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German envoy lauds CM's vision for the development

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Union of Romanian Principalities celebrations

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Efforts on to get Pak students to UK: envoy

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Briefs

Government believes in freedom of expression

RANA FARRUKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for information and broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz has said that the government fully believes in freedom of expression. He was talking to a delegation of Abbottabad Press Club. The Federal Minister said that the government is making efforts for the promotion of independent and responsible journalism in the country. Shibli Faraz said that all possible steps are being taken to ensure a safe environment for the media.

Abbasi for abolishing NAB

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister and senior PML-N leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Friday said that "the sooner Pakistan decides to do away with the NAB, the better". He was addressing a press conference along with senior PML-N leaders Ahsan Iqbal and Khurram Dastgir Khan in the federal capital on Friday. Referring to the Broadsheet LLC scandal and criticising the country's accountability watchdog for the "corruption therein" Abbasi said that the sooner the state decides to abolish the bureau, the better it would be for the country.

PM Imran to complete his tenure

DNA

KARACHI: Minister of Interior Sheikh Rashed Ahmad on Friday said that Prime Minister Imran Khan would complete his five years constitutional term in the office. He observed that the Broadsheet issue would be Panama-2 of Pakistan in upcoming two to three months.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.
- Editor

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Biden urged to work for Afghan peace

Qureshi also called on the US not to view Pakistan's close ties with China - an economic and political rival to the US - as a "zero-sum game"

NAVEED MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said Pakistan hopes for greater engagement with the new United States government and called on President Joe Biden to follow up on the ongoing Afghan peace process and withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country. "I think they (Biden administration) should realise there is an opportunity in Afghanistan and they should persevere with what was initiated and not reverse things," Qureshi said in an interview with Al Jazeera. "Push them forward, because, after a long time, we have started moving in the right direction," he said. Pakistan facilitated the intra-Afghan talks and the US-Taliban dialogue and has now called for the US to stick to the agreements.

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Pak condemns Baghdad blasts

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan joins the international community in strongly condemning the twin suicide blasts at a crowded market in Baghdad, which resulted in loss of 32 precious human lives and injuries to several others. A statement issued by foreign office said, "We convey our deepest condolences to the bereaved families and pray for speedy recovery of those injured in these gruesome terrorist attacks." Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and stands in solidarity with the brotherly government and people of Iraq in their fight against terrorism, it added.



ISLAMABAD: Counselor Indonesian embassy Denny Tri Basuki in a picture with High Commissioner of Brunei Dato Mahmud Saidin and his wife during a farewell reception held at the Brunei High Commission. - DNA

Bilawal hints at no-trust move against PM Imran

NAZIR SIYAL

LARKANA: Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Friday while announcing to table a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan said that he would convince the allies. Addressing a ceremony in Larkana on Friday, he said that the federal ministers

Continued on Page 06

Maryam slams hike in electricity tariff

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice-President Maryam Nawaz has condemned the increase in electricity tariff by the government. In a tweet on Friday, Maryam Nawaz said nobody else knew better how to suck people's blood than 'incompetent' Prime Minister Imran Khan. She further said each and every moment spent under Imran Khan's government was a burden on the people.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr. Christian Turner posing for photo with the Nepalese climbing team who made first winter ascent of K2. - DNA

Efforts on to get Pak students to UK: envoy

British Deputy High Commissioner hopes COVID situation shall improve; attends reception hosted by Head of Press Section British High Commission Ms. Fouzia Younis

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Head of Press Section British High Commission Ms. Fouzia Younis hosted a reception at her residence. She invited prominent journalists for the reception. Deputy Head of Communications Mr. Cameron Millar also co-hosted the reception, while the British Deputy High Commissioner Alison Blackburne also attended the event. Alison Blackburne told daily Islamabad POST that the COVID variant was mainly present in London and surrounding areas and it was not possible to say which other regions of Britain had been affected by this variant. To a question she further said High Commission was trying to get those students to UK who had already got admissions in various educational institutions.



Ms. Blackburne hoped situation shall soon be normalized in UK and elsewhere. It may be mentioned here that Ms. Blackburne has served as the British Ambassador to South Sudan from April 2017 to May 2019, and before that British High Commissioner to Uganda from August 2012 to November 2016. Alison joined the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in 1987 and has held a variety of posts in London and abroad. She has previously served overseas in Warsaw, Stockholm, New York (UK Permanent Mission to the UN),

Continued on Page 06

COVID-19 claims 47 more lives

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: The national tally of total active COVID-19 cases in the country on Friday reached 34,916 with 1,745 more people tested positive for the deadly virus while 2,075 people recovered from the disease during the last 24 hours. Forty-seven corona patients, 40 among them were under treatment in hospital and seven in their homes or quarantines died on Thursday, according to the latest update issued by the NCOC. During the last 24 hours most of the deaths had occurred in Punjab followed by the Sindh. It said that out of the total 47 deaths during last 24 hours 23 patients died on ventilators. Some 35,839 tests were conducted across the country on Thursday, including 6,535 in Sindh, 15,304 in Punjab, 6,543 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), 5,777 in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), 838 in Balochistan, 443 in GB, and 339 in AJK.

Biden appoints another Kashmiri woman in his team

Uzra Zeya had quit the Foreign Service in 2018 in protest against the Trump's policies

DNA

WASHINGTON: The US President, Joe Biden, has nominated a Kashmiri-origin diplomat as Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, a key State Department position, as the new administration takes over the country.

Uzra Zeya, who had quit the Foreign Service in 2018 in protest against the policies of the then US President, Donald Trump, as per a media report, has been nominated as part of key nominations for the Department of State. Zeya served most recently as CEO and President of the Alliance for Peace-building, where she drew on over two decades of diplomatic experience



in Near East, South Asian, European, human rights and multilateral affairs. From 2012 to 2014, Zeya served as Acting Assistant Secretary and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour. She has also served as Deputy Executive Secretary to the Secretary of State, Director of the Executive Secretariat Staff, and as UN General Assembly Coordinator.

Girl injured in Indian firing: ISPR

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Indian Army once again violated the ceasefire and targeted civilian population near the Line of Control (LoC) and injured an 18-year-old girl. According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Indian Army troops initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation (CFV) in Chirkot Sector along the LoC targeting civil population. An 18-year-old Ansa Siddique, resident of Polas village received critical injuries and was evacuated to nearby hospital for necessary medical treatment. The army's media wing said that the Pakistan Army responded to the Indian actions in a befitting manner and targeted the enemy posts along the LoC. It is pertinent to mention here that Indian forces have regularly committee ceasefire violations at the LoC and in one such incident recently, Indian army troops resorted to unprovoked ceasefire violation in Baroh and Khanjar Sectors along the border.

Pakistan marching towards self reliance in edible oil

NAVEED MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is passing through a silent revolution vis-vis olive oil production. The government's enhanced focus on olive plantation is taking the country gradually towards self reliance which will greatly help it save \$ 3 to \$ 4 billion currently being spent on the import of edible oil. In a major development, the officials told this correspondent that more than nine advanced oil extraction plants have been installed in the country to harness the increasing olive oil production on a commercial scale for farmers. The oil extraction units have been installed under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) to promote olive cultivation to cater to domestic requirements. The officials said that three out of nine plants have a capacity of extracting 600 kg oil per hour while six have a capacity of extracting 100 kg per hour.



Olive trees have successfully been cultivated over 27,000 hectares of land across the country. The plantation extends through Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Islamabad and Azad Kashmir. The officials said that Olive orchards in Punjab have reached the fruition stage especially

the Potohar region has great prospects of becoming the highest olive seed producer. They said the olive saplings are provided free of cost to the farmers of the region including Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Jhelum, Attock and Khushab districts in order to encourage them cultivate more olive trees. The officials said that cultivation

is to be expanded over 70,000 hectares to turn marginal lands into productive ones. "This will not only enhance the income of small scale growers but also give impetus to the economy. They said that massive plantation is in the pipeline. The officials said the government also plans to issue certifications for the marketing and

branding of olive oil for the private sector. In addition, the officials said the present government is now giving special emphasis to the development of road infrastructure in order to facilitate the growers/farmers to take their produce direct to the market and get reasonable price for their crops. They said the Punjab

government has recently started work on the 41 kilometer Gujranwala-Sheikhupura road to connect two major industrial cities of the province. The project will be completed under the public private partnership at a cost of Rs 5.7 billion rupees by mid of next year. They said that work on ten more such projects is also underway.



Briefs

'Help to vulnerable religious, social obligation'

DNA

MIRPUR: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan has said that help to the orphan and poor children was our religious obligation and at the same time, it is our social responsibility. "It is the basic responsibility of the state and well off people to provide an infrastructure of care to enable vulnerable citizens to flourish socially and economically on an equal basis," he asserted. He expressed these views during a meeting of the Board of Governors of Kashmir Orphan Relief Trust (KORT) here on Friday. The President said that the children who have lost one or both of their parents had been facing unfavourable conditions, and it is the religious and social responsibility of all of us to fulfil their education and health needs. The AJK president said that Kashmir Orphan Relief Trust headed by Chaudhry Mohammad Akhtar besides looking after hundreds of children is providing quality education and health facilities to them. "The Kashmir Orphan Trust is a role model for not only Azad Kashmir but the whole of South Asia as well," he declared. Appreciating Chaudhry Mohammad Akhtar and his team for their excellent social work, Sardar Masood Khan assured that he in his personal capacity as well as through the state government would continue to extend all possible cooperation to this organization. Earlier in a briefing, the state president was told that besides establishing water filtration plants in different areas of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to provide potable water, the Trust had distributed 1,000 wheelchairs to the people with disabilities while it constructed 143 housing units for quake-hit families in Mirpur and surrounding areas.

NAB traces fake bank accounts used for corruption

DNA

KARACHI: In major development during the ongoing investigation into alleged corruption, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) traced nine more fake bank accounts used for embezzlement of pension funds by officials the Sindh finance department, citing sources. Besides detecting the new fake bank accounts, the anti-corruption watchdog has also traced the system for embezzlement of government funds worth billions through 'fake pension (commutation) bills'. Sources privy to the development said that Rs140 million had been deposited in the nine bank accounts from 2012 to 2017. The money was then transferred to the accounts of Naveed Bajari, the former additional district account officer of District Accounts Office - Hyderabad, and his family. It emerged that Rs30 million had been transferred to Dubai from the fake bank accounts. Following the revelations, NAB had issued call-up notice to Naveed Bajari to question him on January 20, however, he did not appear before the investigators, sources added.

Nation rejects PDM, Maulana: Haleem Adil

KARACHI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) central vice president Haleem Adil Sheikh on Friday said that nation had rejected the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and opposition alliance had failed to gain the nation's "attention and sympathy." Addressing a press conference in Hunaid Lakhani Secretariat, flanked by PTI leader and head of Baitul Mal Sindh, he said that the opposition alliance is giving new deadlines after expiry of previous deadlines but they are not willing to tender resignations. He said that the PDM had failed to rally people in the streets against the government during the demonstrations it staged outside the office of the Election Commission of Pakistan. He asked the Maulana not to use the students of seminaries for his political rallies. - APP

Chairman CDA for removing encroachments from capital

Chairman CDA said that the process of actions against the encroachments will be continued without any break. Strict action should be taken against those who have grabbed the government's land and forest's land, he added



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) chaired a high level session to deal with the encroachments in the city on Friday. IG Islamabad, DIG, Deputy Commissioner, SSP, and CDA officials attended the session. Officials of revenue department were also present at the occasion. Important decisions were made during the high level session. Decision to remove encroachments

from Islamabad Highway, Margala hills, and green areas was taken during the session. Besides this, a high level committee was also devised to resolve the pending cases regarding revenue. The committee will comprise of officers of police and revenue department. It is also decided during the session that strict action would be taken against the government officials who would be found involved in encroachments and illegal occupation. Special check points of police and CDA will be setup to

protect the areas allocated for forests from encroachments. Upon the special directions of Chairman CDA the administration of the authority took action against encroachments in zone three on Friday. CDA retrieved its land. Forest area on government's land in Malpur retrieved. Three different illegal constructions at grabbed land were demolished at the occasion. CDA and police took part in the action against encroachments. Speaking at the occasion, Chairman CDA said that the process

of actions against the encroachments will be continued without any break. Strict action should be taken against those who have grabbed the government's land and forest's land, he added. Prior to this CDA removed dozens of encroachments at park road. 03 buildings, 10 illegal boundary walls, 01 illegal building, 01 room, 03 road side set ups, and DPC of one building were demolished at Bari Imam during the operation against encroachments. Construction material was captured.

Anti encroachment operation was also conducted in C-15 where a number of encroachments were removed. Illegal constructions and encroachments at 06 different places of Bani Gala were also demolished. Polls were removed from a street in F-7/3. An iron pillar was removed from the street in G-8. One illegal security cabin was also demolished at the occasion. Illegal boundary wall was demolished at F-11. Encroachments were also removed from Khhana Pull and I-9.

72% work on development projects completed

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: In Faisalabad division, under various development programs, 72% construction work of public welfare, regional construction and development schemes at a cost of billion rupees has been completed while 100% projects are being completed by utilizing the available funds expeditiously. This was stated to Divisional Commissioner Saqib Manan during a meeting to review the progress of implementation of development programs. Deputy Commissioners Muhammad Ali, Umar Javed, Muhammad Riaz, Director Development Dr. Naveed Itikhar Aulakh, AC Sadar Umar Maqbool, DD Developments, Officers of departments implementing development programs were also present. The Director Development provided details of Sustainable Development Program One, Two and Three, Annual Development Program 2020.21, 100 Million Development Program, ADP Local Government and other sector schemes, current financial budget. Presented a detailed review of the funds allocated for the year, their utilization and the schemes to be completed. He said that out of the allocated funds of Rs.21.20 billion in the current financial year, Rs.12.45 billion has been released out of which Rs.8.69 billion has been spent.

Reversal of power tariff hike demanded

DNA

KARACHI: Chairman of National Business Group of FPCCI, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Friday said a fifteen percent hike in power tariff will burden masses by over 200 billion rupees. The decision should be reversed as it will hit economic activities and erode the confidence of the investors, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the government should not have increased power tariff to revive the power sector but tried to reduce losses, theft and improve recoveries. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that masses and economy cannot afford the recent hike in power tariff as it will increase inflation by two percent and hit agricultural and industrial production. The decision will budget masses by over two hundred billion rupees while they will have to brave additional burden of general sales tax and fuel adjustment etc. Those poor who were consuming up to 50 units per month and paying bill amounting to Rs100 will now pay Rs197.50 while those consuming up to 100 units will pay Rs774 instead of Rs 579, he said.

DC directs to facilitate kiln workers

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: District administration should be resolved the problems of kiln workers on top priority and the concerned departments should improve their performance and mobilize the kiln owners for payment of workers' rights in this regard. This was stated by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali at a meeting of District Vigilance Committee. Additional Deputy Commissioner General Khurram Pervaiz, Director Labor Malik Munawar Awan, Education, Social Security, EOBI, Social Welfare,

Punjab Police besides labor leaders, kiln owners and their representatives were also present. Taking a detailed look at the demands/issues of the kiln workers, the Deputy Commissioner asked the kiln owners to ensure implementation of the fixed wages so that legal action would not be taken. He directed the kiln owners to pay their dues for the issuance of social security cards, Emphasizing that departmental progress should not be hampered, he asked the representative officer of EOBI to get the registration data of the workers from the Social Security Department and expedite the task.

Dinner hosted in honor of African envoys



ISLAMABAD: Public relations are being made effective in line with the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan to expedite cooperation and exchanges with African countries, said Khurshid Barlas, Chairman, Regional Trade Promotional Committee, Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Addressing a dinner in honor of ambassador of Sierra Leonean in Iran Alie Badara Kamara and ambassador of Mali, Dianguina Dit Yaya Doucoure and, he said that he thanked Federal Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his team for serving as a bridge between the business and diplomatic communities. Thanking him, he said that the Angie Africa initiative initiated by Federal Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi at the November 2019 Conference of African Ambassadors was a show of strength. - DNA

Sherry opposes govt's takeover of Sindh's hospitals

ISLAMABAD: Opposing Federal government's takeover on Sindh's hospitals, the Parliamentary Leader of the PPP in the Senate, Senator Sherry Rehman said, "Sindh's National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD), National Institute of Child Health (NICH) and Jinnah Sindh Medical University are renowned all over Asia for their world class care. People from all over the country come there for treatment since there are no other hospitals in the country which offer the same high quality of care and treatment but plans are being made by the federal government to takeover

them". "Employees are already feeling threatened that they will go down the same route as PIMS. This is completely illegal under the 18th amendment. Service delivery which is with the province can not be taken over by the federal government. As it stands the service delivery record of PTI in health and education is abysmal. You only need to see the state of KP institutions to understand that. Why do they want to get into something they are not capable of handling? Why do they want to damage the quality of these hospitals?" she questioned. She said, "Sindh is attracting doctors

from the private sector by paying them more and giving them incentives. Instead of making the provinces more independent during the pandemic, this government wants to take down the only functional hospitals in the country. We strongly condemn these attempts by the federal government to takeover Sindh's hospitals". Speaking on the MDCAT issue, Rehman said, "121,000 students are protesting against the Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) over their abrupt decision to 'centralise' the Medical and Dental College Admission Test (MDCAT) from this year. - DNA

President for roadmap to eliminate malpractices

The Auditor General briefed the President about the working of the AGP office and the steps being taken by him for improving the efficiency of the organization by adopting information technology. The President asked the AGP to identify the grey areas within the organization and propose workable solutions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi has directed the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP), Javid Jehangir, to prepare a roadmap in one month aiming to eliminate malpractices within the organization. He asked him to take corrective measures and improve the performance and efficiency of the AGP Office to address anomalies of the system. He emphasized that focus should be on identifying the grave irregularities instead of wasting energies on pointing out trivial issues. The President gave these directions during a meeting with the Auditor General of Pakistan, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The Auditor General briefed the President about the working of the AGP office and the steps being taken by him for improving the efficiency of the organization by adopting information technology. The President asked the AGP to identify the grey areas within the organization and propose workable solutions. He also directed him to expeditiously complete the audit automation process so as to ensure transparency in the organization.



SC dismisses Hamza Shahbaz's bail plea

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court (SC) on Friday has dismissed bail plea of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) member and Opposition Leader in Punjab Assembly Hamza Shahbaz in money laundering case. According to details, the plea was disposed of after Hamza Shahbaz withdrew it. Justice Yahya Afridi, during the hearing, remarked that the issue which has not been raised in high court cannot be directly taken to the SC. The accused should better approach high court after the report of accountability court, he said. Earlier, Director General of NAB Lahore had submitted a report in the court through investigation officer on freezing the properties of Shehbaz Sharif's wife Nusrat Shahbaz, daughter Rabia Imran and others. Shehbaz Sharif told that there was no doctor dealing with cancer patients present in the government panel, therefore, he requested the court to include his personal doctor in the board. Accountability court had declared Shehbaz Sharif's wife Nusrat Shahbaz as proclaimed offender in money laundering case.

Briefs

GNSS Winter School to start from February 22

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS), Institute of Space Technology in collaboration with Space Education Research Lab (GSERL) of National Center of GIS and Space Applications will arrange 'GNSS Winter School' during the month of February. According to an official, GNSS Winter School will be held on-ground, Face to Face at IST, however in case of severe circumstances, online mechanism will be implemented partially or entirely. The school will be held from February 22 and conclude on February 26. GNSS Winter School will be focusing on the Positioning aspects of Global Navigation Satellite Systems such as Positioning, Determination Techniques, Coordinate and Time Reference Systems, Satellite Orbit and Position Determination, GNSS Signals and Receivers and Specialised areas of Inertial and Integrated Navigation Systems. A special session has also been planned for GNSS applications and opportunities in the current GNSS market, the official informed. This school is intended for engineers, researchers and students working in the domains of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Guidance, Navigation and Controls, Global Navigation Satellite Systems, Satellite or Radio Navigation, Inertial and Integrated Navigation Systems, Space Systems, Constellation Designs, Interplanetary Navigation, Remote Sensing and Geo Information Science and similar allied areas.

Capital's air quality remains unhealthy

ISLAMABAD: Health experts have warned citizens to avoid unnecessary outdoor exertion as hazardous pollutants were higher in ratio in the capital's air quality on Friday. 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 (PM_{2.5}), which was a hazardous ambient air pollutant causing chronic respiratory diseases and premature deaths, was higher than safer limits in the capital's air. PM_{2.5} was recorded 56.42 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. - APP

IESCO notifies 2-day power schedule

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday notified 2-day power suspension programme for Sunday and Monday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period on Sunday from 09:00 am to 02:00 am Club-1, Mahfooz Shaheed, Orchard, Filtration Plant, Scheme 2, Pandorin, Park View, Pindi Board, Jail Park, Car Chowk, Mehboob Shaheed, Fuji Foundation, Morgah, Daultalaha, Ahdi, Islamabad Club, Koral, Madina Market, G-9/3, H-8/2, New Exchange, F-11/3, NIH, Company Bagh, Gharial, Kotli Sattian, Bari Imam, F-Block, A-Block, Gangal, Dhok Hikmadad, Liaquat Bagh, Jinnah Road, Chakri, Arsalan Poultry Farm, Hanif Shaheed feeders and surrounding areas. - APP

PRCS launches project to improve road safety

Abrar ul Haq hopes PRCS initiative will help make roads safer and save many lives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has launched an initiative to raise awareness among general public about road safety in order to reduce traffic accidents, deaths and injuries and save lives. The project, being executed by PRCS in collaboration with other Movement Partners, will target general public, local transport drivers, and relevant government authorities to seek their contribution in reducing road fatalities.

The project will promote 'Individual Road Safety Commitment Card', one of the initiatives set by the Global Road Safety Partnership for Red Cross and Red Crescent. A special emphasis on post-crash response will be laid under the project. First aid trainings will be imparted to traffic police and motorways police in order to boost their capacity vis-vis post-crash response so that maximum lives can be saved and permanent disabilities could be averted on roads. The project will involve volunteers who will help promote the 10-point agenda of the 'Individual Road Safety Commitment Card'.



"Road safety is a major public health issue in Pakistan. It is estimated that every five minutes, someone is killed or badly injured in a road traffic crash in Pakistan," PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq said. "One of the major causes of road deaths and injuries in Paki-

stan is the lack of awareness," he said. "Road traffic deaths and injuries can be reduced by improving awareness level of general public and transporters through a public awareness campaign on road safety," he maintained.

The chairman hoped that the project launched by the PRCS in collaboration with Movement Partners will help boost road safety in Pakistan through increased awareness among general public, commuters, transporters and the traffic police personnel. "Road safety is a shared responsibility and we all need to do more

to protect our communities from deaths and injuries on roads," he added. The project launched by the PRCS aims at achieving the SDG target of halving the current number of road deaths in Pakistan, which is also aligned with the vision of the National Road Safety Strategy, 2018-2030. Another objective of the PRCS initiative is to strengthen advocacy on existing laws to help government boost road safety. A campaign will be launched to encourage people to comply with existing laws, guidelines and policies pertaining to the road safety.

RCB issues 1810 notices to food outlets

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Food Branch of Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) issued 1810 notices to food outlets for unhygienic and poor cleanliness conditions during last seven months of the current financial year while fines amounting to Rs 2.3 million were also imposed on the violators.

According to RCB Food Branch, total 2200 food outlets were checked and the teams collected 917 food samples which were sent to lab for quality test.

The cases of substandard food items were also sent to the court of the cantonment magistrate which imposed fines on the rules violators. Food Inspectors on the directive of the Cantonment Executive Officer conducted surprise visits of different markets including Saddar, Allahabad, Peshawar Road and other areas and inspected cleanliness condition with quality of food items at food outlets.

In order to ensure supply of quality food items to the residents, he said, the teams were conducting raids at food outlets in different areas on daily basis.

The fines were also being imposed on the stall holders and vendors for unhygienic food and poor cleanliness condition. The raids would continue, he said adding that the teams were directed to also check the health of the workers serving at the food outlets.

IHC extends stay orders against falcons' export

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday extended its stay orders for further four weeks against the export of rare falcon species to the Arab countries and directed not to even caught the falcons until the legal process was completed. Justice Athar Minalah heard the case filed by former chairman wildlife management board. Deputy attorney general adopted the stance that the UAE government had formally made a written request in this regard. The Pakistan had not done trading, business or commercial activity pertaining to the falcons, he said.

He further said that Pakistan had gifted the falcons to UAE government for home and personal use on the basis of mutual relationships. Foreign policy, national interests and diplomatic ties between the two countries were very important, he said.

The officials of Ministry of Climate Change stated that falcons' export was banned here since 2005 to this the chief justice remarked that the foreign office was going to violate this ban, adding that why not the climate ministry was stopping this practice as it was the ministry's responsibility to protect the wildlife. Why not this matter should be sent to federal cabinet, the court said. The chief justice said that if they wanted to do the same practice then the government should bring changes in laws or adopt legal procedure for exemption. No one could violate the law, he said.

Gold prices decrease by Rs 600 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs 600 on Friday and was sold at Rs 112,800 against its sale at Rs113,400 the previous day, Karachi Sarafa Association reported. The price of ten gram 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs514 and was traded at Rs 96,708 against its sale at Rs97,222 while ten gram 22 karat gold was sold at Rs88,649. The price of per tola and ten gram silver also witnessed no change and was sold at Rs1300 and Rs1114.54 respectively. The gold price in the international market witnessed decrease of US \$ 25 and was sold at US \$ 1845 against its sale at \$1870, the association added. - APP



ISLAMABAD: First Lady Samina Alvi taking interacting with a student during her visit to the care for special persons Foundation. - DNA

First Lady stresses mainstreaming of disabled persons

ISLAMABAD: First Lady Begum Samina Alvi on Friday stressed mainstreaming of the disabled persons in all areas of life, saying helping them become self-reliant could prove beneficial for the society. During a visit to a Foundation for Special Persons here, the First Lady said steps were being taken to launch a one-window operation to simplify registration process of the disabled children. She said financial assistance would be provided to the parents of disabled persons under the Ehsaas Kifalat Programme. The

First Lady mentioned that for provision of vocational training to the special children, the government was working on several projects in collaboration with relevant organizations, including Karachi's business community. Begum Alvi was given a briefing on the welfare of physically and mentally retarded children. It was informed that disabled children were being provided education and therapy as per their needs at the Foundation. The First Lady also visited the stalls of artifacts prepared by the disabled children. - DNA

Six arrested for illegal LPG decanting

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police have arrested six shopkeepers on charge of decanting LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) illegally in various parts of the city. A police spokesperson said that the police raided at illegal LPG refilling points and arrested six shopkeepers from Civil Line, Airport and Morgah police station areas and caught the accused while they were illegally decanting gas. He said, Saghir Iqbal, Muhammad Rizwan, Muhammad Anis, Saif ur Rehman, Majid Ali and Muhammad Basit were sent behind the bars. Police have registered separate cases against all the accused while further investigations are underway, he added. He said, Rawalpindi police were conducting raids to check and stop the illegal business of LPG in Rawalpindi district. - DNA

Senators express concerns over recent MDCAT

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Senators on Friday expressed concerns over the recent Medical & Dental College Admission Test (MDCAT), pointing out some issues in the process due to which many eligible students particularly of remote areas could not qualify for admissions. Speaking on point of order, Senator Aurangzeb Orakzai said that some students have obtained fake domiciles to get admission on

erstwhile FATA allocated seats. He demanded that this issue should be sent to the concerned committee. Senator Mir Kabeer Ahmed Muhammad Shahi said that rural areas students cannot compete the students studying in major cities. He said that this is very important issue and should be resolved on priority. Senator Ghous Muhammad Khan Niazi proposed that MDCAT should be held on provincial level to resolve such issues in the future. During session, Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq

Sanjrani directed the concerned ministry to get a report regarding recent Medical & Dental College Admission Test (MDCAT) from Pakistan Medical Commission. Speaking on the point of order Dr. Jahanzeb Jamalini raised the issue of trade of local people in border areas, adding that majority of the local people was dependent on the border trades. Speaking on point of order, Senator Kuda Babar said that Balochistan was the peaceful province at moment. Senator Bahramand

Khan Tangi said that electricity meters should be installed in merged districts of erstwhile FATA, adding that this was the only solution to stop kunda culture in the areas. Senator Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif said that launching of 3G and 4G in erstwhile FATA is very good initiative, adding that mechanism should be adopted to stop misuse of the social media in the country. He said that fake accounts were being created on the names of prominent personalities on social media.

IRSA releases 31,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 31,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 41,800 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 15,500 cusecs each. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1172.40 feet, which was 132.40 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet. - APP

Weekly inflation goes up 0.32%

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) based on weekly inflation for the week ended on January 21, for the combined consumption group, witnessed increase of 0.32 percent as compared to the previous week. The SPI for the week under review in the above mentioned group was recorded at 140.15 points against 139.70 points registered in the previous week, according to the latest data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). As compared with the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the

week under review witnessed an increase of 6.54 percent. The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16=100 is covering 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The Sensitive Price Indicator for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732 witnessed 0.06 percent increase and went up from 145.07 points in last week to 145.15 points during the week under review. Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption groups from Rs17,732-22,888; Rs22,889-29,517; Rs29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 per month also increased by 0.14 percent, 0.23 percent, 0.29 and 0.41

percent respectively. During the week, prices of 08 items decreased, 19 items increased while that of 24 items remained constant. The items, which recorded decrease in their average prices, included tomatoes, eggs, potatoes, LPG Cylinder, sugar, garlic, wheat flour and firewood. The commodities, which recorded increase in their average prices, included chicken, bananas, perol, vegetable ghee (tin), diesel, cooking oil (loose) vegetable ghee (loose), onions, moong pulse, match box, gram pulse, washing soap, mustard oil, cooked beef, gur, mutton, beef and mash pulse.

PHA to provide recreational activities in parks

Malik Abid Hussain said this while talking with the citizens during his special visits to Rawal Park Rawal Road and Iqbal Park Murree Road

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Vice Chairman Parks and Horticulture Authority Rawalpindi Malik Abid Hussain has said the PHA shall provide all-round opportunities to the citizens for positive recreational activities in the coming spring season and also involve them in massive Spring Tree Plantation campaign. He said this while talking with the citizens during his special visits to Rawal Park Murree Road and Iqbal Park Murree Road on Friday. He also shared with citizens the programmes of spring

festivities and sought their co-operation with regard to make success the campaign of turning parks natural green. He said the PHA shall arrange different merriments for the citizens especially for the children. "While celebrating the spring season with fun and fair, it would also be taken as an opportunity to make the citizens, especially the students and small children responsible ones to contribute in lessening environmental pollution", he added. He shared that every citizen would be involved in Spring Tree Plantation Campaign and he or she not merely plant a sapling but would

take full care of it till the planted sapling turned into a mature tree. Malik Abid Hussain mentioned that PHA Chairman and Advisor to the Chief Minister Punjab Asif Mehmood was keen to create a healthy environment and provide all-round opportunities for positive recreational activities to the citizens for which consultations are underway with the concerned agencies and individuals to finalize the programs. He said that the citizens would be involved in the spring tree planting campaign with full vigor. In this regard, we will launch a special campaign in government and non-government schools, colleges and vocational training

centers to make students aware of the need and importance of trees through their teachers. He maintained that the process of retrieving and making the lands allotted for the parks natural green by converting them into regular parks has already been started. It is the responsibility of the citizens who come to the parks for recreation not only to protect the flowers and plants but also to give their suggestions for making them green and fresh and also to play their role in promoting charity like tree planting in practice. Malik Abid Hussain also spoke to the park staff and asked them to take special care of cleanliness

inside the parks. "All of you may appeal to the citizens with full courtesy and high moral attitudes to maintain cleanliness", he advised the staff. "We all should make positive changes in our habits and attitudes and refrain from actions that pollute the environment," he said. In the use of food items inside the parks, it is important to take care that fruit peels or wrappers etc. are not thrown on the ground but in the dustbins to assist the concerned staff in maintaining the cleanliness of the parks. "These are small things we can do to help make parks greener," he concluded.

Briefs

'Govt retires \$16.4 billion external debt'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Industries and Production Hammad Azhar on Friday informed the Senate the government has paid US \$16.4 billion towards external debt and Rs19.9 trillion towards domestic debt during the last two years. Responding to various supplementary questions during Question Hour, the minister said record debt servicing was done during the last two years. The government was retiring US \$10 billion debt annually, he added. To another question, he said that the country's foreign exchange reserves have increased to US \$20 billion despite record debt servicing. He said State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has foreign exchange reserves of \$ 12-13 billion. The reserves have increased due to improvement in exports and remittances, he added. The minister said the current account has shown a surplus of \$1.6 billion during the first five months of current financial year against a deficit of US \$ 1.7 billion in the corresponding period of last year. To a separate question, he said no cut on the NFC share of provinces has been imposed by the federal government. It was not a fact, that the government has imposed cut of Rs154 billion on the share of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in the NFC Award. - APP

94 constables promoted in Rawalpindi

DNA

RAWALPINDI: As many as 64 constables including 3 women have been promoted as Head Constables and were pinned badges by City Police Officer (CPO) Muhammad Ahsan Younis. The CPO greeted all the promotion holders and hoped that they would continue to serve their professional duties with honesty in next ranks. He said they would facilitate the general public through their professional attitude as well as hard work. The promoted constables included Muhammad Imran, Sajid Mehmood, Kashif Khan, Aftab Ahmed, Abdul Ghafoor Haider, Asim Zameer, Muhammad Zubair, Nouman Ahmed, Khurram Riaz, Abdul Wahab, Jawad Hussain, Usman Muneer, Usman Ali, Muhammad Naadeem, Mustaq Ahmed, Abdul Qudoos and others.

Motorway police recovers stolen car

RAWALPINDI: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on Friday recovered a stolen Suzuki Wagner car bearing registration number ALE 368 from jurisdictions of Sawabi. An official of NHMP informed that a patrolling team of Motorway police found an unclaimed car parked near Sawabi. Following the investigation, it was revealed that the said car was stolen from Sialkot. The police took the car into custody and informed the concerned police station and owner of the car. Search operation is underway to apprehend the accused. - APP

'Pak historic ties with North African countries need bolstering'

The exigency was highlighted in a consultative session titled 'Pakistan's relations with North African countries' organized by Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), which was addressed as keynote speaker by Pakistan's former envoy to Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, Ambassador (r) Mushtaq Ali Shah



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan needs to set its focus on bolstering diplomatic, economic and cultural ties with North African states as the historic ties with them remain short of achieving their true potential so far.

The exigency was highlighted in a consultative session titled 'Pakistan's relations with North African countries' organized by Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), which was addressed as keynote speaker by Pakistan's former envoy to Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, Ambassador (r) Mushtaq Ali Shah.

The session was chaired by Executive President IPS Khalid Rahman and participated by Ambassador (r) Tajammul Altaf, Brig (r) Tugh-

ral Yamin, associate dean, CIPSNUST and non-resident research fellow at IPS, GM-IPS Naufil Shahrukh, and Kulsoom Belal, research officer and focal person for IPS' 'Understanding Africa' initiative. Speaking about the history of Pak-Egypt ties, Ali recalled that Allama Muhammad Iqbal had visited Egypt in 1931 and King Farouk was so impressed by his philosophy and poetry that he ordered opening up of an Urdu department in Cairo University so that Allama's work could be understood in the kingdom. Urdu departments were later established in Cairo University, Jamia Al-Azhar and six other major universities.

Quaide-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had visited Cairo in 1946 and held meetings not only with the King and government officials

but also leaders of Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood), Ambassador Ali further recollected. The former ambassador said that the recognition and appreciation of Pakistan's contributions in Task Force 151, anti-piracy actions and UN peacekeeping missions in Africa resonates across the North African region, yet their bilateral ties remain short of achieving the true potential. Highlighting the importance of growing economic and trade ties with North Africa in juxtaposition to Europe, the former ambassador apprised that Pakistan can export its defence equipment, textile, pharmaceuticals and agrobased goods, services, films and dramas to North African states.

Contemplating over the strategic cost of neglecting North Africa, the keynote speaker pointed out

that India has already built a strong foothold in the region, and is trying to compete with China which remains to be the biggest investor in Africa to date. Unfortunately, he rued, Pakistan is lagging behind in the competition. The speaker also lamented that despite having a dedicated Urdu language department at the Al Azhar University since 1979, bilateral political and cultural ties between Pakistan and Egypt - the second biggest African economy - have remained topsy-turvy especially in the wake of Arab Spring that swept through the Arab world and rattled decades-old dictatorships and monarchs. Nonetheless, efforts are being made now from both sides to revive bilateral relations which is evident from Pakistan hosting a business seminar in Egypt last year. Such endeavors, he stressed,

should continue to be held in the future as well in a bid to foster greater trade and political contacts. Concluding the session, DG-IPS Khalid Rahman opined that foreign policy practitioners are skilled in making ways even amidst difficult circumstances. The same applies to Pakistan's foreign office as well which needs to devise lasting policies vis-à-vis North Africa. He also stressed that bilateral relations with North African countries need to be revived and fortified sooner rather than later, and that can be done by facilitating joint business ventures, visits of parliamentary delegations, tourism, sports, economic integration, academic exchanges and increased people-to-people contact between both sides.

Policing culture to be improved: IGP Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Qazi Jamil ur Rehman on Friday expressed his commitment to improve the typical policing culture by ensuring policy of merit and introducing friendly police ecology in the city. Speaking here at Police Darbar, he said that 'Thana Culture' in Islamabad would be changed and Station House Officers and Muharrars at police stations would be appointed through tests and interviews. The IGP said that public issues would be automatically resolved at the level of police stations through appointments on merit. He said that today's Darbar is dedicated to martyrs of Islamabad police, their children, widows, mothers and sisters. "The martyrs of Islamabad police sacrificed their lives for the country and nation and they would be remembered forever," the IGP maintained.

He thanked Almighty Allah for giving him opportunity to lead the best police force of Pakistan. He said that every police personnel should be thankful to Allah who selected him/her for the service to people and the authority/power should be used to facilitate them. Islamabad police chief said that funds would be issued to police stations and strict implementation on policy of free registration of crime would be ensured. He said that immediate registration of First Information Report (FIR) is right of every citizen and no compromise would be made on it.

He said that issues of police personnel would be resolved on priority and their morale would be boosted through encouragement over good performance. The IGP urged the police officials to stand with him for changing typical police environment and adopt decent attitude with those complainants visiting policing stations. He said that promotion system in the department would be improved and pending promotions would be made soon. The IGP directed Zonal SPs, SDPOs and SHO's to take steps for community policing and hold open kutcheries in their respective areas on regular basis.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser is a meeting with President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Masood Khan and chairman parliamentary committee on Kashmir, Shehryar Khan Afridi at Parliament House. - DNA

'Pak challenges food security need holistic approach'

RANA FARRUKH

ISLAMABAD: Ensuring food security is one of the most pressing issues during the time of global pandemic.

Holistic approach at every level needs to be in place to respond to this critical challenge of the day effectively. The experts in food security and agriculture sector from public and private sector as well as academia, said this while sharing their views with the participants of webinar 'Ensuring Food Security in constrained economic situation of Pakistan', organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), here on Friday. Chairman, Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC), Dr Muhammad Azeem Khan, has emphasized on the need of integrated approach towards ensuring food security in the country. Food security is directly linked with the national security, he said while adding that we need to improve

the quality of our agricultural products as well as climate change resistant to boost our trade in this sector. "Scientific research and use of technology as joint Public-private ventures is imperative to respond to new challenges," Dr Khan said. He also emphasized on the need of contextual production and improving the seed system to counter the rust attack and pests. Dr Hamid Jalil, Member Food Security, Climate Change and Nutrition, Planning Commission, highlighted the fact that food security requires a long-time plan and thus, the ministry we have made a National Food Security Agenda which outlines the long-term policies of food security. He added further that a team of expert is being sought to regulate all the existing bodies. Besides, bringing reforms to make our production more sustainable, revamping agriculture research, cotton revival programme, disease eradication and facilitating small holder agriculture sector are some of the focused areas, he

concluded. Dr Abid Qaiyum Sulehri, Executive Director, SDPI, while covering different aspects of the topic, said that food security in these times of economic constraint is one of the major threats to the humanity. Since March 2020 when the covid-19 was declared a global pandemic, food shortage in Pakistan has exacerbated by it. Primitive methods of agriculture, guesstimates-based data, administrative failures which resulted in hoarding and the climate change which has been affecting our crops and their production are some of the major contributing factors here. "A food security dashboard has been established at the PM office with data and statistics of each district available on to accurately guess the trends in supply and demands at first hand," Dr Sulehri informed the panelists and added that the Chinese government has appointed an agricultural commissioner in Pakistan under the banner of the second phase of CPEC, which is a heartening development.

Govt sets up committee on Broadsheet, says Babar

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Zaheer-ud-Din Babar Awan on Friday said that the government had set up an inquiry committee to investigate the Broadsheet matter and determine responsibility.

Speaking in Senate, he said the government did not believe to put the issues under the carpet. He said that constitution of the inquiry committee was the demand of the house and people of the country. Babar Awan said the government wanted to probe how Pervez Musharraf hired the firm for search of assets. He said that the PTI government had a track record to probe whenever allegations rose on any issue. He said that no one can even think to go after the sugar mafia. It was imperative that there should be an investigation, and on the basis of that inquiry responsibility should be fixed, he added.

Leader of the House Dr. Shahzad Waseem said that federal and provincial governments should jointly provide health facilities to people of the country. "Providing health facilities should not be politicized," he added. Nine reports were also presented in the house. Babar Awan had also moved a motion to discuss President's address to the joint session of the Parliament. On the request of Babar Awan it was decided to start debate on the President's address from Monday. - APP

NHA attracts Rs 144 bln private sector investment

ISLAMABAD: National Highway Authority (NHA), during past one year, has successfully attracted private sector investment with projects worth over Rs. 144 billion surpassing the average annual Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Pakistan. Besides other benefits, the expected revenue earnings from these projects would be over Rs. 391 billion, an official of NHA told APP here on Friday.

He said the modern concept of infrastructure development, Public Private Partnership (PPP) has become a popular mode of road construction also known as Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) model in which the private sector builds a project and operate a facility for an agreed period of time ranging from 20 to 30 years.

The private party bears the responsibility of design, construction, operation and maintenance of the project and in return the party is authorized to receive toll/other revenue for a certain period. Islamabad-Lahore Motorway was one of major PPP projects which was handed over to a concessionaire for a 20 years period in 2014 and scope of the project overlay and modernization of 357 km M-2). Habiba Bridge on Grand Trunk Road (N-5) in Okara was the other project completed on BOT basis. About 136 km Super Highway was another major NHA project converted to Karachi-Hyderabad Motorway on BOT basis. Recently opened for traffic 91 Sialkot-Lahore Motorway was also built on the BOT model. Among the upcoming PPP projects of the NHA included Hyderabad-Sukkur - APP

NUMS and NIH sign DOU to strengthen research co-op

SHAHEEN HANIF

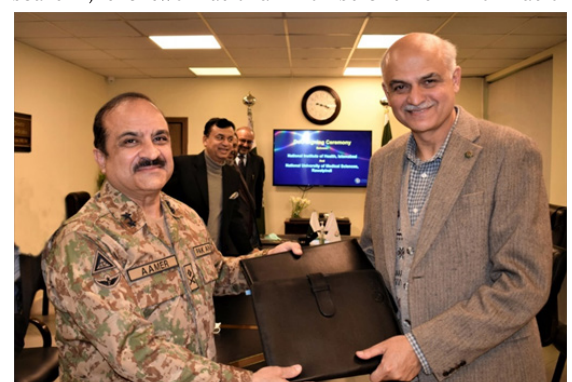
RAWALPINDI: The National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) and National Institute of Health Islamabad (NIH) signed five year Document of Understanding (DOU) here Friday to strengthen research cooperation in the development of medical sciences.

The DOU was inked by NUMS Vice Chancellor Lt. Gen. Syed Muhammad Imran Majeed (Retd) and Executive Director NIH Maj. Gen. Aamir Ikram at a simple ceremony at the university secretariat. Pro-Vice Chancellor Aca-

demics Maj. Gen. (Retd) Saleem Ahmed Khan and Pro-Vice Chancellor Adm. Maj. Gen. (Retd) Syed Reza Hamdani were present on the occasion. In order to promote research, the two national

institutions agreed to facilitate exchange of faculties, scientists and experts for joint research project, said the DOU.

It also provides for co-operation "in exchange of scientific information



books, journals and other relevant technical materials in the field of training, research and technology" in line with policies of NUMS and NIH. Both the sides agreed to appoint focal persons to monitor implementation of the programme and prepare annual progress report.

In his brief remarks on the occasion Vice Chancellor NUMS said NIH had played a pivotal role in the health sector. Given the devastating impact of the pandemic, health sector ought to be accorded top priority as every sector now was dependent on it, he added.

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

Right of way

AT long last, the government has approved the right of way (RoW) policy for the telecom sector. The telecom industry needed this for a long time. The new blueprint will allow the telecom companies deeper penetration in the country. The policy will become a key enabler for expediting the deployment of underground (optical fibre) and overground (mobile towers) infrastructure in Pakistan. Because of the lack of an RoW policy, Pakistan is lagging behind all its neighbours. Only Afghanistan is below us in the telecom sector. Hopefully, the new policy will lessen the bureaucratic hurdles in the way of telecommunication companies.

The greatest beneficiaries of the RoW policy will be ordinary people. Mobile and Internet service providers often cite the lack of space for setting up the infrastructure necessary for addressing the poor-quality network. On the one hand, the new policy will simplify the process of site acquisition for installation of mobile towers and expedite the provision of mobile infrastructure. On the other hand, Internet service providers will also be facilitated since the new plan addresses the hurdles that Internet companies face in laying the fibre cable. Consequently, better connectivity, enhanced speed, more coverage and reduction in call drops for the users are the benefits associated with the new strategy.

Furthermore, the new regulations will attract more players to Pakistan's telecommunications market for the policy provides legal cover to telecom and digital infrastructure. Similarly, the companies already in the market will find encouragement to spread out in areas beyond urban centres. The newly approved policy is undoubtedly a significant initiative by the government, as it can bring in so much to every stakeholder's plate. However, the government needs to know that approving a policy is one thing; implementing it is another. And all the advantages of the RoW policy are contingent upon its successful implementation.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



Civil service reforms

REFORMING the bureaucracy had been a major part of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI)'s administrative plan. It is no secret that there had been a litigant of complaints against the bureaucratic process—it has been criticised as one which lets corruption off the hook, of not being a meritocratic structure, that its system does not prioritise deliverance and that it is still continuing the colonial-era legacy with its hierarchies and its commitment to structure rather than performance. While there have been attempts to reform the civil service, with some good efforts being made with the Police system, there was still indisputable need for some institutional change. The PTI government has now unveiled some of the most sweeping changes—the government okayed the Civil Servants (E&D) Rules-2020 in December, and on Wednesday, Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafiqat Mahmood announced some major reforms, with the intention to introduce more accountability.

How do the new reforms help? A consistent complaint with the civil services had been that it was too stable an occupation—an officer could work till retirement, even with weak performance, with little evaluation. The reforms are designed to inculcate more transparency on performance and have more evaluation methods by transferring the authority from a hierarchical one to the new appointing authorities. Promotion will be made with more scrutiny, to hold those with corruption allegations or pending investigations to account.

These reforms are good and are bound to increase transparency and keep the civil service on its toes—for a while. The struggle of the bureaucracy is not lack of rules but also a culture of slow work and inefficiency. The government will need to keep checking on the appointing authorities to make sure the rules are being followed; otherwise, that same culture could seep in the accountability mechanisms as well. One step towards countering that would be to make enquiries and the civil service process more public so the authorities are accountable to the public, as well as the government.

Biden under pressure to challenge Israel on HR

Daoud Kuttub



The campaigning ahead of Israel's elections, which are due to be held on March 23, has so far avoided any discussion of the status of the Occupied Territories. All major parties are divided between either supporting or opposing the continued premiership of Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been charged with multiple counts of corruption. But B'Tselem's report was published shortly before the Biden administration was sworn in

LEADING Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem last week issued a report that says that the areas under Israeli control are a single political entity and that the state must be held accountable for its human rights record. "One of the key points in our analysis is that this is a single geopolitical area ruled by one government," B'Tselem Director Hagai El-Ad said. "This is not democracy plus occupation. This is apartheid between the river and the sea." The Jan. 12 report was widely published in the English-language media around the world, but it didn't see the light of day in Israel's Hebrew-language publications — a signal of the concern that it could cause major domestic political injury to a polarized Israeli public that is due to participate in its fourth elections in just two years in March.

This was not the first time that Palestine and Israel have been mentioned geographically in the same sentence. In 2018, CNN analyst Marc Lamont Hill effectively lost his job for using the six words "from the river to the sea" during a speech at the UN. Peter Beinart also made waves last year when he argued that a comprehensive binational solution that ignores the Green Line was needed. Years earlier, during the First Intifada, Palestinian professor Sari Nusseibeh said that Palestinians and Israelis must agree to either share the power or share the land. "You either divorce us or marry us" is the phrase he often used in this regard. Even Donald Trump, in his first days in office, said that the Palestinians

and Israelis needed to agree to either two states or one.

B'Tselem's well-documented report will have an important impact on attempts to discredit pro-Palestinian nonviolent protests around the world, especially in the US. Israel and its apologists have repeatedly attacked the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement as being anti-Semitic because it erases the line between Israel on the one hand and the West Bank and Gaza on the other. BDS leaders have repeatedly argued that policy in the Occupied Territories cannot be separated from that of the state of Israel. BDS officials were also slammed for not taking a stand for either the two-state solution or one state with equal rights for all citizens. The movement's supporters have been tarnished as anti-Semitic because it was argued this position implies that they don't recognize Israel; something they vehemently deny. Pro-Israeli groups and lobbies in the US have even introduced legislation both at the national and state levels aimed at criminalizing BDS and denying Americans their constitutional right to express themselves, including by means of nonviolent protest. The new report's most damning conclusion is that Israel is continuously committing the war crime of apartheid. While a military occupation is abhorrent, it is not considered a war crime by international humanitarian law. For example, moving the citizens of an occupied country to occupied areas or moving prisoners from an occupied area to prisons in the occupying country are violations of the Fourth

Geneva Convention. But B'Tselem goes a step further and states that all Israeli crimes in the Occupied Territories meet the definition of apartheid, which was declared a war crime during South Africa's era of institutionalized racial segregation. This report by a well-respected Israeli human rights organization totally debunks the continuous efforts made in America and some other countries to delegitimize the calls for nonviolent protest made by BDS and others. These calls aim to punish Israel economically and morally for its failure to end its policies that disenfranchise millions of Palestinians and deny them their political rights, including the right to self-determination.

The campaigning ahead of Israel's elections, which are due to be held on March 23, has so far avoided any discussion of the status of the Occupied Territories. All major parties are divided between either supporting or opposing the continued premiership of Benjamin Netanyahu, who has been charged with multiple counts of corruption. But B'Tselem's report was published shortly before the Biden administration was sworn in. The new president has telegraphed that he will give high priority to human rights issues in foreign policy decisions. While many expect this position to apply to authoritarian regimes such as China and the Philippines, B'Tselem indicates that, if it is to be consistent, the Biden administration will also need to hold Israel responsible for the major crime of apartheid over the way its military rule handles Palestinians.

— Courtesy: Arab News

There is no 'return to normalcy'

Nate Hochman



Trump is a Jacksonian populist in full: he represents the energetic, unpredictable and sometimes dangerously unhinged id of the US's wildest democratic passions. The aesthetic of stability offered by a Biden presidency will come as a momentary relief from those chaotic tendencies. But this is a cosmetic remedy; it will not stop the larger trends that produced Trump in the first place

JOE Biden's presidential bid has often invited comparisons to President Warren G Harding, whose 1920 campaign slogan promised a "return to normalcy" after a chaotic preceding decade. But these comparisons often miss a number of important differences between the two candidates: while Harding ran on a kind of small-c conservatism, promising to rescue the country from the autocratic wartime progressivism of the Woodrow Wilson presidency, Biden campaigned on restoration of Obama-era technocracy, returning the reins of power to the United States' elite, over-credentialed handlers after four years of populist chaos. Harding ran against the elite consensus, opposing the growing power of progressive academics in the executive bureaucracy, while Biden — in spite of his obligatory nods to fighting corporate greed, dismantling systemic racism, and speaking truth to power — ultimately ran as the champion of the pre-2016 status quo.

The "normalcy" that Biden is preparing to return the US to, then, is very different from the "normalcy" promised by his predecessor. In many ways, the septuagenarian Democrat is a personification of the destructive Clinton-Bush-Obama consensus that bears a significant responsibility for producing Donald Trump. But it is difficult to blame voters for being wooed by this restorationist message nonetheless, especially after the tumult of the past few months: in a choice between the reckless and often downright shameful nature of Trump's behaviour — which culminated in the January 6 riot at the US Capitol that took the lives of at least five people — and what felt, at least on the surface, like some semblance of sanity and competence, it is entirely understandable that many Americans chose the latter.

Trump's tenure in the executive branch has undoubtedly inflamed and exacerbated the significant challenges that the US currently faces. But Biden and his counterparts do not seem to have bothered to consider why the erstwhile president's populist energy has proved so potent. And for that reason, the incoming administration's business-as-usual approach to governance is inevitably going to further energise the forces that swept Trump into power in the years to come. The US's political and cultural

leaders seem to have learned very little from the last four years: the reaction to Trump from the legacy media, academia, big business, and — to varying degrees — both party establishments has not been one of introspection and critical self-reflection, but of a doubling down; "more of the same", but with a renewed vigour and determination.

If President Biden truly wants to "unify" the country in the way that he says he does, he will need to reckon with the failures of the bipartisan political and cultural consensus that has governed our politics since at least September 11 attacks. For the past 20 years, our leaders have fiddled while their constituents suffered from declining life expectancies — an unprecedented trend in a modern industrialised nation — cultural atomisation, a collapsing middle class, spiritual alienation, the loss of a shared sense of citizenship and diminishing trust in every big institution in American life (with the notable exception of the military).

No single ideology has a monopoly on this issue: the disconnect between the upper one-third and the rest of the US population has grown wider under both Republican and Democratic administrations, and both Trump and Bernie Sanders tapped into comparable kinds of populist energy in segments of their respective parties. But when Sanders dropped out after his unsuccessful bid for the Democratic nomination in 2016, Trump was the only candidate who offered a meaningful alternative vision to the stale, establishment form of politics symbolised by Hillary Clinton. In retrospect, then, it should be unsurprising that he was ultimately victorious.

The populist energy that Trump represents is, at its heart, a rejection of our leaders' seeming comfort with the deterioration of the American way of life. Economic issues are a factor in this, but they are not as central to Trump's appeal as they are often made out to be. Fundamentally, the movement that the former reality television star harnessed is a reaction to the loss of a shared American identity, the breakdown of a sense of collective purpose, and the decline of our civic community ties. And these phenomena, in turn, are the direct result of policy decisions made by the stewards of the US's managed decline: a corporate-friendly neoliberal economic philosophy has

seen the financialisation of the American economy, the disappearance of the middle class and the hollowing out of local communities, and our elites' embrace of multiculturalism has produced uncontrolled immigration at the border and an approach to social policy that divides Americans into distinct identity groups and pits them against one another in perpetuity.

Everywhere, now, we see the consequences of these decisions. Most recently, and disturbingly, the rise of political street violence on the fringes of both the left and the right — what Abraham Lincoln famously described as the "mobocratic spirit" in the years leading up to the Civil War — can only be understood as the direct result of the loss of faith in the American system that has been caused by these political and cultural developments.

Infsofar as our elite institutions have acknowledged the Trump phenomenon as a symbol of the profound unhappiness of a significant portion of the American electorate, their response has been to denigrate, marginalise and ultimately suppress those sentiments rather than reckon with their own roles in creating them. The most recent last-ditch effort to combat the country's increasingly radicalised populist fervour through revoking book deals, barring access to economic capital and banning accounts from social media is like attempting to heal a bullet wound with a Band-Aid. It is too little, too late — and it testifies to the persistence of a widespread elite attitude which regards Americans' concerns about the nation's decline as dangerously bigoted and worthy of derision. Trump is a Jacksonian populist in full: he represents the energetic, unpredictable and sometimes dangerously unhinged id of the US's wildest democratic passions. The aesthetic of stability offered by a Biden presidency will come as a momentary relief from those chaotic tendencies. But this is a cosmetic remedy; it will not stop the larger trends that produced Trump in the first place. In the event that our leadership class allows itself to be lulled back into a comfortable apathy by the illusion of security, something far more dangerous and destructive will emerge in Trump's place — and when that happens, a "return to normalcy" will no longer be an option at all.

— Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

Archer, Stokes return in England squad

DNA

KARACHI: England have announced their 16-man squad and six traveling reserves for the first two Tests against India. All-rounder Ben Stokes and pacer Jofra Archer have returned after being rested from the Test series against Sri Lanka. Opener Rory Burns also named to the squad as he was at home for the birth of his first child. Middle-order batter Ollie Pope will travel to India and will be added to the squad when passed fit. Pope is recovering from a shoulder injury sustained in September during the Test series against Pakistan.

Read: England's Bairstow, Lawrence seal seven-wicket win over Sri Lanka
Jonny Bairstow, Mark Wood, Sam Curran, part of the Tests against Sri Lanka, are rested for the first two Tests.

England Squad:

Joe Root (c), Jofra Archer, Moeen Ali, James Anderson, Dom Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler, Zak Crawley, Ben Foakes, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Dom Sibley, Ben Stokes, Ollie Stone, Chris Woakes. Meanwhile, India had also announced their 18-member squad for the first two Tests. Regular captain Virat Kohli returned to the side after missing three Tests against Australia due to the birth of his first daughter.

India squad:

Virat Kohli (C), Ajinkya Rahane, Axar Patel, Cheteshwar Pujara, Hardik Pandya, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, KL Rahul, Krunal Pandya, Mayank Agarwal, Mohammed Siraj, Ravichandran Ashwin, Rishabh Pant (WK), Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Washington Sundar & Wriddhiman Saha (WK).

It must be noted that both teams are scheduled to play the four-match Test series. The first two Tests will be played at MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai.

Bilawal hints at no-trust move against PM Imran

From Page 01

They were trying to create differences among the opposition but the puppet will have to go home and the people's representative will become the prime minister. "We know how to send undemocratic powers packing and we will overthrow this incompetent and incompetent government under the banner of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)," Bilawal said. The PPP chairman went on to say that the statements of federal ministers were an expression of their fear and apprehension. They are afraid that if all the opposition forces come together, their puppet prime minister would be thrown out.

He further said that that Larkana Industrial Zone will provide employment opportunities to thousands of people, adding that the geographical location of the project is according to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. "The PPP has always served the people of Pakistan," Bilawal said and added his party has always created employment opportunities whether it is a laborer or a farmer.

The PPP chairman said: "The damage PTI government has done to the country is unprecedented. Pakistan has further weakened economically. Compared to the federal government, PPP gave reasonable rates for taxes. We did not consider traders and industrialists as criminals but gradually brought them under the tax net." Bilawal said that agriculture is a backbone of Sindh's economy and we hope that this project will boost agriculture in the province. "We are portrayed as enemies of industry and friends of the people but we know that industrialization plays an important role in the development of a country. That's why we offer special packages," he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for inter-provincial coordination and president of Pakistan sports board, Dr. Fehmida Mirza awarded winners of 9th world memory championship with certificates and souvenirs. – DNA

'Pakistan can review its position about Armenia'

Pakistan's stance on Armenia is linked to the sensitivities of the brotherly countries, Turkey and Azerbaijan. So, if Turkey and Azerbaijan are able to normalize relations with Armenia we can review our position, sad Pakistani envoy

DNA

BAKU: During the 44-day war Azerbaijan liberated its territories occupied by Armenia in the early 90's of the last century. In those days, Pakistan repeatedly stated its support for Azerbaijan and its right of self-defense. How do you assess the results of the war?

I wish to start by congratulating the Government and people of Azerbaijan on this very remarkable triumph on the recent war commonly known

as Patriotic War. Pakistan supported the position of Azerbaijan in this campaign which we consider as a legitimate and just struggle because you were fighting for the territorial integrity of your country. To fight for self-defense and territorial integrity for one's country is a legal right under international law. It is a position that was supported by various UN Security Council resolutions adopted in 1993. It was because of these reasons that Pakistan supported Azerbaijan in this campaign. We wish the people of Azerbaijan well on this



victory as well as during the next phase of reconstruction in the liberated areas. Azerbaijan and Turkey

are already taking steps to restore economic and transport relations with Armenia. Does Pakistan have a plan on normalizing relations with Armenia? In the near future, will we see the building of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Pakistan and Armenia, as well? Pakistan is the only country in the world that does not recognize the state of Armenia. But Pakistan does not have a direct conflict with Armenia. We are not part of this region. Pakistan's stance on Armenia is linked to the sensitivities of the brotherly countries, Tur-

key and Azerbaijan. So, if Turkey and Azerbaijan are able to normalize relations with Armenia, as we saw things moving in the Moscow meeting regarding the implementation of the 9 November Ceasefire Agreement for unblocking transportation and communication links between these countries, we can review our position. If everything moves well and the relationships between Azerbaijan and Armenia and between Armenia and Turkey are normalized, of course, we will also consider normalizing relations with Armenia.

SCO to sponsor Pak's first female mountaineer

GILGIT: Special Communications Organization (SCO) will sponsor Pakistan's first female mountaineer Samina Baig for her attempt to climb K-2. If successful, Samina Baig will be the first Pakistani and Muslim woman to climb K-2, the second highest peak of the world. Samina Baig is a Pakistani high-altitude mountaineer. Born in Gilgit-Baltistan, at the age of 21, Samina Baig became the first Mus-

lim Pakistani woman to climb the "Seven Summits", including K2, said a press release. A recipient of the Pride of Performance Award, Samina Baig will now attempt to climb the 8,611 meters high K-2 peak to promote women empowerment and to raise awareness about global warming and climate change. "I'm thrilled and grateful to be partnering with SCO for my upcoming K-2 Dream Expedition 2021. – APP

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane positive for Covid-19

DNA

MADRID: Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane has tested positive for Covid-19, the Spanish club announced Friday. The positive test comes a day before Madrid travel to Alaves in La Liga seeking to bounce back from an embarrassing midweek Copa del Rey exit. "Real Madrid C.F. report that our coach Zinedine Zidane has tested positive for Covid-19," the club said in a statement.

Zidane has already had to self-isolate this month after coming into contact with a person infected with the virus.



He tested negative at the time and was able to oversee the team. After successive defeats in the Spanish Super Cup and Copa del Rey, the second a shock loss to

third-tier Alcoyano, Zidane is again under pressure, and Real Madrid will try to reignite their La Liga title challenge away to Alaves. Zidane's side are playing catch-up to Atletico Madrid, despite having played a game more, after draws against struggling Elche and Osasuna, two of the league's bottom three, in recent weeks. Alaves beat Madrid 2-1 in the capital in late November but have won just once in eight matches since, their slide into a relegation scrap costing coach Pablo Machin his job last week with former Spain international Abelardo Fernandez returning to take charge.



SARGODHA: A view of friendly hockey match playing between Pak Fazaia Hockey team and Sargodha 11 Hockey team at Astro turf Hockey Stadium. – DNA

'No truth' in Olympics cancellation: Japan

DNA

TOKYO: Japan dismissed a report claiming officials see cancelling the Tokyo Olympics as inevitable on Friday, as Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said he was "determined" to hold the Games. Deputy government spokesman Manabu Sakai there was "no truth" to the report in The Times, which quoted an unnamed ruling coalition source as saying "the consensus is that it's too difficult" to hold the Games. It is the latest article to cast doubt on the Games, which were postponed over the coro-

navirus last year but have been hit by a surge in cases and plunging public support. "I am determined to realise a safe and secure Tokyo Games as proof that mankind will have overcome the virus," Suga insisted on Friday.

Games organisers also said they were "fully focused on hosting the Games this summer". But Sakai said a decision on hosting the Games was looming for Japan, a statement that appeared to deviate from the government's stated position. "At some point in time, we will naturally make a decision as to whether to actually hold it," he said.

Efforts on to get Pak students to UK: envoy

From Page 01

Harare and Brussels (UK Permanent Representation to the EU), as well as more recent short-term roles in Jakarta and Washington. She also spent 2 years on loan to the Ministry of Justice as Principal Private Secretary to the Justice Secretary. Head of Press Section British High Commission Ms. Fouzia Younis earlier greeted the guests and said this reception was long overdue. Due to COVID situation she could not meet with her media colleagues earlier. She said cricketing ties between the two countries are also normalizing and the English cricket team is visiting Pakistan in October this year. She also talked about resumption of British Airways flights and launching of Virgin Air flights to Pakistan and hoped this will further strengthen relations between Britain and Pakistan.

Biden urged to work for Afghan peace

From Page 01

Former US President Donald Trump accelerated a timeline for troop withdrawal agreed with the Taliban in February last year, as the Biden administration comes in with 2,500 US soldiers on the ground in Afghanistan. Under last year's historic deal, all US troops are due to leave Afghanistan by April, but the Pentagon recently hinted it could delay that if violence does not abate. "We are concerned because we feel violence can vitiate the climate," Qureshi added.

"Pakistan has done a lot, we have really bent backwards to create an environment to facilitate the peace process," he said, while blaming "spoilers" for the violence, identifying them as internal Afghan players "who have benefited from the war economy". Qureshi said "there are elements from outside who do not share our vision, which is a peaceful, stable, prosperous Afghanistan."

"It is a shared responsibility to begin with but the ultimate responsibility is with the Afghan leadership. It's their country, it's their future," he said. He said, "Our approach, thinking, objectives and shared visions are very much in line with the priorities of the new administration. And that convergence can be built further." Qureshi also called on the US not to view Pakistan's close ties with China – an economic and political rival to the US – as a "zero-sum game". "They have to understand that our relationship with China is not a zero-sum game for them," he said, making note of China's \$60 billion investment in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. "They (the US) should come, compete and invest." He added that Pakistan was willing to act as a mediator between China and the US, a role it played in 1972 when it facilitated talks to set up an historic visit to Beijing by then-President Richard Nixon.

"Pakistan traditionally has had the opportunity and has built bridges between the two. In this environment, where there is a change... Pakistan can be a bridge-builder," he said.

Hales hits century in BBL total

DNA

ADELAIDE: England's explosive batter Alex Hales smashed 110 off 56 balls as Sydney Thunder posted the highest Big Bash League (BBL) total in history to beat Sydney Sixers. The 32-year-old Hales hit nine fours and eight sixes. He reached his century off just 52 balls in Thunder's record 232/5 at Adelaide Oval. Defending champions Sixers managed 186-5 in reply as they lost by 46 runs. Win has elevated Thunder to third spot in the points table while Sixers are at the top with 32 points. Hales is the leading run-getter of the ongoing tournament with 462 at an average of 38.50 and strike-rate of almost 166. Hales is playing franchise leagues all over the world and will be representing Islamabad United in upcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL) season six.

United Nations TPNW comes into force

In a video message and statement, he said that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) also represents a "strong demonstration of support for multilateral approaches to nuclear disarmament" overall

UNITED NATIONS: A United Nations treaty banning nuclear weapons entered into force on Friday, with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres hailing it as "an important step towards a world free of nuclear weapons".

In a video message and statement, he said that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) also represents a "strong demonstration of support for multilateral approaches to nuclear disarmament" overall.

The UN chief commended the states that have ratified the treaty and welcomed the "instrumental role of civil society in advancing the TPNW's negotiation and entry into force". "The survivors of nuclear explosions and nuclear tests offered tragic testimo-

nies and were a moral force behind the treaty. Entry into force is a tribute to their enduring advocacy", he said. Guterres said he was looking forward to guiding the UN's response according to the treaty, including preparations for the first official Meeting of States Parties. "Nuclear weapons pose growing dangers and the world needs urgent action to ensure their elimination and prevent the catastrophic human and environmental consequences any use would cause", said the UN chief.

"The elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations. The Secretary-General calls on all states to work together to realize this ambition to advance common security and collec-

tive safety," a statement issued by his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. The TPNW secured the 50 ratifications it needed to then enter into force, at the end of last October. The campaigners who had steered momentum towards Friday's milestone moment, described it then as "a new chapter for nuclear disarmament". The accord was approved initially by 122 nations at the UN General Assembly in 2017, but it was civil society groups led by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) which had put in the "decades of activism" to secure the number of countries required to make it a reality.

So far however, the main nuclear powers of the United States, the United King-

dom, Russia, China and France, have not signed the accord. Other countries that possess nuclear weapons, such as India, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan, have also declined to join.

It declares that countries ratifying it must "never under any circumstances develop, test, produce, manufacture or otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices."

In a statement released last October by the civil society and campaign umbrella group ICAN, which won the Nobel Peace Prize for its work in 2017, said that once the treaty comes into force, all states' parties will need to follow through on their promises, and abide by its prohibitions. – APP

Briefs

EU chief urges Putin to release Navalny

BRUSSELS: European Council chief Charles Michel demanded the "immediate release" of Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny in a call with President Vladimir Putin on Friday. The EU had already condemned an attempt to assassinate Navalny and his arrest on his return to Russia after treatment, but Michel has now expressed "grave concerns" directly to Putin. And Michel told the Kremlin chief that he would launch a "strategic debate" on EU-Russia relations when he convenes a summit of all 27 EU leaders in March. "The President of the European Council informed President Putin of the grave concern in the EU and its Member States over recent developments and called to fully and unconditionally respect Alexei Navalny's rights," Michel's office said. — APP

HK to impose lockdown on virus-hit district

HONG KONG: Thousands of Hong Kongers will be ordered to stay in their homes for the city's first coronavirus lockdown, local media reported Friday, as authorities battle an outbreak in one of its poorest and most densely packed districts. The order bans anyone from leaving their apartment unless they can show a negative test where cases have surged in recent days, and will last until everyone within the designated area has been tested, the reports said. The South China Morning Post said the measures would come in at midnight Friday into Saturday with some 1,700 police ready to enforce the lockdown covering some 150 housing blocks and up to 9,000 people. Health officials declined to comment on the proposal at an afternoon press briefing but multiple local outlets reported the lockdown citing government officials throughout Friday. — APP

Russia cracks down on Navalny allies

MOSCOW: Russian authorities on Friday cracked down on allies of jailed Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny and jailed his spokeswoman for nine days as police vowed to suppress protests this weekend. Allies of President Vladimir Putin's top critics are planning to hold demonstrations on Saturday in dozens of cities in support of the opposition politician, who was arrested and held behind bars on his return to Russia following a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve agent. The last time major protests took place in Moscow was in the summer of 2019, and the Saturday rallies are expected to be a major test of the opposition's ability to mobilise despite the increasing Kremlin pressure and the coronavirus pandemic. Police said unsanctioned public events will be "immediately suppressed," as key opposition activists were detained on the eve of the rallies. Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh, 31, who spent the night in detention, was sentenced to nine days in jail over violating legislation on public gatherings after a hearing that lasted less than five minutes, her lawyer Veronika Polyakova told AFP. Another activist, Georgy Alburov, said he expected to be jailed for 10 days. Key Navalny ally Lyubov Sobol is accused of repeatedly violating legislation on public gatherings, which carries a maximum fine of up to 300,000 rubles (\$4,000), her lawyer Vladimir Voronin told AFP, who added that authorities could open a criminal probe against her later. A number of Navalny associates were detained in the provinces and also received short jail terms. Despite the increasing pressure, Navalny's associates urged Russians to take to the streets and promised financial help to protesters given fines on Saturday. In Moscow, demonstrators are being urged to gather in the city centre and then march towards the Kremlin. — APP



Karachi: Swiss ambassador Bénédict de Cerjat paying homage to Pakistan's founder and most revered son, Muhammad Ali Jinnah during his first visit to Karachi. — DNA

Biden orders expanded aid to address growing hunger crisis

Biden's main initiative to turn the economy around is a \$1.9 trillion "rescue" package that he outlined last week, followed by a promised proposal aimed at fueling job creation and spurring hiring. "Much, much more is needed

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden is ordering an expansion of government benefits for hungry Americans, after the coronavirus pandemic ignited the worst hunger crisis the United States has seen in modern times. The decree, one of two executive orders the White House said he will sign Friday, is modest and far short of the actions the president has called for from Congress. Nonetheless, it represents one of Biden's first actions since taking office on Wednesday aimed at reviving the world's largest economy, after Covid-19 caused mass layoffs beginning last year that have left many people scrambling to pay the bills. "The American people can't afford to wait. And so many are hanging by a thread, they need help, and we are committed to doing everything we can to provide that help as quickly as possible," said Brian Deese, director of the White House's National Economic Council Director. Biden's main initiative to turn the economy around is a \$1.9 trillion "rescue" package that he outlined last week, followed by a promised proposal aimed at fueling job creation and spurring hiring. "Much, much more is needed. And so that's why, as we take these actions, we will continue to engage with Congress and with the American people around the need to move on the American rescue plan," Deese told reporters. The orders also instruct government agencies



to help people more quickly access federal stimulus payments, allow workers to leave jobs that could jeopardize their health, and expand protections for federal workers, while laying the groundwork for a minimum wage increase

for federal contractors. Even after two massive government aid packages, the US economy is reeling from the damage caused by the pandemic, which has seen the death toll soar to 400,000. The Labor Department reported more than 1.3 million new applications for unemployment were filed last week, and as of the first week of January nearly 16 million people were still receiving some form of government jobless benefits. Amid the widespread joblessness many families are struggling to pay for groceries: the Commerce Department reported in mid-December that 13.7 percent of adults lived in households where they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat. And millions of children rely on meals from schools, which have been forced to close or modify their schedules during the pandemic. The government last year offered families food aid equivalent to what their children would be getting at school. Biden's order expands that by 15 percent, which the White House said would give a family with three children more than \$100 extra every two months. The president order also instructs the Agriculture Department to issue guidance that would allow states to expand food aid to an additional 12 million people, and reevaluate its basis for determining benefits, according to the White House. — APP

Hungary procures 'large quantities' of Russian vaccine

DNA

BUDAPEST: Hungary said on Friday it had reached a deal to buy large quantities of Russia's Sputnik V virus vaccine, even though it has not been approved by the European Union. The deal comes a day after Hungary became the first EU member to break ranks and approve Sputnik V, as well as the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine. "Hungary has concluded with Russia an agreement to buy in three phases large quantities of the Sputnik V vaccine; the contract has been negotiated, and signed during the night," Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto said in a video statement on his Facebook page after meeting the Russian health minister in Moscow. He added more details would be given "during the day". Hungary has repeatedly criticised what it says is the slow pace of vaccine approval and procurement by EU authorities. "We should face the fact that something has gone wrong

with the EU," nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban said in a weekly radio interview on Friday. "If there is no vaccine from the Union, let it come from elsewhere. It is not possible that Hungarians die because of this." According to regulations from the EU's Amsterdam-based European Medicines Agency (EMA), a national regulator may grant a temporary licence for a vaccine in an emergency situation. Only two vaccines have so far been approved by the EMA: Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna. The EMA is currently evaluating the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine and has said a decision on its approval could come before the end of next week. On Wednesday Russia filed an application for registration for Sputnik V with the EMA. However the EMA said the vaccine was "not undergoing a rolling review". The Sputnik doses still need a final sign-off from a Hungarian public health authority, so no date has been given for the first jabs.

Employers Federation slams hike in electricity prices

KARACHI: Ismail Suttar, President Employers' Federation (EFP), has expressed great concern on the recent hike in electricity unit by Rs. 1.9 per unit with special emphasis on when the MOUs of the Government with 19 Independent Power Producers (IPPs) will finally materialize as the escalated circular debt is now wearing away precious 1.5 billion Rupees of opportunity, per day. In a statement, EFP president hoped that the steady withdrawal of gas supply to industrial units amid an ongoing 6 months' grace period of energy subsidies announced by the Prime Minister in November are of the same plan



as resuscitation of industries is contingent on these crucial steps.

"The Economic Council of EFP has since last year, been constantly advocating for forensic auditing of IPPs with whom governments of the past had signed expensive power purchase agreements that had resulted in costly repayments of capacity charges in dollar terms", he added. Instead of a single-buyer model, the Council suggested a competitive power purchasing electricity market should be developed to create an alternate source of funds for revamping the distribution structure that does not allow the full transmission of the 18,500 MW required by the country.

Bond movie 'No Time To Die' delayed again by pandemic

DNA

CALIFORNIA: Much-delayed James Bond movie "No Time To Die" was postponed again due to the pandemic Thursday, with studio MGM confirming 007's next mission will not take place until October. The release of the 25th installment of the fictional British spy saga has already been pushed back multiple times. It was originally set for a London premiere last March, before that was pushed back to November by the global spread of Covid-19. With

coronavirus still sweeping the globe and thousands of movie theaters shuttered again due to lockdowns, the film's next April 2021 release dates has now also been abandoned. "NO TIME TO DIE, the 25th film in the James Bond series, previously set to release April 2, 2021 will now release on October 8, 2021 - wide," MGM said in a statement to AFP. The film directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga ("Beasts of No Nation," "True Detective") is expected to be Craig's last outing as the suave British spy, after starring in four previous films. It sees Bond drawn out of retirement in

Jamaica by his old friend and CIA agent Felix Leiter. Rami Malek ("Bohemian Rhapsody") plays Bond's adversary Safin, while Lashana Lynch, Lea Seydoux, Ana de Armas and Ben Whishaw also star. "No Time To Die" is just one of dozens of major Hollywood titles left in limbo by the pandemic, as studios weigh up whether to push back their release dates indefinitely, or opt for online streaming releases that deprive them of vital box office profits. Produced at a rumored cost of around \$250 million, the film's success is crucial for MGM, while Universal Pictures will distribute the film overseas.

Beijing launches mass testing to stem virus outbreak

Officials plan to complete the testing by Saturday, and with the Lunar New Year holiday looming -- typically a time when hundreds of millions travel across the country to visit families -- they are keen to avoid a fully fledged outbreak in Beijing

BEIJING: Beijing on Friday kicked off a drive to test two million people in 48 hours as the city rushed to snuff out a new local cluster of cases believed to be linked to a more contagious virus variant. Long queues snaked through the Chinese capital - which reported 19 coronavirus cases in the past week - as the mass testing campaign got under way in Dongcheng and Xicheng districts. The two downtown districts include Tiananmen Square and several government ministry offices, and are home to around two million

residents. AFP saw one testing line stretch over 400 metres (1,300 feet), with around a thousand people waiting to be tested. "I received the notification this morning and thought I'd come during lunch hour; but there are so many people here in line," one Dongcheng resident said. Officials plan to complete the testing by Saturday, and with the Lunar New Year holiday looming - typically a time when hundreds of millions travel across the country to visit families - they are keen to avoid a fully fledged outbreak in Beijing.

Locals have complained about long wait times in freezing temperatures, with social media users Friday saying queues for tests were "unending" as residents braved the winter chill to get swabbed. "I queued for three hours and finally got tested," one user said on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform. The Xicheng district government said in a social media notice Friday that some of the confirmed cases had been into the area and there was an "increased risk" of infections. Dongcheng district also put out a notice to say tests would be

organised in batches over Friday and Saturday for both residents and workers. A partial lockdown is already in place in the city's southern Daxing district, where five neighbourhoods have been ordered to remain indoors and all 1.6 million residents have been told not to leave the city. Beijing's rush to test comes as China faces its highest number of cases in nearly a year, after coronavirus was first detected in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019. Officials have said that some of the cases detected in Beijing are linked to a variant of the deadly pathogen

that was first found in the UK and is believed to be more transmissible. China reported 103 new Covid-19 infections Friday, including six domestic cases in Shanghai and three in Beijing. The majority of cases were in the country's northeast. China had largely brought the virus under control - with fewer than 5,000 official deaths - even as the rest of the world struggles with mounting caseloads and overburdened hospitals. But a series of small, localised outbreaks has prompted a swift response from Chinese officials. — APP

Germany virus death toll tops 50,000

DNA

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Germany has recorded more than 50,000 deaths from the coronavirus since the start of the pandemic, the Robert Koch Institute disease control centre said Friday. It said 859 people died from the virus in the past 24 hours, bringing the total number of fatalities to 50,642. Germany this week extended its partial lockdown until February 14, and Chancellor Angela Merkel has not ruled out border checks to slow the spread of new, more contagious variants of the virus.

UK govt borrowing soars further on virus support

DNA

LONDON: UK government borrowing soared further in December on emergency action to support the British economy battered by the coronavirus pandemic, official data showed Friday. Borrowing last month hit £34.1 billion (\$46.6 billion, 38.4 billion euros), a record for December, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. Separate data showed British retail sales edged up 0.3 percent in December from November. The ONS noted that state borrowing by Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government had reached £271 billion in the nine months through to the end of December - an increase of £213 billion compared with the same year-earlier period. Britain entered a first lockdown in late March, which lasted until around the middle of June, hitting the economy hard. The latest figures mean that total public debt officially stands at 99.4 percent of gross domestic product, the highest level in decades. A vast chunk of the outlay has been to keep millions of private-sector workers in jobs via the government's furlough scheme, with the bulk of wages to be paid until the end of April. "Since the start of the pandemic we've invested over £280 billion to protect jobs and livelihoods across the UK, and support our economy and public services," finance minister Rishi Sunak said in response to Friday's data.

Denmark suspends UAE flights

COPENHAGEN: Denmark is suspending flights from the UAE for five days over suspicions that virus tests and checks are not rigorous enough, the Nordic nation's transport minister said on Friday. All air passengers arriving in Denmark need to show a negative virus test from the previous 24 hours, but Transport Minister Benny Engelbrecht said Danish authorities want to be sure there were no botched screenings or tests that had been bought in Dubai. "All commercial flights from the United Arab Emirates are cancelled for five days," he said in a statement, adding that it would give officials time "to ensure that the required negative test is a true screening that has been carried out correctly". The flight ban will run from Friday until Wednesday, during which time Denmark will not accept any negative tests from the UAE. While other tourist destinations are applying heavy restrictions to control the health crisis, Dubai has kept its doors open. Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen issued a rebuke this week after several Danish celebrities visited Dubai. "What happens when you travel at the moment is that you take the risk of bringing back mutations to Denmark, which helps undermine our control of the epidemic," she said on Tuesday. Denmark imposed tight restrictions at the end of December to combat a spike in cases, and officials are worried about new fast-spreading variants. — APP

Briefs

Ravi Urban Project vital for Lahore's uplift: PM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday said the Ravi Urban Development Project was significant for the economic and social uplift of Lahore and would generate immense job opportunities. "The completion of the project will not only increase economic activity, but also create employment opportunities through quality construction on unused land," the Prime Minister said while chairing a meeting regarding development projects of Punjab's provincial capital. The review meeting discussed progress on projects including Ravi Urban Development, Central Business District, relocation of Walton Airport and provision of affordable housing to the people in adjoining small towns, under the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan. The meeting was attended by Special Assistant Dr. Shahbaz Gill, Chairman Naya Pakistan Housing Authority Lt. Gen. (ret'd) Anwar Ali Haider and senior officials. Provincial Finance Minister Makhdoom Hashim Jawan Bakht, Adviser to Punjab Chief Minister Dr. Salman Shah, Special Assistant to CM Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan, Chairman Ravi Urban Development Authority Rashid Aziz and senior officials attended the meeting through video-link. The meeting was informed that negotiations with the consultants and design issues in the Ravi City project had entered its final stages.

PML-N 'rejects' probe under Justice Azmat Saeed

DNA

LAHORE: The PML-N has 'rejected' a probe panel established by the PTI government which is to be headed by former Supreme Court Justice Azmat Saeed to investigate the Broadsheet scandal. In a statement on Friday, senior PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal pointed out that the former Supreme Court judge was part of the bench in the Panama Papers case which disqualified Nawaz Sharif. He was later invited to join the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Hospital's Board of Governors after his retirement by Prime Minister Imran Khan. Iqbal also pointed out that during the Musharraf regime, when the asset recovery agreement was signed with Broadsheet, Justice Azmat had been part of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). According to the Supreme Court's website, Justice Azmat was deputy prosecutor general NAB at Islamabad in the year 2000 for a period of one year and was later appointed special prosecutor NAB in 2001 to prosecute cases before Accountability Courts at Attock Fort and Rawalpindi.

Pak issues SOPs for inbound flights' crew

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) has issued anti-COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the air crew traveling to Pakistan on direct flights from United Kingdom, South Africa and Category-C countries. According to a notification shared by the authority here on Friday, the flight crew would only be allowed to travel to Pakistan while holding a negative PCR Test Certification for the virus conducted in the last 72 hours prior to commencement of travel to Pakistan. They would be cleared expeditiously through relevant formalities related to arrival and departure at Pakistan airports by the authorities concerned via separate gates and counters. The PCAA said the flight crew would be exempted from testing on arrival in Pakistan; however, 'This will only be applicable to Flight Crew displaying no symptoms related to COVID-19.' - DNA

Union of Romanian Principalities celebrations

DNA

BUCHAREST: Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan Nicolae Goia has said every year on 24 January Romanians celebrate one of the most important - and probably most affectionate - moments in the history of their country, the Union of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. The Union of 1859 has been the beginning of an extraordinary process of modernization and reforms. It has paved the way to the Great Union of 1st December 1918 when, based on the principle of people's right to self-determination, the third Romanian principality, Transylvania, also decided to unite with Romania. The ambassador in his message said, if Romanians have always been so proud of the Union achieved on 24 January 1859, it is

undoubtedly due to the sense of responsibility (or "ownership", as we would say nowadays) that they assumed in its making, and to the great spirit of solidarity that made it possible 162 years ago. The reforms that ensued after the historical moment in all the important areas of the economy and the social-political life changed the destiny of this people for the better. It was a mix of political will and courage to which Romania also owes its current existence, returning more than a decade ago to the big European family, and joining NATO as well. The development and modernization of the newly formed state would not have been possible without respect for the law and the good of the whole nation. We have much to learn from the example of the creators of the union of the Romanian principalities. The celebration of the union



of the Romanian Principalities is a good opportunity to reflect on what we want as a people for the future, leaving aside differences of opinion or rivalries. We had a favorable external context on our side, European-friendly states, but we especially had remarkable Romanian elites who believed in the Romanian destiny and an extraordinary popular will to remove the barriers between Romanian

and Romanian. Romania's national roots lie in ancient times when the Romania's current territory was inhabited by the Dacians, described by Herodotus as being 'the bravest and most honest of the Tracians.' The Kingdom of Dacia was conquered by the Romans at the beginning of the second century AD. Out of this ethnic, linguistic and cultural synthesis the Romanian people were born, the only Latin people in Central and Eastern Europe. Today, Romania is a modern European State with a dynamic economy and a fantastic human potential, and fully engaged in the European Union and the Euro-Atlantic community. History has shown us that we can be strong as a nation when a common goal brings us together. Romania has a strong bilateral relationship with Islamic Republic of Pakistan, both

countries share values of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and the desire to live peacefully in harmony and tolerance. We enjoy now excellent bilateral political dialogue and we hope in growing economic cooperation and ever-expanding people-to-people contacts. This provides us with solid grounds and guidance for our future efforts, to further expand our institutional, business, educational and cultural links, to better tap the tremendous potential that exist in our relations. "I warmly welcome the spirit of Romania-Pakistan relations, characterized by friendship and collaboration and the new dynamism witnessed in the recent years with a result driven political dialogue reflecting a clear desire of both states for developing a pragmatic relationship in fields of mutual interests", he added.

COAS lauds K2 expedition team

The delegation also expressed their gratitude for facilitating the expedition to achieve this record



RAWALPINDI: A group of mountaineers part of International Winter K-2 Expedition visited GHQ on Friday and called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS). According to an ISPR press release, Chief of Army Staff congratulated the climbers for their great achievement, scaling K-2 in winter for the first time; making history in the field of mountaineering. The delegation shared their experiences during the momentous expedition and thanked Pakistan and its people for their warm hospitality. The delegation also expressed their gratitude for facilitating the expedition to achieve this record, it added. - DNA

'Govt to introduce smart technology in all sectors'

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Hussain Chaudhry on Friday said that the Federal and provincial governments were committed to utilize all available resources to introduce smart technologies related to agriculture and other sectors. He said this at a ceremony held here to lay the foundation stone of National Center for Industrial Biotechnology (NCAB) and solarization project at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR). Addressing the participants the Minister said that to-

day's modern world was created by the universities and their students as the contemporary development was result of the efforts of the students of the top universities of the world. The future development would also be done by the universities and the scientists because the base of the modern world was knowledge and education, the minister said adding that the universities would also give the direction to the future world. He urged the universities to train the students on modern lines to achieve the goals of the modern world and the challenges. "If we as a nation continue the development which was witnessed in Pakistan in 60s

and 70s, then the country would have been in a different position," he added. "Now, we are focusing three areas, electronics, precision agriculture and chemicals," the minister informed. He said, NCAB set up by PMAS-AAUR would be a landmark center to conduct research work on Industrial Biotechnology and agriculture. "We cannot move forward without adopting modern technologies. We are far behind in agriculture production from the developed countries as we don't have seeds and pesticides. We will have to modernize our agriculture if we want to complete the world," he added. He appreciated the research work being done by the universities particu-

larly Faisalabad, Arid, University Rawalpindi, Multan and Jamshoro universities saying, really some mesmerizing work was done by them but unfortunately, it could not be marketed. He urged the students who have graduated from the universities to start their own businesses and establish new companies. The students of the top universities of the world who have changed the world, created new companies after completing their education and not wasted their precious time for seeking jobs. He asked the graduates of the Arid University to come forward to change the farming. "We should work for value addition of agriculture products," he said.

Bakhtawar's wedding date announced

DNA

KARACHI: Bilawal House on Friday announced the wedding date of PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari's eldest daughter Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari with her fiancé Mahmood Choudhary. According to the details, a Milad function will be held on the 24th of January at Bilawal House while a simple Mehndi ceremony will take place on 27th of this month. A spokesperson of Bilawal House said that the Nikkah of Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari with Mahmood Choudhary will be held on 29th of January while the Barat is scheduled for 30th of January. He maintained that around 1,000 guests are invited to the marriage ceremony. The spokesperson further said that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has suspended his political activities for one week on the special occasion.

Senate delegation to visit Djibouti

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A three-member delegation of Senate is set to depart 4-day official visit to Djibouti from January 25 to 28, on the invitation of the President of Djibouti National Parliament and Acting Chairman of the African Union Parliament Mohammed Ali Houmed. The delegation comprising of Secretary-General International Parliamentarians' Congress (IPC) Senator Muhammad Ali Saif, Senator Mirza Mohammad Afridi and Fayaz Thaheem, Manager (Procurement & Coordination), IPC, said a statement issued here Friday. The delegation would meet with the President of Arab Parliament, it further said. During the visit, delegation would also call on Prime Minister Djibouti, President of the Arab Parliament, President of Chamber of Commerce, and with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Commerce, and Budget. This is the first official visit of a delegation from Pakistan to Djibouti to establish Pakistan's "Engage Africa" policy, which aims at rooting its ties with the African continent by intensifying Islamabad's diplomatic footprint in the region and expanding economic engagement. Moreover, meeting with the President of the Arab Parliament and his delegation will also strengthen the bilateral ties between Pakistan and the Arab world.

Nine SEZs to be built under CPEC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Industries and Production Hammad Azhar on Friday informed the Senate that nine special economic zones (SEZs) would be constructed under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project with an estimated cost of \$ 1.5 billion. Responding to various questions during Question Hour, the minister said out of total, construction work on three SEZs has been expedited on fast track. To another question, the minister said as many as 11 projects worth \$ 1.7 billion were specified for Gwadar under the CPEC. Two projects have already been completed while seven projects worth \$ 1.2 billion were in the execution phase, he added. To a separate question, Hammad Azhar told that CPEC Authority ordinance has been lapsed and currently the Ministry of Planning was looking after the affairs of the CPEC projects. Meanwhile, State Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan told that bringing reforms in Federal Board of Revenue was part of PTI election manifesto. He said record revenue was collected during the PTI tenure, he said.



LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab, Sardar Usman Buzdar presents a souvenir to Ambassador of Germany, Burnhard Stephan. - APP

German envoy meets CM, discuss expansion of cooperation

DNA

LAHORE: Ambassador of Germany Bernhard Stephan Schlagheck called on Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar at his office on Friday and discussed various matters including the expansion of bilateral cooperation. Talking on the occasion, CM Usman Buzdar stated that solid steps will be taken to further promote rela-

tions as Germany was the best partner of Pakistan. The government will take advantage of German expertise to develop the automobile industry, IT, health and social sector on modern lines, he said adding, Punjab will take a lead for promotion of cooperation in different sectors as different facilities were provided to the investors under one roof. The CM asked the German investors to take benefit of tremendous investment opportunities as special incentives were being provided to foreign investment. All the necessary facilities were provided under one roof in special economic zones being established in different districts, he added. He said the construction sector has a lot of potential and five cement factories were issued NOCs, while 12 more NOCs will be issued soon. The chief minister emphasized that development of less developed areas was

focused and a special package was given for backward areas of south Punjab. The establishment of the south Punjab secretariat was an important initiative as the development process was brought to the doorstep of the common man. On the other side, the CM pointed out that the government was fully focused on the development of the agriculture sector and the latest technology will be utilized for enhancing cotton production.

Pak-sponsored resolution adopted at UN

NEW YORK: The United Nations on Thursday adopted a Pakistan-sponsored resolution calling for the protection of religious sites, reports Radio Pakistan. The resolution was co-sponsored by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other OIC countries and adopted by consensus. The resolution condemns all acts of threats of violence, destruction and damage directed against religious sites that have continued to occur across the world, especially in India. The resolution also denounces any move to obliterate or forcibly convert any religious sites. Read more: Foreign ministers of Pakistan, Turkey, and Azerbaijan talk "atrocities against Muslim minorities and Islamophobia" The resolution expresses concerns on the rise of racial and religious intolerance and negative stereotyping of religions and condemns any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that promotes discrimination, hostility or violence. Pakistan's envoy to the UN, in a tweet, expressed happiness that the UN General Assembly adopted the consensus resolution. "Pakistan will continue to play a leading role in denouncing violent attacks on religious sites," said Akram. - DNA

Getting Broadsheet's services must be probed

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Babar Awan Friday said investigations over the Broadsheet matter must be carried out concerning the acquisition of the firm's services in Pervez Musharraf's regime and to find out how the work was halted. Babar Awan addressed the Senate and said it was demanded in this House to probe the Broadsheet issue. It should be explored that what are NRO-I and NRO-II, he said while adding that it was not us who claimed victory after formation of joint investigation team (JIT) in the Panama case. On the other hand, Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry talked to media in Rawalpindi and said that no government minister is in Broadsheet committee. Fawad Chaudhry said, "Prime Minister Imran Khan cannot spare anyone for looting the national exchequer. The government does not want to imprison anyone. PML-N's senior leader Khawja Asif can also get freedom by returning the plundered money." - DNA

Chief of Naval Staff visits Saudi Arabia

The dignitaries acknowledged brotherly relations between Pakistan & Saudi Arabia and appreciated the contributions of Pakistan in spearheading various initiatives

DNA

RIYADH: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi is on official visit to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). During the visit, the Naval Chief called on Chief of General Staff and Commander Royal Saudi Naval Forces. Upon his arrival at Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) Headquarters Ri-

yadh, Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi was received by Commander Royal Saudi Naval Forces Vice Admiral Fahad bin Abdullah Al Ghofaily. A smartly turned out contingent of RSNF clad in ceremonial dress presented Guard of Honour. The Admiral was given comprehensive briefing on RSNF setup and ongoing operations. The Naval Chief also visited their Command and Control Centre.



Later, Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi called on Chief of General Staff General Ruwali and Commander Royal Naval Forces Vice Admiral Fahad bin Abdullah Al Ghofaily separately. During the interactions, matters of mutual interest and bilateral defence ties were discussed. The dignitaries acknowledged brotherly relations between Pakistan & Saudi

Arabia and appreciated the contributions of Pakistan in spearheading various initiatives for maintaining peace and stability in the region. In addition, role of Pakistan Navy in training and capacity building of RSNF was also appreciated. This visit is expected to greatly enhance the bilateral cooperation between both the countries in general and navies in particular.