying there was no evidence to support the allegations. Hathloul's sentencing came nearly three weeks after a Riyadh court jailed U.S.-Saudi physician Walid al-Fitaihi for six years, despite U.S. pressure to release him, in a case rights groups have called politically motivated. - DNA

Maryam visits Benazir's grave along with Bilawal and Aseefa

Maryam Nawaz also laid petals/flowers on the graves of martyrs Benazir Bhutto, Zulfikar Bhutto and others and visited photo gallery of Shuhda

NAZIR SIYAL

LARKANA / NAUDERO: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari with PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz arrived Garhi Khuda Baksh after the Lunch and dinner hosted by Naudero Bhutto House

for the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) leaders and the party here on Monday. PML-N woman leader Maryam Nawaz along with PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Aseefa and others visited the ancestral graveyard of Bhutto family and offered Fateha prayers at the Mazars of

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Mir Murtaza Bhutto, Shah Nawaz Bhutto, Begum Nusrat Bhutto and others. Maryam Nawaz also laid petals/flowers on the graves of martyrs Benazir Bhutto, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and others and visited photo gallery of Shuhda

Bilawal Bhutto drive the car with Maryam Nawaz and led him to the different corners of the Mazar building on the second-floor visit. During the visit of Garhi Khuda Bux, PML-N leaders Capt. Saifdar, Pervez Rasheed, Maryam Aurangzeb, Sherry Rehman Jamil Soomro were also present on the occasion.

Rs319.5 bn released for social sector uplift projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government has released Rs. 319.5 billion for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects till date under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2020-21. The released funds include Rs. 206.5 billion for federal ministries, Rs.87 billion for corporations, Rs. 25.25 billion for special are010as, and Rs. 750 million for the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA), according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform. The total PSDP allocation for ERRA for the year 2020-21 is Rs. 1.5 billion. Similarly, Rs. 55.2 billion out of PSDP allocation of Rs. 118.67 billion has been released for the National Highway Authority, Rs.31.8 billion out of Rs. 158.3 billion for the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC), and Rs. 45 billion out of Rs. 81.2 billion for the for the Water Resources Division.

'Govt to distribute COVID-19 vaccine free of cost'

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary National Health Services Regulation and Coordination (NHSRC) Dr Nausheen Hamid on Monday reconfirmed that offering free Covid-19 vaccination to all citizens as it pushes ahead in the global race to achieve nationwide immunity against the coronavirus. Talking to a Private news channel, she said government is offering initial funding of \$150 million to purchase ID-19 vaccine



directly from the international market by the second quarter of the next calendar year to begin immunizing its population of 220 million people, adding, phase III of clinical trials of Chinese vaccines was proceeding well and free of cost shots would be available to the people soon. She also mentioned that government has allowed the private sector to import vaccines for protection against the novel coronavirus and front line healthcare workers will be at the top of the vaccine priority list. In the second stage, the elderly and at risk-population will get the vaccine and lastly, the common people, she added. Replying a Question , she said government has already started tracking passengers who have arrived in the country from the United Kingdom after a new coronavirus strain was discovered in England. She said government is tracing and testing people and those who test positive for the virus will be placed under quarantine, adding that the new coronavirus strain in the UK was very dangerous. "The virus has the capability to spread rapidly from an infected person," she added. She also said that the coronavirus vaccines will be equally effective against the new mutant of the virus and there is no reason to panic. She said the transmissible of the new strain is a bit higher but this does not mean it is more lethal and more people are going to die due to it. - DNA

1,974 new cases; 55 deaths reported

ISLAMABAD: The national tally of total active COVID-19 cases in Pakistan on Monday reached 39,488 with 1,974 more people tested positive for the deadly virus and 1,760 people recovered from the Coronavirus during the last 24 hours. Fifty Five corona patients, 50 of whom were under treatment in hospital and Five in their respective homes or quarantines died on Saturday, according to the latest update issued by the National command and Operation Centre (NOC). During the last 24 hours most of the deaths had occurred in Sindh followed by the Punjab. It added that out of the total 55 deaths during last 24 hours 35 patients died on ventilators. No COVID affected person was on ventilator in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Balochistan and Gilgit Baltistan (GB) while 321 ventilators were occupied elsewhere in Pakistan. The maximum ventilators were occupied in four major areas including Multan 45 percent, ICT 45 percent, Peshawar 36 percent and Lahore 34 percent. The Oxygen beds (oxygen providing facility other than ventilator as per patient's medical requirement) were also occupied in four major areas as in ICT 31 percent, Rawalpindi 32 percent, Peshawar 62 percent and Multan 38 percent. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairing a meeting on ML-1 project. - DNA

CPEC now a household word" says Sadiq Sanjrani

Ambassador Nong Rong says CPEC plays a significant role to promote the in-depth development of the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership and high-quality growth of the Belt and Road Initiative; not a single Pakistani working on CPEC sites was laid off: Mushahid Hussain

DNA / STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The 6th China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Media Forum was held here in Islamabad. The forum was jointly organized by the Pakistan-China Institute (PCI) and China Economic Net (CEN) in cooperation with the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Pakistan. It is conducted as an annual event in Beijing and Islamabad in alternate years. Due to COVID-19, this year's forum was held virtually and was themed "Post-epidemic China-Pakistan Media Cooperation". The Forum conducted in-depth exchanges and discussions on topics including the opportunities for digital media, media as an engine for the high-quality development of CPEC, and China-Pakistan media cooperation. It was moderated by Zoon Ahmed Khan, anchor of China Economic Net. Chairman Senate, Sadiq

Sanjrani was the chief guest. The forum was addressed by Railways Minister, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission plus Ambassadors of both countries. Zheng Qingdong, President and Editor-in-Chief of Economic Daily, and Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director, Pakistan-China Institute gave the welcome addresses. Zheng highlighted the importance of the CPEC media forum and said that since it's launch, it has contributed a lot towards building a positive public opinion on CPEC. Mustafa Hyder Sayed said that Pakistan-China Institute in collaboration with China Economic Net launched the CPEC media forum as an online event and it is held in Beijing and Islamabad in alternate years. Last year, Pakistan-China Institute launched the Rapid Response Information Network (RRIN) which identifies fake news on CPEC and deconstructs them with Facts. Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani,

Chairman Senate of Pakistan, in his keynote speech said that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has achieved significant milestones through joint efforts of the governments, enterprises, and peoples of both countries. The first phase of CPEC, which focused on energy and infrastructure projects met its successful completion and now, the second phase is set to boost Pak-China cooperation in agriculture and initiate an era of industrializa-

tion through the establishment of Special Economic Zones. He commended the role of the media and said that it has played a very important role in the dissemination of facts on CPEC which has resulted in CPEC becoming a household name in Pakistan. Through events like the CPEC media forum, both countries get an excellent opportunity to consolidate the existing all-weather friendship. He also highlighted Pakistan's Medical

and moral support to China during its fight against the pandemic. Moreover, he said that the Senate passed a resolution that acknowledged China's robust measures to deal with coronavirus and commended their efforts to make Pakistani there, mainly students in Wuhan, feel at home during this critical time. Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong said that as an important pilot project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and a demonstration project of China-Pakistan Cooperation, the CPEC plays a significant role to promote the in-depth development of the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership and high-quality growth of the Belt and Road Initiative. He said that high level and quality participation in the CPEC media forum is the testimony to the fact that CPEC has been highly valued in Pakistan. Since its inception in 2015, CPEC Media Forum has brought together the govern-

ments, business communities, media, think tanks, and other sectors of China and Pakistan to focus on the construction of the CPEC. Pakistan's ambassador to China, Moin ul Haq said that in this digital age, the media is playing a pivotal role in bolstering the friendship and solidarity between the peoples of Pakistan and China. He said that the media has rightly guided the public about the true significance of the CPEC project, which has resulted in creating a national consensus on CPEC. Moreover, he said that Pakistan is the biggest proponent of BRI and endorses President Xi's philosophy of shared future and prosperity. He concluded by saying that Pakistan and China need to strengthen media cooperation by screening more films in China just like 'Parwaaz hai Junoon', which was the first Pakistani film screened in China in the last 45 years. He said that JWG on



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