



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Khojaly genocide is reflection of Armenian fascism

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Zardari jumps in to bolster PPP campaign

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One Window operations opening soon

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Briefs

PDM's hypocrisy exposed

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Syed Shibli Faraz said on Friday that the opposition's appreciation for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has exposed its political hypocrisy as it has been protesting against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in past. In a tweet, he said changing stance and negating its own narrative has become a hallmark of the opposition. He said opposition only accepted those decisions, which come in its favor. He said opposition only considered those elections as transparent in which it wins; otherwise it makes hue and cry in the name of rigging.

COVID-19 vaccine is safe

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan Friday said over 140,000 health workers had been vaccinated for COVID-19 across the country. Talking to a private news channel, he said the COVID-19 vaccination should be mandatory for all the front-line workers to break the chain of infection as he himself got the first dose of vaccine a couple of days ago.

PTI govt near its end

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former Governor Sindh Muhammad Zubair has criticized PTI's Senate hopeful from Islamabad, Dr Hafeez Shaikh, saying that he only comes to Pakistan when he is given public office. He said that the PTI government will soon be out of power, therefore, Dr Hafeez Shaikh should book a ticket out of the country.

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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PIA to start flights to Baku and Tashkent

Likewise PIA is planning to start Lahore, Baku flight also, which shall enable visitors to visit this beautiful country

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plans to operate flights from Lahore to Tashkent by the end of March this year and permission has been sought in this regard. CEO PIA Air Marshal Arshad Malik and Chief Commercial Officer Ali Tahir Qasim and airline officials met with Ambassador of Uzbekistan in Pakistan Aybek Arif Usmanov and Pakistan's Ambassador to Uzbekistan Ali Asad Gilani to seek formal permission for flights. Both the ambassadors expressed their keenness to have air links between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, a place of mosques and shrines, while Tashkent, Bukhara and Samarkand have a rich Islamic culture and history. PIA is planning to expand its network to Central Asian countries and increasing frequency of flights to Afghanistan.

Continued on Page 06

3 new airlines seek CAA nod to operate

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Three new airlines on Friday have sought Regular Public Transport (RPT) permit from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to operate domestic flights across Pakistan. As per details, three new airlines Q-Airlines, Fly Jinnah and Jet Green Airlines have sought permission from the CAA to operate domestic flights in the country. Sources privy to the development said that scrutiny of two Q-Airlines and Fly Jinnah has been completed while Jet Green Airlines is still going through the process of scrutiny.

Sri Lanka ends forced cremations after PM visit

NEWS DESK

Pak hails Lankan decision

SHAHEEN HANIF

COLOMBO: A couple of days after Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's official visit to Sri Lanka, the country announced Friday an end to the forced cremations – a win for the island's minority Muslims and their funeral rites. Dozens of demonstrators had used PM Imran Khan's February 23 visit as an opportunity to call attention to the Sri Lankan government's disregard for Islamic burial customs and carried a mock coffin. Traditionally, Muslims bury their dead facing Makkah. Sri Lanka's majority Buddhists – who are strong backers of the current government – are typically cremated. Similar customs are practised by the Hindu

population of the country. Sri Lanka had first banned burials in April 2020 over concerns – which experts said were baseless – by influential Buddhist monks that the practice could contaminate groundwater and spread the virus, leading to an outcry by members of the South Asian nation's Muslim community who constitute

10% of the 21 million population. While health minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi did not give a reason in her announcement reversing the ban, official sources said the Pakistani premier had raised the subject with both President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa during his trip earlier this week.

Khuli Katcheri held at Pak Embassy France

Members of the community appreciated the role being played by the embassy

PARIS: A Khuli Katcheri was held at the Pakistan Embassy here this afternoon. Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Mr. M. Amjad Aziz Qazi listened to the complaints of the members of the Pakistani community in France and gave directions to concerned officers for redressal. Due to Covid 19 restrictions the event was held online. Members of the Pakistani community, Pakistani students and media persons representing various Pakistani media organizations in France attended the virtual event. While talking to the participants Mr. Amjad Qazi said that the Embassy would hold Khuli Katcheri on the last Friday of every month. He said the Embassy will keep on providing all possible support to the Pakistani community living in France. He said the issues raised and complaints made in previous Khuli Katcheri, held a month ago, have been resolved or taken up with concerned departments for redressal. Members of the community appreciated the role being played by the embassy in timely provision of consular services despite Covid 19 restrictions, especially the support provided in the transportation of dead bodies to Pakistan. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Iraqi Defence officials led by Defence Minister of Iraq, Jumma Enad Saadoon Al-Jibori called on President Dr Arif Alvi. - DNA

Iraqi minister calls on President

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday said Pakistan could help Iraq in the development of its infrastructure by providing technical assistance and human resource. The president made the offer in a meeting with a visiting Iraqi defence delegation led by Minister of Defence of Iraq Jumma Enad Saadoon, here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. President Alvi said Pakistan attached great importance to the mutually beneficial relations with Iraq and wanted to further strengthen bilateral relations in the areas of trade, economy and defence. He told the delegation that Pakistan strongly supported the sovereignty, political unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. The president offered training courses for the Iraqi military personnel in the defence training institutes of Pakistan. He emphasized that both the countries needed to support each other at all international fora.

'Pak will come out of FATF grey list by June'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Industries and Production Hammad Azhar says Pakistan has complied with 90 percent of Financial Action Task Force's action plan and rest will be completed by June this year. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Friday, he said Pakistan has so far completed compliance of 24 out of 27 action points of the FATF. He said Pakistan will come out of the grey list after compliance of the remaining three points. He said Pakistan was given the most challenging action plan of the world. - DNA

Pak, Qatar sign LNG 10-year agreement

Qatar's Minister al-Kaabi termed as "historic" the agreement with Pakistan and expressed confidence that it would open up new vistas of development

NEHAL MIRAJ

Pak to save \$300 million annually: PM

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Qatar will provide Pakistan three million tons of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) for 10 years as the two countries entered into an agreement on Friday. Prime Minister Imran Khan witnessed the signing of agreement that took place here at the PM House. Federal Minister for Energy Omar Ayub Khan and Qatar's Energy Minister Saad Sherida al-Kaabi

LAHORE: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday revealed that Pakistan had signed a deal related to the supply of the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) which would help save

Continued on Page 06

inked the agreement. Qatar's Minister al-Kaabi termed as "historic" the agreement with Pakistan and expressed confidence that it would open up new vistas of development. He said Qatar would also promote bilateral cooperation in other areas of mutual interest. Special Assistant to PM on Petroleum Nadeem Babar said the agreement would prove to be helpful in fulfilling Pakistan's energy requirements

Biden, King Salman discuss regional issues



NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: United States President Joe Biden and Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz during a telephonic conversation have discussed regional and international issues including end of Yemen war. According to White House, President Biden during the conversation emphasized the US commitment to assuring Saudi Arabia's security from threats and discussed renewed diplomatic efforts to end the war in Yemen. The two leaders also affirmed the historic

nature of the relationship and work to make the bilateral relationship as strong and transparent as possible. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and United States have vowed to enhance their bilateral relations to restore peace and stability in the region and face regional and international challenges. The resolve was expressed during a telephonic conversation between Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The two sides also discussed bilateral relations and strategic partnership between the two countries.

Wanted TTP commander killed in IBO

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Security Forces on Friday, in an important intelligence based operation (IBO), killed most wanted terrorist commander of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Nooristan alias Hasan Baba. The Security forces had conducted an IBO on terrorist hideout after confirmation of terrorists presence in Sharmangi, Tiarza area of South Waziristan, said a statement of Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). "During exchange of fire a high value target, Terrorist commander (TTP) Nooristan alias Hasan Baba killed," the ISPR statement read. The most sought and wanted killed Terrorist was improvised explosive device (IED) expert and master trainer who was involved in martyrdom of more than 50 security forces personnel since 2007, it added.

ECP issues code of conduct for Senate polls

The political parties, candidates, voters and election agents will not indulge in any kind of corrupt or illegal practices as defined in chapter-X of the Elections Act 2017

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued the code of conduct for political parties, contesting candidates, election agents and voters for Senate elections 2021.

According to notification, the commission said that as per code of conduct the political parties, candidates, voters and election agents will not propagate any opinion, or act in any manner prejudicial to the glory of Islam and ideology of Pakistan, or the sovereignty, integrity or security of Pakistan, or morality or public order, or the integrity or independence of the Parliament, judiciary of Pakistan

or which defames or brings into ridicule the Parliament, judiciary or the Armed Forces of Pakistan. The political parties, candidates, voters and election agents will abide by all directions and instructions issued by the ECP from time

to time relating to smooth conduct of elections. The political parties, candidates, voters and election agents will not indulge in any kind of corrupt or illegal practices as defined in chapter-X of the Elections Act 2017.

Contesting candidates, election agents and their supporters will not solicit the support or assistance of any person in the service of Pakistan or any public office to promote or hinder the election of contesting candidate in any manner.

The President and Governors of the Provinces will not take part in election campaign relating to election to the Senate in any manner whatsoever and will not use their respective offices as well as houses in connection therewith. While entering the polling station, each voter will ensure that he or she does not possess mobile phone or other such electronic device or gadget which can be used to take photograph of the marked ballot paper. For purposes of election expenses, a candidate will open an exclusive account with any branch of a scheduled bank before the date fixed for scrutiny of nomination papers and maintain, or cause to be maintained, a register of receipts and expenditures.

Senate campaign to end from midnight Mar 1

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday said that the election campaign for Senate election in the country will come to an end with effect from the midnight falling between the March 1st and March 2nd, 2021. The commission has asked all the political parties and the contesting candidates to follow the provisions of law and exercise self-restraint so that the poll is held in an orderly and peaceful manner on the March 3rd. The commission has drawn attention of political parties and contesting candidates for Senate Elections, to the provisions of Section 182 of the Elections Act, 2017, which provides that no person shall convene, hold or attend any public meeting and no person shall promote or join in any procession within the area of a province during a period of forty-eight hours ending at midnight following the conclusion of the poll for an election in that province or federal capital. Violation of said provision will be illegal practice which is punishable in accordance with Section 183 of that Elections Act, 2017, it added. - DNA

PIO Sohail Khan promoted to Grade 21

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Principle Information Officer (PIO) Sohail Khan has been promoted to Grade 21. The Prime Minister Imran Khan signed the summary of promotions on Saturday. Two other officers of the Information Group have been promoted to Grade 21. These officers include Ambreen Jan and Mubashar Tauqeer. Mubashar is currently posted at the Press Information Department. Ambreen Jan is likely to be posted in the President House.

Briefs

LHC CJ lays foundation stone of PJA Phase-III

LAHORE: Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Muhammad Qasim Khan Friday laid the foundation-stone of phase two of the Punjab Judicial Academy (PJA) Kala Shah Kaku campus. Justice Malik Shehzad Ahmed, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Ali Baqir Najafi, Justice Atir Mehmood, Justice Syed Shahbaz Ali Rizvi, Justice Anwar-ul-Haq Pannu, Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar, Justice Asjad Javed Goral, LHC Registrar Malik Mushtaq Ahmed Ojla, the district judiciary director general, PJA Director General Chaudhry Muhammad Saleem and others were also present.

While addressing the ceremony, the chief justice said that continuous education and training of members of the judiciary was very important, as the law was never static and changes take place in it with time. "We have continued the process of training of judges to keep pace with the passing time, and the main objective of establishing the academy was to provide the best learning opportunities to judges," he added. The chief justice said that it was necessary to provide all facilities to the learners in the academy; therefore, such an infrastructure model was adopted for the academy where all facilities, including accommodation and others, were being provided. "We wanted the academy to emerge as a degree awarding institution in near future, besides providing training to judges across the country and carry out legal research work," he added.

ECP bars president, governors from running campaign

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued Code of Conduct for political parties, contesting candidates, election agents and voters for the upcoming Senate elections. According to a notification, the Commission said that as per the Code of Conduct, the political parties, candidates, voters and election agents will abide by all the directions and instructions issued by the ECP from time to time relating to the smooth conduct of the Senate elections.

It further said that the political parties, candidates, voters and election agents will not indulge in any kind of corrupt or illegal practices as defined in chapter-X of the Elections Act 2017. The Election Commission said that all members will be banned from carrying mobile phones in the polling booth. Ballot papers cannot be photographed. The president and governors will not run campaign for the Senate election. Casting vote in exchange for gifts or to intimidate for votes will be prohibited. The successful candidate will submit the details of election expenses to the Returning Officer within five days.



ISLAMABAD: Nawaf Saeed Al Maliki Ambassador of Saudi Arabia met with His Excellency the Minister of Federal Railways, Senator Azam Khan Swati. During the meeting, cordial conversations were exchanged and issues of common interest between the two brotherly countries were discussed. - DNA

Chairman NAVTTC lauds China's support in vocational training

Ambassador Han Nianlong that NAVTTC's proposal will be effective in involving and engaging Chinese technical training entities and encouraging them to deliver training to the Pakistani labour especially youth in collaboration with existing training bodies and institutes across Pakistan

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting was held between Chairman, National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC), Syed Javed Hassan and H.E. Ambassador of Peoples Republic of China to Pakistan, Nong Rong. Chairman, NAVTTC appreciated the support of China in revamping the technical and vocational training programs and put forth different proposals to further enhance the cooperation in TVET

sector. Executive Director NAVTTC, Dr. Nasir Khan apprised H.E. Ambassador Han Nianlong that NAVTTC's proposal will be effective in involving and engaging Chinese technical training entities and encouraging them to deliver training to the Pakistani labour especially youth in collaboration with existing training bodies and institutes across Pakistan. Further the proposal will play vital role in training of Pakistani youth in relevant technical trades and soft skills in accordance with



the skill requirements of Chinese companies, quality enhancement of Pakistani technical training institutes, enhancement of training delivery, preparation of Pakistani youth for Hi-Tech trades and ultimately preparation of globally competitive skilled workforce, Khan said. Dr. Khan requested for co-operation and support of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan and the relevant Chinese departments in achieving the objectives of the proposals. The Ambassador assured full support in the field of technical and vocational education and trainings and promised to take up the proposals with the relevant Chinese authorities.

Railway minister opens RCCI build 2021 Expo

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Railway lands across the country will be brought into use in collaboration with the private sector. The construction industry will develop very soon. If the country's economy is further strengthened, employment opportunities will be created. The Chamber of Commerce will have the full support of the government. He said that exhibitions increase trade activities.

The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce deserves compliments for organizing this expo. These views were expressed by Federal Minister for Railways Azam Khan Swati while talking to the media on the occasion of the inauguration of the first Build 2021 Construction Trade Fair organized by Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). He said that no president or prime minister of any country can be a chief executive who does not understand

construction. Prime Minister Imran Khan holds a meeting every week regarding construction. Chamber President Muhammad Nasir Mirza said that the purpose of the expo is to promote business activities. The expo will provide investors with a wealth of information on the housing and construction sectors, as well as information on various construction projects under one roof. He said that more than 40 industries are connected with the construction sector.



MULTAN: Chairman parliamentary committee on Kashmir, Shehryar Khan Afridi addressing a seminar arranged by Nishtar Medical College & University. - DNA

Shehryar Afridi urges UN to put sanctions

MULTAN: Chairman Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir Shehryar Khan Afridi Friday urged United Nations (UN) to act on the recent report of UN experts on human rights and put sanctions on India for its demographic terrorism in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). He expressed these views while addressing participants of a seminar titled 'Countering Extreme Behaviors Through Perception Management' at Nishtar Medical University Multan. Afridi said that seven UN experts have issued a report on India's stripping of autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir and undermining minority rights. The UN rights experts have said that the loss of Kashmir's autonomy and subsequent legislation has threatened the demographics of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that UN experts have warned that Indian acts could curtail the previous level of political participation of Muslims and other minorities. He said that top human rights organizations have also called on India to immediately halt its intensifying suppression of voices of Kashmiris after the country's National Invest-

igation Agency (NIA) raided several organizations in Jammu and Kashmir. Quoting the Amnesty International, Shehryar Afridi said that the global watchdog on human rights said that Indian raids are an alarming reminder that India's government was determined to suppress all dissenting voices in Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He said, after the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A to strip Jammu and Kashmir of its autonomy, thousands of Kashmiris were arrested, including pro-India politicians, and an internet blackout was imposed following the unprecedented political move. He said that the high-speed internet was restored after many months, the longest spells of internet shutdown in the world. Shehryar Afridi said that the youth should beware of enemy's propaganda and must not distract from their roots. He said that self-belief and national pride was a must for our youth and they should work diligently to create a tolerant and moderate society. He said that Pakistan was the jewel of the crown in Asia and was a center of regional and global connectivity and trade. - APP

State institutions working independently

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Usman Dar Friday said every state institution including Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) were working smoothly and independently without any political influence. Talking to a private news channel, he said it was the first time in country's history that the ECP was functioning independently. The PTI government was proud of that the institutions were independent now in the country. He said Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was leveling baseless allegations of rigging in the by-polls but we would approach the Supreme Court and appeal against the decision. He further said the PML-N was habitual of doing politics of hooliganism and its leadership repeated that practice by sending Rana Sanullah and others to deteriorate the law and order situation in Daska, where peaceful electioneering was underway. Dar said everyone knew that the PML-N wanted re-polling at 20 polling stations and the returning officer himself admitted that only 14 stations were doubtful. "The election was transparent in Wazirabad where it won but unfair in Sialkot where it lost," he said adding the PML-N disputed Daska by-election under an organized propaganda. - APP

CCTV footage adds twist to Karachi girl rape case

STAFF REPORT

KARACHI: The kidnap-cum-gang-rape case of a college student has taken a twist as police have found no evidence showing the girl was sexually abused after being kidnapped from outside her college in Karachi. According to the police, CCTV footage of different DHA areas showed her walking around and buying things from shops before she was found, what her father claimed in an FIR, in an unconscious state. Moreover, in a statement given to the investigation officer, the alleged rape victim said accused Sami, Fawad and Umair blackmailed her and threatened of posting her photos on social media. On February 9, she disclosed, Umair tricked her into accompanying him to his house on bike where he sexually assaulted her after promising marriage. Next morning, he refused to marry her and threatened of using the influence of his father, a police officer, to destroy her entire family if she discussed with anybody what he did to her, she said. The police said the girl's statement recorded under section 164 CrPC has been submitted to the relevant court for perusal. Umair is out on bail while four accused Fawad, Sami, Adil, and Sameer are in custody. The investigation officer said further investigation into the case is underway in light of her statement. An FIR was registered on the complaint of a government schoolteacher. He said his 16-year-old daughter, a student of the first year at a government college in Gulshan-e-Hadeed, had left home on February 9 for the college but she did not return home. - APP

'CPEC will change economic fate of Balochistan'

The President expressed these views during a meeting with a 14-member delegation of journalists led by Ilias Kamboh, President, Hub Press Club at the AJK President House on Friday

MIRPUR: Describing Balochistan as a strategically important federating unit of the country, Azad Jammu Kashmir President Sardar Masood Khan predicted that when Balochistan will achieve prosperity, the whole of Pakistan will be prosperous. The President expressed these views during a meeting with a 14-member delegation of journalists led by Ilias Kamboh, President, Hub Press Club at the AJK President House on Friday. He said after the completion of development projects under the China-Pakistan Corridor, a new era of progress and prosperity will usher in Balochistan and it will turn the economic fate of the Baloch people. The people of Balochistan

should have faith and confidence that the whole of Pakistan, including Azad Kashmir, wanted to see them prosperous and developed. With the grace of Almighty Allah, the time is not far when investors from all over the world will come to Balochistan and create jobs, business and employment opportunities in the province. He said that the media should raise awareness about the opportunities that will arise for the development and the prosperity of the province in the coming time. Baloch people are brave and hardworking and they are fortunate enough to have a long coastal belt where the traditional feudal system has been weakened. "Now

is the time for them to forge unity and turn this region into a dreamland." He said that like Balochistan, the people of Azad Kashmir also faced many problems but in the recent past we have taken a quantum leap and achieved the highest literacy rate in all of Pakistan. At present, there are 5 public sector universities in AJK, hundreds of colleges and thousands of schools where millions of children are studying. "Our biggest challenge is the unprovoked firing by the Indian occupation troops on the Line of Control, which kills and injures innocent civilians every day and causes irreparable losses to their property," AJK President said. - APP

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Briefs

IGP inspects speed checking campaign

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Qazi Jamil ur Rehman on Friday visited various areas of the city and checked the speed monitoring campaign of traffic police. The IGP checked 13 speed monitoring radars and lauded the efforts of personnel of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) to ensure safe road environment in the city. The staff of ITP told IGP that strict monitoring against speeding vehicles is being ensured in the city and only two accidents occurred during the last week owing to this drive. It was further told that 413 speeding vehicles were fined and an amount of Rs. 1, 23,900 was received from those violating speed limits. The IGP further directed to ensure indiscriminate action against speeding vehicles. He said that lane discipline should be maintained and action to be taken against motorcyclists not wearing helmets and motorists not fastening seat belts. The IGP said that implantation on traffic laws guarantees safe road environment and every possible effort should be made to secure the lives of road users. He also lauded the efforts of traffic staff working hard for the success of this drive and appealed citizens to cooperate with police in this regard.

Islamabad police officials visit markets

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The officials of Islamabad police on Friday visited various residential sectors and markets with an aim to interact with citizens and enhance public trust on police. Following directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Qazi Jamil ur Rehman, a campaign has been formally launched by Islamabad police to improve relations with citizens and improve their confidence on police. Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer along with Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Hamza Shafqaat visited sectors F-10 and F-11 on foot and met with citizens. Likewise, all Zonal police officials patrolled on foot in their respective areas and also visited various markets. Police officials met with citizens, shopkeepers and traders and listened to their problems as well as issues. They assured the complainants to resolve their issues on priority. SSP (Operations) said that such interactions would help to improve level of public confidence on police and eradicate crime through citizens' cooperation.

USC not selling any substandard product

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan (USC) is not selling any substandard product at its all outlets. This was stated by a source in Utility Stores, while responding to queries raised by Public Accounts Committee over the sale of edible ghee and cooking oil. The source further states that, Utility Stores have pre-qualified firms/vendors, who provide all enlisted products certified by Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) at its shelves. Also, USC follows a rigorous registration process for the products' registration. That's why, the available products at USC are of high quality as per food standards. The source maintained that, USC, since its inception is providing high quality subsidized products to masses. That is why, people of Pakistan has an undaunted trust over the products of USC.



ISLAMABAD: Diplomatic Staff from the Embassy of Indonesia met with the Management of CGSS. It was decided that the Embassy of Indonesia will facilitate in connecting different institutions and think tanks of Indonesia. The concept of Regional Integration Center, Punjab University, Lahore was also introduced during the meeting. The diplomatic staff showed keen interest in various initiatives by Regional Integration Center & vowed to show full support and contribution from Indonesia as well. - DNA

'One Window Ehsaas operations opening soon'

Currently, Ehsaas is also building a new database for standardized beneficiary targeting through Ehsaas National Socioeconomic Registry (NSER) survey. The new Ehsaas database will steer Ehsaas One Window operations

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Sana Nishtar Friday convened a final consultative meeting with all four executing agencies of Ehsaas to discuss the policy and roll out plan for the forthcoming One Window Ehsaas operations. The meeting was held at the Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division (PASSD), said a news release issued here. As a part of One Window Ehsaas Initiative, preparations are underway to open the first of its kind, 'Physical One Window Ehsaas Center' in Islamabad and inaugurate 'Ehsaas Digital' by the end of March 2021.

In this regard, Ehsaas is currently in a process of structuring and integrating One Window Ehsaas, which is a single-service operation to avoid duplication and ensure improved access to multisectoral Ehsaas initiatives. "The Ehsaas Strategy stipulates the creation of 'One-Window Ehsaas' (Policy # 4) to enable rule-based delivery of the multiple Ehsaas programmes through a single window", Dr Nishtar said. The initiative comprises of 'Physical One Window Ehsaas Centers, inter-linked Ehsaas services through Ehsaas e-portal, Ehsaas Android app, deployment of cognitive API architecture for data sharing, standardization of beneficiary targeting

and alignment of program beneficiary populations", she added. The first 'Physical One Window Ehsaas Center' opening in Islamabad will be a one-stop-shop that will integrate all Ehsaas programmes under one roof. The center will facilitate beneficiaries to get information on all Ehsaas benefits and services available to them in one space. Likewise, the Ehsaas e-portal will be a one-stop-shop that will provide links to all Ehsaas-related information and services. Available on Google Playstore, the Ehsaas App will be an android application. Currently, Ehsaas is also building a new database for standardized beneficiary targeting through Ehsaas National Socioeconomic Registry (NSER) survey.

The new Ehsaas database will steer Ehsaas One Window operations. All executing agencies of Ehsaas will be able to access data from the survey database in real time and will be able to ascertain eligibility of potential beneficiaries. As of today, the Ehsaas survey is 70% complete and is progressing smoothly to conclude nationwide by June 2021. Along with Secretary PASSD, Mohammad Ali Shahzada, senior officials from Ehsaas' executing agencies-Benazir Income Support Program, Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal and Trust of Voluntary Organizations also joined the meeting.



Workshop on issues of federating units held

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: The School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) in collaboration with the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) organized one-day workshop on the Model Council of Common Interests (CCI): Debating Democratic Devolution theme. The workshop was divided into two sessions - political aspects of democratic devolution and communication skills - in order to advance participating students' understanding relative to issues of common concern between federating units. The workshop will give way to a model simulation exercise to be attended by eight participating universities across Pakistan. In his opening remarks, the Director of the School of Politics and International Relations, Dr. Farhan Hanif Siddiqi highlighted the work of Hanns Seidel Foundation in promoting the culture of research, debate and dialogue in Pakistan. He stated that the model CCI simulation exercise provides a wonderful opportunity for students to showcase their talent and academic and communication skills outside the classroom setting. Dr. Stefan Kudella, Resident Representative, Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) gave an overview of 40 years long engagements of the organization with partner universities in Pakistan.

Prosecution department established in Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A prosecution department was established here on Friday in federal capital for provision of speedy justice over the demand of federal capital dwellers. Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration set up the department in a short span of one year, following directions of Chief Commissioner Islamabad, Aamer Ali Ahmed, Director General ICT Syeda Shafaq Hashmi told journalists. The people of Islamabad were in dire need of such kind of institution that had not been existed for the last 40 years, said Hashmi. She said the initiative would help in crime prevention as well as legislation.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hammad Alzaabi visiting Foreign Service Academy. - DNA

Universities will continue to operate as per HEC guidelines

It also added that health and safety guidelines communicated by the Higher Education Commission or prescribed by the Government should be implemented strictly and will remain effective until and unless modified

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has clarified that all universities will continue to operate as per guidelines issued by the HEC earlier. The recent announcement of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training is about resumption of a regular

school week of 5 days for urban centers of Karachi, Hyderabad, Lahore, and Peshawar. Earlier schools in these cities were restricted to a 3-day school week by NCOC in view of a high prevalence of COVID-19. NCOC has removed these restrictions following a fresh assessment of the prevailing situation in these cities. According to a statement issued by the Higher Edu-

cation Commission here on Friday, it is reiterated that all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will continue academic and research operations in accordance with the relevant instructions already provided by the Higher Education Commission in the following Covid-19 guidance notes. (a) Higher Education Commission Policy Guidance Note # 8; Further Guidance w.e.f.

November 26, 2020 which is available at <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/HECAnnouncements/Documents/nCoVirus/Further-Guidance-HEIs.pdf> and (b) Strategy for Gradual Opening of HEIs, revised September 2, 2020 available at <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/HECAnnouncements/Documents/nCoVirus/Reopening-of-HEIs.pdf>. It also added that health

and safety guidelines communicated by the Higher Education Commission or prescribed by the Government should be implemented strictly and will remain effective until and unless modified. Universities are advised to seek further guidance, if required, from the Chair or the provincial/regional members of the Covid-19 Oversight Committee or email at mghbhatti@hec.gov.pk.

NATIONAL TRANSMISSION AND DESPATCH COMPANY LIMITED

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Sr.#	Name of Work			
1.	Construction of patrolling and entrance path at 220/132 KV Grid Station Gujrat.			
Estimated Cost (Rs)	Earnest Money (Rs)	Cost of Tender Documents (Rs)	Completion Period	
6,948,817.00	3% of bid price	3,000/-	180-Days	

Date and Time of tender receipt:- 16.03.2021 upto 12:00 noon
Date and Time of tender opening:- 16.03.2021 at 12:30 p.m

Place of opening:- EXECUTIVE ENGINEER EHV CIVIL WORKS DIVISION NTDC LAHORE.

ELIGIBILITY OF CONTRACTORS

- Registered with PEC in category qualifying estimated amount of the work and having renewal for the year 2020-2021.
- Bank statement for last 6-months showing the financial position of the firm.
- Must produce satisfactory completion certificate of at least two works of similar nature.
- Successful bidder will submit 10% Performance Security (Bank Guarantee) of quoted bid from any scheduled bank in Pakistan.
- Tender document may be obtained on production of above said documents and handing over the earnest money in the shape of Deposit Call in favour of Executive Engineer EHV Civil works Division NTDC, NTDC House, 34-Industrial Area Gulberg-III, Lahore up to 15.03.2021 from the office of the undersigned during working hours. Relevant Design / Drawings may be seen during office hours in the Office of the undersigned.
- Bid price must include all Federal and provincial taxes & duties i.e. income tax, general sales tax, provisional sales tax etc.
- The Bidders will submit undertaking that he has read & accepted the NTDC SOP for blacklisting of firm.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER EHV CIVIL WORKS DIVISION 34-INDUSTRIAL AREA GULBERG-III, NTDC HOUSE, LAHORE
Phone Office: 042-99263264. S.D.E Civil 2nd 0335-7402532
PID/L NO. 2418

Briefs

PTA directs CMOs to improve quality of service

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Friday directed Cellular Mobile Operators (CMOs) to improve network coverage and performance, and maintain Quality of Service (QoS) as per license standards. In view of public complaints regarding degradation in service quality and results of PTA surveys, it was observed that lack of network expansion and insufficient network/sites are some of the causes of QoS issues, said a news release. CMOs have been asked to take concrete measures for resolution of root causes, ensure network stability and adequate coverage through expansion of their networks, especially in densely populated urban areas.

PTA will review the steps taken by CMOs from time to time to check that improved voice and data services are being extended to the subscribers. Better coverage and service quality will ensure that end-user expectations for optimum performance are being met. — APP

NA condemn killing of 4 women in N.Waziristan

ISLAMABAD: Legislators in the National Assembly (NA) on Friday condemned the incident of killing of four female handicraft trainers in North Waziristan and decided to hold discussion on the issue in the standing committee on interior.

NA Speaker Asad Qaiser referred the matter of killing of the four women to the committee after a debate. During discussion on floor of the lower house of parliament, MNA Mohsin Dawar from North Waziristan said before the incident of the killing of four women, ten persons including a local government engineer and public prosecutor and his brother were also kidnapped from the North Waziristan.

He expressed the concern that the terrorists were regrouping in the tribal areas and these terror acts could spread in other parts of the country as well. He along with member of Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz Murtaza Javed Abbasi called for a comprehensive debate in the house on the incidents of terror and kidnappings in the border areas. Murtaza said his party condemned the acts of terror and pointed out that the situation had deteriorated in the tribal areas, adding in the previous bye-elections in the border areas, it was even difficult to run an election campaign due to terrorist activities.

He also said the terrorist networks were regrouping in the area and urged the government and the law enforcement agencies to take notice of the situation. Zahid Durrani of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl and other legislators stressed that the Shuhada package should be announced for the families of the four deceased women. Munawar Ali Talpur of Pakistan Peoples Party said attacks on workers of non governmental organisations was unfortunate, adding the killing of the women in North Waziristan was very saddening. Condemning the killings, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan said the nation was united on the issue of terrorism and the people, police and armed forces had already given immense sacrifices in the war against terror.

Rupee gains 36 paise against US dollar

ISLAMABAD: The exchange rate of Pakistani rupee strengthened by 36 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Friday and closed at Rs158.10 as compared to the previous day's closing of Rs158.46.

Meanwhile, according to Forex Association of Pakistan, the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs158.1 and Rs158.7 respectively. In interbank trading, the price of euro depreciated by Rs 1.11 and closed at Rs192.10 against the last day's trading of Rs 193.21. State Bank of Pakistan reported. The Japanese Yen lost one paise to close at Rs1.48, whereas a decrease of Rs 3.64 was witnessed in the exchange rate of British Pound which was traded at Rs220.48 as compared to its last closing of Rs224.12. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi visited NUML on Friday. He met with the Maj Gen Muhammad Jaffar Rector and staff of the University. — DNA

NUML, Foreign Ministry ink accord to co-op in languages

While exchanging views with Rector NUML, the Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that NUML is playing a vital role in promoting bilateral relations with other countries by way of teaching their languages and hosting international students

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and National University of Modern Languages (NUML) on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to cooperate in languages and translations. Foreign Minister Mahmood Shah Mahmood Qureshi and

Rector NUML Major General Muhammad Jaffar HI (M) Retd observed the MoU signing ceremony held here at NUML University.

The MoU was signed by the Pro-Rector Resources and Planning/DG NUML Brig Muhammad Badr Malik and Saima Sayed Director General Strategic Communication Division MOFA. Senior officials

from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NUML were also present at the occasion. While exchanging views with Rector NUML, the Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that NUML is playing a vital role in promoting bilateral relations with other countries by way of teaching their languages and hosting international students.

He added that this MoU is an acknowledgment of languages and translation expertise of NUML. Foreign Minister opined that the power of language is sharper than the sword, therefore, NUML in that context is doing a commendable job in enabling government officials and people from across Pakistan and foreign countries in developing language proficiency.

He thanked Rector NUML Major General Muhammad Jaffar (Retd) for his warm welcome and hospitality. Earlier, Rector NUML in his welcome remarks thanked the honourable guest for his time and briefed him about various curricular, co and extra-curricular activities in the university, which were highly appreciated by the Foreign Minister.

CDA establishes permanent pickets to protect govt land

According to detail, CDA is taking actions against encroachments and illegal construction for couple of months. However, the land grabbers repeat the same practices after the operations of CDA. This time, CDA has devised special teams to look after the government's land at various sites to ensure that no one can do encroachment or illegal constructions

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The administration of Capital Development Authority (CDA) has established permanent pickets at Saidpur, Margala hills, Shah Allah Dita, Chontra, Bari Imam, and other areas to protect government's land from land grabbers. More than 10 teams have been devised to put an end on encroachments and illegal constructions. These teams will submit reports to CDA's administration on

daily basis. According to detail, CDA is taking actions against encroachments and illegal construction for couple of months. However, the land grabbers repeat the same practices after the operations of CDA. This time, CDA has devised special teams to look after the government's land at various sites to ensure that no one can do encroachment or illegal constructions. These teams will do their duties in two shifts without any

off. They will submit reports to the department of enforcement regularly. On the basis of these reports, CDA will take action against encroachments and illegal constructions. CDA has directed these teams to demolish the illegal constructions and encroachments on spot and should capture the construction material. Letters have been written to district administration and police to promptly take action on the reports received from these special teams.

Accountability process to continue in policing affairs

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police would continue accountability process to improve functioning of department and bringing transparency in policing affairs. It was stated by Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer while chairing a meeting held to review the overall crime situation and performance of police officers. The meeting was attended among others by Additional SP Farhat Abbas Kazmi, four Zonal SPs, Sub-Divisional Police Officers (SDPOs) and Station House Officers (SHOs) of all police stations. SSP (Operations) said that Islamabad have accelerated accountability process of those police officers serving at police stations and investigating various cases. He scrutinized the perfor-

mance of each police official and directed to issue show cause notices to SHOs of Kohsar, Karachi Company and Sabzi Mandi Police stations. He gave them last warning to improve performance and come upto the expectations of the people through professional attitude. He also directed SDPOs of Kohsar, Karachi Company, Korla and Saddar Circles to explain their position over non-satisfactory policing measures in their areas. SSP (Operations) announced to award Rs. 5,000 and commendation certificates to SHO Shamas Colony police station while SHOs of Industrial Area, Khanna, Sihala and Loif Bher police stations were awarded commendation certificates over good performance. — APP

AIOU announces results of bachelor programs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced results of final examinations of bachelor programs offered in spring 2020 semester including General Arts, Library Science, Mass Communication, B Com and Dars e Nizami. The students of these programs may download their result cards from the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk), a press release on Friday said. Result cards are also being dispatched to the students through registered

postal services. AIOU has, already, announced results of matriculation and intermediate programs. All these results are available online on the university website. Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, VC, AIOU, has instructed heads of all academic and administrative departments to implement and follow 'AIOU Academic Calendar' in true letter and spirit to save precious time of the students. Examination department has expedited work to finalize results of programs offered in autumn 2020 semester in accordance with the timeline of academic calendar.



ISLAMABAD, Feb 26 (APP): Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood planting a sapling at the premises of Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of the Spring Tree Plantation Campaign 2021. — DNA

Govt given April 2 to amend social media rules

Last month, the federal government had agreed to review the policy - Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Online Content (Procedure, Oversight and Safeguards) Rules 2020 - introduced in November last year, amid protests by various stakeholders

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) gave the government till April 2 on Friday to amend the previously introduced social media rules. The high court also directed Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Khalid Javed Khan to submit a report on the date. "A verdict on the petitions challenging the policy will be announced once we have seen the report," the court maintained. Last month, the federal government had agreed to review the policy - Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Online Content (Procedure, Oversight and Safeguards) Rules 2020 - introduced in November last year, amid protests by various stakeholders. The court subsequently directed for all pleas

relating to the case to be scheduled for a hearing on April 2. The IHC further observed that

the contempt case against TV anchors will also be heard on the same day. Earlier, Dep-



uty Attorney General Tayyab Shah implored that they want to complete consultations with all the stakeholders. "We have sought the opinion of some more experts," he said. The new rules - framed under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 (PECA) and introduced on November 19, 2020 - placed all the internet service providers (ISPs) at par with social media companies and applied all the requirements of the social media platforms to the ISPs as well. Under the new rules, a national coordinator was to be appointed to coordinate with the stakeholders for regulating online systems. It required the social media companies to immediately remove, suspend or disable access to any online content in contravention of Pecca, or any other law, rule, regulation or instruction of the coordinator.

President appoints Dr Arshad Saleem as Rector VU

ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi on Friday appointed Dr Arshad Saleem Bhatti as Rector of Virtual University. The President conducted detailed interviews of the three candidates in the panel proposed by the university's Board of Governors, the President House said. The panel also included Dr Nasir Mahmood and Dr Muhammad Bilal Khan. "On recommendations of the Board of Governors and an interview, the appointment was made on merit," the President House said. President Alvi said Virtual University was playing an important role in promotion of affordable and quality education in the country. Through Virtual University, he said, the students after 12th grade could get education from any part of the country on an affordable fee structure. — APP

Pakistan's exports to USA surge 9.82% in 7 months

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's exports of goods and services to United State of America (USA) witnessed a surge of 9.82 percent during the seven months of financial year (2020-21) compared to the corresponding period last year. The overall exports to USA were recorded as US \$ 2680.250 million during July-January (2020-21) against exports of US \$ 2440.386 million during July-January (2019-20), showing growth of 9.82 percent, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data revealed. Meanwhile, on year-to-year basis, exports to USA during January 2021 also increased by 9.17 percent, from US \$ 366.306 million against the exports of US \$399.931 million. However, month-on-month basis, exports of USA were decreased by 5.84 percent during January 2021 in comparison with exports of US \$ 424.754 million in December 2020, SBP data said. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed decline of 3.80 percent in seven months, from US \$ 14.445 billion to US \$ 13.896 billion. On the other hand, the imports from USA into the country during the period under review were recorded as US \$ 1230.525 million against US \$ 1223.338 million last year, showing nominal increase of 0.58 percent in seven months of this year.

Cops directed to continue crackdown on kite sellers

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District police have been directed to continue crackdown on the kite sellers and flyers and take strict action against lawbreakers as violation of the ban continued on Thursday night and Friday in several city areas.

According to a police spokesman, Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Muhammad Ahsan Younas had chalked out a plan to check and control kite flying and aerial firing. He said that over 2500 cops including 135 police teams, 30 Dolphin squads, 35 Mohaffiz squads, 10 Elite Force sections, and a large number of cops were deployed on rooftops to monitor the situation and net the lawbreakers. Drone operators had also been deployed to search and monitor the kite flying and aerial firing, particularly in congested city areas, he said.

He informed that 43 cases were registered on Thursday night and 49 violators were rounded up.

The CPO urged the parents, teachers, ulema-e-akram and civil society members to come forward and play role against kite flying and aerial firing which has become a menace as it's a dangerous game and taking lives of innocent citizens.

He said, the CPO had directed the police officers to take strict action against those found involved in violation of the ban and playing with the lives of the citizens. It is pertinent to mention here that the ban on kite flying and use of metallic strings was openly being violated in several city and cantonment areas. The residents of the city have expressed concern over Kite-flying and use of metallic strings for the purpose. — APP

Easing restrictions

AS the global lockdown is fast approaching its one-year anniversary, the world over, countries are starting to shift focus to vaccine procurement and release, and deliberate on ways to open up their respective economies and societies in a responsible way. In Pakistan, after months of confusion and uncertainty over when schools and workplaces will go back to more usual schedules, the government has clarified some sort of timeline for when the country will open up more.

The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Wednesday relaxed a number of restrictions on commercial activities and official work. Under the new directives, the time limit on commercial activities has been lifted and the condition of 50 percent attendance at workplaces removed with immediate effect.

A lot of other restrictions will be removed by mid-March, including indoor wedding ceremonies and the opening of cinemas and shrines. The NCOC also increased the number of spectators attending Pakistan Super League (PSL) pool matches to 50 percent from the present 20 percent.

These are some sweeping changes and indicate that society might adjust fully back to usual by June, albeit the NCOC has still kept SOPs such as wearing masks and social distancing mandatory. While this may cause some to celebrate—as it is likely to lead to an increase in business revenues—the jubilation may be a little premature.

Pakistan cannot compare its situation with other countries. Firstly, the country has procured the vaccine a little later than others. Secondly, our vaccine campaign has seen some hurdles in the provinces. Countries where residents are prone to anti-vaccine sentiment, have had a less successful vaccine drive; something Pakistan should keep in mind considering our past examples with the polio inoculation efforts.

The country's experience with the coronavirus pandemic is not as successful as the politicians like to depict—the numbers are still large enough to be worried. Just yesterday, Punjab recorded the highest number of Covid-19 deaths over the last 24 hours, followed by Sindh. This does not mean the country should not start relaxing restrictions—but it needs to do it more gradually and with a strong contingency plan in place.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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

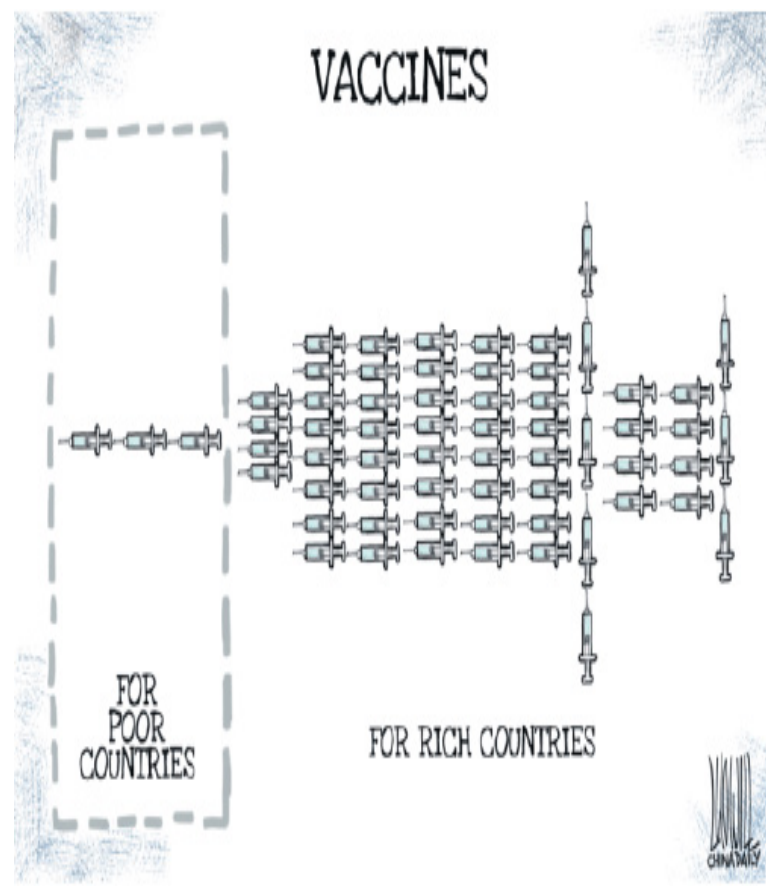
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Diplomatic gains made

EVER since Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has come into power, the government has been working hard on improving its relations with other states. An earlier visit of Foreign Minister (FM) Shah Mehmood Qureshi to Egypt and the recently concluded visit of Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan to Sri Lanka demonstrate Pakistan's shift from geo-strategic to geo-economic tendencies in its foreign policy. PM Khan's visit to Sri Lanka must be seen as a foreign policy win. The PM and his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa reaffirmed their resolve to work together, which indicates that the leaders understand the importance of cooperation for growth.

Historically, the two sides have always enjoyed warm relations. In Sri Lanka's offensive against the rebels in particular, Islamabad and Colombo became much closer due to the support we provided. Building on that, PM Khan's announcement of a military credit line worth \$50 million will take the military cooperation between the two nations to new heights. The line will expand security sector relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Ever since Sri Lanka has managed to clamp down on insurgency, Pakistan has made even greater strides in developing armaments and defence equipment. Perhaps Colombo can be sold the indigenous JF-17s and other technology we are now producing independently.

Likewise, the signing of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in many sectors, including higher education, IT and commerce and an informal commitment to take up the bilateral trade to \$1 billion will bring the two sides closer than ever. PM Khan's decision to pitch the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Sri Lanka reflects our desire to play an integral part in regional development and peace. It suffices to conclude that Khan's tour was a very fruitful trip to a country that we have had productive and meaningful relations with in a broad sphere of issues. Khan's efforts to reach out to countries within the region are praiseworthy.

The initiatives of the President of Uzbekistan

Akmal Saidov



The adoption of the National Strategy took into account the views of not only the expert community, but also the general public and international organizations. Uzbekistan maintains an active and constructive dialogue with the UN Charter and Treaty bodies, specialized agencies and Special procedures of the UN HR Council

Uzbekistan – the member of the UN

THE UN and the Republic of Uzbekistan have a nearly 30-year history of cooperation. Uzbekistan became a member of the UN on March 2, 1992. Main priorities of cooperation include fight against modern threats and challenges to security, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, tackling environmental problems, in particular impacts of the Aral sea crisis, the socio-economic development, protection of human rights and freedoms. The UN system supports Uzbekistan in addressing a wide range of development issues, including health, education and social protection, preservation of cultural values, protection of natural resources and biodiversity, fight against drug trafficking and spread of HIV/AIDS.

Uzbekistan was visited by three United Nations Secretaries-General:

- H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan in 2002,
- H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon in 2010 and 2015,
- H.E. Mr. António Guterres in 2017.

The Republic of Uzbekistan stands for strengthening the entire UN system, strengthening the role of UN structures in solving problems of regional and international security and ensuring sustainable development. Participation of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. M. Mirziyoyev at the 75th anniversary session of the UN General Assembly marked a significant event in the history of Uzbekistan-UN relationships. All the initiatives put forward by Uzbekistan within the framework of the UN have found full support from the international community and today make a significant practical contribution to ensuring universal peace, maintaining regional stability, continuing sustainable development, and the protection of human rights.

Uzbekistan and United Nations cooperation in the field of human rights

In Uzbekistan, the protection of human rights is considered one of the priorities of cooperation with the UN. Today, the country has a stable political system that meets the modern criteria of democracy and human rights, and the legislative, executive and judicial authorities at all levels are actively working to strengthen respect for human rights and to promote human rights education throughout the country. But the most important thing is that the Uzbek society maintains respect for the principles of the rule of law and human rights. We in Uzbekistan highly appreciate the efforts of the UN Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen the protection of human rights around the world. For without ensuring human rights, it is impossible to advance socio-economic, political, legal, cultural and humanitarian development of States.

Uzbekistan has developed national indicators for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Strategy of Action adopted by the President of Uzbekistan on five priority areas of the country's development in 2017-2021 is a "Roadmap" for implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Uzbekistan was the first Central Asian State to establish a system of national human rights institutions, which includes a parliamentary Ombudsman, a Children's Ombudsman, a Business Ombudsman and a National Human Rights Centre. In June 2020, the National Human Rights Strategy of Uzbekistan was adopted for the first time and is being consistently implemented. It provides for the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies.

The adoption of the National Strategy took into account the views of not only the expert community, but also the general public and international organizations. Uzbekistan maintains an active and constructive dialogue with the UN Charter and Treaty bodies, specialized agencies and Special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council. The Government submits timely periodic reports on the implementation of the main international human rights treaties, as well as on the follow-up to the recommendations of the treaty bodies (41 reports). In Uzbekistan, more than half of the population is young people. As such, much is being done to ensure seamless integration

of every young person into society and realize their potential. In the way of guaranteeing aforementioned missions, Concept of "Youth of Uzbekistan – 2025" has been adopted, Youth Parliament and the Agency for Youth Affairs are functioning. In August 2020, the Samarkand Forum on Youth Rights was held under the auspices of the United Nations with a view to attract global attention to matters related to youth.

In his speeches at the 75th anniversary session of the UN General Assembly, the 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council, as well as in his Address to the Uzbek Parliament, the President of Uzbekistan identified the key priorities of New Uzbekistan on human rights:

- ensuring the right to health;
- gender equality;
- protection of the rights of persons with disabilities;
- protection of the youth rights;
- human rights education;
- strengthening the independence of the courts;
- the fight against torture;
- development of regional cooperation on human rights.

Uzbekistan's new initiatives on Human Rights
The first initiative. Uzbekistan is pursuing a radical policy of increasing the role of women in the political, public and business life of the country. Two new laws on gender equality and the protection of women from violence and harassment have been adopted.

It is planned to hold a Women Leader's Dialogue of Central Asian states and a Regional Women's Business Forum in Uzbekistan. The second initiative. Much attention is paid to the protection of the rights of persons with special needs. A new Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force this year. The Parliament of Uzbekistan plans to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Uzbekistan also proposes to create a Regional Council for the self-realization of People with Disabilities.

The third initiative. Today, intellectually and spiritually developed, proactive young people are becoming a driver of sustainable progress. There are more than 2 billion young people in the world. This year in Uzbekistan is declared the Year of Supporting Youth and Strengthening Public Health. Most of the challenges facing humanity – such as threats to peace and security, terrorism and extremism, racism, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic must be addressed with active participation of young people. The initiative to adopt an International Convention on the Rights of Youth, put forward by the President of Uzbekistan from the high rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly, has been supported with great interest by the international community. This year, we plan to hold a World Conference on Youth Rights under the UN auspices. The purpose of the international forum is once again to give the youngest people the opportunity to directly participate in the development and implementation of national, regional and global strategies aimed at meeting their immediate needs, protecting their rights, freedoms and legitimate interests. The President of Uzbekistan also put forward a proposal to establish the institution of a UNSpecial Rapporteur on Youth Rights. In the current International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, a Law on the Children's Ombudsman will be adopted. The fourth initiative. Uzbekistan actively partici-

pates in the United Nations World Programme for Human Rights Education. The National Action Plan for the implementation of the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training is being implemented.

Together with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, we are planning to hold a Global Forum on Human Rights Education. In order to develop the system of human rights education, Uzbekistan contributes to the UN Voluntary Fund for Human Rights. The fifth initiative. Uzbekistan pays priority attention to the deepening of reforms in the judicial and legal sphere, as a result of which concrete measures have been taken to implement international standards in the field of judicial independence and the protection of the right to a fair trial.

Implementation of the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers has begun. In order to ensure the independence of the judiciary and regulate the selection and appointment of judicial personnel, the President of Uzbekistan proposed that the UN Human Rights Council consider the development of universal principles of the judicial councils. The sixth initiative. The fight against torture is a priority area of judicial and legal reforms in Uzbekistan. Work has begun on the implementation of a national preventive mechanism for the elimination of torture. The closure of the specialized penal colony located in the village of Zhaslyk was an important humanitarian event. As a result of the measures taken, the number of convicts held in places of deprivation of liberty has decreased by almost three times.

Over the past short period, we have made significant progress in our interaction with the special procedures. Visits of two Special Rapporteurs were carried out.

We intend to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. Uzbekistan invites the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to pay a visit. Moreover, we have decided to send a standing invitation to all mandate holders to visit our country. Of course, cooperation with distinguished mandate holders will help to make headway in the effective implementation of reforms in Uzbekistan. The seventh initiative. Uzbekistan also intends to continue to promote the establishment of a regional human rights mechanism in the Asian region. In this regard, a permanent platform has been created – the Samarkand Forum on Human Rights. There is no universal model of development in the world that is equally suitable for all States in the same historical period. The sad experience of a number of countries clearly shows that attempts to impose "unified standards" of democratic development, without taking into account specific historical, social and other aspects, as well as national and religious traditions, are counterproductive. Uzbekistan fully endorses the role of the UN in international peacekeeping, maintaining security, promoting sustainable development, and guaranteeing human rights. As an active member of the Human Rights Council, Uzbekistan wishes to express explicitly its continuous readiness for broad and mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries of the world and practical dialogue with the UN.

– *Akmal Saidov is the Director of the National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan.*

Pak-Afghan border fence, a step in right direction

Abdul Basit



The fencing of the border, however, has also presented Pakistan with new challenges. The fence adversely affected the daily lives of families who have relatives on both sides of the border. Similarly, it harmed subsistence farmers whose lands straddle the border

PAKISTAN is about to reach a new milestone in its fight against terrorism. The fence barrier it is building on the Durand Line, the 2,640km (1,640-mile) land border between Afghanistan and Pakistan that passes through rugged mountains, densely forested valleys and narrow rock passages, is nearing completion. Islamabad started fencing its porous border with Afghanistan in March 2017, after facing a spate of deadly attacks from Afghanistan-based Pakistani militant groups in the previous year. Despite a slow-performing economy, disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and a volatile security environment, the work on the border continued mostly uninterrupted in the last four years. So far, 85 percent of the border has been fenced, and the remaining work is expected to be completed by April 2021. The border barrier consists of two sets of chain-link fences, separated by a 2-metre (6-foot) space filled with concertina wire coils. The double-fence, which is 3.6 metres high (11 feet) on the Pakistani side and 4 metres high (13 feet) on the Afghan side, is fitted with surveillance cameras and infrared detectors. Moreover, nearly 1,000 forts are also being constructed along the border to increase security. Cross-border movement will only be allowed through 16 formally designated crossing points after the completion of the project, which is expected to cost more than \$500m in total. For the last two decades, the regions surrounding the Durand Line have been used by armed groups, such as the Haqqani Network, al-Qaeda and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), to conduct attacks both in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Kabul has long accused Pakistan of providing sanctuary to the Afghan Taliban. Islamabad, on the other hand, has raised similar concerns about TTP's presence in Afghanistan. Indeed, both Pakistan and Afghanistan have repeatedly found prominent criminals they are seeking to capture and eliminate in each other's backyards in recent years. In 2016, for example, Taliban chief Mullah Akhtar Manor was killed by a US drone attack in Pakistan's Balochistan region. Two years later, in 2018, TTP leader Mullah Fazlullah was killed by another US drone attack in Afghanistan's Kunar province. Pakistan says its border barrier will extensively increase security in restive border areas and put to rest the tensions it experienced with its neighbour over cross-border militant

attacks. Critics of the project, however, argue that while the fence will likely deter Afghanistan-based anti-Pakistan militants from conducting cross-border attacks, the Afghan Taliban will continue to cross the border at will, with a wink and a nod from Pakistan. Pakistan is also hoping that the border barrier will prevent any future turmoil in Afghanistan from spilling into its territory. Indeed, if Afghanistan once again descends into chaos in the coming years, the wall will help curtail the refugee influx from Afghanistan into Pakistan. In 1989, when Russia withdrew from Afghanistan, the ensuing civil war resulted in the migration of millions of Afghan refugees into Pakistan. Further, the fence will help curb the cross-border smuggling of narcotics and weapons that helps sustain terror groups in the region. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan is the source of 80 to 90 percent of the world's opium supply. About 45 percent of Afghan opium, which is used in the production of heroin, is trafficked through Pakistan to the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Pakistan's reasons for embarking on this massive fencing project, however, are not only increasing border security and preventing smuggling. The fence will also help Pakistan politically by cementing the Durand Line as the permanent border between the sovereign territories of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghanistan disputes the border drawn by British colonial officials, with the agreement of then-Afghan leader Amir Abdul Rehman, in 1893. It argues that the border is a "colonial imposition" that divides the ancestral homelands of Pashtun tribes between two countries, and claims sovereignty over the Pashtun territories on the Pakistani side of the border that comprise the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and parts of North West Frontier Province. Kabul also argues that the agreement between British officials and Rehman had a 100-year time limit, which expired in 1993. Pakistan, on the other hand, considers the border it inherited from the British after its independence as legal and final. And it hopes that its ambitious border barrier project will put the dispute over the Durand Line to rest for good.

Even before its completion, the border barrier provided Pakistan with visible benefits. Since 2007, Pakistan has carried out numerous kinetic operations, including Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad, to root out terror groups from

the former FATA. However, the de-facto open border between Afghanistan and Pakistan undermined the security gains made through these operations. It allowed militants to avoid capture by escaping into Afghanistan. These militants, after recovering and regrouping within Afghanistan, later launched new attacks on Pakistan. But since Pakistan's fencing project began, these same militants started to find it a lot harder to move between the two countries and evade the Pakistani government's efforts to prevent their attacks. The number of cross-border terror attacks from Afghanistan has fallen from 82 in 2019 to just 11 in 2020.

The fencing of the border, however, has also presented Pakistan with new challenges. The fence adversely affected the daily lives of families who have relatives on both sides of the border. Similarly, it harmed subsistence farmers whose lands straddle the border. The situation has already compelled several farmers to sell their lands at throwaway prices. Traders who made a living by exporting food items and other goods from Pakistan into Afghanistan and vice versa have also been affected as they now need to acquire visas to cross the border and pay customs fees for the produce they bring over. Pakistan is already working to mitigate the negative impact the border barrier had on the lives of civilians living in the area. It has reached an agreement with Afghanistan to establish joint trade markets along the border and discussions are ongoing about exactly where these markets should be established and what items should be traded within them. It is also planning to financially compensate the farmers who have lands on both sides of the border. For the families living across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, Islamabad will issue long-term passes.

The fencing of the Pak-Afghan border is a necessary step towards curbing militancy in the border areas and bringing stability to the former FATA. But on its own, it will not solve the region's myriad problems. The border barrier will undoubtedly provide a tactical respite for Pakistan and reduce the number of cross-border attacks. But until sustainable peace is achieved in Afghanistan, and the grievances of the Pashtun tribes living near the border are resolved, no barrier will successfully bring peace, stability and long term security to the region.

– *Courtesy: Al Jazeera*

Briefs

India tightens regulatory grip on social media

FOREIGN DESK

NEW DELHI: India has announced new rules to regulate content on social media, making Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and others more accountable to legal requests for the swift removal of posts and sharing information on where the messages originated from.

The rules - part of an effort by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to put Big Tech on a shorter leash - come after Twitter recently ignored government orders to drop content related to the farmers' protests.

India has the largest market by users for Facebook and its messenger service WhatsApp. The new rules called the Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code, issued by the government on Thursday will be legally enforceable. The rules will require big social media companies to set up a grievance redressal mechanism and within three months appoint new executives to coordinate with law enforcement.

Social media firms should be "more responsible and accountable," Ravi Shankar Prasad, the minister for information technology, told reporters in outlining the rules. Big social media firms will be obliged to remove content within 36 hours of receiving a legal order, according to the rules.

The government also said companies need to assist in probes or other cyber-security-related incidents within 72 hours of receiving a request. They must also disable within a day any post depicting an individual in a sexual act or conduct, said the rules, a draft copy of which was reported by the Reuters news agency on Wednesday. IT minister Prasad also told reporters the rules would oblige the companies to reveal the originator of a message or post when legally ordered. Facebook said it welcomed rules that prescribe ways to address challenges on the web. "The details of rules like these matter and we will carefully study the new rules," it said in a statement. Facebook-owned WhatsApp declined to comment. A Twitter spokesman said the company would study the guidelines and looked forward to continued engagement with the Indian government. "We believe that regulation is beneficial when it safeguards citizen's fundamental rights and reinforces online freedoms," he said in a statement.

Germany committed to Afghan peace process, minister says

FOREIGN DESK

BAERLIN: Germany is committed to the peace process in Afghanistan, Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer said Friday during a surprise visit to troops in Mazar-i-Sharif, where the majority of German troops are deployed. Kramp-Karrenbauer arrived at the Bundeswehr camp in the north of the country in the early hours of the morning in order to "get an overview of the current situation of the Bundeswehr contingent and the situation in Afghanistan in a direct exchange with the men and women of the Bundeswehr." "We are ready to continue supporting the peace process," the defense minister said. On Wednesday, the Cabinet in Berlin approved a 10-month extension until next January of Germany's military mission there, a move that still has to be approved by parliament. During her visit, Kramp-Karrenbauer said the country "urgently needs a settlement between the opposing groups of its society." Soldiers cannot replace these reconciliation processes, but they were "making an important contribution together with allies, especially in the north of the country," she said. The minister added that Berlin's goal remained an orderly withdrawal of troops. "In view of the security situation, the protection of our servicemen and women is a very high priority in this regard, and all necessary measures will be taken together with our partners to this end," she said. "The goal remains an orderly withdrawal."



Rizwan, Maqsood hand 1st win to Sultans in PSL 6

Hafeez scored his eighth PSL fifty as Qalandars accelerated their score in 10 overs. He made 60 runs off 35 balls with the help of three boundaries and five sixes

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Skipper Mohammad Rizwan and Sohaib Maqsood powered Multan Sultans with the bat as they beat Lahore Qalandars by seven wickets to win first match in PSL 6.

Rizwan and Maqsood put up a match-winning partnership of 110 runs after they joined hands when Sultans were suffering at 2-30 while chasing 158 runs in 20 overs.

While batting first, Hafeez powered Qalandars initially but Sultans' bowlers contained well and restricted them to 157-6.

Hafeez scored his eighth PSL fifty as Qalandars accelerated their score in 10 overs. He made 60 runs off 35 balls with the help of three boundaries



and five sixes. Joe Denly (31) supported Hafeez well as they scored 89 runs together. Samit Patel powered 26 runs off 20 with the help of two boundaries and a

six. For Sultans, Shahnawaz Dhani and Carlos Brathwaite bagged two wickets each while Usman Qadir took a wicket. In reply, Sultans lost

Chris Lynn and James Vince departed earlier to leave Sultans tattered at 30-2. Rizwan and Maqsood took charge then and partnered strongly to take the game

Zalmi beat Gladiators by 3 wickets in PSL-6

KARACHI: Sarfaraz Ahmed and Azam Khan dominated throughout as Quetta Gladiators posted 198-7 in 20 overs against Peshawar Zalmi in the eighth match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 6. Sent into bat, Gladiators lost an early wicket of Cameron Delpport but young Saim Ayub got a dream partnership with South African legendary batsman Faf Du Plessis. They both scored 33 runs together before Saim got run-out. Wahab Riaz bagged Du Plessis in 11th over to reduce Gladiators to 88-3. But, Sarfaraz and Azam scored 105 runs together to put Gladiators in the driving seat. Sarfaraz made 81 runs off 40 balls with the help of 12 boundaries and a six. Azam scored 47 runs off 26 balls with the help of six boundaries and two sixes. Wahab conceded 54 runs in his four overs and bagged two wickets. Saqib Mahmood took three wickets while Mohammad Imran bagged a wicket. - Sports Desk

into their hand. Rizwan smashed 76 runs off 49 balls laced with 12 boundaries whereas Maqsood remained not out for 61 runs spread over seven boundaries and two sixes. Shaheen Shah Afridi bagged two wickets while Samit Patel took a wicket each.

Over 300 schoolgirls abducted in Nigeria

Alhaji Bello Maikusa Jangebe, a father of one of the students at the school in the Talatar Mafara local government, said he was woken up by gunshots early morning

MONITORING DESK

KANO: Over 300 schoolgirls were kidnapped in Nigeria in the wee hours of Friday, eyewitnesses said. Armed men attacked a boarding school in the northwestern state of Zamfara.

Alhaji Bello Maikusa Jangebe, a father of one of the students at the school in the Talatar Mafara local government, said he was woken up by gunshots early morning. "We thought they had come to attack residents as they usually do, unfortunately, this time around, they aimed at the students and abducted about 327 of them. Later we noticed that only a few of the students were left behind," he told Anadolu Agency by phone. Malam Sa'idu Kwairo, a guardian of one of the abducted girls, said the gunmen stormed in riding seven vehicles and opened indiscriminate fire. "We could hear the helpless voices of the abducted girls screaming for help amid sounds of gunfire," he added. Police have yet to comment on the issue. No group has claimed responsibility for the abduction.

'Double standards from PCB in Hafeez's case'

A true reflection of prejudice against an individual," he wrote. It must be noted here that Hafeez turned down PCB's offer to be included in the C Category of their central contracts

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Former Test cricketer, Moin Khan criticized Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for having double standards for cricketers. Taking to Instagram, Khan said PCB clearly has dual standards while awarding central contracts to different players.

"Hafeez deserves A category contract and there are clear double standards from PCB to award him C category when Azhar Ali & Yasir

Shah who also play in one format are given A category contracts. A true reflection of prejudice against an individual," he wrote. It must be noted here that Hafeez turned down PCB's offer to be included in the C Category of their central contracts. PCB's CEO, Wasim Khan shared that the veteran cricketer denied accepting the C category central contract. Remember, Test cricketer Azhar Ali is in the A category while Yasir is in the B category of current Central Contracts.

Dunk gives security vote of confidence for Australia tour

DNA

KARACHI: Swashbuckling batsman Ben Dunk approved security arrangements for teams in Pakistan, raising hopes Australia's next year's tour to the country would be amazing for the people of Pakistan as well as for the players. Australia are scheduled to tour Pakistan for two Tests, three ODIs and as many T20Is in what will be their first tour to Pakistan since 1998. Asked would he give a thumbs up if Cricket Australia takes his opinion on safety and security in Pakistan, Dunk was positive, "I think 100 per cent. In my four times to Pakistan, I have never felt unsafe. "The security around the hotel, and into the game is simply amazing. I think it would be awesome for the people of Pakistan to have the Australian team touring here." England and New Zealand are also due to visit Pakistan later this year. Dunk is part of Lahore Qalandars for the second time after featuring for Karachi Kings in 2019. The 33-year-old Queensland, who played five T20Is for Australia between 2014-17, hoped Covid-19 situation improves



by the time Australia travel to Pakistan in February next year.

"We saw South Africa come just before the HBL PSL 6. Hopefully, by that stage the Covid-19 situation around the world and here in Pakistan would allow a significant crowd. It would be an amazing experience for the Australian boys to play in front of the Pakistani home crowd.

"I have been really fortunate to have played in front of some amazing crowds and my memories will last for a long time. The same will be for the Australian players to play Test cricket here." Dunk said he has always enjoyed his visits to Pakistan. "This is my fourth time in Pakistan. The hospitali-

ty is great and the food is great. I am really fortunate that I am being embraced by the local people. I am getting incredible support and welcomed by all. "I always look forward to coming back to Pakistan. Lahore Qalandars' two wins in their first two matches saw them top the ladder.

They opened their HBL PSL 6 campaign with a four-wicket win over 2017 champions Peshawar Zalmi and made a strong statement with a commanding nine-wicket win over Multan Sultans. Lahore Qalandars' fortunes changed last year when they first secured their maiden qualification in the play-offs and went on to play the final with Dunk's batsmanship playing a pivotal role. Dunk knocked 300 runs at an impressive strike rate of 167.59.

"The great thing about last year's team was that everybody contributed to the wins. I was fortunate to play couple of innings and played my role for the team. We have so many stars. Shaheen (Shah Afridi) was amazing, skipper (Sohail Akhtar) was amazing, (Mohammad) Hafeez was brilliant, so literally everybody in the team, at some stage, contributed to the wins and that's what made us a good team."



ANKARA: Pakistan Ambassador Syrus Qazi inaugurated utility store. Pakistanis living in Ankara & those who have a taste for Pakistani products now have the facility available to order online or purchase by visiting. - DNA

US's 1st military action under Biden draws criticism

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's authorisation of military air raids in eastern Syria on Thursday has drawn criticism in the Middle East.

The United States military said it carried out measured attacks on facilities in eastern Syria used by Iran-backed militias, in response to rocket attacks against US troops in Iraq. The air raids were "deliberate" and aimed to "de-escalate the overall situation in both eastern Syria and Iraq", Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said in a statement. Some commentators said there was a clear effort to draw a distinction between Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump, who in response to attacks on coalition forces in Iraq used "the most disproportionate force by killing the Iranian general (Qassem) Soleimani", said Al Ja-

zeera's Shihab Rattansi in Washington, DC.

Seyyed Mohammad Marandi, a professor of English literature and orientalism at the University of Tehran said the move showed how Biden and Trump are the same.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif spoke to his Syrian counterpart on Friday hours after US air raids.

"The two sides stressed the need of the West to adhere to UN Security Council resolutions regarding Syria," the Iranian government website Dolat.ir said. US journalist Ayman Moyeldin drew a timeline to show similarities between Biden's move and several former US presidents. The US has long been criticised for military intervention in several Muslim-majority countries such as Iraq and Libya and imposing regime change leading to political chaos and instability.

In the US, the move was also met with condemnation.

Hillary Mann Leverett, CEO of the political risk consultancy Stratega, said while the air raids sent a message about the Biden administration's loyalties in the region, they would not diffuse the situation in the Middle East.

"The Biden administration is trying to portray this first military attack as measured in consultation with allies. But this won't de-escalate anything. "In fact, it signals very strongly a message to Iran that ... the Biden administration is in fact trying to increase its pressure and leverage against Iran."

The rocket attacks on US positions in Iraq were carried out as Washington and Tehran are looking for a way to return to the 2015 nuclear deal abandoned by former US President Trump.

It was not clear how, or whether, the raid might affect US efforts to coax

Iran back into a negotiation about both sides resuming compliance with the agreement.

Mary Ellen O'Connell, a professor at Notre Dame Law School, criticised the US attack as a violation of international law.

"The United Nations Charter makes absolutely clear that the use of military force on the territory of a foreign sovereign state is lawful only in response to an armed attack on the defending state for which the target state is responsible," she said. "None of those elements is met in the Syria strike."

Justin Amash, a US lawyer who formerly served as the representative for Michigan's 3rd congressional district said the move was unconstitutional.

Still, some observers showed support for the air raids. Representative Michael McCaul, the top Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said the

attacks were the right move.

"Responses like this are a necessary deterrent and remind Iran, its proxies, and our adversaries around the world that attacks on US interests will not be tolerated," McCaul said. Suzanne Maloney, of the Brookings Institution think-tank, said the attacks showed the Biden administration could negotiate with Iran on the nuclear deal while pushing back against the militias it backed.

"Good move by... Biden (administration) demonstrating US can walk and chew gum at the same time," she said on Twitter.

In the February 15 attack, rockets hit the US military base housed at Erbil International Airport in the Kurdish-run region, killing a non-American contractor and injuring a number of American contractors and a US service member. Another salvo struck a base hosting US forces north of Baghdad days later, hurting at least one contractor.

PSL-6 Fixture

Saturday, February 27: Karachi Kings v Multan Sultans (2pm); Peshawar Zalmi v Islamabad United (7pm)

Sunday, February 28: Karachi Kings v Lahore Qalandars (7pm)

Monday, March 1: Islamabad United v Quetta Gladiators (7pm)

Wednesday, March 3: Karachi Kings v Peshawar Zalmi (2pm); Quetta Gladiators v Multan Sultans (7pm)

Thursday, March 4: Lahore Qalandars v Islamabad United (7pm)

Friday, March 5: Multan Sultans v Karachi Kings (7pm)

Saturday, March 6: Islamabad United v Quetta Gladiators (2pm); Peshawar Zalmi v Lahore Qalandars (7pm)

Sunday, March 7: Multan Sultans v Quetta Gladiators (2pm); Islamabad United v Karachi Kings (7pm)

Wednesday, March 10: Peshawar Zalmi v Karachi Kings (7pm)

Thursday, March 11: Quetta Gladiators v Lahore Qalandars (7pm)

Friday, March 12: Multan Sultans v Peshawar Zalmi (3pm); Islamabad United v Lahore Qalandars (8pm)

Saturday, March 13: Quetta Gladiators v Karachi Kings (2pm); Multan Sultans v Islamabad United (7pm)

Sunday, March 14: Quetta Gladiators v Peshawar Zalmi (2pm); Lahore Qalandars v Karachi Kings (7pm)

Monday, March 15: Islamabad United v Peshawar Zalmi (7pm)

Tuesday, March 16: Multan Sultans v Lahore Qalandars (7pm)

Thursday, March 18: Qualifier (1 v 2) (7pm)

Friday, March 19: Eliminator 1 (3 v 4) (7pm)

Saturday, March 20: Eliminator 2 (loser Qualifier v winner Eliminator 1) (7pm)

Monday, March 22: Final (7pm)

PIA to start flights to Baku and Tashkent

From Page 01
It may be mentioned here that Uzbek air is already operating from Lahore to Tashkent while there was no direct flight from Pakistan to Azerbaijan.

Due to virus issue, the Uzbek air had temporarily discontinued its operations in Pakistan however it is likely to resume services in March. Therefore PIA and Uzbek air will provide the passengers with options to travel to Uzbekistan. Likewise PIA is planning to start Lahore, Baku flight also, which shall enable visitors to visit this beautiful country. From Lahore to Tashkent it takes only two hours while in case of Baku the distance shall be covered only in three and half hours. For the moment visitors who wish to travel to Baku have to either take the Qatar or Turkey route. In Qatar it takes almost 10 hours to reach Baku while in case of Turkey it takes almost 22 hours because there is 12 hours transit in Istanbul in case passengers travel via Istanbul. The Uzbek government announced to attract more and more tourists this year therefore it is making all possible arrangements to provide easy and quick access to tourists to Uzbekistan.

Pak to save \$300 million annually: PM

From Page 01
The nation \$300mn annually. Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony of the Central Business District ceremony in Lahore, the prime minister said that his government had been trying to negotiate this deal for the past one year. "When a difficult time comes upon the nation, a country has to think of 'out-of-the-box' solutions," he said. "Pakistan went through a decade of darkness," he added. The prime minister had said Pakistan was facing a fiscal deficit due to which it was forced to take foreign loans due to which the country's reserves declined and its currency lost its worth. "These problems were inherited by this government," he said, adding that the government cannot solve this problem until and unless it generates wealth. Touching upon the LNG deal with Qatar, the prime minister said that he was proud to announce that Pakistan will save \$300mn each year as a result of the deal. "And in 10 years' time, Pakistan will save \$3bn," he said.

Briefs

Japanese journalist detained in Myanmar

FOREIGN DESK

YANGON: A Japanese freelance journalist was detained by security forces in Myanmar's largest city Yangon on Friday while covering an anti-coup protest there, his assistant said. Yuki Kitazumi is a former reporter for the Tokyo-based Nikkei business daily and is now based in Yangon. The Japanese Embassy in Yangon was trying to ascertain his identity, an embassy official said. Local media reported that about 20 people were detained during Friday's demonstration in central Yangon, including protesters.

Libya's new PM delays naming cabinet

WEB DESK

TRIPOLI: Libya's newly-elected prime minister failed to name members of a much-anticipated Cabinet ahead of an expected deadline on Thursday, raising questions over whether his transitional government can unite Libya's factions.

Prime Minister-designate Abdul Hamid Dbeibah was set to announce his Cabinet in a news conference from the capital, Tripoli, and send it to Libya's House of Representatives for approval.

Instead, Dbeibah told reporters he only shared with Libyan legislators proposed guidelines for the selection of Cabinet members and a "vision" of his priorities in the coming period. "We submitted today a proposition for a structure and a working vision of a national unity government along with the selection criteria for (that) team ... to the speaker of Parliament," Dbeibah told reporters in Tripoli on Thursday evening. He said the submission was in line with the deadline set by a United Nations road map, which requires at least 30 percent of top government posts to be filled by women and young candidates.

He also told reporters the names of proposed ministers will be disclosed in Parliament during a vote of confidence for his lineup. The UN-backed transitional road map envisages holding general elections in the war-torn North African country by the end of the year.

EU summit decides to maintain strict restrictions

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The epidemiological situation in the European Union remains serious, and the community has decided to maintain tough restrictive measures, according to statement following the first day of the EU summit. "We are determined to continue to work together and coordinate our action to tackle the pandemic and its consequences. The epidemiological situation remains serious, and the new variants pose additional challenges. We must therefore uphold tight restrictions while stepping up efforts to accelerate the provision of vaccines," the statement said.

According to the report, "non-essential travel needs to be restricted". "We welcome the adoption of the two Council recommendations on travel within, and into, the EU, according to which restrictions can be introduced in accordance with the principles of proportionality and non-discrimination and taking into account the specific situation of cross-border communities," the European Council said. The EU pledged to speed up the issuance of permits for production and distribution of vaccines. "We need to urgently accelerate the authorization, production and distribution of vaccines, as well as vaccination," the statement said. The Council also supports "the additional efforts by the Commission to work with industry and Member States to increase the capacity of current vaccine production as well as to adjust vaccines to the new variants as necessary."



BAKU: Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva visited the Khojaly genocide memorial in Baku's Khatayi district to commemorate the victims of the genocide. - DNA

'Khojaly genocide reflection of Armenian fascism'

Aliyev said that Khojaly genocide is well-documented and over ten world countries have recognized what happened in Khojaly as genocide. He stressed that by massacring civilians, Armenians sought to break the will of Azerbaijani people

DNA

BAKU: President Ilham Aliyev has said that the Khojaly genocide is the manifestation of Armenian fascism and that Azerbaijan avenged the victims by liberating the Armenian-occupied territories. Aliyev made the remarks in the presser held on February 26 that marks the 29th anniversary of Khojaly genocide. "The Khojaly genocide was a manifestation of Armenian fascism. Armenian fascism was on the rise at that time, and from 1992 to the last events, Armenian fascism dealt a great blow to the Azerbaijani people. Military provocations, terrorist acts, cruel-

ty to the civilian population, the shelling of our cities and villages, as well as the bombing of peaceful cities with ballistic missiles during the Second Karabakh War - all these are manifestations of Armenian fascism." Aliyev said that Khojaly genocide is well-documented and over ten world countries have recognized what happened in Khojaly as genocide. He stressed that by massacring civilians, Armenians sought to break the will of Azerbaijani people.

On February 26 in 1992 over the span of a few hours, Armenian forces massacred 613 Azerbaijani civilians in the town of Khojaly in Nagorno-Karabakh region. The death toll included 106 women, 63 children and 70 elderly people.

During the genocide, 56 people were killed with special cruelty, with people's scalps removed, various limbs cut off, eyes gouged out, and pregnant women's bellies pierced with bayonets. Eight families were completely destroyed, 25 children lost both parents and 130 children lost one parent. President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva visited the Khojaly genocide memorial in Baku's Khatayi district to commemorate the victims of the genocide today.

Azerbaijani Presidential Aide Hikmat Hajiyev called for justice for the Khojaly genocide in a Twitter post on February 26. "We Remember! We demand justice for innocent victims of Khojaly genocide! Justice

is an important component of reconciliation. Perpetrators of Khojaly genocide are glorified as heroes in Armenia based on extreme ideologies of racism, discrimination, ethnic hate," Hajiyev wrote.

The massacre was the bloodiest incident in the Nagorno-Karabakh war. It was also the turning point in the first Nagorno-Karabakh war waged between 1990 and 1994. It changed the course of the war as Armenians gained a psychological advantage over Azerbaijanis. As Armenian forces were advancing, Azerbaijani civilians were fleeing to other parts of Azerbaijan fearing a second Khojaly. This pattern continued throughout the war and by the time the sides signed the cease-fire agreement in 1994, Arme-

'Int'l organizations fairly assess Khojaly events'

DNA

BAKU: The 26th of February, 2021 is the 29th anniversary of the Khojaly genocide, one of the heaviest crimes committed by Armenia against Azerbaijan, and the Azerbaijani people won't forget this tragedy, the country's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov said during an event dedicated to the tragedy's commemoration at the ADA University. "The civilians were killed only because they were Azerbaijani. A number of countries adopted documents recognizing this crime as geno-



cide," Bayramov noted. He stressed that the lands that were under the occupation of Armenia for a long time had been liberated (as a result of the 44-day war from late Sept. through early Nov.2020).

The minister also pointed out that during the occupation period, these territories were mined and currently Armenia refuses to provide maps of the minefields. "Azerbaijan has always acted based on international law. Twenty-nine years have passed since the day of the genocide and Azerbaijan demands a fair assessment of these events by international organizations and countries," added Bayramov.

During the Karabakh war, the Armenian military committed an act of genocide against the population of Azerbaijan's Khojaly town consisting of 7,000 people on Feb. 26, 1992.

'US sanctions against spirit of alliance'



WEB DESK

ANKARA: Imposing sanctions on Turkey over its purchase of the Russian S-400 missile defense system does not comply with the spirit of alliance, Turkey's defense minister said on Friday. "Imposing some restrictions on Turkey, especially on F-35 over the S-400 issue is not in line with the spirit of alliance," Hulusi Akar said addressing an event in the central Kayseri province. "The S-400 defense system is used against threats and dangers when it is needed. The S-400 does not harm anyone if there is no intention to attack Turkey," Akar added. Last December, the US imposed sanctions on Turkey over the acquisition of the Russian S-400 missile defense system. US officials have voiced opposition to the deal, claiming the S-400s would be incompatible with NATO systems and expose F-35 jets to pos-

sible Russian subterfuge. Turkey, however, stressed that the S-400s would not be integrated into NATO systems, and pose no threat to the alliance or its armaments. Turkish officials have repeatedly proposed a working group to examine the technical compatibility issue. Meanwhile, speaking on Greek jets' harassment of a Turkish scientific research vessel in the Aegean Sea, he reiterated this is not what good neighbors do. On Tuesday, one of the four Greek fighter jets that approached the TCG Cesme west of Lemnos Island launched a chaff cartridge from a distance of two nautical miles (2.3 miles), according to security sources. The Turkish ship, which was engaged in hydrographic surveying activities at the time, is slated to continue its scientific and technical research in the region until March 2. Besides, touching upon Turkey's fight against the Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO), Akar said: "We continue our fight against FETO determinedly. As of July 15, 2016, some 21,194 people have been dismissed from the Turkish Armed Forces. FETO and its US-based leader Fetullah Gulen orchestrated the defeated coup of July 15, 2016, which left 251 people martyred and 2,734 injured.

Dutch court upholds controversial virus curfew

THE HAGUE: A Dutch court Friday upheld an appeal by the government against a lower court's order to scrap a controversial coronavirus curfew, saying the cabinet had not overstepped its brief.

Friday's ruling against the case brought by the Covid-sceptic group Virus Truth has limited impact as parliament already pushed through a new law to support the curfew instituted on January 23.

The introduction of the curfew - the first since Nazi occupation during World War II - led to three days of severe rioting across the country in late January. But police clamped down and hundreds of rioters were arrested. Many have already been sentenced by Dutch courts. A lower court judge earlier this month said Prime Minister Mark Rutte's government overstepped its authority when it imposed the 9:00 pm to 4:30 am curfew based on a law that gives government emergency powers.

Such measures could only be used in sudden national emergencies such as a dyke breach, the lower court judge ruled. However, the Hague Appeals Court on Friday said there were "indeed exceptional circumstances to make the introduction of the curfew possible." - APP

US expert panel to vote on J&J Covid vaccine

WASHINGTON: A panel of independent experts was set to vote Friday on whether to recommend emergency approval of Johnson & Johnson's single-shot Covid-19 vaccine, potentially paving the way for at least three million doses to ship next week. The committee's 22 members, who were convened by the Food and Drug Administration and include leading scientists as well as consumer and industry representatives, will hold a daylong virtual meeting to decide if the known benefits of the drug outweigh its risks. It is an exercise in transparency without parallel among other advanced countries, giving the public access to the nitty gritty details of the scientific debate.

Though the panel's recommendations aren't binding, they are usually followed, and the members are widely expected to vote in favor. An emergency use authorization (EUA) would soon follow, making the J&J vaccine the third to be greenlighted in the United States after Pfizer's and Moderna's were provisionally approved in December. "If the FDA approves the use of this new vaccine, we have a plan to roll it out as quickly as Johnson & Johnson can make it," US President Joe Biden said Thursday. Administration officials said earlier this week they hoped to deliver three to four million doses next week, pending emergency authorization. - APP

Japan to partially lift virus state of emergency

TOKYO: Japan will end a coronavirus state of emergency early in some regions as the pace of infection slows, reports said Friday, less than five months before the pandemic-postponed Tokyo Olympics. The emergency measure - currently in force in 10 regions including Tokyo - is looser than the strict lockdowns seen elsewhere in the world, and primarily calls for bars and restaurants to close from 8pm.

It is due to end on March 7, but the government will lift the measure this Sunday, just over a week early, in around six prefectures, the reports said. The greater Tokyo area will stay under the measure as the pace of decline in new infections has slowed, the reports said. Several prefectures have requested the state of emergency be lifted and the government will present a plan to do so before making a formal decision, top government spokesman Katsunobu Kato told reporters. - APP



BANGKOK: Pakistan ambassador to Thailand, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad met with Thai minister of justice, Somsak Thepsutin. - DNA

'China's treatment of Uighurs is genocide'

FOREIGN DESK

AMSTERDAM: The Dutch parliament passed a non-binding motion saying the treatment of the Muslim Uighur minority in China amounted to genocide, the first such move by a European country. "A genocide on the Uighur minority is occurring in China," the Dutch motion said, stopping short of directly saying that the Chinese government was responsible. Activists and UN rights experts say at least one million Muslims have been detained in camps in the remote western region of Xinjiang. The activists and some Western politicians accuse China of using torture, forced labour and

sterilisations.

China denies any human rights abuses in Xinjiang and says its camps provide vocational training and are needed to fight hardline views.

The Chinese Embassy in The Hague said on Thursday any suggestion of genocide in Xinjiang was an "outright lie" and the Dutch parliament had "deliberately smeared China and grossly interfered in China's internal affairs".

Canada passed a resolution labeling China's treatment of the Uighurs genocide earlier this week. In a press conference on Tuesday, US State Department Spokesman Ned Price also said that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

has been "very clear" that what has taken place in Xinjiang "was genocide" and that it constitutes "crimes against humanity".

The Dutch motion said that actions by the Chinese government such as "measures intended to prevent births" and "having punishment camps" fell under United Nations Resolution 260, generally known as the genocide convention.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte's conservative VVD party voted against the resolution.

Foreign Minister Stef Blok said the government did not want to use the term genocide, as the situation has not been declared as such by the United Nations or by an international court.

"The situation of the Uighurs is a cause of great concern," Blok told reporters after the motion was passed, adding that the Netherlands hoped to work with other nations on the issue.

The author of the motion, legislator Sjoerd Sjoerdsma of the centre-left Democrats 66 Party, has separately proposed lobbying the International Olympic Committee to move the 2022 Winter Olympics away from Beijing.

"Recognising the atrocities that are taking place against the Uighurs in China for what they are, namely genocide, prevents the world from looking the other way and forces us into action," he told the Reuters news agency in an emailed response to questions.

In a statement on its website, the Chinese Embassy in The Hague said the Uighur population in Xinjiang has been growing in recent years, enjoying a higher standard of living and a longer life expectancy.

"How can you call this a genocide?" it said. "Xinjiang-related issues are never about human rights, ethnicity or religion, but about combating violent terrorism and secession."

China's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva accused Western powers on Wednesday of using the Uighur issue to meddle in his country's internal affairs.

The growing pressure on China over the Uighurs comes as an annual report from the National Bu-

Briefs

PAF celebrates 'Surprise Day' today

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on the occasion of second anniversary of Operation Swift Retort will celebrate February 27 as Surprise Day to tribute valiant Shaheens' for their brave defence of the motherland while retaliating to Indian Air Force violation of its sovereign territories on February 27, 2019.

The celebration ceremony of Surprise Day will be held here at PAF Headquarters and to be telecasted live across all media channels. The Operation Swift Retort was a rapid response to Indian Air Force strike in Balakot obliterating Pakistan's airspace that had merely harmed a few trees and a wild Crow.

The PAF giving a resounding response had carried out air strikes at six multiple locations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and engaged its counterpart in a dogfight whereas it was first ever incident after 1971 when both the rival forces had attacked each others territory. The PAF had shot down two Indian fighter jets namely MiG-21 and Su-30 where the former's pilot Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was caught by Pakistan Army after his safe ejection and falling into the Pakistani side of the line of control (LoC).

WB provides \$12m grant for FATA's, IDP's

DNA

ISLAMABAD: World Bank has provided additional grant worth of US \$ 12 million for FATA, Temporarily Displaced Persons Early Recovery Project (TDP-ERP) to earlier recovery of displaced families in former tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK).

Minister for Economic Affairs, Makhdom Khuro Bakhtyar witnessed the signing ceremony of Additional Grant Agreement of "FATA Temporarily Displaced Persons Emergency Recovery Project" worth of US \$ 12 million with the World Bank held on Friday in Ministry of Economic Affairs, said a press release issued by Ministry of Economic Affairs.

FATA Temporarily Displaced Persons Early Recovery Project (TDP-ERP) is aimed to support the early recovery of families affected by the displacement, promote child health and enhance citizen-centered service delivery in the former tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The project will now also cover four new districts in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province i.e. D.I. Khan, Lakki Marwat, Tank and Bannu in addition to Kurram, Khyber, Orakzai, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Mohmand and Bajaur Districts.

PTI to file 2 petitions against ECP decision

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) will file two petitions to challenge the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) decision against NA-75 Daska by-polls after approval from Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday. The decision was made after Special Assistant to Chief Minister Punjab (SACM) on Information Firdous Ashiq Awan, Advocate Ali Zafar and NA-75 candidate Ali Asjad Malhi called on Prime Minister Imran Khan. The prime minister was briefed on the by-polls while Ali Zafar suggested to him regarding the legal options party had against the ECP decision. It was decided to challenge the decision of the ECP in light of the suggestion given by Barister Ali Zafar. The prime minister approved filing two petitions from PTI in the Lahore High Court (LHC).

British DHM hosts reception for Chevening participants

The Chevening Mentoring Scheme has played an important role in promoting gender equality, inclusion and opportunity for all which are integral to our work in Pakistan



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Iona Thomas, Acting Deputy High Commissioner at the British High Commission in Islamabad, hosted a reception at her residence on Thursday for participants of the inaugural Chevening Mentoring Scheme.

The British High Commission launched the inaugural Chevening Mentoring Scheme last year. The project was designed for entry level lawyers and entrepreneurs with

leadership potential, to enhance skills, knowledge and work performance. A total of 10 mentees (eight women and two men, including one each from minorities) were inducted in the scheme. Chevening alumni who participated as mentors included: Yasmeen Rehman, former member of the National Assembly and entrepreneur; Aasia Sail Khan, entrepreneur, pharmacist, and gender consultant; Hassan Shah, lawyer and entrepreneur; and Khadija Ali, legal practitioner and devel-



opment consultant. The year-long scheme helped the mentees to grow professionally and learn to meet challenges at the workplace. It also helped the mentees to enhance their communication skills and confidence as well a chance to attend formal trainings. Acting British Deputy High Commissioner, Iona Thomas said: "Our Chevening alumni are contributing to a brighter future for Pakistan by helping build the capacity of future lawyers and entrepreneurs."

"The Chevening Mentoring Scheme has played an important role in promoting gender equality, inclusion and opportunity for all which are integral to our work in Pakistan. We had 80% women as mentees in the scheme, and a record 60% of women were selected for Chevening scholarships in the UK last year." The UK Government's Chevening Scholarship enables outstanding emerging leaders across Pakistan to pursue fully funded one-year master's degrees in the UK; and

is a unique opportunity to develop leadership potential, network with students from across the world and experience the best of the UK's first class education offer. Since 1983, around 2,000 Pakistani have been awarded the Chevening Scholarship. To receive applications for the next academic year 2022-23, the online application window will open in August 2021. Interested candidates can sign up for alerts, by visiting the Chevening website: www.chevening.org

Zardari jumps in to bolster PPP campaign

RAJA PERVAIZ

KARACHI: Former president and PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari, a seasoned politician and considered by the rivals as a master of political makes and breaks, does not like to stay behind as he jumped in to bolster his party's campaign for the Senate elections on March 3.

Asif Zardari said they will win the elections for the Upper House of the Parliament as the cracks are visible in the government's ranks.

Addressing a dinner reception in honour of PPP lawmakers at Bilawal House in Karachi, Zardari said "I will show it to the nation how to get rid of the incompetent

rulers. We are winning the Senate elections as the government's ranks are shaking with cracks." Zardari said they had faced many challenges banking on the strength of PPP workers and legislators. The dinner was also attended by Bakhtawar Bhutto, Mahmood Chaudhry, Aseefa Bhutto and Faryal Talpur. It may be mentioned here that PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was at Jati Umra on Thursday to finalise the strategy for the Senate elections. He held in-depth talks with PML-N Vice-President Maryam Nawaz. Both the leaders also pondered upon the joint strategy for contesting the Senate elections with each

other's support. Speaking on the occasion, Bilawal had said the government had suffered defeats in the recent by-elections, from Pishin to Sialkot. "The people have rejected them in every by-election," he said. "I believe two decisions taken by the PDM - one to contest the by-elections and the other to partake in the Senate polls - have completely changed the political situation and has made the government uneasy," added Bilawal. The PPP leader said that the PDM was not bringing about a no-confidence movement against the government at the moment and was only contesting the Senate elections.

FM for promoting ties with Malaysia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has emphasized the need for promoting economic cooperation between Pakistan and Malaysia. He was talking to Pakistan's High Commissioner to Malaysia Amna Baloch who called on him in Islamabad on Friday. Shah Mahmood Qureshi noted that Pakistan and Malaysia enjoy historic fraternal ties deep rooted in common faith and culture. Shah Mahmood Qureshi directed the envoy to take special care of the welfare of Pakistani workers in Malaysia.

Steps underway to strengthen economy, says Dr Firdous

GHULAM MURTAZA

LAHORE: Special Assistant to Punjab Chief Minister on Information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan said on Friday that overseas Pakistanis had been given lucrative investment opportunities for various projects as the role of private sector had been quite significant in the country's economic uplift. Addressing a press conference here, she said that Prime Minister Imran Khan wanted to see Lahore in the list of developed cities of the world and he inaugurated revolutionary project "Green Central Business District"

and under this project a new city would be set up in the provincial capital. She said, "Our economic, digital and residential requirements are associated with this project," adding that this project would be completed in three phases. She said this project was a reflection of concept of vertical development. This project would help in promoting different industries and ultimately yield positive results for country's economy. This project would generate funds of Rs 1300 billion and the Punjab government would get Rs 250 billion in the form of tax, she added.

Opposition govt clash mars Sindh Assembly session

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: Ruckus on Friday has erupted during the ongoing Sindh Assembly session as government and opposition lawmakers manhandled each other.

The disturbance occurred after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Khurram Sher Zaman used non-parliamentary language over which, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) member Mukesh Kumar warned him to sit on his seat and have a hold on his tongue. PTI's Khurram Sher Zaman accused Provincial Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla of turning Sindh into wine shops. In return, Chawla accused Khurram Sher Zaman of serving sub-standard food to the masses at his restaurant. The group of thieves should learn how to speak on the floor, Chawla was quoted as saying.

Jumping into the brawl, PPP's Taimoor Talpur threatened Sher Zaman. "Come out I will see you." PTI's Saeed Afridi while complaining to Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani, said that a member of treasury benches is accusing in the house, what he will do outside?

Both the leaders continued to exchange harsh words despite warnings from Sindh Assembly Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani. The opposition, while recording strong protest against Khurram Sher Zaman's speech, demanded the speaker to take action into the matter.

Ashrafi extends felicitations to PM Imran

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Representative of the Prime Minister for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Friday extended his felicitations to Prime Minister Imran Khan for seeking permission of burial of Muslim's dead bodies in Sri Lanka. Addressing Friday congregation at Grand Jamia Bahria Town, Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi, who is also Chairman Pakistan Ulama Council said that Prime Minister Imran Khan has fulfilled his right to be a great leader of the Muslim Ummah for serving Muslim community of Sri Lanka.

Islamic Shariah commands the burial of Muslims instead of burning them and the government of Sri Lanka in wake of Coronavirus had ordered to burn dead bodies even of Muslims, which caused unrest not only in Sri Lanka but also among Muslims around the world. Prime Minister Imran Khan has solved this most important problem of the Muslims of Sri Lanka and has practically fulfilled the command of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) that Muslims are like one body if any part of the body suffers; there is pain all over the body.

Pak arrests 17 Indian fishermen, seizes 3 boats

IMRAN TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Maritime Security Agency has arrested 17 Indian fishermen and impounded their three boats for violating the territorial waters of Pakistan. The Maritime Security Agency's ship spotted the Indian boats in the eastern maritime zone during the routine patrol. According to a spokesman of the Maritime Security Agency, the Indian fishermen were arrested for crossing the sea frontiers of Pakistan. "There penetration deep into Pakistani waters is a matter of concern for us," he added. He said the Indian fishermen have been handed over to the police for further legal action.



RAWALPINDI: Juma Enad Sadoon Khattab Al Jibori, Defence Minister of Iraq calls on General Nadeem Raza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee. - DNA

Iraqi minister, CJCS discuss defense cooperation

RAWALPINDI: Juma Enad Sadoon Khattab Al Jibori, Defence Minister of Iraq, who is on official visit to Pakistan, called on General Nadeem Raza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi. Matters of bilateral professional interest and further strengthening of security and defence cooperation between the two countries were discussed during the meeting. Both sides also deliberated upon prevailing international and regional security environment. Juma Enad Sadoon Khattab Al Jibori lauded the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in fight against terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned out tri-services contingent presented 'Guard of Honour' to the visiting dignitary. - DNA

US urges Pak-India to hold talks, hails joint statement

"We welcome the joint statement between India and Pakistan that the two countries have agreed to maintain strict observance of a ceasefire along the LoC starting immediately," he said

DNA

WASHINGTON: In its first statement on occupied Kashmir, the Biden administration has urged India and Pakistan to hold direct talks on the issue, and welcomed an agreement between the two neighbours to de-escalate tensions along the Line of Control (LoC). Both India and Pakistan announced on Thursday that their senior military commanders have agreed to strictly observe all agreements, understandings and ceasefire along the LoC and other sectors, with effect from midnight on Wednesday. In Washington, US State Department spokesman Ned Price mentioned this agreement in his

opening statement at the Thursday afternoon news briefing. "We welcome the joint statement between India and Pakistan that the two countries have agreed to maintain strict observance of a ceasefire along the LoC starting immediately," he said. "We encourage continued efforts to improve communication between the two sides and to reduce tensions and violence along the LoC," he added. His statement prompted journalists to ask: "To what extent, if any, did the United States play a role in helping broker this new ceasefire agreement?"

United Nations' Chief terms it "a positive step"

NEW YORK: On the other hand, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the development a "positive step" and hoped that it would pave the way for more talks between the two countries. "The Secretary-General is encouraged by the joint statement issued by the militaries of India and Pakistan on their agreement to observing the ceasefire at the Line of Control in Kashmir and engaging through established mechanisms," his spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said in a statement read out at the regular noon briefing at the UN Headquarters in New York on Thursday. "He (UN chief) hopes that this positive step will provide an opportunity for further dialogue," the statement said. Replying to a question from APP correspondent, the spokesman said the UN chief had no plans as yet to contact the leaders of India and Pakistan for starting the process to resolve the decades-old Kashmir dispute. He said the secretary-general's good offices were always available for any member state who would request it. - DNA