



Islamabad POST

Friday, May 28, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

Pak, Azerbaijan have time-tested relations, says Amb. Alizada

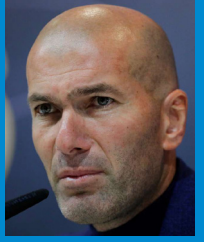
Detailed News On Page-08

New policy on cards for film industry

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Zidane resigns as Real Madrid manager

Detailed News On Page-06



UNSC inaction breeding distrust, laments Bozkir

– Says Pakistan should bring Kashmir issue to the UN more strongly; prime minister appreciated Bozkir's role

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: President of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Volkan Bozkir said the Palestine issue worldwide had received more political win than the J&K dispute and suggested Pakistan to bring the issue of the latter to the UN platform "more strongly".

Volkan Bozkir met Prime Minister Imran and the two held discussions on regional and international peace and security, sustainable development and economic recovery efforts in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to a statement by the Prime Minister's Office, the premier and UNGA president exchanged thoughts on Palestine, the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, Afghan peace process, and illicit financial flows from proceeds of crime, corruption and bribery.

The prime minister appreciated Bozkir's role in convening the special session of the UNGA on the situation in Palestine, emphasising the need for a "just and lasting solution in line

President confers Hilal-e-Pakistan upon Bozkir

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday at a Special Investiture Ceremony, the President conferred the Award of 'Hilal-e-Pakistan' on Mr Bozkir. The award was conferred in recognition of Mr Bozkir's outstanding services for the promotion of international peace, security and sustainable development, in his capacity as the President of the United Nations General Assembly.

President Alvi expressed Pakistan's strong commitment to the central role of the United Nations in upholding multilateralism to foster peace, prosperity and harmony around the globe. He expressed these views during a meeting with President of the United Nations General Assembly (PGA), Volkan Bozkir here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. During the meeting, views were exchanged on a wide range of issues.

The President also called for the implementation of the UN resolutions that affirmed the inalienable right to self-determination of the peoples of Palestine and Jammu and Kashmir. To mitigate the social and economic impacts of Covid-19 on the developing countries, he underscored the importance of ensuring universal and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccine.

with relevant UN resolutions and two-state vision".

Prime Minister Imran also underlined Pakistan's "strong commitment to multilateralism with the UN playing a central role". He highlighted the need

for increased international cooperation to deal with climate change and environmental degradation, and debt relief for developing countries as they dealt with the economic effects of the pandemic.

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For his part, Bozkir informed the prime minister about various initiatives the UNGA had taken during his presidency to address key international political and socioeconomic issues.

Earlier, Bozkir said the status of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute must not be changed unless resolved as per the resolutions of UN Security Council.

Addressing at a joint presser with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, the UNGA president said the resolution of Jammu and Kashmir lay with the implementation of the UN Charter and through peaceful means as decided between Pakistan and India under Simla Agreement.

The UNGA president urged the parties on both sides to "refrain from changing the status of the dispute" otherwise. Volkan Bozkir, who arrived here Wednesday on a three-day visit, focused his press conference on the issues of Palestine, Jammu and Kashmir, Afghanistan, and the role of UN in handling the conflicts.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi conferring the award of Hilal-e-Pakistan upon President UN General Assembly, Mr Volkan Bozkir, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

Pakistan rejects Indian allegations

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Responding to media queries regarding the comments made by Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at the Hoover Institution, the Spokesperson categorically rejected the allegations of any cross-border infiltration and stated that peace and security in the region was threatened on account of India's brutalization of Kashmiri people and refusal to resolve the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolutions, its own pledges to the international community and the Kashmiris.

India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019 in IIOJK were against international law and manifestly anti-peace. The movement against the Indian occupation and its state-sponsored terrorism in IIOJK is indigenous and is likely to continue till India decides to act in accordance with the UNSC resolutions, mandating a free and impartial plebiscite in the occupied territory.

'CPEC success is non-negotiable'

Chinese ambassador Nong Rong calls on NSA; vows to continue building a lasting partnership



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Nong Rong, called on National Security Adviser, Dr. Moeed Yusuf at his office today to discuss bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest.

National Security Adviser, Dr. Moeed Yusuf said that Pakistan and China have always enjoyed strong and close ties since the es-

establishment of diplomatic relations. He added that Pakistan and China have come even closer recently and are strategically aligned on the vision of growth and prosperity in the region. "Pakistan and China are moving in the same direction and synergizing their efforts to achieve the goal of peace and development in the region", he said.

Dr. Moeed Yusuf said that CPEC is a flagship project

whose success is non-negotiable for both countries. He remarked that CPEC fits perfectly with "Pakistan's geo-economic paradigm that is now the vision of the government." Ambassador Nong Rong vowed to continue building on the strong and long-lasting partnership between the two countries. He appreciated ongoing efforts to constantly improve the Pakistan-China relationship.

Briefs

Won't let anti-people budget pass

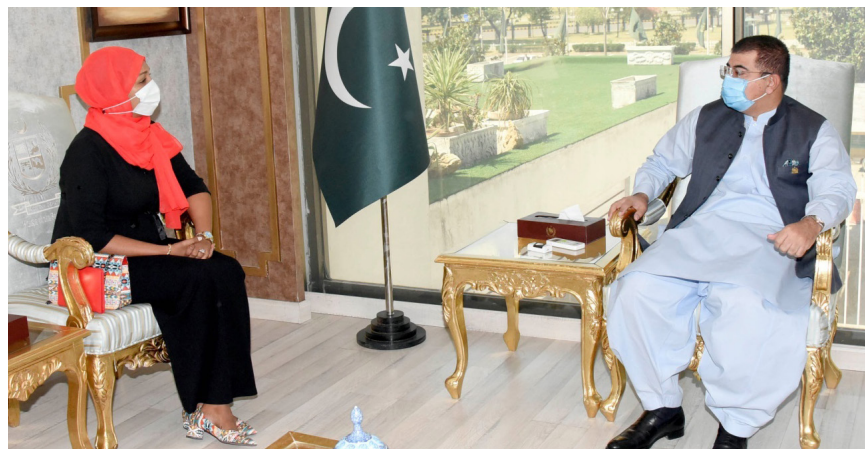
ABID RAZA

LAHORE: PML-N President and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif on Thursday said that he would not let the PTI-led government pass an "anti-people budget." In a statement, Shahbaz Sharif said that he would resist getting the budget approved because it is "against the public interest," adding that he has directed the party's economic advisory to hold a pre-budget seminar so that people can understand the reality of the economy.

"Economists will tell the nation the reality of the economy in the pre-budget seminar," said Shahbaz. "The masses are paying the price of the government's economic manipulation every day due to inflation."

Pak highly values ties with Somalia: Sanjrani

The Somalian ambassador conveyed gratitude over Pakistan's consistent support



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Trade, economic, public, and parliamentary ties with Somalia need to be further bolstered. Pakistan wants to further enhance bilateral bonds at the multi-faceted level with Mogadishu. Islamabad highly values its relationship with Somalia, Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani said while talking

to Somalian Envoy Khadija Mohammad El Makhzoumi, who called on Chairman Senate here at Parliament House on Thursday. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, important bilateral issues, regional situations, trade and economic ties between the two countries were discussed in detail. The two sides discussed a wide range of issues with a focus on 'Pakistan-Somalia relations and mutual support at multilateral fora.

"The two countries have always supported each other's stance on various issues on international forum, which is commendable. Pakistan appreciates Somalia's support for Pakistan in the UN Security Council. Islamabad wants lasting peace and prosperity in Somalia", Sanjrani maintained.

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PM tarnishing country's image: Bilawal

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Prime Minister Imran Khan has enslaved the whole nation to the international lenders and put the country's future at stake, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhatto said Thursday.

Bilawal, in a statement, said PM Imran Khan is carrying a "begging bowl" to Washington, Riyadh, Dubai, and Beijing, "tarnishing" the country's prestige. The PPP chairman said the prime minister was putting the country at risk for generations to come by running the state's economy on loans.

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President Arif Alvi lauds outgoing Malaysian ambassador's services

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that Pakistan attaches significant importance to its ties with Malaysia as the two countries enjoy excellent relations in various fields and unanimity of views on regional and international issues. He underscored the need for increasing cooperation in the areas of trade, culture and technology for the mutual benefits of the two brotherly countries. He made these remarks while talking to the outgoing High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Mr. Ikram Bin Mohammad Ibrahim, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Thursday. Talking to the High Commis-



ISLAMABAD: The outgoing High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Ikram Bin Mohammad Ibrahim, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

sioner, the President said that there existed tremendous amounts of goodwill between the two countries and bilateral cooperation needed

to be further expanded for the mutual advantages of the two sides. He stated that Pakistan offered tremendous investment opportuni-

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Briefs

Govt. to provide EVM facility to PBC: Fawad

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Thursday said that the government would provide Electronic Voting Machine (EVMs) to Punjab Bar Council (PBC) for its elections.

Talking to the delegation of PBC he said the council would be briefed about electronic voting process along with Advisor to Prime Minister on Parliamentarians Affairs Dr Babar Awan and Senator Barrister Ali Zafar. PBC delegation had requested the biometric voting facility for its elections.

Fawad said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was well aware of the lawyers' problems and resolving their issues was its top priority. He said that a proposal was under consideration to provide upto Rs. one million loan to young lawyers under Kamyab Jawan Programme. The government was taking steps to establish housing colonies for lawyers while a proposal to provide health cards to lawyers was also under consideration.

He urged the legal community to play a leading role on national issues. The members of Punjab Bar Council apprised the minister about their problems and Chaudhry Fawad Hussain assured them to resolve their issues on priority basis. — APP

Three more development projects at UAF

ISLAMABAD: Three more development projects including Pak-Korea Nutrition Center (PKNC), National Center for Genome Editing (NCGE) and Agri. Mechanization Project worth Rs. 2.5 billion have been approved for implementation at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad with effect from FY 2021-22 by CDWP, DDWP and PDWP respectively.

According to a UAF press release, it was revealed at budget meeting of the UAF that was chaired by Registrar Tariq Mehmud Gill while Treasurer Umer Saeed Qadri inquired the different financial related issues of the different departments. The house applauded the efforts made by Director Planning & Development Irfan Abbas in this regard. Umar Saeed said that all possible measures are being taken to address the problems of the campus community. He added that the university transportation vehicles had been repaired for the facilitations of the campus community. He said that modern financial methods are being adopted to make the system more effective and transparent. He added that sports activities would be more strengthened at par with the international standards in the campus. Registrar Tariq Mehmud Gill said that the approval of such giant projects is a great success. — APP

India replicating Israeli model in IIOJK, says Afridi

Non-local Indians are being given tourism opportunities while jungles are also being leased to people from mainland India while Kashmiris are being refused

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Kashmir Committee Shehryar Khan Afridi Thursday said that Indian occupational regime was replicating the Israeli occupational model in Jammu and Kashmir and the world must stand up to prevent another Palestine being removed from planet earth. Addressing the participants of a seminar titled 'Palestine and Kashmir Crisis: Call for Justice', held jointly by Kashmir Committee and Muslim Institute at PIPS, Afridi said that before August, 5, 2019, the Indian regime had sent its top Police and civil bureaucrats posted in Jammu and Kashmir to Israel for learning, training and then brought back to replicate the Israeli

model in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that among those included infamous police officer, Imtiaz Hussain, who is blamed for killing 200 Kashmiri Muslims. Imtiaz Hussain was sent to Israel to understand the Israeli security system before August 5, 2019 and on return he was posted as security in-charge in Srinagar to suppress protests in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the disposition of local population from Jammu and Kashmir was another area where India is learning from Israeli regime and India is replicating the same in Kashmir.

"Settler colonial project of Israel is being implemented in Jammu and Kashmir in blatant violation of UN resolutions. 40,00,000 new domicile certificates have been

issued out of which 500,000 issued to people from mainland India who never visited Kashmir.

Non-local Indians are being given tourism opportunities while jungles are also being leased to people from mainland India while Kashmiris are being refused. Gulmarg hotels are being refused to locals and India is leasing those to Indians now. India is economically strangulating Kashmiris and dispossessing the Kashmiris in blatant violation of the UN resolutions," he added.

He said in a bid to cement the military occupation on Kashmir, militarisation process is being pushed to a new high and new bunkers are being constructed with concrete material on sides of roads and streets.

There is 400 percent increase in bunkers post

August 5, 2019 and the military men harass the Kashmiri people on streets on one pretext or another just to provoke them. India has imposed military lockdown in guise of Covid-19 lockdown," he said.

He said Modi regime is silencing the genuine voices and rights activists in Kashmir, depriving families from their very basic livelihood opportunities in a fascist manner.

The Indian authorities have illegally and illogically terminated the services of many Muslim government officials in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the Indian authorities have set up a Special Task Force (STF) to initiate action against government employees on their social work and pro-freedom senti-

ments, beating youth to the submission.

The belligerent Modi regime in IIOJK had completed a list of 1000 Muslim employees for the termination and it is reported that more than 500 govt employees are being terminated from their services in IIOJK since Aug 5, 2019.

"The purpose behind the termination is to make Kashmiris subservient to New Delhi. Furthermore, Modi regime is hell-bent to kill the economy of Kashmir and is using various tools to keep naive people away from the benefits of their own resources," he added.

Other distinguished speakers included AJK President Masood Khan, President Muslim Institute Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Ali, Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan Ahmad Rabaie,

Ambassador of Turkey to Pakistan, Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Ali Fikrat Oglu Alizada and Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anleeb Abbas.

Speakers observed that Kashmir and Palestine issues present examples of worst human rights violations in the contemporary world. Both of the issues are outstanding and as old as the United Nations itself but yet they remain unresolved.

Indian forces in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Israeli forces in Occupied Palestine are violating international laws and committing crimes against humanity.

During past few weeks Palestinians people were targeted by the Israeli forces.

2 children handed over to mothers

FAISALABAD: A court handed over two children to their mothers after recovering from the custody of their fathers.

According to details, Kiran Shahzadi filed a petition contending that her husband, Asghar resident of Siddiq Akbar Town had kicked her out and snatched minor child- Rubab forcibly. Similarly, Parveen Ramzan filed another petition contending that her husband, Akmal, snatched her minor girl, Fatima, forcibly.

After hearing the petitions, District & Sessions Judge Rana Masood Akhtar directed Mansoor Abad police to recover children from the custody of their fathers. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Usman Dar, SAPM on Youth Affairs called on Asim Saleem Bajwa, Chairman CPEC Authority at his office in Islamabad today. Syed Javed Hassan Shah, Chairman NAVTTC was also present in the meeting. — DNA

Khidmat Aap ke Dahleez Par kicks off in Faisalabad

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: On the special directions of the CM Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar the "Khidmat Aap ke Dahleez Par" program has kicked off in the district. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali formally inaugurated the first week by sweeping with broom on the road outside the office of Faisalabad Waste Management Company. Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters Muhammad Khalid, CO Waste Management Company Kashif Raza Awan, General Manager Operations Col. Emad Iqbal Gul, Deputy Manager Muteeb Virk, Incharge District Control Room Muhammad Sadiq and other officers were present. Speaking to media persons on the occasion of the inauguration ceremony, the Deputy Commissioner said that the program "Khidmat Aap Ki Dahleez Par" would continue for three weeks in which cleanliness of roads, inside the streets and Street lights will be repaired. He said that

in the second week sewage drains and public toilets will be cleaned and in the third week, cleaning of government buildings, whitewash, parks and green Belts will be beautified.

He told the citizens through the media to point out their problems on the "App" in this

regard, go to the Play Store and download the "Khidmat Aap ki Dahleez Par" app. He said that the aim of the program is to solve the basic problems of the people and improve the municipal services. He said that the public should give their feedback on the activities taking place in

the program at their doorstep. Reiterating his commitment, he said that all possible measures would be made to make district clean and beautiful. He clarified that the functioning of all the concerned departments would also be reviewed on a daily basis during the program.



FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali sweeping the road after inaugurates the Program Khidmat Aap Ki Dahleez Par. — DNA

PM urged to remove RD, ACD on yarn & reduce turnover tax

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan Yarn Merchants Association (PYMA) has urged Prime Minister Imran Khan to remove additional customs duty (ACD), regulatory duty (RD) on basic raw material synthetic yarns for making the textile industry competitive in international markets, and also requested to reduce turnover tax on yarn traders, so that trade and industry can be restored to normal and exports can boost, which is already affected by COVID-19 pandemic.

In a meeting at PYMA, Hanif Lakhany, Vice President, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Senior Vice Chairman Pakistan Yarn Merchants Association (PYMA) and Farhan Ashrafi, Vice Chairman PYMA, convener FPCCI's Central Standing Committee on Yarn Trading with members managing committee, discussed the negative effects

of COVID-19 pandemic on trade and industry

The meeting was attended by a large number of members of the Managing Committee including Muhammad Usman, Khurshid Sheikh, Javed Khanani, Khurram Bharara, Sohail Nisar, Rizwan Deewan, Anis Mandavia, Adnan Riaz, Junaid Teli, Tanveer Pasha, Bilal Bakhsh, Abdullah and others.

Hanif Lakhany, Farhan Ashrafi said that due to skyrocketing prices of cotton and yarn in the local markets, the production cost of the textile industry has increased, which is the backbone of the country's economy.

"PYMA has repeatedly demanded the federal government that if the state really wants to increase exports, it must provide relief to the export oriented industries by reducing the taxes & duties so that exporters will be able to compete in the ongoing prices in world markets", they added.

GCWUF holds int'l conference on food security

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Two-day International Conference entitled "Dynamic Strategies in Plant Sciences for Crop Sustainability and Food Security" has been organized on May 26-27, 2021 (virtually on Zoom) by Department of Botany, Government College Women University Faisalabad, Pakistan.

The aim of the conference was to provide an international forum for the academicians, researchers, managers, industrial participants, and students to share their research findings with global experts. Botanists from various countries i.e., Pakistan, Canada, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Kingdom, France, and Australia keenly participated in the conference. Eminent speakers, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Ruhu Mermut, Prof. Dr. Stephen C. Fry, Prof. Dr. Peter Kettlewell, Prof. Dr. Munazza Gull, Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, Dr. Odile Berge, Khawar Sohail Siddiqui, and Dr. Zabta Khan Shinwari graced the event by delivering thoughtful keynote lectures. Scientists highlighted the current challenges faced by agriculture sector which are having adverse effects on food security.

They highlighted the problem of food security as global challenge, by stating that in 2030 a huge gap is expected between food demand and supply. They also suggested the real-world solutions of problems faced by scientists and farmers and emphasized that crop sustainability must be given top priority.

LWMC Kicks off sanitation week in city

LAHORE: Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) Thursday kicked off sanitation week under Punjab Government's initiative "Khidmat Aap Ki Dahleez Par" (service at your doorstep). The purpose of this sanitation week is to take extraordinary cleaning measures in the provincial capital.

LWMC CEO Imran Ali Sultan paid multiple visits across the city including Thokar Niaz Baig, Multan Road, Data Darbar, Sabzazar, Johar Town, Allama Iqbal Town, Ferozpur Road, Muslim Town, Chaurji, Lakshmi Chowk, Circular Road and other areas. He inspected the performance of workforce and deployment of machinery in field. He issued instructions to carry out special cleanliness arrangements around public and private hospitals, mosques, churches, main roads, government offices, parks and commercial markets. He said that field teams were working in two shifts while in the third shift, mechanical sweeping and washing would further be enhanced.

The CEO LWMC said that cleanliness was top priority and department was using all available resources to ensure exceptional sanitation services in the city. He urged the citizens to dispose of their waste properly instead of littering and illegal dumping. — APP

Punjab launches 'Service at your doorstep' drive

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Special plan of public awareness and outreach has been chalked out to project public welfare oriented programme of Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Bazar with the name of Service at your doorstep. Director General Public Relations Punjab Saman Rai in a curter raiser at DGPR Production House & Studios shairing the details of the Media Management Plan as a Curtain Raiser said that the Public Relations Practitioners of DGPR, who have high professionalism and expertise across Punjab, will conduct publicity methodology at the inaugural functions of the special program at all district headquarters on Thursday. She said that the purpose of this program was to create awareness among the people about health and hygiene as well as to be initiated by Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Bazar



and achieve the objectives of this special program. Saman Rai was of the view that Community Development programs can only be made successful with public support and full participation and media will highlight the performance of the institutions that bring services to

the doorstep of the people on daily basis.

She said that the Public Relations Department is the body of the Punjab Government which communicates the performance of all the departments and organizations of the government to the people through the media.

She further revealed that DGPR has been upgraded under which the social and digital media of the department is being activated and a studio has been set up to impart accurate and timely information to all medium of mass communication which has started regular working and with the help of this studio, content for social and electronic media will be developed. Saman Rai said that Khidmat aap ki dahleez per is a program which will reflect like a mirror of public service. She said Information department will play its role in updating media about every stage of implementation of programme.

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Briefs

PTA receives Rs. 15.82 bln of license renewal fee

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has received Rs. 15.82 billion against second installment of License Renewal Fee from two Cellular Mobile Operators (CMOs); Telenor Pakistan and Pakistan Mobile Communication Ltd. (Jazz). The amount is being deposited in Federal Consolidated Fund (FCF) as per practice under Pakistan Telecom Re-organization Act 1996, said a news release. PTA has so far deposited Rs 135.81 billion with the government, received against 50% of total License Renewal Fee and first installment of the same from three CMOs. With the amount of second installment received from two CMOs now, the total receipts on this count have become Rs 151.63 billion (USD 965.39 million). The second license renewal fee installment of CMPAK (ZONG) for USD 54.086 will be due in October 2021. - APP

FDE directs AEO's to vaccinate staff

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) has directed all the Area Education Officers (AEOs) to ensure the vaccination of teaching and non-teaching staff of the educational institutions in ICT in their respective areas. According to a notification issued by FDE, it is stated that NCOC has taken decision that vaccination of all teaching and non-teaching staff will have to be ensured and in this regard compliance is needed by 5 percent of June, 2021.

It is therefore advised that every AEO must ensure that all teaching and non-teaching staff of their respective sectors get themselves vaccinated on priority basis in their nearest vaccination facility centres or visit Mass Vaccination Centre established in F-9 Park, Islamabad which has 75 counters, with the capacity to inoculate 7,000 people daily, it added. If not done already, everyone must immediately register for vaccination by sending their CNIC number through SMS to 1166. All Heads of Institutions shall be responsible for implementation and timely provision of data to respective Area Education Office, the notification mentioned.

All Area Education Officers are requested to ensure its implementation in true letter and spirit and submit the compliance report as on 26-05-2021, 31-05-2021 and final report on 04-06-2021 as per the given format.

50 Covid-19 infections reported in 24 hours

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: As many as 50 more COVID-19 positive cases were reported during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 26,086 in the district. As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here Thursday, the total infected cases included 24,093 from Rawalpindi and 1993 from other districts.

"Presently 101 confirmed patients were admitted to various city facilities, counting 21 in Holy Family Hospital, 16 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 31 in Institute of Urology, 25 in Fauji Foundation Hospital, 4 in Bilal Hospital, 3 in Hearts International Hospital, and one in Akhtar Rukhsana Memorial hospital," the health authority report said.

District Health Authority informed that so far 24,266 patients were discharged after recovery and 1788 were quarantined including 1023 at home and 765 in isolation centers. The report updated that 1247 people have lost their battle of life so far due to this deadly disease with 954 belonged to Rawalpindi and 293 from other districts.

Indonesian envoy stresses people-to-people contacts

Prof. Dr. Asif Ali, Vice Chancellor, MNS University of Agriculture, Multan meets Ambassador Tugio

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A meeting was held between Prof. Dr. Asif Ali, Vice Chancellor, MNS University of Agriculture, Multan, Adam M. Tugio, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Pakistan and Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad. The meeting was held at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Islamabad and Prof. Irfan Ahmed Baig, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, MNS University of Agriculture, Multan was also present during the meeting. During the meeting, areas of mutual collaborations were discussed. It was de-



cidated MNS University of Agriculture, Multan will work in collaboration with various universities and academic institutions in Indonesia. Furthermore, various possibilities will also be explored for cooperation in the agriculture sector. It was also agreed that CGSS will facilitate academic collaborations between the MNS Agriculture University of Multan and academic Institutions in Indonesia to promote joint research opportunities and exchange of relevant expertise. Adam M. Tugio, was of the view that people to people contacts must be promoted to build better partnerships between Pakistan and Indonesia. He also appreciated CGSS for its instrumental role in promoting Pakistan's true potential in the region.

Wafaqi Mohtasib disposes of 91% complaints

ISLAMABAD: The Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat has disposed of around 91 per cent complaints it received against different departments during a three months period, from January to March-2021. According to an official report, the Wafaqi Mohtasib received as many as 25,145 complaints against various departments including power distribution companies, NADRA, Sui gas companies, Pakistan Postal Services, AIOU, PBM, State Life Insurance Company and EOBI, out of which it resolved 22,878 during first quarter of the current calendar year. As per the breakup, there were 10,859 complaints against power distribution companies, 1,080 against NADRA, 5,038 against Sui gas companies, 418 against Pakistan Postal Services, 640 against AIOU, 234 against State Life Insurance Corporation, 235 against PBM and 247 against EOBI. - APP

Korean envoy meets Minister Fakhar Imam

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Suh Sangpyo paid a courtesy call upon the Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Syed Fakhar Imam at his office here in Islamabad. Suh Sangpyo was accompanied by the Country Director of the Korea Program for International Cooperation in Agricultural Technology (KOPIA), Dr. Cho Gyoung-rae and both sides discussed the possibilities of transfer of advanced agricultural technologies, skills development of Pakistani agronomists and avenues for enhanced agricultural exports between the Republic of Korea and Pakistan at length.



AIOU declares intermediate results

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced results of intermediate programs offered in autumn 2020 semester. The students, enrolled in these programs, may access their result on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk). Provisional result cards are also being dispatched to the students through registered postal services. Moreover, university has completed the process of dispatching course books to the students enrolled in matriculation and intermediate programs offered in spring 2020 semester. - DNA

'Pakistan-China-Afghan trilateral co-op will lead to regional development

ISLAMABAD: The speakers at a panel discussion on Thursday stressed that trilateral cooperation between Pakistan, China and Afghanistan could lead to development and ensure peace in the region. The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at the ISSI on Pakistan-China-Afghanistan: Prospects of Trilateral Cooperation for Regional Stability' virtually gathered thinkers and intellectuals to deliberate upon the aspects of cooperation. Ambassador Omar Samad, non-resident Senior Fellow Atlantic Council said China had made it clear that it was dedicated to improve connectivity and build an open inclusive world community. The Afghan conflict, he said, serves as a distraction to the economic connectivity of the region. He said for China, the CPEC and China-Central Asia corridor are both crucial for the success of Belt and Road Initiative and in their junction, lies Afghanistan. Ambassador Masood Khalid, former ambassador to China said China wants Afghanistan and Pakistan to work hard to overcome misgivings about each other. Depending on the ground situation, China will be willing to help Afghanistan in socio-economic development, he added. - DNA

2 Gangs held, looted items recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Noon police team has arrested seven criminals of two gangs involved in several snatching and street crime incidents. Police spokesman told Thursday that SSP (Operations) Islamabad police, Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanweer had categorically directed all the Zonal SPs to accelerate their efforts to arrest the accused involved in street crime and snatching incidents. Following these directions, SP (Industrial-Area) Fida Hussain Satti constituted police teams under supervision of SDPO Sabzi Mandi, Muhammad Nawaz Bhatti also including SHO Noon police station Sub-Inspector Ishaq Hussain Shah and other police officials. - APP

ICCI presents budget proposals to the govt



ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has presented its budget proposals to the government with the demand that these proposals should be incorporated in the federal budget 2021-22 in order to facilitate the growth of business and economic activities in the country. Chairing a meeting of the business community on budget proposals, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the chambers of commerce

& industry were the key stakeholders in the economy and government should always finalize the federal budget in consultation with their Presidents that would help in boosting business and economic activities. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that the highest slab of tax on rental income was up to 35%, which was putting extra burden on the taxpayers and urged that the government should reduce it to 10% that would promote tax culture, avoid tax evasion, reduce shop and office rents and help improve tax revenue of the country. He said that the turnover tax on all man-

ufacturing sectors should be reduced across the board in the next budget from 1.5% to 0.5%. He said that the high GST has increased inflation and production cost in Pakistan, therefore, it should be reduced to at least 5% without input tax adjustment to help stimulate the ailing economy. He further said that the additional sales tax of 3% on industrial raw material should also be abolished to facilitate the revival of industrialization. He said that to enhance the tax base, the government should introduce a 2 per cent fixed tax for traders.

RCCI and IST to cement industry academia linkages



DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) and Institute of Space Technology (IST) has desired to join hands for further cementing industry academia linkages. "We have to make joint efforts with the industry to adapt ourselves to the requirements of the new age and tackle the challenges of the modern technology". These remarks were made during a delegation led by the Vice Chancellor of the Institute of Space Technology Major General (ret'd) Rehan Abdul Baqi during his visit to RCCI. The delegation included Registrar Engineer Ishaq Saboor, Dean Dr Ibrahim Qazi, Direc-

tor ORIC Ahmer Rafi and Additional Director Technical Coordination Colonel (ret'd) Farooq Akbar. Vice Chancellor Rehan Abdul Baqi said that the role of RCCI in promoting trade activities and industry academia linkages was commendable. He said that He said that entrepreneurship, start-ups, research and equipping industries with modern technologies will be developed in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce. RCCI President Nasir Mirza gave a briefing to the delegation on the ongoing activities of the Chamber and future programs. He said that the doors of RCCI are always open for the guidance of students. Mutual cooperation agreements (MOUs) have been signed with more than 24 universities with the aim of encouraging students towards business.



State Bank of Pakistan

Merit Scholarship Scheme (2020-21)

State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) offers financial assistance by way of Merit Scholarship to the talented and meritorious children of its serving/ retired/ deceased employees (up to OG-2 level) who are pursuing their studies at Intermediate, Graduation and Post-Graduation levels.

Applications for grant of scholarships under Merit Scholarship Scheme 2020-21 are invited from eligible candidates on the prescribed form.

Eligibility for SBP Merit Scholarship

1. Courses and Subjects:

All disciplines for Intermediate, Graduation, Post-Graduation and Diplomas (duration minimum six months).

2. Educational Institutions:

The award of scholarships for Intermediate, Graduation, Post-Graduation and Diploma courses will be considered for only those students who have taken admission in Colleges, Universities, Degree Awarding Institutions (DAIs)/Technical Training Institutes duly recognized by the relevant authority/ body (HEC, BIEK, BISE, IBCC, NAVTTC, PEC, PMDC, TEVTA etc.).

3. Levels of Scholarship:

Enrolled in Program	Previous Qualification	Amount
Intermediate	Matric/O-levels	Rs. 6,160
Graduation	Intermediate/A-levels	Rs. 7,840
Post-Graduation	Graduate Degree	Rs. 11,200

4. Eligibility Criteria:

- Children of SBP employees (serving/retired/deceased) up to OG-2 level who have passed their last exams (Matriculation/O-levels/Intermediate/A-levels/Graduation/Diploma) in any year with minimum "B" grade or at least 60% marks.
- In case of grades mentioned in GPA/CGPA format, the candidate must provide certificate from the concerned institution stating the grading policy with GPA's corresponding percentages and minimum GPA requirements.
- The candidates must have secured admission in recognized educational institutions during the calendar year 2019 and afterwards.
- The students are not in receipt of scholarship from any other institution or the Government.
- Duration of the enrolled program must be mentioned clearly on the application form and supported with documentary evidence from educational institution.
- Minimum duration of diplomas should be 6 months

5. Admissibility/ Withdrawal:

- The scholarship will be granted in order of merit and in accordance with the prescribed quota for each course to those candidates who strictly meet all the eligibility conditions mentioned in this advertisement.
- Scholarships under this scheme cannot be claimed for same level of education twice.
- Disbursement of scholarship during each subsequent year/semester will be subject to submission of progress report of the last examination undertaken by the student.
- The scholarship will be withdrawn where children fail or do not appear in the examination.

Application Procedure:

Eligible candidates may submit their applications to Mr. Amjad Ali, Sr. Joint Director, Human Resources Department, State Bank of Pakistan, I. I. Chundrigar Road, Karachi-74000, latest by June 30, 2021. Application Form can be downloaded by accessing the link <https://www.sbp.org.pk/Scholarship/App-Forms-Merit-Scho.PDF>.

Briefs

Chinese companies obtain MDMA from PTA

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: At least 19 mobile manufacturing companies including top Chinese mobile manufacturers have obtained Mobile Device Manufacturing Authorizations (MDMA) from Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) for the local production of mobile devices (2G/3G/4G) in the country, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday.

According to PTA, MDMA would be initially valid for the next ten years while the manufacturers may also "establish their own new brand under the authorization, helping in promotion of 'Manufactured in Pakistan' culture".

According to an official document obtained by Gwadar Pro, China's Oppo, Infinix, Iteel, Techno, Vivo and Realme are amongst the foreign mobile manufacturers that received MDMA.

All these companies would manufacture devices supporting 4G. Alcatel, the French/Chinese brand of mobile handsets jointly owned by China's TCL Technology and Finnish's Nokia has also obtained MDMA. Fiji Mobile is the only non-Chinese foreign company that has received MDMA.

Phones produced by these manufacturers will be sold in Pakistan and could be exported to other competitive markets of the region and beyond.

Passing out parade of Punjab Rangers held

ZUBAIR AHMAD

RAWALPINDI: Passing out parade ceremony of the 29th Course of Pakistan Rangers Punjab was held at Mandi Bahauddin, quoting Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

Director General Punjab Rangers Major General Aamir Majeed Mughal was the chief guest at the event. A smartly turned-out contingent of Rangers troops presented guard of honor to the chief guest.

As many as 1953 recruits passed the tests. The DG Rangers Punjab distributed gifts among the cadets who showed extraordinary performance during their training. Addressing the ceremony, Major General Aamir Majeed Mughal congratulated the soldiers & their families on the successful completion of their training.

The DG Rangers Punjab urged the cadets to secure the eastern border. "Ensure law and order from Gilgit to Kashmir." He further said that safeguarding important installations of the state is also our responsibility.

Police arrested 12 anti-social elements

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: Police have arrested here twelve anti-social elements including seven drug peddlers, three proclaimed offenders and two gamblers.

Police recovered 7.805 kg charrs, three litre liquor, and other valuables from their possession.

All have been booked under the act and have been sent behind the bars.

Those arrested include Muhammad Ismail, Zubair Mehmood, Alabaz, Noor Muhammad, Mehboob Elahi, Faisal Naveed, Ghulam Ahmad and Ansar Mehmood, Zafarullah, Ilyas, Said Rehman and Sabz Ali.

Meanwhile Saleem s/o Yasen died on the spot when the bike he was traveling by was hit by a truck on GT Road near Gondal. Rescue 1122 shifted his dead body to THQ Hospital Hazro.

In another incident a house caught fire because of short circuit in village Mari Kanjoor. Rescue 1122 fire tenders controlled the fire.

Reportedly valuables worth Rs 0.3 million were burnt to ashes.

Uzbekistan keen to expand scientific ties with Pakistan

Prof. Dr. Asif Ali, Vice-Chancellor, MNS University of Agriculture, Multan meets Aybek A. Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: A meeting was held between Prof. Dr. Asif Ali, Vice-Chancellor, MNS University of Agriculture, Multan, H.E. Aybek A. Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, and Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad. The meeting was held at the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islamabad and Prof. Irfan Ahmed Baig, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, MNS University of Agriculture, Multan was also present during the meeting.

During the meeting, H. E. Aybek A. Usmanov appreciated the significant role of Center for Global &



Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad in bridging the gap between the academic institutions of Pakistan and Uzbekistan. The development of academic linkages between the two countries is fundamental for a holistic regional connectivity. Furthermore, areas of mutual interest particularly research, stu-

dent exchange programs, and faculty exchange programs were discussed. Furthermore, it was decided that joint academic initiatives will be taken by the three institutions. Additionally, Prof. Dr. Asif Ali and H. E. Aybek A. Usmanov also discussed the exchange of knowledge, technology, research, and expertise in areas of cotton, wheat, and other crops growing were discussed. Moreover, the growing and export of these crops was also finalized between the two institutions. Lastly, enhancing connectivity in sectors of trade and commerce between the two countries was also highlighted. It was also decided that collaborations between MNS University of Agriculture, Multan and relevant institutions of Uzbekistan will also be supported.



ISLAMABAD: Zafar Bakhtawari Secretary General United Business Group is Presenting flower bouquet to Naseem Ur Rehman to congratulate him on the election of Senator Faisal Saleem. Senator Faisal Saleem, President UBG Zubair Tufail, Abdul Rouf Alam and Sohail Altaf are also present. - DNA

IPS' study on 'Forced Conversions' discussed in KU

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In an online interactive session organized by Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) in collaboration with the Department of Mass Communication, Karachi University, students of media research deliberated on the methodology and findings of a recent IPS' study titled 'Forced Conversions or Faith Conversion: Reality and Rhetoric' with its researchers.

Dr. Ghulam Hussain Sufi, IPS research officer and author of the study, Syed Nadeem Farhat, senior research officer at IPS, responded to the questions and comments of the media research students, whereas Samina Qureshi, assistant professor, mass communication, moderated the discussion.

Busting the so-called forced conversion myth in Pakistan, Sufi Ghulam Hussain said marriage is the prime reason behind such conversions as Islam does not allow Muslims to tie the knot outside their religion. Hence, faith conversion is

instead a ritualistic need for a converter, he added. The baseline study, Hussain said, analyzed the content of around three dozen reports of various rights organizations.

He added that these reports are often presented as evidence for alleging that there is an organized and systematic effort to forcibly convert non-Muslims to Islam. However, he contended in the study that these reports lack any primary or empirical data.

Such reports, the study claims, rely on clichés cited from other reports which too have been prepared without any evidence. At most, he said, some reports had based themselves on anecdotal evidence taken from newspaper reports and political statements but they still do not independently verify the allegations of forced conversions from 'the supposed victims and so-called perpetrators'. Claims in these reports are tautological and make circular arguments based on unverified, unverifiable secondary sources, the study noted.

Private sector key to unlock Pak economic potential

The report, the Pakistan CPSD, says Pakistan has tremendous untapped economic potential that may be realized through key policy actions to help create new market opportunities

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan can foster a more innovative, competitive and entrepreneurial economy and reinvigorate growth by addressing critical constraints that are limiting private sector investment, according to a new report from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the World Bank.

The report, the Pakistan Country Private Sector Diagnostic (CPSD), says Pakistan has tremendous untapped economic potential that may be realized through key policy actions to help create new market opportunities, mobilize private investments to create more jobs and help the country in coping with the impact of COVID-19 on its economy.

It highlights the urgent need for reforms given the COVID-19 pandemic and

the impact it has had on the country's private businesses, especially on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), that drive so much of Pakistan's economy. They make up about 90 percent of all businesses in the country, employing about 80 percent of the non-agricultural labor force but receives only seven percent of financial credit. At present most businesses are closed in keeping with restrictions due to the pandemic and scheduled lockdown.

It says while Pakistan has made impressive strides in reducing poverty, many people remain economically vulnerable and will struggle due to the COVID-19 crisis. While the need for reforms extends across the economic system, the report outlines three broad policy objectives to support private sector development. These include boosting institutional capacity and policy

coordination; strengthening competition and leveling the playing field; and spurring the development of a diversified and inclusive financial sector. The report says the reform agenda would generate higher returns if complemented by other initiatives to address systemic macroeconomic fragilities and increase both public and private investments in human capital.

"This report makes it clear there is no single reform that would turn the economy around, but equally it is clear that Pakistan's high dependency on consumption rather than investment and exports is a major cause of its boom-bust cycle of the economy," said Nadeem A. Siddiqui, IFC Senior Country Manager for Pakistan. "A private sector-led growth agenda needs to be equitable and benefit Pakistan's many small and medium-sized enterprises and also offer jobs and op-

portunities for the more than two million youth who join the labor force each year."

The report says that embarking on a robust public-private partnership (PPP) agenda could strengthen private participation in the country's development. A PPP-driven growth model not only offers the prospect of access to currently idle capital for investment, but also productivity gains stemming from adoption of advanced technologies and prudent management.

It also recommends greater participation of women in Pakistan's labor force for future growth prospects. Female labor participation in Pakistan stands at 26 percent, compared to 82 percent for men, much lower than the regional average. The Pakistan CPSD can be downloaded here. It was also guided by in-depth consultations with business leaders and public officials.

Sanjrani for promoting trade, ties Pak, Azerbaijan

Jubilee Medal of "100th Anniversary of Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan" Presented to Chairman Senate

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has underscored the need for a robust action plan to enhance trade and investment opportunities between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. The Chairman Senate expressed these views at reception held in connection with national day of Azerbaijan.

He also emphasized the need for making more efforts in order to boost the bilateral trade as it does not commensurate with close political ties between both the countries. Pakistan and Azerbaijan have great expertise to share and trade

in the fields of energy, defense, agriculture, natural resources, science and culture, there is need to adopt a robust Action plan for enhancing trade and investment opportunities.

He further said that ties between the two countries are based on historical cultural bonds, mutual respect and trust. He also extended his good wishes to the leadership, government parliament and people of Azerbaijan on their National Day. He thanked the ambassador for presentation of the jubilee Medal of 100th Anniversary of diplomatic service of the Republic of Azerbaijan. He said that it signifies the sincerest wishes of Azerbaijan to take our



diplomatic ties and friendship one step higher. He acknowledged the award and expressed gratitude to the leadership of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

He reiterated that Pakistan will continue to stand with Azerbaijan through its times of need, as Azerbaijan has stood by Pakistan in its times of need, particularly with its support on the Kashmir issue.

He expressed satisfaction that there is tremendous goodwill for each other at the leadership and official level which is also manifested in the people-to-people contact.

The Chairman Senate said that Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The two countries have since exchanged great support on critical issues through the respective political leadership.

"It is an honor and a privilege to be present here on the momentous occasion of the National Day of Azerbaijan" said Chairman Senate.

Chairman Senate observed that both Pakistan and Azerbaijan believe in peace and development therefore consider regional growth and prosperity a shared agenda. He said that regional connectivity is important for promoting socio-economic growth and both sides must prioritize linkages to boost trade and economic cooperation. He said that geographical location enhances significance of both the countries in the region and both can become hub of economic activity.

38 Sahulat Bazaars set up in RWP division

RAWALPINDI: In the light of confidence of the people on Ramzan bazaars, 38 Sahulat Bazaars have been set up in the Rawalpindi division on the instructions of the Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar Punjab here Thursday. Chairing a meeting to review the arrangements of Sahulat Bazaars, Commissioner Syed Gulzar Hussain Shah that 16 Bazaars were established in District Rawalpindi, six in Attock, seven in Jehlum and nine in District Chakwal for providing maximum relief to the deserving people.

The Commissioner said that the main objective of establishing Sahulat Bazaars was to ensure availability of essential food items to the residents at a subsidized rate. He said a 10 kg bag of flour would be available at a discounted rate of Rs 430 at the Bazaars.

The Commissioner said that this step of the government would discourage the profiteers and hoarders and the people would get their daily used items at affordable prices. He directed the officials concerned to ensure the COVID-19 SOPs at the Bazaars. - APP

PCSIR, IPO to promote patent culture

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) and Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO) joined hands to promote inventions and patent culture in Pakistan. In this regard both the organizations signed a document "Record of Arrangement (RoA)" during a ceremony held in the Ministry of Science and Technology.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by the Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Shibli Faraz.

The document was signed by Chairman Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Dr. Syed Hussain Abidi and Chairman IPO, Mr. Mujeeb Ahmad Khan.

The said activity is the result of directions of the Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Shibli Faraz to redefine patent culture in Pakistan in general and Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in particular.

On the occasion, the federal minister appreciated both the organizations and hoped that this cooperation will develop collaboration to promote innovation in the areas of scientific and technological research as well as strengthening of knowledge based economy. Under the scope of collaborative activities, both the organizations will share information and guide each other on Intellectual Property (IP) right protection, sharing of technical expertise, commercialization and licensing arrangements with the third parties.

96% work on THQ Murree completed

RAWALPINDI: Despite financial constraints, the Punjab government has completed 96 per cent renovation work of Tehsil Headquarter Hospital (THQ) Murree and the rest would be completed by the end of the financial year 2021.

Chief Executive Officer District Health Authority Dr. Faiza Kanwal told APP here Thursday that an amount of Rs 45.24 million has so far been spent on the renovation of the existing THQ hospital building out of the total Rs 49.25 mln allocated for the project.

She informed that improvement work on the first and 2nd floor has been completed while the installation of the heating system at the hospital is in the final stages that would be completed soon.

The CEO said that the state-of-the-art facility with additional amenities would be ready for the residents of the hill station and adjoining localities by June 2021. - APP

Visa facilitation

THE cabinet's approval of issuing separate visas to Chinese nationals who want to visit Pakistan for business purposes is the first step towards opening up the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) by streamlining the procedure for its users.

Visa policies are among the most significant governmental policies influencing bilateral and international trade. The development of policies and procedures for visas and other essential travel documents such as passports affect the volume of trade activities massively as a result. The economic development of developed countries informs us that a free and open international investment regime is vital for a stable and growing economy. Foreign investors view the ease with which they can travel to a country as a key indicator of how easy it will be to make or administer an investment. It is great seeing that the government realises that visa restrictions hinder cross-border travel deterring potential visitors and producing an inimical effect on trade and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). On the other hand, liberal visa policies facilitate business travels and encourage companies to engage in international trade. Since much of international trade requires personal contact with trading partners, visa facilitation for Chinese investors will render such physical contact easier for them with their trading partners in Pakistan.

Given that the ultimate aim behind the creation of CPEC is the free flow of goods and services, the government's initiative regarding the facilitation of Chinese nationals in getting visas easily and swiftly is a big and vital step to gain economic dividends from the corridor.

The visa facilitation policy for the citizens of China can work as a trial test in determining the efficacy of a liberal visa regime. As the goals of the economic corridor and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are to expand commercial and economic activities, China and Pakistan would have to expand such facilitation to the nationals of other states as well once CPEC develops even further and BRI becomes fully functional.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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ABC CERTIFIED

Vol: 02 Issue: 22

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Circular debt

THE government appears to be helpless in controlling the circular debt that has now swelled by Rs260 billion in the first ten months of the current fiscal. Though the government is claiming that it has controlled the buildup, the broader picture is not very convincing. According to the power division report for April 2021 that it submitted to the cabinet committee on energy, the buildup of circular debt from July 2020 to April 2021 was Rs260 billion. It is lower than the Rs449 billion buildup in the corresponding period of the last fiscal year, but this has happened mainly because of the power tariff increases meted out to consumers.

There are a couple of points that need the attention of the power managers of the country. First, the government must plan to make the power sector viable in the long run rather than employing ad-hoc measures such as increasing tariffs. Second, there has to be some detailed strategy to prevent the accumulation of arrears that mainly benefit businesses and industries more than the domestic consumer in Pakistan. The increase in power tariffs in the beginning of the 2020 fiscal year ultimately compounded the financial woes of people when the Covid-19 pandemic arrived in the country.

The growth in intermediate consumption has also progressed modestly and more needs to be done in this regard. A shift to cheaper sources of power needs to be explored in earnest. More than pricing it seems to be a governance issue as transmission losses still pose a major hurdle in the way to financial stability in this sector. The competitiveness of various power sources needs ample analysis and proper implementation of altered mechanisms to eliminate – or at least reduce – circular debt. Automatic tariff notifications and revisions also need to be streamlined, keeping in mind their merits and demerits to consumers. Though the government is prompt in its collection of bills from common consumers, we do not see the same alacrity when it comes to big defaulters who have been enjoying subsidies for long.

Good economic news isn't about numbers alone

Syed Talat Hussain



GDP growth is better documented and actually mentions the sectors such as large scale manufacturing and the services sectors that have pushed up the numbers beyond expectations. It would be interesting to see how the international lenders would absorb these important claims

IN a country that devours mostly depressing news, good tidings should be warmly welcomed. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma to understand why this is generally not the case in Pakistan.

The government's recent claim that it is likely to notch up an impressive 3.94% GDP growth for the current financial year and that the national per capita income has also registered improvement has not fallen on receptive ears. GDP growth stats sent out by the National Accounts Committee has the government's own ministers in a state of ecstasy that they want to see resonate across the nation, a desire that remains unfulfilled.

Similarly per capita income increase too is something to write home about considering the widespread economic depression caused by structural problems but aggravated by Covid19 ravages. The government believes it has a good case to plead on both these counts.

The State Bank of Pakistan has joined in the chorus of praise in its assessment. In its tweet that followed days of debate about whether or not growth figures need to be taken seriously, the Central Bank has endorsed them resoundingly.

It has said that "post-Covid recovery underway since last summer has strengthened." It has quoted the 9-month current account to be in surplus for the first time in 17 years and has underlined that foreign exchange reserves are at a four year high."

In the Bank's assessment this rebound is "fuelled by a well-calibrated policy response".

It explains the dynamics in the following words: "Given high public debt, fiscal support was targeted to the most vulnerable. The underprivileged have benefited through the globally-acclaimed Ehsaas Programme. At the same time

public debt and deficit have been kept under check which has supported market sentiment, investment outlook, and economic recovery." The Bank mentions the fact that it has provided a targeted economic stimulus of Rs2 trillion that has significantly contributed to the uptick that has got everyone in the government excited. Not so, says the Opposition.

It has questioned these claims and has accused the government of inflating the numbers to create a feel-good environment for itself. This would not be an issue because, in the binary of national politics, the opposition is bound to react along predictable lines and generally such views can be shrugged off through rhetorical rebuttals. But experts too have jumped into the debate to create further complexities.

One has pointed out that official data released by the Ministry of Planning and Development that finalised the national accounts confirms the fact that "per capita income estimated at \$1,543 was just above \$1,529 in 2015-16 and well below \$1,630 in 2017-18, just before the downhill journey started.

The per capita income had dropped to \$1,459 in 2018-19 and further down to \$1,361 in 2019-20. The size of that stood at \$315 billion in 2018 and is now reported to have recovered to about \$295bn this year from \$264bn last year."

More to the point, there is no consensus on the national headcount used by government officials to work out improvement in the per capita income.

Some critics have pointed out that baseline population figure is misleading in that it excludes nearly 10 million people from the equation and thus spreads the per capita income across fewer than actual figures to document the improvement.

GDP growth is better documented and actually

mentions the sectors such as large scale manufacturing and the services sectors that have pushed up the numbers beyond expectations.

It would be interesting to see how the international lenders would absorb these important claims. They are core stake holders in Pakistan's economy through lending, loaning and development programmes worth billions of dollars.

Before government figures came out most of them were reporting a rather lacklustre picture of the months ahead. The Asian Development Bank was forecasting a 2% GDP growth. The International Money Fund had it set at 1.5% and the World Bank prognosis was 1.3%. Even the State Bank's own assessment did not see the GDP growth to go beyond 3%.

It is fairly awkward for the world's best economic wizards to have gone so wrong with the numbers that they should be able to work out with considerable precision given the fact that Pakistan's real time economic data is shared with them as part of their financial arrangements here.

However, the ultimate clincher for the government would be neither lenders' assessments nor its own figures. This will be restoration of public faith in the change of the national economic direction which for years has not been far below the country's real potential.

More jobs, more business and commercial activity, more exports, more improvement in human development indexes is what will close this debate in the government's favour.

Numbers and their authenticity matters, but what matters more is the buzz in the market of public's life that shapes their opinions and forms their views. Growth has to be seen and felt to be believed.

— Courtesy: Gulf News

US politicians' one-sided condemnation of bigotry

Ray Hanania



The truth of the matter is reflected in the consequences of the violence. Far more Palestinians – the number is in the thousands – have been killed in the past eight years by so-called Israeli retaliations than the few dozen, at most, Israelis killed by Hamas rockets

OVER the last week, police in cities across America have been put on alert to protect Jewish communities in the wake of what is being described as a record rise in anti-Semitism. It is not a coincidence that, every time activists in the US rise up in protest against Israeli violence overseas, pro-Israel activists respond that the protests are fueling "anti-Semitism."

Those who describe pro-Palestinian protests as fueling hate crimes against Jews frequently state that anti-Semitism is a direct response to Hamas rocket fire from Gaza. However, they ignore the fact that Israeli violence provoked Hamas' actions and describe Israel's massive military and police response against Palestinians as an act of "self-defense."

In contrast, despite repeated claims by Arab American leaders of a rise in anti-Arab and Islamophobic incidents – as was made several weeks ago by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) – no US political leaders have seen the need to heighten protection for Arabs.

The focus on anti-Semitism is actually a strategy to deflect the American public's attention away from Israel's violence and shift blame onto the Palestinians. For example, as New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio last week condemned attacks against Jewish Americans, he did so in the blurred context of Israel's violence against Palestinians.

Despite the assertions of pro-Israel officials like De Blasio and others who claimed Tel Aviv was attacking Gaza in response to Hamas rocket fire, it was Israel that began the latest round of violence. Israel moved to evict Palestinian civilians living in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah and re-

place them with members of the racist Jewish settler movement. Israeli police and soldiers, along with armed settlers, confronted dozens of Palestinian families amid efforts to Judaize the city. Israel's long history of ethnically cleansing Arab neighborhoods to strengthen the Jewish presence is an established fact. Palestinians responded to Israel's violence by protesting, not just in Sheikh Jarrah but also in other areas of the Occupied Territories and inside Israel. Israeli police beat and arrested many Palestinian citizens in Lod, for example. Only when the settlers, with the support of heavily armed Israeli soldiers and police, tried to storm Al-Aqsa Mosque – which settlers have repeatedly said they wanted to burn down – did Hamas begin firing rockets. But, in the eyes of many pro-Israel politicians, Palestinians don't get to defend themselves. Only Israelis get to defend themselves, even if they are responding to violence they provoked.

The truth of the matter is reflected in the consequences of the violence. Far more Palestinians – the number is in the thousands – have been killed in the past eight years by so-called Israeli retaliations than the few dozen, at most, Israelis killed by Hamas rockets.

US police reacted forcefully during the many massive pro-Palestinian protests that swept the country this month. Several protesters were arrested and charged with hate crimes, which De Blasio decried as a "horrible and consistent pattern." The New York mayor met with and assured Jewish leaders, saying: "We take it seriously because, if we don't, it's at all of our peril... I don't see this in isolation, and it's not just one incident... People's fears and concerns are well placed and we have to respond in kind." While De Blasio and dozens of other American

mayors and elected officials were reacting to claims of rising anti-Semitism, none reacted to Arab American and Muslim leaders' claims that anti-Arab and anti-Muslim violence, which is also related to the spike in Middle East violence, was on the rise.

During an appearance on my radio show this month, ADC President Samer Khalaf said that Arab and Muslim Americans don't get the same support as other communities in the face of increasing hatred and bigotry. "We get all the negatives of being a minority. We are discriminated against," he said. "We see the hate. But we don't get the help some of the other minority communities get."

What makes the Arab and Muslim concerns even more relevant is that America is approaching the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, which resulted in a large wave of anti-Arab and Islamophobic bigotry and violence.

The real tragedy is that anti-Semitism is not just a hate crime against Jews, even though the politics of the Middle East conflict has made that narrow definition the only focus. Arabs are Semites too. So any American politician that forcefully responds to anti-Jew hatred should also be looking at the anti-Semitism being directed against the more defenseless Arab American community. Police should be assigned to defend mosques and Arab American organizations too, particularly in places like New York, Ohio and other areas where the focus on fighting bigotry has been so one-sided.

Arabs are victims of hatred in America. The fact that the US political system expresses so little concern only compounds this fact.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

UAE govt reduces quarantine period

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: The efforts of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise have proved to be fruitful after United Arab Emirates (UAE) government reduced the quarantine period of the participants. According to sources, the players, officials and broadcast crew will undergo five-day isolation instead of seven days. The final decision will be announced after the clearance from PCB's medical staff. Meanwhile, two groups in Karachi and Lahore have arrived at the airports to leave for Abu Dhabi. Due to COVID-19 protocols, they are divided into two groups. On the other hand, the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) has fastened their efforts to get permission from its government for the arrival of camera crew planes in the UAE. The approval is expected to be received by evening. Currently, 25 people in hotels of Lahore and Karachi have not yet received visas. All of them will stay in the biosecure bubble. Upon issuance of visas, they will fly to Abu Dhabi via separate chartered flight.

Italy's young cable car survivor 'wakes up'

ROME: The boy who survived last weekend's deadly cable car crash in the Italian mountains is awake and will soon be moved out of intensive care, the hospital said Thursday. The five-year-old has been in critical condition since the cabin plunged to the ground on the Mottarone mountain, killing the other 14 people inside, including his parents, younger brother and great-grandparents. "Eitan is now awake and conscious in the intensive care unit, speaking with his aunt and looking around," said a spokesman for Turin's Regina Margherita hospital. "From a clinical point of view, he is still in a critical condition due to his thoracic and abdominal trauma and the fractures to his limbs. "In the next few days he will be taken out of intensive care and transferred to a hospital ward." - APP

Pak highly values ties with...

From Page 01
Highlighting historical ties and Pakistan's steadfast support to Somalia, the Chairman reaffirmed the commitment to further promote bilateral cooperation in diverse fields, in particular in trade and investment. Chairman Senate stated that Pakistan, under its "Engage Africa" initiative, attached high importance to its relationship with Africa and Somalia. Pakistan has a conducive environment for investment and that Somali investors and traders should benefit from Islamabad's friendly policies, he further added. The visiting dignitary also invited Pakistani investors to take advantage of the investment opportunities in Somalia and identified the livestock, fisheries, agriculture, and natural resources as key sectors in this regard. The Ambassador conveyed gratitude over Pakistan's consistent support and expressed the desire to forge closer ties in a range of areas. The exchange of delegations at the parliamentary level must be expedited for boosting cooperation in the parliamentary spheres. Pakistan will provide scholarships to Somali students to enhance their skills in technology and science, Sanjrani maintained.

The issue of Palestine and Kashmir was also discussed in detail during the meeting. Pakistan strongly condemns the human rights and international law violations caused by Israeli occupation forces oppression, Chairman Senate underlined. "Bilateral cooperation and coordination between the two fraternal countries are enhancing further and is of great significance. Somalia would like to benefit from Pakistan's continued support in human resource development as well as its expertise in countering terrorism", Somali envoy stated.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan Ahmed Rabaie addressing a seminar on "Palestine and Kashmir Crises: Call for Justice" at Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS).

Israel's Gaza strikes may constitute 'war crimes': UN

The UN official said she had seen no evidence that civilian buildings in Gaza hit by Israeli fighter jets were being used for military purposes

DNA

NEW YORK: The United Nations human rights chief Michelle Bachelet has said Israel's recent attacks on the besieged Gaza Strip that killed more than 200 Palestinians may constitute "war crimes" if they are shown to be disproportionate. Bachelet's comments on Thursday came as she opened a special session of the UN Human Rights Council, called at the request of Pakistan - on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation - and Palestine. The UN official said she had seen no evidence that civilian buildings in Gaza hit by Israeli fighter jets were being used for military purposes. "If found disproportionate, such attacks might constitute war crimes," Bachelet told the 47-member Geneva forum. She also urged Hamas, which runs Gaza, to refrain

from firing rockets indiscriminately on Israeli territory. The 11-day offensive on the Gaza Strip, which began on May 10, killed at least 253 Palestinians, including 66 children, and wounded more than 1,900 people, according to the health ministry in Gaza. At least 12 people, including three foreign workers and two children, were killed in Israel by rockets fired by Hamas and other armed groups from Gaza during the same period. "Although reportedly targeting members of armed groups and their military infrastructure, the Israeli attacks resulted in extensive civilian deaths and injuries, as well as large-scale destruction and damage to civilian objects," said Bachelet, highlighting the scale of the destruction in Gaza, which has been under a 14-year-old Israeli blockade. She pointed out that governmental buildings, residential homes,

international humanitarian organisations, medical facilities and media offices had been hit in the enclave of two million people. The UN has dubbed it "the world's largest open-air prison." "Despite Israel's claims that many of these buildings were hosting armed groups or being used for military purposes, we have not seen evidence in this regard," said Bachelet. "There is no doubt that Israel has the right to defend its citizens and residents," she added. "However, Palestinians have rights too. The same rights." The council was debating a draft resolution to launch a broad, international investigation into violations surrounding the latest Gaza violence, but also of "systematic" abuses in the Palestinian territories and inside Israel. Saleh Hijazi, Middle East and North Africa deputy regional director of Amnesty International, welcomed the draft resolution as

a means to "establish an investigative mechanism that collects and preserves evidence that cooperates with the ongoing international criminal court investigation into the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories." "It is important that these moves tackle arms transfers and lead to a comprehensive arms embargo on Israel and Palestinian armed groups," he told Al Jazeera, speaking from the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah. "This is a real test, specifically for the European Union states, to walk the walk when they talk about accountability, to not make Israel an exception when it comes to human rights and respect for international law," he said. Of the various speakers to address the council's session was Muna El-Kurd, an activist and journalist from the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood Sheikh Jarrah, where a number of families are

facing imminent forced displacement from their own homes. "We don't want just your concern, we want you to stop this ethnic cleansing in Sheikh Jarrah and in Palestine," she said.

She went on to describe the imminent forced displacement Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah, including her own, are facing. Half of El-Kurd's own home was taken over by Israeli settlers in 2009, in what she said was a systematic collusion between the Israeli government and settler organisations. The imminent expulsion of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah led to widespread protests from Palestinians, which drew harsh Israeli crackdown and raids on Al-Aqsa Mosque - considered the third-holiest site in Islam. Palestinian factions in Gaza, including Hamas, said they fired rockets against Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem.

EU backs Japan holding Olympics

BRUSSELS: The EU and Japan said Thursday they backed the holding of a "safe and secure" Olympic Games despite calls for the event to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "We support the holding of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 in a safe and secure manner this summer as a symbol of global unity in defeating COVID-19," the two sides said in a statement following a video summit between EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel and Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga. Several parts of Japan are under a state of emergency because of a surge in infections, and the Japanese public is largely opposed to holding the Games this summer. Medical groups have warned the massive event could introduce new variants to Japan and strain medical resources as the country battles a fourth virus wave. Organisers have already barred overseas fans from the Tokyo Games, an unprecedented decision for the Olympics. A decision on domestic spectators is expected in late June. European Commission chief von der Leyen insisted the leaders said "we're looking forward to the Olympic Games" during their video talks. She pointed to the EU's authorisation for more than 100 million doses of vaccines to be exported to Japan as "a strong sign that we support any preparation for the Olympic Games, and the safety of these Games".

President Arif Alvi lauds...

From Page 01
He said that a number of Malaysian mega companies such as auto maker Proton and teleco Edotco had already entered into Pakistani market and were benefiting from the investment opportunities. The President also highlighted the brutalities being committed by the Indian Security Forces against the people of illegally Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJ&K) and Israeli military forces against the Muslims of Palestine. He urged the international community to fulfill its obligations by granting inalienable right to self-determination to the people of IOJ&K and Palestine. The President thanked the Government of Malaysia for supporting Pakistan's position on Kashmir. He appreciated the contribution made by the High Commissioner towards strengthening bilateral ties between Pakistan and Malaysia.

UNSC inaction breeding...

From Page 01
On Palestine, Bozkir said, "We have captured the momentum and the eye of the storm. When the political structure is ready for something, nothing will stop it." He lauded Foreign Minister Qureshi for "representing Pakistan in a good way" to highlight the Palestine issue internationally joined by his other counterparts. "[I] am witnessed that in last UN meeting on Palestine, your leadership was very important that moved towards success," he said. As president of UNGA, he said, it was his duty to remain impartial, however said that "impartiality could be defined" in other words. "For the case like Palestine, I think that helping people and giving them a just solution to their problem is impartiality," he said. Also, the goal of ending occupation and achieving two independent viable states side by side in mutual recognition to the pre-1969 settlement is important, he added. The UNGA president said Pakistan along with Turkey was playing an important role in resumption of peace in Afghanistan, which he said, could have its effects on international and regional basis. He said termed Pakistan his "second home" and added that the love between Pakistan and Turkey was not due to any financial reasons, but a connection of hearts. He drew attention towards wearing a green face mask and necktie, as a gesture to honour Pakistan's national colour and flag.

Russian govt designates three German NGOs as 'undesirable'

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: Russia's Prosecutor General designated three German nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as "undesirable" on Wednesday in a step criticized by Berlin and German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas. The Prosecutor General's move seeks to curtail the work of the Forum of

Russian-Speaking Europeans, the Center for Liberal Modernity and the German-Russian Exchange under a widely criticized law that aims to curb criticism of the Russian government. The Russian Prosecutor General's office claimed the three German NGOs' work "threaten the foundations of the constitutional order and security of the Russian Federation."

Two of the NGOs participate in the St. Petersburg Dialogue, a German-Russian forum that brings civil society along with think tank experts and policy makers from both countries together. The move comes as a result of a contentious Russian law requiring NGOs which receive foreign funding and engage in "political activity" to register as "foreign agents."

All three NGOs have their headquarters in Berlin. The Center for Liberal Modernity describes itself as a think tank for democracy, freedom and being open to the world. It cooperates with the Sakharov Center in Moscow devoted to the protection of human rights in Russia. It described the Russian decision as a "capricious political act."

Zinedine Zidane resigns as Real Madrid coach



DNA

MADRID: Real Madrid on Thursday officially announced the departure of Zinedine Zidane as manager. In the statement, the Spanish club said that they respect Zidane's decision to leave Real Madrid which ended the La Liga's 2020-2021 season in second place, two points behind Atletico Madrid. "Zidane is one of Real Madrid's great icons and his legacy extends beyond what he has achieved as a coach and player at our club. He is aware that he has a place in the hearts of the Real Madrid fans and that he will always have a home at Real Madrid," it added. Zidane's career as Real Madrid's manager started in January 2016, when he

replaced Spanish Rafael Benitez on a two-and-a-half-year contract when he was 43-year-old. In his first tenure, the Frenchman led Real Madrid to win Champions League trophies three times in a row from 2016 to 2018. Zidane was back in charge of Real Madrid in March 2019, since the Spanish side suffered some poor results during the 2018-2019 season. Following this disappointing season, Zidane's impact on Real Madrid was immediate, leading his team to secure a record 34th league title in the 2019-2020 season. Regarded as one of the most decorated Real Madrid managers in history, Zidane won three Champions League trophies, two Club World Cups, two UEFA Super Cups, two Spanish Super Cups, and two LaLiga titles in Madrid.



GDANSK: Villarreal players celebrate after winning the UEFA Europa League final match between Villarreal CF and Manchester United in Gdansk, Poland. - DNA

Amnesty slams Israel's forced evictions in Silwan

"For years Israel has sought to expand illegal settlements in the area of Silwan, forcibly displacing more than 200 Palestinians from their homes. The recent protests locally and worldwide against forced evictions in Sheikh Jarrah send a clear message that Israel's land grabs will not go unnoticed"

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Amnesty International has sharply criticized the planned eviction of several dozen Palestinian families from their homes in the occupied East Jerusalem al-Quds neighborhood of Silwan as "another illustration of Israel's criminal policy of forced displacement of Palestinians." Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa in the London-based organization, Saleh Higazi, said the Israeli regime is "fanning the flames of the latest upsurge in violence and perpetuating the same systematic human rights violations against Palesti-

ans" by continuing to pursue the Jerusalem al-Quds District Court's decision on a pending appeal against the ordered eviction. He argued that the measure follows massive outcry over planned expulsions from Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in occupied East Jerusalem al-Quds, where protests against the decision led to Israeli violence against Palestinians and the 11-day war on the Gaza Strip. "For years Israel has sought to expand illegal settlements in the area of Silwan, forcibly displacing more than 200 Palestinians from their homes. The recent protests locally and worldwide against forced evictions in Sheikh Jarrah send a clear message that Israel's

land grabs will not go unnoticed," the senior Amnesty International official noted. He added, "Israel's authorities must immediately halt plans for forced evictions in Batn al-Hawa in Silwan and any other areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Such forced evictions flagrantly violate the prohibition in international humanitarian law of forcible transfer and amount to war crimes." Higazi finally called upon the United States, Britain, EU countries and the international community to assume their responsibility to stop Israel from continuing with its policies of systematic oppression and dis-

possession of Palestinians. Silwan, home to about 33,000 Palestinians, is located outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem al-Quds and its sacred sites. Israeli officials have been moving Jewish extremists to the neighborhood since the 1980s, and currently several hundred settlers live there in heavily protected settlement compounds. This has resulted in numerous human rights violations, including the forced eviction and displacement of Palestinian residents. The Silwan properties are claimed by extremists backed by AteretCohanim, a right-wing foundation that works to strengthen the Jewish presence

in East Jerusalem al-Quds. More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds. The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions. Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem al-Quds as its capital. The last round of Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2014. Among the major sticking points in those negotiations was Israel's continued settlement expansion on Palestinian territories.

Briefs

Bezos to step down in July 5

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: After leading the US e-commerce giant for almost three decades, Amazon.com founder and CEO Jeff Bezos has picked July 5 as the date to step down.

Bezos told the company's annual shareholder meeting on Wednesday that he will hand over the top job to Andy Jassy, who currently runs Amazon Web Services. Amazon first announced the change in leadership in its February earnings report, but no date had been given. The date is "sentimental," according to Bezos, who said July 5, 1994 was the day Amazon was incorporated exactly 27 years ago. "I'm very excited to move into the chair role, where I'll focus my energies and attention on new products and early initiatives."

Bezos said in February that he wanted more time to focus on his personal ventures such as climate change organization Bezos Earth Fund and aerospace company Blue Origin.

During his 27-year tenure as CEO, Bezos saw himself become the world's richest person, in 2017. As of Thursday he comes in second place with a net worth of around \$189 billion, according to Forbes magazine.

Twitter 'concerned' about India staff

FOREIGN DESK

CALIFORNIA: Twitter Inc says it is worried about the safety of its staff in India, days after police visited its offices as part of a probe related to the social media firm's tagging of some governing party posts as manipulated.

Indian police on Monday visited the Twitter offices to serve a notice to the micro-blogging firm's country head for a probe into its tagging of a tweet by a ruling party spokesman as "manipulated media".

Without directly referring to the Delhi police action, Twitter on Thursday said: "We, alongside many in civil society in India and around the world, have concerns with regards to the use of intimidation tactics by the police in response to enforcement of our global Terms of Service."

Members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) recently shared portions of a document on Twitter they said was created by the main opposition Congress party and highlighted government failures in handling the COVID-19 pandemic.

Congress complained to Twitter, saying the document was fake, after which Twitter marked some of the posts as "manipulated media". Delhi Police declined to comment, Reuters news agency said.

Twitter has been battling with the Indian government since February after the technology ministry asked it to block content alleging Modi's administration was trying to silence criticism related to the farmer protests in the country.

Vienna-Moscow flight cancelled

VIENNA: Austrian Airlines cancelled a Vienna-Moscow flight on Thursday, saying Russian authorities had not approved a route change for the plane to be able to avoid Belarusian airspace.

The airline said it had suspended flights over Belarusian airspace in line with a recommendation by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), making a route change for the Vienna-Moscow flight necessary. "A change in flight routes must be approved by the authorities. The Russian authorities did not give us this permission," the airline said in a statement to media. Austria's transport ministry confirmed the flight had been cancelled. "According to our information Russian authorities did not approve a change to the flight route," the ministry said in a statement to media. - APP

Close ally of supreme leader is favorite to win Iran election

FOREIGN DESK

ATLANTA: The approaching Iranian presidential election on June 18 has been "fixed" in favor of an unpopular candidate whose support from the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has made him the front runner, according to commentators.

On Tuesday, Iran's the Council of Guardians, the 12-member council of senior religious clerics vetting presidential candidates, disqualified the majority of candidates who were reformists or moderates, leaving judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi and several little known candidates in the running.

The Council of Guardians also approved secretary of the Expediency Council Mohsen Rezaei; former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili; deputy parliament speaker Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi; former vice president Mohsen Mehralizadeh; central bank governor Abdolnasser Hemmati; and lawmaker Alireza Zakani. Iran experts say that Raisi was



implicated in the killing of several thousands of Iranian activists and political prisoners in 1988, a stigma that still haunts him. Nevertheless his chances of winning the election remain high. The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), an opposition group based in Europe, said in an online briefing on Wednesday that Raisi will most likely win the presidency because he is favored by the Supreme leader. The group called

the upcoming elections a "sham." Mohammad Mohaddessin, the NCRI foreign policy chief, said: "Khamenei specified the criteria for his favorite president, which fit Raisi perfectly. He has dispensed with the 'moderate-hardliner' theatrics to secure the presidency for his preferred candidate. In short, this time around, the election is a one-man show." Barbara Slavin, Director of the Future of Iran Initiative at the Atlantic

Council in Washington D.C., told the Arab News that the upcoming presidential election is a "joke." She said that because no one of note was allowed to stand in the elections other than Raisi, he seems to be almost guaranteed to win. "Unless the Supreme Leader changes his mind and allows other credible candidates to run for the election, the turnout will be very low and it will be embarrassing for the government," she said. Slavin said that Raisi stands to

win the elections because he is very close to Khamenei, who is looking to cement his legacy and may be grooming Raisi as his successor as the Supreme Leader.

The winner of the presidential election will have to handle negotiations with the US and other European countries to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), more commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, which the US withdrew under President Donald Trump. Trump also imposed a strict economic sanctions against Iran that created severe financial and economic difficulties for the Islamic Republic.

Negotiations between Iran and the US and European countries are unlikely to bring immediate relief to the Iranian economy in time for Raisi's presidency unless the US and Iran reach an interim agreement to either to revive the old JCPOA or initiate a framework for a new agreement. However, it remains unclear how a Raisi government will conduct nuclear negotiations with the US and its allies, given its hardline credentials.

Erdogan to visit Azerbaijan in June

DNA

BAKU: President Ilham Aliyev has said that Turkish President Recep Tayyip will attend a groundbreaking ceremony of a Turkish school in Azerbaijan's newly-liberated Shusha city during his visit to the country in June. The foundation of the school that was destroyed by Armenians during the occupation was laid in May. Aliyev made the remarks while receiving Turkish Minister of National Education Ziya Selcuk on May 27.

The president reminded that Azerbaijan will build schools in its formerly-occupied territories as part of the master plans to reconstruct these territories.

"Azerbaijan is at the start of a great creative process now, and the training of new qualified personnel is very important both in the liberated lands and throughout the country... Therefore, vocational schools should be established in liberated lands in accordance with the potential of those regions. Of course, we hope for the support of the Turkish side," he went on saying. The president noted that Turkey's experience was important for carrying out educational reforms in Azerbaijan, adding that "additional proposals on education, improving the quality of education, as well as closer ties between young people from Turkey and Azerbaijan, should be discussed."

FPCCI, Customs to resolve Valuation Rolling

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FPCCI) and Customs Department have agreed on formation of an advisory committee to resolve issues pertaining to valuation through consultation.

According to the FPCCI statement issued here on Thursday, Director General, Customs Valuation Ms. Shahnaz Maqbool visited the Federation House and held meeting with FPCCI's Central Standing Committee on Customs. Convener of the Committee, Shabbir Mansha Churra and his team presented a set of recommendations for resolving various issues.

The DG appreciated the recommendations and assured of expeditious disposal of cases pending for many years related to valuation rolling.

Shabbir Mansha Churra drew the attention of DG Valuation to the growing issues related to valuation rolling; and, said that for strong liaison between FPCCI and Customs, it was necessary to form a Joint Advisory Committee. The Committee will have representatives of the concerned stakeholders and legal and business experts.

Nigeria appoints new army chief

ABUJA: Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari appointed a new chief of army staff on Thursday after the previous top-ranking commander and 10 other officers died in a plane crash last week.

It was the third air disaster this year for the military, which is fighting a decade-long militants insurgency in the northeast, kidnap gangs in the northwest and separatist violence in the southeast.

"President Muhammadu Buhari has appointed Major General Farouk Yahaya as the new Chief of Army Staff," defence spokesman Onyema Nwachukwe said in a statement. Few details are known of Yahaya, whose nomination needs confirmation from the National Assembly.

In April 2020, he was named theatre commander of Operation Lafiya Dole, the military's campaign in the northeast, recently renamed Operation Hadin Kai. His predecessor, Lieutenant General Ibrahim Attahiru, who died in the crash Friday had only been appointed in January. The aircraft went down "due to inclement weather," the armed forces said, when trying to land at Kaduna's international airport. - APP

Young customs officer sends medical aid to Pakistan

BEIJING: Young customs officer Ma Yanhui released first batch of medical supplies aid to Pakistan, says a report published by China Economic Net (CEN).

"I came to Pamirs because of love as my husband worked here. I stay here because of love to Khunjerab Customs House," said Ma who along with colleagues released the first batch in 2020.

In March 2020, it was Mid-winter in Khunjerab Pass. The vanguard team of Khunjerab Customs House had worked for six hours straight to release the first batch of medical supplies aid to Pakistan. Ma, one of the vanguard team members, recalled that, "It was -30c at that time. - DNA

lowest temperature down to -40c. Khunjerab Pass is at an elevation of 4,733 meters, the highest border-crossing in the world. As the only land access route between China and Pakistan, Khunjerab Pass played an important role in fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic.

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KUWAIT CITY: Pakistan ambassador to Kuwait Syed Sajjad met Maj. General Talal Ibrahim Maarfe and Maj. General Ali Al Muali of Rehabilitation/ Law Enforcement Affairs of Kuwait. CWA also participated in discussion on issues of mutual concern. - DNA

PBoC to strengthen co-op with Pakistan

BEIJING: The People's Bank of China will continue to strengthen cooperation with Pakistan in existing and emerging areas such as digital finance and cross-border e-commerce to support the healthy development of trade and investment links between two countries, giving full play to the Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, Deputy Governor, People's Bank of China, Pan Gongsheng said on Thursday.

Welcoming Pakistan Ambassador to China, Moin Ul Haque here, the deputy governor appreciated bilateral financial cooperation between the central and commercial banks of Pakistan and China. - APP

\$24.2 billion remittances a trust of overseas Pakistanis in government

DNA

OTTAWA: Pakistan High Commissioner to Canada Raza Bashir Tarar has described a record and unprecedented surge in remittances up to US\$ 24.2 billion sent by overseas Pakistanis back home in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year as a vote of confidence in the government and its policies.

He made this statement while addressing an e-katchery-cum-public forum organised online for the Pakistanis living in Canada for redress of their issues and addressing their concerns about consular services and other community related issues. Consul General of Pakistan Toronto Abdul Hameed, Consul General of



Pakistan Vancouver Janbaz Khan and Consul General of Pakistan Montreal Mr. Ishtiaq Ahmad Aqil also attended the forum and answered queries of the participants.

Raza Bashir Tarar assured the community that in line with the vision of Prime Min-

ister Imran Khan and regular advice and guidance from Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Pakistan High Commission and its Consulates in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal would continue to provide prompt consular services to the community.

He said the love of overseas Pakistanis for Pakistan and their contribution to the development of the country was valued at all levels of the government in Pakistan.

The High Commissioner emphasized that Pakistan's Missions in Canada had pro-

vided adequate services notwithstanding the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than letting the pandemic be a recipe for inaction, technology and out-of-box thinking was employed to provide uninterrupted consular services. He reiterated that while e-katchery was held once every month, Pakistanis were welcome to approach the High Commission and its Consulates any time day for resolution of their issues and contact details of officials had also been circulated in this regard. He also urged the community members to register themselves with the Pakistan High Commission for planning consular services in view of their number and presence in different regions in Canada.



ISLAMABAD: Hamad Obaid Alzaabi, the UAE Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, meets Dr. Reza Baqir, Governor State Bank of Pakistan, and discusses bilateral work and cooperation and mechanism for development of joint programs between the two countries. - DNA

Govt accepts major chunk of UBG proposals for budget

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: United Business Group (UBG) in the federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Central Chairman Iftikhar Ali Malik said on Thursday that Federal Finance Minister Shoukat Tarin assured that all the viable growth oriented UBG budget proposals have been incorporated in the upcoming federal budget mainly aimed at accelerating the pace of economic activities in wake of pandemic of coronavirus.

He expressed these views while chairing UBG core committee meeting through video link here today which was participated by its patron

in chief SM Munir, President Zubair Tufail Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary Information Dr Mirza Ikhtiar Baig, Khalid Tawab, Feroze Gulzar, Mian Adress, Dr Nauman Idris Butt, Sh Riaz Ahmad, Daroo Khan Achakzai, Sohail Hussain Malik, Mian Fareed, Abdul Rauf Alam, Hameed Akhtar Chadda, Rehmat Ullah Javed and Ghazanfar Bilour Bilour.

Iftikhar Malik said Pakistan's economy is passing through a challenging phase due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. "The most impacted section of our society is the manufacturers, traders, retailers, importers and exporters and business community are in a distress and facing

huge financial losses due to current emergency situation," adding he said the good thing is that minister assured him that majority of the UBG 40 proposals would be part of the upcoming federal budget 2021-22.

He further said that income tax and sales tax refunds were still pending with FBR due to which business community was facing liquidity issues and suggested that FBR should speed up the process of their payment or allow their adjustment against payable taxes.

He said that the government had to focus on enhancing business relations with other countries as no country in the current era could progress on its own.

Macron seeks forgiveness over Rwanda genocide

WEB DESK

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron admitted French responsibility in the Rwandan genocide, during a visit to the Rwandan capital Kigali on Thursday. "Standing here today, with humility and respect, by your side, I have come to recognize our responsibilities," Macron said in a speech at the Kigali Genocide Memorial where more than 250,000 Tutsi are buried. He said that France had a duty to admit the "suffering it inflicted on the Rwandan people by too long valuing silence over the examination of the truth."

Relations deteriorated after the

1994 genocide and Macron is the first French leader to visit the country in ten years.

The French president said only Rwandans could forgive France for its role in the genocide: "On this path, only those who went through that night can perhaps forgive, give us the gift of forgiving." France did not listen to those who warned it about the impending massacre in Rwanda and stood de facto by a genocidal regime, Macron said.

But France "was not an accomplice" to the genocide, Macron added. Rwandan President Paul Kagame said: "His words were something more valuable than an apology. They were the truth," he told a joint press conference after

the two leaders met in Kigali. Kagame said relations would only strengthen going forward: "France and Rwanda are going to relate much better to the benefit of both our peoples, economically, politically and in terms of culture," he said.

"But the relationship between our two countries will never be entirely conventional. There is a special familiarity resulting from the complex and terrible history we share, for better or for worse," he added. "We have chosen to make it for the better. We wish to form a strong and sustainable relationship, based on priorities that matter to both Rwanda and France."

Jean Paul Kimonyo, a former aide to President Kagame, said: "I think

that speech was a very strong speech because he asked for forgiveness in a subtle manner but in a strong manner. It was subtle but substantively strong." The Ibuka association, Rwanda's main genocide survivor group, criticized Macron for not giving "a clear apology and not asking for forgiveness.

Egide Nkuranga, the group's president, added that Macron had "really tried to explain the genocide, how it happened, what they didn't do, their responsibilities... It's very important, it shows that he understands us." Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who has accused France of responsibility in the genocide, earlier said they could "maybe not forget, but forgive" France for its role.

Rwanda has repeatedly accused France of being complicit in the 1994 genocide that killed around 800,000 people, mostly Tutsi Rwandans and moderate Hutus.

A report by a French panel released in March said French officials bore "serious and overwhelming" responsibility for not foreseeing the slaughter. It said that a colonial attitude had blinded French officials. The report absolved France of direct complicity in the killings.

President Kagame said the report "meant a lot" to Rwandans. In 1994, during the Rwandan civil war, then-President Juvenal Habyarimana's plane was shot down, killing him. This led to the genocide that lasted around 100 days.

Briefs

Center to give Sindh equipment to fight bandits

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed said on Thursday the Centre and Sindh will together fight the menace of bandits in the province. Addressing a press conference here, he said: "I held a meeting with Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah this morning, wherein it was decided that the Centre and province will together deal with bandits." Sheikh Rasheed said the Sindh government can utilize the Rangers' services wherever it wants in the province. "We are ready to provide the Rangers for the entire province if the Sindh government desires so," he added. He said bandits involved in kidnapping for ransom and murders will be booked under the terrorism law. "We are ready to provide drones to the police," the interior minister said in a reference to the chief minister's demand for provision of air support and sensitive equipment for the anti-bandit operation. "We will not rest until the dacoit rule is eliminated," he vowed. Though, the Sindh government wants to tackle the Shikarpur situation on its own, the Rangers have been put on alert, he added.

CPEC investment to be around \$ 50.7 bln

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, Development, and Reforms, Kanwal Shauzab on Thursday apprised the National Assembly that investment under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was expected to be around \$ 50.7 billion. In response to various questions during Question Hour, she said this huge inflow of investment would generate through massive economic activities and thereby employment opportunities. She said apart from focusing on energy, infrastructure and Gwadar projects, 9 Special Economic Zones would be established under CPEC portfolio, which would create tremendous job opportunities and technological transformation. The Parliamentary Secretary said ML-1 project to upgrade and dualize the rail track from Peshawar to Karachi (1872 km) has a potential to create 174,000 direct jobs. Employment opportunities under CPEC would further go up over the period of time, she said. She said Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) and Provincial Statistics departments collect, compile and maintain data on labour force, manpower and employment etc. - APP

COVID-19 claims 75 more lives

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The national tally of total active COVID-19 cases recorded 59,018 as 2726 more people tested positive for the deadly virus with 75 deaths reported across the country in Pakistan during the last 24 hours on Thursday. Out of total 75 deaths, 68 patients were under treatment in various hospitals while seven others were at their respective quarantines or at homes, according to the latest update issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC). Most of the deaths reported from the Punjab and Sindh followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The maximum ventilators were occupied in four major areas including Lahore 42 percent, Multan 66 percent, Bahawalpur 38 percent and Peshawar 34 percent. The maximum Oxygen beds (alternate oxygen providing facility other than ventilator administered as per medical requirement of COVID patient) was also occupied in four major areas including Gujranwala 46 percent, Swabi 40 percent, Multan 54 percent and Bahawalpur 37 percent.

Pakistan, Azerbaijan have time-tested relations, says Amb. Alizada

Message of Mr. Ali Alizada, Ambassador of Azerbaijan on the occasion of the National Day of Azerbaijan – May 28

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Ali Alizada has issued special message on the occasion of National Day of Azerbaijan. Here is the text of his message. "This year Azerbaijan celebrates the 103rd anniversary of the establishment of Azerbaijani Democratic Republic (ADR), the first democratic republic in the Muslim world, with double and special significance, after the liberation of the internationally recognized territories from almost 30 years of illegal Armenian occupation. The ADR left an indelible mark and entered forever into the history of Azerbaijani nation with its rich state building experience and prepared a good basis for the future independence of Azerbaijan. As the successor of ADR, Azerbaijan regained its independence in 1991 and after coming to power of Heydar Aliyev, the National Leader of Azerbaijan in 1993, Azerbaijan has overcome through the hard and strict tests of history and embarked on the path of development, ensuring stability and confidently moving forward. Relying solely on the support of the Azerbaijani people, H. Aliyev put an end to all negativity in the country, disbanded all illegal armed groups, established safety and order, and began building the state institutions and a regular army of Azerbaijan. All these years Azerbaijani nation lived with one dream, to liberate the illegally occupied territories of Azerbaijan and restore peace and justice in the region, which Azerbaijan has sought almost 30 years through all platforms. If the creation of ADR, on May 28, 1918 was a historic event for Azerbaijani nation, the restoration of the territorial integrity of the modern independent Azerbaijan in 2020 became another glorious historic victory and achievement for Azerbaijan and its nation. For all 30 years of the conflict, Azerbaijan has suffered a lot from Armenian aggression and Azerbaijan has been delivering the truth about this issue at all international events and forums. More than 30 thousands of Azerbaijanis have been martyred, all cities, residential buildings, schools, hospitals, public buildings, historical sites and mosques in occupied territories of Azerbaijan have been destroyed. Armenia insulted the entire Muslim world, kept cows and pigs in our mosques, destroyed all cultural monuments and even plowed up all graves. Despite that all leading international organizations recognized and supported the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and demanded withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territories. Armenia has always showed unconstructive approach to the resolution of the

conflict and at the end the provocative steps, statements and aggressive actions of Armenia have put an end to all negotiations and made war inevitable. Under the resolute command of the Supreme Commander-in-chief, Azerbaijan has fulfilled its historic mission and defeated Armenia due to professionalism and heroism of victorious Azerbaijan Army, and of course due to high national spirit and strength. Glory to Allah, thanks to the dedication of our martyrs, Azerbaijan has again secured its territorial integrity. May Allah grant all our martyrs the highest rank in Jannah! We have achieved our goal. The 44-day Patriotic war has demonstrated Azerbaijan's power, resolve and unity. It showed that



the Azerbaijani people will never put up with injustice. We must also mention that Azerbaijan has liberated its lands through development, because development is also the backbone of our victory, and today, Azerbaijan is one of the rapidly developing countries of the world, and under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev continues its dynamic progress and economic growth. And soon the liberated territories of Azerbaijan will also become one of the developed regions of Azerbaijan and a real paradise. We are thankful to our brotherly country Pakistan and its nation which constantly stood shoulder to shoulder with Azerbaijan and supported its right of self-defence during Patriotic War of Azerbaijan. Pakistan even didn't recognize Armenia due to occupation of Azerbaijani lands and always put its principal position in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. During the years of the occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia, the Senate and National Assembly of Pakistan adopted several resolutions, Foreign Office and Armed Forces of Pakistan issued many statements condemning the illegal actions and war crimes of Armenia against Azerbaijan. This is a true demonstration of brotherhood. Azerbaijan has also always stood and supported Pakistan in all matters, including the Kashmir issue which also warrants implementation of UN SC resolutions for several decades. I am sure our brotherhood and mu-

tual support to each other will be continued and strengthened in the years ahead as well. Pakistan and Azerbaijan have time tested relations which based on strategic partnership, confidence, mutual respect and trust. In the last one year Covid-19 pandemic has caused worldwide slowdown, but even in pandemic time Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations, the political, military, defence, economy, security, and energy ties have continued to grow in upward trajectory. The leadership of two countries had a regular constructive meetings and telephone conversations where they hailed the importance of further strengthening the efforts to boost cooperation between our countries. Despite the restrictions caused by pandemic we were able to hold bilateral political consultations, the meeting of Joint Working Group on Trade, online business forum, B2B meetings and as well as the trilateral meeting of FMs of Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Turkey. During the last year, we were also able to conduct several high level visits of government and military officials, including an official bilateral visit of FM of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, the bilateral official visits of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of Pakistan and the Chief of Air Staff of Pakistan to Azerbaijan, etc. Soon an official visit of Speaker of Milli Majlis (Parliament) of Azerbaijan to Pakistan will be conducted, the meeting of the Joint Working Group on Agriculture, the meeting of Intergovernmental Joint Commission will be arranged, the visits of Chief of Naval Staff of Azerbaijan to Pakistan and the Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan to Azerbaijan, as well as Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Turkey joint military exercise will be held during this year. The efforts for strengthening people to people contacts, cultural, media, science, education ties have also increased and the humanitarian-social projects of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation of Azerbaijan were also continued in Pakistan during this pandemic time. The establishment of direct flights remains also one of our main aims and the agreement have already reached to start operations of direct flights as soon as Covid-19 situation will be settled down. All these developments show the commitment of our fraternal nations and Governments to further deepen and strengthen our relations. I thank the Government, Army and people of brotherly Pakistan for continued cooperation, support and commitment to further deepen our relations. Taking this opportunity, I congratulate Azerbaijani community in Pakistan and all my countrymen on the occasion of National Day, "May 28 Republic Day of Azerbaijan". Pakistan-Azerbaijan Dosti Zindabad!

relations between the two countries have spanned half a century. A strong relationship is a matter of pride for the people and government of both countries. While exchanging views with the UAE Envoy, the Chairman said that Pakistan and UAE have shared values, traditions, and a common dream for regional development and prosperity. The existing economic cooperation needs to be enhanced in line with tremendous potential for trade and business between the two countries, he further added. Sanjrani underlined that exchange of parliamentary delegations would steer the agenda to enhance bilateral ties and economic relationships.

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ISLAMABAD: UAE Ambassador to Pakistan Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al-Zaabi called on Chairman Senate, Sadiq Sanjrani. - DNA

Sanjrani invites UAE to invest in Pakistan

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: UAE Ambassador to Pakistan Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al-Zaabi called on Chairman of the Upper House, Sadiq Sanjrani here in Parliament House on Thursday. Both the dignitaries discussed matters of mutual interest, inter alia, including trade, tourism, bilateral cooperation, and the overall situation in the region. The Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani said that Pakistan and UAE enjoy cordial relations based on mutual trust. The fraternal linkages between the two countries are getting stronger over time. The brotherly

relations between the two countries have spanned half a century. A strong relationship is a matter of pride for the people and government of both countries. While exchanging views with the UAE Envoy, the Chairman said that Pakistan and UAE have shared values, traditions, and a common dream for regional development and prosperity. The existing economic cooperation needs to be enhanced in line with tremendous potential for trade and business between the two countries, he further added. Sanjrani underlined that exchange of parliamentary delegations would steer the agenda to enhance bilateral ties and economic relationships.

Palestine welcomes HRC resolution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The State of Palestine welcomes the adoption by the Human Rights Council of a historic resolution on the establishment of an ongoing and independent commission of inquiry to investigate Israel's violations of international law, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel. The resolution reflects the determination of the international community to address and investigate Israel's systematic violations of international law, including its protracted racist policies and repression of the Palestinian people. This landmark resolution is an indisputable international recognition of Israel's systemic oppression and discrimination against the Palestinian people, including the systematic denial of basic human rights. This reality of apartheid and impunity can no longer be ignored. Today, states that stood on the right side of history and voted in favor of the resolution affirmed the principle of accountability and respect for international rights. They elevated and reaffirmed the centrality of the Human Rights Council and the multilateral system in general. All States and relevant parties must now fully cooperate with the commission to hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes and achieve justice for the victims. The humanity and dignity of the Palestinian people have been vindicated and their hope in justice revived. This was long overdue. The U.N. high commissioner for human rights said on Thursday that Israel's deadly strikes on Gaza might constitute war crimes. Michelle Bachelet said her office had verified the deaths of 270 Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including 68 children, during violence this month. Most were killed in Hamas-controlled Gaza, where Israel fought militants for 11 days. The conflict ended with a ceasefire. She was addressing a special session of the U.N. Human Rights Council, held at the request of Muslim states.

China to meet Pak vaccine demand

DNA

BEIJING: China has always attached great importance to Pakistan's demand for vaccines to help fight Covid-19 pandemic and carried out close cooperation with that country, Chinese Foreign Ministry's Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Thursday. "Chinese vaccine manufacturers have cooperated with Pakistan in the development and production of vaccines from very beginning and will continue to export vaccines to Pakistan," he said in a statement issued here.

He said that China and Pakistan are all weather strategic cooperative partners, adding, "Since the outbreak of Covid-19, China and Pakistan have worked together to help each other and achieve positive results." The spokesperson informed that in addition, the Chinese government has so far provided three batches of vaccines aid to Pakistan and the PLA has also provided two batches of aid to Pakistan army. "The two countries are in close communication on the delivery of a new batch of vaccine aid to Pakistan as soon as possible," he added.

New policy parameters on cards for film industry: Fawad

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Film industry needs a substantive package and review of major taxes to spur its production process. Now the government has taken the initiative to go for new policy parameters in order to ensure its revival and overall growth in the country. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain and representatives of Pakistani Film Producers Association (PFPA) had recently held a

formal meeting to work out modalities for the revival of the industry. The meeting was informed that government would announce a new film policy by next month. The PFPA delegation was also informed that new policy would review taxes on films in addition to providing "special incentives" for TV and film productions. During the meeting, it was pointed out that the government had been working to revise current film policy for the past several months. In April, Senator Faisal Javed



had stressed the need for new guidelines that may ensure safety of film stars besides ensuring their right to royalties. Entertainers, writers and people associated with industry have warmly welcomed the government's initiative to rationalize major taxes on

major production, terming it a major move fully revive the sector. Talking to state-run official media on Thursday, Ishtiaq Asif Naqvi, a writer and poet said: "It is a timely and great initiative of the government to rescue country's films industry by providing big relief." He said the step will encourage new investors to work hard for reviving the industry. Veteran actor Aijaz Aslam, in his remarks to foreign media said government's new approach would certainly encourage young producers to show their potential.

COAS, Russian envoy discuss Afghan peace process

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: His Excellency Mr Danila V. Ganich, Russian Ambassador to Pakistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ. During the meeting matters of mutual interest, regional security situation, enhanced bilateral & defence cooperation and Afghan Peace Process were discussed. COAS said that Peace in Afghanistan is a common goal. Both reiterated mutual efforts towards achieving the goal. He also said that Pakistan values its relations with Russia and hoped for furthering military to military relations between the two countries.



RAWALPINDI: Danila V. Ganich, Russian Ambassador to Pakistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS). - DNA

COAS appreciated recent visit of Mr Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister to Pakistan and hoped for further diplomatic engage-

ments at higher level. The Russian Ambassador appreciated Pakistan's sincere efforts for bringing peace and stability in the

region, especially the Afghan Peace Process. Both reiterated the commitment to enhance Pak-Russia bilateral relationship.

Army Chief talks to Bill Gates

RAWALPINDI: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Mr. Bill Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) had a telephone conversation. Matters related to Pakistan's commitment for comprehensive Polio eradication and COVID-19 were discussed. COAS said that it was a national cause and national effort. He said that we will only call it a success when no child is affected by Polio anymore in Pakistan. Credit goes to the grass roots workers including mobile polio teams, Law Enforcement Agencies and health representatives. Mr Gates conveyed his special appreciation for Pakistan Army for supporting national polio drive and ensuring proper reach and coverage of polio campaigns this year, particularly through involvement of community leaders and influencers. COAS appreciated untiring efforts of Mr. Bill Gates and his foundation towards the noble cause of Polio eradication at global level and assured him of continued support. - DNA