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Battle-hardened army ready to defend Pakistan: COAS Bajwa

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EU envoy lauds pro-active efforts of EFP-EC

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Contestant quits Miss Universe Pageant 2021

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Briefs

Khan wins Int'l Sports Personality

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Prime Minister and PCB Patron-in-Chief Imran Khan has won the Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Creative Sports Award. The ceremony for the eleventh edition of the MBR Creative Sports Award was held at Deep Dive Dubai on Monday, where Imran Khan was selected for the "International Sports Personality" category. This prestigious award has been given to Imran Khan for his contributions to sports, which includes leading his country's cricket team to the 1992 World Cup glory.

Moed urges assistance for Afghans

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: National Security Advisor Dr Moed Yusuf has urged the international community to devise a system to ensure provision of assistance to Afghans before winter. He was talking to a six-member US delegation headed by Congressman Gregory Meeks in Islamabad. The National Security Advisor expressed deep concern over deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan as nearly sixty percent of Afghan population may face extreme level of hunger. He said Afghanistan's financial and banking system is in disarray.

Afridi vacates Senate seat

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PTI's Ayub Afridi has resigned from the Senate to make way for the election of PM's Adviser on Finance Shaukat Tarin as a member of the Parliament. Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani has accepted Ayub Afridi's resignation, who has now been inducted as a cabinet member. The Senate Secretariat has declared Ayub Afridi's seat vacant and issued a notification to which the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has also been informed.

'Allegations from within' Judiciary is in the dock, claims PDM

Sources say PDM meeting on Dec 6 may demand general elections in 2022; long march and resignations also likely to come next year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) President Maulana Fazlur Rehman said Tuesday that the judiciary's integrity had come into question after recent allegations "from within". Sources say PDM meeting on December 6 may demand general elections in 2022 while long march and resignations also likely to come next year. The JUI-F chief, speaking to the media, was referring to the recent affidavit submitted by former Gilgit-Baltistan chief justice Rana Shamim and an audio clip that allegedly features the voice of ex-chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar. Fazl was speaking to the media after a PDM meeting, saying that the "conspiracies" that took place against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, his party and leaders of other political parties, were in reality conspiracies against the country and its democracy. "We respect the courts but are also hurt," he said, referring to the Rana Shamim affidavit and the alleged Justice (ret'd) Saqib Nisar audio clip. The JUI-F leader said that the recent controversies had raised questions on the freedom and independence of the judiciary. "With a heavy heart, we think that they [judiciary] will have to regain their status through their character," he added. The PDM leader said that these conspiracies were the main reason why Pakistan was facing an economic crisis today.

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Institutions must not run courts: Khaqan Abbasi

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi while vouching for the authenticity of the leaked audiotape of former chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar has said though it has been established that it is the ex-CJP's voice but the government was hell-bent to prove that the tape is fake. The senior PML-N leader stated that one day, everything would be revealed. In the alleged audiotape, the former CJP was telling somebody that judges received instructions to target PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz. "Who is instructing whom, everything will come to light," he added. Abbasi maintained that the PML-N had nothing to do with any 'affidavit' or 'audio tape' we were just demanding justice. He insisted that the tape was original. He said if the PML-N had created this tape or affidavit to frame the former chief justice of Pakistan, then they should be punished and Ahmad Noorani should be punished for releasing it.

Battle-hardened army ready to defend Pakistan

The Army Chief emphasized on the youth to strive for excellence

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited Headquarters Lahore Corps where he was given a detailed briefing on operational preparedness of the formation, according to Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). According to the ISPR, COAS Qamar Bajwa appreciated the operational preparedness and measures taken against COVID-19 pandemic by the Corps that is currently being led by Lieutenant General Muhammad Abdul Aziz. The army chief, according to the military's media wing, visited Lahore Medical College (LMC)

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan rejects Indian claims

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan categorically rejected on Tuesday the baseless Indian claims that a Pakistan Air Force's (PAF) F-16 was shot down by an Indian pilot - Abhinandan Varthaman - before he was captured by Pakistan in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on February 27, 2019. The Foreign Office issued a statement a day after Abhinandan was awarded Vir Chakra medal - India's third-highest military award - stating that the 'citation of the award to the downed Indian pilot is a classic case of Indian fabrications and pure fantasy to appease the domestic audience and hide the embarrassment.' The statement further mentioned that the Indian Air Force was completely outplayed on the day. "In a daring daylight action, two Indian aircraft were shot down by the Pakistan Air Force on 27 February 2019.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan launching Track and Trace System for Sugar Sector. - DNA

US Embassy donates 26,500 books

Over 5,300 students and alumni of the US Microscholarship Program (Access) to benefit

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The U.S. Embassy's Regional English Language Office, in coordination with Cengage, National Geographic, and Allied Book Company, donated 26,500 books to over 5,300 students and alumni of the U.S. Government's English Access Microscholarship Program (Access). The Access program is delivering fiction and non-fiction books representing a variety of genres to Access students and alumni across Pakistan.

Continued on Page 06

PM orders inquiry against senior bureaucrat

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has ordered an inquiry against a senior joint secretary of the Cabinet Division for posting "objectionable comments" against the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf on a social media platform. According to a statement of allegations issued by the Establishment Division on Monday, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, BS-21 officer Hammad Shamimi had posted a comment on a social media page/platform that was tantamount to misconduct under the Civil Servants (Efficiency and Discipline) Rules, 2020.

Cabinet okays wheat transit from India

Fawad Chaudhry says PML-N is using fake audios to pressurize judiciary



SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry on Tuesday reiterated the government's resolve for holding the next general election through Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) at all cost. He added, the federal cabinet has accorded approval to provide transit to shipment of 50,000 metric tons of wheat supplied by

India to Afghanistan to avert any humanitarian crisis. Addressing the media persons about decisions taken in the Federal Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan, he said a ministerial committee had been constituted to liaise with the Election Commission (ECP) for ensuring implementation of the recently passed laws on electoral reforms.

Continued on Page 06

Rising debt a security issue: PM

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday said that the rising foreign debt and low tax revenue had become an issue of "national security" because government did not have enough resources to spend on people's welfare. "Our biggest problem is that we don't have enough money to run our country due to which we have to borrow loans," he said while addressing the inaugural ceremony of Track and Trace System (TTS) of FBR for sugar industry in Islamabad. The FBR's TTS will ensure electronic monitoring of

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Pakistan, Azerbaijan mull opportunities to increase trade

Ambassador Khazar Farhadov stressed the importance of developing economic and trade relations and informed the works carried out in recent months in this regard

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and met with Mr. Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Executive Members of ICCI. ICCI President Muhammad Shakeel Munir firstly thanked Ambassador Khazar Farhadov for the visit and expressed satisfaction with



the sincere relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. Informing about the structure and activities of ICCI, the President spoke about the future activities of ICCI in further enhancing trade relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. Speaking about the high level of political relations between the two countries, Ambassador Khazar Farhadov stressed the importance of developing economic and trade relations and informed the works carried out in recent months in this regard. Talking about the potential of import-export products between Azerbaijan and Pakistan,

Farhadov noted the importance of identifying specific projects and taking practical steps as a result of direct discussions within the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Joint Commission, as well as between the business circles of the two countries in this direction. The sides also noted the importance of SOCAR's LNG supplies to Pakistan so far in terms of developing economic and trade relations between the two countries, and exchanged views on the possibility of continuation of these activities of SOCAR in the future as well.

Briefs

ECP decides to celebrate National Voters Day

PESHAWAR: The Election Commission of Pakistan is going to celebrate the National Voters Day on December 7 across the country to create awareness among the general public and young voters about the importance of voting in the electoral process besides maximizing voters' registration.

To highlight significance of a vote and to encourage people especially youth and women to register for voting, ECP has decided to celebrate December 7 as national voters day in all provinces of Pakistan including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where awareness campaign would be launched at district level with assistance of civil society, media and intelligentsia.

Provincial Election Commission (PEC) official told APP on Tuesday that the major function would be held at Peshawar under an aegis of Provincial Election Commission where representatives of civil society, media, officers of relevant departments, students, workers of political parties, community and religious leaders and intelligentsia would participate.

Awareness seminars, debates, rallies and walks would be arranged in each district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to appraise people, especially young voters and women, about the importance of votes in a democratic step. — APP

KP to implement food policy: Atif Khan

PESHAWAR: Senior Minister for Food and Information Technology, Atif Khan on Tuesday said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the first province that has formulated and implemented food security policy to ensure availability of nutritious food at affordable price for people of province.

Talking to APP, the minister said that basic goal of the food policy was to attain sustainable food security, poverty alleviation and generate employment opportunities through achieving higher sustainable economic growth.

He said that food security policy had four main pillars to make sure physical availability and presence of food from all sources, economic access to the available food and attaining efficient, affordable, sustainable, accessible, nutrition sensitive and inclusive food system.

Atif Khan said that the food policy aimed to provide incentives to women for enhanced participation in agriculture sector, promotion of public-private partnership and contractual farming, introduction of Kissan Card scheme for farmer, developing agricultural zones across the province.

He said that food policy would encourage involvement of community based workers for farmers awareness, creation of dedicated secretariat for Livestock sector and efficient use of allocated share of Irrigation water under Water Apportionment Accord 1991. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Ladies posing for a group photo on the occasion of Armed Forces Day of Bangladesh. — DNA

Increase in mark-up will add burden on SMEs

SBP has totally ignored the interests of the business community which will have negative repercussions on the overall business environment in addition to intensifying inflation

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Increase of 150 basic points in mark up rate will be detrimental for the economy and is tantamount to stopping the growing exports, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

Commenting on the recently held meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), he said that the majority of the business community belong to the SME sector with limited financial re-

sources.

He said they have to depend on loans and increase in markup will add additional burden on them instead of bringing down the cost of production. "Depreciation of PKR will further complicate the business of import and export", he said and added that the SBP has totally ignored the interests of the business community which will have negative repercussions on the overall business environment in addition to intensifying inflation.

"Recent increase in markup will make our exportable surplus uncompetitive in the global mar-



kets", he said and added that Special Assistant to Prime Minister Mr. Abdul Razak Dawood has made hectic efforts to put

the exports on growth trajectory but this increase will nullify his serious efforts and further squeeze our export earnings and foreign exchange reserves.

He demanded that the Government must intervene and withdraw this unjustified increase in markup rate. He further said that it will also help the Government to control inflation which has made the life of poor masses miserable.

Meanwhile Mr. Imran Mahmood Sheikh Senior Vice President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry has also termed this increase as a noose for the entire

industrial sector and said that the increase in production cost will force industrialists to close down their units which will also render millions of workers jobless.

He said that the SME sector was already passing through a critical stage and increasing markup would further aggravate this situation. He also expressed concern over the decision to increase the number of meetings of the Monetary Policy Committee from 6 to 8 in a year.

He said that it will foment uncertainty and no businessman could make long term agreements with futuristic vision.

IGP suspends DSP Chung, SHO Nawab Town

LAHORE: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Rao Sardar Ali Khan on Tuesday suspended Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Chung and Station House Officer (SHO) Nawab Town over the incident of firing between two groups here.

He directed that all the persons involved in the incident should be arrested as soon as possible and strict legal action should be taken against them.

Presiding over a meeting at Central Police Office (CPO) to give directions to supervisory officers of Lahore and Sheikhupura ranges, he directed that security arrangements of the courts in all the districts of the province should be re-audited, adding the security of the courts should be improved with the effective use of available resources.

Rao Sardar Ali Khan said the supervisory officers should take immediate action on the incidents of abduction, torture, violence and abuse of children and women.

The IGP directed strict action against those involved in the manufacture, sale and use of metal strings of kites.

Expressing dismay over the incident of violence and torture against a woman at Kasur police station, he said that torture and inhumane treatment of the accused was "intolerable", and directed dismissal of lady constable and police official involved in the incident. The IGP while instructing the officers from Lahore and Sheikhupura regions said that RPOs and DPOs should go out in the field themselves and conduct inspections of police stations.

He said that those who bring disrepute to the department by their words and deeds would be expelled from the department under zero tolerance policy.

The IGP directed the officers of Lahore and Sheikhupura to re-submit their performance reports after seven days.

Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Fayyaz Ahmad Dev, RPO Sheikhupura, DIG operations Lahore, other senior officers were also present. — APP

Commissioner reviews progress on safari train

PESHAWAR: Commissioner Peshawar Division, Riaz Mehsud has reviewed progress so far taken place on safari train from Peshawar to Landikotal, near the Pak-Afghan border after the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government decided to restart the British era railway track.

Commissioner Peshawar has directed the administration to clear encroachments along the railway track within three days otherwise strict action would be taken.

Mehsud visited the railway track with the officials of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

He was informed that the British-era track completely encroaches at 11 points in Khyber and Peshawar districts.

Earlier, the Divisional Superintendent (DS) Muhammad Yusuf, Chief Engineer of Pakistan Railway Headquarters, Lahore, and the technical team visited the railway track and identified the obstacles for clearing the route of historic track from Peshawar to Torkham. — APP



KARACHI: Assistant to Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Riaz Hussain Shah, after Public meetings, keenly reading credible Pakistan's first diplomatic Daily "Islamabad Post" on Tuesday. DNA

Minister for promotion of agri sector on modern lines

FAISALABAD: Provincial Minister for Agriculture Syed Hussain Jahania Gardezi has said that promotion of modern agri-techniques and research is imperative to further boost the agriculture sector. After inaugurating the Engro Learning Centre at University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) here on Tuesday, he said that wheat production in Punjab had increased

1.5 maunds per acre this year and hoped that it would go by 3 maunds by next fiscal year. He said that 22,000 students of UAF participated in the Punjab government wheat campaign which not only helped promote modern farming methods but also enable the students to get acquainted with the real problems of farmers. He said the government was taking all possible measures

to make agriculture profitable, ensure food security and increase per acre production, that will help alleviate poverty and open up the new avenues for economic growth.

The minister said the agricultural scientists of UAF had rendered immense services for the development of agriculture and hoped that they would enhance their role in tackling the challenges faced by the agri sector. — APP

FOSPAH holds seminar on awareness against harassment

PESHAWAR: An awareness seminar against harassment at the workplace was held here Tuesday in University of Engineering Technology (UET) to create awareness among the youth regarding harassment especially women.

Kashmala Khan, Federal Ombudsman, Federal Ombudsmen Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment (FOSPAH) was the chief guest on the occasion. The event was attended by a large number of students and staff.

Kashmala said, FOSPAH was established in 2010 and has worked a lot in the field through online complaint registration. She informed the audience on how to approach FOSPAH for protection in case women face harassment at workplaces.

She said FOSPAH is aimed to protect women so that they could work without any fear, adding, "that all of us have to stand up, speak up against harassment".

She urged the students to get rid of fear and know their rights while working with men. She said, FOSPAH will ensure that women get justice provided that they are aware which institutions are to be approached for reporting.

She urged the need to have a harassment committee at universities so that matters for timely solution of cases, adding, FOSPAH assures to extend free legal counseling support and register appeals.

Regional Commissioner, Peshawar Rubab Mehdi in her address said, the harassment cases have tripled in the present tenure, however property rights and financial empowerment for women are the focal areas for FOSPAH.

Vice Chancellor UET Peshawar Prof. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain said UET Peshawar has established a proper grievance redressal system for any such case. The harassment and discipline committees have women representation which makes it easier for female students to share their issues and deal with matters on time.

He advised the faculty and students to take care of female staff. — APP

Ababeel Force to curb street crimes

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police department has decided to form "Ababeel Force" in the provincial metropolis to curb street crimes.

The IGP office sources informed on Tuesday that the Ababeel Force would comprise 1,600 police officials from the elite force and perform duty in two shifts. The officials would patrol city roads and streets on motorcycles. Four officials on two bikes would patrol together to provide needed assistance to teach other in the time of need.

The forces wearing jackets would also be equipped with all necessary gadgets including cameras and weapons. The cameras would also help in monitoring the police officials' performance. — APP

Dist admin holds smog awareness walk

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad has directed to take Stern action against stubble burning and fixed 50 thousand fine to those who are involved in it this practice so next no one be tried to stubble the burning. He said this while presided over the review meeting of anti smog measures. Deputy Commissioner directed the

ACs and concerned departments to be proactive in implementing anti smog measures and should be in field. Deputy Commissioner said that traffic police and secretary RTA should intensify the campaign against smoke emitting vehicles.

He said that banners related to crackdown against emitting vehicles on major highways and public places including transport stands should also be hung. Asked the agriculture department

to continue the awareness campaign for the farmers not to burn the crop residues and inform them about the ban imposed by the Punjab government so that there would be no violation.

He said that promote the process of installing kilns under zig zang technology in this regard, brick kiln associations should be contacted and fine the violators. The Deputy Commissioner stressed on the need to organize awareness lectures and speech competitions in educational institutions to prevent smog.

He said that all the departments should carry out their responsibilities responsibly to control smog and the results of their operations should be seen in this regard. He said that measures are also being taken to curb the smoke emanating from the boilers of factories.

A walk was also held to sensitize the public for adopting precautionary measures during smog. Deputy Commissioner led the walk.



FAISALABAD: DC Ali Shahzad distributes pamphlets among citizen regarding precautionary measures about smog. — DNA

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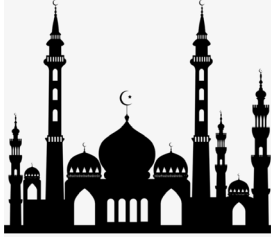
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Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi inaugurated the country's first ever National Cyber Security Academy. – DNA

Building capabilities in cyber security vital: Alvi

President Alvi said the attainment of strong capacity in cyber security was significant for both defensive and offensive strategies as the world witnessed rapid technological advancement

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday said amid the global challenges of cyber-attacks, it was important for Pakistan to build national capabilities in cyber security to protect its important systems and data. Addressing at the inaugural session of 2nd annual International Conference of Cyber Warfare and Security, he said preparing indigenous professionals and solutions was vital to reduce the risk of cyber-attacks, particularly against the country's defence, energy and financial infrastructures. The two-day event organized by National Centre of Cyber Security, Air University discussed ways to build to strengthen cyber security

and neutralize advanced threats. President Alvi said the attainment of strong capacity in cyber security was significant for both defensive and offensive strategies as the world witnessed rapid technological advancement. He said a national vision of a secure and robust digital ecosystem would lead the country to socio-economic development. He mentioned that cyberspace had recently attracted the attention of many developed and developing countries with reports of government websites being hacked and sensitive data stolen by foreign groups. He said with quantum computers coming to future, it would become highly difficult to secure data for a country unless production of its indigenous hardware

and software. He pointed out that cyber-attacks could affect the nation's infrastructure and damage its economy. To create cyber security awareness, he said, there was a dire need for Pakistan to produce graduates and human resource capable of handling the challenges of cyber security. The president, who inaugurated on the occasion the National Cyber Security Academy, lauded the efforts of the Pakistan Air Force to emerge as an effective ubiquitous and highly responsive cyber force. He expressed confidence that under the patronage of PAF and Higher Education Commission, the academy would prove as a milestone towards safe, secure and sustainable national cyber security. Be-

sides defence, Dr Alvi said, it was high time for Pakistan to secure its boundaries from all sorts of cyber-attacks in domains including politics, industry and culture. PAF Director General C4I Air Vice Marshal Abbas Ghuman outlined the priorities of PAF in collaboration with academia in ensuring the cyber defence. He mentioned in this regard the initiatives including artificial intelligence, strengthening of the aerospace industry to gain self-reliance, malware detection, hardware and software evaluation, the establishment of PAF's first cyber security park and full operationalization of the PAF's cyber command by March. Director National Centre for Cyber Security (NCCS) Dr Kashif Kifayat said the Air

University and NCCS were collaborating on indigenous tool development to tap the international market. The cyber security academy would act as a platform for researchers and industry to improve the digital landscape of the country, he added. Vice Chancellor Air University Air Marshal (ret) Javid Ahmed said for PAF, the timely realization of cyber security amid top threats of national security had gained momentum. He said the National Cyber Security Academy was important in developing cyber awareness, training and skilled development. The Chief Security Officer of Huawei Pakistan said as cyber security became fundamental to business, Huawei was building a co-

operative digital ecosystem in 170 countries with a comprehensive global security system. Executive Director Higher Education Commission Dr Shaista Sohail said the HEC was upgrading the academic course of cyber security to BS and PhD levels and also considering including it as a mandatory subject in universities for creating awareness among the new generation. The president, along with Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaeem Ahmed Babar Sidhu, visited the industry exhibit and evinced keen interest in the products including cyber forensic toolkits, secure communication framework, remote monitoring via sensors, and internet security and privacy labs.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Muhammad Ayub tendering his resignation to Chairman Senate, Sadiq Sanjrani. – DNA

SECP amends regulations to facilitate SMEs

ISLAMABAD: The SECP has introduced amendments in the Companies (Further Issue of Shares) Regulations, 2020 to address the impediments faced by the corporate sector, particularly startups and small companies, in raising equity through conventional modes. Key changes include permission to convert one class of shares into another class, issuance of shares with differential rights without approval of the SECP, and specification of mechanism for valuation of non-cash assets. As per the law, companies can have more than one kind of shares conferring varying rights of dividend, voting and participation depending upon the needs of its capital providers. – DNA

IPDS, Viivbook inks MoU to promote Chinese language

ISLAMABAD: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Viivbook to jointly launch the Chinese Language Program in Pakistani Universities. The MoU would be offering free Chinese training courses, research and development, and promoting cultural cooperation. The initiative would be a pilot project that begins from Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU), Peshawar which would be expanded to all universities across the country. The two sides aimed to work together further to expand and strengthen the cooperation. They also agreed that it was just the beginning of the long journey of cooperation between the two sides. Farhat Asif, President of IPDS made concluding remarks in which she emphasized closer China-Pakistan cooperation. She emphasized the role of the Centre of BRI and China studies in strengthening relations and building trust between the two sides. She stated everyone was aware of the importance of CPEC and BRI in regional development. The initiative had increased the importance of Chinese language for local population, she added. She said therefore, the Chinese Language Program became an important initiative to learn the Chinese language. Students, Scholars, and even any interested individual can learn the Chinese language through this project. She stressed that the two sides should continue to make efforts to strengthen the bilateral relations. Libei Zhang, Manager Viivbook, Tianjin Hantong Educational Technology Co., Ltd said that the initiative would strengthen the ironclad brotherhood of China and Pakistan. She highlighted the close bilateral relations of the two states. – APP

ANF sizes 2285 kg drugs valuing US\$168 mln

ISLAMABAD: Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) had seized 2285.04 kg narcotics valuing US\$ 168.539 million internationally, arrested 30 drug pushers, and impounded 15 vehicles during 33 counter-narcotics strikes throughout the country. According to the spokesperson the seized drugs comprised 113.88 Kg heroin, 2076.85 Kg hashish, 79.85 Kg opium, 10 Kg amphetamine, 4.25 Kg methamphetamine (Ice), 1210 Valium Tablets (0.210 Kg). In Balochistan, the force had recovered 652 Kg drugs in 1 operation. The seized drugs comprised 652 Kg hashish. The force in Punjab had recovered 10.885 Kg drugs in 2 operations while arresting 3 accused. The seized drugs comprised 10.885 Kg Heroin. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the ANF had recovered 315.83 Kg drugs in 14 operations while arrested 10 accused including 1 woman and 2 Afghan nationals, and impounded 4 vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 63.88 Kg heroin, 226.95 Kg hashish, 15 Kg opium, and 10 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice). The Anti-Narcotics Force in Sindh Province had recovered 1146.03 Kg drugs in 7 operations while arresting 5 accused and impounding 3 vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 0.270 Kg heroin, 1128.05 Kg hashish, 13.500 Kg opium, 4 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice), and 1210 Valium Tablets (0.210 Kg). The force had also recovered 160.295 Kg drugs in 9 operations and arrested 12 accused including 1 woman, and captured 8 vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 38.845 Kg heroin, 69.850 Kg hashish, 51.35 Kg Opium, and 0.250 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice). The cases have been registered at respective ANF police stations under CNS Act 1997 and investigations are under process. – APP

11 more tested positive of coronavirus

RAWALPINDI: As many as eleven more patients were tested positive of the deadly coronavirus during the last 24 hours in the district, with four belonging to the Rawalpindi Cantonment area, two each from Potohar and Rawal town while one each case has reached from Kallar Syeda, Kahutta and Chakwal. According to the daily situation report issued by the District Corona Management centre on Tuesday, 27 Coronavirus confirmed patients were admitted to four city facilities, including 11 in Fauji foundation hospital, eight in Institute of Urology, six in Benazir Bhutto, and two in Bilal hospital. The report updated that three patients were on ventilators in critical condition, ten stable and 14 on oxygen support. Around 3,610,494 people, including 43,934 health workers, had so far been vaccinated against the fatal disease out of the total eligible population of 4,225,634 in the district, it added. The report updated that during the last 24 hours, 1,392 samples were collected, out of which 1,381 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 0.79 per cent.

CDWP clears Nulla Lai Expressway, Ring Road

RAWALPINDI: Central Development Working Party (CDWP) has cleared two mega projects of district, Nulla Lai Expressway and Rawalpindi Ring Road project. Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) spokesman Hafiz Irfan talking to APP informed that a meeting of CDWP was held at the office of Planning Commission Islamabad under the chairmanship of Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, Muhammad Jehanzeb Khan. During the meeting, Commissioner Rawalpindi Division and Project Director, Syed Gulzar Hussain Shah who is also holding charge of Director General, Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) gave a briefing regarding Nulla Lai Expressway and Rawalpindi Ring Road project. – APP

COMSTECH, S&T institutions mull cooperation

The meeting was chaired by the Additional Secretary, MoST, Dr. Syed Ata-ur-Rehman. In his welcome remarks Dr. Rehman said that there is a need of improved coordination between science and technology institutions and COMSTECH

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Coordination meeting between COMSTECH and the S&T organizations and institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST), Pakistan held at COMSTECH on Tuesday. The meeting was chaired by the Additional Secretary, MoST, Dr. Syed Ata-ur-Rehman. In his welcome remarks Dr. Rehman said that there is a need of improved

coordination between science and technology institutions and COMSTECH. He said that the government is committed to achieve the goal of success in the development of science and technology. Dr. Rehman said that having COMSTECH is a great privilege as well as a challenge. He emphasized the need of mutual cooperation and coordination among S&T institutions. Dr. Rehman said to have doable projects in the minutes of the meeting for circulation among the S&T insti-

tution for implementation. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH welcomed the heads of 12 leading S&T institutions participated in the meeting. He shed light on the establishment of COMSTECH, its mandate and status in Muslim World. Prof. Choudhary emphasized the need of linking Pakistani S&T organizations and institutions with the institutions of same mandate in other OIC member states to achieve socio-economic

development through mutual cooperation and coordination and to accomplish successful science diplomacy. Prof. Choudhary offered S&T institutions full support in creating linkages with institutions in OIC member states for joint projects and programmes. He said the job of COMSTECH is to serve OIC states to develop their own S&T capacity building, help building inter-institutional linkages for developing result oriented projects. The meeting was attended by the heads of 12 leading S&T in-

stitutions affiliated with MoST: PCRWR, PCSIR, NUTECH, CUI, PCST, STEDEC, NIB, NIO, PNCAC, PHA, PSF and PCRET. The heads of institutions presented their prospective projects, discussed future plan and gave recommendations. Next meeting would be hosted by COMSTECH in which all institutions would present doable projects for seeking funding from international funding agencies and partner organizations from OIC states.

Briefs

TBTP termed global success story at COP26

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul on Tuesday said the success of Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme (TBTP) project was a major ecosystem restoration initiative of the government and was termed as a global success story during the global environmental moot (COP26) held at Glasgow past week. Addressing the one-day session organized by the Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC), IUCN Pakistan and EMC Pakistan for the Private Sector's orientation and engagement on REDD+ the Minister of State as chief guest underlined the untapped investment opportunities in the carbon stocks of the country. "The world has recognized the efforts of Pakistan for restoration of nature," Zartaj underscored. She quoted that the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of Pakistan have been presented by the MoCC at the COP26. Zartaj appraised the private sector about the investment potential in Pakistan with a focus on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) framework and the available Carbon Stock. — APP

Cdre Syed Ahmed promoted to Rear Admiral

ISLAMABAD: Commodore Syed Ahmed Salman of Pakistan Navy on Tuesday has been promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral with immediate effect.

Rear Admiral Syed Ahmed Salman got commissioned in Pakistan Navy in 1991. The Admiral was a graduate of Pakistan Navy War College Lahore and National Defence University Islamabad, said a Pakistan Navy media release.

The Admiral has an illustrious Service career having vast experience of Command and Staff appointments.

His Command appointments included Director Procurement (Navy) and Director Inventory Control Point (DICP). His major Staff appointments at Naval Headquarters Islamabad included Secretary and Flag Lieutenant to Chief of the Naval Staff, Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Supply) and Director Surface Stores. The Admiral's foreign Staff appointments included Attaché Defence Procurement, UK and Staff Officer (Logistic) to Commander Task Force-150 at Headquarters US NAVCENT, Bahrain. — APP

99,168 FIRs registered against power pilferers

ISLAMABAD: As many as 99,168 first investigation reports (FIR) had been registered against power pilferers across the country besides recovering Rs 5.49 billion from them from October 2018 to October 2021.

Official sources told APP here Tuesday that all power distribution companies (DISCOs) on the directives of the Energy Ministry launched an anti-power theft campaign against the power pilferers. They said that the power thieves were charged Rs 8.08 billion during the said period while Rs 5.49 billion had already been recovered from them.

They said that various steps were also taken to reduce electricity line losses to make the power sector efficient. Construction of new Grids and up-gradation of the existing grid, stations, augmentation of Power transformers, replacement of undersize conductors, installation and replacement of defective capacitors, replacement of undersized conductors of 11 KV Feeders, replacement of Old and defective meters, augmentation and addition of Distribution transformers and replacement of defective transformers were some steps taken to overpower electricity losses, he added. — APP

RCCI organizes trade and investment moot in Sri Lanka

The major aim of this BOC was to enhance bilateral trade relations and improve connectivity among trade partners and at chamber of commerce level

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The first Pak-Sri Lanka Trade and Investment Conference, being organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), was inaugurated by Dr. Bandula Gunawardana, Minister of Trade Sri Lanka in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka. The major aim of this BOC was to enhance bilateral trade relations and improve connectivity among trade partners and at chamber of commerce level. Acting High Commissioner Tanveer Ahmad, Trade and Investment attaché Asma Kamal, RCCI President Nadeem Rauf, group leader Sohail Altaf, former presidents Manzar Khurshid, Malik Shahid Saleem, Chairman Usman Shaukat, members of the executive committee and a large number of investors and representatives of Companies and organizations from Pakistan and Sri Lanka attended the conference. Successful Business to Business (B2B) meetings were also held with representatives of various sectors including Pharmaceutical, Education, FMCG, Consumer



Goods, Construction, IT. A number of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) have also been signed with a number of companies. A memorandum of understanding was also signed with the Sri Lankan Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry to strengthen bilateral relations at the Chamber level.

RCCI President Nadeem Rauf said that trade relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka are historic and there is a historical partnership between the two countries. In addition, there is a need to provide a platform for the two countries to forge important trade links. We are thankful to the High Commission office and Acting High

Commissioner to Sri Lanka Tanveer Ahmed for their support and assistance for arranging B2B meetings on the sideline of BOC. He said that there was a need to enhance relations between the two countries at the level of the Chamber of Commerce. Nadeem Rauf maintained that people-to-people contact and religious tourism

provide excellent platforms to further expand bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Pakistan is home to the Gandhara Buddhist heritage and proud custodian of some of the most sacred relics of Buddhism, offering great potential for promoting religious tourism from Sri Lanka to Pakistan, he further added.



ISLAMABAD: Defence Attache of Bangladesh Brig. Gen Abdul Fazal Sanaullah speaking on the occasion of Armed Forces Day of Bangladesh. — DNA

Youth is Pakistan's hope for a bright future

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan bears unrealised potential to strengthen its position among the comity of states. The primary asset in this regard which is not only the present but also, the custodian of a bright future for this homeland is its skilled youth, said Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhary, Director General Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI), Islamabad. He was addressing a gathering at the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) organised to honour the release of his recent book titled Diplomatic Footprints: A Memoir. Ambassador Aizaz added that while the target audience for his recent book was a multifaceted one, he specifically wrote it for the youth in order to reiterate their significance as future leaders of Pakistan. He went on to elaborate various segments of the book and added that he aimed the book to be minimally verbose in order to enhance its readability for all his readers.

Ambassador Aizaz briefly reflected on the main themes of his book such as Pakistan's relations with the Muslim World, India, the United States, Afghanistan and most importantly the glaring shift in the world order from multilateralism to unilateralism. In an elaborate explanation of the aforesaid themes, he mentioned some of his experiences detailing the complexities of the decision-making and power corridors and its associated challenges. He added that the fundamental issue with Pakistan's foreign policy outlook, irrespective of the state at the other end of the aisle, was the cultural psyche of designating allies as permanent partners; a tendency that had many a times led to misplaced expectations resulting in grievances when left unmet. In that, a reconfiguration of the barometer to evaluate and subsequently plan interstate relations was a critical step to remind policy makers of the evolving nature of national interests.

GCISC holds workshop on challenges of climate change

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The experts at the two-day workshop launched the Monitoring and Evaluation RISQ IT Platform and training for adaptation tracking in Pakistan. The two-day workshop was organized by the Global Change Impact Study Centre (GCISC) in collaboration with CITEPA, ACTERA and OIEau with the support of GIZ Pakistan. While addressing the participants in open session, Arif Goheer, Head of Agriculture and Coordination at GCISC highlighted the importance and need of robust M&E adaptation tracking to track adaptation actions of Pakistan and report to UNFCCC accordingly as per the commitments made in the newly submitted National Determined Contributions (NDC). He thanked GIZ Pakistan for its financial and technical support through CITEPA in supporting Ministry of Climate Change and GCISC in developing such crucial platform and building the related capacities of national and sub-national actors through interactive training workshops.



He also briefed the participants on how Pakistan is committed to build its resilience to growing climate change challenges. Further, he highlighted the importance of agriculture being selected as pilot sector for this RISQ IT platform with preparing guidelines and roadmap for future adaptation actions. Baptiste Chatre, Climate Change Coordinator at GIZ Pakistan shed light on the GIZ cooperation with MoCC and GCISC in building this integrated M&E platform in monitoring and reporting its progresses on adaptation actions and to get require support from

international funding channels to deal with climate change issues. He particularly thanked MoCC and Arif Goheer for their continuous collaboration in leading the development of this M&E adaptation system with CITEPA. Baptiste also informed the participants about GIZ forthcoming "Strengthening Climate Adaptation and Resilience (SAR) project to be implemented in Pakistan with particular focus on climate risk assessments and integration of climate change into policy and planning processes including further strengthening M&E adaptation while developing the ca-

capacity of relevant stakeholders across Pakistan. Another important area that GIZ new project will focus on climate finance while building local capacities. Ghislaine, adaptation expert from CITEPA thanked GIZ and GCISC for inviting her to Pakistan to develop and conduct trainings on M&E adaptation system. Ghislaine gave an overview of the project and layout of the training workshop to the participants. She also hoped to get constructive feedback from the participants on the content and indicators to improve the M&E adaptation RISQ platform.

AIUO establishes regional campus at Mithi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University has recently completed the construction of the Regional Campus at Mithi (Sindh), and this newly constructed campus is expected to be inaugurated soon. The campus has all the facilities to meet the needs of ever-changing dynamic and technology oriented modern educational system. The newly constructed building has a state-of-the-art computer laboratory which is equipped with latest technology. Moreover, it has a digital library, smart classrooms, an IT lab and a multipurpose hall. The students of this region will utilize computer laboratory and internet facilities to accomplish their academic tasks free of cost. Mr. Inam Ullah, Director, Regional Services

said that VC, AIUO, Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum is primarily focusing on providing quality educational services across Pakistan so that university can play its due role in the process of nation building so that nobody is deprived of education owing to lack of material resources. The expansion of AIUO's educational network to the remotest areas of Pakistan which lack basic educational facilities is a further testimony of this vision. The present administration has started construction of 15 Regional Campus buildings during the last three years, of which 5 have been completed and the rest are in various stages of construction. Vice Chancellor is on a mission to relocate the university's regional campuses from rented accommodation to its own buildings. He visited these areas and met with government officials and philanthropists there to arrange land.



JHELUM: Bulgarian ambassador Irena Gancheva visits Rohtas Fort, Jhelum, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which is an example of the rich historical, cultural and architectural heritage of Pakistan. — DNA

PSW 1st phase to complete in March

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin on Tuesday expressed satisfaction on the overall progress made to implement Pakistan Single Window (PSW), the first phase of which is under roll out and would be completed in March, 2022.

The advisor was presiding over the second meeting of the Governing Council (GC) of Pakistan Single Window (PSW), according to press statement issued here by the finance ministry.

The advisor lauded the efforts of Pakistan Customs in Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) as the lead agency of PSW program.

While assuring full support to the deep-rooted reforms being undertaken under PSW program, Tarin urged stronger collaboration with both public and private sector in order to create ownership and awareness.

He directed PSW to focus on its outreach activities and allow private sector to judge performance of its system.

He said, successful implementation of PSW was a major objective of current government in order to promote trade competitiveness through enhanced transparency and efficiency.

On the occasion, Secretary Governing Council gave detailed presentation on the progress, achievements, goals, milestones and challenges under PSW program. He apprised that Pakistan Customs after detailed working, with support from local and international experts, had designed and implemented PSW's operational, governance, revenue and functional models to ensure efficacy and sustainability. — APP

CDWP clears 6 projects worth Rs 60.64 bn

ISLAMABAD: Central Development Working Party (CDWP) Tuesday approved three development projects of Rs600 million and recommended three projects worth Rs60.64 billion to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for further consideration. Projects related to Industries & Commerce and Transport & Communication sectors were presented in the meeting. The meeting was presided over by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan and was attended by senior officials from Planning Commission and federal ministries/divisions. Representatives from the provincial governments participated in the meeting through video conferences. The forum approved a project titled "Establishment of Joint Border Market at Gadd District Gwadar, Balochistan" worth Rs226.585 million. The meeting also approved projects "Establishment of Joint Border Market at Mand District Keh, Balochistan" worth Rs183.905 million and "Establishment of Joint Border Market at Ghedhi District Panjgur, Balochistan" worth Rs184.501 million. — APP

ICT police to appoint 'students' internees

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have decided to appoint 'students internees' to enhance police liaison with the public and address the grievances of people on a prompt basis. The decision to this effect has been taken by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Qazi Jamil ur Rehman as this step would help to resolve the complaints of people with police on an immediate basis.

These internees would be appointed at all police stations of Islamabad and competent students will be picked for the purpose. They would observe the police attitude with the public and highlight the flaws in such interactions. A report would be compiled daily by these internees on daily basis and to be forwarded to the Central Police Office. A board comprising of senior police officials would review this report and finalize recommendations to improve the policing system besides ensuring implementation on them. — APP

Gender gap

THE total number of registered votes in Pakistan has increased steadily to a total of 119 million, signalling towards increased overall political participation in the country. While this is worth celebrating, the fact that 81 of the 133 districts have a gender gap of over 10 percent is truly worrisome, as reported by a news publication. We have taken monumental steps like granting overseas citizens a right to vote but when it comes to ensuring inclusivity within our borders, we have missed the mark. According to the data released, 28 districts in KP, 26 in Balochistan, 17 in Punjab and 9 in Sindh are fostering voter gender disparity that exceeds 10 percent. This means that a significant portion of the female population will not participate in one of the key pillars of democracy. It is good to see that the government has been addressing this issue consistently but a greater initiative must be taken now so that the upcoming elections are truly representative. This should start with engaging female residents and marginalised communities. The Elections Act of 2017 made it mandatory for the interim government to register and educate voters on their responsibility to participate in the elections. In this endeavour, it was discovered that the primary cause for low female voter turnout was their negligence when it came to registering for CNICs. This problem was solved as registration centres were opened up in distant areas, SMS registration was introduced and awareness campaigns about the importance of voting were carried out. Legislatively, the government also added a provision into the act which stated that in constituencies where women comprise less than 10 percent of the total voter turnout, the result of the election can be declared as null and void. This is an excellent law that should force political parties to target all segments of the population, especially those in minorities as otherwise, their win could be challenged. More steps to take now would be to have a dedicated door-to-door canvassing and registration strategy, using granular data in places with gaps, that aims to mobilise female voters. Similarly, a dedicated gender wing at the Election Commission is bound to create a more inclusive environment for women across the country.

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A consistent problem

THERE are troubling signs that the government may not be able to live up to its commitment of providing uninterrupted gas to industries through LNG. With the report that this year's procurement has decreased by 27 percent compared to last year, it is unclear how the government will manage the gaps in both households and the manufacturing sector. A shortfall was always expected, and domestic consumers—connected to local supply lines—were the ones who would have had to bear the brunt of this year's supply problem. The schedule was announced; gas would be provided only three times during a day, primarily for cooking. But if additional LNG reduction is on the cards, this can only mean that the government has to renege on one of its promises. It can either provide gas to households three times a day, which would mean that industries will be unable to get around-the-clock fuel, or it can manage the LNG purchasing shortfall for industries by making up for it through domestic reserves. And this is made all the worse if you account for the already reduced supply of gas through local stores. December will bring a lot of hardships for both the public and businesses. There is not much to be done this year except for trying to get more cargoes of LNG through the spot market; but even this looks unlikely. In the longer term, corrective measures need to be taken urgently. More terminals would enhance our supply capabilities for LNG, but only if supply contracts are secured at the right time. Exploration must recommence to look for new deposits where possible. At the same time, we need to iron out the details with Russia on the \$3 billion gas pipeline currently under discussion. The questions of security and sovereign guarantee must be resolved urgently. The future of Pakistan's gas cannot only rely on LNG contracts that may or may not come through. Our own supplies are dwindling. The only solution is to have an alternative to LNG as well; one that is not as prone to price and supply fluctuations as each supply cargo of LNG is. We need to start focusing on making this problem go away instead of trying to defend an ugly situation that is steadily getting worse.

Qatari World Cup sparks healthy controversy across multiple issues

James Dorsey

Critics charge that the attempt by Qatar and like-minded states to stymie discussion enables situations in which gay people are not protected against discrimination and socially hostile situations and encounters. "While there are no reported cases of the death penalty being applied for consensual..."

WHEN seven-time Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton wore a helmet this weekend featuring the colours of the LGBTI Pride Progress Flag during the debut Qatar Grand Prix, he was challenging more than the Gulf state's failure to recognise rights. So will the Danish Football Union (DBU), Denmark's governing soccer body, that announced that its commercial sponsors had agreed to surrender space on training kits to allow for messaging critical of Qatar's treatment of migrant workers. The union said it would also minimize the number of trips to Qatar by the Danish team that has already qualified for the 2022 World Cup to avoid commercial activities that promote the World Cup hosts' events. The stance by Mr. Ham-

ilton and the Danish union calls into question the success of Qatar's use of sports as a pillar of its soft power strategy. Moreover, it lays bare the state-owned Al Jazeera television network's inability or unwillingness to report critically about Qatar. It further challenges international sports administrators' assertion that sports and politics are separate as well as their ban on political expressions on sports venues. To its credit, Formula 1's website showed Mr. Hamilton winning the Qatar race with his demonstrative helmet. Mr. Hamilton and the Danish union's protests further raise questions about the nature and impact of the decade-old debate about Qatar in the wake of its winning in December 2010 of the 2022 hosting rights. It also highlights a complicated debate on the best way to accommodate rights of gender and religious minorities in countries that legally refuse to recognise those rights. There is often merit on both sides of the argument. In the case of LGBTI, these countries often criminalise the minority's orientation but do not enforce the law as long as the minority remains discreet. The fragile balance is between a minority's principled right to legal recognition and protection and a de facto live-and-let-live approach intended to avoid a situation in which public opinion turns on the minority and its members see their circumstances worsen rather than improve. The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World) noted in its December 2020 report on State-Sponsored Homophobia that religious interpretations of Qatari law could enable the sentencing of gays to death. It also stated that other articles stipulate sentences of up to ten years in prison. Critics charge that the attempt by Qatar and like-minded states to stymie discussion enables situations in which gay people are not protected against discrimination and socially hostile situations and encounters. "While there are no reported cases of the death penalty being applied for consensual same-sex sexual activity in Qatar as of October 2020, there are local testimonies indicating that LGBTI people living in Qatar face an extremely hostile context," the report said. The report implicitly acknowledged the dilemma in seeking to secure LGBTI rights in ways that don't further disadvantage the group in countries

in which public opinion and government oppose legalisation. Majid Al-Qatari, a pseudonym for a Qatari gay, sparked outrage in 2011 by writing an article describing what it meant to be homosexual in the Gulf state. Mr. Al-Qatari noted that many had lauded the attack on a gay bar in Orlando, Florida, that year by describing gays as 'God's cursed people.' "It is very jarring living here; it is traumatizing to see that you are the cause of your parents' anguish, that you are shaming your family. It is a constant onslaught, and it is killing me. It has caused irreparable damage to my mental health. I wouldn't have chosen to have been born in a place where my life is tantamount to my death. There is no prospect or future for me here — no normalcy," Mr. Al-Qatari said. The awarding of the 2022 hosting rights to Qatar may not have significantly improved the plight of gays, but it may have helped prevent a deterioration. It also halted Qatari support for a Kuwaiti proposal to ban LGBTI foreigners from gaining employment in any of the six Gulf monarchies. Much of the criticism of Qatari labour practice and discrimination against gays is justified, it is also true that bias, prejudice, and sour grapes frequently laced the debate over the past decade. Furthermore, the discussion was partly driven by controversy over the integrity of the Qatari World Cup bid and the Gulf state's willingness to invest far more than its competitors to win the hosting rights and stage the tournament. Qatar's soft power strategy involves, besides sports, a fast-paced, mediation-driven foreign policy; the creation of a world-class airline and air traffic hub; hosting of the most extensive US military base in the Middle East; sponsorship of high-profile museums and arts events; and acquisition of eye-catching real estate and investment in multi-national blue chips. Last but not least, like the Qatari bid itself, the athletes' protests highlight that the incestuous relationship between sports and politics is written into the DNA of elite sports. It also suggests that athletes and players, like in past instances related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have become more willing to use sports as a platform to stand up for their beliefs. Mr. Hamilton has already pledged to repeat his protest performance in the Jeddah F1 race in Saudi Arabia in two weeks' time.

Pakistan on the path of V2G revolution

Huma Arshad



Pakistan has recently come out with an ambitious National Electric Vehicles Policy which is in line with many European targets. However, Pakistan, unlike Europe, is not gradually raising emission standards for the vehicle

PAKISTAN ranks second, behind Bangladesh, according to a list of nations with the worst air quality in the world. The transport sector is a major source of environmental pollution in the country. Introducing a modern and environmentally-friendly transport system through electric vehicles (EVs) in the country is very important in the path of reducing Pakistan's air pollution and making cities clean and green. The fact that air pollution takes away nearly 135,000 lives in Pakistan in a year and costs around 5-6% of the GDP validates the idea further. However, the execution of the strategy is no walk in the park. The journey is full of unidentified challenges and may demand a more exhaustive effort than what one may expect. V2G the "vehicle to grid technology enables energy to be pushed back to the power grid from the battery of an electric car. The world is moving away from fossil fuels. For example, Amsterdam is banning all diesel vehicles by 2030. Similarly, twenty-three other European cities will ban all diesel vehicles by 2030. This ban will be further extended to completely banning fossil fuel for vehicles in countries like the Netherlands by 2040. The implications of the world moving beyond fossil fuels are great not only for automobile manufacturers and petroleum-producing states but countries like Pakistan as well. Introducing EVs in the country's ailing transport system is pivotal for modernizing it and reducing the carbon emissions that contribute to climate change and smog, improving public health, and reducing ecological damage. EVs registration-related issues that automobile and vehicle battery manufacturing companies and end-users are grappling with myriad issues from the excise and taxation departments in registering EVs, as there are many stakeholders involved in the registration process and that registration of EVs is still done based on the equivalent 'cc' in Internal Combustion Engine-based vehicles, which incurs high registration cost. This discourages prospective buyers from owning an EV. Also, the relaxation in the registration cost and token tax offered by the NEVP has not been

implemented by many provinces, they added. NEVP authorizes the import of EV-specific parts and components at 1% custom duty and their sale at 1% GST. However, companies are experiencing challenges in the interpretation of rules and regulations by FBR's Customs and Inland Revenue Department dictating import of EV specific parts and components. Pakistan already has a significant market for hybrid vehicles with Honda's Vezeel, Toyota's Prius and Aqua, and other models seen on the roads. The Automotive Development Policy (2016-2021) and the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are encouraging foreign investments for the new automobile brands to enter the Pakistani market, while the leading manufacturers in the automobile industry in Pakistan are interested in introducing EV models with a wide range of prices which target consumers of diverse income groups. Several members of the international automobile industry including South Korea, China, and Japan also believe that Pakistan has a high potential market for EV technology, and local businesses are collaborating with them to bring EVs to Pakistan. Pakistan has recently come out with an ambitious National Electric Vehicles Policy which is in line with many European targets. However, Pakistan, unlike Europe, is not gradually raising emission standards for the vehicle. The Euro emission standards have been stricter for diesel vehicles in Europe and have led to a reduction in demand for diesel vehicles. There are already news reports that the lobbyists in Pakistan are attempting to derail the implementation of the NEVP. In addition, in Pakistan, major auto manufacturers do not report the vehicles' emission standards on their websites. Moreover from the consumer's perspective, are the prices attractive for purchasing a new hybrid or electric vehicle? Currently, they are not. For example, the price of an 1800 CC Prius S is around 9.2 million rupees. Compare this price with a Toyota Corolla Altis 1800 CC for about 3.9 million rupees. The government should raise the prices of existing non-electric and non-hybrid vehicles so that they lose their pricing advantage over hybrid/electric vehicles. Any vehicle customer should be given two alternatives between hydrocarbon and hybrid/electric vehicles at similar price levels should choose hybrid/electric because of the operational cost advantages like better fuel consumption for hybrids and electricity being cheaper than hydrocarbons for electric vehicles. Another alternative could be to introduce steeper annual taxation on non-hybrid and non-electric vehicles purchased thus driving up the cost of ownership of such vehicles. Pakistan's electric vehicle push is picking up speed; nearly two years after the country launched its ambitious green policy, which envisions a shift to 30% electric cars and trucks nationwide by 2030, and 90% by 2040. Key to the shift is hefty tax exemptions for both electric vehicles imports and imports of parts and equipment to build the cars in Pakistan. To overcome worries that electric vehicles may have no resale value, car manufacturers and dealers could offer buy-back guarantees, he added. The government needs to push to completely phase out fuel-run and hybrid vehicles by increasing taxes on them and providing affordable bank loans for people looking to buy electricity. Last but not least those people who use motorbikes and rickshaws deserve to have more electric vehicles on the roads to cut air pollution.

Zulfi is wanted by overseas Pakistanis

Tazeen Akhtar

Overseas Pakistanis Foundation generated profit of Rs 111 million after 4 years of losses through austerity and efficiency measures. This is central org regarding the welfare of overseas. Zulfi prepared it in line with the PM's vision for the overseas



Not only this but another feather in his cap was his winning of case against Rehman Khan. It is not only the victory of Zulfi but for Imran Khan as well because the case was about her book. Rehman leveled personal allegations on the PM in her book. Her defeat in UK court proves that the other allegations might also have been wrong. But now a large number of Pakistanis abroad and within Pakistan are astonished to hear that the portfolio can be given to former senator Ayub Afridi. People are asking what is the problem that the Prime Minister replaces the persons like this who bring success stories for him. In Sep 2019, the Prime Minister delivered a speech at UNGA that was welcomed not only throughout Pakistan but in USA and other capitals of the world as well. PM declared his visit as big success but at the same time replaced Maleeh Lodhi who was the incharge of the all arrangements for making the visit a success. Now another change is in the offing, when Overseas Pakistanis are feeling much better than the previous govts and Pakistan is having the benefits of the policies for overseas, tourism and investments. Why it is necessary to take the portfolio back from Zulfi? Ayub Afridi can be accommodated at some other place. Release of Pakistani prisoners was no doubt a big service to the countrymen in the very first year of PTI government. So far, more than 6,880 prisoners have been released from mainly the jails of Middle East countries. The prisoners are mostly labor class who were unable to fight their cases. Had Zulfi not taken the initiative, they would never have seen the sun again in their life. It not only

brought prayers for Imran Khan but fetched huge respect in the eyes of the authorities of those countries that the government of Pakistan is very careful for their citizens. Many were languishing in jails for petty crimes. Zulfi arranged for their financial and legal assistance. The release is still on. 63 Pakistani prisoners were released by Saudi Arabia in August 2021 by latest. Pakistani labor requires Protector before they can proceed to travel abroad for work. The protector offices were exploiting them. Zulfi took notice and brought reforms here. He sacked 9 top officials who were not ready to cooperate in facilitating the labor and overseas as was the direction of the Prime Minister. He established one-window operation for the convenience of the labor. The reforms in the overseas circle of Pakistan created 1.3 Million new jobs abroad for Pakistanis. Overseas Pakistanis Foundation generated profit of Rs 111 million after 4 years of losses through austerity and efficiency measures. This is central org regarding the welfare of overseas. Zulfi prepared it in line with the PM's vision for the overseas. Now OPF is all set to receive complaints, queries online and all govt departments are bound to respond on the recommendations of OPF in favor of oversea. Prime Minister said the other day in his speech that overseas would face loss when they started business in Pakistan and their properties would have been occupied. Here OPF has special role. Any oversea Pakistani can approach for guidance to what business to do or for return of his/her occupied property. British Airways resumed its direct flights operation to and from Pakistan thanks to the efforts of Zulfi Bukhari. The flights were stopped after Marriott Hotel bombing in Islamabad in Sep 2008. In June 2019 British Airways Boeing 787 Dream liner departed from Heathrow, London, with 240 passengers on board, and touched down at Islamabad International Airport. Prime Minister needs to review his decisions and priorities. His flagship project 5 Million homes is stuck at 1500 homes only. Most of the initiatives, PM announced are at the back burner. PM knows that he already lacks sincere and competent members in his team. Replacing Zulfi will further add to already present chaos. Let him work with his ongoing line and length.

Briefs

Judiciary in the dock, claims PDM

FROM PAGE 01
Fazl said that the PDM will hold its next meeting on December 6 where the Opposition alliance will take "final and important decisions." The JUI-F chief said the entire nation was demanding an independent election commission. "It is totally unacceptable to clip the ECP's wings," he said, adding that the Constitution already lays down the powers of the commission. Fazl lashed out at the "fake government", saying that it had promised the government one 10 million jobs but had "stolen" over 5 million so far from the people. He said that the joint Opposition will play a role in guaranteeing that overseas Pakistanis "have representation in the Parliament", warning them not to get caught up in the government's "lies". Speaking about the electronic voting machines (EVMs), he said the government wanted to hold elections when the world had rejected the same process. "We reject this pre-poll rigging," he said, referring to the government's move to pass laws relating to the voting machines. Taking aim at the government's economic policies, Fazl said it had made the State Bank a "branch of the IMF".

Battle-hardened army...

FROM PAGE 01
Lahore and laid the foundation stone of School of Allied Health Sciences (SAHS). While interacting with the students and faculty, the COAS said that LMC has emerged as a leading College in Pakistan and is playing a pivotal role in producing Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) and BS (Honors) Medical Imaging Technology (MIT) of the highest calibre. He emphasized on the youth to strive for excellence while always seeking to optimally contribute for their country and service to humanity. Later, the army chief visited the forward troops in Bedian, where he was briefed by the local Formation Commander. COAS Qamar Javed Bajwa expressed satisfaction over the high standard of operational readiness and morale of troops. While interacting with officers and troops, he said that they are a battle-hardened Army that has rendered innumerable sacrifices in the line of duty and are ready to defend their motherland at all costs.

Pakistan rejects Indian...

FROM PAGE 01
One of the Indian Mig-21 Bison aircraft fell down in AJK. The pilot who ejected was captured by Pakistan and later released as a goodwill gesture. His return to India was a testimony of Islamabad's desire for peace despite New Delhi's hostility and ill-conceived aggressive action. Another Indian aircraft SU 30 shot down by the PAF fell on the other side of LOC. On the same day, in panic, the Indian military shot down its own Mi 17 helicopter near Srinagar which [was] initially denied, [but] was accepted later on," the FO added. The statement further added that international experts and US officials had already confirmed that no Pakistani F-16 was shot down on the day, after taking stock of the PAF F-16 aircraft. "India's insistence on propagating a lie that has been thoroughly exposed is ludicrous and nonsensical. Granting military honours for imaginary feats of gallantry is contrary to every norm of military conduct. By giving such an award, also as an afterthought, India has only made a mockery of itself," the communique stated. The FO further added that it was obvious that India's farcical story had no credibility whatsoever before the international community. "On its part, Pakistan stands as ready and resolute to thwart any hostile designs as it was in February 2019," the FO said. "India would do well to learn a lesson from its botched attempt to violate Pakistan's sovereignty and refrain from any misadventure in future."

EU says in talks with Belarus to solve migrant crisis

"The most recent discussion took place on Friday about the necessary logistics," he added. Belarusian authorities announced on Thursday that they had moved migrants from the border with Poland to a nearby warehouse turned into a processing center

SPORT DESK

BRUSSELS: EU officials are holding technical talks with Belarus to solve the migration crisis along its borders, an EU official told a daily news briefing Monday. "We have been actually in touch with a number of Belarusian interlocutors, including the Foreign Ministry in different levels," Peter Stano, the European Commission's chief spokesperson on foreign policy, said when asked about Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's claims that he had reached out to the EU in vain. Contrary to Lukashenko's

remarks, the European External Action Service (EEAS) has been in touch at various levels with their counterparts at Belarus' Foreign Ministry, said Stano. "We are looking into the possibility of holding technical talks with UN agencies and Belarusian counterparts at the technical and expert level in order to see how we can assist in their efforts to facilitate the repatriation of people stuck on Belarus back to safety," he said. Stano also confirmed that EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell had two phone calls over the last seven days with Belarus' Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei, while other EEAS officials also

Belarus sends back more migrants

MINSK: Authorities in Belarus has said that a group of 118 migrants who had hoped to reach the European Union via Poland have been flown out of the country. "Yesterday, 118 people left from Minsk national airport," Alexey Begun, the head of the migration department at Belarus's interior ministry, told state news agency Belta on Tuesday. He said another group of migrants was due to fly out of Belarus on Tuesday. He did not say where they were headed, but said the embassies of several countries, including Syria and Iraq, were organising repatriation flights for their citizens who "have found themselves in a difficult situation." It was the latest sign of de-escalation in a crisis that saw several thousand migrants, mainly from the Middle East, stuck on the border between Poland and Belarus, the EU's eastern frontier. A first group of 431 people was flown back to Iraq from Belarus on a repatriation flight last week. - Agencies

held technical talks "with their counterparts of lower level" in Belarus' Foreign Ministry. "The most recent discussion took place on Friday about the necessary logistics," he added. Belarusian authorities announced on Thursday that they had moved migrants from the border with Poland to a nearby warehouse turned into a processing center. On the same day, the first repatriation flights to Iraq took off with hundreds of people on board. Over 2,000 people, including women and children, spent a week in the Belarusian-Polish border area in dire conditions. The EU accuses Lukashenko of seeking retribution

for EU sanctions on his regime by inviting "tourists" from countries that are the main sources of migration to the bloc and then herding them towards the borders of EU countries, in particular Poland. In parallel to the talks with the Belarusian government, Borrell and European Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas traveled to countries of origin and transit to raise authorities' awareness of Belarus' dangerous tactics and to stop the flights to Belarus. Schinas last week visited Turkey, which the EU has praised for taking action to stop would-be migrants from taking flights to Belarus.

Greek contestant withdraws from Miss Universe Pageant

Miss Universe pageant 2021 that is set to be held in Israel

RAMALLAH: Greek Miss Universe contestant Rafele Plastira has officially announced her withdrawal from Miss Universe pageant that is set to be held in Israel, saying that she can't go up on stage and act like nothing's happening. Plastira took it to her Instagram post to announce to her followers that she is not going to participate in the pageant, citing the hosting country as a reason for her decision. "I will not be attending 'Miss Universe' this year. The reason for that is the country," she said. "I can't go up that stage and act like nothing is happening when people are fighting for their lives out there." Earlier this month, Africa For Palestine released a statement welcoming the intended withdrawal of Miss South Africa Lalela Mswane from the upcoming Israeli hosted Miss Universe. A couple of hours later, the CEO of Miss South Africa Organization, Stephanie Weil, made an announcement on behalf of Miss South Africa, that Mswane will still proceed to Israel. "This u-turn is disappointing. CEO of Miss South Africa, Stephanie Weil, clearly supports Apartheid Israel by defending the indefensible," the organization said in a press statement. The statement added, "It is clear to us that there are divisions within the organization and company of Miss South Africa. We had, in fact, been reliably informed of Miss Lalela Mswane's withdrawal from the upcoming pageant in Israel, but it seems that there has been interference and pressure, with Miss South Africa now making a u-turn and reversing the withdrawal decision." The statement added, "The Miss South Africa brand is getting uglier by the day by ignoring the history of South Africa, by disregarding the suffering of the Palestinians and by dismissing its own supporters who have urged the company to do the right thing and not endorse the Apartheid State of Israel." Earlier Candidates from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Mo-

rocco announced they will take part in the Miss Universe pageant in Israel in December, ignoring calls for a boycott. The 70th Miss Universe competition will be held in the Israeli Red Sea resort of Eilat on 12 December, confirmed the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. The UAE will take part in the pageant for the first time, while Morocco is returning to the competition for the first time in 40 years. Citing the occupation of Palestine and the brutal treatment of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the decision to hold the contest in Israel has sparked an outcry, with some calling for a boycott of the event. In a statement last week, the grandson of former South African President Nelson Mandela, Inkosi Zwelivelle Mandla Mandela, said that he calls on all former Miss South Africa winners to boycott the event in protest over the "occupation and cruel treatment of Palestinians at the hands of apartheid Israel regime", he said. Inkosi also took to Instagram to call for a boycott of the event, comparing the occupation of Palestine to apartheid South Africa. "Apartheid Israel's occupation is no less despicable than apartheid South Africa. The world responded to our call to stand in global solidarity against the apartheid regime. - Agencies



World number one Barty announces engagement

SYDNEY: Ashleigh Barty capped her third straight season as world number one Tuesday by announcing she is engaged to long-term boyfriend Garry Kissick. The Australian revealed the happy news in an Instagram post, sharing a photo of the smiling couple embracing with an engagement ring on her finger. "Future husband," wrote Barty, 25, who accompanied the post with a love heart and ring emoji. Kissick, 30, is a former golf pro and the pair met on a course in Barty's home state of Queensland in 2016. He is ever-present courtship when she plays and often posts supportive messages on social media. The news sparked a frenzy of congratulations from fellow tennis stars, with Simona Halep posting 10 love heart emojis. Reigning Wimbledon champion Barty pulled out of the season-ending WTA Finals to remain at home and focus on preparing for the Australian summer. She has not played since a shock third-round loss at the US Open in September, but still finished as world number one after a season in which she won five titles. Barty joined Steffi Graf, Martina Navratilova, Serena Williams and Chris Evert as the only women to finish as the top-ranked player for three consecutive years. - APP

Lewandowski, Benzema nominated for FIFA's Best award

LAUSANNE: Robert Lewandowski is in the running to retain his Best FIFA Men's Player award after he was named Monday on an 11-man shortlist alongside Karim Benzema and Jorginho. Perennial candidates Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo feature among the nominees, with Neymar, Mohamed Salah and Kylian Mbappe also up for a prize first awarded in 2017. Erling Haaland, N'Golo Kante and Kevin De Bruyne complete the list of potential winners. Four Barcelona players are included on the women's best player shortlist - Alexia Putellas, Jennifer Hermoso, Aitana Bonmati and Caroline Graham Hansen. Chelsea, beaten by Barcelona in last season's Women's Champions League final, also have four representatives with Sam Kerr, Ji So-yun, Magdalena Eriksson and Pernille Harder. Lucy Bronze, who took home last year's award, was nominated with fellow England international Ellen White. Canada's Olympic gold medalist Christine Sinclair is in contention too, as is Stina Blackstenius of Sweden. Thomas Tuchel is a frontrunner for best men's coach after leading Chelsea to the Champions League title. He faces competition from Roberto Mancini, the mastermind of Italy's Euro 2020 triumph. Other nominees are Hansi Flick, Pep Guardiola, Antonio Conte, Diego Simeone and Argentina boss Lionel Scaloni. The prizes for the best men's and women's player, coach and goalkeeper are voted for by the captains and coaches of all national teams around the world, as well as an online ballot of fans and a select number of journalists. Voting will run from November 22 to December 10. - APP

China says Peng Shuai case is 'maliciously' hyped up

BEIJING: China on Tuesday said the controversy surrounding Peng Shuai was being "maliciously" hyped up, after the Chinese tennis star made sexual assault claims against one of the nation's most powerful politicians. Peng, a Wimbledon and French Open doubles champion, was not seen for more than two weeks after she made the accusations against former vice-premier Zhang Gaoli. The 35-year-old Peng reappeared in public for the first time at the weekend when she was seen attending a Beijing tennis tournament. "I think some people should stop alone politicise this issue," said foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian in response to Peng's international image. Beijing will host you have all seen that she recently at call with IOC president Thomas Bach, a direct response from the Chinese government. Beijing had repeatedly brushed off welfare - calling them "not a diplomat have also been scrubbed from The Women's Tennis Association tie contracts with China unless appeared in a 30-minute video Committee (IOC) chief on Sunday. that during the call, "Peng Shuai her well-being." "She explained that in Beijing, but would like to have her Earlier Sunday, Peng was seen attending photos of the event. But human rights have continued to voice concern about on her allegations. "This video does not investigation, without censorship, into her that gave rise to our initial concern," the WTA



UAE can be perfect venue for Pak-India ties

"The best thing would be to get India-Pakistan matches here. When Sharjah used to host India and Pak all those years ago, it was like a war. But it was a good war, it was a sporting war and it was fantastic"

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Dubai Cricket Council (DCC) Abdul Rahman Falaknaz, believes UAE could be the perfect neutral venue for Pakistan-India to hold the bilateral duels saying the game of Cricket brings people together. After hosting the second half of the Indian Premier League (IPL) and then the ICC Twenty20 Cricket World Cup, DCC has expressed its desire to host Pakistan-India bilateral series. The DCC chairman could not hide his joy when asked to reflect on UAE's resounding success in hosting a cricket World Cup. "First of all, as an Emirati, I'm very proud. You know, the most amazing thing is that an Arab country hosted a cricket World Cup. And this was not understood at all by anybody. Nobody even thought that there

would be facilities in the Arab world to host cricket because cricket is not our game," Falaknaz said while talking to local media in Dubai as quoted by khaleejtimes.com. "But there are people who have played the game. I played in India. In fact, I played quite well for my school in (Bombay). My manager at that time said if I had stayed in India, I could have played for India. That's what he told me when I was 16 years old!" Falaknaz, whose brother-in-law, Sultan Zarawani, captained UAE in the 1996 World Cup, offered to break t h e d e a d -

lock in Pakistan-India bilateral cricket ties. Both arch-rivals haven't engaged in bilateral cricket duels since 2013. But Falaknaz believes UAE could be the perfect neutral venue for the two countries. "The best thing would be to get India-Pakistan matches here. When Sharjah used to host India and Pakistan all those years ago, it was like a war. But it was a good war, it was a sporting war and it was fantastic," he said. "I remember Raj Kapoor came once with his family. During the awards night, he took the mic and said, 'how wonderful it is to have

India-Pakistan battles in Sharjah. Cricket brings people together, cricket has brought us together and let us remain this way'. "So this is what we would like to do. If we can convince India to come and play here against Pakistan once a year or twice a year, it would be fantastic." With the NBA making the ground-breaking announcement to bring their bandwagon to UAE for a couple of matches from next year, this country's position as a global sporting hub was further enhanced. Falaknaz said the Indian cricket board should also take a leaf out of NBA's book by hosting a few Indian Premier League (IPL) matches every year in UAE. "It all depends on BCCI to decide what they want to do. We are very friendly with them. They have seen our potential. I would invite them to come and hold their IPL, start here and finish in India or start in India and finish in Dubai," he said.

US Embassy donates 26,500 books

FROM PAGE 01

The books are published by Cengage and National Geographic and distributed in Pakistan by Allied Book Company. Donated books include novels that combine comic illustrations and classical literature to entertain readers, as well as action, thriller, drama, and mystery books. The Access program provides basic English language skills to economically disadvantaged students in Pakistan, between the ages of 13 and 20. The program provides participants opportunities to improve their English and develop leadership skills that improve students' professional and educational prospects. Through these skills, participants are also able to compete for and participate in future exchanges and study programs in the United States. Overall, approximately 22,000 students from 16 cities in Pakistan have participated in the Access Program since its inception in 2015.

Cabinet okays wheat transit...

FROM PAGE 01

The committee would finalize all the nitty-gritty on use of the EVMs in the next election such as cost, numbers of machines and others, he added. The minister said the committee would comprise Adviser on Parliamentary Affairs Dr Babar Awan, Minister for Railway Azam Swati, Minister for Science and Technology Shibli Faraz, Minister for Information Technology Aminul Haq and Attorney General. The minister said it was imperative that next general election should be held with help of EVMs at all the cost and 9 million overseas Pakistanis would exercise their right of franchise. Fawad Chaudhry alleged that the "PML-N's Maryam Nawaz group" had formed teams in the party to make fake video and audio clips in order to bring senior officials, including judges, under pressure. The minister made the remark in reference to a leaked audio clip, purportedly of a conversation between former chief justice of Pakistan and an unidentified man regarding PML-N leaders Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz's trial prior to the 2018 elections. However, Chaudhry referred to a report by Samaa on the matter and commended the news website for exposing the "fake clip". "And now since the clip has been proven fake, [it's clear] that the only objective behind it was to pressurise the judiciary," he commented. "They (the PML-N) started the 'mujhe kyun nikala' (why was I ousted) in the past to pressurise the generals in armed forces. And when we see proceedings against (PML-N leaders) are under way [in the court], they are running a similar campaign, believing that they will be able to pressurise judges." But, he added, the judiciary would "reject" this, adding that Maryam had been involved in getting fake clips made in the past as well, not just to pressurise high-ups but her party as well. To a query, the minister said the government had reached out to the opposition many a time and asked them to share their suggestions on the electoral reforms as it wanted consensus on the matter. The entire nation including government, opposition and public had consensus over reforming the existing electoral system, he said, stressing the need for use of the EVMs to end rigging for once and all.

Rising debt a security...

FROM PAGE 01

the production and sale of important sectors including tobacco, fertilizer, sugar and cement sectors. This will help bring transparency in the system and enhance the country's revenue. Under the system, no production bag of sugar will be taken out from the factory and manufacturing plant without stamp and individual identity mark. In the next phase, the FBR was planning to introduce the track and system in petroleum and beverages sector. PM Imran while appreciating the FBR for introducing TTS said that this system will have "far reaching" impact on the tax collection of the country.



Briefs

Russian spying hit by Covid

WEB DESK

PRAGUE: The Czech Republic's intelligence agency said on Tuesday that Russian spying activities on its territory had been hit by coronavirus restrictions curbing movement in 2020. In its annual report, the Security Information Service (BIS) said the restrictions had reduced "opportunities for intelligence exchanges in the traditional areas of interest, such as politics, the academic sphere or trade". But it also reported an increase in Russian interest in contacting Czech pro-Russian and anti-system entities and building contacts. "Russia aims to use the Czech territory to gain access to Czech nationals but also to build contacts with foreign nationals," said the BIS, adding that Russia had also continued cyber attacks on Czech targets. It added that China also remained a "complex growing intelligence threat" with its spies using diplomatic and journalistic cover. "Chinese intelligence activities were most intensive in the area of politics and scientific and technical intelligence," according to the report.

Generation of children 'at stake' in Lebanon

BEIRUT: The UN children's agency Tuesday called on Lebanon to take urgent action to protect children after it documented a spike in child labour rates and food insecurity since April. "Urgent action is needed to ensure no child goes hungry, becomes sick, or has to work rather than receive an education," said Yukie Mokuo, UNICEF representative in Lebanon. "The staggering magnitude of the crisis must be a wake-up call," she said, quoted in a statement. Lebanon is grappling with its worst-ever financial crisis, with nearly 80 percent of the population estimated to be living below the poverty line. UNICEF in October followed up with the more than 800 families it had surveyed in April and found that since then living conditions had deteriorated dramatically. "The future of an entire generation of children is at stake," it said in its latest report titled "Surviving without the basics".

The survey found 53 percent of families had at least one child who skipped a meal in October 2021, compared with 37 percent in April. "The proportion of families... who sent children to work rose to 12 percent, from nine percent," UNICEF added. — APP

Merkel's husband calls unvaccinated Germans 'lazy'

BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel's husband on Tuesday accused unvaccinated Germans of "laziness" as the country struggles to contain a dramatic surge in coronavirus infections. Germany's Covid-19 resurgence has in part been blamed on its relatively low vaccination rate compared with other Western European nations like France, Italy or Spain, with just 68 percent of the population fully jabbed. "It is astonishing that a third of the population does not follow scientific findings," Merkel's husband, Joachim Sauer, said in an interview with Italian newspaper La Repubblica and picked up by German daily Die Welt. "In part, this is due to a certain laziness and complacency of Germans," Sauer said, a cohort he said also included doctors and scientists. Like his famous wife, Sauer is a quantum chemist and was in Italy on an academic visit. The couple keep a low profile and Sauer rarely speaks to the media. One of the few occasions when they are photographed together is during their annual visit to the Bayreuth opera festival. — APP

Council of Pak condemns cultural genocide by Armenia

"Pakistan, Turkey and Azerbaijan are three nations who have bonded to become one as brothers"

DNA

LOS ANGELES: The Council of Pakistan - one of the most influential Pakistani American organizations - has hosted its board meeting, with the participation of Nasimi Aghayev, Consul General of Azerbaijan and Dean of the Los Angeles Consular Corps; and Can Oguz, Consul General of Turkey, as invited guests. Law enforcement officers of Los Angeles also joined the meeting, which was chaired by Council of Pakistan President Adnan Khan. Speaking at the event, Consul General Nasimi Aghayev highlighted the strong brotherhood between Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Turkey, and their respective communities in Los Angeles. Aghayev mentioned that Consulates of three countries with the close participation of the Council of Pakistan hosted several events over the last years bringing the communities together. The Consul General thanked both the Turkish and Pakistani communities for their vocal support to Azerbaijan's Patriotic War last year, the liberation of its territories from Armenia's 30-year long barbaric occupation and the restoration of justice. Aghayev noted that during three decades of illegal occupation of Azerbaijan's territories, Armenia razed to the ground over 10,000 sq. km of area, including nine cities and 900 villages. Nearly all houses of over 800,000 forcibly displaced Azerbaijani civilians were looted and demolished brick by brick, and the materials were transported to Armenia and sold there. In addition, Armenia destroyed 700 historical Azerbaijani



monuments and 927 libraries with 4.6 million books. He stressed that 65 out of 67 Azerbaijani mosques were desecrated and destroyed, with many of the mosques turned into pigsties and cowsheds by Armenia. The Consul General noted that Azerbaijan, which is now demining and rebuilding the liberated areas, wants to sign a peace treaty with Armenia as soon as possible. Then a short film produced by Azerbaijan's Los Angeles Consulate General, titled "Cultural Genocide in the Caucasus: The worst cultural genocide of the 21st century," was screened. In his remarks, Consul General Can Oguz of Turkey recognized the robust contributions of the Turkish, Azerbaijani and Pakistani communities to the rich diversity of California. He thanked the law

enforcement for their selfless efforts for the safety and security of all minority groups. Reminding the guests of the heinous assassinations of Turkish diplomats in Los Angeles by Armenian terrorists, Oguz thanked the law enforcement for their dedicated work in ensuring a safe environment for Turkish and Azerbaijani diplomats in Los Angeles, who are still threatened by radical Armenian groups. The Consul General shared his concern about the rising hate attacks against Turkish and Azerbaijani Americans in Los Angeles, and underscored the importance of the strong solidarity and cooperation among Pakistani, Turkish and Azerbaijani communities against these hostile acts. Speaking at the event also in-

cluded the leaders of the Islamic Center of Inglewood (ICI) - one of the largest and oldest mosques in Southern California - namely the President of the ICI Javed Bava and ICI Co-Directors for Muslim Outreach Ismail Keekeebhai and Zubair Rawda. At the invitation of Azerbaijan's Consulate General, they recently visited Azerbaijan, together with Christian and Jewish faith leaders of Los Angeles. During the visit, they had the opportunity to also travel to the liberated cities of Aghdam and Shusha. The speakers shared their witnessing unimaginable destruction committed by Armenian troops in Karabakh during three decades of brutal occupation. They stressed that desecrating and destroying the houses of worship was totally unacceptable and must be con-

demned by all. The speakers also shared their impression of Azerbaijan's interfaith harmony and multiculturalism, as well as many meetings in Baku with faith leaders of all three religions. The Council of Pakistan President Adnan Khan said: "Pakistan, Turkey and Azerbaijan are three nations who have bonded to become one as brothers." "Since the early 1990s, the Armenian army has committed a genocide against Azerbaijani people. The people of Pakistan demand justice for Azerbaijan. The destruction of houses of worship, the destruction of cities committed by the Armenian army has to be addressed, and the Armenian government has to be held accountable. The United Nations cannot sit silent," Adnan Khan added.

Baku holds briefing ahead of Nizami Ganjavi Forum

DNA

BAKU: The International Nizami Ganjavi Forum is fast approaching. The forum "Nizami Ganjavi Intercultural Bridge" will be held in Baku on November 24-26. Over 40 scientists and experts from 15 countries are expected to join the forum to be held as part of Nizami Week. Speaking at the press-conference, First Deputy Minister of Culture Elnur Aliyev stressed the importance of the event in promoting Nizami Ganjavi's legacy. The Minister pointed out that

the forum will discuss the poet's influence on the formation of public attitudes and literature in different countries. Elnur Aliyev noted that the forum will gather prominent statesmen, scientists, representatives of the international organizations and the diplomatic corps. Among the guests are the Culture Minister of Turkey and Uzbekistan. The forum will feature panel discussions on the topics "The influence of Nizami's work on the political and social traditions of the medieval East", "Nizami Ganjavi: a view of the modern world" and others", etc.



BAKU: Pakistan ambassador to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee visit Pakistan Cultural Center Baku and got acquainted with the drawing competition to be held here. He met with students and answered questions about international journalism. — DNA

Flaming bus crash in Bulgaria kills 45

AGENCIES

SOFIA: At least 45 people, including 12 children, died as a bus carrying mostly North Macedonian tourists crashed in flames on a highway in western Bulgaria hours before daybreak on Tuesday, officials said. Seven people who leapt from the burning bus were rushed to the Pirogov emergency hospital in the Bulgarian capital Sofia and were in a stable condition, hospital staff said.

They had suffered burns and one had a broken leg. Bulgaria's interior ministry said 45 people had died, making it the most deadly bus accident in the Balkan country's history. Interim Interior Minister Boyko Rashkov said bodies were "clustered inside and are burnt to ash". "The picture is terrifying, terrifying. I have never seen anything like that before," he told reporters at the site. The cause of the accident was unclear but the bus appeared to have hit a highway barrier

either before or after it caught fire, Bulgarian officials said. The accident happened on Struma highway about 30 km (19 miles) west of Sofia around 2 a.m. (0000 GMT), they said. The coach party had been returning to Skopje, capital of North Macedonia, after a weekend holiday trip to Istanbul, a trip of about 800 km (500 miles). Bulgarian investigative service chief Borislav Sarafov said four buses from a North Macedonian travel agency

had entered Bulgaria late on Monday from Turkey. "Human error by the driver or a technical malfunction are the two initial versions for the accident," Sarafov said. Television footage showed the bus standing upright but charred and gutted by fire in the middle of the highway, which was wet from rain. "This is a huge tragedy," North Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev told reporters in Sofia and expressed his condolences to relatives of the victims.

Uzbekistan, GB plan to expand trade co-op

TASHKENT: The Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sardor Umurzakov met with the British Trade Commissioner for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Consul General of Great Britain in Istanbul Kenan Poleo. During the meeting, a wide range of issues of Uzbek-British cooperation were considered. The active dynamics of expanding partnership in the political, investment, trade and economic spheres was noted. This is evidenced, in particular, by the receipt by Uzbekistan of the beneficiary status of the Extended Scheme of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP EF) of Great Britain. It was noted that this step will make a significant contribution to the diversification and development of economic and trade relations between the two states. During the dialogue, the parties indicated their mutual readiness to implement practical measures for the effective implementation of the preferential status of the GSP EF beneficiary. — News Desk

Ethiopia PM vows to lead army

AGENCIES

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has vowed to head to the war front to lead soldiers battling rebels, as the year-long Tigray conflict moves closer to the capital Addis Ababa. "Starting tomorrow, I will mobilise to the front to lead the defence forces," Abiy, winner of the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize, said in a statement posted on Twitter on Monday. "Those who want to be among the Ethiopian children who will be hailed by history, rise up for your country today. Let's meet at the front." Abiy's statement came as the Tigray People's Liberation Front (or TPLF) rebel group continued to press towards Addis Ababa, claiming control of the town of Shewa Robit, just 220 kilometres northeast of the capital by road. In response, the spokesman for the Tigray forces Getachew Reda tweeted that "our forces won't relent on their inexorable advance towards bringing (Abiy's) chokehold on our people to an end." Abiy's comments came after the ruling Prosperity Party's executive committee met to discuss the war, which has dragged on for a year.

Bangladesh asked to halt Rohingya relocation

NEWS DESK

DHAKA: A global human rights watchdog on Tuesday urged Bangladesh to halt the relocation of Rohingya refugees to the remote island of Bhasan Char until "freedom of movement, informed consent and other rights of Rohingya refugees are protected." In a statement, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) said the relocation contravenes the October agreement between the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Bangladesh government that established a framework for UN support for refugee operations on Bhasan Char. "Bangladesh's October agreement with the UN doesn't provide a free ticket to forcibly relocate Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char," said Bill Frelick, refugee and migrant rights director at the HRW. According to the New York-based non-profit, Bangladesh authorities have already moved nearly 20,000 Rohingya refugees to the remote, flood-prone island, claiming that the relocations were necessary to ease the overcrowding in the Cox's Bazar camps. "Many refugees were transferred to the island without full, informed consent, and have been prevented from returning to the mainland," it alleged.

Eurozone business recovery again gains pace

BRUSSELS: The recovery of the eurozone economy is again gaining pace after dipping last month, a closely watched survey said on Tuesday. The IHS Markit purchasing managers' index (PMI), which measures corporate confidence, rose to 55.8 in November after dropping to 54.2 in October. This is good news for job creation as the single currency area recovers from the lingering damage of the coronavirus pandemic and global supply chain disruption. But it comes along with increasing inflationary pressures, with prices and wages rising more steeply. Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit said: "A stronger expansion of business activity in November defied economists' expectations of a slowdown." But this is "unlikely to prevent the eurozone from suffering slower growth in the fourth quarter, especially as rising virus cases look set to cause renewed disruptions to the economy in December." Economist Rory Fennessy of Oxford Economics agreed that the uptick in the PMI was a surprise, and seemed mainly driven by growth in services. — APP

Rakesh Tikait: Man who made Modi bend

The farmers had been protesting for months, fearful that the laws would loosen rules around sale, pricing and storage of farm produce and lead to the entry of private buyers

RUBEN BANERJEE

TRACING the journey of an impressive farmer leader, who once was employed as a lowly police constable in Delhi. In hindsight, his tears did the trick. On a cold wintry night last January, Rakesh Tikait sobbed uncontrollably. He said he wouldn't leave the farmers' protests at Ghazipur, on the outskirts of Delhi, until three farm laws enacted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government were repealed. The farmers had been protesting for months, fearful that the laws would loosen rules around sale, pricing and storage of farm produce and lead to the entry of private buyers. But that eventful night, barely 48 hours after some unruly farmers had gone on a rampage with their tractors in the capital city, the protests nearly unravelled. Public sympathy for the agitation in the wake of

violence had greatly dissipated. The police were all set to move in and forcibly disperse the protesters. That's when Tikait broke down. Tikait's tears, which were broadcast on television, helped turn the tide. As video clips of him weeping were widely shared, many farmers who had been trickling back home returned to the protests in large numbers. This forced the police to retreat. The protests survived and gathered in strength over a period of months, ultimately resulting in a rare success last week in which Modi capitulated. The prime minister, despite rarely bowing to public pressure, announced the repeal of the laws. Because of their scale and tenacity, the farmers' protests raged across several states have been in the headlines for nearly a year. But appearing alongside these headlines has been the portly 53-year-old Tikait. Though dozens of farmers' groups



coalesced under the umbrella group Kisan Samyukta Morcha, Tikait has been the most visible face of the protests. As spokesman of one of the biggest farmer groups, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), Tikait, who speaks in a rustic rural dialect, has proven to be both charismatic and influential. Following last week's victory, his stature has grown even more. In a country where opposition leaders have struggled to stand up to the hugely popular Modi - a man often

accused by detractors of being autocratic - Tikait's feat has been remarkable. In all likelihood, the farmers' victory will galvanise the dispirited opposition ranks and reignite people's faith in the power of democratic protests, which had been all but delegitimised by the current government with its brute parliamentary majority. That Tikait helped guide the farmers to this victory also has profound personal significance. He has lived up to his pedigree.

His late father, Mahendra Singh Tikait, was one of the country's most prominent farmers' leaders. In 1988 he brought Delhi to a virtual standstill by mobilising tens of thousands of farmers to demand better prices for their sugarcane crops. The elder Tikait passed away in 2011 and many believed that the family that traditionally headed a powerful clan of locals from across numerous villages have ceased to enjoy enormous clout. Doubts over the Tikait's swelled when Rakesh Tikait ran for election in his home state of Uttar Pradesh and came in an embarrassing sixth place. The family's reputation was also sullied when Rakesh and his siblings were accused of complicity in the communal riots of 2013 in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh. That conflict claimed around 60 lives, mostly Muslims. Police cases were registered against Tikait, whom it was alleged worked in tandem

with Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party to foment tension and polarise voters along religious lines with a view to consolidate Hindu votes. But all that is forgotten now, and Tikait - once employed as a lowly police constable in Delhi - has emerged as an impressive leader. Elections in the bellwether state of Uttar Pradesh are due early next year along with several other states, such as Punjab. Political leaders - particularly those aligned against Modi - are competing to have Tikait on their side. Farmers make up 58 percent of India's electorate, and their support is critical. Historically, they do not vote as a bloc and are instead divided by caste, religion and other factors. But now they are united by the farmers' agitation, and they could swing the results. Tikait is certainly an important key to secure their backing.

— Courtesy: TRT World

Briefs

WHO fears 700,000 more Covid deaths in Europe

COPENHAGEN: Europe remains "in the firm grip" of Covid and the death toll on the continent could top 2.2 million this winter if current trends continue, the World Health Organization said Tuesday. Some 700,000 could die in the coming months, the WHO said, as cases creep up across Europe, prompting some countries to reimpose tough restrictions. The WHO expects "high or extreme stress in intensive care units (ICUs) in 49 out of 53 countries between now and March 1, 2022". "Cumulative reported deaths are projected to reach over 2.2 million by spring next year," it added, up from the current 1.5 million. Covid-19 is the leading cause of death across Europe and Central Asia, the WHO reported, citing figures from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. The rise in Europe was being driven by a combination of the highly-contagious Delta variant, insufficient vaccination coverage and the easing of measures such as mask wearing and physical distancing, it said. According to WHO data, Covid-related deaths increased last week to nearly 4,200 a day, doubling from 2,100 deaths a day at the end of September. The WHO also said evidence was growing that vaccine-induced protection against infection and mild disease was declining. — APP

India announces bill to ban digital currencies

NEW DELHI: India's government will introduce a bill to ban private cryptocurrencies and create a framework for a central bank-backed digital money, parliament said in a shock announcement late Tuesday. The proposed bill "seeks to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India", the Lok Sabha said, and comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned last week that Bitcoin presents a risk to younger generations and could "spoil our youths" if it ends up "in the wrong hands". It is the latest such move by a major emerging economy, after China declared all cryptocurrency transactions illegal in September. India's cryptocurrency market has boomed since the country's Supreme Court overturned a previous ban in April last year, growing more than 600 percent over the past year according to research by Chainalysis. Between 15 and 100 million people in Asia's third-largest economy are estimated to own cryptocurrencies, with total holdings in the billions of dollars. Their investments will now face an uncertain future. India's central bank announced in June that it is working to introduce its own digital currency by the end of the year, while warning it has "serious concerns" about private cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Ethereum and others. — APP

EU ambassador commends pro-active efforts of EFP-EC

During her visit to the EFP-EC, Ambassador Kaminara specifically focused on the EU GSP Plus significance and appreciated that EFP, as a constituent of ILO, is portraying the soft image of Pakistan

DNA

KARACHI: Ambassador of the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan, Ms. Androulla Kaminara, has said that the pro-active efforts of private sector representative organizations are important in ensuring a sustainable presence in the global market as well as taking maximum advantage of the trade facilitation accorded by regional blocs or by individual countries. The positive initiatives undertaken by the Economic Council of Employers Federation of Pakistan are a step in the right direction and are commendable. During her visit to the EFP-EC, the EU Ambassador specifically focused on the EU GSP Plus significance and appreciated that EFP, as a constituent of ILO, is portraying the soft image of Pakistan and the endeavors of those Pakistani exporters who are seriously complying with ILO Labor Standards. She particularly lauded the pragmatic initiatives that EFP-EC has taken regarding GSP Plus, Minerals to Chemicals, Look

Africa, Electricity Markets, Tourism, and Women Empowerment. Moreover, she also responded favorably to the fact that the UN Global Compact Network Pakistan is under the umbrella of EFP. The senior EU diplomat advised that it must be incumbent upon EFP, since it has the mandate of Human Resources also, to sensitize private sector as well as workers and government to accord serious consideration to eliminate child labor, to set up a mechanism to ensure labor inspection, and to enable workers to form unions under the Freedom of Association Convention of ILO. It is primarily the responsibility of employers to have a positive outlook and she assured that such efforts would help Pakistan in presenting the case for grant of the next EU GSP Plus status from January 2024. Ambassador Kaminara appreciated the fact that the Research Department of EFP-EC is an all-female department and also complimented the female researchers for preparing excellent presentations on the various initiatives of the Economic Council.

Her Excellency advised the research team to also strive by themselves to assist in up scaling the output and ideas of EFP as these can do wonders for Pakistan at international forums especially with regard to women empowerment and trade and industrial development programs. Earlier, welcoming the EU delegation that also included Daniel Clauss and Husnain If-takhar and also welcoming Ms. Ingrid Christensen, Country Director ILO and Saghir Bukhari, Senior Specialist ILO, Ismail Suttar, President EFP, said that EFP sincerely believes that closer collaboration with European Union is the practical move forward. He added that Pakistan has been subjected to long years of being behind International stakeholders, and it is time EFP works side by side with European Union Delegation and thanked Ambassador Androulla Kaminara for visiting EFP-EC and for her keen interest in EFP. Suttar informed that EU is Pakistan's most important trading partner, accounting for 14.3% of Pakistan's total trade in 2020 and absorbing 28% of Pakistan's to-

tal exports. Pakistani exports to the EU are dominated by textiles and clothing which account for 75.2% of Pakistan's total exports to the EU in 2020. The President listed the projects currently being pursued by the Federation. Furthermore, EFP advocates that it is important for relevant international stakeholders to have further engagement since Pakistan is now in the forefront in the international community. The private sector must align itself with the compliances required within the international trade framework. The EU Ambassador's interest is a stepping stone for further collaboration with EFP. Majyd Aziz, President UN Global Compact Network Pakistan and a Former EFP President, Asif Zuberi, Chairman EFP-EC and Director EFP, Younus Dagher, Senior Advisor and Member EFP-EC, Ms Ingrid Christensen and Saghir Bukhari also dwelt in detail on the various aspects of the ILO Labor Standards, WEBCOP, GSP Plus, Electricity Market, Minerals to Chemicals, SDGs and other relevant subjects.

Pakistan to introduce e-passports next year

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The federal government is set to issue e-passports from next year to facilitate the citizens well-informed sources Tuesday said. The decision was made during a meeting chaired by Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed in Islamabad. The important meeting was attended by the secretary of the interior, chairman NADRA, DG Passport and additional DG FIA. The development is being described as a key move that would help eradicate all the hurdles in the current manual system and assist Pakistanis living abroad process online applications conveniently. Biometric documents will speed up the identification process, simplifying passport control and paving the way for automation of services. It must be noted that a microchip with all biometric information of an individual would be embedded in each e-passport to help authenticate the identity of the traveller. Now, 2 pictures of the passport holder will be displayed on the main page of the new e-passport.



ISLAMABAD Ambassador of Denmark Lise Rosenholm and others taking interest in painting during an exhibition at Satrang Art Gallery at Islamabad Serena Hotel. — DNA

Italy and France to sign new treaty

ROME: French President Emmanuel Macron will visit Rome this week to sign a new treaty with Italy, cementing ties between two founding EU members at a time the bloc is in flux. He is expected to meet with Prime Minister Mario Draghi and President Sergio Mattarella on Thursday before inking the deal the following day. Also on the agenda Friday is a meeting with Pope Francis, coming as the French Catholic Church is embroiled in a child abuse scandal. The two Mediterranean powers bound by historical, cultural and linguistic ties have long been close, with the relationship buttressed in recent decades by their key roles in the European Union and the NATO military alliance. — APP

EU ministers urge UK to end N. Ireland row

WEB DESK

BRUSSELS: EU ministers on Tuesday urged Britain to bury the hatchet over post-Brexit trading arrangements and backed Brussels in its efforts to find a solution to a row over Northern Ireland. "Dear friends in London and Great Britain, please come to your senses," pleaded German European Affairs minister Michael Roth as he arrived in Brussels for talks with his counterparts. "This is not a game.... Dammit, we want to work together in partnership and friendship," he said, adding that obeying the terms of what was agreed in EU-UK post-Brexit arrangements "shouldn't be that difficult". The tough words from one of the EU's most powerful member states indicated that Maros Sefcovic, the EU negotiator in charge of relations with the UK, had the full backing of the European capitals.

US issues biological weapons' danger warning

FOREIGN DESK

GENEVA: The US told the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs on Monday that a global biological weapons threat is real, serious and growing as some states have sophisticated, well-established programs, while non-state actors are acquiring capabilities. US Under Secretary for Arms Control Bonnie

Denise Jenkins said at the opening of the four-day meeting in Geneva that the Biological Weapons Convention is one of the critical international security agreements that guard the threat of weapons of mass destruction. "For the past two decades, efforts to strengthen the Convention have been treading water," said Jenkins. "Useful discussions" at the disarmament office had

led to minor steps at the national level, while states had been unable to agree on more significant action. She said the widespread availability of sophisticated scientific and technological tools and methods is gradually eroding barriers to the development of biological weapons. "While COVID-19 was not the result of a biological weapon, the pandemic is a wake-up call for all of us,"

she said. Jenkins said while there are unprecedented efforts to strengthen international health security, the world needs to address the latest challenge. "To do so, we must strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention," she said. "We must take action to ensure that the Convention can effectively address the challenges we face now and in the future."

Erdogan warns of 'economic war'

ISTANBUL: The Turkish lira plunged to record lows Tuesday after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stuck to his support for interest rate cuts, warning his country was in a "war of economic independence". The Turkish currency exchanged hands at more

than 13 lira to the dollar, a 15 percent fall, before recovering slightly from the historic drop. Turkey is facing the worst currency crisis since August 2018 when the value of the lira hit historic lows during a row with then US president Donald Trump. — Agencies

PM Imran Khan for a strategy to protect cities from pollution

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday directed devising of a comprehensive strategy within the shortest possible time, to protect major cities from pollution. "A sustainable environment protection plan is need of the hour to fight pollution, especially in major cities," Imran

Khan said while chairing a meeting to counter pollution and its impact on health and related issues in the country. For the past fortnight, smog has engulfed large swathes of land in Punjab, mostly due to the burning of stubble, vehicular and smoke from industries and a number of measures. The Prime Minister directed the departments concerned to devise a strategy in coordination with the provincial governments to save the

major cities from pollution, by taking all necessary steps, at the earliest. "In line with our manifesto, clean and pollution-free Pakistan is our top priority, and long term measures should be taken to deal with the climate change-related issues," he said. A statement from the Prime Minister Office said, "we are focused on maximizing green cover of our cities through massive plantation."

NIA continues terrorizing HR defenders

Our organisations condemn the arbitrary use of anti-terrorism law against Mr. Parvez and call for his immediate and unconditional release

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The NIA on Monday arrested Khurram Parvez from his residence Sonwar Srinagar. As per the family sources, the agency raided his home and office and confiscated some of his books, phone and laptop. Mr. Khurram Parvez, is Program Coordinator of the JKCCS (Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society: a Srinagar based organisation that monitors and investigates human right abuses) and the Chairperson of the AFAD (Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances: a consortium of 13 NGOs from 10 Asian countries that campaign against enforced disappearances). On 14 September 2016 Mr. Parvez was stopped from travelling to Geneva to participate in the United Nations Human Rights Council on orders from the Intelligence Bu-

Pakistan condemns arrest of HR activist

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday strongly condemned the arrest of human rights activist Khuram Parvez in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). "Arbitrary arrests of human rights activists on orchestrated charges by Indian occupation forces is clear evidence of New Delhi's state-terrorism and trampling of fundamental human rights in IIOJK," Foreign Office Spokesperson Asim Iftikhar said in a statement issued here. The Spokesperson said that the

reprehensible unwarranted searches by Indian National Investigation Agency at the offices and residence of Khuram Parvez, had also been condemned by international human rights activists and organizations. "The world is aware that it has become increasingly difficult for human rights organizations and activists to continue their work in India and IIOJK due to incessant witch hunt by the Hindutva driven RSS- BJP combine over unfounded and motivated allegations," he added. — APP

reau, and was laterbooked under draconian law. Legal Forum for Kashmir (LFOVK) denounce this abuse of the UAPA and other draconian laws by the

Indian authorities to silence human rights defenders and dissidents under the guise of national security. Almost 2300 people have been arrested in Indian occupied Kashmir

since disputed region's semi-autonomous status was unilaterally revoked by Government of India. Our organisations condemn the arbitrary use of anti-terrorism law against Mr. Parvez and call for his immediate and unconditional release. Additionally, we demand an end to the harassment of human rights defenders, political activists and journalists. The government of India must remove all legal and administrative barriers that impede their legitimate work. We also call on the international community, notably the other members of the United Nations Human Rights Council of which India is currently a member, to insist that India comply with its human rights obligations, including by allowing Indian human rights defenders to freely engage in their work and to enjoy their rights to free expression, peaceful assembly, and association.

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