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Indonesia, Pakistan have every reason to diversify their ties

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Briefs

Bilawal vows to fight for labourers

NAZIR SIYAL



KARACHI: PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said Monday that the country's industries cannot flourish until the government does something for the problems and woes of the nation's labourers. Addressing a gathering in Sukkur, he said that the Benazir Mazdoor Card (BMC) would be rolled out soon, and through it, "no labourer would be left helpless during these hard times." "PPP stands like a wall against anti-labourer policies," the PPP chairman said.

Govt to work on development agenda

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the House in the Senate Dr. Shahzad Waseem on Monday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government would continue to work on its development agenda as per the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Addressing on motion at Senate, he criticized opposition party's alliance PDM, adding that PDM was rejected by the masses. He said that people had given their decision in favour of PTI. He said that despite all dramas of the opposition, people of Gilgit Baltistan had given mandate to PTI.

PDM wants to challenge democracy

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Special Assistant to Chief Minister (SACM) Punjab on Information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan has said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had made inter-ministerial committee to probe all misdeeds, committed from 2002 to 2020. The committee would make all facts public after completing its work, she added. To another query, she said that if the opposition would cross limits in protest outside the ECP, the law would take its own course.

Goswami's chat revealed 'dirty nexus', says PM

The premier said that a "larger crisis" was averted due to Pakistan's "responsible, measured response to Balakot"

ANSAR BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that the leaked WhatsApp chat of Arnab Goswami has revealed the "dirty nexus" between the Narendra Modi government and Indian media that is pushing the nuclearised region to the brink of a conflict. PM Imran Khan said that in his address to the United Nations General Assembly he had informed the world on how India's fascist Modi government used the "Balakot crisis for domestic electoral gains". "Latest revelations from the communication of an Indian journalist, known for his war-mongering, reveal the unholy nexus between the Modi govt and Indian media that led to a dangerous military adventurism to win an election in utter disregard for the consequences of destabilising the entire region," said PM Imran. The premier said that a "larger crisis" was averted due to Pakistan's "responsible, measured response to Balakot".

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PM constitutes committee for Broadsheet issue

NAVEED MIRAJ / DNA

ISLAMABAD: With Prime Minister Imran Khan in chair, the federal cabinet has constituted a three-member committee to probe the Broadsheet LLC scandal. The committee will be led by Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Shibli Faraz and comprise Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry, and Federal Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari. The committee has been given the task to review Pakistan's agreement with Broadsheet LCC for the period 2002-2018, sources informed Geo News. "An investigation will be launched to find out who took advantage of the deal," the sources said as they revealed the cabinet's decisions.

PDM announces more rallies for February

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, talking about the decisions taken by the PDM steering committee, said that on January 21, there will be a million march rejecting Israel followed by a rally in solidarity with Kashmiris on February 5 at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi. "There will be a full-scale protest against those who sold off Kashmir," he said. Addressing a press conference with Maryam Nawaz after a PDM steering committee meeting in Islamabad, he further said that

Continued on Page 06

FBR intensifies crackdown against counterfeit cigarettes

It merits mentioning here that the legitimate tobacco industry in Pak has been pleading the government to take action against the sale of illicit cigarettes

NAVEED MIRAJ / DNA

ISLAMABAD: As illegal cigarette trade is inflicting considerable loss to the national exchequer on account of tax evasion and impeding efforts to effectively address the public health issue, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), on the instructions of the government, has intensified its operation against the sale and production of counterfeit cigarettes. The teams of Intelligence and Investiga-

tion (I&I) are conducting raids in different cities to curb the menace. Two separate raids were conducted the other day in Peshawar and Multan. According to the FBR officials, the I&I Multan team conducted a raid against illicit tobacco at Jahanian teshil of Khanewal District and seized approximately 110 cartons. In a separate raid, ninety eight cartons of counterfeit cigarettes were seized from a truck near Karnal Sher Interchange and taken to Peshawar office.

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ISLAMABAD: The Outgoing Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Mr Pham Hoang Kim, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

Pakistan condemns Saudi village attack

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday strongly condemned Houthi militants' terrorist attack by launching of a military projectile on one of the border villages in Jazan area in Saudi Arabia, resulting in injuries to three civilians. "These attacks threaten peace and security of Saudi Arabia, as well as the region. We call for the immediate cessation of such attacks," said Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri in a statement here. "Pakistan reiterates its full support and solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia against any threats to its security and territorial integrity," the Spokesperson maintained.

Saudi govt reduces executions

DNA

RIYAD: Saudi Arabia, for years one of the world's most prolific executioners, dramatically reduced the number of people put to death last year, following changes halting executions for non-violent drug-related crimes, according to the government's tally and independent observers. The Saudi government's Human Rights Commission said Monday it documented 27 executions in 2020. That's compared to an all-time high of 184 executions the year before as documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The change represents an 85% reduction in the number of people put to death last year, compared to 2019.

Pakistan values ties with Vietnam

President Arif Alvi made these remarks while talking to the outgoing Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Pham Hoang Kim

A.M.BHATTI

Islamabad: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that Pakistan highly values its relations with Vietnam and wants to further strengthen trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. He said that Vietnamese investors needed to take advantage of Pakistan's improved business environment as Pakistan offered on-arrival visa facility to Vietnamese nationals.

The President made these remarks while talking to the outgoing Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Mr. Pham Hoang Kim, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Monday. While highlighting the need to institutionalize high-level bilateral exchanges, the President said that the exchange of parliamentary delegations would open up new avenues of bilateral cooperation. He stated that Pakistan admired the fast-paced economic growth of Vietnam.

Pakistan is also grateful of Vietnam's support to Pakistan to become full-dialogue partner with ASEAN, President said. He underlined the need to foster people-to-people contacts by promoting cooperation in the fields of tourism and education. The President congratulated Mr. Pham Hoang Kim on the successful completion of his tenure in Pakistan and appreciated his efforts towards the promotion of bilateral ties between Pakistan and Vietnam.

Two TTP terrorists killed: ISPR

The two terrorists namely Usman Ali and Waheed Lashtai were killed while one got injured and was consequently apprehended during intense fire

ABID RAZA

RAWALPINDI: The Security Forces on Monday killed two active terrorists of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Sajna group amid intense exchange of fire in an Intelligence Based Operation (IBO) in Nargosa area of South Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The two terrorists namely Usman Ali and Waheed Lashtai were killed while one got injured and was consequently apprehended during intense fire, said a brief Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement. It added that the

killed terrorists were active members of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Sajna group and were Improvised Explosive Device (IED) experts, terrorist trainers and motivator and also involved in attacks on the Security Forces. The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement had further elaborated that terrorist Usman was also involved in attack on security forces on October 14, 2020 in which Captain Umer Cheema, two Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs) and three Soldiers embraced shahadat (martyrdom) while four were injured.

Pakistan approves Sinopharm vaccine

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday authorised emergency use of Chinese firm Sinopharm's anti-coronavirus vaccine. The decision was taken by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) after meetings held between January 14 and 18 during which the authority reviewed vaccine results submitted by the National Institute of Health (NIH), sources told media. "This approval allows federal and provincial governments as well as the private sector to import the vaccine from China. In December 2020, Federal Minister Ch Fawad Hussain had said Pakistan will purchase 1.2m vaccine doses from China's Sinopharm.

Egypt resumes Qatar flights

DNA

DOHA: The first direct flights since 2017 between Qatar and its former rivals Egypt and the UAE took to the skies on Monday, following the end of a regional crisis. Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) joined Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in cutting ties with Qatar in June 2017, accusing it of being too close to Iran and of backing Islamic extremists, charges Doha denies. The quartet agreed to heal the rift at a Gulf summit on January 5 in Saudi Arabia, after a flurry of diplomatic activity by outgoing US President Donald Trump's administration. The first commercial flight from Qatar to Egypt in three and a half years, an EgyptAir service to Cairo, took off from windswept Doha airport.

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Indonesia, Pak have every reason to diversify their relationship: Amb. Adam – Page 08

Pak not to change narrative on Palestine: Mushahid

"For Pakistan, which has a principal stance on Kashmir as well, Palestine is a sacred cause and surrender is not an option", said Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed while addressing a virtual meeting of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committees of the Pro-Palestine Countries

NAVEED MIRA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman Senate Foreign Affairs while addressing a virtual meeting of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committees of the Pro-Palestine Countries said that Pakistan and Iran share the same common perspective on Palestine as we oppose any attempt at undermining the just cause of the people of Palestine and both Pakistan and Iran remain committed to the formation of an independent Palestine, with al-Quds as its capital as enshrined in the United Nations resolutions. The virtual meeting was hosted by the Parliament of Iran. He said that Pakistan's commitment

to Palestine predates the creation of Pakistan because the founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah has talked about

the rights of Palestine as far back as 1940, when the struggle for Pakistan started under his great leadership. "7 years later Paki-

stan was created and since then Pakistan has steadfastly remained committed to Palestinian cause", Senator Mushahid observed.



ISLAMABAD: Outgoing ambassador of Vietnam calls on Senator Mushahid Hussain. –DNA

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Govt taking measures to bring down prices

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Industries and Production Hammad Azhar has said the government is taking concrete measures to bring down sugar and wheat prices in the country. Speaking in the Senate today (Monday), he said more sugar will be imported to ensure its smooth and cheap supply. Hammad Azhar said in this regard we will seek permission from ECC to import 5000 tons more sugar. The Minister said to ensure adequate supply of flour, Punjab government timely enhanced the release of wheat to flour mills, however, at the same time Sindh government limited the release which resulted in price hike of flour in Sindh. He said for the first time in history, sugarcane farmers are being paid real price of their crop due to support price announced by the PTI government. The Minister said petroleum prices in Pakistan are lower than that of the neighboring countries. Hammad Azhar said major part of external debt during the PTI government was utilized to repay the interest on the loans obtained by the previous governments.

APHC appeals UN, OIC to help resolve Kashmir dispute

DNA

SRINAGAR: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference Working Vice Chairman, Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar, has appealed to the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to use their influence on India to settle the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the Kashmiris' aspirations. Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar in a statement issued in Srinagar strongly denounced the grave human rights violations being perpetrated by Indian troops across the occupied territory. He said that the recent extrajudicial killing of six youth in fake encounters in Shopian and Srinagar should serve as an eye-opener for the world community. He said that India must allow the teams of world human rights bodies like the UN Human Rights Council, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Committee of Red Cross to visit IOJK and take stock of the ground situation. He said that despite Indian atrocities, Kashmiris were determined to continue their freedom struggle till it reached its logical conclusion. Hurriyat leader, Javid Ahmed Mir, interacting with people in different areas of Srinagar appealed to the world community to play role in the resolution of the long-pending Kashmir dispute for ensuring durable peace in South Asia.

Emirates Group rolls out vaccination programme

DNA

KARACHI: The Emirates Group today rolled out a COVID-19 vaccination programme for its substantial UAE based workforce in coordination with the Dubai Health Authority and the Ministry of Health and Prevention. The inoculation drive began this morning, with priority being placed on its frontline aviation workforce, including Cabin Crew, Flight Deck and other operationally focused roles. The airline, along with dnata, are among the first transport and air services organisations in the world to offer employees the option to get vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. Over the course of the pandemic, Emirates and dnata have implemented multiple layers of safety measures, to ensure the health and safety of customers, employees and the communities served. The rollout of its vaccination programme is another step forward, helping to safeguard the health and wellbeing of aviation employees who serve the travelling public and help move essential goods around the world.



ISLAMABAD: Begum Samina Arif Alvi visiting "Umeed-e-Noor", an education center for children with disabilities, in Islamabad. – DNA

'Work on PWD underpass to be completed by end of April'

According to detail, the current administration of CDA is taking remarkable steps for the completion of various delayed projects. Work is continued on PWD underpass at Islamabad Express Way

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Administration of Capital Development Authority (CDA) will complete its work on PWD Underpass at Islamabad Expressway by the end of April. Earth work and Pipe Culverts work for east and west ramp of the said project have also been completed. According to detail, the current administration of CDA is taking remarkable steps for the completion of various delayed projects. Work is continued



on PWD underpass at Islamabad Express Way. NIT expense of the project is Rs 515,984, 740 whereas the contract expense of the

project is Rs 428,227,272. Local company MS Magbool Calsons JV is working on the project. MS Zeerak Loya is working on design,

supervision, and consultant of the project. Work on project was initiated in September 2020 and was supposed to be completed within

the time period of 07 months. 27% work on the project has been completed. Work on box culverts of the project is also underway.

Yasmin Rashid rejects rumours about ministers getting vaccines



LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Dr Yasmin Rashid has rejected the rumours

about ministers getting COVID-19 vaccines and clarified that the vaccine has not arrived in Pakistan so far. Dr Yasmin Rashid, while addressing a press conference today, said that rumours are circulating about the administration of COVID-19 vaccines to the ministers. She clarified that the vaccines have not arrived in the country so far, however, the provin-

cial government completed arrangements for launching the vaccination drive. "We would try our best to get the best vaccines for our people." While elaborating the preparations regarding the forthcoming COVID-19 vaccination drive in the province, she said that the government established 20 new laboratories amid the pandemic and PC-I of five more labs

was also finalised. She detailed that the province conducted 15,195 tests today, whereas, the total number of tests reached up to 2,730,000. The province could conduct 24,000 Covid tests in a day now, she said. The positivity rate of novel coronavirus in the provincial capital Lahore is low as compared to the other provinces. – DNA

'LB system to usher in era of development'

The local bodies system would benefit the people as a strong local government system would help to resolve public problems, he held



DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar chaired a meeting at his office to review steps for resolving public problems at the grassroots. The meeting was attended by provincial ministers Raja Basharat, Mian Mahmood-ur-Rasheed, Hashim Jawan Bakht, Mian Aslam Iqbal, Chief Secretary and others. The CM directed that effective steps be taken to resolve the problems of people at their doorsteps adding that the new local bodies system would usher in a new era of development at the basic level. The local bodies system would benefit

the people as a strong local government system would help to resolve public problems, he held. Similarly, the Punjab Local Government Act would ensure genuine public representation, he added. The CM said the government wanted to introduce an exemplary system for empowering local bodies institutions. He disclosed that a separate development package would be introduced for every district adding that best sanitation services, as well as the provision of clean drinking water, were top priorities of the government. The government was giving particular attention to the repair and maintenance of roads and streets because the timely solution of problems was the gist of the public-friendly development process, he said. A democratic system that could solve public problems at their doorsteps was imperative and the PTI government fully believed in the devolution of power and authority at the grassroots, he added.



ISLAMABAD: SAPM on overseas Pakistanis and HRD, Syed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari and Senator Faisal Javed in a group photograph at launching ceremony of Pakistan Overseas Real Estate Forum. – DNA

'Demographic changes turn IOJK into a Hindu state'

The President while addressing the seminar said, India invaded and reoccupied IOJK on August 5, 2019, and then illegally divided the state into two parts and annexed it to the Indian federation, against the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Masood Khan, President Azad Jammu and Kashmir, has said that the Indian occupation authorities are using demographic changes to vaporize the State of Jammu and Kashmir and to make it a Hindu majority state. "This is unacceptable. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have vowed they would not let this happen", asserted Masood Khan. The AJK President made these remarks while addressing a webinar on "New Domicile Law in IOJK" organized by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS). The event was attended by Imtiaz Gul, Executive Director CRSS and Dr Nazir Gillani, President of Jammu and Kashmir Council

for Human Rights. The President while addressing the seminar said, India invaded and reoccupied IOJK on August 5, 2019, and then illegally divided the state into two parts and annexed it to the Indian federation, against the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Since then, he said, Indian forces have been systematically killing, torturing, forcibly disappearing and incarcerating people in the occupied territory, targeting young men. Thousands of political activists have been put in concentration camps. Rape and sexual violence against women have been used as a weapon of war to punish the entire population of the disputed region in order to deter them from demanding freedom and self-determination, he said.



Masood Khan said that since April last year, Indian occupation forces and authorities are systematically and illegally changing the demography in the occupied territory. He went on to add that more than two million Hindus from India have been imported and transferred to the occupied territory and the Indian leadership has made it clear that they would increase this number to more than

5 million in a short period of time. "India through these actions is violating international humanitarian law and norms of customary international law. The Fourth Geneva Convention and Additional Protocol prohibit deportation or transfer of a State's own population in a territory it occupies while the Statute of International Criminal Court says that such transfers, directly or indirectly constitute a war crime." Sardar Masood maintained that several resolutions of the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly and UN Human Rights Commission declared such illegal transfers and "implantation of settlers and settlements" unlawful and that the State undertaking such an exercise, as well as individuals, making decisions on its behalf will have criminal responsibility. Moreover, President Khan said that Article II of 1948 Genocide Convention recognizes that a crime of genocide and it clearly depicts the situation in the Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Article II, he said, defines genocide as any of the acts committed with the intent to destroy in whole or part a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. "This is what is happening in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir", he said. Khan said that the Muslim majority of the disputed State of Jammu and Kashmir aspire to decide their political future by exercising their right to self-determination but India has chosen to crush these aspirations of the entire Kashmiri nation and is now in the process of altering the occupied territory to a Hindu Rashtra.

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Court bars police from arresting Mansha 'Bomb'

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday granted interim bail to Malik Mansha Khokhar alias 'Mansha Bomb' in a land grabbing case. The court has approved the interim bail of Mansha 'Bomb' and barred police from arresting Malik Mansha Khokhar till January 21. Several cases have been registered against the accused in Lahore's Green Town police station. It is pertinent to mention here that Mansha Bomb was arrested from the Supreme Court premises soon after he had surfaced there to seek protective bail on October 15, 2018, however, it was reported that he surrendered himself to the top court.

Tarbela power generation reaches 700 MW

TARBAILA: Despite low water inflow in the Tarbela dam reservoir Monday the power generation of the dam increased to 700 Mega Watts. According to the Tarbela Dam officials, from the last two weeks, the power generation of the Tarbela reaches its lowest where inflow remained up to 14000 cusec feet. The water level of Tarbela dams was reduced to 1470.73 feet owing to the decreased water inflow. Today the dam produced only 700 megawatts of electricity while only five power generation units were working with low capacity. 5 out of 12 power generation units of the dam were producing only 700 megawatts of electricity and 12 units were shut down. Today water inflow in the Tarbela reservoir was recorded 14300 cusec feet while outflow remained at 14300 cusecs feet.

DG NEPRA assures industrialists not charging

DNA

KARACHI: DG National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) Consumer Affairs, Naveed Elahi Shaikh, has assured the industrialists of Karachi that if any consumer has owned substation requests to Distribution company (DISCO) for shut down due to reason including the maintenance of machinery etc. The Distribution company will consider to shut down the PMT & substation without any charges. However, the consumer is required to submit a written three days' prior the schedule shut down and in case of fire at a business location, the electricity can be temporarily restored if the distribution company is satisfied. DG NEPRA, while discussing with a delegation comprising President North Karachi Association of Trade & Industry (NKATI) Faisal Moiz Khan, SVP Shabbir Ismail and member Shahab Ali Akram at his office in Islamabad, said that NEPRA has included that clause in the schedule for implementation, so that the business and industrial community don't face any difficulties.

Arrested fundraiser sending money to terrorists in Syria: CTD

DNA

KARACHI: DIG Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Umar Shahid on Monday said that arrested terrorist was sending money to terrorists operating in Syria. DIG CTD was addressing a press conference along with in-charge CTD Raja Umar Khatab here on Monday. It is to be mentioned here that the CTD had recently arrested main suspect Umar bin Khalid in terrorism funding case. Accused Umar Khalid, a university student, being further questioned in the case, DIG Umar Shahid said. Forensic report of his mobile phones highlighted that they were sending money by cryptocurrency bitcoin to fighters in Syria. "It is more convenient to fund terrorists by this currency," the DIG said. "He was in link with a boy Zia in Hyderabad and was sending money to him. They have sent over a million rupees of funds to Syria," CTD official said. They were used to sending money by Easypaisa and bitcoin," he elaborated.

Briefs

Zulfi warns expats against housing schemes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) Sayed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari Monday exhorted the expatriates to refrain from investing in the housing societies, selling land without obtaining No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from the relevant departments.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of Pakistan Overseas Real Estate Forum, he said the Pakistani diaspora was a major contributor of Foreign Direct Investment that was why protection of their assets was government's priority.

He said the government was all set to launch first-ever fast-track court to ensure speedy retrieval of the expats' lands from land grabbers. The initiative, which was in its final phase, would help dispose of their cases within a time-frame of 30 days, he added. The SAPM said the OP&HRD ministry would launch a drive next week to make sure that all the development authorities would post details of the housing societies, having NOCs, on their websites to facilitate the expats in making safe and secure investment in the country.

Court adjourns DRAP reference

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court (AC) on Monday adjourned hearing till February 18, in a Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) reference against ex-secretary Law Arshad Farooq and others. AC-III Judge Syed Asghar Ali heard the graft reference pertaining to increase in medicines' prices to benefit certain pharmaceutical companies.

The court gave last opportunity to co-accused Sabir Mali to appear and warned that proceedings would be initiated against the accused for declaring him court absconder if he failed to appear in a month.

The NAB prosecutor said that warrants were served to the accused address but could not be implemented. It was informed that the accused was staying abroad.

The defense lawyer said that the accused was out of country and prayed the court to grant one month time for his appearance. The court accepted the request and adjourned hearing of the case till February 18.

IRSA releases 32,100 cusecs water

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 32,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 42,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1470.73 feet, which was 78.73 feet higher than its dead level 1386 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 15,300 cusecs each.

The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1170.80 feet, which was 130.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 10,400 cusecs and 1,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 31,200, 23,200 and 8,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 8,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 8,600 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala.

Indian attempts to weaken native Kashmiris' highlighted

Pakistan and Kashmiris - wherever they are must continue highlighting the policy that is directly impacting lives and values of Muslims in the valley, a webinar by Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) observed

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: A striking consequence of the post August 2019 laws and regulations in the Indian-occupied Kashmir have been numerous; forced evictions and demolitions of Kashmiri Gujjar and Bakerwal nomads. Nearly one million poor nomads have become the latest victims of India's Hindutva policies which are aimed at eventually disempowering native Kashmiris. Pakistan and Kashmiris - wherever they are must continue highlighting this policy that is directly impacting lives and values of Muslims in the valley.

These ideas were resonated at a webinar, organised by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS). Speakers included the President of AJK Sardar Masood Khan and Dr.Nazir Gilani, the CEO of the London-based Jammu Kashmir Human Rights Council. Masood Khan condemned the "illegal Indian occupation" and called on the global community to wake up to the Indian high-handedness.

We must knock at every possible door to plead the case of Kashmiri Muslims who have been facing brutal oppression and genocide. It is the duty of the world to check the Indian aggression on Kashmiris, Khan said.

Both Khan, and Dr.Gilani voiced concern over the massive and continued violations of human rights with the help of some 100 laws that the BJP-government has enforced in Kashmir after declaring it as a union territory. These laws are likely to upset the demography of the region as they opened doors to outsiders to come , settled down and acquire properties in direct contravention of laws that bar non-Kashmiris from acquiring lands there.

A Kashmir journalist, currently in exile, pointed out the presence in Indian-occupied Kashmir of one million soldiers, half-million labourers, three hundred thousand Hindutva workers which, including their families, as a factor which may outnumber the 8 million Muslim population of Kashmir. Only after five years, the Muslims will be reduced to a minority which is the main agenda of the BJP government.

The journalist - who wished to remain anonymous spoke of reports of buses carrying thousands of RSS workers last year for settlement in areas near the Line of Control. Areas near borders have become commercial hubs of non-locals who can even speak Kashmiri now.

The second possible consequence, it was pointed out, was a possible infiltration into Azad Kashmir, particularly of RSS cadres in the garb of Kashmiri Muslims.

India may create conditions which may look legitimate for local residents to flee. And many of those residents are not native Kashmiris any more. They are either RSS cadres or Indian security establishment agents, who could be instrumental in not only fanning trouble in Azad Kashmir but also used as proxy victims of Pakistan, it was pointed out.

Speakers called on Pakistan to be pro-active and vigilant of next Indian moves, keeping in view their untenable claims on Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

7325 challans issued

DNA

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) issued 7325 challan slips on over speeding and imposed fines amounting to over Rs 2.9 million on the rules violators during 2020. According to Incharge Camera Squad Ahmed Nawaz Tarar, CTP on the directives of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Syed Ali Akbar Shah were checking over speeding on various roads of the district and taking action in accordance with the law against the violators.

He informed that the squad conducted operations to check over speeding through speed cameras on main roads particularly old Airport Road, New Airport Road and in other sectors including Taxila, Kalar Syedan and Mehrabad.

The CTO said that CTP had formed a special camera squad to check over speeding on various roads and the step had helped controlling fatal road accidents considerably in the district.

The squad was directed to take strict action against the violators without any discrimination, he added.

He said, CTP were making all out efforts to control over speeding and violation of traffic rules aimed at minimizing road traffic accidents. The CTO said, the Camera Squad had been directed to take strict action in accordance with the law against over speeding and wrong overtaking.

The CTP Education Squad was also making efforts to create awareness among road users about the road safety laws. He advised the road users to obey traffic rules and cooperate with Traffic Wardens in order to reach their destinations safe and sound.

Cold, dry weather likely in Capital

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Monday forecast cold and dry weather in the federal capital during next 24 hours. However, fog expected at few places in Islamabad and surrounding areas during morning hours, a MET office reported.

Fog likely to persist in plain areas of Punjab and upper Sindh while intense cold weather expected in Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan, upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and north Balochistan.

Minimum temperature's recorded in (°C): Skardu -14°C, Gupis, Astore, Leh -12°C, Anantnag -08°C, Bagrote -07°C, Gilgit, Hunza, Srinagar -06°C, Parachinar, shopian and Ziarat -05°C.

WASA starts crackdown against defaulters

RAWALPINDI: Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi on Monday launched a crackdown against the defaulters and sealed 12 services stations. Talking to APP Director General WASA, Raja Shoukat Mehmood said that action in accordance with the law was being taken against the water bill defaulters.

He informed that today an operation was conducted in Pirwadhai, Khayaban-e-Sir Syed and College Road areas under the supervision of Senior Special Magistrate Amir Ishfaq and 12 service stations were sealed in Pirwadhai area while their water pumps were also confiscated.

The DG further informed that two raids were also conducted at under construction plazas in Khayaban-e-Sir Syed and College Road areas and the team took action in accordance with the law.

He said, the teams have been directed to take strict action against the water bill defaulters without any discrimination. The DG said, the operation would continue against water theft and the defaulters and their water connections would be disconnected. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Students of National University of Modern Languages protesting against varsity's decision to hold exams on-campus. - DNA

NUML students protest against on-campus exams

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Students of the National University of Modern Languages in Islamabad on Monday demonstrated a protest against the varsity's decision to hold the exams on-campus.

The protesting students were of the view that they've been attending online classes and submitting assignments online but suddenly the university administration has decided to hold the exams in university.

The protesters have also demanded the university to refund their half-semester fee and the money charged for transport service and hostels, as the university remained closed for most of the semester. Deputy Commissioner, along with university officials negotiated with the protestors.

As per the deputy commissioner, the university administration has accepted to meet four of the five demands presented by the protestors. However, the students said they would continue the protest till all their demands are met.

It is worth mentioning here that a number of students have been complaining about online classes, citing the lack of internet facilities in their localities, however, the university kept the semester alive through online classes and now called the final exams on-campus, the decision which has largely irked the students.

Increased pollutants ratio mars capital's air quality

ISLAMABAD: Health experts have warned citizens to avoid unnecessary outdoor exertion as hazardous pollutants were recorded beyond permissible limits in the capital's air quality on Monday that marred its serene and scenic ambience. The air with high pollutant ratio was injurious to the health of children, teenagers and old people while the patients of lungs and heart diseases were at high risk, the medical practitioners said.

According to the data released by Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA), the particulate of 2.5 microns (PM2.5), which was a hazardous ambient air pollutant causing chronic respiratory diseases and premature deaths, was higher than safer limits in the capital's air.

PM2.5 was recorded 78.44 micrograms per cubic meter in Islamabad, which is much higher than the National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) of 35 micrograms and the World Health Organization (WHO) standard of 20 micrograms per cubic meter. The air quality data revealed the presence of 43.16 micrograms sulphur dioxide and 33.58 micrograms nitrogen dioxide per cubic meter against the NEQS of 120 micrograms and 80 micrograms per cubic meter respectively.

According to an EPA official, prevailing dry weather and increased vehicular emissions was the main reason for the bad air quality, caused due to presence of PM2.5 above the NEQS limit. It was the most health damaging environmental pollutant causing chronic respiratory diseases and premature deaths as it could easily penetrate into human blood through lungs cells, she said while talking to APP.

The official said sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide were released from industrial emissions and car engines at different concentrations that accumulated into the ambience causing air pollution. She mentioned that the Federal Capital's air quality was commendable during the lockdown as vehicular emissions had drastically reduced. The main reason of air pollution was a large number of vehicles on the Capital's roads emitting combustion gases, she added. - DNA

Rare gems' diorama opens at PMNH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Museum of Natural History (PMNH) has displayed the rare collections of gems and mineral of Pakistan at its galleries to create awareness among the people about the natural potential wealth of the country. Pakistan is blessed with natural wealth in the forms precious gemstones like emerald, ruby, tourmaline, topaz, garnet etc., metallic and non-metallic minerals and ores such as gold, copper, silver, chromite, aluminum and others metals.

All these forms of gems and minerals has been displayed for visitors and students to come and get knowledge and conduct research, an official said on Monday. - APP

PAS to award Pakistani Scientists

PAS Gold Medals will be awarded in various disciplines including Agriculture Sciences, including Veterinary Sciences and Forestry; Biological Science, including Botany, Zoology

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS) has announced to confer "Gold Medals and Awards 2021" upon the Pakistani scientists who have made outstanding contributions in scientific research. The PAS has invited the nominations from the Pakistani scientists in different disciplines for their selection for the prestigious awards which were being given with an objective to acknowledge their contributions to society. According to an official of the academy, PAS Gold Medals will be awarded in various disciplines including Agriculture Sciences, including Veterinary Sciences and Forestry; Biological Science, including Botany, Zoology, Microbiology and Bio-Chemistry; Chemical Sciences including Pharmaceutical Sciences; Earth and Environmental Sciences and Emerging Technologies, including Biotechnology, Nanotechnology, Molecular Biology and Bioinformatics. The other disciplines include Engineering Sciences, including Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Sciences; Health Sciences and Physics. The other awards to be given included Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman Gold Medal in Chemistry for Scientists under 40; Dr. M. Raziuddin Siddiqui Prize in Chemistry for Scientists under 40; Dr. Shah Jahan Prize in Agriculture for Scientists under 40; PAS-COMSTECH Prize in Computer Science (IT); Dr. M.N. Azam Prize in Computer Science (Software) and Prof. Zabta K. Shinwari Gold Medal in Biotechnology for Scientists under 50.

Abdus Salam Prize in Basic Sciences for Scientists under 40 in Biology and Salimuzzaman Siddiqui Prize in Applied Science-Technology for Scientists under 40 in Engineering Sciences were also among the awards to be given. About the nomination procedure, the official informed that only one nomination can be made in each subject by Fellows of the Academy, Vice Chancellors or Rectors of Universities and Heads of Organisations engaged in scientific education and research. While a statement will also be provided by the nominator that the nominee is not involved in any plagiarism or misconduct case. The nominations with filled proforma should reach on or before February 17 to Professor Dr Tasawar Hayat, Secretary General, Pakistan Academy of Sciences, 3-Constitution Avenue, G-5/2, Islamabad, Phone no: (92-51) 9204843, Email: sec.gen@paspk.org. - DNA

Govt to present DRAP act amendment bill soon

The parliamentary secretary said the health department would ensure implementation of all laws by medical stores and pharmaceutical companies

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Dr. Nausheen Hamid Monday said that incumbent government would table the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) Act amendment bill in the Parliament soon in order to regulate quality and pricing of the drugs.

Talking to a private news channel, she said that the government under its reforms agenda has started revamping DRAP to encourage merit and improve the quality of drugs, adding, it had started a move against illicit drug trafficking and taken several pro-active measures.

She warned that the pharmacists at medical stores should save their customers lives from dealing with complications which are due to using of the expired medicines and thus discourage illiterate sales managers. She said the health department would ensure implementation of all laws by medical stores and pharmaceutical companies.

She said serious steps have been taken to improve the legitimate use of controlled medicines and such medicines cannot be sold without the prescription of a registered medical practitioner.

Replying to a question, she said the amendments that have recently been made to the act have tightened the rules for medical stores and the stores with unregistered medicines would not only be sealed but owners will also be charged a hefty penalty.

She further said the health department has also conducted awareness campaigns at all district level to apprise the traders about the order and for its strict implementation. To another query, she replied that Sinopharm has been selected for corona vaccination in the country and government has also been in contact with four other vaccine companies and talks for procurement of COVID-19 vaccine have been in final stages.

The parliamentary secretary said Sinopharm vaccine would be available for advance booking, adding, the consignment of the vaccine is expected to arrive in Pakistan at the end of February or beginning of March.



Briefs

'Our top priority is to make Islamabad safest city'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Syed Mustafa Tanvir on Monday said it was foremost priority of the federal capital police to make Islamabad safest city and all out efforts would be made in that regard. A massive crackdown has been launched against anti-social elements and drug peddlers to make Islamabad crime free city, the SSP said in a statement. According to a police statement, Islamabad Police has arrested 14 outlaws from various areas of the city and recovered stolen car, narcotics, wine, valuables and weapons from their possession. SP (Rural-Zone) Farooq Amjad Butter constituted special police team under the supervision of DSP Qasim Niazi including SHO Koral police station Inspector Basheer along with others. The team successfully apprehended two accused Muhammad Umair and Baber and recovered two pistols along with ammunition from their possession. Anti-Car Lifting Cell arrested two accused Aadil and Irfan and recovered stolen car from their possession. Women police arrested a house maid Irfan involved in theft. Similarly, Sabzi Mandi police arrested an accused Asim and recovered stolen valuables from him. Secretariat police arrested suspect Safdar and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him. Homicide Unit of Islamabad police arrested two accused Naseer-ud-Din and Muhammad Ramzan and recovered two pistols along with ammunition from their possession. Likewise, Industrial-Area police arrested accused Imran and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him. Karachi company police arrested two accused Romaish and Sanook Messih and recovered four wine bottles from their possession. Golra police apprehended an accused Muhammad Faizan and recovered 120 gram hashish from him while police also arrested accused Waseem Khan involved in illegally oil selling. Cases have been registered against these nabbed persons and further investigation is underway from them.

'PDM will fall into the ditch dug'

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Communication Dr. Shahbaz Gill said in his statement that the Nawaz Sharif's theft in the name of "service" is being punished by the nation today. He said PML-N can no longer hide behind the hollow slogans of Khidmat and Khadim-e-Ala. He said an increase of 85% in Shahbaz Sharif's assets in ten years is his real performance, flood victims funds, cheap bread and kickbacks of laptop schemes are a testament to their performance, unfortunately, during his tenure, corruption increased in the cycle of performance, he had polluted Lahore with his politics of corruption. Dr. Shahbaz Gill said that PDM has no clear agenda, resignations, long march, protests have all been reduced to dust by the people of Pakistan. He said PDM is now trying unsuccessfully to raise the issue of foreign funding; PDM will fall into the ditch dug for PTI. These thieves will also fail on the issue of foreign funding. He said they are taking the name of Israel and India; PML-N had a plan to recognize Israel, which was working for the fulfillment of the agenda. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing a seminar on promotion of breastfeeding in Pakistan, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

President urges Ulema, media's role to promote breastfeeding

The president said the frequent messaging in the society on different health issues was essential for what the role of prayer leaders, media and lady health workers was vital as they had a deeper penetration in the society

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Monday emphasized the role of prayer leaders and media to promote breastfeeding in the society for a healthier future generation by preventing the children from stunting and other communicable diseases. Addressing an "Advocacy Seminar on Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding" here at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said breastfeeding was the most

cost-effective intervention for children's better growth. First Lady Samina Alvi, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health Dr. Faisal Sultan, SAPM Dr. Sania Nishtar, Parliamentary Secretary on Health Dr. Nosheen Hamid, Country Representative of Unicef Aida Girma-Melaku attended the event besides parliamentarians and women from different walks of life. Started with recitation of Qurani verses teaching the breastfeeding for 24 to 30 months, the seminar also

featured a video documentary to highlight the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for at least initial six months and rubbishing some misconceptions. The president said the frequent messaging in the society on different health issues was essential for what the role of prayer leaders, media and lady health workers was vital as they had a deeper penetration in the society. Clarifying a misconception about the yellowish colostrum (first form of milk produced immediately after

delivery of the newborn), the president said instead of wasting, it must be fed to newborn for it being full of antibodies and nutrients. He said from the very first day of assuming the office, Prime Minister Imran Khan took up the issue of malnutrition and stunted growth which could be effectively prevented through two-year breastfeeding. Arif Alvi told the audience that better human development was inevitable for poverty alleviation and economic

development. He said less than fifty percent of the children were not breastfed by the mothers which was unfortunate particularly in a Muslim country like Pakistan as both Quran as well as scientific research strongly advocated for mother feed with no substitute of it. He called for displaying posters with relevant comprehensive messages in mosques for public awareness. The president said even the formula milk producing compa-

nies should clearly tell the consumers that it was in no way a substitute to the breastfeeding. He said the breastfed children get better protection against cancer, pneumonia, osteoporosis and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) besides having better IQ level. He advised the mothers to breastfeed their children exclusively for six months without even serving water to the newborn and continue breastfeeding for two years.

PARC opened a new branch of PATCO-PARC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PATCO is an agri-business company of PARC to promote its R&D products and services and in connection with its agri-business growth PATCO-PARC is establishing a chain of its display centers across the town. Recently setting up of its 4th display center under public private partnership at Ghori Town Phase-I Islamabad on 17 January 2021 is successfully achieved. At its opening ceremony Chairman PARC Dr. Muhammad Azeem Khan started the ceremony by cutting the ribbon in the presence of CEO PATCO-PARC Dr. Muhammad Amjad and other high officials. Being determined to seek growth of research based and multi grain food products with the high nutritional value in the country Dr. Azeem Khan is playing key role in scaling up agricultural R&D through its agri-business. While inauguration Chairman PARC resolved to bring forward such interventions more and more and maximum 10 branches will be opened in future.

USC's chairman terminated over misuse of powers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal government on Monday terminated the services of Utility Stores Corporation (USC) Chairman Zulqarnain Ali Khan after an inquiry proved five charges against him. Zulqarnain Ali Khan was appointed chairman of the USC in 2018 and an inquiry found him guilty on five counts including misuse of powers. Besides his termination, a notification for the dissolution of the board of directors of the utility stores corporation was also issued. The secretary industries has been appointed as the chairman of the USC for three months while an interim six-member board has also been formed to run the affairs of the corporation. The new board, which is announced through a notification, comprises of secretary and joint secretary of the industries department, joint secretary finance, DG HSP, MD Utility Stores Corporation and DG FIA. The new board will work until a new chairman is appointed by the government in three months.

Eight gamblers held

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested eight gamblers and recovered stake money Rs 5,35 and 5 mobile phones from their possession here on Monday, informed police spokesman. Ganjmandi Police team raided and arrested for gambling on card were identified as Muslim Khan, Yusuf Khan, Mohammad Siddique, Amir Khan, Anwar Saeed, Abdul Hakim, Siddique and Rafaqat Farooq. During course of action, police also recovered amount of Rs. 5,350 and 05 mobile phones and playing cards were recovered. A case has been registered against the accused under the Gambling Act. City Police Officer CPO Muhammad Ahsan Younas appreciated the performance of police team adding that strict action should be taken against anti social elements.

IGP directs for safe road environment in Capital

RANA FARRUKH

ISLAMABAD: The Inspector General of Police, Islamabad Qazi Jamil ur Rehman on Monday directed Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) to prove itself before other forces as the most capable force through hard work and ensure courteous attitude with road users.

According to details, the Inspector General of Police, Islamabad Qazi Jamil ur Rehman paid visit to Islamabad Traffic Police. He visited various branches and inspected the one window driving license system, traffic help line-1915 and other departments of ITP. SSP (Traffic) Farrukh Rasheed briefed the IGP on the working of ITP. The IGP Islamabad while appreciating the services being rendered by ITP, directed to keep up the morale of the personnel. The IGP emphasized the team work for the safety of citizens and hoped that ITP will also prove itself as friendly police and emerge as role model for other police departments. He directed to ensure



safe road environment in the city by strict implementation on traffic laws and launch special campaign to educate road users. He asked to resolve the traffic related issues of the citizens and ensure maximum convenience to them. The IGP directed to take strict action against those those involved in violation of traffic rules including one wheeling practices, using tinted glasses and non pattern num-

ber plates. He directed action against transporters involved in non-completion of routes, misbehavior with passengers and overloading. SSP (Traffic) Farrukh Rasheed thanked IGP on his visit of the office and assured further hard work to come up to the expectations of citizens. He also directed to keep updating the citizens through ITP FM Radio 92.4

Govt fully bent upon destroying health sector, says JI Chief

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Senator Sirajul Haq has said that the PTI has fully bent upon destroying the health sector of rest of the country after failing to bring reforms in KP's hospitals during more than seven years of its government in the province. While addressing a protest demonstration of medics at Islamabad's D-Chowk here on Monday, he backed the protestors' demands, saying the JI would resist every step of the government to handover the hospitals to the private contractors. "The PTI has badly exposed itself in every sector. People are no more



ready to trust upon the claims of the prime minister." He said the PM had claimed that it had 200 economy experts with him but the country's economic sector was on the verge of collapse and it seemed that Islamabad made the complete surrender before the IMF.

He said the policy of importing advisors was continuing and nation was paying the cost. Senator Siraj said the country could not be put on the track with a fragile democratic system where the decisions were being made in closed doors. He said the thousands had become jobless in past two and half years and prices of basic commodities went to record high due to flop economic policies of the rulers. He said there was dire need to get rid of the ruling elite and introduce a system which was dreamt by the founding fathers of the country. The JI, he said, already started a full-fledged campaign to transform the country into an Islamic welfare state.

CDNS reaches net target of Rs 430 billion free deposit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has reached the free deposit of Rs 430 billion in last six months from July 01 to December 31st current Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21. The Central Directorate of National Savings (SDNS) has compensated an amount of Rs 440 billion to its investors after the termination of major prize bonds of Rs 40,000 and recent cancellation of prize bonds of Rs 25,000, senior official of CDNS told here on Monday. Replying to a question, he said that the federal government has recently suspended the prize bonds of

Rs25,000 and has given a six-month deadline to investors to encash their savings of Rs184 billion. The government has already cancelled prize bonds of Rs 40,000 and CDNS repaid to the investors the encashment worth Rs 158 billion in previous FY 2019-20, he said. The Senior official achieved a collective net target of Rs 42 billion in the last six months by July 1st to December 31 of current fiscal year 2020-21. The CDNS has set Rs 249 billion annual collection target for the year 2020-21 as compared to Rs 352 billion for the previous year's 2019-20 to enhance savings and promote saving culture in the country.

AIUO to continue its scholarships schemes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University has announced to continue its scholarships schemes to provide financial assistance to the students. Besides merit scholarship schemes, earn to learn initiative and final year project grant, university is providing financial assistance to transgenders, prisoners, different abled people as well as children of martyrs so that after seeking education, they may contribute in the progress and development of the country. It is pertinent to mention here that AIUO is the only university in Pakistan, both in public and private sectors, which provides free

matriculation education to the people of Baluchistan, Gilgit Baltistan and former FATA. The students are required to contact students advisory and counseling services or their respective regional offices in order to obtain further information to avail these opportunities. Moreover, university has commenced admissions in spring 2021 semester from January 15, 2021. Prospectus sale points have been established throughout the country at the union council levels to provide admission facilities at the doorsteps of the people. Prospectuses and admission forms of all the programs are available online on the university website (www.aiuo.edu.pk).

Indicators show economy witnessing significant growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: At a time when the world economic growth rate has been hit hard by the COVID-19 (coronavirus) shocks, the economy of Pakistan has been showing significant progress as indicated by various indicators, depicting prudent policies of the government in running the country in these crisis times. According to official figures, the Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) witnessed growth of 7.41 percent during the first five months (July-November) of the current fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year. While on year-on-year basis, the LSMI grew by 14.46 percent in November 2020 as compared to November 2019. The monthly inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), decelerated to 8 percent on year-on-year (YoY) basis in December 2020, from 8.3 percent

during November. On month-on-month (MoM) basis, it decreased by 0.7% in December as compared to an increase of 0.8 percent in November 2020 and a decrease of 0.3 percent in December 2019. On revenue side, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) collected taxes of Rs.2204 billion during the first half of the current fiscal year as against the revenues of Rs2101 during the corresponding period of fiscal year 2019-20, showing growth of 5 percent. The tax collection on year-on-year basis increased by 8.3 percent during the month of December 2020 compared to same month of last year. The collection during December 2020 was recorded at Rs508 billion against Rs469 billion in December 2019. Meanwhile, the remittances from overseas Pakistanis during December 2020 rose by 16.2 per cent year-on-year to \$2.436 billion, compared to \$2.097bn in December 2019. The remittances re-

mained above \$2 billion for the seventh consecutive month. The remittance during the first half of the current fiscal year increased by 24.9 percent to \$14.2bn against the remittances of \$11.372 billion during July-December (2019-20). Meanwhile, the overall, liquid foreign currency reserves held by the country, including net reserves held by banks other than the SBP, stood at \$20,519 million as on January 08, 2020 compared to \$18,658.1 in January 2020, showing increase of 9.97 percent. The country's exports increased by 4.98 percent during the first half (H1) of the current fiscal year (2020-21) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. The exports from the country during July-December (2020-21) were recorded at \$12.098 billion against the exports of \$11.524 billion during July-December (2019-20), according to the latest PBS data.

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



A danger to peace

WHAT started off as an investigation into a prominent Indian journalist's abetting of suicide has unveiled incriminating facts about the Indian government's organising of terrorism in its own territory and abroad. Leaked WhatsApp conversations of Arnab Goswami, Managing Director of Republic Media Network, include proof that the Pulwama attack was a false flag operation, in which India killed its own troops and tried to pin the blame on Pakistan, and that Goswami knew of the Modi government's plan to stage a strike in Pakistan days before the Balakot episode.

The revelations confirm that the Pulwama attack, which India used as a justification to push further violence onto Pakistan, was indeed a false flag operation, in order to boost Modi's popularity in the then-upcoming 2019 general elections and to malign the Kashmir Freedom Movement. The revelations validate what the Pakistani state has been pointing out about the Modi government all along. India knowingly peddled a narrative to promote volatility on a false premise—it was willing to risk a nuclear showdown, indeed an Armageddon, purely for its own domestic benefit.

In contrast, Pakistan's restrained response at the time to false allegations by India demonstrates its commitment to keeping regional peace, and its maturity. The Goswami leaks pose further questions on what other terrorist attacks India has been behind—the recent attacks in Pakistan also show strong evidence of Indian involvement. Goswami is not just one journalist—he represents the Indian State's coordinated campaign to use disinformation warfare against Pakistan. The EU DisinfoLab's investigation, unveiling Indian manipulation of international media, NGOs and think tanks, only scratched the surface of the Modi government's jingoistic ambitions, which appear to readily forego regional security for its own domestic interests.

For the sake of the security of the region—and of the world, India must be isolated until it changes its ways and apologises. Its behaviour is unacceptable and dangerous, and the sheer opposite of the decency with which other responsible states in the region conduct themselves. The world now has to look past India's clownish facade to see its true face. It facilitates, funds and indeed orchestrates terrorist attacks, it must be treated as a pariah.

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

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



Quick action

WHILE the second wave may be in full swing in Sindh and Punjab, it seems to have slowed down in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). The region has neither reported a new case in the last four days nor has it reported a death since December 25. Surely, there is something to be learnt about crisis management from the region. However, matters should be made easier now that Oxford's AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved for emergency use. Focus can now be placed on quick procurement and subsequent vaccination of the population along with social distancing measures. The government has to be proactive if any ground is to be achieved on this front.

On a national level, there are over 34,000 active cases in the country—majority of which are restricted to the provinces of Sindh and Punjab. Considering that the pandemic is raging in such areas, it is extraordinary how GB has exercised control over the situation and prevented any transmission of the virus for the past four days. It signals to the fact that the region enforced comprehensive laws and protocols strictly enough to shield people from vulnerabilities. There is no denying that population density played a big part in how quickly this outcome was achieved however, the commitment is still noteworthy. It would bode well for all other provincial governments to follow suit.

Only through such careful action will the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine by Oxford University also help improve the overall situation. Currently, it has only been approved for local and emergency use. As such, the need to adhere to preventative measures is still dire. The government needs to go about this with dexterity. Considering that there is still a limited supply of vaccines available, quick procurement is essential. We already have allocated a large budget for this objective so there should be no reason for a delay. Then, phase by phase vaccination campaigns need to be carried out so that the population can be immunised against the virus. Only through such a comprehensive plan can actual positive outcomes be achieved.

Health security needs strengthening

Sara Al-Mulla



Governments should ensure that healthcare systems are fully equipped with medical devices and personal protective gear, as well as having infection control practices in place.

Sufficient healthcare professionals should also be available, and they should have access to specialized training on handling, preventing and treating patients with infectious diseases, especially during stressful periods like epidemics or pandemics

MORE than a year has passed since the emergence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and, with it, a pandemic that is still wreaking havoc across the globe. Biological threats are not just public health crises, they also have the power to paralyze entire nations through economic recessions, productivity downturns, international and domestic security fears, the loss of lives, and civic distress. It is thus imperative that global leaders work collectively to upgrade their health security measures to counter the effects of infectious disease outbreaks.

In recent years, epidemics have served as a wake-up call to nations. The 2003 SARS outbreak spread to two dozen countries in Asia, Europe, North America and South America before it was contained. By then, it had infected more than 8,000 people and claimed the lives of about 800. In 2014, the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa became the biggest of its kind in history. West African countries were, at the time, ill-prepared to deal with this unfamiliar illness, with weak detection systems and healthcare workers untrained in handling such a disease; not to mention the social and economic upheavals that accompanied the outbreak. These factors enabled the disease to spread expansively across populations until global efforts brought it under control.

Spurred by such recent biological threats, many governments took measures to improve national health security in order to prevent, detect and respond to serious threats. For example, the Singaporean government in 2019 established the National Centre for Infectious Diseases to strengthen its capabilities in terms of preventing and managing infectious diseases. Its work focuses on long-term horizon scanning and risk assessments, as well as training on outbreak management, epidemiological research, and outbreak readiness and response. Elsewhere, the South Korean government invested heavily in digital health technologies to monitor infectious diseases and manage outbreaks. Its detailed epidemiological data dashboard has enabled the government to successfully curb COVID-19 infection rates by tracking patients, identifying hotspots and alerting citizens. Health security es-

entially refers to a country's ability to prevent the emergence of pandemics, detect and report biological threats, ensure early and rapid responses, manage a robust healthcare system with sufficient infrastructure and trained healthcare professionals, comply with international health standards, and measure its vulnerability to biological threats. The most comprehensive evaluation of health security capabilities is the Global Health Security Index, which assesses 195 countries in this area and is published by the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, the Economist Intelligence Unit, and the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

Its 2019 report revealed that no country is fully equipped to face epidemics or pandemics, with major gaps in their public health systems preventing them from doing so. For example, fewer than 7 percent of countries scored in the top tier for their ability to prevent the emergence of pandemics. Furthermore, only 20 percent scored well in monitoring, detecting and reporting emerging outbreaks, while fewer than 5 percent had the public health and governance systems to respond rapidly to outbreaks and mitigate their spread. The rankings also highlighted the health security levels in Arab states, with Saudi Arabia leading the region in its capability, followed by the UAE and Kuwait. Unfortunately, many other Arab states' scores categorized them among the least-prepared nations, with perilous outages that leave them ill-equipped to handle outbreaks. It is clear that governments worldwide need to seriously commit to upgrading their health security. This can be done, firstly, by establishing a dedicated agency that is responsible for monitoring and managing infectious disease outbreaks, in addition to conducting vital epidemiological research, bringing new knowledge on medical diagnoses and treatments related to infectious diseases, training medical staff, coordinating with public bodies, engaging with communities, and formulating effective public health interventions. Governments should ensure that healthcare systems are fully equipped with medical devices and personal protective gear, as well as having infection control practices in place. Sufficient health-

care professionals should also be available, and they should have access to specialized training on handling, preventing and treating patients with infectious diseases, especially during stressful periods like epidemics or pandemics. Furthermore, it is important to have a multifunctional and qualified team of physicians, nurses, epidemiologists, public health officials, laboratory staff, community health workers, and social workers that work together to deliver a holistic outbreak management strategy. In tandem, universal health coverage should be available for citizens and residents to mitigate the spread of infectious diseases.

More investment needs to be channeled into research within this area to study effective strategies in handling epidemics or pandemics from various perspectives, such as industry and trade, international relations, immigration, security, and social services. Governments and private sector companies should be encouraged to invest in research that revolves around vaccine development, case management and treatment plans, the invention of lifesaving medical devices, and effective medications. Additionally, it is important to invest in digital health technologies — namely live health data dashboards and epidemiological research — that can inform decision-makers on managing outbreaks.

Finally, it is imperative that countries work closely together to boost national health security and provide real-time global biosurveillance data, updated health research, technical advice, and emergency response efforts. It is also worth reaching out to the private sector and civil society in this regard, seeing as they have positively contributed to mitigating outbreaks in the past. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, they have donated to global health efforts, invested in technological innovations, provided essential products and services to affected communities, and enabled employees to work remotely.

By addressing these critical health security measures, countries can strengthen their capabilities so that they can better address the current COVID-19 pandemic and also prevent future outbreaks.

— *Courtesy: Arab News*

Kashmir: A nuclear trouble spot

Muhammad Akhter Aslam



Kashmir issue is, now, talk of the global politics and bone of contention at international level. As this issue is between two nuclear-power countries; hence, its costs are expected far beyond the borders. Putting deaf ears over this issue is signal of peace demoting on the other hand, supporting Indian hegemonic steps will never constrain Pakistan to compromise on its minimum credible deterrence

IT is well-known to everyone that First World War resulted in devastating consequences; therefore, to maintain world peace, first ever international organization, League of Nations, was established in 1920. Begging of the Second World War put an end to the peace treaty. Protection of Human right has always been priority of the developed countries; so, another idea for collective cooperation emerged in 1945 which give birth to United Nations Organization. This is matter of fact that this organization resolved many conflicting concerns of the countries. Promoting international peace and avoiding wars is one of the major concerns of this worldwide organization but unfortunately Security Council, the chief organ of UNO, has remained ineffective to execute certain resolutions over India in Jammu and Kashmir case. Indian threat to IIOJK and violation of Human rights is not only question mark for regional peace but also warning to stability of United Nations.

Kashmir issue is, now, talk of the global politics and bone of contention at international level. As this issue is between two nuclear-power countries; hence, its costs are expected far beyond the borders. Putting deaf ears over this issue is signal of peace demoting on the other hand, supporting Indian hegemonic steps will never constrain Pakistan to compromise on its minimum credible deterrence. It is Seventy-three historic conflict between two nuclear countries and its roots go to ignorant steps of Lord Mountbatten and Hindutva alliance at the time of separation. Kashmir was consisting of 80 percent Muslim population and majority was willing to be part of Pakistan. Kashmiris have all the cultural, geographic and religious explanations that connect them with Pakistan but brutality of Indian

hegemony abused international notion of the human rights in IIOJK. This affiliation of Kashmiris with Pakistan showed real Indian picture. Indian army started genocides against Muslims and common human right violation in Jammu, in the result of that, regional Mujahedin emerged to support Kashmiri Muslims. Nehru government crossed all the limitations of humanity and over-run Indian army into Kashmir. Pakistan, being supporter of Kashmiri rights, came forward to resist destructive outcomes but resultantly India started war against Pakistan.

To resolve the issue, United Nations recommended for plebiscite in Kashmir but India, knowing the results, turned away by giving unnecessary excuses. Furthermore, India held elections in 1954 and with approval of Kashmir assembly, India declared Kashmir as integral part of it. In reaction to that, UNSC passed resolution 122 that rejected the law and advocated the referendum in Kashmir. Though, after Indo-Pakistan nuclear blast testing, United Nations passed resolution-1172 and asked both rivals to minimize tensions and buildup trust. Indian, as habitual, simply put blind eye over this decision. Indian interference is violation of international law, recently Kulbhushan Yadav case and the dossier presented at press conference of authorities is live example of Indian illegal intervention policy. India always plays that game to divert public attention from Indian national issues but South Asian politics should not ignore the fact that India's this policy will lead to greatest debacle in the region.

This region experienced four foremost wars between two countries. Recently in February 2019, Pakistan cracked two Indian warplanes MIG-21 and Pilot Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was arrested. Knowing the fact that both are

nuclear countries, Pakistan released the accused in order to give peace gesture in the region. This is time for UNSC to put way forward in Kashmir issue in accordance with the same resolution which India has been ducking for 73 years by using certain tactics and excuses. Knowing the fact, that step of Indian government is violation of all the resolutions of United Nations. The silence of UN on Indian move, taken on 5th August, 2019, weakens the stability of this international organization. United Nations knows that nearly 530 days passed since Indians unconstitutional move. It is abuse to human rights activist that Kashmiris are being behaved as prisoners for guilt since revoking of article 370 and 35 A.

In recent times, inhuman activities are being carried by Indian government. Pakistan, being Islamic state, will never leave Kashmir into ditch of unjust. Indian government has violated ceasefire on working boundary. Almost, ninety-two women, sixty-eight children and overall, two hundred seventy-six citizens are victimized in that brutal step by Indian army.

It is, hence, finalized that fascist Modi government has taken unconstitutional actions that violate secular nature of Indian constitution. Current government of India promotes Hindutva and materializes religious amendments in their constitution which is, even, unacceptable to Indian minorities. Despite all this, Pakistan represents clear agenda favorable to Kashmiris. International institutions should have a duty to resolve this conflict and put serious actions against Indian immoral, inhuman and unjust activities. Global players should be aware from the reality that outcome of this burning question will be staking not only regional peace but also global.

— *The writer is student of M.Phil, Criminology at SU Jamshoro.*

Briefs

PDM
announces
more rallies
for February

From Page 01

historic rallies would be held in Hyderabad on February 9, Sialkot on February 13, Pishin on February 16, Sargodha on February 23, Khuzdar on February 27, followed by the decision to march towards Islamabad. The final date for the Long March will be announced at the PDM rally, said Fazlur Rehman. Maulana Fazlur Rehman has also termed the foreign funding case as the 'biggest scandal in the history of the country' and said that Imran Khan had created political instability by taking "Mother of NROs". He said that the meeting discussed the strategy of PDM's protest before the Election Commission. "On Tuesday, the PDM leadership will stage a massive protest in front of the Election Commission of Pakistan", he said. Maulana Fazlur Rehman alleged that Imran Khan was the main accused in the foreign funding case in which private business was done through a secret account. He said that PDM will protest in front of the ECP office and demand an early verdict as the delay is raising suspicions.

FBR
intensifies
crackdown

From Page 01

Sources told this scribe that the clamp down against the mafia involved in illicit trade of cigarette will be further accelerated in the days to come to achieve the desired results in the minimum possible time. It merits mentioning here that the legitimate tobacco industry in Pakistan has been pleading the government to take action against the sale of illicit cigarettes. According to estimates, around 87 million illicit cigarettes are consumed every day in Pakistan due to their lower prices and are said to cause an annual loss of Rs35-40 billion to the national exchequer. The illicit cigarettes account for about 35% of the market share and most of these are produced in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Kashmir. These cigarettes attract the youth due to easy access at lower prices. According to sources Prime Minister Imran Khan has given special instructions to the Ministry of National Health Services and the FBR to immediately cope with this challenge as it is the matter of future of young generation.

As per the study conducted by Oxford Economics, Pakistan is ranked number one in the trade of illicit cigarettes in Asia. The primary reason for the existence of illegal manufacturers and traders is the tax-driven price differential between legal and illicit brands.

UAE suspends
visa waiver
agreement
with Israel

FOREIGN DESK

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has suspended a visa waiver agreement with Israel in an effort to stem the spread of coronavirus, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said on Monday. A ministry statement said the suspension will continue until July 1. "The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs has informed that according to the signed visa waiver agreement and in light of the efforts made to limit the spread of coronavirus, the visa waiver agreement will be suspended until July 1," the statement reads. "Until the aforementioned date, Israeli citizens will be required to obtain an entry visa before traveling to the United Arab Emirates and UAE citizens will be required to obtain an entry visa in advance before traveling to Israel," the statement added. Thousands of Israelis have traveled to the UAE in the past few months. Israel and the UAE have reached an agreement for the mutual exemption of visas for both countries' citizens within the framework of their agreement to normalize relations. The UAE was the first Arab country to sign a visa waiver agreement with Israel. Israel and the UAE signed a US-sponsored deal on Sept. 15 last year to normalize their relations, a move that was followed by Bahrain and Sudan and recently Morocco.



ISLAMABAD: Afghan ambassador to Pakistan, Najibullah Ali Khil visited the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad and met with ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General of the Institute. – DNA

Vaccine nationalism puts world
'catastrophic moral failure': WHO

"WHO has to remain relevant and ... has to come out of this crisis with more strength than before," said WHO Executive Board Vice-Chair Bjoern Kuemmel of Germany in comments last week

FOREIGN DESK

GENEVA: The world is on the brink of "catastrophic moral failure" in sharing Covid-19 vaccines, the head of the World Health Organisation said on Monday, urging countries and manufacturers to spread doses more fairly around the world.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the prospects for equitable distribution were at "serious risk" just as its COVAX vaccine-sharing scheme aimed to start distributing

inoculations next month.

He noted 44 bilateral deals were signed last year and at least 12 have already been signed this year. "This could delay COVAX deliveries and create exactly the scenario COVAX was designed to avoid, with hoarding, a chaotic market, an uncoordinated response and continued social and economic disruption," he said.

Such a "me-first approach" left the world's poorest and most vulnerable at risk, he said at the opening of the body's annual Executive Board meeting in virtual format. "Ultimately these actions will only



prolong the pandemic," he added, urging countries to avoid making the same mistakes made during the H1N1 and HIV pandemics. The global scramble for shots has intensified as more infectious vi-

rus variants circulate.

Tedros said more than 39 million vaccine doses had been administered in 49 higher-income countries whereas just 25 doses had been given in one poor country. A delegate from Burkina Faso, on behalf of the African group, expressed concern at the meeting that a few countries had "hoovered up" most of the supplies.

Observers say this board meeting, which last until next Tuesday, is one of the most important in the UN health agency's more than 70-year history and could shape its role in global health long after the

pandemic ends.

On the agenda is reform of the body as well as its financing system, which was revealed as inadequate after its largest donor, the United States, announced its withdrawal last year.

"WHO has to remain relevant and ... has to come out of this crisis with more strength than before," said WHO Executive Board Vice-Chair Bjoern Kuemmel of Germany in comments last week.

But he expected resistance from some countries to pressure to boost financial contributions.

Ozil confirms
leaving Arsenal

SPORTS DESK

ISTANBUL: Mesut Ozil has confirmed he is leaving Arsenal for Turkish side Fenerbahce, saying he was "very excited" to join a team he always supported and that he was in good physical condition despite missing nearly a year of football. The German World Cup winner has been frozen out of the London club for months and was left out of its English Premier League and Europa League squads at the start of the season. The 32-year-old, who is of Turkish origin, has long been linked with a move to Fenerbahce, one of Istanbul's three big clubs. Speaking to Turkish broadcaster NTV on Sunday, Ozil said he would arrive in the Turkish city early on Monday to seal his move.

"I am a Fenerbahce fan. That is why I am very happy to be coming to Turkey with Fenerbahce," Ozil said. "I'm very excited. God gave me the chance to wear this jersey as a Fenerbahce fan. God will-

ing, I will carry it with honour and do everything I can for the team," he added. Ozil has not played for Arsenal since March 2020 and his reported deal on a weekly salary of £350,000 (\$475,000) was set to expire at the end of the current season. "Of course, I'm missing a few matches. I haven't played in a match in a while, but I am physically fit, I have no issues," he said, adding he had been training with the first team at Arsenal during his time off the pitch.

In a Twitter post, Ozil tweeted "67" with a heart emoji, in an apparent reference to the first two digits of the postal code of Zonguldak in Turkey, where his family hails from. Media reports in Turkey said Ozil will sign a three and a half year deal with Fenerbahce, which are currently second in the league behind Besiktas. Signed in 2013 for a then-club record fee of about 42 million pounds (\$57 million) from Spanish giant Real Madrid, Ozil played an important role under Arsene Wenger in ending Arsenal's trophy drought, winning the FA Cup in his first season. But he found himself marginalised under Wenger's replacement Unai Emery and again by current manager Mikel Arteta, who said the player's omission from the squad was for "football reasons".

21st century to be Asia's
century: Turkish FM

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: The 21st century will be the "Asia's century," Turkey's foreign minister said Monday, underlining the continent's strategic importance and potential. "The 19th and 20th centuries were the centuries of Europe and America, respectively. Today, all the data suggest that the 21st century will be

the century of Asia," Mevlut Cavusoglu said at a virtual meeting organized by Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) on new perspectives towards enhancing trade volume between Turkey and Asian countries. Many countries act with the awareness of this fact, Cavusoglu stressed, citing various deals signed recently between European countries, such as the UK, and their Asian counterparts. Noting that Turkey

launched its Asia Anew initiative in 2019 to improve ties with Asian nations, he stressed that the initiative was especially significant on enhancing economic relations. "We supported 33 Asian countries during the pandemic period and we brought medical supplies on vaccinations from countries like China and Japan," he said, referring to continuing ties between Turkey and Asia during the novel corona virus pandemic.



HYDERABAD: Squash players are playing their semi final rounds during the 2nd day of All Pakistan Women Squash Championship 2021. – DNA / Photo by Jan Ali Laghari

Suga vows to tackle virus as public support plunges

Suga's government has stressed the need to balance infection measures against economic impact, but was slammed for continuing to back a do-

DNA

TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga pledged Monday to tackle surging coronavirus cases and restore normal life "as soon as possible" as polls showed plunging support for his government. Suga, who was speaking at the opening of a new parliament session, has only been in office since September, but has seen approval ratings nosedive over his government's handling of a third wave of infections. The latest wave in Japan and abroad has also cast doubt on whether the pandemic-postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics can go

ahead this year, but Suga repeated he was still committed to holding the Games as "proof of mankind's victory over the virus". "To protect the lives and health of the Japanese people... I will get the situation back to normal as soon as possible," Suga said in a policy address to the Diet as it opened for a 150-day session. The greater Tokyo region and several other parts of Japan are under a virus state of emergency set to last until February 7, but the government has been accused of waiting too long to impose the measure and of mixed messaging on the situation. A weekend survey by the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper showed approval for



Suga's cabinet sank six percentage points from December to 39 percent, against a disapproval rate of 49 percent. The latest readings compare with a 74 percent approval rating for his government in the same survey when he took office in September. A poll from private

broadcaster ANN over the weekend showed similar results, with approval dropping to 34.8 percent from December.

Suga's government has stressed the need to balance infection measures against economic impact, but was slammed for continuing to back a domestic travel campaign even as infection rates spiked. He said Monday his government would soon submit legislation intended to toughen the rules during a state of emergency - including allowing fines for businesses that flout closure requests.

Reports suggest the government may also seek legal changes that would allow fines or even prison

sentences for those who refuse hospitalisation or contact tracing after testing positive with the virus. Despite the recent spike, Japan has so far seen a comparatively small Covid-19 outbreak, with around 4,500 deaths overall.

On Monday, the country detected a virus variant which first emerged in the UK, which is more transmissible, in three people who had never travelled there - a first in Japan.

"Based on the fact the variant was detected from the people with no travel history (to the UK), we can assume they were infected in Japan," Takaji Wakita, head of the National Institute of Infectious Diseases, told reporters.

Pak not to
change
narrative

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surrender to brute force and recognize Israel as it represses the people of Palestine. This undermines all United Nations resolutions", Chairman of Senate Foreign Affairs remarked. For Pakistan, which has a principal stance on Kashmir as well, Palestine is a sacred cause and surrender is not an option. He said that Pakistan is committed to supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people till the achievement of their goals. In these times of the Corona virus and in the context of the human siege of Palestine and Gaza we affirm our solidarity with the people of Palestine and we feel that our solidarity with the heroic people of Palestine must be supported and sustained. Earlier last year, on February 18th 2020 the Senate of Pakistan unanimously passed a resolution expressing solidarity with Palestine and the Pakistan Parliament also opposed any back tracking on Pakistan's principal policy on Palestine. Pakistan will remain committed to this cause.

He said that the conference is taking place at a historical movement when there is a shift in the global balance of economic and political power in which we see a shift, from the West to the East. He said that recent developments in the United States have shown that a divided and weakened America is on the decline and this is a world of multi-polarity and end of the age of the so-called sole super power. Above all, it is also the age where the notion of might is right is no longer tenable but, in-fact, the principal of Right is Might is paramount and it is in this context that causes like Kashmir and Palestine top the global agenda of peace and justice through implementation of United Nations Resolutions.

He said that Pakistan is ready to cooperate with other countries and parliaments to promote causes like Kashmir and Palestine. He expressed his pleasure to be participating in this conference on behalf of the people and the Parliament of Pakistan, on an issue that is vital to global peace and security, namely, Palestine. He thanked the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is brotherly neighbor of Pakistan with a long history of common interest, common issues, and above all common and sustained commitment to the cause of Palestine.

Goswami's
chat
revealed

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However, he warned that the Narendra Modi led government is turning India into a "rogue state". PM Imran said that Indian sponsorship of terrorism in Pakistan, its abuses in Indian occupied Kashmir and a 15-year global disinformation campaign against Pakistan have been exposed. "Now India's own media has revealed the dirty nexus that is pushing our nuclearised region to the brink of a conflict it cannot afford," said the PM. The premier reiterated that his government will "continue to expose India's belligerent designs towards Pakistan and Modi government's fascism". The Pakistani leader urged the world to "stop India from its reckless, militarist agenda before the Modi government's brinkmanship pushes the region" into an uncontrollable conflict.

Amir urges
to stop
spreading
fake news

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Left-arm pacer Mohammad Amir has urged to stop spreading fake news regarding his comeback in international cricket. The 28-year-old clarified and repeated his stance that he will be available for selection once this management leaves. "I would like to clarify that yes I will be available for Pakistan only once this management leaves. so please stop spreading fake news just to sell your story," Amir tweeted. It must be noted that there were reports that Amir has announced his availability for the national team's selection after giving an interview to a local sports channel.

Briefs

Tunisia protests spread to a dozen cities

WEB DESK

TUNIS: More than 600 people have been arrested after a third consecutive night of riots in several Tunisian cities and troops have been deployed in some regions, officials said. Interior ministry spokesman Khaled Hayouni said on Sunday a total of 632 people were arrested, notably "groups of people between the ages of 15, 20 and 25 who burned tires and bins in order to block movements by the security forces". The defence ministry said the army had been deployed in several cities. Protesters blocked roads by burning tyres and threw stones and other objects at police and businesses, according to the interior ministry, which said the situation was now "calm" across the country. Most Tunisians are angry that the country is on the verge of bankruptcy and has dire public services.

Afghanistan launches polio vaccination drive

WEB DESK

BAKUL: Afghanistan has launched a nationwide campaign to administer the polio vaccine to nearly 10 million children under the age of five, the nation's Public Health Ministry announced. Some 65,000 health workers will implement the campaign over a five-day period, a public relations officer for the anti-polio campaign, Mir Jan Rasikh, told DPA news agency on Monday. Last year, 3.4 million children were deprived of the vaccine across the war-torn country. As a result, at least 56 Afghan children contracted the crippling disease, according to officials. The Taliban armed group does not allow healthcare workers in areas under their control to carry out door-to-door campaigns. The group's fighters claim that in the past, the campaign had been used to gather intelligence in some provinces. On Sunday, Taliban deputy leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar met with officials from the World Health Organization and UNICEF for South Asia in Qatar where they discussed the polio vaccination and other communicable diseases, the group announced. It was not clear if the Taliban fighters had agreed to allow a door-to-door campaign in the areas under their control. Officials warn that lack of access would deprive around 3 million children of the vaccine again. The deadly virus has been eradicated from the rest of the world but is still prevalent in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has launched a similar drive.

Twitter locks account of Republican lawmaker

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: US tech giant Twitter has temporarily suspended the account of a newly elected Republican congresswoman for violating its integrity policy multiple times over baseless claims of election fraud. Marjorie Taylor Greene's account was locked for 12 hours on Sunday after the company flagged at least two tweets as "disputed" and prevented them from being shared or retweeted as they carried the "risk of violence", said a Twitter spokesman. An ardent Donald Trump supporter, Green posted baseless claims over the Georgia elections on the social media platform after Democrats won the two State's Senate seats. The congresswoman is also known for having embraced QAnon conspiracy theories in the past and was endorsed by the president as a "future Republican star". QAnon followers believe in a conspiracy theory that Trump is waging a secret war against a global liberal cult of Satan-worshipping paedophiles. They have not offered any credible evidence for it.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Germany Bernard Schlagech called on Syed Fakhar Imam. – DNA

Hungary, Iran eye participation in restoration of Karabakh

He added that the Central Europe it is also important to be able to buy gas from as many sources as possible. "A direct gas pipeline connection has been established between Azerbaijan and Europe. Hungary will also potentially be able to buy gas from Azerbaijan," he said

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan and Hungary have discussed Hungarian companies' participation in the restoration of Azerbaijan's liberated territories, Hungarian Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Péter Szijjártó wrote in his official Facebook page. Szijjártó said that the topic was discussed during the videoconference between Azerbaijan Minister of Labor and Social Protection, Co-chair of the Hungarian-Azerbaijani Joint Economic Committee Sahil Babayev and Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Co-chair of the Hungarian-Azerbaijani Joint Economic Committee Péter Szijjártó. Szijjártó reiterated his country's support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. "Hungary has always stood up for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. After the end of the conflict, we have now discussed how Hungarian companies can participate in the reconstruction of areas previously affected by the war," he said.

He emphasized that the Hungarian Exim Bank has opened \$100 million credit line for Hungarian companies intending to participate in the reconstruction program. In order to reduce the consequences of the war, Hungary offered a grant of 25,000 (\$30,330) for demining activities. "Hungarian companies have recently significantly increased their presence in the Azerbaijani market: MOL has made the largest Hungarian corporate investment ever, WizzAir is ready to resume flights, Hell has gained a 25 percent of the market, and out cattle exports have also resumed," he stated. He added that the Central Europe it is also important to be able to buy gas from as many sources as possible. "A direct gas pipeline connection has been established between Azerbaijan and Europe. Hungary will also potentially be able to buy gas from Azerbaijan," he said. Furthermore, during the same meeting, it was noted that economic relations between Azerbaijan and Hungary successfully

Azerbaijan, Turkey to hold joint drills

BAKU: Servicemen of Azerbaijan's Combined Arms Army will take part in the Winter Exercises-2021 to be held in Turkey's Kars city, the Defence Ministry reported on January 17. A ceremony was held on the occasion of the departure of the military personnel and the military vehicles to be involved in the exercises. At the ceremony, Major-General Fazil Agalarov spoke about the developing Azerbaijani-Turkish military-technical cooperation, the importance of the joint military drills that are annually held in Nakhchivan and Kars, the Azerbaijani Army's victory in the Patriotic War and wished success to servicemen of the units, who will take part in the Winter Exercises-2021. – DNA

continued and expanded last year, which is evidenced by the increase in trade turnover between two countries over the last year. Azerbaijan's trade turnover with Hungary has increased by 10.8 percent, during the period of January-November 2020, including an increase in imports by 9.9 percent and export by 56.5 percent, compared to the corresponding period of 2019. It should be noted that the trade turnover between two countries amounted to \$34 million, with im-

port amounting to \$33.9 million, and export to \$934,420. Noting that the country's successful social and economic policy ensures the dynamic development of the country in all spheres, Babayev stated that Azerbaijan, which is recognized as a reliable partner in the world, is constantly expanding its successful cooperation with foreign countries. Likewise, the minister emphasized the positive results of the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the two

countries, underlining the successful activities of Hungarian companies in trade, transport, agriculture and services in Azerbaijan. Additionally, the results of Azerbaijani-Hungarian economic cooperation were noted, and the parties exchanged views on the activities of the bilateral commission and the tasks it faces. Azerbaijan's southern neighbour Iran has also voiced its readiness to be involved in the restoration of Azerbaijani lands newly-liberated from the Armenian occupation. Special Assistant to Speaker of the Iranian Parliament on International Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has said that that Iranian companies have high technical and engineering capabilities and can participate in the restoration of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. During the meeting with Azerbaijani Ambassador to Iran Bunyad Huseynov held in Tehran on January 14, Amir-Abdollahian reminded Iran's support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Israeli fighter jets target Gaza Strip

FOREIGN DESK

GAZA: Israeli warplanes have targeted the southern Gaza Strip after rockets were fired from the coastal enclave. Palestinian sources said the air attacks early on Monday struck an agricultural field in the southern city of Rafah, as well as land near the al-Furqan mosque in the town of al-Qarara, northeast of Khan Younis. According to a statement from the Israeli army, two rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip towards the coast near the southern city of Ashdod. "In response ... fighter jets struck military targets belonging to the Hamas terror organisation in the Gaza Strip, including tunnel digging sites," the military said. There were no reports of damage from the Palestin-

ian rockets, with Israeli army sources indicating they landed in the Mediterranean Sea. Palestinian security sources in Gaza said the Israeli missiles caused material damage but no injuries. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the rocket launches from Gaza. Despite a Qatar-brokered truce between Hamas and Israel in August, there have been several flare-ups of violence in recent months. The Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli-Egyptian air, land and naval blockade since 2007, shortly after Hamas took control of the territory after a pre-emptive coup orchestrated by its rival faction, Fatah. Hamas maintains an unofficial ceasefire with Israel, but Israel holds the group responsible for any attacks emanating from Gaza.

FBI vets troops amid fears of insider attack

MONITORING DESK

WASHINGTON: US law enforcement agencies are screening all 25,000 National Guard officers deployed for President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration, fearing a possible insider attack after it emerged that some of those involved the deadly January 6 riot at the US Capitol had ties to security agencies. "In coordination with the Secret Service and the FBI, they're screening all the personnel that are coming in," General Daniel Hokanson, who heads the National Guard Bureau, told CBS News on Sunday. The comments by the four-star general come as the capital Washington, DC, remains locked down under unprecedented security in the wake of the storming of the Capitol – the seat of the US government – by supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump. The mob wanted to prevent the Congress from certifying Biden's election following repeated false claims by Trump that the November election was stolen. At least five people died in the worst riot in almost two centuries, and prompted the US Congress to impeach

President Trump for "incitement of insurrection". Speaking from Washington, DC, Al Jazeera's Shihab Rattansi said that ahead of Wednesday's inauguration day, the National Guard is no longer relying on its usual vetting mechanisms to ensure that those within the service are not radicalised in some way. "We've been told constantly from the National Guard leadership that members of the National Guard are routinely vetted for any potential dangers in their backgrounds, any links to extremism and so on," he said. "The new development that's been reported is that the FBI is now getting involved." Rattansi said the FBI is running the names of the National Guard officers through its own databases, "checking for any red flags, any connection to extremist or militia groups". At least 21 current and ex-members of the US army and law enforcement have been identified as being at or near the Capitol riot, The Associated Press (AP) reported. The US Army has also been investigating a psychological operations officer who led a group of people from North

Carolina to the rally. Captain Emily Rainey, who had said she acted within military regulations, later resigned. Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy told AP on Sunday that officials are conscious of the potential threat, and he warned commanders to be on the lookout for any problems within their ranks as the inauguration approaches. So far, he and other leaders say they have seen no evidence of any threats, and officials said the vetting had not flagged any issues they were aware of. "We're continually going through the process, and taking second, third looks at every one of the individuals assigned to this operation," McCarthy said in an interview after he and other military leaders went through an exhaustive, three-hour security drill in preparation for Wednesday's inauguration. He said Guard members are also being trained on how to identify potential insider threats. Much of Washington, DC, resembles a fortified compound in a war zone, with most of the downtown area blocked off, security fences topped by razor wire and about 25,000 National Guard troops – at least two and a half times the number for previous inaugurations –

Australia may not open borders in 2021

FOREIGN DESK

CANBERRA: Australia may not fully reopen its international borders this year even if most of the population is vaccinated against coronavirus, the head of its health department said on Monday, as the country recorded no new local cases of COVID-19. Australia is looking at potential adverse effects of the Pfizer vaccine after Norway reported a small number of deaths in older people who received the shot, but is due to begin its immunisation programme next month.

"Even if we have a lot of the population vaccinated, we don't know whether that will prevent transmission of the virus," Brendan Murphy told the public broadcaster, ABC. The country has managed the coronavirus better than many other nations through targeted lockdowns and high rates of testing and contact tracing, and reported zero local COVID-19 cases on Monday.

Victoria, which is hosting the Australian Open, reported four positive cases in overseas travellers, all associated with the tennis tournament, taking the total to nine.

The event is being organised under strict coronavirus protocols with players, coaches and officials brought to Australia on charter flights and spending two weeks in quarantine before the competition gets under way.

China imposes sanctions on US officials over Taiwan

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: China on Monday announced imposing sanctions on US officials over enhanced engagements with Taiwan. "China has decided to impose sanctions on related US officials who have behaved badly on Taiwan question," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a news conference in the capital Beijing, according to the state-run Global Times.

The move comes days after the US eased restrictions on contacts between American and Taiwanese officials. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Jan. 9 termed "null and void" the self-imposed restrictions on US diplomats, service members, and other officials' interactions with their Taiwanese "counterparts."

Beijing considers Taiwan – officially known as the Republic of China – a breakaway province, but Taipei insists on its independence since 1949, and has diplomatic relations with 16 countries and regions.

The US formally recognized China in 1979 and under "Three Communiques," shifted diplomatic relations from Taipei to Beijing, acknowledging the "One China" policy and thus including Taiwan as part of mainland China. It, however, has increased its engagement with Taiwan recently. Last August, US Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar became the highest-ranking US politician to hold meetings on the island in decades. It also approved arms sales to Taiwan worth billions of dollars in 2020.

Turkish defense chief in Iraq on official visit

WEB DESK

BAGHDAD: Turkey's top defense official, along with the country's chief of staff, arrived in the Iraqi capital as part of an official visit, the ministry announced Monday. Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and Gen. Yasar Guler are to meet senior Iraqi officials in Baghdad including President Barham Salih, Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, Defense Minister Jouma Anad and Interior Minister Othman al-Ghamdi. Combating terrorism is to be the main focus of discussions during the visit, as well as a joint cooperation between Turkey and Iraq, said the ministry statement. As a first stop, Akar was welcomed with a military ceremony by his Iraqi counterpart with whom he later met one-on-one before the sides' delegations held discussions.

World leaders blast Russia over Navalny arrest

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Monday that expressions of outrage reflect an attempt "to divert attention from the crisis of the Western model of development"

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: Alexey Navalny has been arrested at a Moscow airport as he tried to enter the country from Germany, where he had spent five months recovering from an alleged nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin. The Kremlin critic's detention on Sunday at passport control in Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport was widely expected as Russia's prisons service said he had violated parole terms from a suspended sentence on a 2014 embezzlement conviction. The prison service said he would be held in custody until a court rules on his case. No date for a court appearance was immediately announced. The service earlier said it would

seek to have Navalny serve his three-and-a-half-year sentence behind bars for the 2014 charge, which Navalny claims is politically motivated. His lawyers on Monday said they had not been granted access to him since he was detained, and that his condition was unknown. Alexander Baunov, a senior fellow at the Moscow Carnegie Centre, described Navalny's choice to return as "brave". "He always [said] he was a brave man, who has no fear before the authorities, of [Russian President Vladimir] Putin and the law and order machine. Now is the time to prove these claims," Baunov told media. "If he stayed abroad, he would diminish his claims." His arrest set off a wave of reactions from officials and world leaders, many of whom called for



his immediate release. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Monday that expressions of outrage reflect an attempt "to divert attention from the crisis of the Western model of development". Journalist, reporting from Moscow, said the international reaction was unlikely to impact the Kremlin. "We know from the past that

such requests and such pleas to the Kremlin are not very well met by the Russian authorities," Godfroid said. "That is to say, they are not going to make them release Navalny or show any lenience towards him." The United Nations Human Rights Council (OHCHR) said it was "deeply troubled" by Navalny's arrest. In a post on Twitter, the agency called for the Kremlin critic's "immediate release" and "for his due process rights to be respected in line with the rule of law". "We reiterate our call for a thorough and impartial investigation into his poisoning," it said. Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has urged the immediate release of Navalny, stressing that Russia is bound to protect civil rights. "Russia

is bound by its own constitution and by international obligations to the principle of the rule of law and to the protection of civil rights," Maas said in a statement. "These principles must, of course, be applied to Alexei Navalny as well. He should be released immediately." Italy's foreign minister Luigi Di Maio said Navalny's arrest was a "very serious matter". "We ask for his immediate release. And we expect his rights to be respected", Luigi Di Maio said in a Twitter post. Italian Economy Minister Roberto Gualtieri on Twitter also called for Navalny's immediate release. France's foreign ministry spokeswoman, Agnes von der Muhll, said in a statement that Paris is following the situation with "utmost vigilance".

Indonesia, Pakistan have every reason to diversify their relationship: Amb. Adam

Ambassador Adam Tugio addresses a webinar; says Indonesia welcomes Pakistan's efforts to enhance regional connectivity and development including through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Republic of Indonesia Adam Tugio has enjoyed a great level of understanding and friendship based on common religious, cultural and social values and their unique relations in various spheres have naturally continued to grow stronger and deeper.

Pakistan and Indonesia stand proudly together as two of the largest Muslim populated countries and emerging economies of creative and talented people. It is very pleasing to note that both the countries aspire to maintain and further develop their exemplary ties and transform the potential of these ties to bolster cooperation in various venues. Ambassador Adam Tugio expressed these views during a webinar facilitated by the Indonesian embassy. Friends of Indonesia including participants of the FAMTRIPS and representatives of the tourism and hospitality industry attended the Webinar. Ambassador Adam further said, President Joko Widodo state visit to Pakistan in 2018 marked a historic milestone and set a new dynamism in the bilateral relations of the two countries. During the state visit wide ranging discussions were held and the two sides agreed to maintain close high-level exchanges to provide guidance to the sustainable development of our bilateral relationship. The two sides agreed to further enhance Both the countries highly value their ties and encourage all-around cooperation to further strengthen the fraternal bond between the two nations.

DEFENCE COOPERATION

Talking about defence cooperation Ambassador Adam said, Indonesia and Pakistan have a long history of defence and security cooperation that includes training of defence personnel and cooperation between their respective defence educational institutions and defense productions.

Indonesia and Pakistan have recently (8 - 9 Oct 2019) held high level meeting in the context of establishing a ministerial-level Indonesia-Pakistan Security Dialogue forum. The main agenda of the meeting discussed the framework that will serve as a reference in the holding of the dialogue forum as well as issues of mutual concern between the two countries, including issues of global and regional security, terrorism, narcotics, maritime security, and human trafficking.

TRADE AND ECONOMIC TIES

Dilating upon trade and economic ties Ambassador Adam said, Indonesia and Pakistan with their combined population of almost half billion are two emerging economies of young and talented people and there existed great potential of trade & investment and economic cooperation between them. Though PTA between Pakistan and Indonesia was signed on February 3rd, 2012 and became operational on September 1st, 2013, however, subsequently the trade surplus increasingly widened in favor



of Indonesia. To make PTA equally favorable for both the countries Indonesia agreed to grant unilateral concessions on additional 20 tariff lines of Pakistan's export interest. Concessions on these tariff lines have come into effect from March 1st, 2019. Following the successful implementation of the Indonesia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) the trade relations between the two countries have been on upward trajectory. Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) enabled both the countries enhanced market access and as a result bilateral trade volume had reached USD 2.3 billion in 2019. Indonesia exports to Pakistan included palm oil and its derivatives, viscos rayon materials, coal, polyester, paper, rubber, motor vehicle parts, tractor accessories, clove, broom, brush, vein chloride and others products. On the other hand, Indonesia major import items from Pakistan included rice, chemicals, raw cotton, wheat, paper, fruits, garments, leather products, plastic materials, cotton yarn, cloth, textile products, sports and surgical goods.

CPEC

Pakistan was strategically located at the juncture of South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East regions and had potential to emerge as a hub of regional connectivity and economic activity. Indonesia welcomes Pakistan's efforts to enhance regional connectivity and development including through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

I am confident that mega project such as CPEC has immense potential to attract diverse investment opportunities and promote industrial, financial and agricultural cooperation. In the context of the emerging opportunities in Pakistan and the region, Indonesia was seriously considering Pakistan as its diverse investment and joint ventures destination for its key exports to the Central Asian and Middle East regions. As Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, I look forward to contribute in further strengthening of government to government ties and facilitate business to business contacts between

our two brotherly countries. I am very optimistic that close consultation and coordination involving all the stakeholders including Pakistan Business Council, Chambers of Commerce & Industry will produce the desired mutually beneficial results.

In this connection, through synergized efforts we would like to develop a coherent road map and framework to power ahead towards benefiting from the diverse existing and emerging opportunities and bringing the economic cooperation and bilateral trade between our two countries to the next level.

Though, over the years, bilateral trade has been showing upward trend between our countries, nevertheless, to improve the trade imbalance and scale up the numbers to its true potential diversification and expansion of the economic ties was essentially the way forward. In this regard, LNG and POL Products, IT, E-commerce, Tourism and Service sectors were the potential areas where both the countries could promote cooperation.

It will be my earnest effort to maintain close coordination with the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and give special emphasis on identifying and removing bottlenecks to better facilitate the businessmen of the two sides and encourage them to participate in trade expos to establish B2B contacts with their respective counterparts.

COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAM

The COVID-19 crisis has created not only massive public health challenges but also an unprecedented economic shock for countries across the globe and Indonesia is no exception. Indonesia believes multilateralism was the best and only way to address the current global challenges and failure to cooperate beyond our borders will lessen our capability to manage the outbreak. The severe impacts of the outbreak, particularly on the economy, needed to be addressed collectively, mainly through innovative ways to enhance cooperation and develop technology and human resource capacity to deal with this pandemic.

In responding to the pandemic through its strategy of balancing health with economy, Indonesian Government made the public health as its top priority. To minimize the economic impact the government unveiled stimulus package worth US\$47.6 billion to anchor the virus-hit economy. The stimulus package was in addition to other smaller packages that are primarily designed to strengthen the healthcare system, direct more spending toward social protection to boost consumption and provide incentives to rescue Indonesian businesses from bankruptcy and workers from layoffs. Indonesia was also moving closer towards releasing a potential vaccine for Covid-19, with officials expecting a widespread public availability in the first quarter of 2021. This comes following the arrival of the potential Covid-19 vaccine developed by a China-based pharmaceutical company Sinovac, in cooperation with Indonesian state-owned pharmaceutical company Bio Farma.

Indonesia was highly upbeat of making firm economy recovery next year and were expecting to grow by 4.5 to 5.5 percent after the growth remained flat this year. The government has proposed 185 billion budget for 2021 as the government would continue spending to recover from the COVID-induced economic downturn.

ASEAN

As the founding member country of ASEAN, over the past fifty three years, Indonesia has been working hard to create the ecosystem of stability and prosperity in the South East Asia region. Through ASEAN unity and centrality Indonesia continues to contribute in the creation of stable and prosperous Asia Pacific region.

Indonesia and Pakistan fully realize the importance of cooperation at the multilateral forums. Both countries have worked closely on major regional and global issues and continue to work with mutual coordination and cooperation at important regional forums including Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the ASEAN Regional Fo-

rum. Indonesia highly value Pakistan 'Vision East Asia' policy as it aims at deepening and further strengthening political, economic and cultural ties with ASEAN and its member states.

Indonesia and Pakistan view ASEAN as highly important forum for regional peace, stability and economic prosperity. Indonesia appreciates Pakistan's Sectoral Dialogue Partnership with ASEAN and supports efforts towards Pakistan's Full Dialogue Partnership with ASEAN.

CULTURAL TIES

To augment people to people contacts and foster cultural & academic linkages, the Embassy continues to engage the Pakistani educational and cultural institutions, students and other segments of the civil society. The Social and cultural events organized by the Embassy in collaboration with Pakistani counterparts brought together the talent of Indonesian artists and glimpses of the unique Indonesian culture and tradition to the people of Pakistani and have been helpful in creating more awareness about Indonesia in Pakistan.

EDUCATION-ACADEMIC COOPERATION

Education is one of the areas that offer some great potential for the bilateral cooperation to benefit from and bring the people of the two countries even closer.

In recent years, academic cooperation has seen some significant improvement as number of MoUs on academic cooperation between the universities of the two countries had been signed and more were under process or consideration.

Following the success of the Indonesian government scholarships of KNB and Daramsiswa in Pakistan, there has been growing interest among the Pakistani students to pursue higher education programs in Indonesia. More recently, master and doctoral level partially funded scholarships offered by some Indonesian universities have also received encouraging response from the Pakistani Students.

Therefore, in view of the Pakistani

student's interest, there is opportunity for the universities of the two countries to capitalize and lay foundation for a solid academic cooperation.

There was need for the Higher Education Authorities of both the countries to work together and play their due role in promotion of academic cooperation and facilitate the students.

TOURISM

Tourism is generally about leisure and pleasure but it also promote cultural exchange and provide opportunity to people of various cultures to meet and understand each other. It also brings people of the similar taste and profession together and opens up windows of many opportunities to benefit from. These days, tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. In addition to the opportunities for recreation and cultural exchange, tourism industry has emerged as a big source to generate employment opportunities, grow service sector and help earn foreign exchange. Hence, tourism spurs the overall economic growth worldwide.

Despite very cordial and brotherly ties that our two countries enjoy and having the great existing tourism potential that our two countries offer, it is unsatisfactory to note that the two way tourists' traffic between the two countries is almost negligible.

Recent statistics suggests that tourist arrival in Indonesia from Pakistan has remained very low even if put into comparison with the countries in the South Asian region. In 2019 Indonesia received only 15000 tourists and this meager number was even below the roughly half of the Sri Lanka 30 thousands tourists which visited Indonesia last year.

I am very pleased to share that Indonesian Lion Air has plans for coming to Pakistan and is expected to start flying to Pakistan as soon as the situation is right in the post COVID era. It is expected that the Lion Air operation will bring down the travel cost, reduce the travel time and consequently push up the tourist's number towards the level where it should be.

Briefs

Membership of 156 lawmakers suspended

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday has suspended membership of 154 lawmakers for not submitting tax returns. The list included three members from Senate, 48 from NA, 52 from Punjab Assembly, 19 from Sindh Assembly, 26 from KP Assembly and six from Balochistan Assembly. The membership of Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry, MQM-P leader Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi, Minister for IPC Fehmida Mirza and PML-N leader Sheikh Rohail has also been suspended.

COVID-19 claims 46 lives

ISLAMABAD: The national tally of total active COVID-19 cases in Pakistan on Monday reached to 34,986 with 1,920 more people tested positive for the deadly virus and 1,589 people recovered from the coronavirus during the last 24 hours. Forty Six coronavirus patients, 39 of whom were under treatment in hospital and Seven were in their respective homes or quarantines died on Sunday, according to the latest update issued by the NCOC. - DNA

PTI handed over 40,000 documents to ECP: Babar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) handed over 40,000 relevant documents and details of donors to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in connection with foreign funding case. Babar Awan, while talking to a private news channel, clarified about the legal and constitutional position of the ECP by saying that the election commission has no power to ban a political party in a foreign funding case. He termed the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) a deceased alliance and said that tomorrow's protest would be their last

sob. He said that PDM's protest outside ECP is neither political, parliamentary nor constitutional from which they are willing to target PTI and topple the incumbent government on the basis of foreign funding allegations. Awan said that the Supreme Court (SC) had already given a ruling in a similar scenario like the petition which is being raised by the opposition parties. The top court's full bench had taken two major decisions regarding the matters related to the prohibited and foreign funding. He said that the case against PTI revolves around prohibited funding, whereas, the PDM parties are facing allegations of foreign funding. He revealed that foreign funding had been grabbed for the inclu-

sion of women and winning elections in past, whereas, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif had received funds from Al-Qaeda chief and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) from Libya. Four political parties are facing the case of prohibited funding and interestingly, PML-N gave arguments regarding the death of the man who had funded Rs100 million to it, said Awan, adding that the political party had failed to give any proof of the donor's death.

Nawaz Sharif had transferred Rs60 million to the bank account from the funds, he said. The third political party is Pakistan People's Party (PPP) who argued for not having any records, whereas, JUI-F

leaders have also rejected to provide proofs. Babar Awan said that ECP should publicise the facts about all four political parties. He predicted that PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari will not attend tomorrow's protest of PDM. All facts have been uncovered after the Broadsheet revelations and the suspicions of Prime Minister Imran Khan have come out true.

In case of NRO, not only the looted money was lost but the assets will go out of reach from being recovered. An absconding person is propagating against the national institutions including executive authority, judiciary, armed forces and election commission, however, his statement cannot affect the national policies, said Awan.

'Broadsheet exposed Sharif family'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Monday said broadsheet case was a new sensation that had exposed Nawaz Sharif family's 76 properties worth 800 million dollar. "The 76 properties of Nawaz Sharif's family have been valued at 800 million dollars according to the broadsheet facts and this is what London court is also saying", the federal minister stated this in a tweet.

Indian fascism to be perilous, Dr Moeed warns

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Security Division and Strategic Policy Planning Dr. Moeed Yusuf on Monday warned the global community about Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime's warmongering fascism and terrorism lies which would be perilous if ignored by the comity of nations. In a tweet, the SAPM shared screenshot of a news item published by 'India Today' on its website that claimed that the Indian government had deployed 10,000 additional troops in IIOJK amid major threat of a terrorist attack in the occupied valley. Dr. Moeed said the chat transcripts of India's leading warmonger (The Republic Editor Arnab Goswami) revealed that while the Modi government and the media was lying to the world about a terror threat from Pakistan, they all knew the truth of why IIOJK was being turned into a prison under thousands of extra troops. The fact, he said, government had lied repeatedly about terror attacks from Pakistan for their own exposed. "Such ignored once before the 20th century, moneger again perilous", DNA

NATO says position not changed in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD: NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has spoken to the Afghan president Ashraf Ghani on Monday, both discussed the peace process. In his tweet, Stoltenberg stated: "NATO's position has not changed & our presence is conditions-based." He further added: "We continue helping the Afghan security forces to ensure Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for international terrorism." This comes as the US force levels in Afghanistan have reached 2,500. Earlier President Donald Trump announced to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the US acting Defense Secretary, Christopher Miller also said in his statement that the United States is closer than ever to ending nearly two decades of war and welcoming in an Afghan-owned, Afghan-led peace process to achieve a political settlement and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire. - DNA

10 killed in Afghan clashes

TALUQAN: The latest attack by Taliban militants in Khwaja Ghar district of the northern Takhar province was repulsed, with the militants running away after suffering casualties, district governor Mohammad Omar said Monday. "A group of Taliban rebels launched attack on the headquarters of Khwaja Ghar district at 01:00 a.m. local time today but policemen retaliated, forcing the attacking insurgents to flee after leaving seven bodies behind," Omar told Xinhua. Omar also said that three policemen were also killed and eight people including six militants and two policemen injured in the firefight lasting for several hours. Taliban militants have yet to make a comment on the report. - Agencies

PTI prepares software to detect horse-trading

KARACHI: PTI Sindh chapter has claimed to develop a software for detecting horse-trading during the forthcoming Senate elections. The PTI Sindh chapter made efforts to stop horse-trading through a 'software' that will generate unique voting patterns to each MPA ahead of Senate polls. PTI Sindh leader Firdous Shamim Nagvi claimed that different voting patterns will be issued to all MPs during Senate elections. He said that the software has the capability to detect the violation of the voting pattern by lawmakers. - DNA