



Islamabad POST

Thursday, October 21, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

Pak, Azerbaijan ties getting stronger, says Speaker Asad Qaisar

Detailed News On Page-08

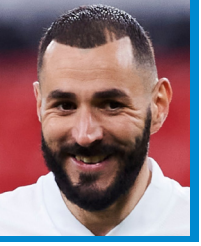
Govt not to allow Opp to disturb law and order

Detailed News On Page-01



Karim Benzema blackmail case trial starts

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Subsidised petrol for low-income people

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday directed the ministers to make a plan to provide subsidised petrol to low-income people. According to a private news channel, Sindh Governor Imran Ismail told the media after a meeting that inflation in the country would reduce next week. Sindh Governor said there was a wave of inflation in the world which had also affected Pakistan. He said flour was the most expensive in Sindh, adding that profiteers were making things artificially expensive in the country.

CM Buzdar takes live calls at FM 95 radio

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar visited the FM 95 Punjab Rung radio at P-LAC and received live calls from listeners who were pleasantly surprised to hear the chief minister live. They asked the CM to share his favourite couplet and appreciated a direct dialogue with the CM. They pointed out that Usman Buzdar was the first chief minister to adopt a public approach to liaise with the people. The CM divulged that non-commercial TV would also start transmissions soon.

PPP stands with people

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that his party stands with the people against the worst inflation in the country. In his statement issued on Wednesday, he commended the die-hard PPP workers for staging protests against inflation in cities and towns and said that the jiyalas' protest demonstrations against worst inflation in Shingla, Kohat and Chinioi were part of a series of protests across the country.

Russia, China, Iran to work with Taliban

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called the Moscow format one of "the most demanded" mechanisms on the Afghan settlement

AGENCIES

MOSCOW: Russia and Central Asia power-brokers agreed Wednesday to work with the Taliban to promote security in the region and called on Afghanistan's new leaders to implement "moderate" policies. Moscow hosted the Taliban for talks in the Russian capital, seeking to assert its influence in the region and push for action against Islamic State fighters, which it says have massed in perennially volatile Afghanistan. Representatives of 10 countries including China and Iran agreed in a statement after the talks to continue to "promote security in Afghanistan to contribute to regional stability". The participants also called on the Taliban to "practise moderate and sound internal and external policies" and "adopt friendly policies towards neighbours of Afghanistan". On domestic policy, they called on them to "respect the rights of ethnic groups, women and children". Women's rights under the Islamist regime are a top concern. There was alarm too in Western circles when this week Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, one of the most senior figures in the Taliban government, hailed suicide bombers as "heroes of Islam". But the Taliban badly need allies. Afghanistan's economy is in a poor state with international aid cut off, food prices rising and unemployment spiking. Representatives of countries at the talks in Moscow called for "consolidated efforts to provide urgent humanitarian and economic assistance to the Afghan people in the post-conflict reconstruction of the country".

Grenade targets Taliban vehicle in Afghan capital

APP

KABUL: A grenade attack on a Taliban vehicle wounded two fighters and four nearby school children in Kabul on Wednesday, officials said. A probe has been launched to "find the perpetrators", Taliban interior ministry spokesman Qari Sayed Khosti told AFP, adding two soldiers were wounded after "a grenade was thrown at a mujahideen vehicle in Deh Mazang". Another official said: "Our initial information shows four school students wounded." The explosion happened just before 8 am (0330 GMT) during rush hour in the Deh Mazang district in the west of Kabul, a witness told AFP. "I was on my way to work, it was 7.55 am and I heard this very big explosion on the road. I managed to escape," said Amin Amani. "I saw a lot of smoke in the mirror of the car and I saw people running," the 35-year-old translator said. Images shared on social media showed plumes of smoke and dust rising into the air on the streets of the capital. Broken glass could be seen at the scene of the blast as security forces stood guard, ushering bystanders away as traffic resumed on the surrounding roads.

PDM eyes mass protests against govt

The interior minister says the government would not allow the Opposition to take law into its hand



SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) on Wednesday kicked off its countrywide anti-government protests from Rawalpindi as the masses suffer due to rising inflation and hike in prices of essential commodities. Rawalpindi Mayor Sardar

anti-government campaign from his home city. The interior minister said the government would not allow the Opposition to take law into its hand, as he mentioned that Prime Minister Imran Khan was personally dealing with the issue of inflation. "If Shahbaz Sharif held a meeting with someone, then it is a positive development," he added. A day earlier, PML-N President Shahbaz Sharif held a high-level meeting of the party to finalise the schedule for protests and rallies against the PTI-led government. The PML-N will hold its first protest jalsa in Rawalpindi today, with Shahbaz Sharif urging workers and leaders of the party at the district and provincial level to partake in the protests.

Continued on Page 06

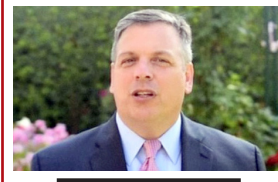
A WALK THROUGH SPAIN



ISLAMABAD: The coffee table book A Walk Through Spain was formally launched at the Spanish embassy. Author Ammar Haider Zaidi presents the book to the chief guest of the event Federal Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry. Federal Ministers Ali Zaidi, Hammad Azhar, former Minister Zulfi Bukhari and host Manuel Duran Ambassador of Spain, and Deputy Head of Mission of the Spanish embassy are also seen in the picture. Complete coverage to appear in the coming issue of Centreline magazine. - DNA

Donald Blome new US envoy to Pakistan

President Biden picks of a career diplomat for Pakistan job



DNA

WASHINGTON : US President Joe Biden has nominated Donald Blome, currently ambassador to Tunisia, as his top diplomat in Pakistan as Washington works to manage the situation in neighboring Afghanistan following the withdrawal of American troops. Blome is a career Foreign Service diplomat with long experience in the region who once worked in the Kabul embassy, shuttered earlier this year during the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan. Pakistan is playing a major role in diplomacy with its Taliban-ruled neighbor. International agencies have warned that Afghanistan is on the verge of humanitarian collapse without access to aid or foreign reserves, which remain frozen in the United States. Pakistan's relationship with neighboring China has also been of interest to the Biden administration, which regards Beijing as its chief international rival. Tunisia, where Blome has worked as ambassador since 2019, is an important diplomatic outpost for the United States in North Africa, representing interests beyond the country's borders, including in neighboring Libya. The ambassadorial position requires Senate confirmation.

NATO official lauds Pakistan role for regional peace

Stefano Pontecorvo, Senior Civil Representative NATO called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Mr Stefano Pontecorvo, Senior Civil Representative NATO called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ, today.

During the meeting, matters related to mutual interest, peace and stability in the region and Afghanistan situation were discussed. COAS said that there is a need for global convergence on Afghanistan to avoid humanitarian crisis. The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's role in Afghan situation including successful evacuation operations and efforts for regional stability. He also assured to enhance cooperation with Pakistan on Afghanistan and regular engagement by the NATO countries for all bilateral issues.

FS meeting with NATO delegation

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood received NATO delegation led by Ambassador Stefano Pontecorvo, Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan, today. The Foreign Secretary shared Pakistan's perspective on the latest developments in the region and stressed the importance of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. The Foreign Secretary also highlighted Pakistan's facilitative role in the evacuation of the diplomatic personnel and staff of the Embassies and international organizations from Afghanistan. The Foreign Secretary underlined that the international community must remain positively engaged with Afghanistan to avoid humanitarian crisis and preclude mass exodus from Afghanistan. Ambassador Pontecorvo thanked the Government of Pakistan for the assistance extended to the NATO allies in their evacuation endeavors. The visit of the NATO delegation is part of the outreach to Pakistan. Pakistan values its relations with NATO, which are based on shared interests of peace and stability in the region.

Covid-19: National tally reports lowest per day positive cases

ISLAMABAD: The national tally of Covid-19 pandemic on Wednesday reported the lowest positive cases during past 24 hours amid decline in national positivity ratio, disease trend and death rate. The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOCC) in a tweet on its official handle shared the latest disease statistics. The nerve centre of the country in its fight against the pandemic wrote that some 42,126 tests were conducted across the country with 554 more people tested positive for the contagious disease. There were 1,783 Covid infected patients under treatment in critical condition in various Covid dedicated healthcare facilities of the country. The National Covid positivity ratio during past 24 hours was recorded 1.31%. The Covid positivity ratio is the percentage of actual positive cases appearing in every 100 tests performed to identify infected individuals. During the past 24 hours, some 12 infected patients died due to the deadly virus including those under treatment in the hospitals and in their respective quarantines or homes. - DNA

Inside...

Rs. 18 mn welfare grants distributed among the needy - Page 02

Covid pandemic exacerbates learning poverty, says Shafiq - Page 03

The war in Afghanistan is far from over: Ambassador Saqib - Page 04

Iran poll contains different messages for Biden and Raisi - Page 05

Namibia outclass Netherlands in T20 World Cup qualifier - Page 06

Heydar Aliyev architect of today's Azerbaijan: Alizada - Page 07

Uzbekistan envoy stresses people to people contacts - Page 08

Japan provides equipment worth USD 6.59 million

UNICEF procured equipment to strengthen cold chain optimization for vaccine storage



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Cold chain optimization equipment worth USD 6.59 million funded by the Government of Japan and procured through the

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for enhancing national capacity to store COVID-19, was today handed over to the Government of Pakistan. The Parliamentary Secretary on Health, Dr. Nausheen

Continued on Page 06

OCTOBER 2021

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Rs. 18 mn welfare grants distributed among the needy

PTI government has initiated the Labor Card Program that is a very important initiative by the Labor Department

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Welfare grants worth over Rs. 18.8 million have been disbursed to the labors and their families in Faisalabad district. In which cheques worth Rs. 4.6 million were distributed for payment of death grant and worth Rs. 1.42 million were distributed for talent scholarships to the students.

Punjab Minister for Labor and Human Resources Ansar Majeed Khan distributed the cheques among labors at Metropolitan Corporation Hall and said that welfare grants of Rs. 7.5 billion have been distributed among the workers in Punjab during the last three years.

In Faisalabad, welfare grants of Rs.5.58 billion have been distributed. He said that he is the answerable to the labors and when he came to power, all government agencies were at the center of problems. He said that legislation was enacted to protect the rights of domestic workers and the Workers Welfare Fund was transferred from the federal to Punjab.

The Department of Labor is responsible for the welfare of workers. He said that the previous governments exploited the workers but PTI government has initiated the Labor Card Program

that is a very important initiative by the Labor Department, under this revolutionary program, the Bank of Punjab will issue labor cards to 1.1 million workers and bank accounts of all registered workers will be opened through which salaries will be paid.

He further informed that the minimum wage law will be implemented 100 percent. The provincial labor minister said that 300,000 workers have been registered in the last three years and the same number of workers have been issued social security cards.

The department will set up women's labor hostels in industrial areas while work has started on a motorcycle scheme for women workers. He said that the Workers Profit Party Separation Fund Act has been implemented in the province that will receive the amount from industries which will be spent on the welfare of the workers. Provincial Minister of Labor announced the establishment of a zonal office of the Labor Department in Faisalabad.

Addressing the function, the Provincial Minister for Colonies and Culture mentioned the steps being taken for the welfare of the workers. He said that closed industries resumed operations by the positive thinking of Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan. He said industries continued to thrive during

the Corona epidemic and in Faisalabad has less labor and more employment opportunities are remained during corona situation. He said that by February 2022, every person's identity card will be a health card. Students will be given interest free loans for ten years after matriculation which they will repay after completing the degree.

Provincial Minister for Colonies said that the government has decided to give a monthly stipend of Rs. 2,500 to a female worker above the age of 62 and Rs. 2,000 to a man.

Secretary Labor Punjab Liaquat Ali Chatha said that the officers have been given a target to deal with 35,000 pending applications for welfare grants in 90 days.

He said that Rs 8 billion should be paid to the workers and their families in next three months.

He said that all the systems are being computerized and an online case will be submitted for the application for welfare grants.

There is also a facility in the offices of the Labor Department for online application. He said that higher secondary schools, 500-room hostels and community centers are also being set up in the labor colonies. During the ceremony labor leaders also spoke and thanked the Punjab Govt for solving their problems.



SAHIWAL: Ambassador of Turkey Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul, Commissioner Sahiwal and others posing for a group photo on the occasion of a lunch hosted by renowned businessman of Sahiwal Sohail Anjum Ansari for the Turkish ambassador at his residence. -DNA

PHP conduct awareness seminar on Gardening

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: In compliance of directions of SSP Patrolling Region Faisalabad Mirza Anjum Kamal, Mobile Education Unit held awareness seminar on the benefits of the kitchen Gardening at Patrolling posts, offices and houses. SSP Patrolling Mirza Anjum Kamal chaired the awareness session. Experts from health and agriculture fields dilated upon the importance and significance of Kitchen Gardening.

Among them Prof Dr Saeed Ashraf Cheema HOD Burn unit Allied Hospital, Sajid Iqbal Sindhu DG Agri Tourism Development corporation and Tariq Tanvir CEO Agri Tourism Development corporation delivered lectures on the importance of Kitchen Gardening.

The salient feature of lecture was as under: the importance of production of organic and healthy food at courtyards, the production of vegetables like Broccoli, turnip, Maro Kaddu, Beetroot, Bringle, Coriander, Methi and carrots etc enhances the beauty and gives economic benefits to the cultivator. And Kitchen Gardening is cost effective and reduces stress by indulging physical activity.

At the conclusion of session, the seed of different vegetables covering the 5 Marla area was distributed to each Post of Region Faisalabad.

National cancer registry need of the hour: Begum Alvi

ISLAMABAD: Begum Samina Alvi, wife of President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said every eighth woman in Pakistan was at the risk of suffering from breast cancer and stressed the need for an urgent plan of action to reduce the growing number of such patients.

Addressing at an awareness walk on breast cancer held here at the National Institute of Health (NIH), she said establishing a national cancer registry was need of the hour to formulate effective policies in line with the accurate database on the disease, including breast cancer.

Begum Alvi said early diagnosis was the best way to check breast cancer instead of the expensive and painful treatment at later stages of the

disease. She said in Pakistan with 0.1 million new cancer patients every year, breast cancer among topped the list of various forms of the disease. She emphasized on raising mass awareness in the society to shun taboos affiliated with breast cancer.

Begum Alvi said a healthy woman could positively contribute to the society and advised the women to practice self-diagnosis, which could save precious lives. She said though October was marked across the country as the breast cancer awareness month, however stressed that the message needed to be spread persistently throughout the year.

She urged the women parliamentarians to play a strong

role in highlighting the issue in their constituencies and sensitize the people. Samina Alvi said she would visit all provinces in the current month to raise awareness among girls and women at schools and colleges about the breast cancer.

Dr Faisal Sultan, Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Health said the government was making efforts to strengthen the primary care centres to treat cancers of different kinds including breast cancer.

Dr Nosheen Hamid, Parliamentary Secretary on Health said lack of awareness was the main reason behind the alarming death rate of 98 percent in patients with breast cancer in the country. - APP

OGRA celebrates Eid-i-Milad ul Nabi

ARIJ GHAZNAVI

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) celebrated Eid-i-Milad ul Nabi by organizing a special talk on the 'Seerat-ul-Nabi' (Peace Be Upon Him) at its head office on Wednesday. The event was held in light of the desire of Prime Minister of Pakistan seeking whole nation to celebrate Eid-i-Milad to enlighten everyone on the life and teachings of Holy Prophet

(Peace Be Upon Him). The Chairman-Mr. Masroor Khan, Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority and Member (Gas), Member (Oil) and senior officers including the OGRA staff attended the event. Allama Sheikh Muhammad Qasim (Director Idara Taleemate-Quran, Rawalpindi) delivered speech on the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and also highlighted other social aspects, including tolerance, kindness, patience in light of the character of Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him).

Rain likely from Friday to Sunday

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast rain-wind-thunderstorm in Upper and Central parts of the country from Friday to Sunday. A westerly wave is likely to enter upper or central parts of the country on Friday which would bring rain in upper and central parts. - APP

TRC gives school supplies to Afghan refugee kids

The supplies were distributed at Afghan Basti

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Turkish Red Crescent distributed school supplies among Afghan refugee children in Islamabad on Wednesday. "We gave 350 school bags and stationery supplies to Afghan refugee children who are studying in Islama-

bad," Ibrahim Carlos Camilo, head of the Turkish Red Crescent delegation in Pakistan, said at a ceremony in Islamabad. The supplies were distributed at the Pind Sangrial and Afghan Basti refugee camps near Islamabad, which are currently home to thousands of Afghans. Muhammad Umar, a teach-

er, thanked the Turkish government and the Turkish Red Crescent for their continuous support to Afghan refugees and children. Earlier this month, the Turkish relief agency sent humanitarian aid for the thousands of people internally displaced in Afghanistan due to years of conflict.



ISLAMABAD: Ibrahim Carlos Camilo, head of the Turkish Red Crescent posing for a group photo with Afghan refugee kids in Pakistan. - DNA

Sania highlights Pakistan's experience in scaling up EEC

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Dr. Sania Nishtar Wednesday highlighted the experience of Pakistan in scaling up the Ehsaas Emergency Cash (EEC) programme using data and digital technology during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. She was speaking at the World Bank Group's Human Capital Ministerial Conclave during the 2021 IMF-World Bank Group Annual Meetings.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sania motivated other countries to invest more in technology and data to improve delivery of human capital services.

"EEC demonstrated how cash transfer programmes can be deployed to counter the socio-economic fallout such as the COVID-19. To deliver cash to 15 million families amid COVID-19, the digital capabilities established in year 2019 as part of Ehsaas, were adapted to deliver Ehsaas Emergency Cash particularly a new biometric payment system, a demand side SMS based request seeking platform and a new wealth profiling big data analytics mechanism", Dr. Sania said.

Further, drawing on lessons learnt from the programme implementation during COVID-19, Dr. Sania added, "Using the same system, we have upscaled our education conditional as well as the health and nutrition conditional cash transfer programmes nationwide despite the financial constraints imposed by COVID. Also, stipends are skewed to favor girls' education. Even when COVID-19 was raging, we completed the work on Ehsaas survey, based on which are expand-

ing our social protection operations." The key lesson, she emphasized, was that to execute well at scale, data and technology are only part of the solution, it is how you plug them in a context of systems, policy and partnership innovations and the execution diligence that matters for delivery.

The Conclave was opened by the World Bank Group President, David Malpass. Ministers of Finance and Planning from



over 80 Human Capital project countries, key development partners, other high-level officials, and the World Bank's senior leadership attended the event. The 2021 Conclave on "Arresting Human Capital Losses due to COVID-19: Reimagining Service Delivery in a Digital Age", focused on how countries can make the most of the Digital age, making smart investment decisions around technology and innovations for services that better protect, build and utilize human capital. According to the World Bank, Pakistan's Ehsaas Emergency Cash Programme

was also ranked fourth globally in terms of the number of people covered and 3rd globally in terms of percentage of population covered amongst those that covered over 100 million people.

Alongside Dr. Sania, Dr. Olavo Avelino Garcia Correa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Business Development, and Digital Economy, Cabo Verde; Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Minister of Finance, Indonesia; Nasser Shraideh, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Jordan; Amb. Ukur Yatani, Cabinet Secretary, National Treasury, Kenya; Prof. Ju-Ho LEE, Commissioner, Global Education Commission and Former Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Korea; Javier Lozano, Co-founder and CEO, Clinicas del Azucar, Mexico; Timur Maksimov, Deputy Minister of Finance, Russian Federation; Amadou Hott, Minister of Economy, Planning and Cooperation, Senegal; Cina Lawson, Minister of Digital Economy and Digital Transformation, Togo; Lutfi Elvan, Minister of Treasury, Turkey; Azucena Arbelache, Minister of Economy and Finance, Uruguay; Asif Saleh, Executive Director, BRAC Bangladesh; and others also delivered statements at the event.

The Conclave showcased ways in which countries have and can reimagine and refine service delivery to better serve their populations in the face of COVID-19, taking advantage of the digital age. Strategic investments in delivery systems, innovative solutions, personalization of existing services, or actions to reach previously unreachable groups were featured. - APP



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Shahbaz Iqbal Malik

Secretary

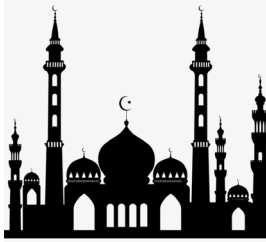
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Zohr.....	11:53 am
Asr.....	03:49 pm
Maghrib.....	05:28 pm
Isha.....	06:51 pm



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Marriott.....	051-2826121
Monal.....	0334-5421812



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Emergency

Rescue (Police).....	15
Bomb Disposal.....	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/	Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance..1122	& Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....	9266044
Motorway Police.....	9270601-20
Women Police Stations	Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....	9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....	115
PIA Flight Info.....	114
PIA Cargo.....	9280979
Railway Inquiry.....	117
Railway Exchange.....	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....	5555489
CAA.....	9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....	5611111
MH.....	5611116
Cantt Hospital.....	9270907-11
DHQ.....	5556311-4
RGH.....	9290301-7
Holy Family.....	9290322-7
PIMS.....	9261170-79
Polyclinic.....	9218300-09
Shifa International.....	4603666



Departments

CDA.....	9221334-43
CDA.....	9208301-04
Met Office.....	9250360-6
RDA.....	5555864
TMA.....	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3



Complaints

Water Tanker Service	E-7, F-10 & F-11.....9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8.....	9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12,	H-8.....9266316
Wapda Islamabad.....	9217579
Wapda Rawalpindi	111-309-309

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....	9209224
Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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Covid pandemic exacerbates learning poverty, says Shafqat

The study has drawn the attention towards serious educational issues and it would eventually help in policy formulation

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education, Professional Training, National Heritage and Culture Shafqat Mahmood said 'learning poverty', currently 75 percent in country according to World Bank study, was the real challenge and the Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation. Launching the Covid-19 Learning Losses Report, he said. The Federal Education Ministry had launched a dedicated TV channel 'TeleSchool' in just fifteen days of the first school closure and according to this ITA report 32 percent children watching this channel is good initiation. The study is aimed at assessing the extent to which the constitutional right to education and Pakistan's commitment to education SDG-4 has been affected

by the Covid-19 pandemic. It evaluated learning losses incurred due to school closures using the ASER assessment tool and identified the extent to which factors like parental education and wealth index of households and access to technology enabled children to continue learning. Shafqat Mahmood in his virtual address said that this study has drawn the attention towards serious educational issues and it would eventually help in policy formulation. He said the ministry in collaboration with AIOU, was working on content development. "We are introducing education technology in the sector and hiring Ed Tech specialists in the ministry to create a hybrid learning environment", he added. He said this would help to improve learning levels of



rural areas schools and low income educational institutions across the country. "By merging different organizations i.e. AEPAM & NEAS under the ministry, we are establishing Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) which will be state-of-the-art think-tank for data gathering, research and assessment mechanism at the

national level," he added. With the support of World Bank 250 million USD, the Federal Education Ministry along with the provinces, will be launching a project for disadvantaged districts to upgrade their infrastructure, to focus on out-of-school children and to reduce the learning poverty, he added.

During the pandemic, to conduct the exams was an uphill task but due to collective decision making through IPERC, the issue was tackled successfully, the Minister said. "If we did not conduct the examinations, the issue of learning losses might have worsened in higher classes as well," he remarked. Shafqat Mahmood said, in next IPERC, introducing remedial courses to cover the learning losses will also be discussed. The minister also highlighted the teachers training programme, Waseela-e-Taleem programme and enhancing the internet connectivity throughout the country by the government. Shafqat Mahmood thanked the ITA and ASER to conduct this useful study and assured that, the ministry will closely examine the

report and its findings will be incorporated in policy making by the ministry. The reports was launched by Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA), with the support of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The launch, held virtually on Zoom, was also attended by Ms. Ellen Van Kalmthout, Chief of Education at UNICEF Pakistan; M Ali Kemal, Economic Policy Advisor at the SDG Support Unit, Ministry of Planning Development and Reform; Ms. Kim Bradford Smith, Education Team Leader at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO); and Dr. Faisal Bari, Senior Research Fellow at IDEAS Pakistan and the Interim Dean of School of Education, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). - APP

Ali Asghar takes charge as MCI C.O

APP

ISLAMABAD: Captain (ret'd) Ali Asghar an officer of Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) has assumed his charge as chief officer Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) here on Wednesday. Deputy DG admin/revenue MCI Mian Tariq Latif, Staff Officer Wajid Ali Khan and Focal Person MCI, Dr Abdullah Tabassam received the newly appointed officer at MCI headquarters. The directors and deputy directors of various formations briefed the chief officer about the working of MCI and its subordinate directorate in details. Syeda Shafaq Hashmi a PAS officer who previously serving as MCI chief officer, relinquished the charge after her posting as Community Welfare Attaché at Consulate General of Pakistan in Milan, Italy.

AIOU to announce Matric/Inter results in Nov

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will announce the results of Matriculation and Intermediate programmes offered in Spring semester 2021 in mid-November. The examinations for these programmes ended in the second week of October, a press release on Wednesday said. According to Controller Examinations, Dr Tauqir Ahmad, the examinations of the postgraduate programmes offered in the second phase will begin in November, while the final examinations for the face-to-face programmes for semester Autumn 2021 will take place in December. It is pertinent to mention here that Matric, FA, BA and Associate degree examinations of overseas students have already started and instructions have been issued to the students in this regard. - APP

NA offers Fateha for deceased

NEWS REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Wednesday offered Fateha for departed souls of former Deputy Speaker Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob and former President of Azad Jammu Kashmir Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan. The house also offered Fateha for the souls of former Member National Assembly Syed Gulzar Sabtain Shah, father of Sharmila Parooqi, renowned columnist Dr Ajmal Niaz, mother of member Sindh Assembly Khurram Sher Zaman and the people who died in the recent earthquake in Harnai district of Balochistan. MNA Moulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali led the prayer on request of Deputy Speaker Qasim Khan Suri.

2-Day Seerat conference starts at NUML

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Two-Day National Seerat Conference started at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) on Wednesday. Departments of Arabic and Islamic Studies jointly organized the Seerat-un-Nabi SAWW Conference. Rector NUML Major General Muhammad Jaffar Hi (M) (Ret'd) was the chief guest while Prof. Dr. Tufail Hashmi, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Hammad Lakhvi and Dr. Habib ur Rehman Asim were the guest speakers on the first session of the conference. Director General NUML/Pro-Rector Resources Brig Syed Nadir Ali, Pro-Rector Acad Prof. Dr. Safer Awan, Pro-Rector Research Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghouri, Deans, Directors, HoDs, faculty members and large number of students also attended the conference. Guest Speakers highlighted the various aspects of the Seerat of Hazrat Muhammad SAWW and stressed that acting upon the Seerat is the key to success for the Ummat.

NORI organizes breast cancer walk

ISLAMABAD: Atomic Energy Cancer Hospital (AECH), NORI organized breast cancer awareness programme under the slogan "Give Hope Save Lives" followed by inauguration of a new linear accelerator facility and an awareness walk here on Wednesday. Nuclear Medicine, Oncology and Radiotherapy Institute (NORI) is the top-notch public sector cancer hospital established in the federal capital by Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) in 1983. Director, Atomic Energy Cancer Hospital NORI, Dr Mohammad Faheem welcomed the participants. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairing a meeting on the development of new Balakot City. - APP

President Alvi urges need for high quality graduates

The president expressed these views during a briefing on Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute (GIKI) of Engineering Sciences and Technology, given by Rector GIKI, Prof. Dr Fazal Ahmad Khalid, at Aiwan-e-Sadr

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi underlined the need for producing graduates of high quality and highly skilled work force by universities to meet the requirements of the country as well as the market on Wednesday. He said that universities needed to speed up their efforts by focusing on information and Communication Technology (ICT) so as to fully reap the dividends of the 4th industrial revolution. The president expressed these views during a briefing on Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute (GIKI) of Engineering Sciences and Technology, given by Rector GIKI, Prof. Dr Fazal Ahmad Khalid, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. President Society for Promotion of Engineering Sciences and Technology (SOPREST), Farid Rahman, Executive Director SOPREST, Shakil Durani, Rector

GIKI, Prof. Dr Fazal Ahmad Khalid, and senior officials of the government attended the meeting. Rector GIKI briefed the president about the role and achievements of the Institute in providing education in the fields of engineering sciences and technology. He informed that presently, 2366 students were enrolled in various

degree programmes and 6852 students had graduated from the university so far. He highlighted that 75% of the Institute's faculty comprised of PhD degree holders from top-ranked national and international universities. He added that GIKI had allocated over Rs 290 million in 2021 to provide scholarships and financial assistance to deserving students. Ad-

ressing the meeting, the president asked the management of the university to develop industrial linkages and promote collaborations with international universities of good repute in order to benefit from their expertise. He said that the university needed to strengthen its International Advisory Board, besides enhancing the volume of online educational component. The president asked the university to implement HEC's policy on students with disabilities which provided complete waiver to such students in tuition fees, hostel fees and utility fees, in addition to employing different-abled people and women in the university. He urged the university to update its vision and set timelines to achieve its targets. He remarked that universities required to prioritize needs of the country by focusing on artificial Intelligence and developing expertise in the area of cyber security. - APP

CDA suspends forest officer for facilitating land mafia

CDA administration said that legal action will be taken if any CDA or district administration official found to be involved in trespassing, illegal construction or violating other building by-laws

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority suspended Assistant Director Forest for facilitating land mafia in Saidpur. Six people, including said Assistant Director, were arrested on carrying out encroachments on government land. In line with the directions Capital Development Authority's Administration, Enforcement Department, with the assistance of Islamabad District Administration and Islamabad Police, on Tuesday conducted operation against enrolment in Saidpur Village despite public holiday on eve of Eidmildunabi. Enforcement Directorate took action on the reports that illegal constructions are being carried out on forest land in Saidpur area. Taking prompt action Enforcement Directorate demolished illegal constructions while Assistant Director Forest Atiq-ur-Rehman has also suspended for allegedly providing patronage and facilitating encroachers. According to the details, the Enforcement Directorate took action on the reports that illegal constructions are being carried out in Saidpur village on state land on Tuesday. The staff of Enforcement Directorate was informed that 26 Marla state Land was sold by Abdul Hameed son of Muhammad Anwar and Assistant Director Environment Atiq-ur-Rehman after extorting 100,000/- have sold to Muhammad Jameel fraudulently. In this regard, immediate action was taken and operation was carried out against the land mafia using heavy machinery thereby demolishing illegal construction while construction material was also confiscated and attempt of illegal constructions on the forest lands was foiled. A formal FIR has been registered against six persons, including Atiq-ur-Rehman, Assistant Director Forest, for their involvement in illegal constructions and facilitation of these elements, while departmental action has been initiated against Atiq-ur-Rehman. Furthermore, the CDA administration said that legal action will be taken if any CDA or district administration official found to be involved in trespassing, illegal construction or violating other building by-laws. - DNA

Industrialists show concern over MCI enhanced taxes

Business Community urges to develop the Kahuta Industrial Triangle on modern lines; without providing facilities, there was no justification to receive taxes from the industrialists

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Kahuta Industrial Triangle led by Omais Khattak, Acting President, Islamabad Industrial Association (IIA) visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and informed the ICCI Office Bearers that MCI has issued the notice of enhanced property tax to the industrialists of the area, which has created lot of concerns in them as it was not feasible for them to pay property tax with exorbitant increase. Shaukat Hayat Khan Vice President IIA, Nasir M. Qureshi Vice President FPCCI, Humayun Kabir Executive Member ICCI, Maj Gen

(Ret'd) Farrukh Javed, Kanwar Aftab, Fiaz Khan, Fida Butt and others were in the delegation. Ejaz Abbasi former President, Khalid Chaudhry Senior Vice President ICCI and others were also present at the occasion. Addressing the delegation, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that MCI had made almost 300 percent hike in property tax in Islamabad in one go without fulfilling the legal requirements. He said that ICCI along with other stakeholders had resorted to the Islamabad High Court against the unjustified hike in property tax and the IHC had issued a stay

order against the said hike. However, despite the court's stay order, the MCI was issuing notices of enhanced property tax to the business community in Islamabad, which was totally unjustified. He called upon the MCI to immediately withdraw all notices of enhanced property tax to save the business community and the citizens from unnecessary problems. He further said that MCI has gone into appeal against stay order and till the decision on its appeal, it should receive property tax on old rates as without any decision on its appeal, MCI was not eligible to receive property tax on increased rates. Omais Khattak Acting President,

Shaukat Hayat Vice President Islamabad Industrial Association, Nasir M. Qureshi Vice President FPCCI and other members of delegation said that CDA and MCI were not providing even basic facilities in the Kahuta Industrial Triangle, which was falling in Zone-V. Due to this state of affairs, the roads were broken, water supply, streetlights, sewerage and other systems were not functioning properly and the industrialists of the area were facing great problems in doing business. They said that first CDA and MCI should provide basic infrastructure and facilities in Kahuta Industrial Triangle and then consider imposing

taxes. They further said that the MCI should receive property tax on old rates till a decision on its appeal against the stay order is taken by the court. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President and Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI fully supported the stand of the delegation of Kahuta Industrial Triangle regarding the property tax issue. They urged that CDA and MCI should develop the Kahuta Industrial Triangle on modern lines and then receive taxes as without providing services and facilities, there was no justification to receive taxes from the industrialists of Zone-V area.

Briefs

IUI placed among top 200 universities

ISLAMABAD: International Islamic University, Islamabad (IUI) has been placed in Top 200 Universities in the Times Higher Education Emerging Economies Universities Ranking 2022. According to recent results, overall there are 698 universities in the ranking this year and 50 territories of emerging economies are represented.

International Islamic University has been ranked as 179, while only three universities from Pakistan including International Islamic University, Quaid-i-Azam University and Abdul Wali Khan University out of 21 ranked to make the top 200 slot.

The university leadership believes that upcoming ranking will be much more positive as new reforms and initiatives have entered into the mature stages through various steps taken such as implementation of the university's strategic plan and academic audits.

The university is now all set and in a better position to submit its accomplishments and achievements with an approach of quantifiable analysis that will lead to improved and realistic university rankings in future.

The university has also started a comprehensive work on research and enterprise that shall also be helpful in improved ranking through linkage with industry, acceptance of international funded projects, collaborations in research and global engagements. — APP

APHC urges UN to examine killings, arrests in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) in IIOJK has condemned the upsurge in search operations carried out by Indian occupation forces and humiliating frisking in the name of so-called security in the nook and corner of the occupied territory.

According to Kashmir Media Service, APHC General Secretary, Molvi Bashir Ahmad Irfani, in a statement said that Indian fascist regime is treating the people of Kashmir worse than animals. He pointed out that inhuman treatment meted out to the common masses at the hands of occupational forces has even caused alienation in the rank and files of India's political stooges in the territory.

The APHC leader hailing the resistance potential of the people of Kashmir said all suppressive and repressive measures tried by India in Kashmir have proved an exercise in futility. Paying rich tributes to the youth recently martyred by Indian troops in Poonch, Shopian, Srinagar and other parts of the territory, Molvi Bashir Ahmad Irfani reiterated the Kashmiris' pledge to take the ongoing resistance movement to its logical conclusion. — APP

Zhong Tai shows interest to invest in KP

ISLAMABAD: China's Zhong Tai Chemical Industry (Private) Limited has expressed interest in investing in the energy, infrastructure and mining sectors of the north-western province of KP.

According to Gwadar Pro, a team led by Li-Gang, CEO Zhong Tai Chemical Industry (Private) Limited, visited Peshawar and held meetings with Special Assistant to Chief Minister KP on Industries and Commerce Abdul Karim Tordher, CEO KP-BOIT Hassan Daud Butt and other officials.

Both sides had a detailed discussion on "potential investment proposals" in different sectors of the province, known as "land of opportunities". Abdul Karim Tordher assured the Chinese officials that the Government of KP would facilitate "all investors and necessary matchmaking will be done to help seamless investment in key areas". Hassan Daud Butt briefed the Chinese officials on KP-BOIT's role of providing one-stop services to foreign investors and making it easier for them to obtain NOC under regulation. — APP

The war in Afghanistan is far from over: Amb Saqib

Ambassador Najam said that it was vital to see the US from the American perspective in order to strategize and plan things accordingly

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The situation in Afghanistan is meant to evolve further in the months and years that follow, said Ambassador Najam Saqib. He was addressing a gathering, jointly organised by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) and the Pak-Afghan Youth Forum (PAYF) here on Wednesday. He stated that Pakistan seemed to be acting by what could be referred to as a wait and see policy. This, he held, was by far the most calculated policy stance that the government had ever taken and had a similar stance been taken back in the 1990s, things in Afghanistan would have been quite different. On US presence in Afghanistan spanning over a decade, the ambassador said that it was important to remember that the US had willfully withdrawn and had not

in fact been defeated in Afghanistan. So, according to him, the possibility that the US was completely out of the picture was a misplaced one.

He further argued that the US defeat in Afghanistan did not in any case symbolise victory for any other regional or international player. Ambassador Saqib spoke extensively about the power vacuum that had been created in Afghanistan following US withdrawal and the potential role of world powers like China and Russia. He maintained that the return of peace and stability to once war-torn Afghan soil could prove to be a mirage. Commenting on the Taliban government, Ambassador Saqib said that while it was true that the Taliban were a reality and the world must accept them as such, it was equally true that if the Taliban failed to attune themselves with the practices of the realpolitik they could end up only 'ex-

isting' and not 'living'. Simplistically, he argued, the Taliban government might lose all grounds to establish a recognisable government if it tried to compromise the fundamental governance practices.

While the governance norms were understandable, he said that the sudden concern of the West over human rights, women rights, and inclusive government were nothing but a paradox as the exact same values stood compromised in almost all developed democracies that placed themselves at a moral pedestal, only to question the functionality of various affairs in another country.

Pakistan's role in the entire situation, he said, was integral but only as far as it was in its own national interest. He said that Pakistan was in no position to cast a blind eye towards the crises at home such as inflation, economic instability, unemployment, brain

drain, etc. in addition to its unresolved Kashmir issue.

Ambassador Saqib further added that although it was unjust of the US to completely disregard Pakistan's efforts in backing US efforts in Afghanistan, it was up to Pakistan to make the most of the current situation and re-establish its relevance, now, more than ever. He said that even if China acquired a major role in Afghanistan, Pakistan must practice mature diplomacy and realise that a friendly China as its neighbour did not mean that it could antagonise the US.

Winding up, Ambassador Najam said that it was vital to see the US from the American perspective in order to strategize and plan things accordingly. He added that Afghanistan did constitute as one of the top-most priorities for Pakistan but that might not stay the same as Pakistan had its own challenges to address.

Courtiers trying to make accountability controversial

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Communication Dr Shahbaz Gill on Wednesday said incompetent courtiers were making failed attempt to make the accountability process controversial.

In response to the statement of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) lawmaker Ahsan Iqbal, he said the PML-N leaders were making efforts to prove themselves innocent in media instead of being accountable.

He said corruption and mafia could be eradicated only through justice in the new Pakistan.

Pakistan placed in the Global Hunger Index was at 106 during PML-N tenure, which has come down at 92 despite coronavirus pandemic, he added. Gill said incompetent courtiers were suffering the most from the state of Madinah. However, there was no room for looters and plunderers like Sharif family in the welfare state, he added. — APP

Rahat announces schedule of USA tour

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan renowned vocalist Ustad Rahat Fateh Ali Khan on Wednesday announced the schedule of "The Legacy USA Tour", starting from October 31 amid huge demand of his fans.

According to the announcement, Ustad Rahat Fateh Ali Khan is continuing a "Legacy of his family of over 600 years, it is based on it". The mystic Guru Rahat Fateh Ali Khan would start his performance at Charlotte, NC on October 31.

He would also perform at many other major cities of USA including Memphis, TN on November 5, Houston, TX on November 6, Dallas TX on November 7, DC November 12, Cincinnati, OH November 13, New Jersey November 14, Chicago, IL November 19, New York November 20, Atlanta November 21, Sacramento November 26, San Jose November 27 and Seattle November 28.

Rahat Fateh Ali Khan has sung more than 50 title tracks of television serials and over 100 film songs. He is a nephew of legendary Qawwali maestro Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. He began his career at the age of three, performing and studying under the tutelage of his uncle referred to as the "King of Qawwali". The Legacy Tour was conceptualized by Salman Ahmed. — APP

NHMP celebrated Eid-e-Milad

ISLAMABAD: National Highways and Motorways Police (NHMP) has observed Eid-Milad-un-Nabi (SAW) with religious devotion at the Central Police Office in Islamabad as and its Regional, Zonal, and Sector Offices.

The Motorway Police scheduled various activities on the occasion of Eid-Milad-un-Nabi (SAW), said a statement. The Central Police Office, NHMP Training College, and all offices of the National Highways and Motorways Police were decorated with electric lights and banners. — APP



Islamabad: Senator Muhammad Ayub, convener Pak-UAE Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Senate exchanging views with Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, ambassador of UAE at Parliament House. — DNA

PCAA issues notices to four airline operators

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) has issued notices to four airline operators including PIA, Serene Air, Airblue and Airsial over cancellation of 383 confirmed scheduled domestic flights, out of 1,145 since October 1, 2021, on the pretext of some 'operational reasons'. After cancellation of the domestic flights, airline operators utilized their aircraft for the conduct of international chartered operations, the authority said in its twitter handle quoting some complaints through different forums in that regard.

The PCAA said it observed that Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) canceled 130 flights out of 417, Serene Air 117 out of 250, Airblue 86 out of 261 and Airsial 50 out of 217. "In light of the cancellation of 383 flights depicting a total percent of 33.4%, the Competent Authority has decided to withhold all international chartered flight permissions forthwith," it said. Prior to requesting any permission for international chartered flights, the authority said, airline operators would submit an undertaking that domestic flight schedule approved for any ongoing "scheduling season(s)" would be operated with a minimum flight regularity and punctuality of 90 per cent and 80 per cent respectively. "Cancellation of domestic flights, if any, will only be made consequent upon technical reasons or forced majeure circumstances. "...the cancellations on the pretext of technical reasons will only be allowed subject to its confirmation from our Airworthiness Directorate," the PCAA warned. — APP

Construction work on IJP Road likely to start soon

Four lanes on each side of the IJP Road will be constructed including two rigid and two flexible lanes while two flyovers will be constructed one at 9th Avenue and other at Faqeer Appa Road

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: In line with the authority's comprehensive policy regarding uplift of road infrastructure in Islamabad, CDA management has directed the concerned formation to accelerate the pace of work IJ Principal Road widening and rehabilitation project.

On the directions of Chairman CDA, Member Engineering alongwith Director General Works, Director Roads South, NESPAK consultants and

NLC visited the IJ Principal Road for inspecting the construction work.

Initial investigation including soil testing, pile load testing and survey work is underway.

Instructions were issued that the initial investigation be completed at earliest and to start construction work on the project soon. Instructions were issued to devise a comprehensive traffic diversion plan with the

consultation of Islamabad Traffic police. CDA has also requested the comuters to use alternative route to avoid inconvenience.

Under this project, four lanes on each side of the IJP Road will be constructed including two rigid and two flexible lanes while two flyovers will be constructed one at 9th Avenue and other at Faqeer Appa Road while two bridges will be constructed at Katarian

and Pirwadi respectively. The project will be completed in 18 months with cost amounting to Rs. 4.9 billion.

Incumbent management of the authority envisaged the project, completed its technical requirements, hired consultant and now work on the project has been started.

The rehabilitation of IJP road will facilitate inter-provincial traffic and the traffic from Rawalpindi to Islamabad and vice versa in addition to facilitating the traffic management system in the city.



RAWALPINDI: MPA Simabia Tahir, Naheed Manzoor, Dr Farhat Abbas and others are participating in the Natia Mushaira organized by Punjab Arts Council in connection with Ashra Rahmatul Lil Alamin. — DNA

Six new projects being executed in petroleum sector

ISLAMABAD: The Petroleum Division would carry out six new projects worth Rs1775.857 million during the current fiscal year 2021-22 to achieve self-sufficiency in the energy sector, streamline matters related to minerals' regulatory framework and data compilation.

According to official documents, the government has allocated Rs40mn in the PSDP 2021-22 for a new project, under which development of Strategic Underground Gas Storage (SUGS), hiring of consul-

tancy services for bankable feasibility study and transaction advisory services (PC-II) would be carried out.

A sum of Rs30 million has been specified for Legal Consultancy Services for drafting of Model Mineral Agreement and updating of Regulatory Framework (Federal and Provincial Minerals/Coal Departments) prepared by Mineral Wing, Petroleum Division, Rs40 million for Pakistan National Research Programme on Geological Hazards (Earthquakes and Landslides). — APP

PSF invites proposals to award Special IC of AI/IoT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) has invited project proposals from all the public and private sector degree awarding institutions for the award of Specialized Incubation Centre (IC) of Artificial Intelligence /Internet of Things (AI/IoT). "The PSF intends to establish Specialized Incubation Centre (IC) of Artificial Intelligence/Internet-of-Things (AI/IoT) based in the campuses of universities to encourage entrepreneurship among the students and researchers", an official of PSF told APP.

ICs will provide potential entrepreneurs, all the necessary infrastructure support, technology/prototype development support, research assistance, help in securing funding, business consultancy, marketing assistance and do whatever is necessary to make the start-up "A SUCCESS".

The official said that specialized incubators motivate and inspire students, researchers and more startups, equip them with necessary skills, provide necessary assistance and convert innovations into marketable products. Academic institutes and research centres are the primary sources of many new ideas and turning those ideas into real and commercial products or services is the most challenging part in innovation cycle.

An incubator enables start-up financiers ready to take risks of moving out of their comfort zone and provide an environment planned to maximise their probabilities of success. — APP

RCCI urges for rationalization of taxation

RCCI President Nadeem Rauf said in a statement that if taxes, custom duty, FED and adjusted sales tax and income tax be withdrawn on edible oil, there would be a downward balancing effect on the overall food inflation

SHUJAAT HAMZA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has urged FBR to introduce rationalization of taxation and called upon the government to withdraw all taxes and duties on food items to mitigate the surge in food inflation.

Commodity prices are skyrocketing and a matter of concern for the Chamber.

RCCI President Nadeem Rauf said in a statement that if taxes, custom duty, FED and adjusted sales tax and income tax be withdrawn on edible oil, there would be a downward balancing effect on the overall food inflation. Similarly, the prices of Drugs/medicines are very high. Since we

import raw material for Pharama, it is urged to lower taxes on import of raw material being used in manufacturing of medicines.

He said that the chamber also put forwarded its suggestions before President Arif Alvi, during Taxpayer Award ceremony in Islamabad. RCCI also requested the government to lower taxes and duties on the import of commodities.

Furthermore, the import of Petroleum Products puts additional pressure on dollar and trade deficit, so it was suggested to lower the taxes and levy on POL. This will lower the transportation cost, he added.

High speed diesel is widely used in agriculture and transport sectors and therefore increase in its price would have a direct impact on life of common man.



Covid declines in Pakistan

WEDNESDAY marked the fifth straight day of less than 1000 cases of coronavirus reported throughout Pakistan. This is an important milestone, as we have not seen such a low incidence of cases since March, when the third wave began. While there has been no observable increase in preventions and precautions being taken by the public, this decrease indicates that the government's attempts to impose safeguards and the vaccination drives might finally be having an effect. However, this important step in pushing the pandemic back must be consolidated. While the vaccination drive looks to be successful so far, there are still gaps that must be accounted for. For instance, the increasing reports of fake vaccination certificates are a serious concern that must be resolved. Vaccines save lives by reducing the chance of an infection and minimising its effects even if the virus is transmitted. The certificates make it possible for the public to lower its guard. If public places ease restrictions based on these certificates, even one fake can lead to a renewed spree of cases. But even with coronavirus being pushed back, there are several threats to the health of Pakistani citizens that must be acted upon. The rising incidence of dengue was bad enough, but for residents of Punjab, the very serious threat posed by smog continues to increase health risks for the general population. We are facing myriad threats, and the efforts being made to counter coronavirus must also be replicated elsewhere. There is no holistic approach when it comes to ailments apart from coronavirus, which is a glaring oversight on part of both the federal and provincial governments. If the past two years have taught us anything, it should be that preventing an outbreak is fundamental in keeping ahead of a disease. It is hoped that the government takes this lesson to heart and replicates the success we are witnessing to other aspects of healthcare as well.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 02 Issue: 142

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Pakistan in the Rule of Law Index 2021

MUHAMMAD OMAR IFTIKHAR

ACCORDING to the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index 2021 report, Pakistan ranks at the 130th spot out of 139 countries in its adherence to the rule of law. Pakistan managed to get a score of merely 0.39 out of a score from 0 to 1 – with 1 showing the strongest adherence to the rule of law. Unfortunately, Pakistan stands at the second-last position in South Asia. Countries better performing than Pakistan are India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Afghanistan is the only country from South Asia that has performed poorly as compared to Pakistan. According to the report, Pakistan has low ratings in the areas pertaining to corruption, fundamental rights, order and security, and regulatory enforcement. In the area of the criminal justice system, civil justice, open government, and constraints on government powers, Pakistan is in the fourth position out of a total of six regional countries assessed as per a news report. The report also states that Pakistan is among the three worst when it comes to order and security. It stands at the 137th position out of 139 countries. In the category of the absence of corruption, Pakistan falls in the red zone by getting a score of 0.31 and stands at the 123rd spot. In the category of fundamental rights, Pakistan gets a score of 0.38 and holds 126th position. This category recognizes that a system of positive law that fails to respect core human rights established under international law is at best "rule by law," and does not deserve to be called a rule of law system. In the category of regulatory enforcement, which measures the extent to which regulations are implemented and enforced, Pakistan is at the 123rd spot with a score of 0.39. This report should be an eye-opener for the concerned authorities and for the government itself. The lawlessness and the institution's inability to provide justice to the common man have been inflicting pain on those who seek justice.

Iran poll contains different messages for Biden and Raisi

James M. Dorsey

Implicitly, Iranians were holding former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani responsible for the mismanagement given that Mr. Raisi only took office in August. Rated very favourable by 61.2 per cent of Iranians surveyed in 2015

"It's the economy, stupid." That is the message of a just-published survey of Iranian public opinion. However, the substance of the message differs for newly elected hardline Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and the Biden administration as Mr. Raisi toughens his negotiating position and the United States grapples with alternative ways of curbing the Islamic republic's nuclear programme should the parties fail to agree on terms for the revival of the 2015 international agreement. Iranians surveyed last month by Iran Poll and the University of Maryland's Center for International and Security Studies were telling Mr. Raisi that they are looking to him to alleviate Iran's economic and other problems and have little hope that a revived nuclear agreement will make the difference, given lack of trust in US and European compliance with any agreement reached. The Iranians polled seemed in majority to endorse some form of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's notion of a "resistance economy" as a way of blunting the impact of the US sanctions imposed by former President Donald J. Trump after he walked away from the nuclear agreement in 2018. Some 65 per cent of the responders said they favoured a self-sufficient economy; 54.2 per cent expected the economy to at least improve somewhat in the next three years. A large number expressed confidence that Mr. Raisi would significantly lower inflation and unemployment, increase Iran's trade with other countries, control the pandemic and root out corruption. Meanwhile, 63 per cent suggested that Iran's economic situation would be the same, if not better, if there were no return to the agreement

and the government continued to pursue a civil nuclear programme. The figure seemed at odds with the 80 per cent who said Iran's economic situation would improve if Iran and the United States returned to the agreement and both fulfilled their obligations under the deal. The divergence may be a function of the fact that the poll, unsurprisingly, indicated that Iranians (64.7 per cent) had little trust in the United States living up to its commitments even though they expected the Biden administration to return to the deal (57.9 per cent). As a result, 73.1 per cent of those surveyed said Iran should not make concessions given that world powers would not live up to commitments they make in return. At the same time, 63 per cent blamed the troubled state of the economy on domestic mismanagement rather than US sanctions. Only 34.4 per cent believed that the sanctions were the main cause of their economic difficulty. Iranians pointing the finger at the government rather than external forces was also reflected in the 60.5 per cent of those polled blaming Iran's water shortages on mismanagement and bad policies. The poll suggested that by emphasising domestic mismanagement, Iranians were going to judge Mr. Raisi on his success or failure in countering the debilitating effect of the sanctions even though 77.5 per cent of those surveyed said that the sanctions had a negative or somewhat negative impact on the economy. Implicitly, Iranians were holding former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani responsible for the mismanagement given that Mr. Raisi only took office in August. Rated very favourable by 61.2 per cent of Iranians surveyed in 2015, Mr. Rouhani's favorability dropped to 4.6 per cent in the most recent poll. By contrast, the favourable views of Mr. Raisi soared from 38.3 per cent in 2014 to 77 per cent last month. IranPoll and the Center have been conducting annual surveys since 2014. Mr. Raisi may have taken pleasure from that but more importantly, the poll implicitly suggested that he does not have much time to produce results before his significant public support starts to wane. Of those polled, 66.7 per cent expected Mr. Raisi to improve Iran's international standing, 55.7 per cent said he would be in a better position to negotiate with world powers, and 45.2 per cent predicted that he would enhance Iran's security. Those expectations may have been to some degree validated in the public's mind by last month's acceptance of Iran's application for membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that groups China, Russia, India, Pakistan and several Central Asian states.

The survey results seemed to suggest that ordinary Iranians were framing their message to the United States differently from the assessment of prominent scholars and analysts. The divergence may well be one primarily of timing but nonetheless has implications for policymaking in Washington. The message of the respondents to the poll was one of immediate impact while analysts and scholars appear to be looking at the middle term. Without referring to the poll, Vienna-based economist and strategic consultant Bijan Khajepour argued this week, seemingly contrary to the poll, that "mismanagement and the Covid-19 pandemic have both contributed to Iran's poor economic performance in recent years, but it remains that US sanctions...will be the key factor in determining Iran's future prospects." Mr. Khajepour went on to say that "high inflation, capital flight and the erosion of household purchasing power alongside mismanagement of resources and the deterioration of the country's infrastructure have the potential to spark more protests and further undermine the already faltering legitimacy of the Islamic Republic in the eyes of the public." No doubt, the jury is out on how Iranians respond if and when Mr. Raisi fails to live up to their expectations. If the past is any indication, Iranians have repeatedly taken to the streets at often substantial risk to liberty and life to make their discontent with government performance evident as they did with the low turnout in this year's election that brought Mr. Raisi to power. The risk of renewed protests was reflected in the fact that responses to various questions regarding the electoral system, the limited number of presidential candidates (because many were barred from running), and the public health system showed that it was often a slim majority at best that expressed confidence in the system. Add to that the fact that 68 per cent of respondents to the poll said that the objectives of past protests had been a demand that officials pay greater attention to people's problems. Yet, at the same time, they were telling the United States that its efforts to generate pressure on Iranian leaders to moderate their nuclear and regional policies by imposing harsh sanctions had for now backfired. Iranians were backing a tougher negotiating position by the Raisi government. Ultimately that could be a double-edged sword for Mr. Raisi. He has to prove that he can be tough on the United States and simultaneously improve the lives of ordinary Iranians. Failure to do so could have in Mr. Khajepour's words "unpredictable consequences."

COP26: What Pakistan shall be looking for?

Munir Ahmed



The government has approved Pakistan's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for the UN Climate Conference COP26 where Pakistan has aimed for an ambitious 50 percent more reduction from the present 1.3 percent carbon emissions by 2030 subject to provision of \$100 bn climate finance. Special Assistant to Prime Minister Malik Amin Aslam has mentioned that national funding

THE UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31 October – 12 November 2021. This very important conference is taking place at the moment when the COVID-19 pandemic has brought devastation to millions around the world, disrupting many parts of the global economy. Governments have stepped up to protect lives and livelihoods. But climate change has continued, and it ultimately threatens life on earth. "As countries begin to recover from the Coronavirus pandemic, we must take the historic opportunity to tackle climate change at the same time – to build back better, and greener. We can deliver green recoveries across the globe that bring in good jobs, trillions in investment and ground-breaking new technology. And we must. To keep the temperature of the planet under control – limiting its increase to 1.5 degrees – the science dictates that by the second half of the century, we should be producing less carbon than we take out of the atmosphere. This is what reaching 'net zero' means", says Alok Sharma, the COP President-Designate. Around the world, storms, floods and wildfires have intensified, air pollution has increased enormously and affecting the health of tens of millions of people and unpredictable weather causes untold damage to homes and livelihoods too. The impact of climate change is devastating but the advances in tackling it are meagre in the proportion. The poor, least developed and developing countries are suffering from the environment unfriendly development and industrial growth of the rich countries. It is the time they have to pay back for the vulnerability of the resource starved countries to take measures to safeguard its people and their livelihoods from the changing climate impacts. According to the World Bank, Pakistan is one of the top five vulnerable countries, despite having no significant contribution to climate change. Another re-

port mentions: "In 2019, CO2 emissions for Pakistan was 223.6 million tons. Between 1970 and 2019, CO2 emissions of Pakistan grew substantially from 17.7 to 223.6 million tons rising at an increasing annual rate that reached a maximum of 15.38 per cent in 1987 and then decreased to 1.33 per cent in 2019." The drastic decrease in carbon emissions is surely the result of steps taken by Pakistan under its Climate Action – the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13. The flagship project Ten Billion Tree Tsunami (TBT) is not just a tree plantation movement but a comprehensive initiative for ecosystem conservation and management. More than a billion new plantations, revised plans for forest management and development across the countries with the engagement of provinces and administrative entities, and capacity of institutions have already been noticed and appreciated by the national and international environment and climate watchdogs. The Sustainable Development Report 2020, written by a group of authors led by Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, President of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and published by Cambridge University Press, has declared Pakistan accomplished all targets of the SD-13 ten years ahead of the actual date – 2030. The UNDP SDDGs report has also shown Pakistan's remarkable progress on SDG-13 Climate Action. COP26 is an opportunity for Pakistan to vigorously showcase its achievements so far and the vulnerabilities as well. Pakistan has been facing the worst impact in the forms of short-span heavy rains, flash floods, unprecedented land-sliding incidents, glacial melting, air pollution and fast diminishing water resources, climate prone crop diseases and low productivity and many others. The overburdened by debt, incapacity and capital shortfall have increased Pakistan's vulnerability. Keeping in view the performance on climate action, Pakistan shall be on the global top priorities for funding, human resource development and institutional strengthening to protect masses living at the edge and their livelihood resources. The government has approved Pakistan's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for the UN Climate Conference COP26 where Pakistan has aimed for an ambitious 50 percent more reduction from the present 1.3 percent carbon emissions by 2030 subject to provision of \$100 bn climate finance. Special Assistant to Prime Minister Malik Amin Aslam has mentioned that national funding, professional capacity and institutional strengthening will simultaneously take place while mobilising global resources to attain the goal. The prime minister's approved roadmap for shifting the country's carbon emissions levels on to a lower trajectory will include 15 percent reduction in carbon emissions from the country's own resources through different ongoing initiatives. Pakistan will be looking for 35 percent reduction in heat trapping carbon emissions that is subject to availability of international financial support from various available funding channels such as Global Climate Fund. Pakistan shall adopt an all-inclusive approach towards achieving the goal. The government offices are besieged by all the stereotyped national and chapters of the international environmental conservation organizations. Government shall trust new extroverted approaches, critical thinking and innovative frameworks for showcasing its achievements for harnessing global finance for achieving its targets. – The writer is a freelance journalist and broadcaster, Director Devcom-Pakistan, an Islamabad-based policy advocacy and outreach think tank. He can be reached at devcom.pakistan@gmail.com and tweets @EmmayeSyed

Will Afghanistan's powerful neighbours engage the Taliban?

Zahir Sherazi

The instability has enabled armed groups along the Pakistan-Afghan border to flourish. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistan Taliban) and Baloch insurgents have been attacking targets in Pakistan for years, killing more than 83,000 and inflicted billions of dollars

THE withdrawal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan is inevitably leaving a political vacuum in South and Central Asia. The question that many are asking is who will step in to fill it. Afghanistan's immediate neighbours – Pakistan, Iran and China – all have special interests in the country that they are likely to pursue with renewed vigour. None is likely to play the same significant role the US did in shaping the future of the country but all three want to see a stable government in Kabul and security established across the country in view of their own national security interests.

The Taliban, for its part, is looking to establish positive relations with its neighbours to earn international legitimacy and attract investment for much needed economic development. So what does this mean for relations with Pakistan, China and Iran? Pakistan, which shares a 2,670km-long (1,659-mile) border with Afghanistan, has suffered a lot during the past four decades of turmoil. It has had to pay a heavy price for acting as a launching pad for Washington's and its allies' "Afghan jihad" on the USSR after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The 9/11 attacks and the subsequent "war on terror" only worsened the security situation in Pakistan. The instability has enabled armed groups along the Pakistan-Afghan border to flourish. Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistan Taliban) and Baloch insurgents have been attacking targets in Pakistan for years, killing more than 83,000 and inflicted billions of dollars worth of losses on the Pakistani economy. Islamabad has often alleged that violent attacks on Pakistan have been planned and executed from Afghan soil with the active support of Indian intelligence. At the same time, Pakistani security agencies have been accused of backing the Afghan Taliban, especially the Haqqani network. In this context, the Taliban takeover of Kabul and the withdrawal of US forces were perceived as a positive development by policy and military circles in Islamabad. Their attitude has been: "We are happy because with the Taliban in power, our western borders will be secured as archrival India will be out of the game." This optimism about a friendly government in Kabul is also strengthened by the fact that the Taliban never retaliated with violence for Pakistan

providing support for the US-led military operation which dislodged them from power in 2001 or for handing over some of its members to western forces. Some have even speculated about a prominent role that Islamabad may play in Kabul, specifically after news of a September 4 visit to the Afghan capital by Pakistani intelligence chief Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed emerged. In the international arena, Islamabad has also been actively campaigning for international engagement with the Taliban. In his video messages to the UN General Assembly aired on September 24, Prime Minister Imran Khan urged the world community to support the Taliban government and help the country with much-needed humanitarian aid. However, Pakistan may not enjoy an unrivalled authority over the Taliban, as some have speculated. Well-placed sources divulged to the author that during an August 16 National Security Council meeting in Islamabad, the military commanders clarified to the parliamentarians that the Taliban may not listen to Pakistan, as it used to in the past. That is why, Islamabad is also cautious and not going for a solo flight to quickly recognise the Taliban government, as it did in the 1990s. Although it still has not formally recognised the government in Kabul, Pakistan has high hopes for engagement with it on the economic front. During former President Ashraf Ghani's time in office, the flow of imported goods through Pakistani ports to landlocked Afghanistan dropped by 80 percent, as Kabul started favouring Iranian ports, funded by India. Bilateral trade also declined from \$2.8bn in 2011 to \$1.8bn. Islamabad would like to see the use of Pakistani ports for Afghan imports restored and bilateral trade boosted. – Courtesy Alfajzeera

Briefs

Australian ex-cricketer arrested

SYDNEY: Former Australian cricketer Michael Slater has been arrested over an alleged domestic violence incident.

The 51-year-old - now a cricket commentator - was arrested at his Sydney home on Wednesday and taken to a police station, local media reported.

New South Wales Police confirmed an alleged incident happened last week. They have not disclosed further details. No charges have been laid and Mr Slater has not commented publicly.

The former batsman was part of the Australian cricket team from 1993 to 2001, playing 74 Tests.

He has since held prominent positions on TV but was let go last week by Australia's Channel Seven, which cited financial pressures.

Mr Slater made headlines in May when he accused Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison of having "blood on his hands" over his response to the pandemic.

It followed the government issuing a two-week ban on Australian citizens returning from India during the height of that nation's coronavirus crisis.

The father-of-three had been in India at the time, commenting for local networks on the Indian Premier League season. - APP

UK fines Facebook £50.5 mn over takeover

LONDON: Britain's competition watchdog said Wednesday it had fined Facebook more than £50 million for failing to supply information linked to its takeover of Giphy.

The Competition and Markets Authority said the fine totalling £50.5 million (\$69.5 million, 60 million euros) was imposed for "consciously refusing to report all the required information" concerning the takeover of the animated graphics startup it bought last year. - APP

Japan's Mount Aso erupts

Tokyo, Oct 20 (AFP/APP)- Japan's Mount Aso erupted Wednesday, spewing a giant column of ash thousands of metres into the sky as hikers rushed away from the popular tourist spot.

No injuries were immediately reported after the late-morning eruption in southwest Japan, which sent rocks flying in a dramatic blast captured by nearby CCTV cameras.

People were warned not to approach the volcano as it ejected hot gas and ash as high as 3,500 metres (11,500 feet), and sent stones tumbling down its grassy slopes. Authorities were checking if any hikers had been trapped or injured, officials told local media, as TV footage showed dozens of vehicles and tour buses parked at a nearby museum that has a clear view of the volcano.

Pale grey torrents of ash were seen rushing down Aso's slopes towards the museum, but did not reach the site. For those near the mountain, "caution must be exercised for large flying rocks and flows of pyroclastic materials", said Japan Meteorological Agency official Tomoaki Ozaki.

"Caution is warranted even in far-away areas downwind, as the wind may carry not just ash but also pebbles," Ozaki told a televised press conference, warning that toxic gases may also have been emitted. The last time the JMA raised its warning for Aso to Wednesday's level - three out of five - was when it erupted in 2016, having rumbled to life the previous year after being dormant for 19 years. The agency has been warning of increasing volcanic activity there in recent days, including a small eruption on Thursday. Mount Aso's huge caldera dominates the southwestern main island of Kyushu, where the 1,592-metre (5,223-foot) volcano is a popular tourist draw. Japan is one of the world's most volcanically active countries. It sits on the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire" where a large proportion of the planet's quakes and volcanic eruptions are recorded. - APP

Heydar Aliyev architect of today's Azerbaijan: Alizada

The development of bilateral relations with our friendly and neighbor country Iran was and is always the priority in our foreign policy. Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the relations with Iran. Iran was among one of the 1st five countries which recognized the independence of Azerbaijan, on December 25, 1991

DNA

TEHRAN: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Iran Ali Alizada has said 30 years ago Azerbaijan regained its independence for the second time in the 20th century. Back in 1990 the people of Azerbaijan along with the national leader of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev took very important and serious steps towards independence and on October 18, 1991, the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan adopted the Constitutional Act on Restoration of the State Independence.

He expressed these words on the occasion of 30th Anniversary of Restoration of Azerbaijan Independence. He further said, if Heydar Aliyev had not come to power at that time at the request of our people, Azerbaijan could find itself in a dire and deplorable state. In 1995, the Constitution of the independent Azerbaijan was adopted. The political reforms carried out in Azerbaijan under the leadership of National Leader were designed for the development of democracy, human rights, unity, progress and full protection of the interests of the country. Azerbaijan began to develop as a modern and emerging state and made great strides in all areas. And this policy was and is continued by the President of Azerbaijan, H.E. Ilham Aliyev.

Along with the rapid development and dynamic progress of the country, the wise policy of the President of Azerbaijan gained to Azerbaijan nation to achieve its main goal - the



liberation of the occupied territories and the restoration of the territorial integrity of the modern, independent Azerbaijan. Due to dynamic development, high national spirit and unity, professionalism and heroism of victorious Azerbaijan Army, and thanks to the dedication of our martyrs, under the command of the Supreme Commander-in-chief, Azerbaijan has defeated aggressor Armenia which kept 20% of Azerbaijani territories under the illegal occupation for almost 30 years, and Azerbaijan has secured its territorial integrity, put an end to Armenian occupation and restored peace and justice in the region. Despite that, for all these 30 years Azerbaijan has suffered a lot from Armenian aggression,

more than 30 thousands of Azerbaijanis have been martyred, all cities and buildings, historical and cultural sites in occupied territories of Azerbaijan have been destroyed, the mosques and all religious places have been razed to the ground or desecrated, but after the liberation of its territories Azerbaijan has shown a sign of goodwill called Armenia to sign a peace agreement on mutual recognition of each other's territorial integrity and borders. Today Azerbaijan is a modern, developing, self-sufficient country with strong diversified economy, with a very high level of social protection. During these 30 years Azerbaijan has been experiencing a period of development that is unparalleled in the economic sphere.



NEW YORK: Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN in a meeting with Indrika Ratwate, Director of UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific. - APP

NBP Exchange Rates

KARACHI: Treasury Management Division of National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) on Wednesday issued the following exchange rates. - APP

Currency	TT Selling	TT Buying
USD	173.25	172.75
EURO	202.08	201.50
JAPANESE YEN	1.5132	1.5088
GBP	239.26	238.57
SWISS FRANC	187.55	187.01
CAD	140.36	39.96
AUD	129.79	129.42
SEK	20.22	20.17
NOK	20.76	20.70
DKK	27.11	27.04
NZD	124.28	123.92
SGD	128.96	128.59
HKD	22.37	22.30
KRW	0.1475	0.1471
CNY	27.44	27.36
MYR	41.72	41.60
THB	05.18	05.17
AED	47.50	47.37
SAR	46.24	46.11
QAR	47.60	47.46
KWD	575.33	573.68

CONVERSION RATE FOR FROZEN FCY DEPOSITS

USD	172.7156
GBP	237.2249
EUR	200.091
JPY	1.5109

IMF warns Afghanistan's crisis will impact neighbours

AGENCIES

LONDON: Afghanistan's economic woes could fuel a refugee crisis impacting neighbouring countries, Turkey and Europe, the International Monetary Fund has said.

The economy will contract by up to 30% this year - which could push millions into poverty and cause a humanitari-

an crisis, the fund warned. The IMF said Afghanistan's neighbours would be further hit because they rely on its funds for trade. Bordering Tajikistan has said it can't afford to take in many more refugees. With foreign assets frozen and most non-humanitarian aid halted, inflows of cash to Afghanistan have all but dried up. In its regional economic out-

look, the fund said: "A large influx of refugees could put a burden on public resources in refugee-hosting countries, fuel labour market pressures, and lead to social tensions, underscoring the need for assistance from the international community." While it's unclear how many Afghan refugees there would be, the IMF estimates that if there were to be a mil-

lion more, hosting them would cost Tajikistan \$100m (£72m), Iran \$300m and Pakistan \$500m. Last month Tajikistan said it could not afford to take in large numbers of refugees unless it received international financial assistance while other Central Asian nations have said they have no plans to host refugees. The country used to receive huge amounts in foreign aid.



ISTANBUL: A delegation of Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry visited Consulate General of Pakistan, Istanbul to explore bilateral trade opportunities in different sectors. The delegation participated in BeautyWorld Istanbul exhibition. - DNA

Shavkat for expansion of co-op within the CIS

The President of Uzbekistan proposed to identify the development of industrial cooperation as a key issue on the economic agenda in the CIS in 2022 to comprehensively support joint projects and establish long-term business contacts

DNA

TASHKENT: President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev attended the CIS Heads of State Council meeting via videoconference.

The summit, chaired by the President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, was also attended by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Zhaparov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova Natalia Gavrilă, a President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, President of the Republic of Tajikistan

Emomali Rahmon, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Chairman of the Executive Committee - Executive Secretary of the CIS Sergey Lebedev. Following the agenda, the heads of delegations exchanged views on the development and achievements of multilateral cooperation over the 30 years of the Organization's activity, considered issues of further expansion of interaction in the economic, legal and cultural-humanitarian spheres, as well as in combating modern challenges and threats to security and stability in the region.

In his speech, the Head of the state presented a vision of key areas for strengthening partnership within the CIS. The importance of ensuring sustainable economic growth in the CIS countries was high-

lighted. In the context of the consequences of the pandemic, the positive dynamics of trade-economic cooperation remain. Thus, since the beginning of this year, the volume of bilateral trade between Uzbekistan and CIS partners



has increased by almost a third. At the same time, both quantitative and qualitative growth of trade turnover indicators is observed. At the same time, the need for the full functioning of free

trade zone in the Commonwealth space without exceptions and restrictions was emphasized. In this regard, it is proposed to prepare recommendations on further liberalization of trade policy within the framework of the



Association based on a comprehensive analysis. The President of Uzbekistan proposed to identify the development of industrial cooperation as a key issue on the economic agenda in the CIS

in 2022 to comprehensively support joint projects and establish long-term business contacts. Currently, at the initiative of the Uzbek side, an appropriate long-term cooperation program is being prepared. Next year, Uzbekistan will host a forum and exhibition of industrial cooperation of the Commonwealth.

The Head of the state focused on the need to further develop the system of effective interregional and transcontinental transport corridors, including by reducing tariffs and simplifying cargo transportation procedures. Uzbekistan also stands for the active promotion of joint innovative programs and supporting startup projects involving young entrepreneurs. An initiative has been put forward to develop a program of

cooperation between technology and IT parks in the Commonwealth countries. The importance of strengthening the activities of the CIS Economic Council by involving representatives of business circles and regions of the countries in its work was also noted.

In addition, special attention was paid to the issues of countering climate change and promoting the green agenda, consolidating efforts to ensure biosafety, improving the labor market, as well as restoring mutual tourist flow and enhancing cultural-humanitarian exchange. Speaking about the situation in Afghanistan, the President of Uzbekistan stressed the expediency of continuing to provide humanitarian and economic assistance to the Afghan people.

Floods, landslides kill 116 in India and Nepal

DEHRADUN: More than 100 people have died in several days of massive flooding and devastating landslides that swept away roads and houses in India and Nepal, officials said Wednesday, with scores more missing. In Uttarakhand in northern India, officials said that 46 people had died in recent days with 11 missing. In Kerala in the south chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that the death toll had hit 39 there.

At least 30 of those in Uttarakhand were killed in seven separate incidents in the Nainital region early Tuesday, after cloudbursts - an ultra-intense deluge of rain - triggered a series of landslides and destroyed several structures.

Five of the dead were from a single family whose house was buried by a massive landslide, local official Pradeep Jain told AFP.

Another landslide in the northern Almora district killed five people after huge rocks and a wall of mud demolished and engulfed their home. At least six others were killed on Monday in two remote districts of the Himalayan state. The Indian Meteorological Department extended and widened its weather alert on Tuesday, predicting heavy to very heavy rainfall in the region. The weather office said several areas were drenched by more than 400 millimetres (16 inches) of rainfall on Monday, causing landslides and flooding. - APP

China, UK have potential for co-op in climate protection

LONDON: China and Britain enjoy enormous potential for practical cooperation in the area of environmental protection, said Tuesday Chinese Ambassador to Britain Zheng Zeguang.

Zheng made the remarks during an online Joint Press Conference by China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the Chinese Embassy in Britain on the issues of biodiversity and climate response, ahead of the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland. He said the two countries' cooperation in environmental protection can be carried out in two areas: policy coordination and practical cooperation.

In terms of policy coordination, the first priority for the two sides at the moment is to make sure the second part of COP15 and the upcoming COP26 are real successes, he said, adding that China is sincere in stepping up its communication and cooperation with Britain and other signatory parties for that purpose. The first part of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) was held from Oct. 11 to 15 in Kunming, capital of China's Yunnan Province, to be followed by the second part next year. - APP

Baku accuses Armenia of ethnic cleansing

HAGUE: Azerbaijan's officials on Tuesday accused Armenia of "ethnic cleansing" as a second case related to the conflict between the two countries opened at the UN's top court.

Azerbaijan's Deputy Foreign Minister Elnur Mammadov said Armenia continues to lay landmines in Nagorno-Karabakh even after a cease-fire ended a six-week war in the disputed region late last year. Last week, the International Court of Justice held hearings into a complaint brought by Armenia against Azerbaijan, also related to last year's war that left more than 6,600 people dead.

The "campaign of ethnic cleansing and incitement to violence against Azerbaijanis is ongoing," Elnur Mammadov told the court. Azerbaijani lawyers argued that laying the mines is a continuation of Armenia's decades-long ethnic cleansing and part of an attempt to clear these areas from Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan and Armenia accuse each other of violating the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which both countries are parties. - APP

Briefs

Syria: Deadly blast on military bus in Damascus

DNA
DAMASCUS: A bomb attack on a military bus in central Damascus has killed at least 13 people, Syrian state media say. The vehicle was targeted with two explosive devices as it passed under Jisr al-Rais bridge shortly after dawn, Sana news agency reported. Video from the scene showed the charred remains of the bus, which was completely burnt out. Although Syria has been embroiled in civil war for a decade, such attacks in the capital are increasingly rare. Wednesday's bombing was reportedly the deadliest in central Damascus since March 2017, when at least 31 people were killed in a suicide attack claimed by the jihadist group Islamic State (IS). Syria has been devastated by a conflict that erupted after President Bashar al-Assad's government responded with deadly force to peaceful pro-democracy protests in March 2011. The fighting has left at least 350,000 people dead, according to the United Nations, and caused half the population to flee their homes, including almost six million refugees abroad.

Germany arrests two ex-soldiers

DNA
BERLIN: Police on Wednesday arrested two former German soldiers accused of trying to form a "terrorist" paramilitary group to fight in Yemen's civil war, prosecutors said. The two men had taken steps to "create a paramilitary unit of 100 to 150 men" composed of former police officers and soldiers, the Karlsruhe federal prosecutor's office said in southwestern Germany. Named as Arend-Adolf G. and Achim A., both German citizens, the pair are accused of starting to plan their "terrorist organisation" in early 2021. Arend-Adolf G., who was reported for recruitment, had already contacted at least seven people in the hope of bringing them on board "to intervene in the civil war in Yemen", the prosecutors said. Both suspects were "aware that the unit they were to command would inevitably have to carry out acts of killing during their mission" and also expected civilians to be killed and injured, the prosecutors said. — APP

'Speedy vaccination drive best way to keep schools open'

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Health Dr Faisal Sultan Wednesday said that the vaccination programme is getting momentum in the country as a speedy jabs of coronavirus will only way to keep school open. Talking to a private news channel, he said the pandemic has already caused the most catastrophic disruption to education in last few years, therefore parents should get their children vaccinated against Covid-19. "Vaccines would be the best defence against Covid-19 and vaccination would makes children less likely to catch the virus", he added. He hoped that with the great support of parents and communities the government's national programme against Coronavirus would achieved the targets soon, adding, everyone should continue their concerted efforts to overcome the hurdles in the last mile to eradication. Replying a query, he said parents were being taken into confidence for the vaccination in schools as vaccination is necessary for the continuation of the teaching process and the safety of children. He expressed his confidence that government is "absolutely confident of being able to meet its ambitious targets by end of December. — APP

Uzbekistan envoy stresses people to people contacts

CGSS, Uzbekistan embassy organize roundtable at the embassy

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A Roundtable conference was arranged to discuss "New Uzbekistan-New Elections". The roundtable was jointly organized by Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan and Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad, Pakistan.

Aybek Arif Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan in his opening remarks stated that people to people contact is very significant for regional connectivity. The economic cooperation is very important keeping in view the current global developments. His Excellency also stated that Pakistan is the transit hub for international trade. Pakistan and Uzbekistan have promoted peace and stability in the region. At this occasion, special editions two magazines "Peace International" and "Diplomatic Focus", devoted to Uzbekistan were also presented. His Excellency thanked and payed tribute to the journalist community of Pakistan for playing a vital role in further cementing the



brotherly ties between both nations. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, CGSS stated that CGSS has taken several initiatives to promote Central & South Asia connectivity. CGSS has engaged various universities across Pakistan in this regard. Grand initiative of Central and South Asian regional connectivity by His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev has proved to be a milestone development for regional integration. Pakistan and Uzbekistan embarked on a new journey of prosperity, enhancing bilateral cooperation, joint ventures for regional peace and stability, and strengthening economic and strategic partnerships. Major General Syed Khalid Amir Jaffery HI(M), (Retd) in his keynote speech stated that our countries and people have always been connected. Our bilateral ties including trade, culture, religion and people to people connectivity is enhancing with the passing time. He stated that all these initiatives are very important so that our youth gets to know each other. Therefore, interaction must be promoted between both the countries. Dr. Zarmina Baloch, Assistant Professor. Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women's



University, Peshawar discussed His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev's initiatives for regional connectivity. She stated that his visionary leadership has made it possible for the countries to connect and prosper. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan due to his exceptional commercial diplomacy and inventive leadership has achieved greater regional connectivity. Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan, Director, Area Study Center (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar stated that Pakistan will serve as a gateway for Uzbekistan. He explained why Uzbekistan is exceptional in Central Asia, he stated that Uzbekistan is a model of gradual reforms and prioritizing economy over politics and this model has made Uzbekistan successful. He stated that during the Presidency of Shavkat Mirziyoyev many issues have been resolved with consensus. He also praised His Excellency Aybek Arif Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan for playing a leading role in Central and South Asia connectivity. He stated that smooth border crossing will ensure a good market and Uzbekistan has become the voice of all regional states. The Roundtable was followed by the Book Launch ceremony that is compiled and published by CGSS on the idea of Central & South Asia Connectivity. The title of the book is "Shavkat Mirziyoyev – A Visionary Statesman". This Book is a collection of Research Articles written by senior academicians from various universities of Pakistan and practitioners from various sectors. This is the first time that a Book of this kind has been published by any institute in Pakistan highlighting the fruitful initiatives of the Uzbek President and can prove to a cornerstone in promoting this vision globally.

Moscow imposes new Covid curbs as daily deaths break record

AGENCIES

MOSCOW: Moscow's mayor announced four months of stay-home restrictions for unvaccinated over-60s on Tuesday and the Russian government proposed a week-long workplace shutdown as the national death toll from Covid-19 hit yet another daily high. The moves reflected a growing sense of urgency from the authorities as they confront fast-rising cases and widespread public reluctance to get injected with the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine. Moscow, a city of 12.7 million, ordered people over the age of 60 to stay home for four months starting on Oct. 25 unless they are vaccinated or have recovered from Covid, and for businesses to move at least 30% of their staff to remote work. "The number of people hospitalised with a severe form of the disease is increasing every day," Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin wrote on his website. "The most alarming thing is the situation with Covid infection among the older generation," he added, saying over-60s accounted for 60% of patients, nearly 80% of people on ventilators, and 86% of deaths.

EU lawmakers call for ending border pushbacks

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: The Socialists and Democrats (S&D) group of the European Parliament on Wednesday urged the European Commission to act against pushbacks of migrants on the bloc's external borders. Addressing European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the second-largest group of EU lawmakers urged her "to take all the necessary actions to put a stop to the inhumane policy of pushbacks that taints us all as Europeans." "A Union of values starts at its external borders with the treatment of the most vulnerable who come to us seeking protection," they pointed out, criticizing "the untenable situation regarding the respect for fundamental rights, in particular the right to international protection and the principle of non-refoulement at the external borders of the Union."



ISLAMABAD: PM Imran chairs the meeting of PTI Core Committee. — APP

Zahir Jaffer tries to hamper court proceedings

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court in Islamabad on Wednesday scolded Zahir Jaffer, the main accused in the Noor Mukadam murder case, for violating the court's decorum. Zahir earned the court's ire after he attempted to speak again and again to interrupt the proceedings. The district and sessions judge ordered the police to silence the accused and the police complied with the orders. Earlier, the police produced Zahir Jaffer, his father Zakir Jaffer and mother Asmat Adamjee before the court. The counsel of the accused apprised the

court that his clients have challenged their indictment in the case at the Islamabad High Court. Notices have been issued in this regard, the lawyer added. Meanwhile, the public prosecutor told the court that the witnesses have been called for fingerprinting. The court adjourned the hearing till 1:30pm today and sent the accused to 'bakhshi khana'. On October 18, the Supreme Court accepted the bail plea of Zahir's mother, Asmat Adamjee, who is one of the other accused individuals in the murder case. However, the apex court rejected the bail plea of Zahir's father, Zakir Jaffer. The Supreme Court ordered Adamjee to submit bail bonds worth Rs1 million.

Pak-Vietnam talks on PTA to be held in Nov: Vietnam's Envoy

ASEAN is a very effective trading bloc of the world and has signed the FTAs with China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand from which all the regional countries are benefiting

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Vietnam Ambassador to Pakistan, Nguyen Tien Phong on Wednesday said that talks on further progress on the proposed Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between Pakistan and Vietnam are likely to take place in mid-November this year. The bilateral talks on the proposed PTA to be held under the framework of the upcoming '5th Viet Nam - Pakistan Subcommittee on Trade' he said. In the Subcommittee meeting both sides will discuss the two top agendas of bilateral trade and investment, the PTA and the agreement on investment Promotion Protection, the ambassador said. The ambassador said that the fifth round of talks under the Trade Subcommittee will also discuss the other

issues of bilateral trade and investment cooperation between the two countries. He said that after signing of the PTA, the talks on the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) would also be expected to increase the trade volume between the two countries. He said that at present there is a bilateral trade of about US\$700 million between the two countries, which is far below its potential, there is a need to enhance the trade volume, with an aim of US\$1 billion in the coming 1-2 years. Responding to a question, he said that the main reason for the decline in bilateral trade volume between the two countries, apart from the impact of the corona pandemic, was lack of mutual awareness between the two sides, which needed to be improved in the future. Regarding multilateral trade in Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and

Pakistan's trade interests with this trading bloc, the Vietnamese Ambassador said that Vietnam, being an active important member of ASEAN, would play its full role in paving the way for trade to Pakistan. He said that ASEAN is a very effective trading bloc of the world and has signed the FTAs with China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand from which all the regional countries are benefiting. Ambassador Phong said that Pakistan also has good trade and economic relations with ASEAN countries, which need to be further enhanced. The ambassador said that the Golden Jubilee of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Vietnam in 2022, would be marked in a dignified manner in which the development of bilateral diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries would be reaffirmed.

Pak, Azerbaijan ties getting stronger: Asad Qaisar

During the Patriotic War government and people of Pakistan morally and politically supported Azerbaijan: Ambassador Khazar Farhadov

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly of Pakistan Asad Qaisar has said Pakistan and Azerbaijan enjoy close brotherly relations, manifested by the tremendous goodwill existing between the leadership and people of the two countries. Our relationship is based on common faith, shared ideals and a mutual desire to live in peace and dignity. Whether it is the issue of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir or Karabagh, the fraternity of our countries has resonated together on regional and international platforms in support of each other. The whole world is witness to the strong bonds of fraternity that bind our two nations. Speaker Asad Qaisar expressed these views while speaking on the occasion of 30th anniversary of Azerbaijan. He said, on 27 September, people of Azerbaijan commemorated the Memorial Day to honor their shaheeds who laid down their lives in defence of motherland. In order to demonstrate our love for the brotherly people of Azerbaijan, the Remembrance Day was also celebrated in Pakistan. The building of Pakistan Monument in Islamabad which is the symbol of Pakistan's unity and territorial integrity, was lit with the colors of Azerbaijani flag. The victory of Azerbaijan in last year's war was a remarkable feat. No wonder, the liberation of Azerbaijani territories was also celebrated in Pakistan. The leadership, armed forces and people of Azerbaijan deserve appreciation for this accomplishment, he added.



He said, during his visit to beautiful city of Baku in July, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two parliaments. This document has laid the foundation of a long term and sustainable cooperation. A trilateral meeting of Speakers of three brotherly countries of Azerbaijan, Turkey and Pakistan also took place during my visit. Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov in his speech said, this year, on October 18, the Republic of Azerbaijan celebrates the 30th anniversary of the restoration of independence. History proves that maintaining independence is much more difficult than gaining it. In a one century Azerbaijan had to restore its sovereignty twice. The first time it was relatively short period, and the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the first republic in the Muslim world history established in 1918 but existed for only 23 months. The ambassador further said, Azerbaijan was able to secure its state independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1991. The Constitutional Act on the State Independence of Azerbaijan was adopted on October 18, 1991 by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan. And Azerbaijani people gained their long-awaited freedom after years of oppression. On March 2, 1992, Azerbaijan became a member of the UN. The first years of independence were not easy for the young sovereign country and faced enormous difficulties. On the one hand, the Armenian military aggression continued, on the other hand, the economy was paralyzed due to the collapse of the existing system. There were serious threats and risks to the Azerbaijani statehood. It was during this difficult period that the great leader of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev came to the power in 1993 at the insistent demand of my people. Great leader eliminated chaos and anarchy in economic and political life of the country. Independent Azerbaijan has outlined a new course of development, making the independence

eternal and irreversible. Today, under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan is one of the fastest growing countries in the world. As the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan has said there is no more administrative territorial unit called Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan. The Karabakh economic zone was established on the basis of a decree that the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan signed on 7 July, this year. And I would like to stress that Pakistan was one of the first countries that recognized the independence of Azerbaijan, demonstrating strong and valuable support over all these years. During the Patriotic War government and people of Pakistan morally and politically supported us, National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan adopted resolutions condemning Armenian aggression and supporting Azerbaijan's just position to restore its territorial integrity. This is a true demonstration of brotherhood. Azerbaijan, fully supports the settlement of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. He added, it was gratifying that the format of trilateral cooperation between the three brotherly countries, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Turkey, established in 2017 at the level of foreign ministers, expanded towards the level of Speakers of Parliament, and also among Ministries of Defense. Beside the brilliant bilateral and trilateral relations we have always had a tradition of cooperation in the international organizations as well. The main reason of this success is support of and respect to norms and principles of international law by our countries, the ambassador concluded.