



# Islamabad POST

Monday, March 08, 2021

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## Briefs

### WHO warns of pandemic's impacts

DNA

NEW YORK: The World Health Organization has warned of lasting consequences of trauma caused by COVID-19 pandemic terming it more severe and massive than World War II. Addressing a virtual news conference, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom said the coronavirus pandemic has affected the whole world thus its trauma is also beyond proportion so all nations have to prepare themselves to tackle it. Evidence of mass trauma has been presented by organizations.

### Cases against big fish to be concluded

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Justice (ret'd) Javed Iqbal has said that mega corruption cases against big fish will be brought to a logical conclusion as per law. A statement issued by the chairman NAB said that billions of rupees looted from corrupt elements would be recovered. All investigations will be completed on the basis of merit, transparency, solid evidence and documentary evidence. Justice (ret'd) Javed Iqbal has directed the concerned DGs to submit the latest report on all mega corruption cases as well as cases of illegal housing societies.

### Govt to ensure supremacy of merit

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to KP CM on Haji, Auqaf and Religious Affairs, Mohammad Zahoor Shakir Sunday said that the supremacy of merit and abolition of corruption was the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan and it would be implemented in letter and spirit. He expressed these views while talking to different delegations who called on him at Doaba, district Hangu. The delegations informed the special assistants about problems of their respective areas in details.

## PTI believes in politics of principles

Senator Shibli Faraz says Imran Khan's victory in the vote of confidence has given a new spirit to people



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz on Sunday said Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) believed in democratic norms and fighting

for upholding the democratic principles as well as ethical values. People acknowledge endeavours of the incumbent government and supported Prime Minister Imran Khan in this struggle, the minister said while addressing a press conference here. He said Prime Minister Imran Khan believed in the politics of principles and decided to get a fresh vote of confidence though legally there was no need for it. The National Assembly reposed confidence in the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan with even more votes than the 2018, he stated. Senator Shibli Faraz said a wave of jubilation and celebration was witnessed not only inside Pakistan but also thousands of felicitation messages were received from abroad after he secured the trust vote. Shibli Faraz said Imran Khan's victory in the vote of confidence has given a new spirit to people who understood that the designs of dark forces were defeated. The minister said opposition parties especially the Pakistan Democratic Movement believed in politics of self-interest, bullying and sale and

Continued on Page 06

## Bilawal wants probe into PM's vote of confidence

Meets Ch. Shujaat Hussain in Lahore and asks for support in Chairman Senate election

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has declared that the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) has the final say on bringing a no-confidence motion against the PTI government. Addressing a joint press conference with Pakistan PML-N stalwart

## Govt to pay 'heavy price': Maryam

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Sunday warned the government that it will have to "pay a heavy price" for the way the PML-N leaders were "assaulted" a day earlier outside parliament. Violence broke out on Saturday as a session of the National Assembly convened for a vote of confidence

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LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan Peoples party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Opposition leader Punjab Hamza Shahbaz addressing a press conference along with other leaders. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of European Union holding a Falcon during a function in the Capital. She finds these Falcons amazing. - DNA

## 2 martyred in attack on Navy vehicle

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: Two Pakistan Navy men were martyred and another was injured in an attack on their vehicle in the Ganza area in the coastal district of Gwadar on Saturday. Official sources said the Pakistan Navy's vehicle was on its way to Ganza from Jiwani when unidentified attackers opened fire on it with automatic weapons. One sailor of Pakistan Navy and a barber were martyred and another Navy man suffered injuries, a security official said. The deceased were identified as Sohail, the sailor, and Noman. The injured was identified as Raza. Soon after the incident, security forces rushed to the scene of the occurrence and took the injured to hospital. The bodies were sent to their home towns and the injured was later shifted to Karachi.

## 1780 new Covid-19 cases reported

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has reported 39 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 590,508. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 13,205 on Sunday. According to the latest figures by the NCOC 1,780 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Sindh remains the worst-hit province by the pandemic in terms of cases followed by Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. Till now 259,666 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 177,008 in Punjab 73,708 in KPK, 45,519 in Islamabad, 19,114 in Balochistan.

## Four high profile terrorists killed

They remained involved in the attacks on Security Forces and LEAs security checkpoints, Military convoys

SUJUAAT HAMZA

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces conducted two separate Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) in Datakhel, North Waziristan and Zoida, South Waziristan. During intense exchange of fire, 4 terrorists including terrorist commanders Abdul Adam zeb alias Dung (TTP Bismillah group), terrorist commander Molvi Mehboob alias Molvi (TTP Sajna group) and terrorist commander Mir Salam alias Anas

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## 500 students, teachers witness Pak Army drills

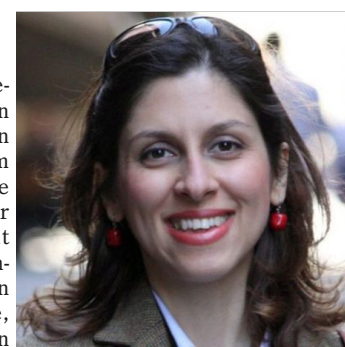
STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: More than 500 students and teachers from local schools, colleges, and universities spent a day with the Bahawalpur Corps in the Cholistan during the Pakistan Army training exercises organized by the Bahawalpur Corps. The one-day program was aimed at educating the younger generation about the Pakistan Army's defense responsibilities and professionalism. At the beginning of the program "Ek Din Fauj Ke Sath" (One Day With Army), the students were given a hands-on demonstration of the professionalism of the soldiers of the Pakistan Army. The students also saw the fire of a multi-barrel rocket launcher during which PAF fighter jets also demonstrated the attack.

## Iran releases British aid worker

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran has released British-Iranian aid worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe from house arrest at the end of her five-year prison sentence, but she has been summoned to court again on another charge, her lawyer said on Sunday. Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who served out most of her sentence in Tehran's Evin prison, was released last March during the coronavirus pandemic and kept under house arrest, but her movements were restricted and she was barred from leaving the country. On Sunday the authorities removed her ankle tag. "She was pardoned by Iran's supreme leader last year, but spent the last year of her term under house arrest with electronic shackles tied to her feet. Now they're cast off," her lawyer Hoojat Kermani told an Iranian website. "She has been freed." Iran's judiciary was not immediately available to comment about the release. Her family and the foundation, a charity that operates independently of media firm and its news subsidiary deny the charge.



## B-52s fly over Middle East

DNA

DUBAI: A pair of B-52 bombers flew over the Middle East on Sunday, the latest such mission in the region aimed at warning Iran amid tensions between Washington and Tehran. The US military's Central Command said the two B-52s flew over the region accompanied by military aircraft from nations including Israel, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. It marked the fourth such bomber deployment into the Middle East this year and the second under President Joe Biden. Flight-tracking data showed the two B-52s flew out of Minot Air Base in North Dakota, something Central Command did not mention in its statement on the flights though authorities later published images of the flight crew preparing its departure there.

## China rejects 'baseless' slanders

DNA

BEIJING: China will not tolerate baseless slanders in its domestic affairs by foreign parties, nor will it allow its core interests to be violated, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a news conference on Sunday. He made these remarks in response to an inquiry on whether China can concede on questions ranging from the South China Sea to Taiwan to improve relations with the US. Wang said that China will never accept groundless allegation and vilification and will never allow its core interests to be violated, urging the United States to recognise the fact that it has been, for quite some time, willfully interfering in other countries' internal affairs in the name of democracy and human rights.

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Japan ambassador greets ITF, PTF for holding of Davis Cup - Page 06

Pak to benefit from ongoing sessions of NPC and CPPCC - Page 07

Riders show huge interest in EU-support cycling event - Page 08

## Of confidence vote and Amir Liaquat's entry

I returned to the Press Gallery of the National Assembly after quite a long time. The event was voting for the confidence vote of the Prime Minister Imran Khan. The vote result was expected as I had predicted in my March 6, 2021 front page comment. Likewise opposition parties' staying away from the National Assembly was also expected and from the opposition's perspective, it was a smart political move because the Prime Minister's getting vote of confidence in the presence of the opposition parties would have proved counterproductive for the opposition. As I pointed out in my March 6 column that the prime minister and his government have every reason to complete five years term however they have to ad-

dress woes of people, which are multiplying with each passing day. The prime minister though assured during his winning speech that he had an understanding of people's miseries and genuinely wanted to take on them but that is what he has been assuring ever since his taking over of the government. As rightly said by MQM leader Khalid Maqbool and Interior Minister Shaikh Rashid Ahmed that it was now time to deliver and provide immediate relief to people. Shaikh Rashid particularly became emotional while talking about ordeals of the poor people. He passionately made an appeal to the prime minister to personally look into these issues before it gets too late. MQM's Khalid Maqbool and Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) Fehmida

Mirza spoke about unfulfilled promises of the prime minister. They tried to convey a message to the premier that they might change their course in case their demands were not met, which according to them, the Senate however in view of the past precedents, it is difficult to predict that it would be able to get its man elected as the Chairman Senate. Thanks to the horse trading phenomenon, which we will see again at its best



Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

at the time of election of the Chairman Senate. During the session, I observed why PTI MPs seem wary of their leadership. A severe communication gap between the prime minister and the MPs turned out to be an apparent reason. The MPs, even the senior ones, were behaving like kids. They were more interested in having a glimpse of Imran Khan. Their second task was to get a selfie with him. One MP was seen mumbling that the prime minister did not even recognize him. Here one has to admit Nawaz Sharif and Yousaf Raza Gillani as prime ministers were much more kind and cordial towards their members. Yousaf Raza Gillani used to greet and meet all MPs with open arms and always with a smiling face. TV anchor and politician

from Karachi Dr. Amir Liaquat made a surprise entry when he requested the Speaker National Assembly that he wanted to recite naat. After getting permission Amir started reciting naat but with modifications in favour of the prime minister, for which he received kudos from his boss yet his own colleagues took him to task for making such modifications'. Dr. Amir's sole purpose was to snatch PM attention and media coverage, which he was able to get. Summing up, the Press Gallery was also abuzz with muttering that who will be the next ISI chief and will this change of guards take place smoothly? It is indeed a routine matter and thus one should not cast any aspersions. Similarly a reshuffle in the Federal Cabinet is also talk of the town these days.



## Briefs

## 'NFC award wakened of state'

ABID RAZA

Lahore: PML-Q Deputy Secretary Information Khawaja Rameez Hassan has said that 18th Amendment and NFC award weakened the infrastructure of the state. The development of the country is possible with the establishment of a presidential system of government and strong local bodies. Past governments have ridiculed the constitution on the basis of party majority and prolonged their rule by distorting its true form. The biggest disadvantages of the 18th Amendment were the elimination of uniform education system and the promotion of provincialism on linguistic grounds. Which really weakened the federation.

## 'Govt taking steps to cash in KP tourism potentials'

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan Sunday said that government was taking concrete steps under a comprehensive strategy for utilizing huge potentials of tourism to provide employment opportunities to locals and strengthen the provincial economy. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting regarding promotion of tourism activities in the province here in Chief Minister's Secretariat. Besides, Provincial Minister for Finance, Taimur Saleem Jhagra, member of the National Task Force for Tourism, Prince Siraj-ul-Mulk and Secretary Tourism Abid Majeed, other concerned authorities were also present on the occasion. Chairman of a foreign private tourism company attended as special guest. The chief minister while terming the promotion of tourism, as important segment of the priorities of his government said that they are providing conducive environment to investors to attract both public and private sector private investment to the province.

The meeting reviewed opportunities and possibilities available for foreign investors in the province for promotion of winter season tourism and winter season sports in the province. The foreign company has expressed interest in making investment in cold areas and winter sports in the province and has stated that if the provincial government provides them land on lease, then the company will make large-scale investment in the province. The meeting was further told that initially the company is interested in establishment of resorts in winter tourism stations. - APP

## 'PTI gets mandate for eliminating corruption'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Accountability Barrister Shahzad Akbar on Sunday said that the nation has given mandate to Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) government for eliminating corruption from the society. The ruling party was carrying out accountability process against the corrupt elements without any discrimination, he said in an interview with PTV. He said the people would never come out from their houses for all those politicians who found involved in looting national money. Commenting on recent Senate elections, Barrister Shahzad Akbar said the government has made efforts for holding Senate elections in a transparent manner. In a reply to a question about upset in results of Senate elections, he said leaders of Pakistan Peoples Party had used unfair mechanism to win seat for Yusuf Raza Gilani. Appreciating the leadership of ruling party, he said Prime Minister Imran Khan believed in moral values rather in politics of powers. He made it clear that PTI government would continue struggle to root out corruption from the society.



HYDERABAD: A view of Karachi Express that derailed near Panu Aqil. A woman was killed in this accident. - Photo Jan Ali Laghari

## President urges extending support to needy, poor people

People's Republic of China, which had brought its people out of poverty by only ensuring provision of education and health facilities to all

LAHORE: President Dr Arif Alvi on Saturday stressed the need to extend a helping hand to the needy and poor people as it was pivotal for making a balanced society and welfare state. He said besides the state, it was also a responsibility of every member of society to help people who were in need to build a healthy society. He was expressing his views during a ceremony

held at Hazoori Bagh, Lahore Fort to mark 20 years of 'Akhwat' - the largest interest-free loan provider NGO.

He said that remarkable work had been done by the Akhwat by providing loans to 4.5 million families so far. Dr Alvi praised the philanthropic passion of the Pakistani people and said that the nation stood united and gave massive charities during COVID-19 pandemic

lockdown in the country. He said though the country was under huge loans and the elite got waived off loans worth billions of rupees, Akhwat was offering interest-free loans to help the people come out of poverty and that too with 100% return ratio.

The President said that personality of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was a great example for everyone and his teachings were guideline for us. He said

state of Medina was true welfare state which took responsibility of the rich and the poor equally.

People's Republic of China, which had brought its people out of poverty by only ensuring provision of education and health facilities to all. Arif Alvi said that Pakistan was now on its way to progress and will become a great nation soon. He said that Founder of the Nation Muhammad Ali

Jinnah had stressed the need to make women part of economic activities for country's development. He added that differently able persons which consisted 10-15 percent of the total population, should be brought to mainstream by making them skilled people.

He said future of Pakistan was bright and the people will soon see it. Punjab Governor Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar also

spoke on the occasion and said that reaching out to deserving persons was a big challenge. He said the government distributed financial assistance of 12,000 rupees to each deserving family during COVID-19 without any discrimination.

He praised the work being done by the Akhwat and said that the federal as well as provincial government was extending all out support to Akhwat. - APP

## DEPO delegation visits FPPCI

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Pakistan must play its pivotal role in attaining self-reliance in production of defence related equipment in addition to enhancing its exports to earn precious foreign exchange, said Colonel Ahmed Nawaz of the Defence Export Promotion Organization (DEPO). Addressing the business community in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he presented a comprehensive documentary about the structure and

objectives of DEPO and said that presidents of different chambers of commerce & industry had visited DEPO on 21 Dec 2020. President FCCI Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham Javed had also participated in it and pointed out some important issues to achieve the ultimate objectives of DEPO by bridging the gap between this organization and private sector. "Our current visit is actually a follow-up of that meeting", he said and added that similar teams will also visit Sialkot and Gujranwala to discuss progress made after that meeting.

## Women's Day: Russian envoy calls for gender equality

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Russian envoy to Pakistan Danila Ganich Saturday said in the era of digitalization women's role had become more significant and imperative in national development and socio-economic uplifts of thriving societies.

The envoy, in a video message posted on the embassy official Facebook account, congratulated the women across the globe on the International Women's Day to

be celebrated on Monday (March 08).

He particularly lauded the women who were rendering great services in the field of education, and mentioned those who were associated with the noble profession of teaching at the National University of Modern Languages (Islamabad).

Highlighting the importance of the day, Ambassador Danila Ganich told that International Women's Day was a day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements



of women, and eulogize their contributions in national developments. "The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. Signifi-

cant activity is witnessed worldwide as groups come together to celebrate women's achievements or rally for women's equality," he remarked.

Following the decision agreed at Copenhagen in 1911, International Women's Day was honoured the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland on March 19 in which more than one million women and men attended allies campaigning for women's rights to work and vote.



LAHORE: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari calls on President, PML-Q, former PM Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and speaker Punjab assembly, Chaudhry Pervaiz. - DNA

## Madrasas spread message of peace

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi has said that the madrasas are spreading the message of peace across the country.

He expressed such view while addressing the annual ceremony held on Saturday in honor of the foreign students here at a local wedding hall near Jamia Binoria International. He further said that Pakistani madrasa was never involved in terrorism. Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said that Prime Minister Imran Khan took personal interest in facilitating the arrival of delegates to the event.

## 18 deaths, 1044 cases reported in Punjab

LAHORE: As many as 1044 new cases of coronavirus with 18 deaths were reported in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

A spokesperson for the Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department (P&SHD) said on Sunday, the death toll due to coronavirus was reached 5,552 and the total cases 177,008 with 164,989 recoveries.

The P&SHD confirmed that 646 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Lahore, 2 in Kasur, 14 in Sheikhupura, 31 in Rawalpindi, 9 in Jehlum, 41 in Gujranwala, 3 in Mandi Bahauddin, 1 in Narowal, 5 in Hafizabad, 36 in Sialkot, 90 in Gujrat, 57 in Faisalabad, 10 in Toba Tek Singh, 2 in Chinot, 4 in Jhang, 20 in Sargodha, 3 in Mianwali, 23 in Multan, 2 in Vehari, 7 in Khanewal, 5 in Dera Ghazi Khan, 1 in Layyah, 3 in Bahawalpur, 4 in Bahawalnagar, 19 in Rahimyar Khan, 2 in Okara and 4 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Sahiwal district during the last 24 hours.

The Punjab health department so far conducted 3,402,377 tests for COVID-19.

The Punjab health department has urged the masses to follow SOPs for their protection and cover their faces with masks. The people should wash their hands with soap several times in a day to protect themselves from COVID-19. Contact 1033 immediately on symptoms of coronavirus, the health care department urged the citizens. - APP

## 4 Peshawar areas placed under smart lockdown

DNA

PESHAWAR: A smart lockdown has been imposed in four neighbourhoods of Peshawar because of the rising coronavirus cases.

According to a notification issued by the deputy commissioner of the city, the sealed areas include Hayatabad's Phase IV, Peshawar Cantt's Shami Road, Phase VII in Hayatabad, and University Town's Muslimabad.

All hospitals and medical stores in these areas will remain open throughout the day. Congregational prayers inside mosques have been restricted to five people. Milk shops will be open from 7am to 7pm; Grocery stores will be open from 7am to 7pm; Bakeries will be open from 7am to 7pm; and Petrol pumps will be open from 9am to 7pm.

The number of Covid-19 cases has surged by more than 50 per cent since the National Command and Operation Centre (NOC) lifted restrictions late last month. Thirty nine more deaths and 1,780 new cases of Covid-19 were reported across the country over the last twenty four hours, according to the NOC.

Residents will not be allowed to leave their homes unless absolutely necessary and people without masks will be fined.

## DC reviews medical store inspection reports

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: The meeting of District Quality Control Board was held with Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali in the chair. The medical store inspection reports of Drug Inspectors were reviewed in the meeting. The total 30 cases against medical stores found involved in different violations of Drug Act were examined during the meeting and hearing of pleas of medical store owners were made in this regard. After hearing, the meeting decided to refer the cases against 8 medical stores to the Drug Court and getting the criminal cases registered against the owner of 3 medical store involved in serious violations of Drug Act. Moreover owner of some medical store was given warning on presenting solid pleas and proof and 11 cases were adjourned till next meeting due to not appearing of medical stores owners.

## Rap song on Peshawar's culture creates buzz

PESHAWAR: A rap song sung by two youngsters in regional Hindko language has created a buzz on social media while highlighting the rich cultural heritage, social norms, lifestyle, prominent personalities and food cuisine of the ancient walled city of Peshawar. The four minutes twenty seconds video song titled 'Peshor Di Gali' (Street of Peshawar) has made viral on social media which attracted more than 500k likes within a period of three weeks after its release. Peshawarites have expressed admiration and excitement over the

choice of words in the song. They have also termed it a good effort to describe the unique architectural and archaeological heritage of the oldest South Asian city in modern way with eye-catching visuals. The rap song, first ever in Hindko language, is filmed at historical Sehti house, important bazaars and streets of the city besides featuring famous eateries. Apart from Hindko speaking local Peshawarites, the song has also received applause from dwellers of other parts of the country in general

and of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular. Talking to APP, Syed Mohsin Ali Shah alias Shah Jee, the main character in the song said, "This song took three months in writing, nine months in shooting which completed in one year." He said the idea behind the song was to present Hindko to the young lot of Peshawar through the use of music for making it attractive and catchy for them. All the expenditure for filming of the song was incurred by him, his team members including Hammad (Singer),

Hussain Ahmad Khan (Director), Adil (Photographer), Sanan Sehti (Producer), and Nazeer Muqsood (Music Director), he added. Abdul Rahim, a student of Peshawar University said that the rap song has effectively reflected the historical background of Peshawar city for the internet users worldwide while apprising the youngsters about the oldest traditional and cultural activities of the inhabitants of the city. He said, "For the first time I enjoyed Hindko language by listening the song sung in modern way

and watching of video gave me a peep into the rich background of my native city."

Engineer Waqar Ahmad, a dweller of Peshawar who works for promotion of Hindko language said, "Using of music and rap singing made the effort more effective and attractive by drawing likes from a large number of people." He said that the rap song shed light on architectural and historical background of Peshawar and also promote Hindko which is the second largest language of KP and sixth of Pakistan. - APP



## Briefs

### Govt to facilitate PWDs at Metro Bus

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has provided various facilities at each station of Metro Bus Service to facilitate Person with disabilities (PWD), said an official Ministry of Human Rights. Talking to media, he said that the elevators and lifts have been provided at each entrance/exit point for PWDs giving them direct access to each bus station. The PWDs have been provided easy and smooth access to board buses without involving any hassle. He said that the accessibility of PWDs in buildings and other interventions including disability friendly mass transit projects have been envisioned under the development plans i.e. Vision 2025 and annual plans of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform/Planning Commission. He said that the Federal and Provincial Headquarters have been declared Disabled Friendly which reflects representation, review and suggestion from all stakeholders and ensures the accessibility standards while designing all new buildings, parks, housing estates, pedestrian walkways and public comfort places. One space for PWDs with wheelchair and four designated seats have been reserved for other PWDs. In most of the Government offices (Ministries, Departments) and private offices, the special elevators, lifts, chairs, ramps etc. are available for PWDs, he added.

### 1,378 govt houses vacated

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Estate Office has vacated some 1,378 houses from illegal and unauthorized occupants in the federal capital with the help of local administration during the last two and half years. To streamlining the allotment process, official sources in the Estate Office said that as many as 2,245 houses were allotted to the government employees on merit basis. After the judgement of Supreme Court, they said the allotment of government houses and quarters were being made strictly on merit on maturity of turn on respective general waiting list of the federal government servants under rule 6 & 7 of Accommodation Allocation Rules, 2002. They said that general waiting list was being maintained and updated by Estate Office regularly which has been established by the information technology department of Estate Office.

### 'PM works to make country corruption-free'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam Sunday said Prime Minister Imran Khan has always worked for making the country a corruption-free and exemplary nation in the world. After coming into power in 2018, the prime minister had taken special measures to stabilize the national economy, enhance exports and eliminate corruption from the country, he said while talking to a private news channel. The minister said the incumbent government had been struggling for ensuring rule of law, supremacy of the parliament and transparency in the national institutions. Replying to a question, he said the prime minister being a dynamic visionary leader had presented himself for seeking vote of confidence from the National Assembly.

## Govt focusing on e-commerce to promote economy

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Syed Junaid Imam, Member (IT), Ministry of Information Technology and Telecom said that the government was focusing on e-commerce to move forward towards digital Pakistan and promote knowledge economy. He was addressing as Chief Guest at an e-commerce summit organized by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry in collaboration with Daraz Pakistan. Senator Mian Muhammad Ateeq Sheikh, Osman Nasir Managing Director Pakistan Software Export Board, Ehsan Saha Managing Director DARAZ and many other dignitaries were present at the occasion. Over 400 participants including traders and university students attended the e-commerce summit. Daraz team registered a large number of sellers on its digital platform to enable them to start online sale of products. This was the first ever e-commerce summit organized by ICCI in collaboration with Daraz with the intention of moving the economy towards digitization in line with PM's vision of Digital Pakistan. Syed Junaid Imam said that the government has formed a Digital Pakistan Policy to facilitate the growth of e-commerce as this market has enormous potential in



Pakistan due to exponential growth in broadband subscribers to over 95 million. He said that the government was working to facilitate e-commerce by providing an enabling environment where Payment Service Providers (PSP) and Payment Service Operators (PSO) can operate and establish an effective e-commerce platform and take e-commerce activities to the higher levels. He assured that MOITT would work with chambers of commerce & industry to prepare recommendations for tax reforms for e-commerce so that IT could flourish in the country. He appreciated

the initiative of ICCI for organizing an e-commerce summit in collaboration with Daraz that would bring more traders on e-commerce platforms for business growth. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry welcomed the participants to the e-commerce summit and said that the purpose of organizing this event was to inform the sellers/retailers/potential individuals including students and all the upcoming entrepreneurs about the immense potential of promoting sales through e-commerce platforms. He said that Amazon's net sales

in 2020 was over USD 386 billion, Alibaba Groups around USD 72 billion and eBay's over USD 10 billion, which showed that this business model has a great future. He said that e-commerce sales China was over 22 percent of its total sales and India's 7-8 percent, but e-commerce sale in Pakistan was just 0.5 percent of its total sales, which showed that Pakistan still remained an untapped market for e-commerce and urged that traders should capitalize on this untapped market for achieving fast growth in business. He said that in coming days, ICCI will hold more events

including an industrial expo, shopping festival, property expo and other initiatives that would further promote the interests of the business community. Ehsan Saha Managing Director Daraz and his team gave a comprehensive presentation to the participants about the registration process on Daraz and how to promote sales using this digital platform. It was informed that Daraz has over 70000 successful sellers nationwide with 20 million products in over 100 categories, 2600 Daraz Dukaans, over 65 Daraz hubs and 5 state of the art warehouses.

Daraz is operating in over 100 cities with a distribution network in over 600 cities. They said that Daraz was a digital platform that connected sellers with buyers for 24/7 business activity and it was operating in 5 countries including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Fatma Azim Senior Vice President and Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI thanked the Daraz team for visiting ICCI to register traders on its platform and giving them comprehensive information about starting online business through the Daraz platform.

### Quaid portrait to be inaugurated on March 23rd

ISLAMABAD: Work of Capital Development Authority (CDA) on the manufacturing of new portrait of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah is underway. The portrait will be inaugurated on March 23. The portrait has been designed by a renowned designer Jamal Shah. According to detail, portrait of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah which was displayed at Express Way was damaged by the heavy rains in the August of last year. The administration of CDA then decided to replace the

portrait. Chairman CDA has given the approval of new design which is prepared by a renowned designer, Jamal Shah. The project will be completed within the time period of three months. This new portrait will be capable of competing with the harsh weather. Length and width of the new portrait will be 50 feet and 60 feet respectively. New features have been added for writing Unity, Faith, and Discipline. Work on the construction of three walls for these wordings is also underway.

## Commissioner directs to seal plazas for violating bylaws

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Muhammad Mehmood has directed the authorities concerned of Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi to seal the plazas whose owners violated the bylaws and despite notices failed to pay the dues. Chairing a meeting held here the other day at Rawalpindi Metropolitan Corporation (RMC) office he directed the authorities to finalize arrangements to launch a crackdown against the rules violators. The owners of several plazas were misusing the space meant for parking lots in violation of the bylaws.

He said, the operation against the plazas whose owners violated the bylaws and requested the MCR on notices to pay the fines in installments but again violated the agreement. He instructed the officers to launch an operation against such violators from next week. He said, the plaza owners had been asked to follow the law or face the legal action. He said, the government was determined to ensure implementation of the relevant laws. He also urged the owners of the buildings to ensure proper use of the parking lots

to avoid parking of vehicles on roads and in the streets. He instructed the officers of RMC to start taking preventive measures against dengue as the season has started. All the graveyards should be cleaned and all possible precautionary measures should be taken to control dengue, he added. The Commissioner asked the officers to finalize arrangement for third phase of the auction of shops and flats of Metropolitan Corporation which would start from March 15. He said, free registration of the handcarts was being

started in the limits of Metropolitan Corporation and the handcarts would be given a beautiful look and design. Rate lists of the items to be sold on the handcarts would also be displayed at prominent places at the handcarts, he added. He informed that the health cards would also be issued to handcart owners. The commissioner was also briefed about several matters of the corporation. Chief Officer Rawalpindi Municipal Corporation (RMC) Ali Abbas Bukhari and all officers concerned were present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: Chinese diplomats planting a tree at the Embassy premises as part of Pakistan gov't drive to plant 10 bn trees. The tree shows strong bonds of Pakistan-China friendship. - DNA

### Inspector Imran Abbas martyred

ZUBAIR AHMAD

RAWALPINDI: Station House Officer (SHO) Race Course Mian Imran was on Sunday killed in a targeted attack in Rawalpindi after unidentified motorcyclists opened fire on him. According to police, SHO Mian Imran left his home for office when armed motorcyclists intercepted him near Kutcheri Chowk (Roundabout) and opened fire, killing the cop on the spot. "The suspects fled from the spot after the incident," they said adding that the police teams have collected the evidence from the spot for forensic analysis. The police have shifted the body of the cop to a hospital for medical treatment. Over a year back in February 2020, a cop was killed after a police party was fired upon by criminals in



Wah Cantt area of Rawalpindi. According to police, a raid was carried out by Islamabad police authorities on the indication of an arrested accused in Rawalpindi. The miscreants were able to run away from the scene. Top police officials including Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Pothohar Syed Ali and SDPO Taxila reached the site soon after the incident.

### Transparency is important than secret balloting

RAWALPINDI: Vice Chairman Parks and Horticulture Authority Rawalpindi Malik Abid Hussain has said that the united to avert the common threat of accountability "Tom and Jerry" are the custodians of the exploitative system of looting who fight each other in the absence of a common threat to make the people fool and plunder. On the other hand, Prime Minister Imran Khan and the PTI are struggling to root out this corrupt system. The political courage shown by Prime Minister Imran Khan in deciding to take a vote of confidence is unprecedented in the history of the country. The Election Commission is constitutionally and legally bound to hold clean and transparent election which is more important than that of ensuring secret balloting. He expressed these views while addressing a gathering of workers of PTI Tiger Force and other PTI organizations which assembled here at Girja Road Rawalpindi Cantt. On Sunday to celebrate PM's victory in Vote of Confidence. - APP

### High fee of ICT colleges deprive students

ISLAMABAD: The exorbitant fee structure of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) colleges in comparison to the provinces has made it difficult for the students of low income groups to afford acquiring higher education. The high fee has badly affected the enrollment of these colleges due to dropout and returning of students to the colleges of their respective provinces. Hundreds of local students, particularly from rural areas of federal capital, are incredibly poor and are compelled to miss out on a college education due to high fee. According to an official source, the fee structure of four-year BS Program and Associate Degree Program (ADP) of ICT colleges is beyond the means and paying capacity of the parents of the students. The students are charged fee ranges from Rs.19100 to Rs.22100 in the first semester while in the subsequent semesters it is around 15000.

The provinces which generally have less resources, are charging a very affordable fee which is 400% less than the ICT colleges. Consequently, students' influx desirous of admission in ADP or BS program are heading to colleges in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The sister city Rawalpindi is attracting students from Islamabad and if the trend continues, F.G colleges will be deserted and infrastructure underutilized. The crisis for low grade and low-paid government employees living in and across the capital has further deepened as they are compelled to send their children to villages located under the jurisdiction of Punjab adding hassle of commuting to far flung Rawalpindi vicinities. Muhammad Munir, a father and a government servant said, college Education in Islamabad is no longer a public good. - APP

### Arts and Crafts Bazaar at PNCA

ISLAMABAD: Arts and Crafts Bazaar titled "Sunday Ke Sunday" held here on Sunday at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA). Director General PNCA Dr. Fouzia Saeed told media that the event was aimed to provide an opportunity to artisans for showcasing their artwork. She said that artisans has displayed a variety of handmade crafts work in the Bazaar. Artists also demonstrated contemporary paintings in oil and pastel at the Bazaar, she added. She said that paginating, sculpture, calligraphy, ceramics, handmade wearing stuff, accessories and much more was available. Dr. Fouzia Saeed said that folk musicians also entertained the visitors by singing famous folk songs at the venue. - DNA

## PHA sets targets to promote Halal trade

PHA has set a target to make Pakistan trend setter in Global Halal Industry through continuous improvement and innovations by assuring global community trust and confidence in Halal products

ISLAMABAD: Director General Pakistan Halal Authority (PHA), Akhtar A. Bughio on Sunday said that PHA will promote trade and commerce of Pakistan's Halal products in the national and international markets. In an exclusive interview to media, he said that the PHA has also set a target to make Pakistan trend setter in Global Halal Industry through continuous improvement and innovations by assuring global community trust and confidence in Halal products and services. DG PHA told that his authority is responsible for ascertaining the Halal status of the products, process and services maintained and monitored

at all time in local market as well as products being imported/ exported. Therefore, the offices of PHA would be established at Port Qasim, Karachi Port Trust and Gwadar Port to control of food products at import and export stage. Likewise, all imported, exported, and manufactured products shall be made traceable by introducing QR codes where customers and consumers will have access to know the detailed information of the products being Halal or Haram by just single click using mobile application. Moreover, all the products being manufactured in Pakistan will bear Halal Logo as endorsement of being certified Halal product. DG PHA also told that

Halal Facilitation Centers would be established in Islamabad as well as in all provincial capitals of Pakistan. Answering to a question, he said that the worth of Halal trade in international market was, approximately, of trillion dollars. Mostly, non-Muslims countries are playing leading role in Halal trade. Pakistan, despite being a Muslim country, has a nominal share in this emerging market. The scope of the Halal sector also covers a wide range of items such as food, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and food supplements, he added. Talking about the provision of halal meat to public, he said that all slaughterhouses will be registered and certified from PHA adding that

his authority is also working to facilitate slaughterhouses for business growth. PHA would also build public-private collaborations to explore business opportunities adding that "We should also target trade with China and GCC countries where there is big scope of meat exports". Commenting about the export of meat and other halal products, he said that it is high time for Pakistan business to compete and raise standards of Pakistani products and services. PHA has also initiated MoU/ MRA with SFDA and looking forward with other countries to resolve the issues of Halal industry on priority to promote export opportunities. However, our business

community need to meet up international requirements for getting certifications as no country can compete in global market without compliance to importing country requirements. The DG said the purpose of this authority was to promote imports and exports, trade and commerce at inter-provincial and international level in Halal articles and processes. Therefore, the authority would also coordinate with national and international organizations for strengthening the Halal sector and promote and encourage establishment of libraries and laboratories for the purpose of developing Halal sector.



## Briefs

## RRRP's bidding process to be completed

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Capt. (R) Muhammad Mehmood said that the Punjab government was making earnest efforts to kick off the construction work of Rawalpindi Ring Road Project (RRRP) and all out efforts were being made to complete the bidding process of the project within two to three months.

He said, RRRP would change fate of the city as it's not only a project of road which would help resolve traffic issues of the city but it would prove a game changer which would give a new look to the city and boost business activities in the region.

The Commissioner informed that eight economic zones would be set up at RRRP and efforts would be made to complete the project up to December 2023. He said "RRRP is a project conceived nearly two decade ago but construction work could not be started." The government has given aids in national and international newspapers for tenders of the project, he said and hoped that the bidding process of the contract would be completed within two to three months. He said "The Punjab government wants progress on the project to ease traffic in central parts of the city."

## "Every Second Counts" in full swing

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Tanzara Gallery in collaboration with Studio RM has organized a two-week long exhibition titled "Every Second Counts", is in full swing which was started on March 4. A group show comprising of eight incredibly talented artists working to their own rhythm in various mediums and styles.

The exhibition would continue till March 16 at the Gallery. Ali Kazim, one of the eight participant artists, is a highly accomplished artist recognized home and abroad. His technically accomplished paintings, derive from an interest in the portrait and are revealed in his fastidiously rendered portraits.

Irfan Gul Dahi's work is rooted in an intensely absorbed activity of image making. His mysterious imagery engages with a narrative, which have different interpretations for each, making them emotionally and intellectually evocative. Mudassar Manzoor's solitary figures are lost in contemplation, detached from the world, yet very much part of its fascinating beauty. Manzoor revels in the majesty of nature. The skills so carefully honed in the miniature studio are brought to the fore; the palette is masterly, the surface treated like a jewel.

## Anti-polio drive in Attock

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: Around 0.3 million children up to the age of five years will be administered polio drops across Attock district during a five days campaign being launched from March 29.

"The five-day polio vaccination drive should be conducted under strict preventive measures for Covid-19". This was emphasized by Deputy Commissioner Attock Ali Anan Qamar while chairing a meeting in this context at Attock.

Which was attended by Chief executive officer Health Dr Jawad Ellahi, assistant commissioners, DDHOs Health of six different tehsils, Superintendent Vaccination, Incharge Polio Control Room and representatives of World Health Organization.

He urged that a 'no touch' vaccination method should be adopted so that distance is maintained between the frontline worker and child.

He said health department teams must ensure that polio drops are administered to all children between the ages of one to five, adding parents must cooperate with the teams to make the campaign a success.

## Pak to vaccinate around 8m senior citizens from this week

DRAP spokesperson Akhtar Abbass said that unless DRAP final decision came into effect, it was premature to proceed

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: In the backdrop of the impending COVID-19 third wave, Pakistan has finalized all preparations to vaccinate its around 8 million senior citizens above 60 years old next week, Gwadar Pro reported on Saturday. So far 185,000 senior citizens in the country have registered themselves for inoculation. Pakistan's drug regulator has approved two coronavirus vaccines, China's Sinopharm and Russia's Sputnik V, for people above 60 years of age, as the country's infections tally nears 600,000.

The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan's (DRAP) officials said the decision to greenlight both vaccines was made during a meeting of the body and it was based on recommendations from a six-member specialist committee.

Anyhow DRAP spokesperson Akhtar Abbass said that unless DRAP final decision came into effect, it was premature to proceed. It is hoped that fresh batch of 0.5 million Sinopharm vaccine, expected to land in few days, will help contribute in the launch of senior citizen vaccination drive. First batch of 0.5 million doses of Sinopharm vaccine had arrived on 1st February. "Both govern-

ments are in process and we want to finish it as soon as possible," Chinese Press Attache Ms. Dong Wenli told China Economic Net.

"We are taking with Pakistan government to start the process," another Chinese official in political section Ms. Bao Zhong said. With new 500000 batch of Sinopharm vaccine arrives, total donated doses will stand at 1 million.

The government started registration of senior citizens for the vaccination programme on Feb. 15 soon after its announcement by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr. Faisal Sultan on Twitter.

"All Pakistanis above the age of

65 can start registration for COVID-19 vaccine starting today. Send an SMS from any mobile phone with your CNIC to 1166 or visit nims.nadra.gov.pk to get registered.

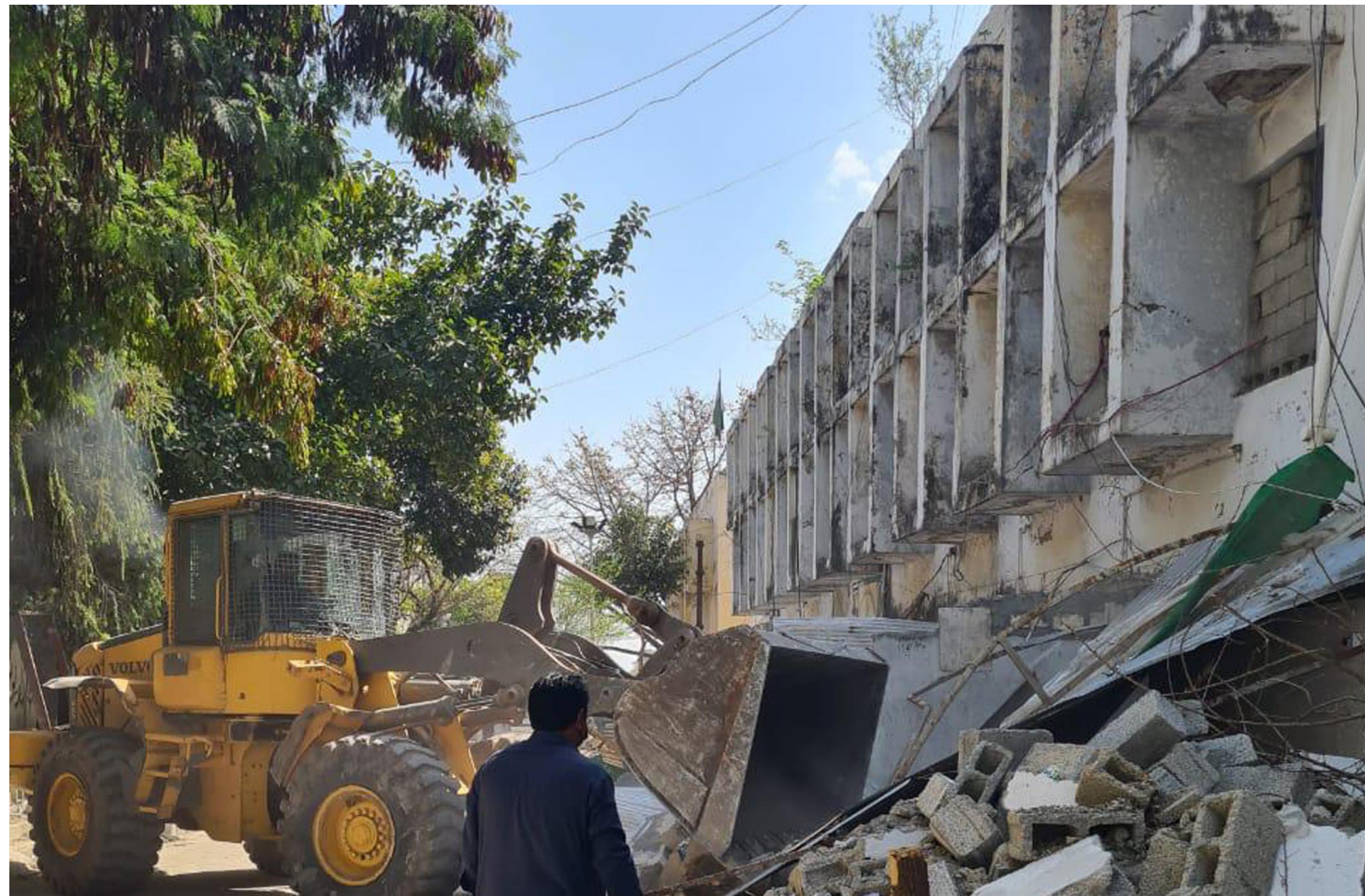
Vaccine center and date of appointment be communicated once vaccine arrives," he tweeted. Earlier, Covax — an international alliance, which has pledged to provide free vaccine for 20 percent population of Pakistan, has intimated the government that 2.8 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine are expected to reach Pakistan in the first week of March.

Moreover, around 17.1 million doses will reach Pakistan by the end of June this year. AstraZene-

ca vaccine can be administered to senior citizens.

Sinopharm vaccine was developed by the Beijing Institute of Biological Products, a subsidiary of state-owned conglomerate Sinopharm. The company announced last month that preliminary data from last-stage trials had shown a 79.3 percent effective.

Previously in a statement, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Health Dr. Faisal Sultan had hoped to procure at least 1m doses of coronavirus vaccines by March, saying it ultimately set the target to inoculate 70 percent of the country's population against the virus.



ISLAMABAD: Work on removal of debris from the F8 Kachery is underway. — DNA

## Confidence vote reduces defeat shock

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Former President ICCI Shahid Rasheed Butt on Sunday said the vote of confidence has reduced embarrassment caused by defeat in the Senate elections but it has increased political tensions which is not good for masses and the struggling economy. The development will not resolve issues confronting the government unless it takes steps to bring masses and opposition closer as the political landscape is only getting more volatile, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the government should keep political differences in limits, accept its weakness in resolving issues of the masses, and stop blaming constitutional institutions like ECP and start confidence-building measures. Masses are not ready to buy the mantra of corruption anymore and they do not take announcements and promises regarding relief seriously.

## Pak-China relations continue to demonstrate remarkable growth

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The long history of Pak-China diplomatic relations spanning over seventy years have shown remarkable stability and growth with milestone achievements for transforming the domestic fortune of millions of people in both the countries.

The bilateral relations between the two countries cover the entire edifice from economic to political, strategic to cultural and commercial to education. In order to commemorate the historic and deep-rooted relations in a befitting manner, both the countries have conceived a number of activities (more than 100 events) throughout the year to celebrate the establishment of diplomatic ties

between the two countries. The events consisted of cultural activities, photography exhibitions, fashion shows, publication of books and people-to-people exchange.

The series of events regarding the 70th anniversary celebrations were launched with virtual ceremony on March 2 in Islamabad and Beijing to mark the date of the relations.

It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan was among one of the first countries that has recognized the People's Republic of China after it was established on October 1, 1949. Subsequently, the diplomatic relations between the two countries were established on May 21, 1951. Over the years, an exponential growth was witnessed in the relations from defense to economy and energy to trade. The ties have

become globally exemplary with vision to create "win-win-situations" and economic prosperity to eradicate poverty from the region.

It was also due the stability and strength of the diplomatic ties between Pakistan and China that the relations often referred as "deeper than the oceans, higher than the mountains, stronger than the steel, sweeter than honey, all-weather friends and iron-brothers" on global arena.

The linking of the globe through inclusive Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) is lauded worldwide for creating long term economic opportunities alongside infrastructural development of the partner countries. The BRI reflects the President Xi's visionary leadership who conceived the road con-

nection a must for economic growth and prosperity of the entire globe.

The multi-billion-dollar China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has not only further expanded the bilateral relations but also forever connected the two countries in terms of socio-economic growth and prosperity. After launching the CPEC project, people-to-people interactions between Pakistan and China have been increased while it rapidly opening up new avenues in areas of higher education, culture exchange programs, strategic relations, economic and business activities between the two countries. China was successfully achieving the set objectives through inclusive BRI to connect the global economic landscape for shared future and economic prosperity.

## PHA's birdhouses to make city more bird-friendly

RAWALPINDI: Vice Chairman, PHA, Malik Abid Hussain said that Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi under its ongoing birdhouses project was trying to make the city more bird-friendly. Talking to APP, he said that the PHA was installing birdhouses at different places to save the birds from bad weather conditions. He informed, the project was launched on the directives of Advisor to the Chief Minister Punjab/Chairman PHA Rawalpindi Asif Mehmood. He said, the city birds have a tough life and they also get less sleep than their rural counterparts and the polluted water they drink makes them sick. The inhospitable urban environment had driven down the numbers of the many, many species of the birds native to cities, he added. The PHA had made the decision in order to protect the birds from inclement weather conditions of summer and winter. He informed that special poles mounted beautiful bird houses in attractive colors have been installed at Moti Mehal, Rialto Park. He said, PHA was making all out efforts to make the city beautiful and green. "Our birdhouses project will help bring back the birds in city areas and the residents will enjoy the amazing voices of the beautiful birds in natural environment," he added. He informed that the birdhouses were being erected well before the breeding season. Replying to a question, he said that a number of sites were selected in the city including Allama Iqbal Park, Liaquat Bagh, Rashid Minhas Road, PHA parks and others to install the birdhouse to attract certain kinds of birds. Special metal poles and trees were used to erect small birdhouses, he said. — DNA

## Federal Capital records 190 fresh coronavirus cases

ISLAMABAD: COVID-19 cases continued to surge in the federal capital as 190 new Coronavirus cases were reported from the city during the last 24 hours, National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) said on Sunday. According to an official of NCOC, as many as 251 cases were reported on Saturday which was the highest figure during last two months while 157 cases were reported on Friday. He said so far 45,519 cases were reported from the federal capital while 508 deaths were reported from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). He added 42,853 patients had been recovered completely. Meanwhile, on the direction of the Ministry of National Health Services, the district administration of Islamabad had continued surveillance of different streets of the capital to reduce transmission of the infection in the selected streets and other sectors. They also started taking actions in violation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) related with the corona while visiting marriage halls, markets and petrol pumps by its inspection teams. The administration has been asked to seal schools, shops, workshop and restaurants on violation of SOPs. The inspection teams have been directed to issue notices to marriage halls besides imposing fines on owners of different shops in case of violation of SOPs. Commenting on the situation, an official of the Ministry of National Health Services said that several local level administrative decisions were made to control the disease. He advised the citizens to continue to follow the social distancing, use of mask and other precautionary measures to stop increasing local transmission of COVID-19 in the city. He said the government had adopted an effective strategy to combat COVID-19 that resulted reduction in corona cases in the country. He said a strategy was made to control coronavirus keeping in view the global information, focusing on data with integration of local data in a scientific way. — DNA

## RCB generates over Rs 1.1b revenue

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) under its ongoing campaign against defaulters of different taxes managed to generate over Rs 1.1 billion revenue during last eight months of the current financial year. According to RCB spokesman, Qaiser Mehmood, the board collected over Rs 642 million property tax, 168 million water charges, Rs 30.6 million Conservancy charges, Rs 244 million TIP Tax and over Rs 8.7 million Trade License Fee while Rs 5.5 million Professional Tax was also recovered from the defaulters during the period. The RCB teams on the directives of the CEO, RCB Muhammad Farooq Ali Malik were conducting raids in different areas to take action against the defaulters of Property Tax, Water Charges, Transfer of Immovable Property (TIP) Tax and Trade Tax, he added. He urged the residents to pay all taxes, otherwise, strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against the defaulters and heavy fines would also be imposed. — DNA

## HEC announces scholarships for Balochistan

The applicants for foreign scholarship will have to provide letters of admission in the top 500 universities in the QS Ranking after their selection

SHUJAAT KHOKAR

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has invited students from Balochistan to apply for LLB, LLM and PhD scholarships, for study at local as well as foreign institutions. Students having domicile or local certificate of Balochistan can apply for scholarships to pursue their Indigenous LLB (5 years), Indigenous LLM,

Foreign LLM, and Foreign PhD studies. Students who fulfill the eligibility criteria for the respective category can apply online through eportal. [hec.gov.pk](http://hec.gov.pk)

The applicants will be required to obtain 50 per cent marks (Accumulative Test Score) in the Aptitude Test. Maximum age limit for LLB studies is 25 years, for LLM 30 years, and for PhD 35 years. For LLB studies, the candidates must have completed



12 years of education with at least 50 per cent marks in the intermediate or equivalent examination. For LLM and PhD studies, the applicants must have completed LLB and LLM, respectively, from HEC recognized degree awarding institutions with at least 50 per cent marks in Bachelor Degree. Fifteen to 20 per cent scholarships are reserved for the children of victims' families of the August 2016 blast in Quetta. Candidates who are already

employed or serving should be from the Law relevant field. They will be required to provide NOC and avail study leave from their respective organization. The applicants for foreign scholarship will have to provide letters of admission in the top 500 universities in the QS Ranking after their selection. Students aspiring to avail the opportunity can visit <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/scholarships/grants/LGSP> for further details.

## 'Citizens to take part in plantation campaigns'

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Bait ul Maal Syed Yawar Abbas Bukhari said every individual must play his role to make tree plantation campaign a success. While inaugurating tree plantation campaign at Tehsil Council Attock, he said trees reduce pollution and soil erosion in waterways. DC Attock Ali Anan Qamar, PTI Leader Malik Khurram Ali Khan, Divisional Forest Officer Aamir Abbas and other officers were present on the occasion.

## Rain likely in Capital from March 14

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Spokesman Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Dr Khalid Malik has predicted a spell of rains that is expected in federal capital from March 14.

Talking to media, he said PMD forecast above normal rainfall in March with overall two to three rain spells likely during the month. He said weather pattern had changed due to fluctuations in the temperature at sea level and rising global temperature. He said prolonged dry spell during the current winter season produced harmful effects on human health as well as agriculture sector.

## 2 killed, 4 injured in road accidents

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: Two persons were killed and four others were injured in two different road accidents in various parts of Attock on Sunday. Police said a speedy dumper hit a passenger van on Rawalpindi-Fatehjang road near Faisal town. In result a passenger identified as Rehat Gull, 30 died while three others identified as Umer Sultan, Umer Gull and Touqeer Hussain sustained injuries.

In another incident, a 45 years old man identified as Mohammad Yousaf died when a speedy Suzuki pick up hit him on Kohat road near Nikka Kallan in limits of Pindigheab Police station. Police registered cases and started investigation.

## Police arrest 40 accused last month

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: Attock Police during February arrested more than 40 accused including 22 proclaimed offenders (POs). According to district police spokesman, the nabbed accused include 22 proclaimed offenders while 18 others nominated in other cases. Police also recovered 58 kg charrs, 78 liters liquor, two kg opium, 39 pistols, four rifles, one shot gun and 354 bullets from their possession, said a press release. Police also recovered cash, eight motorbikes, two vehicles and valuables from them.

## Theatre Wallay to arrange performance on feminism

IMRAN TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: Theatre Wallay, in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, would organize a theater performance 'Feminism Apna Apna' followed by an open discussion with the audience on feminism, its contradictions and ambiguities on March 11. The event is being organized with reference to the International Women's Day 2021, said a press release issued here. International women's day would be observed on 8 March with theme of "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world." The participation in the theater performance would be free but prior registration is mandatory. The performance and open discussion session would be held at The Farm in Banigala office.



## Shift in US policy

**T**HE shift in the official language of the United States (US) over Kashmir suggests the Biden administration's preference to India over Kashmir. Islamabad needs to be aware of the US State Department's leaning when it refers to Illegally Indian Occupied Kashmir as a "union territory." The reference to Kashmir is not just semantics; it is a significant hint in the continuation of the US policy over Kashmir. If Pakistan, especially the Foreign Office (FO), does not respond accordingly, there are high chances that the status quo will become the new reality. If this happens, the Kashmir cause will suffer a severe blow. Though the State Department maintains that Washington's Kashmir policy will remain unchanged, calling IIOK "union territory" is nothing short of accepting India's illegal move. The words of Ned Price, spokesman of the State Department, that the US has "a global comprehensive partnership" with India and "important shared interests in the region" with Pakistan show the preferential treatment that India will get. And there is nothing new in the US policy for South Asian countries. Mr Price's statement tells us that Biden's administration is not moving an inch away from Obama's Af-Pak policy or the Trump "Howdy Modi" thrust. The words about Pakistan indicate the incumbent US regime is looking at Pak-US ties through the Afghan lens only. If we want to change the US position on South Asia, which is heavily tilted towards New Delhi, we have to offer more in terms of trading ties and investment. If we succeed in offering the US more in terms of trade partnerships, the White House will stop dealing with us in reference to fast-changing Afghanistan that might even be heading towards a civil war. Islamabad must extricate itself from the age-old international understanding of Pakistan's perceived pull in Afghanistan. The escalating violence and lawlessness in Kabul establish this. Pakistan should continue with its policy of neutrality over strategic matters to maintain friendly terms with the US.

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## Excessive taxation

**T**HE import of computers, tech accessories and spare parts of vehicles has become problematic, with exorbitant taxes being levied against their import and sale. Various industries stand to get affected in a time when the dependence on such technology is paramount for survival amidst the pandemic. If economic growth is to be encouraged, there must be an active effort to reduce duties to encourage local production, sale and foster healthy competition. According to the Director General of Customs Valuation, an average increase of \$70 to \$150 per every imported pricey laptop has been implemented. This effectively ensures that access to such technology is limited to the elite exclusively, even leaving the education, health and business sectors at a severe disadvantage. Already, the budget allocated for such spending is limited; with the addition of these tariffs, we compromise on the quality of services dispensed and threaten the future of the country. Even the seven percent increase on the Additional Customs Duty (ACD) on automobile parts goes against the spirit of economic growth. The only thing that such a strategy will achieve is alienating business owners and the general public, two stakeholders that the economy depends on for survival. With the automobile industry being looked at as one that will grow in the short to medium terms, heavy cost of import will only lead to increased final prices. The solution here is not to embark upon an excessive taxation spree that will put a halt to any and all progress that Pakistan could have made. Instead, the government must look towards providing subsidies to ensure that prices remain stable and affordable. Partnering up with importers to create an appropriate policy towards encouraging the use of technology all the while ensuring that the government can generate revenue is vital at this point in time. The only way that we will survive this pandemic economically is if the authorities adopt a smart, empathetic and encouraging plan of action that keeps in line with the actual financial capacity of the population and the industries.

# Tajikistan's SCO Chairmanship

Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan



Tajikistan being current Chairman of the SCO shares a great deal of political trust and considers economic development and the improvement of people's livelihood as priorities

**T**HE Republic of Tajikistan now holds the chairmanship of the SCO which coincides with the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the organization. Tajikistan's government developed a comprehensive plan for its SCO chairmanship cover over 100 events, most of which will be held in Tajikistan. Its chairmanship of the SCO is aimed at the consistent implementation of international treaties, decisions, program documents and agreements recorded in the final documents of the meetings of the Council of Heads of States and the Council of Heads of Governments (Prime Ministers) of the SCO member states for the purpose of the progressive development of the Organization. Moreover, it will be based on the principles of equality, continuity, mutual understanding and respect for the opinion of each member state of the organization. It declared its chairmanship as: "20 years of the SCO: cooperation for stability and prosperity." It has certain objectives which vividly reflects its political commitment and strategic orientation to make the SCO more productive, meaningful, interactive, beneficial, participatory by strengthening friendship and good-neighborliness between the SCO member states; further development of the "Shanghai spirit"; maintaining peace, security and stability in the region; building up cooperation in trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres; strengthening the image and international positioning of the SCO; improvement of the legal framework

of the Organization and expansion of interaction mechanisms. For achieving the true spirits of the SCO which is holistic and harmoniousness Tajikistan has close liaison with other SCO member states to solve a number of tasks in the following areas of the organization's agenda. Tajikistan's SCO Chairmanship has befitting and consultative political orientation for strengthening internal consolidation and mutual trust; coordination of positions on regional and international issues affecting the interests of the SCO. It planned member states and a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in Dushanbe. Right from the beginning, regional security has been one of the key elements of the SCO. Now Tajikistan's SCO Chairmanship has very valid plans in the field of security i.e. assistance in strengthening practical cooperation in the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism, drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime; taking the necessary measures to implement the initiative of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan to create the SCO Anti-Drug Center in the city of Dushanbe. It covers both traditional as well as non-state security threats. It will host the Meeting of the Secretaries of the Security Councils, the Meeting of Defense Ministers and the Meeting of the Heads of the Competent Bodies of the SCO Member States, empowered to combat drug trafficking. Sustainable economic development, socio-economic integration and regional prosperity are the real essence of the SCO. It has comprehensive economic road map and action plan to achieve the desired goals of its chairmanship. Tajikistan planned to elaborate the issue and adoption of the Plan of Priority Practical Measures for 2021-2022 to overcome the socio-economic, financial and food consequences of the pandemic of the new coronavirus infection in the region; development and adoption of the Concept for the creation of economic growth zones in the SCO space; assistance in promoting the issues of wide use of transit opportunities of the member states; assistance in deepening interaction between the Business Council and the SCO Interbank Association, establishing their cooperation with international financial institutions, improving the legal framework for cooperation; assistance in the development of business incubators in the SCO space in order to support start-up projects. Tajikistan is planning to hold a Meeting of the SCO Business Council Board, a Meeting of the Interbank Association Council, an Economic Forum, a Meeting of Finance Ministers and Chairpersons of Central (National) Banks, a Meeting of Transport Ministers, a Meeting of Industry Ministers, a Meeting of Energy Ministers and a Meeting of Agriculture Ministers. Humanity, human capital and humanitarian assistance has been cornerstone of the SCO and the government of Tajikistan desires to consolidate the true spirits of the SCO by assisting in building up interaction between research and analytical centers of the SCO member states; promoting cooperation in the field of preserving the cultural heritage of the SCO region; assistance in the development of cooperation in the field of cinematography; elaboration of the issue of adopting the anthem of the Organization during the jubilee summit of the 20th anniversary of the SCO; promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls within the SCO. It will hold a Meeting of Ministers of Culture, a Meeting of Ministers of Justice, a Meeting of Ministers of Health, a Meeting of Heads of Services of the SCO Member States responsible for ensuring sanitary and epidemiological well-being, a Meeting of Heads

of Ministries and Departments of the SCO Member States involved in prevention and emergency response, Meetings of heads of tourist administrations, the SCO Cuisine Festival, the Tourist Forum, the Dushanbe SCO Half Marathon, the Forum of Mass Media Leaders and the Women's Forum. Although the SCO stands for strong regionalism but it is not anti-internationalism. In this regard, Tajikistan planned to further strengthen the image of the SCO in the international arena by building up practical interaction between the SCO and regional partner organizations, primarily with the CSTO, CIS, ECO, CICA and ASEAN. It desires to hold a high-level joint event on cooperation between the SCO and the UN in New York and the Meeting of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group in Dushanbe. Measures will be taken to adopt a General Assembly resolution "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization" during the 75th session of the UN General Assembly. Economics of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is versatile, dynamic, diversified and huge in terms of collective GDPs, GNP, population and above all human capitals. The SCO member states covered nearly half of the world's population and more than 60 percent of the Eurasian landmass, and their combined GDP accounts for more than 20 percent of the global total. Tajikistan being current Chairman of the SCO shares a great deal of political trust and considers economic development and the improvement of people's livelihood as priorities, and it has a strong desire to develop a productive and participatory mechanism within the SCO. It is staunch supporter of free trade and regional cooperation under the umbrella of the SCO. Tajikistan shares close trading relationships with the SCO states especially China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Tajikistan stands for mutual trade and investment which should be expanded in scale, enlarging in scope, and has the potential for even greater regional cooperation. Moreover, being member of World Trade Organization (WTO) Tajikistan shares similar trading rules which provide it much of the common ground to be needed to develop a multilateral trading system. Tajikistan believes in bilateral or multilateral regional economic and trade cooperation mechanisms established among SCO member states have laid a foundation for them to explore the potential of an SCO free trade zone. It acknowledges supportive role of the SCO for the further socio-economic integration of the Eurasian Economic Union and development of the Silk Road Economic Belt which would open up new prospects for regional economic cooperation, including a free trade zone. Tajikistan's SCO Chairmanship has opened a new chapter of regionalism, greater socio-economic integration, regional connectivity, sense of collective security shield. Its chairmanship is a new paradigm shift. It is working for reconfiguration of the geopolitical landscape and a shift toward a multipolar world. It is working for further strengthening of mutual cooperation, peaceful settlement of disputes and anti-terrorism. Being prominent regional expert of Tajikistan & CIS I would like to suggest that the government of Tajikistan should try to promote culture of innovation, technological advancement and implementation of the artificial intelligence protocols in the SCO. There should be rigorous development in the field of e-governance, e-commerce, e-banking, e-payment system, e-credit facilities, e-visa and last but not least, digitalization under its chairmanship during 2021. In this regard, greater role

of private sector must be encouraged. Greater regional connectivity is the way forward which may be further strengthened by having effective and meaningful free trade agreements (FTAs), reduction of custom duties and incentivized tax regimes in the SCO. There is an urgent need to develop a functional concept of "Geo-Economy" in the SCO in which easy and smooth supplies of funds may be available for the socio-economic development. Reactivation of the SCO Bank is the need of the hour which should focus on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), social entrepreneurship, poverty eradication and further women empowerment among the SCO member countries. Corona virus changed the geo-political, geo-strategic and even geo-economic orientation of the globe. It has been fatal which produced serious strains on regional as well as international economies too. It is pandemic which requires a collective and collaborative approach to combat it. In this regard, the Republic of Tajikistan has a golden opportunity to introduce and implement the innovative concept of "E-Health" and Health-Bank among the SCO members which would be first line of defense for all the member countries. Food and energy security is the base of modern human civilization and the chairmanship of Tajikistan should take concrete steps to secure it. Proposal of formation of a "Food & Energy Bank" may be right step in right direction. Reactivation of regional energy projects should be initiated as soon as possible. There is vast opportunity in service, financial and tourism sectors among the SCO. Concept of the Smart-tourism having ecofriendly spirits should be promoted among the SCO. Cultural diplomacy is the need of the hour which may be further strengthened with the help of cultural diversity by forming a "Cultural Bank" for promoting spirits of tolerance, interfaith harmony, preserving cultural treasures and holding trans-regional cultural events. The Republic of Tajikistan is the prime example of women empowerment, during its chairmanship it may suggest to establish a "Woman Bank" for further strengthening of women empowerment drives in all the SCO member states and eradication of gender discrimination. Climate change is a serious threat for human existence on the earth which has multiplier socio-economic, geopolitical and geostatistic consequences too. To overcome the increasing carbon footnotes and emission of the dangerous gases, there is an urgent need to build a "Climate Bank" among the SCO member states and chairmanship of the Tajikistan should float this noble idea which is very much functional. To conclude the development of a single effective transit system, including electronic document flow, guarantee mechanisms and the ability to monitor the movement of goods, can play a contributory role in the further development of various regional mega projects like CASA-1000, BRI and even the CPEC. President of the Tajikistan H.E. Emomali Rahmon has a great vision to revolutionize the macro-economy of the country by pursuing diversified but integrated policies of massive industrialization, green energy, innovation, artificial intelligence reducing the dependence of the country's economy on agriculture and current Chairmanship of the SCO would provide it befitting propositions to achieve the desired goals of socio-economic prosperity and sustainable growth in the days to come. - The Writer is the Director: Geopolitics/Economics Regional Expert: Tajikistan & CIS Member Board of Experts: The CGSS

# The dilemma that needs immediate attention

Asra A. Ansari

With an increasing range of such incidents in all across the country today, and the inability of the authorities to prosecute the perpetrators, females in Pakistan feel more vulnerable than ever. Many incidents are not reported due to being afraid of the fact "Blaming the Victim". Furthermore, male figures are also becoming the target of sexual harassment at alarming rate; unfortunately, circumstances are yet to be controlled

**H**UMAN beings have the tendency to feel, express, think, and most all make decisions related to complex matters. These tendencies are intrinsic urges that motivates an individual to exchange ideas with other individuals around in a certain way. Almost all life forms generally find order, to operate, to connect, to measure and even schedule, to either exploit matters or to transfer to subjectivity, to be imaginative, to experiment, to be interactive, to be precise, to establish themselves and also have values. These natural tendencies are essential for Individuals to live and cope in society but as far as the value goes, individuals misuse these tendencies which can turn into a harmful act. When feelings and emotions are concerned, desire to achieve becomes a priority. Desire is an emotional mental state that is analogous to love or rage or sadness as well as unexpectedness or pleasure leading by a state of mind. This is certainly not true, though. Many researchers and mental health professionals nowadays agree that desire is turned into lust which is a bodily impulse, quite similar to starvation or the need for oxygen from the blood. Intensive sexual attraction or appetite is the concept of lust. This sexual attraction is also described as being for someone other than a partner, although it may not be as relevant to the current cultural baggage. In certain situations, such strong desire for sex is only a symptom of balanced sex drive as an adult; however it's a manifestation of something a little more complex also. Currently, the natural urge is now taken a shape of a violation across nations. According to United Nations, globally 35% women experience physical or sexual harassment via an immediate family member, or by a non-partner, has long been encountered; which is increased during covid-19 pandemic. Every year almost 120 million girls as young as 20 years - about 1 in 10 females are compelled to participate in intimate relations and execute numerous different lewd acts, although the actual figure is probably much higher. Approximately 90% of adolescent girls who report forced coitus say that anyone they grew up knowing had been their first offender, usually a boyfriend or a husband. Not just fe-

males but males as well become the victims; unfortunately, they are unable to report the crime. Every 72 seconds someone get molested in America; in which 14.8% complete and 2.8% are attempted rape victims (females), 12% Transgender, Gender-queer and Non-conforming (including: 18% non-TGQN females and 4% non-TGQN males). In 2019, more than 30,900 sexual assault cases/ or 82 incidents per 100,000 population were reported in Canada, making it almost 7% higher rate since 2018. In industrialized countries, sexual assault is very common among working woman, which is approximately around 42-50%. In the European Union 40-50% women, 30-40% women in Asian Pacific countries and recently 77% women in South Africa were reported have become the victim of workplace sexual assault. It is disturbing that far too many females have started to accept sexual abuse and violence as a routine phenomenon in common daily interaction across South Asia and even beyond. Across the South Asian countries like Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, silence on the sex subject becoming the reason of increase rate of sex abuse, even as its effect has however doubled in current interventions. In India about 28% women gets violated by their husbands, 22% women by boyfriend/friend and approximately almost 145,000 cases are still pending to be reported. In Bangladesh around 53% in Dhaka and 62% in Matlab married women, 79% by non-partner and almost 86% females around the age of less than 15 till age 30 get molested by strangers. Nepal region cases have increase to 10% in two years. Almost 256 rape cases reported within the age group 15-24, in which 1,131 cases are still under-reported. Cases which were reported includes 64% conviction rape case, 44% attempted rape. In Sri Lanka, almost about one third (30%) of women get assaulted by their intimate partner and about 24.4% women gets violated by non-partner. Sexual assault in Pakistan increased at alarming rate. Although Pakistani culture discourages news, the White Ribbon Pakistan NGO estimates that 47,034 women have encountered sexual harassment, over 15,000 cases of honor violations have been reported, and more than 1,800 cases of domestic violence and more than 5,500 abductions of wom-

en between 2004 and 2016 have taken place. More than 51,241 incidents of violence against women were recorded between January 2011 and June 2017, according to media reports. Covid-19 was not the only crisis Pakistan was facing. In 2020, almost 73 incidents of Rape were reported in Lahore including 5 gang-rape cases. During the time, the gang violence continued to fluctuate with a 73% decline rate in the month of February, but an increase of about 360% was seen during the month of March 2020. A 5-year-old girl was abducted, struck on the head and above all was burned alive after brutally raped in southern Pakistan. Nearly after five days later of this incident, a mother in the eastern part of the country was first pulled from her vehicle and sexually attacked in front of her children on a Lahore-Sialkot Motorway. Child sexual abuse cases shoot up in 2020; nearly 53% girls and 47% boy were subjected to sexual abuse or rape. With an increasing range of such incidents in all across the country today, and the inability of the authorities to prosecute the perpetrators, females in Pakistan feel more vulnerable than ever. Many incidents are not reported due to being afraid of the fact "Blaming the Victim". Furthermore, male figures are also becoming the target of sexual harassment at alarming rate; unfortunately, circumstances are yet to be controlled. Being silent about such subjects not only provoking harm than preventing it; but also becoming the reason of lack of responsibility towards one nation. UNESCO published a fully updated International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, which advocates for quality CSE (Comprehensive Sex Education) to promote health and well-being, respect for human rights and gender equality, and empowers children and young people to lead healthy, safe and productive lives. Each teenager should have sex education integrated into their schooling. It is not meant to be opt-in or opt-out, but obligatory. Why should parents be able to pick their children in or out of a topic that they will use later in life, one way or another? Sex education should be compulsory, systematic, medically correct, and taught during school years, much like algebra. It is our moral responsibility as a society to educate the next generation and we are losing at this moment.



## Briefs

## PCB name panel to review PSL fallout

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Sunday named a two-member fact-finding panel to review the bio-secure protocols and bylaws put in place during the sixth edition of Pakistan Super League (PSL) that was postponed following emergence of multiple Covid-19 cases. In a press release today, the PCB revealed that distinguished infectious disease experts Dr Syed Faisal Mahmood and Dr Salma Muhammad Abbas have been appointed as independent members of the investigative panel.

The two have been tasked to carry out a holistic and detailed review of the Covid-19 SOPs being followed in PSL 6, identify any gaps and advise as to the reasons why the bio-secure environment did not remain Covid-free. "The independent panel of two distinguished experts has been appointed with the sole purpose of an honest, constructive and objective review," PCB Chairman Ehsan Mani said.

"The independent panel will speak with all the relevant stakeholders, including the event and hotel staff, medical and compliance officers, team players and management, so that we can get a better understanding how the cases occurred." Dr Faisal is an Associate Professor, Section of Infectious Diseases, Department of Medicine, The Aga Khan University, while Dr Salma is a Consultant Infectious Diseases and General Medicine with the Shaikat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Lahore. The panel will submit its findings and recommendations to PCB Chairman by March 31.

## Govt to pay...

From Page 01

in the prime minister. PTI and PML-N members exchanged hot words which escalated to an exchange of physical blows. Maryam's words came as she addressed a media conference following a meeting between the party leadership. She said a discussion took place on the long march, the Daska by-election, the NA-249 by-election and the candidate to field. Maryam, speaking of the incident outside parliament, said: "The party will not take this lying down. The disrespect shown to senior leadership will not be tolerated." The PML-N vice president denounced the assault on Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Ahsan Iqbal, Miftah Ismail, Marriyum Aurangzeb, Murtaza Javed Abbasi, Khurram Dastagir and Musadik Malik which took place "in front of cameras" and said there was "great anger" within the party ranks over the matter. "You can keep this lecture you like to give us on ethics and morality to yourselves," she said addressing the government. "You will have to pay a heavy price for this. If you slap us twice, we will slap you ten times," she added. Maryam said that the "thugery" displayed, especially with Marriyum Aurangzeb, "is a debt on each PML-N member — one that they know full well how to pay".

## Four high profile...

From Page 01

(TTP Sajna group) killed. According to an ISPR statement, terrorist commander Abdul Adam zeb remained involved in more than 20 terrorist activities against Security Forces, Law Enforcement Agencies and local population since 2014 including IED attacks, firing, attacks on government buildings, target killing, kidnapping for ransom, extortion and recruiting & organising terrorists in Muhammad khel, Boya, Daktakhel of North Waziristan and Zoida areas of South Waziristan. Terrorist commanders Molvi Mehboob and Mir Salam were close associates of Baitullah Mehsud and other TTP's terrorist commanders. They remained involved in the attacks on Security Forces and LEAs security checkpoints, Military convoys, attack on Ladhra Fort in 2007, IED attacks and other sabotage activities in South Waziristan.

## Japan ambassador greets ITF, PTF for holding of Davis Cup

Congratulating both the teams for their excellent performance in the matches, Ambassador MATSUDA said he was greatly moved by their professional skills and hard work and wished the players good luck in their future endeavors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Matsuda Kuninori, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, has expressed his deep appreciation and heartfelt congratulations to all the stakeholders involved in successfully holding the Davis Cup World Group 1 tie at the Pakistan Sports Complex between Japan and Pakistan teams from March 5-6 despite the challenging conditions in the midst of coronavirus pandemic.

"My sincere appreciations for International Tennis Federation (ITF), Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) and Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) for making their efforts and taking effective measures for successfully hosting this important sporting event between the Japanese and Pakistani tennis teams. Without your sheer efforts and



hard work, it would not have been possible to hold these matches successfully" said Ambassador MATSUDA at the con-

clusion of two-day matches here at the Pakistan Sports Complex in Islamabad. The Ambassador, who witnessed

the matches between Japanese and Pakistani teams, said that he was impressed to watch the matches on the grass court which

was well-kept and maintained for holding these matches of Davis Cup Group 1 tie.

Congratulating both the teams for their excellent performance in the matches, Ambassador MATSUDA said he was greatly moved by their professional skills and hard work and wished the players good luck in their future endeavors.

"Winning or losing does matter but the most important thing which counts at the end is your dedication, continued efforts and professionalism.

This spirit takes you to the victory stand sooner or later", said the Ambassador.

Thanking the Pakistan Tennis Federation for their kind hospitality, Ambassador MATSUDA hoped that holding of such competitions as well as exchanges in the field of sports would help to further strengthen Japan-Pakistan friendly relationships.

## Guptill leads NZ to T20 series win against Australia

DNA

WELLINGTON: A century opening stand by Martin Guptill and Devon Conway saw New Zealand clinch their Twenty20 series against Australia in Wellington on Sunday after the tourists faltered in the face of an experimental spin attack.

Set a target of 143 for victory in the fifth and final match, New Zealand claimed victory by seven wickets and took the series 3-2 with an emphatic 27 balls to spare. After being comprehensively outplayed in games three and four when batting second, New Zealand captain Kane Williamson knew he had to be innovative to win the series after he lost the toss and was told to bowl first.

He put an emphasis on spin with his slow bowlers sending down 12 overs, the most for New Zealand in a Twenty20 match, and they took four of the eight wickets. "We just wanted to put out a much-improved performance from the last two and it was great that we could show some signs of improvement," Williamson said.

"Clearly, the slower bowlers on that wicket were a little bit trickier."

Of the spin brigade, Ish Sodhi finished with 3-24 off his four overs, Hong Kong-born Mark Chapman, bowling for the first time for New Zealand, took 1-9 off two and Mitchell Santner conceded only 21 runs from his four.

Guptill, who had been out of form going into the series, silenced his critics with a masterful 71, including seven fours and four sixes, while Conway contributed 36 with the pair putting on 106 for the first wicket. New Zealand stumbled slightly when Kane Williamson went first ball but a Guptill single denied Riley Meredith the hat-trick. Glenn Phillips blasted New Zealand home with five fours and two sixes to be unbeaten on 34.

Although a Covid-19 outbreak in Auckland forced the last three matches to be played on the same wicket in Wellington in the space of five days, Australian captain Aaron Finch said it was his side's batting and not a worn pitch that cost the tourists.

## Djokovic takes Federer's world number one record



DNA

PARIS: Novak Djokovic will on Monday set a new landmark of 311 weeks as world number one, surpassing Roger Federer whose hold on a record-equalling 20 Grand Slam titles is now firmly in the Serb's sights. The 33-year-old Djokovic, already the winner of 18 majors, has time on his side with Federer turning 40 in August. He is also a year

younger than Rafael Nadal who also has 20 majors. "Now that I've become the historic No.1, I'm relieved," said Djokovic after sweeping to a ninth Australian Open last month which guaranteed his extended stay at the top. "Now, I'm going to be able to focus mainly on the Grand Slams."

Djokovic reclaimed the top ranking from Nadal in February 2020 and finished as year-end number one for the sixth time, tying the mark

set by Pete Sampras. He is currently in his fifth different spell at the rankings. Nadal, currently at number two, has been at the top for 'only' 209 weeks in total although the 13-time Roland Garros champion can boast being a top 10 ever-present since April 2005. He will, however, lose his world number two spot to Daniil Medvedev a week on Monday. Federer, who returns to action in Doha next week after more than

a year out of action to recover from two knee surgeries, will slip out of the top five on Monday.

Djokovic made his top 100 debut in July 2005, just weeks after Nadal had won his first Roland Garros. He was top 50 in June 2006, top 20 for the first time in October 2006 and top 10 by March 2007. He first became world number one at the age of 24 on July 4, 2011, the day after winning Wimbledon for the first time, beating Nadal in the final.



TURIN: Danilo and Alex Sandro of Juventus vie with Ciro Immobile of Lazio during a serie A football match between FC Juventus and Lazio in Turin. — DNA

## 'Shaheen's family approached us' Afridi confirms

"Shaheen's family approached my family for my daughter. Both families are in touch, matches are made in heaven, if Allah wills this match will be made too," Afridi tweeted

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Former Pakistan captain Shahid Afridi has finally responded to a buzz that is on the radar of netizens since yesterday regarding the engagement of pacer Shaheen Shah and his daughter. Boom Boom Afridi confirmed that the family of 20-year-old Shaheen has approached his family for his daughter and both the families are in touch. "Shaheen's family approached my family for my daughter. Both families are in touch, matches are made in heaven, if Allah wills this match will be made too," Afridi tweeted. "My prayers are with Shaheen for his continued success on and off the field," he added. Shaheen thanked Afridi for his prayers and prayed to Allah for making things easy for everyone. "Alhumdulillah. Thanks Lala for your prayers. May Allah SWT make things easier for everyone. You are the pride of entire nation," Shaheen responded. Earlier, Shaheen's father Ayaz Khan revealed to the media and confirmed that both families have longstanding relations and that Shahid Afridi's family has agreed to the proposal. — DNA

## Aisam refuses to play singles

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan's tennis star Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi on Saturday announced that he will not be playing singles for the country anymore. The 41-year-old told the publication that he had communicated his decision to the authorities at Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF). "My body cannot bear excessive physical demands for singles game. Moreover, it damages my doubles' performance too," he was quoted as saying.

The veteran, who has represented Pakistan in over 95 Davis Cup matches so far, said that he had been playing singles for the last eight years only for the sake of the country.

"Though I left playing singles almost eight years back, I continue representing the country in the Davis Cup singles as no back-up player was available to support Aqeel. Now I don't think my body can tolerate it anymore," he said. Aisam added that due to his growing age, his body cannot take the extra pressure. The player said that his focus is on playing the doubles now and is available for the country in that format.

"Since I play doubles internationally and it is my forte, I would continue playing doubles in the Davis Cup if required by the country," he said. The player also urged the youngsters to step up and fill the gap while requesting PTF to initiate players' development programme so that it helps the best talent rise to the top level. "The PTF will have to work on war-like footings to groom quality players. The PTF should make the youngsters realise that the country requires their services at the highest level of the game," he added.

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## PTI believes...

From Page 01

purchase of loyalties and they had damaged the entire social, economic and political system during the past four decades. He said some of the opposition leaders entered into politics in 1985 party-less elections and introduced the culture of bribery and horse trading to come to power. Shibli Faraz said due to the political approach of the past rulers the country faced severe challenges which added in the sufferings of masses whereas they plundered national wealth and built properties not only inside Pakistan but in Europe and other parts of the world.

They turned politics into business and used it for self-interest and not for the interest of country, said the minister.

He said the PTI has gradually emerged on the political horizon of the country and in the 2013 election it formed government in KPK, adding that due to its good performance people showed their confidence on it and PTI came into power in 2018 with masses' support.

Now after the Senate election it has become the single largest party in both the National Assembly and Senate having representation in all four provinces as people have supported its ideology of ending the status quo.

## Bilawal wants...

From Page 01

and Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly Hamza Shehbaz at his Model Town residence in Lahore on Sunday, Bilawal said "The PDM will take a final decision on no-trust motion against the government and it will also decide about the timing of such a move." Bilawal maintained that it seemed 178 MNAs were not present in the National Assembly during polling on the vote of confidence in Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday.

"President Arif Alvi had already admitted that the prime minister had lost the support of the majority of the House," he added.

"The president has accepted the opposition's stance," said Bilawal. "We just contested a senate election [but] the president of Pakistan has accepted that Khan Sahib has lost his majority and he asked him to prove his majority in the national assembly."

Bilawal said that everyone wants to get rid of 'Wasim Akram Plus' and an ideal Chief Minister of Punjab.

## Israel's dilemma: to work with ICC probe or not?

Netanyahu has not made clear whether Israel would fight back through diplomacy and public opinion — or by engaging directly with the ICC, to which Israel is not a party

DNA

JERUSALEM: Israel faces a dilemma: should it argue its case to International Criminal Court investigators looking into possible war crimes in the Palestinian territories, or refuse to cooperate? Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a vocal critic of the ICC, declared Israel was "under attack" after prosecutor Fatou Bensouda announced Wednesday she was opening a full-blown probe into the actions of all sides in the 2014 Gaza conflict. "We will speak the truth in every forum, in every country, on every stage until this outrageous decision is reversed and becomes null and void," he said. The ICC is the world's only permanent war

crimes tribunal and was set up in 2002 to try the planet's worst crimes where local courts are unwilling or unable to step in.

It does not try states, but top leaders or warlords alleged to have given the orders. Even presidents have been hauled before the court in The Hague. So in theory it might be possible that Netanyahu or even former defence minister in 2014 Benny Gantz could be targeted in the ICC investigation. Some countries have bridled at moves to investigate top national leaders or warlords allegedly behind war crimes or even genocide. Under president Donald Trump, the United States imposed sanctions on Bensouda after she separately decided to investigate alleged US war crimes in Afghanistan. Netanyahu's office said Friday

that in a call with US Vice President Kamala Harris she had "expressed the American administration's complete opposition to the decision of the prosecutor" to probe the Gaza war.

Netanyahu has not made clear whether Israel would fight back through diplomacy and public opinion — or by engaging directly with the ICC, to which Israel is not a party. There is also a middle path, said Pnina Sharvit Baruch, former head of the international law unit of the Israeli Military Advocate General — to provide less than full cooperation, but not a total boycott.

"What Israel can do and probably will do is provide the prosecutor with the relevant materials" for its defence, but without formal cooperation because the Jewish state

"does not trust this court", she told media.

The ICC probe will focus on the 2014 conflict that saw Israel launch a major military operation in Gaza, said to be to stop rocket fire into the Jewish state by the strip's ruling Islamist Hamas movement. An estimated 2,250 Palestinians were killed, mostly civilians, and 74 Israelis, mostly soldiers. ICC judges paved the way for a war crimes probe when they ruled a month ago that the tribunal has jurisdiction over the situation due to Palestine's membership of the court.

Bensouda, who is due to be replaced by Karim Khan in June, said Wednesday there was a "reasonable basis" to believe crimes were committed by members of the Israel Defense Forces, Israeli

authorities, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups.

"The ICC lacks any jurisdiction on this matter," Israel's attorney general said in a statement on Thursday. It also argued that Israel itself "has in place a robust system for examining alleged violations of international law". "There is absolutely no place for the ICC's intervention in matters that are under the jurisdiction of the State of Israel." The probe will take several years to complete, and any charges or arrest warrants would likely be kept under seal. But the ICC's move has raised fears that Israeli ex-soldiers and politicians could also one day become subject to international arrest warrants. Sharvit Baruch said she had spoken to soldiers about the potential threat.



## Briefs

## 2 Suu Kyi's party members tortured to death

FOREIGN DESK

YANGON: Two members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), the party of ousted State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi, were allegedly killed by Myanmar's security forces during a night-long detention, family members said on Sunday.

During mid-night raids in several townships of the country's commercial city of Yangon, police, backed up by soldiers, picked up Khin Maung Latt and Shein Win, the two NLD members, along with dozens of other people. Both were Muslims by faith, according to their family members.

Latt served as head of the NLD in the township of Pabedan, while Win headed the party branch in the township of Hlaing.

On Sunday morning, the authorities informed their families that both of them had died and that their bodies were being kept at a military hospital in Yangon.

Win appeared to have been tortured by security forces during his overnight detention, a family member told Anadolu Agency.

"His body was almost covered in blood. We believe that he was tortured to death," claimed a family member who asked not to be named.

## Iran bans travel during Nowruz holiday

WEB DESK

TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has banned travel to cities with high numbers of coronavirus cases during the Nowruz holiday that starts on March 21, according to the official IRNA News Agency.

The announcement came after the conclusion of the National Committee on Combating Coronavirus meeting chaired by Rouhani in the capital, Tehran.

Iran's Health Ministry has classified districts based on the rate of coronavirus infections with red color indicating high risk, orange meaning medium, while yellow implied low risk and blue being the least.

Data by the Health Ministry shows 11 districts identified as red, 32 as orange, while 251 and 154 were marked as yellow and blue, respectively.

The most dangerous areas are concentrated in the southwest of the country, particularly in Khuzestan Province.

Iranian officials are concerned that travels during the Nowruz festival could spark a new wave in the spread of the virus.

## Iran calls on Europe to avoid 'threats'

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has criticised Europe's "inactivity on JCPOA commitments" and added that Iran is committed to "preserving the JCPOA and is the only party that has paid a price for it."

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has urged Europe to avoid "threats or pressure" in any negotiations with Tehran, as he has received Ireland's foreign minister amid diplomatic efforts to revive a landmark nuclear deal.

Ireland is currently "facilitator" for the United Nations Security Council resolution that enshrined the 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and six major powers, according to the Irish foreign ministry.

The deal, known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has been hanging by a thread since former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from it in 2018 and reimposed punishing sanctions on Tehran.

Following Joe Biden's US presidential election victory in November, the US, the European parties to the deal - France, Germany and Britain - and Tehran have been trying to salvage the accord.



BAKU: Foreign diplomats being briefed about Armenian aggression during their visit to recently liberated territories. - DNA

## Pak to benefit from ongoing sessions of NPC and CPPCC

According to the report, as China's economy is growing and steadily rising, this bodes well for Pakistan. This steady growth and poverty alleviation announcement made recently by China will create a strong impact on Pakistan's economic progress

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistan being an important strategic ally of China will be a beneficiary of the decisions to be made by the going annual sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), says a report published by Gwadar Pro on Sunday.

Both the countries are also celebrating 70 Years of their diplomatic relations and in a recently hosted ceremony simultaneously in Beijing and Islamabad wherein official logo of the celebrations has been inaugurated between

the two states kick starting the festivities of togetherness.

The recent announcement by President Xi Jinping about victory against the poverty is an important milestone achieved before the opening of the two sessions. Poverty alleviation has remained at the top agenda of the government of China to help ensure people's wellbeing and development.

According to the report, as China's economy is growing and steadily rising, this bodes well for Pakistan. This steady growth and poverty alleviation announcement made recently by China will create a strong impact on Pakistan's economic progress.

This is because of increasing engagement of Pakistan's economy with China, not only through CPEC projects and infrastructure development, but the ongoing exports, imports, technological advancement will help Pakistan have an overall comprehensive economic development. China, a country of 1.4 billion population is offering huge lucrative opportunities for countries like Pakistan to expand the trade base and avail the opportunities offered by China especially in terms of business and development options.

As a result of the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement has its Phase II established, there is a growing chance for

Pakistani businesses to promote the export in a Zero tariff lucrative business environment. As Chinese domestic market is widening with an increase in purchasing power as a result of the zero poverty, this gives another important opportunity for Pakistan to recover from its economic challenges to avail this "dual circulation" economic strategy by China to solve the problem of trade imbalance. With China's overall development agenda and the discussions during the two sessions will also focus on the BRI development plans, CPEC as a crown of BRI will benefit at the large scale. As a result of the decision

made in the two sessions, it is expected that there will be continuation of the similar level of the cooperation between China and Pakistan for collaboration in the ongoing projects under CPEC. The Chinese next five-year plan to be discussed in the two session can be dubbed as plans of opportunities for Pakistan. The report says, the two of the main political bodies are to finalize the development plans for the country's projections and policies for the next year in the realm of military, diplomacy, trade, environment, and other important sectors. Two sessions are important to increase not only national unity and cohesion amongst

the length and breadth of China, help achieve country's goals but also to reach out to global partners and reflect the steady development and engagement plans.

This year's meeting is happening at an important stage when the CPC is celebrating its 100 years of establishment and there is a start of the 14th Five Year Plan Period (2021-2025) for Social and Economic Development targets for 2035 along with the fact that China is recovering from the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

With all the challenges ahead, China is all set to make important announcements related to its goals in development in all spheres.

## Pope Francis visits Iraqi Christians who suffered under IS

BAGHDAD: Pope Francis, on his historic Iraq tour, visits on Sunday Christian communities that endured the brutality of the Islamic State group until the jihadists "caliphate" was defeated three years ago.

The 84-year-old, traveling under tight security, will lead a prayer "for the victims of the war" in Mosul, an ancient crossroads whose centre was reduced to rubble by fierce fighting to oust IS.

"We believers cannot be silent when terrorism abuses religion," Francis said at an

interfaith service Saturday, one of the many stops on the first-ever papal visit to the war-scarred country.

Pope Francis' trip to Iraq as a "pilgrim of peace" aims to reassure the country's ancient, but dwindling, Christian community and to expand his dialogue with other religions.

The leader of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics on Saturday met Iraq's top Shiite Muslim cleric, the reclusive Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who agreed that Iraq's Christians should be able to live in "peace". - APP

## Nicolas Cage gets married for the fifth time

WEB DESK

LAS VEGAS: Hollywood celebrity Nicolas Cage got married on February 16 for the fifth time in a small ceremony in Las Vegas, less than two years after his last marriage with Erika Koike. The actor married girlfriend Riko Shibata in a 'very small and intimate wedding' in Vegas. The actor's representative said: 'After the wedding, the happy couple was joined for a small celebration attended by Nicolas' ex-wife, Alice and their son Kal.'

Cage met Riko, who is from Kyoto, in Shiga, Japan, over a year ago, shortly after the dissolution of his fourth

marriage.

This is the first marriage for Riko who, at 26, is four years younger than Cage's eldest son Weston, 30, who he shares with ex Christina Fulton. Cage has been married four times previously; he was first married to Patricia Arquette from 1995 until 2001, before marrying Lisa Marie Presley in 2002 and divorcing two years later.

He married Alice Kim in 2004 and they welcomed son Kal-EI in 2005, but they split in 2016.

In March 2019, the star married Erika Koike, but filed for annulment four days later, claiming in court documents that he 'lacked understanding of his actions in marrying



[Koike] to the extent that he was incapable of agreeing to the marriage'.

## China exports spike to highest in decades after Covid-19 hit

BEIJING: China's export growth jumped to the highest in over two decades, official data showed Sunday, with imports also surging in a sharp bounceback from the coronavirus outbreak that had brought activity to a near halt.

Electronics and textile exports such as masks contributed to the spike in outbound shipments, as demand for work-from-home supplies and protective gear against the virus outbreak soared during the pandemic.

Exports spiked 60.6 percent on-year in the January-February

period, well above analysts' expectations, while imports rose 22.2 percent, official data showed Sunday. The latest figures stand in stark contrast to last year's fall of around 17 percent in exports and 4 percent drop in imports.

The country struggled to contain the spread of Covid-19 early on, with consumers staying home and businesses seeing a slow return to operations.

On Sunday, official data showed that electronics exports rose 54.1 percent, while textiles including masks rose 50.2 percent. -APP



SAMARKAND: Turkish foreign minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu along with his Uzbek counterpart inaugurating Turkish consulate at Samarkand. - DNA

## Apparel sector wants duty-free yarn import

The country's textile sector consumes around 12m bales of cotton per annum but production has fallen short of the requirement over the past one and a half decade

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Ready-made Garments Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PRGMEA) on Sunday asked the government to allow import from India through Wagha border land route on zero-duty, exempting it from all types of taxes and duties, as import from Afghanistan and Central Asian States via Torkham land route would not end apparel industry's raw material scarcity. We appreciate PM Imran Khan for

taking serious note of cotton shortage and its skyrocketing prices in the country, instructing the Ministry of Commerce to take necessary measures, including cross border trade of cotton yarn, to keep the momentum of value-added exports, said PRGMEA Central Chairman Sohail A. Sheikh and chief coordinator Ijaz Khokhar in a statement.

Sohail A. Sheikh said that the apparel sector is in trouble because of cotton shortage and its high prices in local market, as the cotton rates found no respite from an unabated spike with the industrial

input trading at season's highest rates because its depressed local production continued to widen demand and supply gap.

Ijaz Khokhar said the unavailability of cotton yarn has badly affected the value-added textile industry in the domestic market by putting millions of Dollars export orders at stake.

"Apparel sector is now reluctant to book new orders, as it is no more competitive due to record high rates of cotton yarn," he added. He said that Adviser on Commerce, Textiles and Investment Abdul Raz-

zaq Dawood had assured the apparel sector of allowing cotton yarn imports from India through Wagha border but now the government is considering permitting imports just from Afghanistan and Central Asian States, which would have no significant impact on cotton shortage. Sohail A. Sheikh said that importing yarn from other countries was not only expensive but would also take one to two months to reach Pakistan. "Yarn can be available to us on time from Wagha border and fulfillment of export orders will also be possible on time in this

way, he added. Sohail Sheikh said that in order to promote the export of value-added textile industry, the government would have to take important steps to increase the production area and production of cotton. He said that it was a matter of concern that the production of cotton in Pakistan was reduced to only 5.5 million bales. The country's textile sector consumes around 12 million bales of cotton per annum but production has fallen short of the requirement over the past one and a half decade.

## Protests continue in Lebanon

FOREIGN DESK

BEIRUT: Protesters have blocked roadways across Lebanon for the fifth day in a row, setting fire to tyres and pieces of furniture as Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab threatened to stop performing his duties to pressure politicians to form a new government.

The renewed protests on Saturday came amid anger about the collapse of the Lebanese pound, which fell to a new low of 10,000 to the dollar on Tuesday. The currency crash has resulted in a sharp increase in prices, as well as delays in the arrival of fuel shipments, leading to more extended power cuts around the country, in some areas lasting more than 12 hours a day.

In the Lebanese capital, a small group of protesters in front of the banking association demanded access to their deposits, and then walked to the Parliament building in downtown Beirut to express their frustration. Approximately 50 demonstrators burned tyres in Martyrs' Square in central Beirut. "The dollar is 10,500 [pounds] and everyone has four or five children on their neck, including their parents. They (corrupt politicians) need to feed us," cried one protester.

## 3 Palestinian fishermen killed in explosion

WEB DESK

GAZA: Three Palestinian fishermen have been killed in a blast off the coast of Gaza, local media and the head of Gaza's fishermen syndicate said.

The official Wafa news agency quoted sources as saying the three men had died on Sunday as a result of a "mysterious explosion". Nizar Ayyash, head of Gaza's fishermen union, told the QNN news website that the three men, all members of the same family, died after their boat was hit by a "missile" off Khan Younis. Ayyash said the source of the projectile remains unknown.

The interior ministry said in a statement it was investigating the incident. The Ministry of Interior and National Security is investigating the death of three fishermen following an explosion in their boat off the coast of Khan Younis, in the south of the Gaza Strip, on Sunday morning. The Israeli military has denied responsibility for the incident.

## S-Korea, US to hold military exercises

FOREIGN DESK

SEOUL: South Korea and the United States will begin their annual military exercises on Monday, the South Korean army has announced, adding that the joint drill will be smaller than usual because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The nine-day war games will be a "computer-simulated command post exercise", the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement on Sunday, stressing that the exercise is "strictly defensive" in nature. Yonhap news agency said the exercises will not include outdoor manoeuvres, as they have been carried out throughout the year, while the number of troops and equipment will be minimised due to the pandemic. Though scaled back, the combined exercises are still likely to infuriate North Korea which calls them a "rehearsal for war".

The JCS said South Korea and the US decided to move forward with the military drill after "comprehensively taking into consideration the COVID-19 situation, the maintenance of the combat readiness posture, the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and the establishment of peace".

It added that part of the drill will involve preparation for the full operational capability test, which is necessary for the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) from the US to South Korea. Since the 1950-1953 Korean War, the US military has retained the authority to control both South Korean and US forces in case of another war breaking out on the Korean Peninsula.



**Briefs**

**ISPR releases new Pakistan Day promo**

**DNA**  
RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Army's media wing, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) has released a new promo in connection with Pakistan Day celebrations. The promo gives a message with regard to Quaid-e-Azam's sacrifices for attaining Pakistan and also explains the commitment and courage of Pakistani nation. Singers Ali Zafar and Aima Baig have lent their vocals to the "One Nation One Destination"-themed promo. Earlier this week, the ISPR had released a video-teaser highlighting preparations to mark Pakistan Day on 23rd March. The 15-second video teaser depicted historic moments of Quaid-e-Azam address to the processions during Pakistan Movement, Minar-e-Pakistan, past military parades, children holding national flags and singing national songs, youth holding largest national flag and rallying with it in streets.

**'Dialogue process vital for progress'**

**KHAYAM ABBASI**  
ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed has said the dialogue process with opponents should continue as sorting out differences is vital for the country's progress. Talking to a private news channel, the minister strongly condemned the incident in which the opposition leaders, were manhandled and said he would take action if any complaint is lodged in that regard. He said Abdul Hafeez Sheikh will continue to perform his duties as Minister of Finance. Sheikh Rashid said huge money was used in the Senate election to buy votes to get Yousaf Raza Gilani elected as senator against Hafeez Sheikh. He hoped that the incumbent Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani will again clinch the top slot with clear majority.

**PTI govt 'not cooperating' with Broadsheet**

**ZUBAIR AHMED**  
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government is not extending any cooperation to the inquiry commission it has established to investigate the Broadsheet saga. According to sources, only National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has provided the relevant record to the Commission of Inquiry on Broadsheet. The panel has yet to receive the information it has sought from the office of the Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP), the sources added. The inquiry commission has recorded statements of Ahmar Bilal Sufi and Shahid Baig, who was Director Audit and Accounts at Pakistan High Commission in London at the time of the payment. According to the sources, the commission has so far recorded statements of 18 witnesses.

**Earthquake jolts AJK, adjoining areas**

**RAJA PERVAIZ**  
MIRPUR: Earthquake tremors were felt in Mirpur Azad Kashmir and adjoining areas on Sunday. According to the details, two tremors were felt in Mirpur. The first tremor was of mild nature while the intensity of the second tremor was high. No casualties have been reported yet. Earlier, a magnitude 3.9 earthquake shook Swat and its adjoining areas of KP here on Monday (15th Feb 2021). According to Seismological Centre, the Hindu Kush mountain range, the Hindu Kush mountain range was the epicenter of the quake. The tremors were felt in Mingora city and nearby areas.

**Riders show huge interest in EU-support cycling event**

The event was organized by Urban Innovation, ICT Administration and the Islamabad Cycling Association. Support was provided by the European Union

**SHUJAAT HAMZA**

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 7: Cars disappeared on Jinnah Avenue on Sunday to make way for 'Cycling Sunday' and hundreds of cyclists and walkers of all ages and abilities. The joyful and carefree moment highlighted a serious message: the need for sustainable means of transportation in light of climate change and rapid urbanization. It also encouraged citizens to make healthier and more sustainable lifestyle choices, for themselves, the community and the environment.

The event was organized by Urban Innovation, Islamabad Capital Territory Administration and the Islamabad Cycling Association. Support was provided by the European Union. Every first Sunday of the month, Jinnah Avenue, the capital's primary thoroughfare, is open exclusively for cyclists from Centaurus mall to D-Chowk.

Taking advantage of the safe, traffic-free space, cyclists participated in fun races with categories for all ages, skills parkour for kids and other activities. And they simply enjoyed a car and carefree ride on the central avenue. Cities around the world are confronted with problems such as traffic congestion, air and noise pollution, and road accidents. In response to these pressing issues, policy-makers are increasingly looking for ways to develop more eco-friendly, diverse and flexible transportation systems, and influence behaviors to encourage a shift away from the reliance on private cars. Cycling is considered an ideal alternative, not only for shorter distances, due to its cost-effectiveness, and multiple benefits in terms of health and environment. Cycling Sunday promotes cycling as a safe mobility in line with the Prime Minister's Clean and Green Pakistan initiative.



On the eve of the International Women's Day, the event particularly encouraged women to become cyclists and underlined the need to address the concerns of women in terms of safety and access to public spaces and transportation. Naveed Ifthikhar, founder of Urban Innovation and one of the initiator of the event, said, "The feeling of cycling in the city center is something which I aspired to regenerate through this event. Such events will invite people to consider cycling as a great option not only for leisure, but also for commuting and in daily life. Finally,

we call on the government to create safe spaces for cyclists to encourage cycling as a sustainable means of transportation." Haroon, Secretary of Islamabad Cycling Association, said, "There are more and more people who are cycling in their free time to stay fit and as a sport. It is great to see this trend growing and we are delighted to bring it to the heart of the city with races for the ambitious riders, but also just for fun." The European Union supported the initiative in light of its global priorities related to climate change, but

also as cycling has become a major trend in Europe in the last years. Transport accounts for nearly 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions and this figure continues to rise as demand grows. The European Green Deal is a set of policy initiatives by the EU with the overarching aim of making Europe climate neutral in 2050. This means moving to more sustainable transportation, by putting users first and providing them with more affordable, accessible, healthier and cleaner alternatives - and promoting active modes of

transport such as cycling. Covid-19 has given a boost to the trend seen across most European cities. More and more Europeans are using a bicycle in their daily lives. And cities are adapting by providing more space for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport to solve traffic problems and make the cities more livable and sustainable for all. In this context, the EU is looking forward to working with the authorities to share experiences and create awareness of the potential of cycling and other active and clean modes of transport.

**Coalition intercepts several Houthi drones**

The US and the UN have stepped up diplomatic efforts to end the conflict, which is largely seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudia and Iran

**DNA**

RIYADH: The Saudi-led coalition engaged in Yemen said on Sunday it had destroyed 10 armed drones launched by the Iran-aligned Houthi movement, including at least five fired towards Saudi Arabia, state television channels reported. The coalition did not specify locations in the kingdom but said the drones were aimed at "civilian sites". On Saturday, the coalition said it intercepted seven drones over 24 hours launched towards Khams Mushait and one towards Jazan, both in southern Saudi Arabia. The Houthis, which have been battling the military coalition since it intervened in Yemen's civil war in March 2015, recently stepped up cross-border missile and drone attacks on Saudi cities, mostly in

the south of the kingdom. The United States and the United Nations have stepped up diplomatic efforts to end the conflict, which is largely seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Riyadh and its allies say they are fighting to restore the rule of Yemen's internationally recognised government, headed by President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi and removed from power following the Houthis' takeover of the capital in late 2014. The Houthis, who now control most of the north, deny being puppets of Tehran and say they are fighting a corrupt system and foreign aggression. Fighting has also intensified on the ground in Yemen in Marib and Taiz regions. The war, in a military deadlock for years, has killed tens of thousands of people and pushed Yemen to the brink of famine. Medical charity Doctors

Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres, or MSF) said on Friday that Al-Thawra hospital in Taiz had treated 28 people wounded in intense clashes since Wednesday and that the hospital itself was hit by gunfire, injuring three, including a 12-year-old boy. In Marib, the government's last northern stronghold, hundreds of fighters from both sides have been killed. Earlier, the Houthi movement fighting in Yemen had said that United States sanctions against two of its leaders will prolong the war and worsen the humanitarian crisis in the country. The US had announced the sanctions on Tuesday against Mansur al-Sa'adi, the Houthi Naval Forces Chief of Staff, and Ahmad Ali Ahsan al-Hamzi, the commander of Yemen's Houthi-aligned Yemeni Air Force and Air Defense Forces.

**Virus cases increase in Lahore, Punjab**

**DNA**

LAHORE: The number of coronavirus cases have almost doubled in a week in Punjab and Lahore, media reported on Sunday. As per sources in the Punjab health department, the number of daily coronavirus cases in Punjab on February 28 were 528 which have now doubled to 1,044 as of today. According to the Punjab Health Department, 646 new cases were reported in Lahore on March 6, 90 in Gujrat, and 36 new coronavirus cases were reported in Sialkot. Moreover, 23 new coronavirus cases emerged in Multan, 31 in Rawalpindi, and 14 cases were reported in Sheikhpura over the past 24 hours, the spokesperson added. So far, 3,402,377 tests have been conducted in Punjab, according to Primary and Secondary Health Care spokesperson.

**1 dead, 40 injured in train accident**

LAHORE: At least one person was killed and 40 others injured when several coaches of the Lahore-bound Karachi Express derailed between Mando Dero and Sanghi railway stations near Rohri late on Saturday night, district and rescue officials said. Railways officials said that all people travelling on the train have been rescued and work is now being carried out to clear the railway tracks. "Railways staff have temporarily cleared the Down track and train operations have resumed on it. Now, work is being done on the Up track. It can take several hours," an official told media. The deceased woman has been identified as a resident of Landhi in Karachi, Sukkur Commissioner Shafiq Ahmed Mahees confirmed to the media. He added that 15 of the injured passengers had been discharged from the taluka hospital in Rohri. - DNA

**No sustainable development without justice: Munir Akram**

Ambassador Akram called for effective action against falsified and fake medical products (such as Covid-19 vaccines) and to strengthen international cooperation in this regard

**DNA**

NEW YORK: The President of United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Pakistan's Ambassador Munir Akram, Sunday joined top Japanese leaders and UN officials in calling for renewed global cooperation against crime to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to recover from the Coronavirus pandemic. The calls were made at the opening session of the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice held in an innovative hybrid format amid pandemic curbs in Kyoto, Japan, featuring statements from Princess Takamado, Japanese Prime Minister

Yoshihide Suga and Justice Minister Yoko Kamikawa, as well as from the UN General Assembly President, Volkan Bozkir, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the head of UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Ghada Waly. "There can be no sustainable development without justice, the rule of law and prevention and control of crime," Ambassador Akram said in his virtual address delivered from New York to the distinguished gathering. Among the issues, he urged the Congress to prioritize measures for halting the bleeding of the resources of developing countries through illicit financial flows, especially when they are struggling to overcome the challenges posed by

shrinking fiscal space to fight the pandemic and achieve the SDGs. Environmental crimes and ever-growing illegal trade in wildlife - which could lead to other zoonotic diseases - must be dealt on priority basis, the ECOSOC chief said. He suggested opening up additional avenues for legal migration as a way to reduce the demand for smuggling services and to meet migration related SDGs. Ambassador Akram called for effective action against falsified and fake medical products (such as Covid-19 vaccines) and to strengthen international cooperation in this regard. "Coordinated approaches to preventing and combating transnational organized crime is critical to recover better from the

crisis, help achieve peaceful and inclusive societies, and make progress towards all of the Sustainable Development Goals," the ECOSOC chief added. In the Kyoto Declaration adopted Sunday, governments agreed concrete actions to advance responses addressing crime prevention, criminal justice, rule of law and international cooperation. Member States will take commitments forward at the 30th session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna in May. The UN chief, in his live address also delivered from New York, highlighted the importance of the Crime Congress to tackling challenges arising in the global pandemic.

**China to resolve border dispute with India**

**DNA**

BEIJING: China's State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Sunday said China was committed to settling boundary dispute with India through dialogue and consultation but at the same time, it resolved to safeguard its sovereign rights and interests. "China's position is very clear. We are committed to settling the boundary dispute through dialogue and consultation. At the same time, we have resolved to safeguard our sovereign rights and interests," he told reporters on the sidelines of the fourth session of the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing. He said the right and wrong of what happened in the border area last year were clear, adding, "It again proves that initiating confrontation will not solve the problem." Wang Yi said that was important that two sides manage disputes properly and at the same time expand and enhance cooperation to create enabling conditions for the settlement of the issue.

**SC warns against unbridled judicial overreach**

**SHAHEEN HANIF**

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Saturday held that a constitutional judge could not issue directives which did not draw legitimacy from the Constitution, unlike a king who could pass any order of his choice. "When judges uncontrollably tread the path of judicial overreach, they lower public image of the judiciary and weaken public trust reposed in the judicial institution. In doing so, such judges violate their oath and turn a blind eye to their constitutional role," observed Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah in a five-page judgement he authored. He stated that constitutional democracy leaned on rule of law, supremacy of the Constitution, independence of the judiciary and separation of powers. Justice Shah warned that any order not anchored in law and which did not draw legitimacy from the Constitution shook foundations of democracy and unnerved other branches of the government.

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