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Briefs

PTI to follow democracy, says Shibli

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz Tuesday said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government would make all-out efforts for the success of Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani in election for Senate chairman. The PTI would follow a democratic way and seek votes even from the opponents for its candidate, he said talking to a private news channel. The minister said Sadiq Sanjrani had even requested his rival candidate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani to vote for him.

Qasim Khan Suri contracts coronavirus

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Qasim Khan Suri on Wednesday announced that he has contracted coronavirus. Taking to Twitter, the deputy speaker said that his coronavirus tests came out positive, adding that his symptoms included a mild fever and headache for the past two or three days. "I request you all to remember me in your special prayers. May Allah protect everyone from this deadly virus. Please take this third wave [of the pandemic] seriously, and make sure your elders get the coronavirus vaccine," he added.

Pakistan promoting society for women

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Munir Akram says Pakistan is promoting a gender-sensitive society where women have opportunities to excel in all walks of life. Speaking at a webinar in connection with International Women's Day, he said Islamabad is also committed to achieve gender equity for all Pakistani women. He said a transforming partnership between women and men is a prerequisite to timely achievement of sustainable development goals.

Pak to give Uzbekistan ports access

PM Imran expressed Pakistan's resolve to forge closer ties with Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said Pakistan would facilitate Uzbekistan to get access to its seaports of Gwadar and Karachi in a bid to enhance regional connectivity and trade. In a meeting with Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdalaziz Kamilov here at the PM House, the Prime Minister said Pakistan offered a shortest route to international seas to all Central Asian Republics including Uzbekistan and could prove as a gateway to landlocked Central Asia. Imran Khan expressed Pakistan's resolve to forge closer ties with Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia in areas of trade, investment, energy, and people-to-people exchanges. Expressing appreciation for the proposed Trans-Afghan railway project between Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, he underscored Pakistan's commitment to support all efforts for the earliest realization of the important connectivity project.

Pak, Uzbekistan agree to promote cooperation

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Uzbekistan have agreed to promote bilateral cooperation in diverse fields, including trade. The understanding was reached at a meeting between Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Uzbek counterpart Abdalaziz Kamilov in Islamabad Wednesday. The two sides discussed matters of mutual interest, including bilateral cooperation in various areas and regional as well as global issues. Shah Mahmood Qureshi said Pakistan and Uzbekistan enjoy cordial ties based on religion, history and cultural harmony that provide a sound foundation for enhancement of multifaceted cooperation.

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COAS discusses Afghan peace with Bahrian, UK



MANAMA: Chief of Army Staff Genral Qamar Bajwa meeting with Field Marshal Mohammed Bin Isa Al Khalifa, Commander Bahrain Nation Guard. – DNA

KHAYYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) held one-on-one meetings with Field Marshal Mohammed Bin Isa Al Khalifa, Commander Bahrain Nation Guard and His Highness Major General Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Bahrain National Security Advisor during his visit to Bahrain on Tuesday. According to an Inter Services Public Relations

(ISPR) press release, issues of mutual interest and regional security situation came under discussion during the meetings. COAS offered Pakistan's complete support in achieving shared interests in bilateral security cooperation including training and capacity building. Later, delegation level talks were also held, where current developments in Afghan Peace Process, Border Security and necessary steps to be undertaken to facilitate an Afghan-led and Afghan owned peace process were discussed.

General Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter - Chief of Defence Staff UK Army, Dr Christian Turner - British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr Hamdullah Mohib - National Security Advisor Afghanistan, General Mohammed Yasin Zia - Chief of Afghan National Army (ANA), Mr Ahmad Zia Saraj - Director National Directorate of Security (NDS) Afghanistan and Lieutenant General Faiz Hamid - Director General Inter Services Intelligence were present during the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Uzbekistan Foreign Minister Abdalaziz Kamilov calls on Prime Minister Imran Khan along with a delegation. – DNA

Educational institutions closed in ICT, Punjab

SHUJAAT HAMZA

'50% work from home' policy in ICT

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government on Wednesday announced the closure of educational institutions of all grades in specific cities of Punjab and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), keeping in view the rising trend in COVID-19 cases from past 10 days. Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Shafiqat Mahmood in a presser along with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan announced the decision. Numerous decisions were

taken and announced in the press conference after holding a detailed consultation with the provinces and other concerned departments at National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC). Shafiqat Mahmood said that we noticed the huge impact of education sector on the epidemic as around 50 million children were at risk due to attending their classes physically. He said that it is good news that the situation in the Sindh and Balochistan was favorable and the classes with 50 percent strength would continue in these provinces.

Continued on Page 06

ECP issues notifications of successful senators

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan on Wednesday notified the victory of newly elected senators to the Upper House of the parliament following the March 3 Senate polls.

"In pursuance of Section 124 of the Elections Act, 2017, and all other powers enabling it in that behalf, the Election Commission hereby publishes the names of the following candidates returned to the Senate of Pakistan [...] in place of the Members whose terms will expire on 11th March, 2021 under clause (3) of Article 59 of the Constitution," read the separate notifications, which then went on to list candidates that had won across the various seat categories in Islamabad, as well as in each of the four provinces. In all, 48 senators have been elected to replace outgoing lawmakers. Earlier, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) rejected PTI's petition against Yousuf Raza Gilani's victory in the March 3 Senate elections. IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the plea filed against the PDM candidate by PTI MNA Ali Nawaz Awan.

PM Imran Khan wants action in sugar scandal

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday showed resentment over the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) as it failed to show any recoveries from the sugar mills owned by the government personalities. The FBR presented the report show-

ing recoveries of more than Rs400 billion from the sugar mills on the orders of the premier. The report showed recoveries from the small sugar companies but failed to show any recoveries from the 'big fishes'. Showing resentment over the report compiled by the country's supreme tax body, PM Imran Khan asked the FBR officials why across

the board action was not initiated in the sugar scandal? The FBR officials replied that investigation against the big companies owned by the Sharif family, JT group, Khushro Bakhtiar, Humayun Akhtar group, RYK, Ittehad Sugar Mills and others are currently underway, but the officials failed to give a convincing reply to the premier.

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South African envoy keen to deepen ties with Pakistan – Page 08

PM kicks-off 'Koi Bhooka Na Soye'

Under the initiative, cooked meals will be provided through mobile trucks at designated delivery points to people in need

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan formally launched Ehsaas "Koi Bhooka Na Soye" initiative at a ceremony in Islamabad on Wednesday. Under the initiative, cooked meals will be provided through mobile trucks at designated delivery points to people in need especially those at risk of or experiencing hunger. Initially, the Ehsaas Food Trucks are being operated in Islamabad and Rawalpindi and at later stage this programme will be

further expanded to other parts of the country. Addressing the launching ceremony, Prime Minister Imran Khan said the programme is a step towards a welfare state, which always cares for its poor and deserving people. He said he always feels



happy to see that deserving people are given shelter and food with honour and dignity at various Pan-aghahs established across the country. The Prime Minister also announced to launch a subsidy programme by June this year under which money will directly be transferred to the accounts of 30 million families. He said it will enable the poor and deserving people to procure kitchen items. The Prime Minister said similarly direct subsidy will be provided to farmers so that they can procure fertilizers and other agricultural inputs.

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Briefs

**'Fast-growing
AJK Bank
has a bright
future'**

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan has said the Bank of Jammu and Kashmir is playing an important role in the socio-economic uplift of the liberated territory and its excellent performance showed that it has a shining and bright future. Speaking during his visit to the head office of the Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, he assured the fullest cooperation of the state government in turning the bank into a profitable and first rank financial institution. Khawar Saeed, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) while briefing the President about the one-year performance and the future strategy of the bank, told that in 2019, the profit of the bank had fallen to 134 million rupees. However, in 2020, the profit touched a record of 301 million rupees. The deposits of 11.87 billion rupees in 2019 rose to 13.70 billion rupees in 2020. The remittances of the bank 863 million rupees in 2019 also increased to 2.86 billion rupees in 2020. In this way, profit, deposits and remittances remained highest in 14 years history of the bank.

**PML-N MPA
held over
slapping lady
constable**

DNA

LAHORE: Police on Wednesday arrested a PML-N MPA Tanveer Bibi for slapping a lady constable at the accountability court in Lahore and registered a case against her after approval from the speaker Punjab Assembly. According to details, a case has been registered against the PML-N leader on the complaint of a lady constable, Anum Fatima, who alleged that the woman had slapped her after she stopped her from entering the premises of the accountability court. The female PML-N leader was taken into custody soon after the incident as police said that a case was registered against her after she refused to apologize for the incident. The police sought permission from Speaker Punjab Assembly to arrest the MPA and registered a case against her under charges of interfering and obstructing the state affairs and torture at Islamabad police station. Besides her, four other people were also booked in the case. In a similar incident, police in December 2020, registered a first information report (FIR) against a woman for allegedly slapping a police officer in a Lahore neighbourhood. A video of the woman slapping a cop in the Lahore Cantt area has gone viral on social media.

**ECP changes
date for
NA-75 Daska
by-election**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has changed the date of NA-75 Daska by-election re-polls and announced a new date of April 10. Earlier ECP had announced to hold by-election on March 18. The Election Commission has issued special instructions to the Punjab government regarding the by-election of Daska and said that after the suspension and transfer of district officers, new officers need time to understand the situation ordering to appoint administrative officers on vacant posts. On the other hand, the Election Commission, while issuing a detailed decision on the by-election of NA-75 Daska, said that the election held on February 19 was not transparent and free. The ECP in its decision said that Form 45 of 20 polling stations, which were tampered, was received late. The presiding officers were frightened and made excuses.



ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for IT Syed Amin Ul Haque in a meeting with Japan ambassador to Pakistan Kuninori Matsuda. – DNA

**Bilateral cooperation between
Pakistan and Nepal stressed**

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan, Tapas Adhikari Wednesday called on Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam and discussed issues related to mutual cooperation between the two countries. Both sides discussed the importance of agriculture sector in socio-economic development of region and stressed the need to enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of agriculture research and development. The minister also highlighted the need for enhancing mutual cooperation in other areas of economy for the betterment of Pak-Nepal relationship with respect to the agriculture sector. Speaking on the occasion Ambassador of Nepal called for activating agricultural working groups of both the

countries and organizing their meeting to make agricultural ties stronger. He said that last agricultural working level meeting was held over a decade ago, adding that regular meeting would help promote bilateral cooperation in agriculture research and development. During the meeting, the both sides also agreed for the advancement of agriculture sector of two countries, besides working to make bilateral relations of Pakistan and Nepal more cordial for the benefit of both the countries. Last week Ambassador of Nepal Tapas Adhikari, said that Pakistan and Nepal have great potential to enhance trade and economic cooperation and stressed that PIA should explore the possibility of starting direct flights with Nepal that would help in promoting two-way trade between the two countries.



He said that trade promotion would help both countries to reduce unemployment and improve living standards of their people. He said that Pakistan and Nepal have great scope to enhance cooperation

in tourism sector as both countries possessed high-traffic peaks in the world. He said that Pakistani business community should visit Nepal while he would also try to bring a delegation of Nepalese businessmen to

Pakistan for promoting business linkages between both countries. He said that Nepalese people have great love for Pakistan and they wanted to further promote trade relations with Pakistan. He was addressing the busi-

ness community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The delegation of Chaman Chamber of Commerce & Industry led by President Jalal Khan was also present at the occasion. He said that Pakistan and Nepal have the potential to cooperate with each other in agriculture & livestock, industry, energy, tourism, IT, banking & finance, health & education, civil aviation and many other fields for which direct connectivity between private sectors was important. He said that Pakistan and Nepal should encourage frequent exchange of trade delegations to promote mutual collaboration and strengthen trade relations. He said that Pakistan and Nepal had signed a trade cooperation long time ago which should be fully exploited for two-way trade promotion.

**Mirza Anjum takes charge of
SP PHP, region Faisalabad**

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: SP Mirza Anjum Kamal has taken the charge of SP Punjab Highway Patrol, Region Faisalabad. While talking to Media, he said that safer Highways and welfare of Patrolling Police would be his prime focus. The establishment of Punjab Highway Patrol characterizes the vision of safe highways. The concept of Punjab highway patrol is to promote pro-active policing and to scuttle the traditional policing. Patrolling Police acts as first Responder in case of any mishap and accidents. The injured are provided with first aid and the serious one is transferred to nearby hospital. The removal of encroachment, reuniting the found children to parents and help rendering is the salient feature of Punjab Highway Patrol. Safe roads are the testimony of safe Punjab. The training of PHP personnel is most crucial to build their capacity to deal dexterously with road crime and diverse situa-



tions while patrolling in the beat area. The most important domains of training are weapon handling, inculcation of principal of patrolling, character building, public dealing and community policing, the importance of crime scene and method of preservation of crime scene, stress management, dealing with accidents and provision of first aid, responsibilities of first responder, methods to stop, search and arrest and

accident investigation to ascertain the cause of accident. He further explained that the well being of PHP officers/Officials is essential and for that purpose, sports activities, lectures on Stress management and healthy coping styles will be arranged. Mobile education unit has predominant responsibility to create awareness in the educational institutions, public places, bus terminals, union councils, health care centers and

commercial markets. Road shows and establishment of road camps helps people that know about traffic rules and ongoing awareness campaigns. It builds soft image of department as imparting education, distribution of pamphlets and leaflets bolster community policing. The large scale awareness about PHP helpline 1124 helps citizens and road commuters to transmit information to PHP control room without any delay.

**Country nearing shortage
of medical equipment**

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group of FPCCI, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Wednesday said the government should take note of the shortage of medical and diagnostic equipment in the country. The shortage can compromise the working of public sector and private hospitals resulting in a new health crisis, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that medical devices include everything from a simple thermometer, face mask and syringes to MRI machines and also all type of diagnostic kits from blood glucose monitoring to Covid testing and their availability should be ensured. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that on the directions of the Supreme Court, the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) framed rules and regulations about health devices in 2017 but requirements were kept very stringent. Around two thousand devices were registered over the last three years but some 48 thousand items have not been registered which include tools to detect and cure Covid. Due to high demand in the country the DRAP allowed a grace period that expired on Jan 15, 2019, and now importers are facing serious challenges in importing life-saving medical devices including those used in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of COVID, he said. The grace period was not extended and many consignments of such items have been stopped by customs authorities resulting in heavy losses, he added. The business leader said that the government should interleave, allow usage of the items which have been allowed in the neighbouring countries and direct DRAP to relax requirements. The government should take Healthcare Devices Association of Pakistan (HDAP) on board to avert the crisis in the making he said.

**Inquiry
ordered for
university
student**

DNA

KARACHI: Inspector General of Police (IG) Sindh Mushtaq Mahar on Wednesday ordered a probe into the death of a Sindh University student in an alleged police encounter. According to details, directing an inquiry into the matter, the IG Sindh formed a three-member body headed by Additional IG Hyderabad Jamil Ahmed and DIG Mirpurkhas Zulfiqar Larik and SSP Kashmir as its members to probe the matter. The IG Sindh has directed all stakeholders in the matter to submit proofs showing if the encounter was carried out originally or was staged. The committee would also probe the criminal record of the Sindh University student, who was killed in the incident, besides also looking into the criminal negligence of the Sukkur police. It is pertinent to mention here that Sukkur police are blamed for killing the SU student Irfan Jatui in an alleged police encounter as the family claimed that he was arrested by police on February 10, days before his killing. In a similar incident in Islamabad, five Counter-Terrorism Force (CTF) officials were arrested for opening fire on a vehicle, leaving a youth dead in Islamabad. The security officials shot multiple fires on a 'suspicious' vehicle in Islamabad's G-10 after allegedly trying to stop the driver many times.

**Faisalabad:
Vaccination
of elderly
people starts**

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: The process of Corona vaccination to people over 60 years of age has been started in the district and as many as 6 vaccination centers at Sports Complex Samanabad, Rural Health Center Khurrianwala new building, Sports Complex Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Jaranwala, Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Tandianwala new building and Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Samundari New Building have been established. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali visited the vaccination center at Samanabad Sports Complex and inaugurated the campaign. Assistant Commissioner City Syed Ayub Bukhari, District Health Officer Dr. Ata ul Moenum, DDHO Dr. Muhammad Ahmed, Focal Person Anti-Corona Dr. Junaid and other doctors were also present. 82-year-old Muhammad Yaqub was vaccinated against corona at the center firstly. The Deputy Commissioner reviewed the process of vaccination of senior citizens at the counters and also met them. talking to the reports, Deputy Commissioner informed that after confirming the message at the centers, the elderly are being vaccinated against corona and for a short medical examination they are also kept under observation for some time for which beds have also been arranged in the centers.

**City authority
to cancel
lease of plots**

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: The city's land and anti-encroachment department has demanded cancellation of lease to the plots alongside the storm water drains. In a letter addressed to the Director General Katchi Abadis and DG Karachi Development Authority (KDA), the anti-encroachment department has demanded cancellation of lease agreements of the plots adjacent to Gujjar Nullah and Orangi Nullah. The leased plots are main hurdle in implementation of expansion projects of the storm water drains, the letter read. "The work on these projects can be continued unhindered after cancellation of leased plots." The expansion work of the storm water drains being implemented on the orders of the Supreme Court, according to the letter. Karachi's drainage system is being remodeled following devastating rains past monsoon in the city due to choking of rain drains and major nullahs.

RCCI organizes digital transformation conference

RAJA PERVAIZ

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) organized Digital Transformation Conference vision 2025 aimed to highlight the key challenges faced by the industry to transform traditional solutions to digital platforms. The conference also provided an opportunity to discuss industrial automation trends worldwide, automation requirements for existing industry, Digitalization and export competitiveness and digitalization requirements for small and cottage industry of the country and impact on employment opportunities. President RCCI Nasir Mirza, Group Leader Sohail Altaf, Former Presidents, Senior Vice Pres-

ident Osman Ashraf, Vice President Shahriz A Malik, executive committee members and a large number of members attended the conference. Federal Minister of Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry who joined the conference via video link, said that the Government is working on a comprehensive policy to address two major challenges to bring digitization or digital revolution in the country. The IT ministry has been given strong direction to bring stable Internet connection and spread the internet across the country. 5G technology will bring a revolution and several sectors including the medical sector. The second challenge is payment gateways where our IT exports are facing a big challenge to grow as we have been placed on

FATF grey list. The minister appreciated RCCI for organizing the conference and assured full support and assistance in this regard. He suggested RCCI to close collaboration with universities as strong industry academia linkages can improve the national economy as we saw many examples around the world. The minister highlighted Government recent initiatives for digital transformation and added that now stents, ventilators are being produced in the country. The Government has introduced the most lucrative electric vehicles auto policy. Member IT Junaid imam highlighted ministry key steps towards knowledge economy. Through the universal support fund more than 20 billion rupee has been spent to

spread broadband penetration and Internet outreach across Pakistan. Later speakers at panel discussion highlighted the core issues faced by the industry towards digital transformation mainly, skill workers, information, data analysis and Government support. President RCCI Nasir Mirza in his welcome address said that with the use of digitization and automation, companies will be able to deliver their orders on time and at the same time be able to maintain quantity and quality standards with compliance with international standards. Further help to increase exports of the country and reduce dependence on the import of goods and services. Digital technologies are a vital tool for social development and economic magnification and growth to com-

pete the world. Group leader Sohail Altaf in his address said that there is a need to fill the communication gap between the ministry and the business community. Chairman Conference, Abdul Basit Malik in his address said that the major aim of this conference was to discuss issues of the business community with relevant ministers and government authorities. The panelists includes, Usman Shaukat (CEO Bio Labs) as moderator, Zarar Hasham Khan, Chief Business Services Officer PTCL, Dr. Rizwan Uppal CEO IDC, Muqem ul Islam Director General NAVTTC, Ms Sadia Masood, Director Technology TUSDEC, Engr. Zaheer Shah MD HMC Taxila.

Briefs

Universities to go online for two weeks

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Following an announcement by the Government for Spring holidays in academic institutions in the selected cities due to recent upsurge in Covid-19 cases, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has clarified that all universities shall continue to operate as per guidelines issued earlier except for the universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) in the following cities: Faisalabad, Lahore, Multan, Sialkot, Peshawar, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. All universities and HEIs in the above-mentioned cities shall remain closed for physical attendance during March 15-28, 2021. However, academic activities will continue online during this period. Moreover, on-going and pre-scheduled exams can be conducted as planned with complete observance of Covid-19 health and safety protocols. Universities are advised to ensure strict observance of the Covid-19 minimum health and safety protocols i.e., thermal scanning, wearing facemasks, social distancing, availability and regular use of sanitizers and disinfection of buildings. In addition, Universities are advised to seek further guidance, if required from the Chair or the provincial/regional members of the Covid-19 Oversight Committee or email at mgbhatti@hec.gov.pk.

CTP starts traffic awareness campaign

ZUBAIR AHMAD

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi on the directives of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rai Mazhar Iqbal have accelerated their ongoing traffic awareness campaign. According to a CTP spokesman, the Education Wing has organized an awareness program here at Chairing Cross Chowk which was participated by a large number school students. The CTO and the students distributed traffic awareness pamphlets and chocolates among the road users. Due to heavy traffic load which was increasing day by day in the town, traffic problems were being faced, he said adding, smooth flow of traffic on the roads has become a challenge for the CTP which were making all out efforts to regulate the traffic. He said the CTP Education Wing had also been directed to accelerate the public awareness campaign about traffic rules and road safety. The CTO said the officials were instructed to ensure that the road users strictly observe traffic signs, signals, traffic rules and regulations on the city roads. He said that maximum pamphlets should be distributed among the public, especially frequent road users, to spread awareness about traffic rules and road safety. The Education Wing was also arranging lectures, seminars, walks and radio programmes and using other mediums of communication to spread awareness among the general public. The CTO informed that the CTP officials were creating awareness about traffic rules among the citizens as well as striving hard to regulate the city traffic.

sequel to PM Imran Khan's vision of Digital Pakistan

Signing Ceremony

Mill Stores Digitalization Contracts



ISLAMABAD: CBSO PTCL Zarrar Hasham Khan, MD NRTC Brig Tofique Ahmed Signing MoU on USC Digitalization contract, Federal Minister for Industry and Production Zubaida Jalal, Federal Minister for Information Technology Hammad Azhar present at the occasion. – DNA

CPEC is not a debt trap, says Dr. Ishrat Hussain

Dr. Ishrat Hussain shared that completed CPEC energy projects had already added 5,320 MW to the power generation capacity in Pakistan with an investment of \$7.9b

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: "CPEC is not a debt trap. All CPEC projects in the energy sector are investments and loans constitute only a small proportion of the overall CPEC portfolio," said Dr. Ishrat Hussain, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms and Austerity with a status of a Federal Minister. He was speaking at a seminar titled "Upscaling the Economic Activities of CPEC: Opportunities and Challenges" organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) here on Wednesday. He further added that the Chinese loans were on concessional rates of 2.34 percent. Dr. Ishrat Hussain shared that com-

pleted CPEC energy projects had already added 5,320 MW to the power generation capacity in Pakistan with an investment of \$7.9 billion. He added that a capacity of another 4,440 MW would be added through an investment of another \$9.55 billion. He also shared details of the various infrastructure projects under CPEC and said that the total tally of all projects under CPEC was around \$52 billion. He added that plans for upgrading the transmission and distribution networks were already in the pipeline. Dr. Hussain shared that the Multan-Sukkur Highway had reduced the travel time from Islamabad to Karachi by six hours and with the completion of the Sukkur-Hyderabad section, it would be reduced by



another three hours. He was of the view that the construction of the planned ML-1 railway line from Peshawar to Karachi would revolutionize the railways sector in Pakistan. He called for dispelling myths and suppositions about CPEC through an understanding of the ground realities.

Director General China at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Muhammad Mudassar Tipu termed CPEC as a truly transformational project the real dividends of which would only be realized in the long term. He added that with the increase in the power generation capacity, power outages in the country had already decreased substantially. Mr. Tipu shed light on the various coordination mechanisms between China and Pakistan with regard to CPEC and highlighted the complete transparency in the process. Executive Director of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) Mr. Abid Qaiyum Sulehri urged the government to save the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) from becoming what he called

real estate zones without any operational industrial activity. Citing some implementation issues with regard to the operationalization of the Gwadar SEZ, he highlighted the need for fast-tracking government decision-making with regard to SEZs. He also called for greater focus on technological transfer and research and development collaboration between Pakistan and China in the agriculture sector, electric cars, and digitalization. Mr. Hassan Daud Butt, the CEO of the KP Board of Investment and Trade, highlighted the need for countering misperceptions about CPEC. "As soon as the JCC [Joint Coordination Committee] meeting nears, naysayers become active," he said.

Sania on prospective commercialization of SNF

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection (SAPM) Dr. Sania Nishtar Wednesday convened a consultative meeting on, 'Prospective Commercialization of the Specialized Nutritious Foods (SNFs) Policy' with Ehsaas Nashonuma stakeholders. The meeting aimed to discuss the viability of commercialization of SNF, said a statement. In the meeting, regulatory and fiscal hurdles were outlined and recommendations

to manufacture and bring specialized nutrition food to the shelves of retail stores and pharmacies at affordable prices were discussed. Nutrition is multisector element of Ehsaas and commercialization of SNF is included in the Ehsaas strategy as Policy #65 'Specialized nutrition food made available for stunted and wasted children in a cost-effective manner'. The cost of the diet study conducted in Pakistan indicates that a large portion (66%) of the population is not able to afford the cheapest possible nutritious diet.

Ehsaas therefore, recognized the need for formulating a national commercialization policy to ensure easy and affordable. "The SNF commercialization will utilize the 1,000 days window of opportunity and is clearly a major area for expansion to sustainably tackle the economic and social impact of malnutrition being faced by Pakistan", she added. It was agreed that in next meeting, the stakeholders will come up with a consolidated proposal featuring comprehensive frame of reference, business plan for

commercialization of SNF, fiscal and regulatory recommendations, details of industry players in the market and their apex association along with risks and benefits. The meeting brought together stakeholders in Pakistan from federal and provincial governments, the World Food Programme and other international development partners, and private sector to provide technical inputs for SNF commercialization policy framework for Pakistan, including specific practical steps to bring SNF to all sectors of the market.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign minister of Uzbekistan, Dr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, planted a tree during his visit at foreign office. – DNA

Ijaz Shah for efforts to check drugs use

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Narcotics Control Syed Ijaz Ahmed Shah on Wednesday underlined the need for collective efforts by all segments of society, to root out menace of drugs use. Chairing a meeting to devise strategy for awareness-raising, the minister said it was a serious threat for the society but unfortunately during previous years, it had not been the top priority. "Either it is resources constraint or lack of will, this area had been the least priority of the developing nations. We have also been experiencing this trend in the past." "It is slow poisoning and seriously damages our social fabric. Therefore, we need to move forward for rooting

out this menace," he told the meeting, attended by Secretary Narcotics Control Akbar Hussain Durrani, and Secretary Information Shahera Shahid. Senior officials from Ministries of Information and Narcotics Control besides representatives from Education, Art and Culture Departments and civil society, took part in the deliberations. He informed the meeting that an estimated nine million people in the country were addicted to drugs and with introduction of new forms of drugs in the market, the figure may further go up in coming days. "Therefore, it is high time to take this issue very seriously and involve all stakeholders including Health and Education Departments as well as law-enforcement agencies to root out this evil."

The minister also stressed to cut the supply-line besides measures for demand reduction of the drugs, and simultaneously focusing on the awareness raising and rehabilitation of drug addicts in the society. He expressed concern on rising drugs addiction trend at some elite educational institutions and said, when the government would be conducting operation against bigwigs, other institutions must lend a hand to discourage the use of drugs. "It has to be a combined and persistent effort by every segment of society," he added. He also advised to prepare a strategy where the addicts were portrayed as victims or patients, instead of abhorring them as criminals. "We need law enforcement agencies' action against the culprits and patience

for the addicts to bring them back to mainstream, because they are already a victim of this curse." Secretary Narcotics Control Akbar Hussain Durrani called upon the participants to join hands with the Narcotics Ministry for raising awareness and purging society of outlaws, poisoning the society and rehabilitation of the affected people. He said at present there were only 216 beds at different hospitals in the country, specified for treatment of drug addicts. "This trend needs to be revisited with specifying space at almost every major hospital in the country." The participants were informed that 70 to 80 percent drugs were smuggled to Pakistan from Afghanistan and it had now become the most profitable business.

RDA seals site offices of three illegal societies

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) under an operation launched against illegal housing societies has sealed site offices of three illegal housing societies namely Blue World City, Abdullah City and Mivida. According to RDA spokesman, the teams also bulldozed offices, structures and other infrastructure of the illegal housing societies. He said, the operation was launched by Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate, RDA on the directive of Director General, RDA, Abdul Sattar Isani and action in accordance with the law was taken against Blue World City, Abdullah City and Mivida.

ITP launches SMS service to alert motorists

IMRAN TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) Wednesday launched a short message service (SMS) to help commuters avoid getting stuck on the roads. The alerts would inform road users about the latest traffic updates, including traffic jams and alternative routes, Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Farukh Rashid told media. Drivers can send message to traffic alert number 03310487487, following which they would receive the latest traffic updates in both languages Urdu and English on their mobile phones. Rashid said ITP also introduced a 'Smart Driving license' with upgraded security features to reduce the chances of forgery. All the data would be recorded through the chip in digital driving license, he said adding it was available at the same fee as the previous license. Furthermore, he said it would be linked to National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and excise's database in near future. Rashid said the department had already introduced an online appointment system for the motorists to obtain new licenses, besides renewal of expired ones. The applicants can book their date of visit while staying at home without wasting time and standing in long queues. ITP were taking every possible measure for the convenience of the motorists, the SSP remarked. – APP

CDA to make capital tourist friendly

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to make the federal capital tourist-friendly and make libraries functional, during the board meeting. According to details, the first introductory meeting of the newly formed CDA Board was held at the Secretariat of the Capital Development Authority (CDA). During the meeting, the board members were briefed on the problems of the city and CDA. It has been decided to make the federal capital tourist friendly and to create a facilities center to promote

tourism. Special guidance will be given to the tourists for providing facilities and information. On the other hand, the importance of visiting the historical places in Islamabad and its environs will also be highlighted. It was decided in the meeting that the existing libraries in the city would be made functional immediately for the promotion of book reading. Other important steps including cultural shows, celebrations and other important steps would be taken to highlight the national culture. The Board meeting also reviewed the sanitation situation in the city and directed to further improve the sanitation system.



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Noman Shaw Chohan 0344-5430821

Enhanced border security

AFTER seven years of closure owing to increasing cross-border violence and terrorism, the last state-run school on the Durand Line was reopened. This was made possible only through improving security in the area by initiating fencing projects along the border. If plan is followed through on the border of Iran as well, the possibility of reverting back to pre-terrorism normalcy will be higher—allowing people an opportunity to go about their routines without fearing the loss of their lives. According to Commandant Colonel Suhail Tanveer, the remote area of Loey Shalman is now completely protected from cross-border terrorism and violent movements due to the extensive fencing project that has been in the works for years. Ensuring that all of Pakistan's borders are impenetrable and that all areas that reside nearby are protected from external influence and threats is one of the primary duties of the government. It is good to see that positive ground has been achieved in this regard. Now, focus can be placed on renovating and restoring infrastructure and facilities in regions like Loey Shalman, which reside near the Afghan border, so that the citizenry can focus on improving their quality of life. Now that our shared border with Afghanistan is not as porous as it once was, the authorities have one less problem to worry about. Instead, complete focus can now be placed on resolving the same problems that plague the regions near the Iranian border—limiting interference by Iranian militants and smugglers that are looking to create trouble. Restoring these areas from closure to complete functionality is a priority and the government must treat it as such.

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Regulations for safety

SOME acts require regulation, rather than outright bans to mitigate their harmful effects. Kite-flying is one of them.

Despite a severe ban on kite-flying, with the entire Spring festival Basant getting cancelled in order to prevent kite-flying, there have still been several incidents of injuries and deaths occurring due to kites. Lahore police registered 519 cases and arrested 543 persons in violation of the Kite Flying Act this year.

Police recovered more than 9,000 kites and kite strings from kite makers, sellers and flyers. And yet, a few days ago, a motorcyclist was injured in Islampura when a kite twine ran over his neck. It has also been reported that a doctor and a lecturer of chemistry had died due to kite string near Muslim Town in the last few weeks.

The continuation of kite-flying, a popular ritual that has had a long cultural history and significance in the sub-continent, despite the bans by the government shows that a public safety issue cannot be solved merely through criminalisation. Just registering FIRs, pursuing court cases and throwing kite-flyers in jail is not going to work, as has been evident. The priority of the government should instead be the safety of the public and ensuring that safe practices are being upheld. The government would need to carry out more targeted intervention to limit injuries from kite-flying, than just criminalising it.

The focus should be on regulation of the sale of kites, instead of ownership and use. The government would need to crack down on those involved in the production, distribution and sale of glass-coated wire, and also put in more incentives for safer wires and practices around kite-flying. Without proper regulation, people will continue to skirt the bans and engage in kite-flying in an unsafe manner—it is not the sport that is inherently dangerous but the careless practices people indulge in to play it.

Ways to promote women's rights through unified approach

Ambassador (R) Fauzia Nasreen



The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees rights for all. There are a number of laws that have been passed over the last several decades. However, it is the enforcement and implementation of the laws which is deficient.

For this structural adjustments and changes are needed bringing about a transformative change in approaches towards women issues. Pakistan will stand to gain by moving along the global paradigms on development, growth and gender equality

EVERY year on 8 March International Women's Day is celebrated to renew the global commitment to empower women and uphold their rights safeguarded in a number of conventions and covenants. In 2021 8th March is being celebrated under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic and very aptly the theme is "Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a Covid-19 world". It reflects the realities of the current environment hugely influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The spirits however, have not been dampened amid hopes for a better recovery. The rapid response by the scientists and medical community has rekindled aspirations for moving beyond the COVID-19 environment building the post COVID-19 world on the pillar of international solidarity. In this women and girls are equal partners aspiring to enjoy the support of all stake holders.

In the struggle against the pandemic women and girls have been at the forefront and at the same time they have been impacted in multiple ways. Women have shouldered the responsibility as health workers, caregivers, innovators and community leaders. They have risen to the call of duty and shown exceptional dedication which has been recognized and commended worldwide. Women leaders have demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities as heads of state and governments and as professionals.

The imperative of their integration and mainstreaming has been reinforced. It presents an opportunity to explore ways to promote their rights as equal contributors to growth and development. Transformative gender equality has become critical under the current conditions now more than ever before. The 2030 Sustainable Development agenda

cannot be achieved without an equitable participation of women in the entire spectrum of development; political, economic, socio-cultural, security, science and technology.

Since gender equality and the empowerment of women is the core of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) almost all the goals and targets touch upon this aspect in a substantial way. Women participation and leadership is essential together with a consensual approach towards issues pertaining to the rights of women and girls in different spheres.

Unified approach that would help achieve women's rights rests on participation and decision making as well as supportive legislative or legal framework. Rationale for such a unified approach is that

- Full political participation in public life ensures that voice of women is heard on all issues affecting the lives of women.
- In order for them to play an active part in public and private sectors their capability matters immensely. Hence their health and wellbeing, solid nutrition along with quality education and skills would be necessary.
- Education matters for gender equality. We are all familiar with the close link between a girl's education and social and economic development. Societal commitment to upholding women and girls' right to education would go a long way in building their capacities.
- Women participation in economic and commercial activities has twofold benefits; first it gives financial independence to women and more importantly it boosts the overall economic growth of the state and society. Creating an enabling environment would be a step in the direction of promoting smart economy.
- Poverty eradication measures need to

ensure equal access to financial and other resources of the state and society which includes agriculture productivity and entrepreneurial assets.

In our efforts towards securing the rights of women and girls, society has an important role to play. Without that support and general understanding the task becomes arduous. Most importantly as SDG 5 calls for ending "all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere" as well as ending "all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres..."

In order to bring about a transformative shift the entire notion and regressive ideas associated with women would be required. Transition to a more conducive structural paradigm would be necessary-along way to go but the new normal does create an opportunity to do so. This opportunity can be capitalized within the context of post COVID-19 recovery.

The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees rights for all. There are a number of laws that have been passed over the last several decades. However, it is the enforcement and implementation of the laws which is deficient. For this structural adjustments and changes are needed bringing about a transformative change in approaches towards women issues. Pakistan will stand to gain by moving along the global paradigms on development, growth and gender equality. SDGs do provide space for accommodation of national priorities and local environment. But for our own sake that environment must be made sustainable by pro-women rights-based approach

The author served as Ambassador of Pakistan in different countries of the world. Lastly, she remained posted as Advisor COMSATS Secretariat on SDGs.

Dalits under attack in India

Sajjad Shaukat



India's National Crime Records Bureau reports that more than 700 Dalits were killed in attacks in 2014, the last year for which data is available. In this respect Archeon Kaur wrote, "A recent report by a rights body against custodial torture across the world reveals a disturbing scenario in India -1,731 people died in custody in 2019

ALTHOUGH Indian Constitution declares India to be a secular and democratic state, which safeguards the rights of religious minorities, yet in practice, its subsequent regimes continued undemocratic practices by targeting, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and even lower-caste Dalits with impunity. India's Constitution abolished the practice of untouchability. But, the Dalits still face discrimination, segregation and violence.

Under the fanatic government of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi-the leader of the biased ruling party BJP, persecution of the Dalit community has been accelerated by the extremist Hindus in connivance with the BJP and other prejudiced outfits. In this regard, numerous incidents of intimidation, harassment, assaults and violence—including sexual rape and custodial deaths against the Dalits have come to the limelight. A lawyer couple of the Dalit community from Telangana was hacked to death on February 17, this year, as the couple had last year filed a PIL about the alleged custodial death of a Dalit man, Seelam Rangaiyah, who was found hanging in the toilet of the Manthani police station. BBC reported on October 14, 2020, "Dalit women are among the most oppressed in the world...a 19-year-old Dalit woman was gang raped and assaulted by a group of upper caste men in Uttar Pradesh state. The news shone the spotlight again on the rampant sexual violence faced by India's 80 million Dalit women, who like their male counterparts languish at the bottom of India's unbending and harsh caste hierarchy...when a Dalit woman is attacked: police are slow to register a complaint; investigations are tardy; officials raise doubts there was a rape...authorities appear to be complicit in siding with the upper caste perpetrators of violence...After the alleged rape in Uttar Pradesh, which is ruled by an upper caste politician belonging to the ruling BJP party...barred the media and opposition politicians from visiting the victim's family...Despite a 1989 law to prevent atrocities against the community, there

was no let-up in violence against Dalit women. They continue to be stalked, abused, molested, raped and murdered with impunity....Ten Dalit women were raped every day in India last year....The Centre for Dalit Rights group examined 100 incidents of sexual violence against Dalit women and girls across 16 districts in India between 2004 and 2013. India's National Crime Records Bureau reports that more than 700 Dalits were killed in attacks in 2014, the last year for which data is available. In this respect Archeon Kaur wrote, "A recent report by a rights body against custodial torture across the world reveals a disturbing scenario in India -1,731 people died in custody in 2019, mostly from vulnerable communities, Dalits and Muslims. Of this, 1,606 people died in judicial custody and 125 people in police custody. The report also highlights some of the most horrifying torture methods. When law enforcement agencies become perpetrators of violence, it becomes an ominous case of abuse of authority and discrimination against caste and religious minorities under the privilege of impunity—all backed by a silent state." Reports suggest, every day, newspapers are awash with stories of injustices against Dalits and their oppression by upper-caste Hindus. In July 20, 2016 file photo, Members of India's low-caste Dalit community block traffic and shout slogans in Ahmadabad, India. Among the attacks on Dalits in the past month: a 13-year-old girl who was beaten up for drinking from a temple water pump; a Dalit team in the traditional Indian sport of kabaddi attacked by a rival upper-caste squad for winning a match; an impoverished Dalit couple hacked to death following a disagreement with an upper-caste shopkeeper over a debt of 15 rupees. Social scientists and Dalit activists say, "Dalits-formerly known as "untouchables" are still victims of thousands of attacks each year despite laws put in place." Beena Pallickal of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights stated, "The Dalit community will

no longer stay silent. We will rise in protest against all forms of prejudice."

Besides, an emerging class of educated Dalits has begun demanding an end to caste bigotry and discrimination.

Chandra Bhan Prasad, a Dalit writer, remarks "This new generation of Dalits cannot tolerate humiliation. Nor will they accept it...their subjugation at the hands of upper-caste Hindus...Dalits, as the lowest caste in the occupational hierarchy, have been assigned the most demeaning jobs, such as skinning dead animals or cleaning public toilets and sewers. In many cities, Dalits are not allowed to own apartments in upper-caste neighborhoods... Dalits are not accepted socially." Regarding Indian caste system, modern scholars point out in light of ground realities that persons belonging to the caste of "Brahmins have been held in the greatest esteem in India" and "they have considered themselves superior to the people of other castes."

In this context, Kallie Szczepanski wrote in his article on June 13 in 2017, "A Brahmin is a member of the highest caste or varna in Hinduism. The Brahmins are the caste from which Hindu priests are drawn, and are responsible for teaching and maintaining sacred knowledge.

The other major castes, from highest to lowest, are the Kshatriya (warriors and princes), Vaisya (farmers or merchants) and Shudra (servants and share-croppers)...Today, the Brahmins comprise about 5% of the total population of India."

However, BJP-led government of the Prime Minister Modi controls all internal policies of India in accordance with the radicalized agenda of the BJP and the RSS. Hence, under his fanatic regime the Dalits are continuously under attack.

Sajjad Shaukat writes on international affairs and is author of the book: US vs Islamic Militants, Invisible Balance of Power: Dangerous Shift in International Relations; Email: sajjad_logic@yahoo.com

Briefs

Remaining
PSL 6 to take
place after
Ramadan

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: The remaining Pakistan Super League (PSL) season six matches are likely to take place after Ramadan. According to details, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and franchise owners will hold an important meeting tomorrow where they will finalize whether to hold the postponed tournament before or after Ramadan. It is unlikely to stage a reminder of the competition before the holy month as Pakistan men's team is scheduled to tour South Africa and Zimbabwe. Remember, the PSL 6 was postponed after rising COVID-19 cases among participants. As many as seven members including six cricketers and a staff member tested COVID-19 positive during three days. Only 14 matches out of 34 were played at the National Stadium. Defending champion Karachi Kings are at the top of the points table while Quetta Gladiators stand at the bottom.

Israel arrests
Al-Aqsa
preacher
Sheikh Sabri

WEB DESK

JERUSALEM: Israeli forces arrested Sheikh Ekrima Sabri, the preacher of Al-Aqsa Mosque, from his house in occupied East Jerusalem on Wednesday morning. Israeli police and intelligence teams surrounded the house and asked Sheikh Sabri to accompany them, a relative told media. "The Israelis did not give any reason for his arrest," he said. Sheikh Sabri's house is in the Al-Sawana area that overlooks Jerusalem's Old City. Israeli authorities have arrested the preacher multiple times in the past and even banned him from entering Al-Aqsa Mosque for several months.

Pak to give
Uzbekistan ...

From Page 01

Prime Minister Imran Khan fondly recalled his interactions with President Mirziyoyev in Beijing and Bishkek and reiterated his invitation to the Uzbek President to visit Pakistan at the earliest convenience. Underlining the historic and civilizational links between the two countries, the Prime Minister underlined that Pakistan highly valued its close fraternal ties with Uzbekistan and wished to deepen bilateral cooperation in all areas. The Prime Minister particularly emphasized that enhanced trade and regional connectivity were the cornerstones of economic growth and development. The Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast support to the Afghan peace process, stressing the imperative of negotiated political solution. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the Afghan sides will seize this historic opportunity to work together constructively and secure an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive negotiated political settlement. In the context of South Asia, the Prime Minister underscored that durable peace and economic development in the region hinged on peaceful resolution of long-standing unresolved disputes.

Pakistan,
Uzbekistan
agree...

From Page 01

He said the two countries have been maintaining close contact to improve regional connectivity particularly for early materialization of the trans-Afghan railways project among Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. The Uzbek Foreign Minister commended Pakistan's efforts for promotion of contacts and establishment of peace in the region. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi hosted a luncheon in the honor of his Uzbek counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov and his delegation at the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Islamabad today.

Pakistan, Belarus investment opportunities discussed

Mr. Yarashenka also welcomed the potential Pakistani investors to benefit from the ideal investment opportunities. Appreciating the progress made in the industrial park, the Ambassador briefed the management on CPEC where 9 SEZs are planned

DNA

MINSK: Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus Mr. Sajjad Haider Khan accompanied by the Deputy Head of Mission Abdullah Amin visited "Great Stone" Industrial Park in Minsk. Head of Administration of the Industrial Park Mr. Aliaksandr Yarashenka received the Ambassador and provided a compressive tour of the facility and briefed the delegation on the origin, scope, ongoing projects and future prospects of the project. The project is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. Mr. Yarashenka was the former Belarusian Deputy Minister of Economy. The park offers all the benefits of a free economic zone coupled



with unique tax and legislative advantages. Great Stone's convenient location, simplified business processes and advanced, ready to use infrastructure has attracted around 70 investors from 14 countries since its establishment, five years ago. Mr. Yarashenka also welcomed the potential Pakistani investors to benefit from the ideal investment opportunities. Appreciating the progress made in the industrial park, the Ambassador briefed the management on China Pakistan Economic Corridor where 9 SEZs are planned with four of them at advanced stages of development. The two sides agreed to remain in touch and work closer for mutual benefit of the two countries.

Myanmar's anti-regime protests continue

FOREIGN DESK

YANGON: Myanmar's anti-regime protests in many cities have continued on Tuesday despite intensified crackdowns, detentions and raids over the previous days. On Monday night, after the 8pm curfew, thousands of protesters took to the streets in many Yangon townships. People left their homes after news spread that hundreds of young protesters had to hide in strangers' homes in Sanchaung after the security forces began rounding people up after Monday's protests. The news of potential raids and hundreds of detentions in Sanchaung spread quickly on social media. Thousands of people took to the streets in many townships to show

Japan urges Military junta to stop violence

FOREIGN DESK

TOKYO: In response to claims by Myanmar's regime of a meeting about boosting bilateral ties, Japan's Embassy said talks with the junta's appointed foreign minister were to call for an end in killings and the release of all detainees. Ichiro Maruyama, the Japanese ambassador to Myanmar, met the regime's foreign minister, U Wanna Maung Lwin, in Naypyitaw on Monday. Military-controlled MRTV announced that discussions related to the maintenance and enhancement of friendly bilateral relations. MRTV claimed U Wanna Maung Lwin explained the military's claims of fraud over the Nov. 8 general election. The National League for Democracy (NLD) won by a landslide in the election but the military has claimed it staged the coup because of its electoral fraud claims and the civilian government's failure to address them. However, Japan's Embassy in Yangon responded that Maruyama strongly urged the military regime "to stop resorting to violence against civilians by all means".

solidarity with protesters in Sanchaung. The US, UK, Canada and United Nations diplomatic missions immediately issued statements condemning the security forces for blocking streets to prevent demonstrators returning home. Earlier, the security forces announced that they would search every home to hunt down protesters and told residents to hand over anyone they were sheltering. After the nighttime protests started elsewhere in Yangon and the diplomatic community condemned the regime's response, the security forces only searched a few homes. Most protesters managed to escape on Tuesday morning with residents' help. Around 50 protesters who had been hiding were reportedly detained during the night.

Ambassador Bilal Hayee visits Baku Higher Oil School

STAFF REPORT

BAKU: Pakistan Ambassador to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee visited the campus of prestigious Baku Higher Oil School (BHOS) and met with the Rector Mr. Elmar Gasimov. The two sides exchanged views to enhance cooperation between the Engineering universities of Pakistan and Azerbaijan including exchange of students, researchers, and sharing of technical expertise. During the tour of the Campus, Ambassador was briefed on the working of different laboratories and training facilities available to the students at the state of art BHOS.



Another cyberattack on Norway parliament

FOREIGN DESK

OSLO: Norway's parliament, the Storting, has suffered another cyberattack after threat actors stole data using the recently disclosed Microsoft Exchange vulnerabilities. Last week, Microsoft released emergency security updates for Microsoft Exchange to fix zero-day vulnerabilities, known as ProxyLogon, used in attacks. These attacks were originally attributed to a China state-sponsored hacking group known as HAFNIUM who used the vulnerabilities to compromise servers, install backdoor web shells, and gain access to internal corporate networks. Soon after suffering a cyberattack in December, the Storting today announced a new cyberattack linked to the recent Microsoft Exchange vulnerabilities. "The Storting has again been hit by an IT attack. The attack is linked to vulnerabilities in Microsoft Exchange, which affected several businesses. The Storting does not yet know the full extent of the attack. A number of measures have been implemented in our systems, and the analysis work is ongoing."

India to buy US drones to boost defence

NEW YORK: India is planning to buy 30 armed drones from the United States to boost its defence, according to an American media report. Citing unnamed officials, Bloomberg, a New York-based international news agency, said India will approve in April the \$3 billion purchase of 30 MQ-9B Predator drones manufactured by San Diego-based General Atomics. Currently, India's drones can only be used for surveillance and reconnaissance but the addition of armed drones will add to India's military capabilities, the report said. India is emerging as a strategic defense partner for the U.S., particularly in countering Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean and some areas of Southeast Asia, it was pointed out. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is in the midst of a 10-year, \$250 billion military modernization. Pentagon officials didn't respond to a request for comment. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin is expected to visit India this month, while President Joe Biden will soon join counterparts from India, Japan and Australia in the first-ever meeting of the "Quad" bloc. The leaders will meet virtually on March 12 to discuss issues including supply chains, maritime security and climate change. The MQ-9B drone can fly for about 48 hours and carry a payload of about 1,700 kilograms (3,700 pounds), Bloomberg said. - APP

'Tokyo Olympics' without foreign spectators

SPORTS DESK

TOKYO: Japan has decided to exclude overseas spectators from the Tokyo Olympics over fears an influx of visitors could bring an increase in coronavirus infections, local media reported Tuesday. Kyodo News said the government had concluded it was "not possible" to allow fans from abroad to attend this summer's Games, already delayed by a year because of the pandemic. This was due to "concerns

among the Japanese public over the coronavirus and the fact that more contagious variants have been detected in many countries", Kyodo said, citing unnamed officials. The Asahi Shimbun daily said the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had asked Japan to make exceptions for overseas guests linked to sponsors, and that the government was considering the request. Despite a spike in infections this winter, Japan has had a comparatively small outbreak overall, with about 8,300 deaths. It has avoided imposing blanket lockdowns, but the Tokyo area is currently under a state of emergency that requests bars and restaurants close early. Tokyo 2020 organisers have stressed that public safety will be "top priority" at the Olympics, which are due to start on July 23.

EU to get 4m more doses of BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine

BRUSSELS: The European Union on Wednesday announced that it will receive four million additional COVID-19 vaccine doses from BioNTech/Pfizer in the next two weeks. "The European Commission has reached an agreement with BioNTech-Pfizer for the supply of four million more doses of COVID-19 vaccines for the Member States in the next two weeks in order to tackle coronavirus hotspots and to facilitate free border movement," a European Commission statement said. The bloc is concerned by the new COVID-19 hotspots emerging in the continent, mainly due to the spread of the new virus variants, the statement said, adding the number of deaths has declined in recent months with the vaccination of elderly and the most vulnerable people. - DNA

2.41 million Indonesians get vaccine

DNA

JAKARTA: The number of Indonesians receiving their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine rose by 127,492 to reach 2,413,615 as of Friday afternoon, according to the Task Force for COVID-19 Handling. Meanwhile, 14,309 additional people received the second shot of the COVID-19 vaccine, bringing the total count to 1,114,537 since the country rolled out the vaccination campaign on January 13, 2021. Indonesia reported 6,971 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 6,331 recoveries in the 24 hours ending 12 p.m. Western Indonesian Time (WIB) on Friday. In total, the number of COVID-19 cases reached 1,368,069, while the number of recoveries were recorded at 1,182,687 as of Friday. With 129 more deaths, the number of fatalities due to COVID-19 reached 37,026. In the day ending 12 p.m. WIB on Friday, the number of suspected cases reached 66,546, while 36,107 specimens were examined in laboratories for detecting the virus. The number of active cases, or patients under treatment, increased by 511 to touch 148,356. The government has set a target of inoculating 181,554,465 people, or 70 percent of the total population of Indonesia, to build herd immunity against the coronavirus.

Greek students keep up protests

DNA

ATHENS: More than 1,000 students kept up protests on Wednesday in the Greek capital after clashes with security forces over bitter allegations of police violence. The authorities reported 10 officers were hurt on Tuesday evening - one with serious head injuries - and 16 people were arrested on the sidelines of a demonstration by some 5,000 people. Two hundred hooded protesters threw rocks and Molotov cocktails at a police station in the Nea Smyrni suburb, AFP reported. Police responded with tear gas and water cannon. Video footage showed the badly injured officer had been dragged off his motorbike and beaten. Police sources said the main suspect in the attack, a 30-year-old, had been arrested on Wednesday. The 16 detained - seven of them minors - were placed in custody on Wednesday. A 22-year-old man faces charges of attempted murder, while the others are accused of grievous bodily harm, violence and insults, and arson as well as breaking Covid restrictions, police said. The protests follow months of anger in the Greek media and among campaigners over numerous high-profile cases of alleged police brutality at student and left-wing protests.

Educational institutions...

From Page 01

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK & Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) witnessed increase in pandemic trend, therefore 50 percent students will also attend classes physically in these areas. He said the major cities of Punjab including Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Lahore, Gujrat, Multan, Sialkot and Rawalpindi along with the Islamabad Capital Territory witnessed rising trend in corona cases due to which the schools in these cities will go on spring break for two weeks from Monday 15-28 March. However, the other districts in the province would observe classes with 50 percent strength under Covid SOPs including wearing of masks, washing of hands and social distancing. He said that it is expected that the decision of physically classes with 50 percent students will also be applied in Muzaffarabad, and Peshawar as well. The minister clarified that send-ups in schools will continue and the restriction imposed today, doesn't apply on continued exams at all level. We have agreed that the metric and intermediate level exams will be taken in June this year and further decision in that regard will be made later, he said. He said the Today's decisions were applicable on all schools, colleges and universities as it had been made after Higher Education Commission and provinces feedback.

New reality created after Karabakh resolution

"At the same time, the Speaker of the Turkish Grand NA, Mustafa Sentop, and members of parliament expressed their solidarity and support. In other words, the days of war showed again how much our peoples are attached to each other, how much they love and respect each other"

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has said that a new reality has emerged in the region after the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, adding that the regional countries must be involved in mutual cooperation now that the war is over. Aliyev made the remarks while receiving the delegation led by Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission of Grand National Assembly of Turkey Akif Chagatay Kilic on March 9. "A new situation has emerged in our region now. A new reality has been created. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been consigned to history. It has been resolved. It is over. We must now look to the future and think about cooperation in our region, especially about the implementation of transport projects," Aliyev said. The president stressed that the opening of the Zangazur corridor is one of the most important issues on the agenda now.

"I am confident that we will achieve this through joint effort." Zangazur corridor is part of the November 10 peace deal that stipulates the unblocking of transport connections in the region. The peace deal also urges Armenia to provide security guarantees for Zangazur corridor that will connect Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan exclave to other parts of the country through the territory of Armenia. Furthermore, Aliyev highlighted the support Turkey and Azerbaijan render to each other, both bilaterally and within international organizations. He stressed the political and moral support given by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, from the first hours of the Karabakh war. "At the same time, the Speaker of the

Turkish Grand National Assembly, Mustafa Sentop, and members of parliament expressed their solidarity and support. In other words, the days of war showed again how much our peoples are attached to each other, how much they love and respect each other," Aliyev went on saying. He further thanked the Turkish media and all public organizations for supporting his country during the war. In turn, Akif Chagatay Kilic congratulated Azerbaijan on the victory in the second Karabakh war, adding that the visit aimed "to demonstrate our unity and solidarity." "We are representatives of four political parties in

the Turkish Grand National Assembly that support your success, your leadership and, as you say, this turning point in the history of the region - as you know, the Turkish Grand National Assembly has adopted a statement to this effect," Kilic said. Its should be noted that Azerbaijan has repeatedly voiced its willingness to restore transport communications in the region. Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders held first post-war meeting in Moscow on January 11 to discuss the provision 9 of the November peace deal that calls for the unblocking of transport communications. Under the statement published during the meeting, a working group chaired by the three countries' deputy prime ministers was set up to ensure the provision of article 9 of the November deal. The working group formulated establishing railway and automobile communications. Unblocking of transport connections had been restricted due to the three decades of conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia.



Briefs

Brazil registers record new daily COVID death toll

FOREIGN DESK

Brazil has registered record daily COVID-19 deaths as the coronavirus pandemic overwhelms hospitals and vaccinations progress slowly.

The health ministry reported on Tuesday a daily total of 1,972 new deaths in the country, which has the world's second-highest overall toll, exceeded only by the United States.

It also reported 70,764 new cases of COVID-19, meaning 11.1 million people have now caught the virus in the country, while at least 268,370 have died.

The previous daily death record was set on March 3 with just over 1,900 fatalities. The figure has been rising steadily over the past two weeks.

Brazil is facing a dire situation with intensive care units more than 80 percent occupied in 25 of Brazil's 27 state capitals, according to a report released on Tuesday by public health institute Fiocruz.

Last week, President Jair Bolsonaro, who flouts expert advice on fighting the coronavirus, urged Brazilians to "stop whining" about COVID-19 and renewed his attacks on stay-at-home measures.

Nepal's ruling party 'dismissed' from poll

WEB DESK

KATMANDU: Nepal's governing party of former Maoist rebels and fellow communists have split after the top elections body ruled its name was unlawful, pushing the country into further political uncertainty.

The Himalayan nation has been roiled by months of turmoil after Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli dissolved the Parliament in December and accused members of his Nepal Communist Party (NCP) of being uncooperative.

The NCP was formed in 2018 by a merger between Oli's communist party CPN-UML and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) of former rebel leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

But the party had no right to the NCP name, the Supreme Court ruled on Sunday, because another, separate communist faction was already using it.

On Tuesday, the Election Commission concurred and said it had "dismissed" Oli's NCP - which had held a rare two-thirds parliamentary majority - from the electoral register.

CPN (Maoist Centre) member Giriraj Mani Pokharel told the AFP news agency the dissolution had sparked discussions in his faction of the party about "whether to withdraw support from the government".

India summons British envoy

FOREIGN DESK

NEW DELHI: India's foreign ministry has summoned the United Kingdom's high commissioner over what it called "unwarranted and tendentious discussion" of Indian agricultural reforms in the British parliament.

Three new agricultural laws introduced by India late last year have led to months of protests by farmers who say the legislation benefits large private buyers at their expense.

A discussion among UK legislators on Monday has caused anger in New Delhi, which accused the parliamentarians of interfering in India's internal affairs.

The debate came in response to a petition initiated by Maidenhead Liberal Democrat leader Gurch Singh, who has Indian roots.

The petition, titled Urge the Indian government to ensure safety of protesters' press freedom, also received more than 100,000 signatures on parliament's petition website.



CASABLANCA: Ambassador of Pakistan to Morocco Hamid Asghar, Chairman Fauji Group Waqar Malik and Chief Executive Fauji Fertilizers Lt.Gen. Tariq Khan held talks with OCP Morocco to forge a strategic partnership for food security based on new Joint Venture Investments of \$750m. - DNA

Armenia: Tensions reignite between PM Pashinyan, army

FOREIGN DESK

YEREVAN: Tensions between Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and the country's army reignited on Wednesday, with the leader under continued pressure over his handling of last year's conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh with Azerbaijan.

Pashinyan, the embattled leader who has faced a wave of anti-government protests in recent weeks, said on Wednesday that

Onik Gasparyan, the army's chief of the General Staff who earlier joined calls for him to resign, has been relieved of his duties, according to Russian news agency RIA.

Hours later, Armenia's army leaders to reiterate their call for Pashinyan to step down, TASS news agency reported.

Pashinyan announced the move in a statement published on a government website, days after Armenian President Armen Sarkissian refused to sign the

premier's draft decree to dismiss Gasparyan.

The statement said the because Sarkissian had not sent documentation pertaining to his rejection of Gasparyan's dismissal to the Constitutional Court, the chief of staff was relieved automatically "thereof from his post from March 10 [Wednesday] by force of law".

Pashinyan, in power since 2018, had accused Gasparyan of leading a coup attempt after he called for the leader's resignation.

The prime minister has been under increasing pressure to step down following the latest conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which saw Armenia suffer heavy losses and agree to return swaths of territory to Azerbaijan.

Last month, large protests flooded the streets of the capital Yerevan - some came out against the PM but many others heeded Pashinyan's call to rally in support of the government.

The dispute with top generals began when Pashinyan

fired the deputy chief of the general staff after he ridiculed claims by the prime minister that Iskander missiles supplied by Russia - Armenia's main military ally - had failed to hit targets during the war for Nagorno-Karabakh.

Pashinyan issued a subdued retraction on Monday, with his office saying he had been "incorrectly briefed on this matter" and had no doubts about the quality of Russian military production.

The Russian-brokered deal

that ended the conflict secured significant major gains for Azerbaijan in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, a region internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but populated and until recently fully controlled by ethnic Armenians.

Thousands of soldiers and dozens of civilians on both sides died during the war. Pashinyan, who has rejected calls to resign, said he had been compelled to agree to the peace deal to prevent greater human and territorial losses.

Libyan lawmakers approve gov't of PM-designate Dbeibah

WEB DESK

TRIPOLI: Libya's parliament has voted to approve an interim unity government to lead the war-ravaged nation to December elections, a key step towards ending a decade of chaos.

After two days of intense debate, the parliament on Wednesday approved the cabinet of interim Prime Minister Abdelhamid Dbeibah, with 121 of the 132 lawmakers present voting in support, his spokesman said.

"This a historic day for the House of Representatives," declared Speaker Aguila Saleh at the end of the vote.

Dbeibah, who was selected last month at UN-sponsored talks in Geneva, last week presented his proposed cabinet to Saleh.

The powerful businessman from the western city of Misrata was appointed last month to lead the executive branch of an interim government that also includes a three-member Presidential Council chaired by Mohammad Younes Menfi, a Libyan diplomat from the country's east. The transitional government is to lead the country through elections, scheduled for December 24, according to a UN-brokered plan.

China committing genocide against Uighurs, says report

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: A US think-tank has accused the Chinese government of committing genocide against Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang, saying it has found "clear and convincing proof" that Beijing violated "each and every act" banned by the United Nations convention against genocide.

In its Tuesday report, the Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy said Chinese President Xi Jinping set in motion the effort to destroy Uighurs as a group when he launched the "People's War on Terror" in Xinjiang in 2014.

Chinese officials followed

up with a campaign of mass internment, killings of Uighur leaders, forcible sterilisations, separating children from their families, and destroying the Turkic Muslim group's identity, including by demolishing mosques and other sacred sites.

The United States government, the Canadian and Dutch parliaments have already labelled China's treatment of the Uighurs genocide, while Washington has also imposed sanctions on several Chinese officials over the rights abuses in Xinjiang.

Beijing, however, rejects the genocide charge, claiming the internment camps are vocational training centres aimed at fighting "ex-

tremsism". Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told the UN Human Rights Council in February that "there has never been so-called genocide, forced labour or religious oppression in Xinjiang". He invited the UN human rights commissioner to visit the closed-off region, but did not give a time frame.

Newlines said its report was the first independent analysis of China's treatment of the Uighurs under the 1948 Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It involved the contributions of more than 30 experts, who examined all available evidence that could be collected and verified, includ-

ing Chinese government communications, witness testimony and analysis of satellite imagery.

The experts found "clear and convincing proof that China is responsible" for committing all five acts that constitute genocide, the report said.

These acts are: killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.



KABUL: Pakistan ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan calls on Afghan finance minister Khalid Payenda and discussed strengthening trade & economic cooperation, ensuring facilitative arrangements at border crossings starting from Torkham and combating smuggling.

US to join Australia, India, Japan in Quad summit

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden will hold the first-ever joint talks with the leaders of Australia, India and Japan as part of an emerging four-way alliance seen as fundamental to efforts to balance China's growing military and economic power.

Friday's virtual meeting of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, also known as the "Quad", will be one of Biden's first summits since taking office and comes as his

administration has sought to counter China's military and trade expansion by strengthening alliances.

The Quad was launched in 2007 by Japan's then prime minister Shinzo Abe, who was alarmed at China's growing assertiveness around Asia.

"That President Biden has made this one of his earliest multilateral engagements speaks to the importance that we place on close cooperation with our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters Tuesday.

Pak needs to takeaways from 'Two Sessions'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan needed to pick its best takeaways from the vision of 'two sessions' of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and National People's Congress that may fit to its national goals and programs on climate and environment spectrum.

A Gwadar Pro's report on Wednesday stated that time is ripe to comprehend the nitty-gritty of China's vision on green future disseminated on important "Two Sessions".

The deliberations during the two sessions had been very exclusive as the Two Sessions met at special time when 2021 year is marking the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, the start of the country's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and its efforts to realize the long-range objectives for development being set for the year 2035.

It is fortunate that the "Two Sessions" annual gatherings of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and National

People's Congress have spotlighted green development plan beside laying down many key priorities and action plans on GDP growth, job creation, CPI ascendancy, research & development funding, trade deals and others.

Pakistan and China are all-weather friends and strategic partners. Whenever Pakistan seeks assistance to fix its economic woes and multiple challenges, China always comes up with solutions.

Treasuring Chinese ability and strategy, Pakistan is looking at China to gain environmental wellness and improve green development. At the start of 2021, Prime Minister Imran Khan said loud and clear that "Pakistan's economic future is now linked to China and the country is eager to learn from China on green development.

According to Gwadar Pro, Premier Li Keqiang in his government work report 2021 delivered to parliament revealed an "action plan" that will be drawn up this year to

meet the 2030 target, in which he promised to improve the country's energy mix and ease the country's dependence on fossil fuels.

Over the 2021-2025 period, China will also aim to cut energy intensity by 13.5% and carbon intensity - a ratio measuring how much carbon is emitted in growing the economy - by 18%. The "action plan" will not only work for China but also for all those developing countries especially Pakistan that have been aspiring to mitigate their vulnerability to environmental hazards.

Environmentalist Javed Shah termed "Two Sessions" and their array of short-term and long-term priorities on Green Development as shining guidelines for Pakistan. "China's Green vision is also of global significance, he said, because it will offer other developing nations to have an alternate path to prosperity rather than just following in the footsteps of developed countries.

"To achieve a fundamental im-

provement in environmental quality by 2035, China is on path to take production and lifestyles green throughout all areas of society.

Aside from strengthening law and policy support for green development during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, China will strive to promote green finance and encourage green technological innovations. Green buildings will also be promoted.

These action plan discussed by deputies in NPC and CPPCC put forth many lesson for Pakistan-decision makers to set their own environmental policies accordingly, he added.

Pakistan parliament-National Assembly and Senate-is positioned to hammer out laws taking advantage of China pragmatic philosophy on green development reverberated during two sessions.

In the shape of CPEC, a signature project of Belt and Road Initiative, Pakistan has already joined hands with China to initiate green devel-

opment programs.

The Pakistani government had already launched an ambitious Protected Areas Initiative under the umbrella programme 'Clean Green Pakistan', which aims to expand the country's protected area from 13 percent to more than 15 percent by 2023 and create 5,000 green jobs across the country.

The climate change ministry had initiated several flagship programmes including the world's largest Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme, Clean Green Pakistan, Protected Areas Initiative, Plastic-Free Pakistan and Recharge Pakistan Initiative. Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong said his government was fully committed to extending support to the green vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan and his remarkable green initiatives, including Green Stimulus and post-Covid-19 green recovery for restoring livelihood of the people affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Russia to host Afghanistan meet

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: Russia plans to hold a conference on Afghanistan in Moscow later this month, marking an attempt by Moscow to raise its profile in the Afghan peace efforts.

Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the talks scheduled for March 18 will bring together representatives of Russia, the United States, China and Pakistan, as well as an Afghan government delegation and representatives of the Taliban.

Qatar, which is hosting intra-Afghan peace talks, has been invited to the Moscow meeting as an honoured guest.

Zakharova said the negotiations will focus on "ways to help advance inter-Afghan talks in Doha, reduce the level of violence and end the armed conflict in Afghanistan and help it develop as an independent, peaceful and self-sufficient state that would be free from terrorism and drug trafficking".

But the US has not yet confirmed its attendance. "The United States has met in the past with Russia in support of the Afghanistan peace process. Recently we have discussed scheduling a meeting, but the United States has nothing to confirm at this time," a State Department spokesperson said.

The announcement of the Moscow talks came after the US shared with Afghan officials, Taliban leaders and others a draft peace plan calling for replacing the government with a power-sharing interim administration pending elections under a new constitution.

Oil prices continue to fall

MONITORING DESK

WASHINGTON: Oil fell for a third straight session on Wednesday as investors locked in profits from recent gains while looking ahead to inventories data from the United States due later in the day for pointers on where prices will head next.

Brent crude for May dropped 56 cents, or 0.8 percent, to \$66.96 a barrel by 0414 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude for April was at \$63.56 a barrel, down 45 cents, or 0.7 percent.

Prices gained support last week from the decision by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allied producers - collectively known as OPEC+ - to largely maintain production cuts in April. They then initially jumped on Monday, with Brent rising above \$70 a barrel, after attacks by Yemeni Houthis on Saudi Arabia's oil heartland, before settling back as the alarm subsided.

"It's a realisation that there was no impact on supply from the attack," said Virendra Chauhan, a Singapore-based analyst at consultancy Energy Aspects said.

S.Korea agrees to boost funding for US troops

WEB DESK

SEOUL: South Korea has agreed to increase its contribution to the cost of hosting troops from the United States by 13.9 percent, according to an official.

The hike, announced on Wednesday, will take South Korea's payments towards the upkeep of US troops stationed there to 1.18 trillion won (\$1.03bn), up from 1.038 trillion won (\$924m) in 2019. The United States, under former President Donald Trump, had called on South Korea to raise its contributions, accusing it of "free-riding" and demanding that it pay as much as \$5bn a year.

The dispute resulted in a deadlock, leaving the US troops stationed in South Korea without a funding scheme for 2020 and triggering fears the row could undermine the two allies' ability to counter potential security threats from North Korea.

"The agreement resolved the longest-ever vacuum that had lasted about a year and three months," South Korea's chief negotiator, Jeong Eun-bo, told a televised briefing.

Briefs

NAB expedites anti-corruption efforts, says Chairman

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau Chairman Justice (Retd) Javed Iqbal said that the bureau has expedited the efforts of eradicating corruption and bring the corrupt elements to book by vigorously pursuing Accountability for All policy.

In a statement, he said the goal of corruption free Pakistan would be achieved by exterminating the menace with joint efforts.

Corruption was the hurdle in progress of the country. He said NAB has no affiliation with any individual, political party or group. NAB officers were sincerely performing their national duties of eradicating the menace of corruption from society.

He said the anti corruption steps of the bureau have started yielding positive results. Due to such efforts the bureau has recovered record Rs 714 billion from the corrupt elements and deposited in the national exchequer.

National Accountability Bureau has achieved the conviction ratio of 68.6 percent. NAB was utilizing all available resources to apprehend proclaimed offenders and punishing them from court of law.

He said plea bargain was considered as confession of the crime and the deal struck between NAB and the accused for recovery of money is only finalized after approval of the relevant accountability court.

US envoy says no rush for deal before Iran election

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden will not race to renew a nuclear deal with Iran before June elections widely expected to see the rise of a more hardline president in Tehran, a US envoy said in an interview released Wednesday.

"We don't intend to base the pace of our discussions on the Iranian elections - the pace will be determined by how far we can get, consistent with defending US national security interests," Rob Malley, the State Department pointman on Iran, told Axios.

"In other words, we won't rush or slow things because of the Iranian elections."

A number of supporters of diplomacy with Iran have called for renewed efforts before the election and the exit of President Hassan Rouhani, who staked his legacy on a 2015 nuclear deal that is on life support.

Some experts, however, counter that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ultimately calls the shots in Iran and that a new president would at most change the optics.

850 Kashmiris martyred in 2018-20 in IOJK

SRINAGAR: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Indian troops in their continued acts of state terrorism martyred 850 Kashmiris over the past three years.

According to a report released by Research Section of Kashmir Media Service, 18 women and 55 teenagers are among 850 Kashmiris, martyred by the troops from 2018 to 2020. Sixty one youth were killed in custody and fake encounters.

The KMS released the report in response to the figures presented by Indian Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy in Lok Sabha on Wednesday wherein he claimed that a total of 750 Kashmiris were killed between 2018 and 2020.

The research report said that 61 women were rendered widowed, 138 children orphaned due to the killings while 197 women were molested or disgraced by the troops during the period.

South African envoy keen to deepen ties with Pak

The High Commissioner of South Africa shared his vision of taking the bilateral relations further ahead. He mentioned particular areas where both Pakistan and South Africa could strengthen and diversify their engagement

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Former President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chairman Pakistan Cultural Forum and Ahsan Bakhtawari former Vice President of ICCI hosted dinner for the High Commissioner of South Africa Mthuzuzeli Madikiza.

The High Commissioner of South Africa shared his vision of taking the bilateral relations further ahead. He mentioned particular areas where both Pakistan and South Africa could strengthen and diversify their engagement.

He told that his country offered a lot of opportunities to businessmen especially from Pakistan adding Pakistan govt's Look Africa policy has played central

role in bridging gaps between Pakistan and the African continent countries. The high commissioner talked about cricketing ties as well. He said both countries rank prominent among the cricket playing



ISLAMABAD: The high commissioner of South Africa H.E Mr. Muthuzuzeli Madikiza is presenting a signed Cricket bat by South African team visited to Pakistan last month to Mr.Arham Bakhtawari at his residence.-- DNA

nations. He hoped the PSL matches discontinued due to virus cases, shall soon be resumed.

The envoy also presented a signed bat of South African cricket Team visited Pakistan last month to Arham Bakhtawari grand son of Zafar Bakhtawari.

Zafar Bakhtawari thanked the high commissioner for sparing time and sharing his views regarding promotion of bilateral relations. He assured the high commissioner that he would do its best to contribute to further strengthening of Pakistan-South Africa relations.

Arham Bakhtawari also thanked the high commissioner for honouring him and to handing over the cricket bat in recognition of his keen interest in cricket and South African cricket team.

'PDM leadership as uncertain as weather'

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar on Wednesday said that the opposition parties in the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) were as uncertain as the weather in decision making and did not stick to one course of action.

"The PDM leadership decides to submit en masse resignations from the parliament one day but announces to take out a long-march the very next day", he said at the inauguration of a medical camp at Kameer, Sahiwal.

Free eye check-up and surgery camp was jointly arranged by Sarwar Foundation and Al-Mustafa Trust. Chairperson Sarwar Foundation, Begum Perveen Sarwar was present on the occasion.

Governor Punjab Chaudhry Sarwar, speaking on the occasion, said all this was reflective of the breaches within the 11-party alliance, adding that there were a dozen narratives within the PDM.

To a question, he said, "There are no differences among the government and its allies and all are on the same page for the development and prosperity of the country and strengthening of institutions". He said the PML-led government would take the country forward.

Sarwar said, "No one should go to bed hungry" program was a testimony to the government's public-friendly initiatives. - APP

Govt launches COVID-19 vaccination of senior citizens

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government on Wednesday launched the next phase of the COVID-19 vaccine in the country with the vaccination of citizens of 60 years and above.

According to an official of the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, the most senior citizens who have registered for vaccination will receive SMS with instructions on their mobile phones and the oldest persons will be vaccinated first.

The senior-most citizens will be the first ones to receive the doses of COVID-19 vaccine, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on National Health Services Dr

Faisal Sultan said. He urged the healthcare workers and those eligible to get vaccinated to protect themselves as well as their loved ones.

"The vaccinations will be done in reverse order by age, which means the oldest person who has registered will be vaccinated first," Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiative Asad Umar said, who is spearheading the country's fight against the pandemic.

The health department started registration of those 60 years and above for the immunization programme from February 15 asking the citizens to send a text message at 1166 or enter their details at the national immunization management system (NIMS) website.

SC declines stay on petition against NA-75 ECP verdict

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan Wednesday declined to issue a stay order on Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) petition, in which it had prayed to the court to declare the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) verdict ordering re-election at all polling stations of NA-75, Daska null and void.

A three-member bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Umar Ata Bandial, said that the decision on granting stay in the case would only be taken when the ECP submitted to it a detailed reply in the case.

The court, instead, directed both the petitioner, PTI candidate Ali Asjad Malhi, and the respondent, Paki-

ECP changes date for NA-75 by-election

ISLAMABAD, MAR 10 (DNA) - The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has changed the date of NA-75 Daska by-election re-polls and announced a new date of April 10. Earlier ECP had announced to hold by-election on March 18.

The Election Commission has issued special instructions to the Punjab government regarding the by-election of Daska and said that after the suspension and transfer of district officers, new officers need time to understand the situation ordering to appoint administrative officers on vacant posts. On the other hand, the Election Commission, while issuing a detailed decision on the by-election of NA-75 Daska, said that the election held on February 19 was not transparent and free. The ECP in its decision said that Form 45 of 20 polling stations, which were tampered, was received late. The presiding officers were frightened and made excuses. The absence of polling staff casts doubt on the results. The decision said that there were major violations of election laws during the by-elections in NA-75. Transfers were banned by the Election Commission in the constituency.

Shahzad Shaukat, counsel for the ruling party, argued that earlier there was a consensus that repolling should be held only at 23 polling stations of the constituency and even Prime Minister Imran Khan had called for re-election at these selected polling stations rather than in the entire NA-75, Daska.

"But when the PML-N changed its stance and started demanding that fresh by-election be held in the entire constituency, the election commission, too, shifted its ground," he said.

Order placed for Cansino Bio vaccine

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan is expected to receive the first batch of Chinese vaccine Ad5-nCoV vaccine (Cansino Bio) for COVID-19 within a week after it placed an order for the single-dose vaccine.

"We have placed an order for the purchase of CanSino Biologics Inc.'s single-dose vaccine and its first tranche of 60,000 doses is expected to be delivered to Pakistan within a week," an official of the National Health Services told The News but added that no exact date of vaccine delivery could be given at the moment.

The official, according to the publication, said the single-dose vaccine could be administered to people of all ages as it was found effective among people from 18 to 80 plus years of age during trials in Pakistan and other countries of the world.

The NHS official added that one-dose was 'logistically very good' for deployment in countries like Pakistan. The official further disclosed that the CanSino Biologics Inc.'s vaccine would also be "manufactured partially in Pakistan", following its successful conclusion of trials at five leading health institutions in the country.



RAWALPINDI: Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan, Chief of Air Staff (CAS), paid farewell call on General Nadeem Raza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi. Chairman JCSC thanked CAS for his services to the Nation during a long and illustrious career. - DNA

UK rejects EU claims of vaccine blocking

LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday rejected claims from European Council chief Charles Michel that the country had imposed a ban on Covid vaccine exports.

"Let me be clear, we have not blocked the export of a single Covid-19 vaccine or vaccine components," he told parliament.

"This pandemic has put us all on the same side in the battle for global health. We oppose vaccine nationalism in all its forms."

Johnson's comments came after London summoned an EU diplomat and wrote to Michel to protest about his

claim made in a newsletter. Michel wrote that the UK and US had "imposed an outright ban on the export of vaccines or vaccine components produced on their territory".

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab called the claims "completely false" and Michel later backtracked.

But Nicole Mannion, deputy head of the EU mission to the UK, was summoned to the foreign ministry for a meeting to "set the record straight" on Wednesday morning. A European official told AFP on condition of anonymity that a response was being prepared. - APP

Japan marks 10th anniversary of Great Earthquake

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government and the people of Japan will commemorate the 10th anniversary of the devastating Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami that struck the north-eastern coast of the country in 2011, causing colossal loss of human lives and property while rendering thousands of people homeless.

While paying tributes to the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake, H.E. MATSUDA Kuminori, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, in his message on the occasion, has renewed his deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Government and the people of Pakistan for their generous support to the Japanese people during that difficult time of their lives. We deeply appreciate the Government and the people of Pakistan for their generous and unwavering support in the aftermath of earthquake and tsunami in 2011, said the Ambassador.

"After the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, many of the foreigners were evacuated from Tokyo, but a group of Pakistani expatriates living in Japan including the Tokyo Metropolitan area took a risk to visit all the way to disaster struck areas of Japan to provide food and warm blankets to the affected Japanese people.

That was a great act of valor and sympathy for the fellow humans and Japan will never ever forget about this strong friendship and empathy shown by the Pakistani expatriates living in Japan. Ten years have passed after that fateful incident but the support extended by the Pakistani residents in Japan at that difficult time is still fresh in the hearts and minds of the people of Japan", said Ambassador MATSUDA.

The Ambassador further added that Japan and Pakistan have many good things in common but one challenge both countries have in common is the occurrence of natural disasters.

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LARGEST CIRCULATED DIPLOMATIC MAGAZINE