



Islamabad POST

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Afghan Peace is vital for whole region, says PM

Detailed News On Page-08

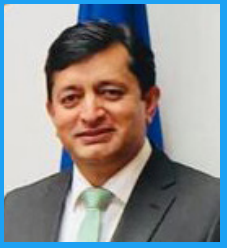
10 nations used 75% of all vaccines

Detailed News On Page-06



Pak-Belarus trade ties are below potential

Detailed News On Page-07



Diplomats still await vaccination

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was supposed to communicate with the Diplomatic Corps and brief it about updates, if any, however Foreign Office's silence has further added to the woes of the diplomatic corps

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: As COVID 19 pandemic continues to taking heavy toll on all and sundry, the diplomatic community especially is worried about its well-being. It is still not clear to the community as to when will it get vaccination. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was supposed to communicate with the Diplomatic Corps and brief it about updates, if any, however Foreign Office's silence has further added to the woes of the diplomatic corps. Even on Thursday, the Foreign Office spokesperson Zahid Hafeez did not make any mention as to when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall update the missions about administration of vaccine.

A few weeks ago, when Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi interacted with the ambassadors and high commissioners of various countries to brief them about Kashmir issue, some ambassadors raised this issue with the Foreign Minister nevertheless Minister Qureshi, as reports suggest, did not pay any heed to the question. A few foreign missions including the Embassy of United Arab Emirates have administered vaccination to their staff on their own. The UAE Embassy arranged vaccine doses thru its own Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Likewise, reports suggest Embassies of United States of America and United Kingdom have also vaccinated their staff members, while a few other missions are in the process of getting vaccine through their own sources. The lack of interest on the part of

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan has literally left the diplomats in the lurch. In such situation the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps should have taken the lead by raising the issue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but unfortunately the Dean of Diplomatic Corps is yet to act on this particular issue. The primary responsibility nevertheless rests with the Pakistan and government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to address this issue as soon as possible because it involves reputation and image of the country. It may be mentioned here that Pakistani missions abroad have been facilitated by the respective governments in provision and administration of vaccine. Diplomats based in Pakistan expect similar arrangements here as well.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of the House in Senate, Senator Dr. Shahzad Waseem called on Prime Minister Imran Khan. - DNA

Govt on its way out: Bilawal

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Thursday claimed that PTI lawmakers "know that the government is on its way out" and will "not vote" for the government in the Senate elections - which is what the government is afraid of. Addressing a gathering in Karachi held to celebrate the victory of PPP candidate Yousuf Murtaza Baloch in the PS-88 Malir by-election, Bilawal asked: "If the government has faith in its members, why is it trying to enter through a back door?" The remark was a likely reference to the presidential ordinance that has been promulgated to pave the way for open balloting in Senate elections due on March 3. The ordinance is subject to a pending opinion by the Supreme Court on open balloting.

Opp. contradicts in words and deeds

Senator Shehzad says the market is set up every time in the Senate elections

SHUJAAT HAMZA

PDM nearing its end, says Shibli Faraz

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the House in the Senate of Pakistan Senator Shahzad Waseem on Thursday said that the opposition is contradicting its own stance opted in 2016 against horse trading in the meeting of whole committee of the upper house. He said that in 2015, Mian Raza Rabbani was the Chairman Senate, Raja Zafarul Haq was the Leader of the House and Aitzaz Ahsan was the Leader of the Opposition and the issue of horse

BUREAU REPORT
PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Senator Shibli Faraz here on Thursday said the people have got disenchanted with the negative politics of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and defeat in the forthcoming Senate election would be a final nail in its' s coffin. Talking to media at provincial election commission office on occasion of scrutiny of his nomination papers for Senate election, the Information Minister said opposition parties have united against open balloting because it did not serve their vested interests. He maintained that opposing open balloting was tantamount to encouraging horse-trading, corruption and sale and purchase of votes as witnessed in the past.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Vaccination next phase in March

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan said Thursday that Pakistan would begin its next vaccination phase from March, with the arrival of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine. The prime minister's aide, addressing a press conference in Islamabad, said that people above 65-years of age would be given the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine that Pakistan is set to receive through the COVAX facility.

PTI lawmakers not under its control

STAFF REPORT

KARACHI: PPP senior leader Sherry Rehman on Thursday said that ruling PTI is making another mistake just to hide a crime. Talking to media persons, she said that incumbent government is involved in vicious practice and made elections controversial and pinned institutions against each other just to keep its lawmakers under control.

CPEC will bring prosperity: COAS

The Army Chief said this in a meeting with Nong Rong, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa has said that successful completion of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will bring more benefits and prosperity to the people of both countries. The Army Chief said this in a meeting with Nong Rong, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan at GHQ, on Thursday. According to a statement

from ISPR (Inter Services Public Relations), matters of mutual interest including regional security issues were discussed during the meeting. The Chief of Army Staff thanked the dignitary for China's assistance in provision of COVID-19 vaccine to Pakistan and appreciated unwavering Chinese support at multiple international fora & capacity enhancement in defence & security domains, the statement added. Visiting dignitary acknowledged

Pervaiz Rasheed's papers rejected

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The nomination papers of PML-N leader Pervaiz Rasheed have been rejected by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday on allegations that he had defaulted on payments that were to be made to the Punjab House. PTI MPA Zainab Omar had filed an objection against Rasheed through her lawyer Rana Mudassar to the returning officer/provincial election commissioner in Lahore.

Pakistan and Egypt agree to collaborate closely

The Foreign Ministers agreed to revitalize and reinvigorate their agreed frameworks of cooperation

I.P.REPORT

CAIRO: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi was received warmly by the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shourky, at Tahrir Palace in Cairo on Wednesday. The Foreign Ministers held delegation level talks before holding a joint press stakeout. After addressing the media, the two sides continued their consultations over the luncheon hosted at Tahrir Palace, in honor of the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. Foreign Minister Qureshi said Pakistan accorded high priority to its relations with Egypt, both as a key Arab state as well as a "Gateway to Africa". He appreciated the progress and development of Egypt in recent years, and outlined Pakistan's priorities aimed at harnessing the country's huge economic, investment and human resource potential. Highlighting the similarities in challenges and

Qureshi meets Arab League Secy Gen

NEHAL MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Thursday said Pakistan enjoyed strong political, trade and bilateral relations with all member countries of the Arab League. The minister, in a meeting with Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit during his visit to Arab League Headquarters in Egypt's capital Cairo, the foreign minister said Pakistan believed that its deep ties with Arab countries were a sign of special relationship with the Arab League. During the meeting, a number of issues of regional and global importance, besides matters of mutual interest, were discussed. Referring to the memorandum of understanding between Pakistan and the Arab League, the foreign minister stressed the need to implement its framework through mutual cooperation and coordination. He apprised the secretary general of Pakistan's reconciliatory efforts for the establishment of peace in neighbouring Afghanistan. He also updated him on the grave human rights violations by the Indian government in the occupied Jammu and Kashmir, which were posing threats to regional peace after India's unilateral step of August 5, 2019. Earlier, Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit welcomed the foreign minister and showed him different sections of the Arab League Headquarters.

developmental needs of both countries, the Foreign Minister stressed that the two countries could build on their complementarities to develop a diversified bilateral relationship. He said his visit was a stepping stone for Pakistan's enhanced ties with Egypt. During the meeting, the Foreign Ministers reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and tasked their delegations to work towards enhancing cooperation in the fields of infrastructure development, defense and defense production, trade, investment, culture, education, television and media, tourism, agriculture and Information Technology. They also agreed to bolster parliamentary cooperation. The Foreign Ministers discussed prospects of building maritime linkages between the two countries to augment their economic and commercial outreach in respective regions.

Continued on Page 06

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EU to impose sanctions on Russians over Navalny - Page 06

Nearly 500 detained in Myanmar, hackers target military websites - Page 07

Peace in Afghanistan vital for whole region, says PM - Page 08

Briefs

Painting exhibition of special children held

GHULAM MURTAZA

RAWALPINDI: An exhibition of paintings by special children held in Punjab Council of the Arts in collaboration with Narjis Khatun Health and Education Foundation. The exhibition was inaugurated by Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Speaker Syed Amjad Ali Zaidi. The exhibition features photographs of more than 50 special children. Addressing the event, Syed Amjad Ali Zaidi said that each picture created by special children has its own story, adding that we only need heart and mind to understand. He added that art and artist have no borders, Pakistani artists were doing well for promotion of local art globally, he added. Naheed Manzoor said that exhibitions should be held regularly to further enhance the work of special children. The photo exhibition lasted for 2 days and a large number of people turned to the art gallery to see the exhibition.

CDNS reaches net target of Rs 455b

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The savings of the Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has reached to the free deposit of Rs 455 billion in last 7th months starting from July 1 to February, 10 in the current Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21. The CDNS had compensated an amount of Rs 455 billion to its investors after the termination of major prize bonds of Rs 40,000 and recent cancellation of prize bonds of Rs 25,000, senior official of CDNS told media here on Thursday. He said that the federal government had recently suspended the prize bonds of Rs25,000 and had given a six-month deadline to investors to encash their savings of Rs188 billion. The government has already canceled prize bonds of Rs 40,000 and CDNS repaid to the investors the encashment worth Rs 158 billion in previous FY 2019-20, he said. The CDNS has set Rs 249 billion annual collection target for the year 2020-21 as compared to Rs 352 billion for the previous year's 2019-20 to enhance savings and promote saving culture in the country. The CDNS had set Rs 352 billion annual collection target for the year 2019-20 as compared to Rs 350 billion for the previous year's 2018-19, he said. The directorate had also revised and increased the gross target of Rs1570 billion for the fiscal year 2019-20, he said. He said CDNS had maintained the same interest rate on the savings certificates investment due to the market situation and PIB policy decision.

Religion and science are interlinked: Dr. Yasinzai

The seminar was also addressed by Khurshid Nadeem, Allama Ammar Nasir, Dr. Khalid Masood, Dr. Bibi Ameena and Dr. Ayesha Qurat ul ain. On the occasion, a book published by IRD on the topic of "Sainsi dor aur Mazhabi Biyaniye" by "Abid Tihami was also launched



ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Iqbal International Institute for Research and Dialogue (IRD) Thursday organized a one day seminar on "Religion & Challenges of Scientific Age" at Faisal Masjid Campus of International Islamic University (IIU). It was addressed by IIUI leadership, renowned intellectuals,

researchers, religious scholars and social experts. Sardar Ateeq Ahmed Khan, former PM AJK addressing the seminar elaborated the facts similar and proved both by religion and science. He discussed evolution of life, universe, theory of relativity, Quranic ideology and other aspects in the light of science and religion. He also discussed micro and macro level challenges and shed light

on the approach of solutions in the light of religion and science. Speaking on the occasion, IIUI Rector Dr. Masoom Yasinzai said that there is dire need to address the confusion prevailing in the minds of youth regarding religion and science. He elaborated that both are interlinked and the masses, specially the youth must be told that religion and science are not against

each other. He called upon the universities to prepare young Muslim minds integrated with teachings of Islam who should also be well aware of the contemporary changes of science. Vice-President AF&P, Dr N.B. Jumani in his speech at the seminar called upon Muslim world to promote research on comparative religions. He stressed for quality research and improve-

ments in research on the scientific bases. He congratulated IRD on organizing the seminar on the vital topic and hoped that the learned speakers will enlighten the minds of participant youth. Executive Director IRD, Husnul Amin in his welcome address briefed about the Institute's activities of research and Dialogue. He said this is the age of reasoning and freedom of discussion that is

why debate on religion and science has increased. He vowed that the IRD will keep its efforts on for useful and constructive dialogue. The seminar was also addressed by Khurshid Nadeem, Allama Ammar Nasir, Dr. Khalid Masood, Dr. Bibi Ameena and Dr. Ayesha Qurat ul ain. On the occasion, a book published by IRD on the topic of "Sainsi dor aur Mazhabi Biyaniye" by "Abid Tihami was also launched.

PRCS deploys ambulances to reduce mortality on motorways

Abrar ul Haq says joint road safety initiative with NHMP will help reduce deaths and injuries due to accidents on motorway besides raising awareness among public on road safety laws

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in collaboration with the National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP) is launching an initiative to help reduce deaths and injuries due to roadside traffic accidents and save lives. Under the joint road safety initiative, PRCS will not only deploy ambulances on the M-2 Motorway service areas but also provide first aid kits to NH&MP for delivery of emergency medical and relief services to commuters in case of any traffic accidents. PRCS will impart

free of cost First Aid training to NH&MP staff as they are first on scene of any accident usually on national highways and motorways. Steps will also be taken to raise awareness among the general public about road safety so that road fatality rate could be minimized. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), globally 1.25 million people die in road traffic accidents every year and about 50 million sustain injuries. According to NHMP sources, around 36,000 people were killed in road accidents across the country in 2019. A survey suggests that 59% of deaths due to

injuries during accidents can be saved through timely provision of First Aid. In a statement, Chairman PRCS Abrar ul Haq said that being a leader in emergency response, PRCS will collaborate with the NH&MP to provide ambulance and first aid service on motorways beside imparting free of cost First Aid training to NHMP staff. Ambulances will be deployed for provision of timely First Aid on spot and later shifting of injured to nearby hospital for specialized care. Highways and motorways are the frequently used routes for transportation both for LTV and HTV traf-

fic and therefore account for a considerable number of road crashes. It is estimated that every five minutes, someone is killed or badly injured in a road traffic crash in Pakistan and lack of awareness about road safety laws is one of the major causes of such incidents. First Aid and Pre-Hospital Care is a flagship program of PRCS to reduce injuries, deaths in country like Pakistan where health facilities are already burdened. "Road safety is a shared responsibility and everyone needs to play his part to protect people from deaths and injuries on roads," he concluded.

IHC seeks reply from 32 lawyers in contempt case

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday once again served contempt of court notices to 32 lawyers involved in IHC rampage and directed them to submit their written reply on next date. The court of Justice Aamer Farooq adjourned hearing against 26 lawyers for three weeks. Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA)'s President Haseeb Chaudhry and other lawyers appeared before the court. The lawyers on the occasion requested the court to constitute a JIT to probe the Capital Development Authority (CDA)'s operation against their chambers. They pleaded before the court that the lawyers were being targeted deliberately, adding that it was attempted to arrest them on gate. Justice Farooq said that if the lawyer organisations themselves demonstrate responsibility then the other lawyers wouldn't face problems. This incident was a tragedy for black coat and judges, he said. The court asked the bar representatives to point out the lawyers involved in IHC attack if they were sincere to take the matter to its logical end and bring the courts on routine. The court noted that the CCTV cameras were not functional on that day. The lawyers said that they were neither provided verified copies of FIRs nor they were given the rights of bail. The lawyers submitted that the police was raiding the houses of lawyers in the name of the honorable court. - DNA

Language Festival on 21

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) has planned to celebrate the 6th Pakistan Mother Languages Literature Festival on February 21 to highlight the value of languages in Pakistan. Intellectuals having experiences from Pakistani mother languages will participate in the event as speakers and moderators to promote Pakistan's linguistic and cultural diversity by fostering critical thinking and learning through effective use of creative expression in mother languages. - DNA

PTCL launches WhatsApp service

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has established its official presence on WhatsApp to better connect with customers and provide them with a convenient and customer friendly communication platform. To start using PTCL WhatsApp, customers have to first save the PTCL WhatsApp number, which is 033 1218 1218 and then send a message on this number to get the required service, said a news release issued here on Thursday. PTCL WhatsApp, a fast, simple and reliable communication tool, will provide quick answers to customers' frequently asked questions and introduce customers to the various options such as complaints registration, order new products or services. Moreover, customers can get information about all kinds of packages and promos, along with getting their bill information and much more. This service will be round the clock facilitation for the customers and will help bridge the communication gap. On the launch of WhatsApp service, Moqem ul Haque, Chief Commercial Officer and Group Corporate Strategy Officer, said, "Despite COVID-19, we have adapted to changing business environment and have taken proactive measures to provide convenience to our customers. As one of our core values is 'We Put Customer First', we are always exploring new avenues to adopt latest technology that will help in digitalization. The successful launch of our WhatsApp service will provide seamless services to our customers and enable them to get timely response on their queries and complaints, thus ensuring enhanced customer experience." - DNA

ITP removes traffic diversions

RAWALPINDI: The twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad on Thursday witnessed huge rows of automobiles and commuters on Islamabad Express way and Faizabad Interchange due to protesters creating a traffic mess and blockade on its major arteries. The ITP had, soon after the protest dissipated, removed diversions from Faizabad Interchange to Khanna Bridge on Islamabad Expressway, said an official statement of the ITP. The ITP keeping in view the

situation had deputed its officials on the key positions to ease out the congestion and ensure smooth flow of traffic, it added. The police officials had placed diversions placed for traffic to contain any untoward situation due to the protest on Islamabad Highway at various points. Elaborating the diversions placed, it said traffic from Korai to Khanna was diverted at Khanna Bridge early due to the protest on Faizabad Bridge. - DNA

Media urged to counter conspiracy theories

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Spokesperson of the Punjab government, Musarrat Jamshed Cheema Thursday appealed to the people to seek correct information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine from authentic sources. She also urged the media to launch an awareness campaign to counter baseless conspiracy theories about the vaccine. Talking to a Private news channel, she urged people not to pay heed to rumors and propaganda and reiterated that the vaccines are well tested and safe. "It is important that no-one will be forced to take the vaccine but we urge people to registered themselves for vaccine instead of believing in fake messages shared on social media", she added. She said we live in a time of fake news and misinformation so it is important that people make their decisions about the vaccination based on reliable information and not on lies peddled by conspiracy theorists who seem hell-bent on forcing their beliefs on others. "Working together we can and will defeat this virus," she stressed. She said that priority was given to high-risk category including frontline healthcare professionals and elderly people, adding, the vaccination of the frontline health workers in the country was started on February 2, a day after China donated 500,000 Sinopharm doses to Pakistan.

Javed Malik gets Purazm Award

The jury finalized the winners with delicate observation. Secretary information Miss Shahira Shahid congratulated the winners



SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Fifth purazm award ceremony 2021 under Pakistan Peace Collective, research project of ministry of information was held at Information Services academy Islamabad. In professional category of text story, a renowned jour-

nalist Javed Malik was awarded first prize. On other categories, Fazle Khaliq, Sheeza Mustaseem, Sundas Mehboob, Seema Iqbal, Waleed Akram, Shahrukh Khan, Musa Yawari, Omer Nafees, Ahmed Zolaid, Anam Naseer, Zaheer Mukhtar, Furqan Azeez, Iqra Imtiaz, Muhammad Talal and Ghulam Abbas were awarded with prizes.

During the introductory speech, CEO of the project Mian Bashir Anwar apprised the participants that more than one thousand short-listed documentary films, stories, pictures and digital posters were judged by the jury consisting of experts like Nadeem Omer Tarar, Katrina Hussain, Professor Kamran Butt and Haroon ur Rasheed. The jury finalized the winners with delicate observation. Secretary information Miss Shahira Shahid congratulated the winners and told the participants that the ministry would take more such steps to bring forward the real talent so that we could introduce our talented writers, filmmakers and experts of digital work to the world. This would be helpful in projecting positive image of Pakistan.

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MEVLUT CAVUSOGLU
TURKEY, PAKISTAN HAVE EVERY REASON TO SOLIDIFY TIES

Central Europe as a community of shared aspirations Page: 46

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Aziz Boolani hosts a lunch for athletes Page: 34

LARGEST CIRCULATED DIPLOMATIC MAGAZINE

Briefs

CTO conduct surprise visit to check performance

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Rai Mazhar Iqbal conducted surprise visits of check posts set up at New Town, Sadiqabad, Committee Chowk and Pir Wadhai to check performance of traffic wardens, informed spokesman here on Thursday.

On the occasion, he directed all the circle and sector in-charge traffic personnel should work hard and diligently to maintain the flow of traffic in their respective sectors in an efficient manner.

He said that any negligence on the part of the traffic wardens in the matter of traffic flow would not be tolerated at all. CTO said that all sector in-charges should submit reports on cleanliness of surroundings on daily basis. He also appealed to the citizens to cooperate with the traffic wardens and always park their vehicles in the parking area or in a suitable place during shopping so that the public would not face any hassle while driving.

NAB chairman briefed about revised contracts with IPPs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A negotiation committee of the government for tariff reduction of IPPs (Independent Power Producers) on Thursday briefed National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Justice (Retd) Javed Iqbal about the revised contracts with 47 IPPs and concessions extracted from the recent deal with IPPs.

According to NAB spokesman, the chairman was briefed about the arbitration clause of these contracts which determines the alleged excess savings of Rs. 55 billion.

It was worth mentioning here that the idea of negotiation was floated by NAB after finding some flaws in the IPPs agreements inked by the previous governments. The strategy of NAB proved advantageous and beneficial which resultantly brought savings of billions of rupees.

Reiterating firm commitment to resolve the issue, the spokesman said NAB always gives top most priority to the development and prosperity of the country. Chairman NAB appreciated the efforts of negotiation teams and the whole process which would help saving Rs. 836 billion from remaining terms of these IPPs.

Six died, 19 injured in road accident

DNA

HASSANABDAL: At least six died, and 19 seriously injured in a head on collision between a speedy coaster and trailer near Gali Jagir on Thursday.

Police said the deceased were identified as Humayun Hassan son of Ghulam Hassan resident of Ikhlas Tehsil Pindi Gheb, Mohammad Waseem son of Mohammad Yasin, resident of Mal Tehsil Pateh Jang, Yasir Mahmood son of Malik Khudadad, resident of Ratwal (a bus conductor), Mohammad Akram son of Mehr Khan resident of Gali Jagir. The injured were Mohammad Shafiq, son of Mohammad Siddique, resident of Khor city Tehsil Pindi Gheb, Ghulam Raza, son of Gul Jaha A, resident of Chichi Tehsil, Telangana besides others. Police have registered a case and started investigation.



RAWALPINDI: President Rawalpindi chamber of commerce and industry, Nasir Mirza presenting chamber memento to High Commissioner of South Africa, Methuthuzeli Madikiza during his visit to RCCI. – DNA

‘S Africa willing to enhance bilateral trade with Pak’

The high Commissioner expressed these views during his visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here on Thursday. He was accompanied by Deputy head of Mission and Political Consular, Christo Janse Van Noordwyk

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: South Africa High Commissioner Methuthuzeli Madikiza has said that South Africa considers Pakistan an important market for trade cooperation and is keen to further enhance bilateral trade with it as the two countries have good potential for trade in many areas. Pakistan is the 14th big exporter to South Africa. He said that the trade relations between the two countries, Pakistan, South Africa, the Chamber of Commerce and the private sector needed to be further strengthened.

The high Commissioner expressed these views during his visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here on Thursday. He was accompanied by Deputy head of Mission and Political Consular, Christo Janse Van Noordwyk. President of the Chamber Muhammad Nasir Mirza, Senior Vice President Usman Ashraf, Vice



President Shahraiz A Malik, members of the executive committee and chamber members were also present on the occasion.

During the meeting, the High Commissioner said that the volume of bilateral trade could increase to one billion dollars in the next few years. Cooperation and joint ven-

tures can be initiated in other sectors, including tourism, agriculture, pharmaceuticals and services. The efforts of the Rawalpindi Chamber in expanding trade activities and promoting trade relations are commendable. The High Commissioner considers the Rawalpindi Chamber as an important partner for

promoting trade ties. The Corona epidemic has affected trade activities in many parts of the world. Meeting new challenges requires joint efforts and cooperation, he added. The high Commissioner offered RCCI to organize its annual achievements awards in Cape Town and also accepted the invitation to

participate in Build Expo 2021 being organized by the Chamber. Earlier, Chamber President Nasir Mirza briefed the High Commissioner about the ongoing activities and future programs of the Chamber. He said that the Chamber had successfully conducted the trade forum with African Countries through a virtual platform despite the Corona epidemic. Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) were also signed with South Africa and the Minara Chamber on the sidelines of the International Chambers Summit (ICS 2021). In order to increase trade with South Africa, trade related information should be shared and exchanged at the delegation level, he suggested. He also apprised the High Commissioner about the investment opportunities in Pakistan. Joint ventures can also be launched in the fields of information technology and construction, including pharma, marble, engineering, poultry and textiles, he further added.

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21 lawyers served notices

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday served notices to 21 lawyers for misconduct and ambush Islamabad High Court (IHC). A three member bench headed by Chief Justice Athar Minallah and comprising Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Lubna Saleem Pervaiz sought reply from the lawyers within one-week.

The Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA)'s President Haseeb Chaudhry, Riasat Ali Azad and other lawyers appeared before the

bench. "This is not my personal issue but directly relates with the sanctity on the honorable court. We would send references against lawyers, involved in IHC attack, under the law." Chief Justice Athar Minallah remarked. He observed that the Islamabad Bar Council (IBA) had condemned this incident and requested the court to send references against the involved lawyers. It was a list of more than 150 names but the court didn't want any kind of injustice with anybody, he added. – APP

Chairman HEC condoles demise of Dr. Rafiq Baloch

ISLAMABAD: Chairman HEC Tariq Banuri has condoned the death of Dr. Muhammad Rafiq Baloch, Vice Chancellor, Lahore Leads University who passed away due to heart attack in Lahore on Wednesday. Mr. Banuri, on behalf of the higher education fraternity, sent heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and students. He prayed for the departed soul and his family, saying that the entire higher education community shared the grief of this irreparable loss. Dr. Baloch served HEC as Director General Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and performed his obligations with utmost dedication and commitment. As a former head of QAA, his contributions to the HEC's efforts for enhancing the quality of higher education will never be forgotten. Dr. Baloch did his PhD in Education in Leadership from Cardinal Stritch University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. He remained attached to Academic Quality Assurance for over a decade while serving as Director Quality Assurance in two universities. – DNA

CDA restored 80% of street light of capital



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) has restored 80% street light across the city. Colorful lights are being installed in underpasses and at flyovers to enhance their beauty. On the other hand 1102 conventional lights have been replaced by LED lights. According to detail, the administration of CDA is committed for enhancing the beauty of capital city. Street lights have been restored at Express Way, Srinagar Highway, Jinnah Avenue, Margalla Road, 7th avenue, 9th avenue, F-6, F-7, F-10, G-10 and other commercial areas, main roads and services. Conventional lights are also being replaced by LED lights. Colorful lights are also being installed. 90% work on restoring and installing new lights in parks of the city has been completed. Patrolling team of CDA

CDA launches operation against land mafia

ISLAMABAD: The administration of Capital Development Authority (CDA) has launched a large scale operation against the land Mafia, illegal constructions and encroachments. The operations are continuing continuously. In this regard, a large scale operation has been launched against the land mafia in Malpur yesterday. According to detail the operation is being carried out under the supervision of the Enforcement Department, while a heavy machinery of the MPO department was used for the operation. During the operation, illegal constructed structures have been demolished and 40 kanals of government land worth crores of rupees has been handed over. The operation will be re-operated. In Sector H-8, encroachments from the side of the highway, Sector I-14, four walls and a hut from GT Road, while nine walls from Quaid-e-Azam University area were demolished. It should be noted that the operation against encroachments will continue. – DNA

is also continuously restoring the street lights which are not in order. CDA has allocated 10 vehicles and staff for addressing the complaints

of the masses. Lights have been installed at 25,468 different places during last 03 months and 36 parks have been enlightened.

‘Force marriages, conversions unislamic’

Responding to a question, he said killing of any non-Muslim or damaging their property has nothing to do with Islam. The killer of a non-Muslim doctor who was killed in Peshawar has been arrested.

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The forced marriages and conversions to Islam were against the teachings of Islam, Special aide to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East, Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi said Thursday.

Addressing, 'National Interfaith Women Conference' held under the aegis of Church of Pakistan and Interfaith Harmony Councils, Ashrafi, who is also Pakistan Ulema Council chairman urged minorities living in Pakistan not be intimidated as the state will stop those who try to

harm them. The honor and status bestowed on women by the Holy Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W) is unmatched anywhere else.

Islam is the protector of the rights of minorities and state was responsible to ensure the protection of the rights of every Pakistani living in the country.

Responding to a question, he said killing of any non-Muslim or damaging their property has nothing to do with Islam. The killer of a non-Muslim doctor who was killed in Peshawar has been arrested. Elements accomplice in terrorism and extremism activities in



the name of Islam are not making any service to Islam and are not friends of Islam. The sanctity of all religions and holy places of all the schools of thought must be respected, he said adding government was in constant coordination with human rights organizations and

NGOs with objectives to invite them to seek solution on different issues through dialogue.

Some conspiring forces misuse social media to fan unrest and anarchy in Pakistan, he said adding endeavors were being made to restrict misuse of blasphemy law. Ashrafi urged Human Rights Organizations and NGOs to come forward and play positive role for promotion of interfaith harmony. He said Interfaith Harmony Councils are being organized at Union Councils level. At the behest of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Human Rights is working together to improve situation.

Talking to reporters after the conference, Ashrafi said that money had been used in the Senate elections in the past.

Prime Minister Imran Khan wants to make an end the culture of buying and selling of votes in elections. He urged the opposition to support the government for transparency in polls. Referring to the approval of new boards of Madaris, he said that the government has made the right decision and the formation of new boards of Madaris will improve the quality of education added that more boards will also be formed.

ATC extends judicial remand of two lawyers till March 1

ISLAMABAD: An Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) on Thursday extended the judicial remand of two lawyers and sent them to jail till March 1, in Islamabad High Court ambush case.

The court also adjourned hearing on bail petitions of three lawyers due to lawyers' strike.

ATC Judge Raja Jawad Abbas Hassan heard the case. The two lawyers including Naveed Malik and Nazia Abbasi were produced before the bench after completion of their remand period.

During the hearing, accused Nazia Abbasi pleaded that she had no connection with the violent protest of lawyers. The prosecution should present evidence to prove her involvement in the incident, she said, adding that she was being dragged in personal disputes. Naveed Malik Advocate said that he was a practicing lawyers for 25 years and he had not been part of such incident. We are being treated as terrorists, he said. The court on the occasion directed the jail administration to bring the lawyers separately from other prisoners.

The lawyers said that the concerned investigation officer was not cooperating with them to this the court summoned the IO and held a recession. After this, the court extended the judicial remand of the two lawyers till March 1. Meanwhile, the court adjourned hearing on bail petitions of Secretary District Bar Association Liaqat Manzor Kambo, Muhammad Umer and Khalid Mehmood till February 19, due to lawyers' strike.

Six died, twelve injured in road mishap

ATTOCK: Six died while twelve received multiple injuries when bus collided with a trawler, 10 km away from Fatehjang on Pindigheb Fatehjang road. The dead and injured were shifted to THQ Hospital Fatehjang by Rescue 1122. As per details a Pindigheb bus coming from Rawalpindi, collided head on with a trawler because of rash driving of the bus driver. Those died include Muhammad Shafiq r/o Khaur, Hamayun r/o Ikhlas, Muhammad Waseem r/o Malal, Yasir bus conductor r/o Ratwal, Muhammad Akram r/o Gali Jageer and Ghulam Raza r/o Chenji Talagang. Those received multiple injuries include Junaid r/o Nowshera Pindigheb, Muhammad r/o Malal, Mansha Bibi r/o Gali Jageer, Shafiq r/o Ikhlas, Rameez r/o Gali Jageer, Muhammad Afzal r/o Muslim Town Pindigheb, Sikandar r/o Dhulian, Mehrban r/o Khaur, Arshad r/o Jhandiyal, Mehmood Khan r/o Khundi Dheri Pindigheb, Musarat Bibi r/o Khaur and Talha r/o Dhuliyuan. Meanwhile Afaq Ahmad a 1st year student r/o Khaur committed suicide because of unknown reasons. On the other hand police arrested four gamblers namely Akram, Liqat, Nisar and Abdul Jabbar from the jurisdiction of Basal police station. – APP

Admin retrieves over 62 kanals land

RAWALPINDI: District administration Rawalpindi accompanied by the local police on Thursday launched an operation and retrieved 62 kanals and 16 marlas state land from the occupation of the encroachers.

According to a District Administration spokesman, the administration on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Capt (ret'd) Anwar ul Haq conducted an operation in 'Moza Ahal Paswal', Taxila under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Taxila Shahzad Mehboob and the Revenue officers concerned. He informed that 62 kanals and 16 marlas state land worth Rs 200 million was retrieved. "Operation against the illegal constructions was carried out in 'Moza Ahal Paswal', Taxila and the land was retrieved from the occupation of the encroachers," he added. The district administration as per orders of the Punjab Chief Minister has issued strict instructions to all the departments concerned to map out illegal encroachments and take strict action against them, he said. – APP

FM In Cairo

PAKISTAN'S Foreign Minister (FM) Shah Mahmood Qureshi is in Cairo on his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Hassan Shoukry's invitation. Ever since Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has come to power, the top leadership of Pakistan has been engaging with that of Egypt. The meetings between Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan and President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi on the sidelines of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Makkah Summit and the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York (2019) and subsequent telephonic conversations have shown that the two sides are eager to cultivate deeper bilateral terms.

While Pakistan enjoys cordial relations with Egypt and other countries in the North African region and the broader Arab world, there is a lot of room for enhancing cooperation. Asia and Africa are undergoing rapid transformation, given China's ambitious Belt and Road project. Therefore, today's engagements with Egypt can bring Pakistan sustainable dividends and turn "Engage Africa" initiative into a great success story. Admittedly, the FM will discuss a wide range of topics with Egyptian officials. Nevertheless, commerce will be the most crucial one. According to Pakistan Business Council's (PBC) profile report of Egypt, the trade exchange volume between the two sides is less than \$220 million against the untapped potential of \$3.40 billion.

Since agricultural products account for a significant portion of Egypt's import bill, Pakistan can play its part in boosting the untapped trade potential. Similarly, Pakistani and Egyptian governments are on board on many regional and global issues and united on the war on terror front. The two sides by boosting up their defence ties can further enhance the trade volume. Cairo can potentially become a key buyer of Pakistan's military equipment. Cooperation in agriculture and defence can open up other avenues of partnerships between the two sides; Pakistan can use Egypt as a "gateway" to make sustainable inroads in Africa.

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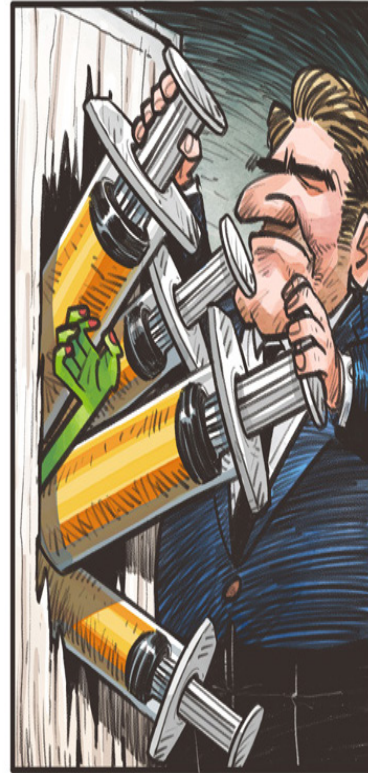
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POOR



RICH



CSS reforms

THE federal government promises to cleanse the civil service of an arbitrary promotion process along with corrupt officers through the new reforms proposed by the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS). While the authorities may be on the right track, there are still certain concerns being expressed about the new reforms that must be heard and responded to. Such small, but necessary, actions let the people know that such initiatives are as consultative as is being claimed. According to Dr Ishrat Hussain, the Adviser to the PM on Institutional Reforms, the CSS reforms were only passed after the expertise of more than 1900 officers was sought, in addition to over 60 sessions of intense discussions. As was needed, all the stakeholders came to the logical conclusion of there being a need to weed out all the causes of inefficiency with the CSS.

As such, to force all the fraudulent officers into retirement and creating a trackable promotion process was the right move forward and any controversy in this regard needs to be clarified immediately. Otherwise, vital progress bears the risk of being derailed by those who claim that not only are the reforms outdated or repetitive but that the PAS has been in charge of the reins for a significant period of time since they were initially called the District Management Group—those in charge of creating such structures within the CSS. These internal bureaucratic squabbles should not tarnish a process that could bring positive restructuring. It is imperative that the government, before taking any further steps to modify the CSS, takes a step back to assure the public, officials and relevant institutions that cooperation is its primary goal when embarking upon such tasks. Furthermore, it can clarify the credentials of the PAS to ensure that such misunderstandings are clarified immediately.

Russia - China supremacy in vaccine diplomacy

Dr M Ali Hamza



The global vaccine race is a part of international power game and the west is in danger of losing more ground. In fact the damage to American and EU standing is already done.

EU failed badly on supplying vaccine to their own citizens, even their closest neighbor like Serbia is sticking her hopes to Russia and China.

Hungry is the first EU member state to approve Chinese vaccines; a huge credibility boost to Beijing

COVID-19 vaccines are turning out to be an important form of diplomatic currency around the world; a tool for soft-power gains. Russia and China have been challenging the West for years. Their military build-ups, infrastructure projects and targeted economic support have already strengthened their geopolitical influence. And now, as the deadly coronavirus pandemic upsets the world, the two powers are presenting themselves as global rescuers. They offer the most in demand commodity what everyone desperately needs; yes the COVID-19 vaccine. Russia produced the first ever corona vaccine proven to have 95% efficacy. President Putin proudly presented 'Sputnik V Serum' after 8 months development and courageously offered his daughter for the first shot. Naming vaccine after the world's first satellite launched by the USSR explicitly evokes images of Russia as a superpower. Vaccine was a big win for Putin administration domestically as well as internationally.

It portrayed to its people that the current regime is strong and capable to face any challenge. China quickly followed Russia by two of their own manufacturers Sino-Vac and Sino-Pharm. Though western media tried it's all best to accuse China for the pandemic, and Trump even called it a China-Virus, but Beijing is busy leading a fight against the Corona tragedy. It is an understood fact that China look forward to a positive response of her vaccine generosity from the receivers of Chinese vaccine. Global vaccine race is political and pulls in lot of business. As USA being a global player seems absent from the vaccine race and EU is looking inward, it is no surprise that Russia and China have rushed into fill the vacuum.

The global vaccine race is a part of international power game and the west is in danger

of losing more ground. In fact the damage to American and EU standing is already done. European Union (EU) failed badly on supplying vaccine to their own citizens, even their closest neighbor like Serbia is sticking her hopes to Russia and China. Hungry is the first EU member state to approve Chinese vaccines; a huge credibility boost to Beijing. Even EU giant nations like Germany, opening the idea of buying Chinese or Russian Vaccine once they are approved; are they waiting for western approval? The EU pledges from the start to help developing and poor nations. It invested heavily on research and development, and sealed deals with 6 different drug manufacturers to secure 2 billion doses of vaccine where as their need was only 450 million doses. Indeed the rest was planned for the world but those promises seem to have been postponed as vaccine supply is too slow for their own people. EU which buys vaccines on behalf of its 27 member states has authorized three shots developed in Germany, the US and the UK. But the bloc was slow to sign contracts and authorize the shots, while manufacturers have struggled to deliver the doses promised. Shortages have been even worse in non-EU countries in Europe. Have some European capitalist gobbled the public money? The story needs attention.

Some small European governments are turning to China for Covid-19 vaccines as EU procurement stumbles and Western vaccine makers' production hiccups hamper the fight against the pandemic. This trend would definitely increase China's influence in the region. China was one of the first countries to make a diplomatic vaccine push, promising to help developing countries last year even before the nation had mass produced a vaccine that was proved to be effective. Just in February China donated 500,000

vaccine doses to Pakistan and it would donate 300,000 vaccine doses to Egypt in the same month. Other low to middle-income countries from Brazil and Nigeria to Algeria are looking to Moscow and Beijing for doses. Chinese vaccines are finding buyers in Latin America and the Middle East. Vaccines from state-owned Sino-Pharm are distributed in the United Arab Emirates and the Balkans. Sino-Vac received orders from Turkey and Brazil. Russia has received orders for 1.2 billion doses of 'Sputnik V Serum' and Iran started mass vaccination by giving a Sputnik V dose to the son of its health minister.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi of China toured four countries: Myanmar, Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines, in January this year, and since October, he has visited every country in Southeast Asia except Vietnam. At each destination Wang assured that helping others through vaccine is top priority of Chinese foreign policy. The world is witnessing that US and EU are unable to maintain a balance of domestic needs fulfillment on one hand and helping the needy on other. They are struggling to immunize their own people but Russia and China are making their offerings at a time when the United States and other rich nations are scooping up the world's supplies. West is once again on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure.

Strangely the western media showed their ignorance about this development and western critiques were stingy in appreciation; rather the critics say Russia and China threatening the international order. Instead of accusing, shouldn't we be applauding Russia and China for their efforts? and why not? Instead of forcefully sending troops under a deception of securing a country and later destroying nations, Russia and China are protecting the countries by saving lives, by saving their economy, by helping with their vaccination.

Kashmir and the higher Game of Thrones

Wajeaha Bilal



The future of any society is its youth; they are supposed to be protected by hesociety and not used by it. The Convention on the Rights of the Child asserts that: "The child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth"

It can be quite irksome to watch television today. News and media revolve around civil wars or natural disasters. Movies depict terrible scenarios to keep the viewers engaged. Children are living with or witnessing violent environments, which is an endless emotional and psychological harassment. In the disputed lands of Kashmir, children are profoundly affected by situations of crisis they do not understand. The Culture of Violence prevails in their daily lives with damaging consequences. Children's well-being should be the concern of the entire society but why is it always the children who have no part to play in the politics of power, suffer the most? The wounds of every war are deep and intimate and trying to be comfortable can spark the hidden gashes and the trapped doors in the consciousness. Unlike physical wounds, the countless effects of war on the mind are unaddressed.

An armed revolt has been going on against Indian rule in the region of Kashmir for decades, claiming tens of thousands of lives. Even before India and Pakistan won their independence from Britain the area was bitterly contested. The accord to align Kashmir with India resulted in decades of rivalry in the debated region, including two wars and a long-standing insurgency.

The underlying reasons of conflict among two states remain the moving force of international relations, that have led to a great deal of diplomatic activity. They are disputed with the suspicion of an escalation, that might lead to a nuclear strike between two nuclear powers. After years of debates and resolutions, none of these efforts have shown any significant results, and the cost of war is heavy on the Kashmiri children both mentally and physically. Lack of food, malnutrition, and illness are part of their daily lives. Mistreatment is their daily routine, that is a violation of basic human rights and a violation of family rights.

"Children in Jammu and Kashmir are living in the most militarized zone of the world, with the presence of 700,000 troops, which exposes them to the risk of all six grave violations against children as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the

Child," according to a report.

The children in Kashmir are experiencing violence both directly and indirectly as their lives are shaped by a sense of injustice, and the susceptibility to accept violence increases with time. All these things have a negative impact on their mental health.

The future of any society is its youth; they are supposed to be protected by hesociety and not used by it. The Convention on the Rights of the Child asserts that: "The child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth." Even though many resolutions have been approved at the United Nations to protect children in a situation of crisis, these laws prove difficult to be applied and the physical and emotional suffering experienced by these children has lasting repercussions for them.

The Kashmir problem is a mixture of state terrorism, revolution and general horror that has continued for decades in history. Indians and Pakistanis have lived with the ramifications for years, but currently blame each other, rather than an impaired partition process. Consequentially, Kashmir came to play a huge role in the respective politics of both states as the Kashmir issue has outlived a cold war status and the old feud that Kashmir is not self-sufficient unless it accedes to a major state, has lost value. The leadership in both countries aggravated the original problem when they turned Kashmir into a medallion of their separate national identities.

If we are unable to solve the issues that has a direct impact on the psychology of our children, then how can we cope with bigger emerging issues that define our truth. We do not want to be a part of the faction that does not want to negotiate Kashmir and seems to be content with the bleeding souls of a suffering land. We cannot be cautious in a massive war by calculating and concluding its uncertain outcomes, while the psychological damage that is done everyday rips our children of their rightful childhood.

History cannot be undone, and Kashmir may have ceased to be the only cause of bad relations between

two states, but it remains a cause. It is also a symbol of their failure to compose their differences and live in peace. Over the years, several proposals have suggested the possibility of putting an end to this major dispute, but it is important to recognize the crucial role of time in resolving the Kashmir problem. History has been a testament to the fact that time is not on our side as the Kashmir problem has been mismanaged by two generations for decades.

People take distinct views about the inevitability of war, but everyone is affected by the ways in which the war comes. They say everything will change and a new world is bound to evolve yet even after generations of wars, children still suffer at the hands of the empowered. After the confrontations have closed, after the speeches have been given, the sermons concluded, the smoke dies down and the danger moves from outside to inside. The war continues to ring in the hearts of the little souls who experience it. In the higher play of game of Thrones, it is always the faultless and the children who suffer the most. The ongoing Wars between the authorities have proven that it is the fight to be in power, and power it always is; power to destroy the societies and psyches of children more swiftly than has ever been done by any human activity before.

It is not our intelligence or our knowledge of the past that defines us, but instead our lessons that we have derived from them. So basically, our identity is not what we have come to know, but what we stand for. The responsibility for standing up for the future generation of Kashmir lies on all of us, when we think, write or speak, we do it to raise awareness for the suffering souls. In the hopes that those higher authorities who have the power to make amends may take the right actions. A nation's integrity is based on the realization that it needs to raise a voice against corrupted powers not on reminiscing the past. It's the only way to acknowledge that the power to healing the young wounds lies within each one of us.

— Wajeaha is author of "The Conscious Ego" and "The Beautiful Present and runs a blog "A Purposeful Life"

Briefs

Georgia's prime minister announces resignation

WEB DESK

Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia has announced his resignation after a court ordered the arrest of a top opposition leader, a move that prompted calls for early elections. Gakharia, who had held the post since 2019, said on Thursday he was stepping down because of a disagreement with his own team over the decision a day earlier to arrest Nika Melia, chairman of the United National Movement (UNM) opposition party. Gakharia said Melia's detention was unacceptable if it threatened to fuel political divisions in the South Caucasus country of 3.7 million people. "I've made the decision to leave my post," Gakharia said, according to the Sputnik Georgia news outlet. "Of course, I believe and want to believe that this step will contribute to lowering the level of polarisation in our country."

A court in the capital Tbilisi had ruled on Wednesday that Melia be taken into custody for allegedly failing to post bail. The opposition leader had been accused of inciting violence at street protests in June 2019, a charge he has dismissed as politically motivated. Following Gakharia's resignation on Thursday, the interior ministry said it was postponing carrying out the order to take Melia into custody. If convicted, Melia faces nine years in prison. Leaders of nearly all of Georgia's opposition parties had gathered since Wednesday at the UNM party headquarters in Tbilisi, vowing to obstruct police if they moved to arrest Melia. Inside the UNM headquarters, Melia called for early elections.

'Climate change bigger threat than pandemic'

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: Climate change is a "bigger" threat than the COVID-19 pandemic in the long run, and it requires immediate and collective action, said the head of the EU delegation to Turkey. "Climate change is not only a risk in itself, but it is also a risk multiplier for all of our societies," Nikolaus Meyer-Landrut told the meeting held with the theme of "Tackling Climate Change" in the Turkish capital Ankara on Wednesday. The global community, he said, has passed the stage of questioning the causes of climate change, however, it still has an advantage as it knows a way to address the problem: the decarbonization of countries' economies. The German diplomat said the international community should not view climate change as a risk only for its gradually increasing effects on societies and stressed global-scale solidarity.

Zimbabwe begins vaccine roll-out with Chinese jabs

HARARE: Zimbabwe's vice president was first to be inoculated Thursday as the southern African country began coronavirus immunisation three days after receiving jabs donated by China. Constantino Chiwenga, wearing a rosary around his neck, received a dose of Sinopharm vaccine at a hospital in the capital Harare and urged citizens to register for the shots. The 64-year-old was first swabbed to test for coronavirus before taking off his jacket and unbuttoning his shirt to receive the shot in the shoulder. Chiwenga said the health ministry had done "all scientific processes" to vet the jab. "My presence here today with some ministry officials (...) is to exhibit the government's confidence in the Sinopharm vaccine," said Chiwenga, who doubles as the country's health minister. Zimbabwe's fight against the virus has been blighted by a run-down healthcare system and a struggling economy. On Monday, it received a shipment of 200,000 doses of the vaccine, whose efficacy against a fast-spreading local variant is unclear. Frontline healthcare workers and custom officials will be the first to receive the shots. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Suaheh Ahmed Faruqi, secretary commerce in a meeting with Obaid Alzaabi, ambassador of UAE. - DNA

Nearly 500 detained in Myanmar, hackers target military websites

It is unclear if the AAPP list includes six celebrities, who are said to have been charged for inciting strikes that have paralysed many government offices. Those charges can carry up to two years in jail

FOREIGN DESK

YANGON: Myanmar's military has ordered more arrests, with nearly 500 individuals facing charges or sentenced to jail in relation to the burgeoning protests and civil disobedience movement following the February 1 coup, as protesters return to the streets on Thursday following a massive demonstration the previous day. Some 495 civilian political leaders, activists and protesters have so far been detained or charged, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), which has been tracking detentions in the country over the past two weeks, said in an update on Wednesday night. Three people have already been convicted to two years in jail and a third for three months, the group said. Some 460 people remain in detention. Among those arrested in recent days was a regional minister of environment in Mandalay, while four train operators and two others were reportedly taken at gunpoint by the military, and three were arrested by police in

Rakhine. Eight civil servants were also put on trial on Wednesday for going on strike as part of a growing civil disobedience movement. It is unclear if the AAPP list includes six celebrities, who are said to have been charged for inciting strikes that have paralysed many government offices. Those charges can carry up to two years in jail. Some of those detained were defiant. "It's incredible to witness that our people are unified. People's power must return to the people," actor Lu Min wrote on his Facebook page. The Defend Lawyers website also reported that at least 40 barristers could face prosecution for participating in the anti-coup movement. Many of the country's lawyers have joined the Red Ribbon Campaign calling for the restoration of democracy in the country. On Thursday, the demonstrators returned to the streets for the 13th straight day of nationwide protests against the coup leaders. In the capital, Naypyidaw, a group of engineers in motorcycles joined a convoy of protesters and demanded that the government release the country's civilian leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. They were joined by other protesters from the Civil Disobedience

Movement. In the country's largest city of Yangon, protesters also started pouring into the streets, with student groups and workers from different ethnic minorities also expected to join the crowds. On social media, images have started to circulate on Thursday showing several people, some in the orange robe of monks, carrying sticks and smashing cars of protesters in Yangon. In the city of Mandalay, protesters on horseback paraded the streets of the country's second largest city, carrying red flags in support of the ousted civilian leaders. Meanwhile, the group Doctors Without Borders (also known as MSF) said on Thursday that it is "gravely concerned" about the recent arrests and detentions of health care workers and other civilians. It said the government's actions "have the potential to severely interrupt the lifesaving health care" that MSF and others have been providing to some of the most vulnerable people in the country, particularly in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. "We see this crisis brings real fears, expressed by so many of our colleagues, and worry for

the immediate and long-term effects on public health and general safety." On Wednesday, tens of thousands of people took to the streets in the biggest anti-coup demonstrations since the generals detained Aung San Suu Kyi and the popularly elected government to seize power more than two weeks ago. The generals have claimed fraud in the November election that was won by Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) in a landslide, saying they will hold new elections at an unspecified date. The elections commission has rejected claims of fraud. The rallies have brought sporadic incidents of violence. The AAPP accused the military and the police in Mandalay, Myanmar's second-biggest city, of destroying a house belonging to one of the anti-coup protesters, leaving at least one person injured. There were also reports that government forces opened fire at protesters and striking railway workers in Mandalay late on Wednesday. Early on Thursday, there were also reports that hackers had attacked military-run websites as the internet was shut down for a fourth straight night.

'China to import dairy products from Pak'

BEIJING: China will import dairy products (Nestle cream) from Pakistan, says a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Thursday. The quarantine and SPS agreement process is about to complete, and there is a vital requirement for dairy products in western China provinces, according to Badar uz Zaman, Commercial Counsellor Pakistan Embassy here. Talking to CEN, Badar said that in Pakistan, livestock plays an important role and Pakistan is the fourth largest milk producer globally. Within the livestock sector, milk is the largest single commodity. "In Pakistan, the production of fresh milk is about 50 million tonnes. We have a strong livestock history that many multinational and the local companies are processing milk. And the additional cream that is extracting is a great exportable product", he mentioned. He further said that Chinese Huiyu group has taken up the process and signed an MOU with Nestle Pakistan. They are about to complete the process of getting permission to import into China. They have a solid distribution base in China. "Chinese customers are very eager to use that cream. The samples distributed among the Chinese buyers, and they liked it very much, and there is great potential as Pakistani dairy products prices are low.

Earthquake hits southwestern Iran

WEB DESK

TEHRAN: At least 43 people in Iran have been injured and several properties destroyed in an earthquake that shook the country's southwestern Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province on Wednesday night, local authorities said on Thursday. According to the Institute of Geophysics of Tehran University, the epicenter of the 5.6 magnitude earthquake, which occurred at 10:55 p.m. local time (1925GMT), was some 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) east of the provincial capital Sisakht, where it inflicted the maximum damage. The strong tremors were felt in many neighboring provinces, including Isfahan and Shiraz, officials said. The footage shared online showed piles of rubble in Sisakht, which is considered an earthquake-prone city. According to local officials, electricity and water supply had been cut off in the area following the earthquake, which has now been gradually restored. Local residents, who spent the night in open areas, reported multiple aftershocks throughout the night. Immediately after the earthquake on Wednesday night, relief and medical teams were dispatched to the affected areas and injured were shifted to nearby hospitals, officials said. The relief and rescue operations being led by Iran's Red Crescent Society continue. Iran is located in a seismically active zone, and the country has seen many catastrophic earthquakes in the past.

Global debt hits new high of \$281T

MONITORING DESK

LONDON: Global debt rose to a new record high of \$281.5 trillion in 2020, driven by measures to curb economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, according to the Institute of International Finance (IIF), a global trade group of financial institutions. "Coupled with a sharp pandemic-driven decline in government and corporate revenues, total private and public debt for the 61 countries in our sample rose by \$24 trillion last year, making up over a quarter of the \$88 trillion rise over the past decade," the IIF said in a report released late Wednesday. Global debt outside the financial sector totaled \$214 trillion in 2020, compared to \$194 trillion the previous year, it said. Debt in mature markets amounted to \$203.7 trillion while emerging markets saw \$77.7 trillion of debt at the end of last year. Global debt-to-GDP ratio hit 355% last year, up 35 percentage points year-on-year. "The upswing was well beyond the rise seen during the 2008 global financial crisis," it noted. European countries saw some of the biggest increases in debt ratios in 2020, notably France, Spain, and Greece.

IMF hail's Uzbekistan's efforts to COVID

FOREIGN DESK

TASHKENT: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday that Uzbekistan's large support package was timely and well-targeted, though the COVID-19 pandemic has had "a marked, but so far relatively short-lived, adverse impact" on the country's economy. The Uzbek authorities' strong policy reaction led to the country being among the few countries that showed positive overall economic growth in 2020, at a rate of 1.6 percent, the IMF said in a statement following a three-week remote mission in Uzbekistan. "Growth is expected to pick up further in 2021, but the level of uncertainty remains high and the recovery will depend especially on vaccine roll-out," it said, adding that the Uzbek economy is projected to grow by about 5 percent this year. The Uzbek authorities faced the challenge of not only supporting the recovery, but also continuing with the country's transformation to a modern market economy, according to the statement. Uzbekistan has made significant progress during the last few years in implementing ambitious reforms, focusing mainly on improving overall macro-economic management, foreign exchange, trade liberalization, and major improvements in fiscal and monetary policy frameworks. - APP

Uzbekistan authorizes use of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan on Wednesday authorized the use of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine and decided to purchase 1 million doses, authorities said. Russia's Sputnik V vaccine is certified and approved for mass use following Phase 3 clinical trials, said Uzbekistan's Special Republican Anti-Coronavirus Commission. It has also allowed a coronavirus vaccine developed by China's Anhui Zhifei Longcom Biopharmaceutical Co., Ltd - whose Phase 3 clinical trials are continuing - to be produced in Uzbekistan. The country will start a vaccination program next month, with more than 4 million people are expected to get vaccinated in the first phase. So far, Uzbekistan has reported a total of 79,497 COVID-19 infections, including 662 deaths and 77,993 recoveries.

Indonesia to boost air force with F-15EX, Rafale jets

FOREIGN DESK

JAKARTA: Indonesia will purchase F-15EX jets from Boeing and Rafale fighter aircraft from France between 2021 and 2024, the head of its air force said on Thursday. The country will also buy C-130J transport planes and medium-altitude long-endurance unmanned combat aerial vehicles, Marshal Fajar Prasetyo, chief of staff of the Indonesian Air Force, said at the annual Air Force Leadership Meeting. According to the meet-

ing's summary document, Indonesia plans to buy 36 Rafale and eight F-15EX jets, with six of the latter expected to arrive by 2022. Along with the new additions, the air force will also modernize its existing combat aircraft this year, Prasetyo said. He said Indonesia's defense procurement plans have undergone several changes in view of global conditions and the country's capacity. "Despite having guidelines for posture, strategic plan, and Minimum Essential Force, the implementation is very dependent on

various factors and conditions that keep changing dynamically," Prasetyo said. He explained that all stakeholders, including the Defense Ministry and the Indonesian Air Force, had analyzed and discussed plans to solve procurement issues. "This is solely to facilitate our steps in obtaining the best defense equipment that meets operational requirements, commonality aspects, obtaining the transfer of technology, in line with the state's capability and the condition of the Indonesian Air Force," he said.



JERUSALEM: This morning, the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock is covered in a layer of snow in the Holy of Holies, Al-Quds Palestine. - DNA

BelCCI, Pak embassy Minsk organizes business event

He said Kinnow (Mandarin) have always been considered as a traditional symbol of good fortune in China. This is mainly because the word orange, when spoke in mandarin, sounds similar to the word 'wealth'. The orange hue of the fruit is also said to symbolise 'gold' which makes it a very auspicious fruit

DNA

MINSK, the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BelCCI) in collaboration with the Embassy of Pakistan, Minsk organized a business interactive event at the BelCCI, which was attended by businessmen/representatives from more than 30 Belarusian companies. Additionally, the session was also attended by around 40 businesspersons on virtual basis, as the event covered via Zoom and YouTube. Welcoming the participants of the business event titled "Meet the Ambassador", the Chairman of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mr. Vladimir Ulakhovich impressed upon the need to working closely for greater economic cooperation. On the occasion, Ambassador Sajjad Haider Khan made a detailed presentation on "Pa-

kistan-Belarus Trade Prospects", particularly highlighting Pakistan's demographic advantages, political and economic strength and trade potential. Referring the excellent polit-



ical relations between the two countries, Ambassador Khan pointed out that the existing trade ties was much below the potential. He urged the participants to take advantage of the improving trade and climate in Pakistan in the context of the government's initiatives and reform agenda. Mr. Nasir Hamid, Minister (Trade & Investment) at the Embassy of Pakistan, Moscow also briefed the participants over investment and tourism potential of Pakistan through video link. He highlighted the rich economic prospects offered by China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the benefits of enhanced regional connectivity for the firms investing in Pakistan as the project nears fruition. Following this, a networking session was held whereby the precise queries of Belarusian businesspersons regarding exports, certifications, payments and other procedures were addressed.

