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Corruption shakes foundation of country: PM Khan

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday said that \$100 billion are laundered from poor countries every year and people like Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari send looted money abroad. Addressing a meeting of federal cabinet, PM Imran said that as per FACTI panel report, which was constituted by UN Secretary General, \$700 billion of poor nation is stacked abroad in tax havens. The premier further said that Asif Zardari, with his wealth accumulated through corruption, buys people as everyone has witnessed what happened in elections of the upper house of the parliament. Imran Khan said that a nation is destroyed when it loses its ability to do justice and a nation which has no moral standing can never do justice. He further said nothing like corruption shakes the foundation of country.

PDM to field JUI-F candidate for Senate Deputy Chairmanship

ISLAMABAD: Opposition alliance Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) has decided to field JUI-F candidate for slot of Senate Deputy Chairman while Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will get post of Opposition leader in the upper house of parliament. A meeting of steering committee was held under the chair of former prime minister Shaukat Khan at his residence. The meeting deliberated on names of candidates for the elections; however an official announcement will be made by PDM head Maulana Fazl-ur Rahman. Earlier, PDM nominated newly elected Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) Senator Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani as joint candidate in the forthcoming Senate chairman election. PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman announced Gilani's candidature for the Senate chairman election after a meeting in Islamabad attended by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Nawaz and other members of the alliance. The PML-N supremo and PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari addressed the gathering via video link.

Yousaf Raza Gilani's victory in Senate elections challenged in IHC

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Member of National Assembly (MNA) Ali Nawaz Aswan on Tuesday challenged the victory of Yousaf Raza Gilani in Senate elections in Islamabad High Court (IHC). The PTI lawmaker filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) through his counsel Adnan Iqbal Advocate to challenge the victory of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) joint candidate Yousaf Raza Gilani in Senate elections on Islamabad seat. It read that Gilani is a convicted person, hence ineligible for the Upper House. It pleaded to nullify the victory notification of Gilani as he committed rigging in Senate polls. The petitioner sought the high court for the annulment of the Senate polls held on March 3. Yousaf Raza Gilani, Ali Haider Gilani and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) have been made parties in the case. A petition had also been filed with the Election Commission of Pakistan seeking the disqualification of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader and former prime minister Yousaf Raza Gilani. Petitioner Pervez Hussain, a citizen, had stated that Yousaf Raza Gilani was allegedly involved in fraud and sought his disqualification under Article 62 and 63 of the Constitution.

Sanjrani to approach all political parties as part of his re-election campaign

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani on Tuesday said that he would approach every political party as part of his re-election campaign. Speaking at a press conference, the Senate Chairman said that regardless of whoever wins the elections the primary focus should remain on strengthening the parliament and democracy. The Senate chairman was flanked by Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser who strongly rejected the opposition's allegations towards the number of votes secured by Prime Minister Imran Khan during the vote of confidence last week. Qaiser pressed that the promotion of democratic norms should not lose moral ground. The speaker further stated that he had constituted a committee comprising members from both the treasury and opposition benches to probe into the unpleasant incidents that took place both inside and outside parliament house during the day of the vote. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Shibli Faraz had announced in a tweet last Thursday, that the re-elections for the Senate chairmanship would be held on March 12, after the completion of the incumbent's Sadiq Sanjrani-tenure of three years.

Cabinet lauds Broadsheet commission chief for declining salary, perks

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Tuesday lauded Chairperson of the Broadsheet Commission Justice (Retd) Sheikh Azmat Saeed's decision to decline a salary and perks offered to him by the government for heading the panel tasked to investigate the Broadsheet saga. The cabinet that met with Prime Minister Imran Khan in the chair took up a 16-point agenda, according to informed sources. The meeting decided to uphold Justice Azmat's decision regarding the salary and perks. The cabinet approved a donation to the Saarc Covid Emergency Fund. It also approved the State Bank of Pakistan's amendment bill and endorsed the government's decision to issue new licences to Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs). Besides, the prime minister was briefed on the Islamabad Metro Bus project as well. The cabinet put on hold the appointment of the member finance of Nepra's appellate tribunal.

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COAS, UK Chief of Defence Staff discuss Afghan peace process

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Defence Staff United Kingdom Army General Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter on Tuesday has called on Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi. According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), matters of mutual interest and the region's overall security situation.

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the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi.

Khalilzad was accompanied by General Austin Miller, commander of the US forces in Afghanistan, and other officials while General Qamar was assisted by DG Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, Pakistan's special envoy on Afghanistan Muhammad Saifullah and PM Special Assistant on National Security Dr Moed Yusuf. Khalilzad's visit, first under the Biden administration, came against the backdrop of desperate attempts by the US to seek a political end to the war in Afghanistan. - News Agency

PM welcomes senator-elect Abdul Qadir into PTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday welcomed senator-elect from Balochistan Muhammad Abdul Qadir into the PTI fold. Abdul Qadir was elected as an independent candidate from Balochistan on March 3 polls. He called on the prime minister today and reposed confidence in his leadership. Defence Minister Pervaiz Khattak and PTI chief organiser Saifullah Nizami were also present in the meeting. Muhammad Abdul Qadir was the independent candidate for the Senate election with the joint support of PTI and the Balochistan Awami Party. - News Agency



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

PPP delegation visits MQM Pakistan Headquarter Seeks support for chairman senate slot



KARACHI: A three member PPP delegation led by Provincial Minister for Information & Local Government Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on Tuesday visited MQM Pakistan Headquarter. Advisor Law & spokesperson for Sindh Government Barrister Murtaza Wahab and former Provincial Minister Shariq Iqbal Memon is also included in the delegation.

MQM's newly elected Senator Faisal Sabzwari and

member Rabita Committee MPA Kanwar Naveed Jameel warmly received the PPP delegation. The meeting which lasted for an hour also attended by Senior Deputy Convener MQM Pakistan Amir Khan Javed Hanif, Rauf Siddiqui and Muhammad Hussain. Later briefing media, Sindh Minister Information Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that on the directives of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, they once again visited MQM Pakistan Headquarter and

requested them for support of Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Chairman Senate slot.

They also congratulated MQM Pakistan for winning two senate seats, the Minister said and added that they were optimistic that their strong case would be placed in the MQM Rabita Committee meeting. Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that Rabita Committee would take decision in the best interest of province and for people of rural and urban Sindh. He said many issue were discussed in detail today, particularly development of urban areas was discussed at length. The Ministers said that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari believed in the vision of development and he (PPP Chairman) had already issued directives to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and his team for development of whole province without any discrimination. - News Agency

Coronavirus kills 54 Pakistanis, infects 1,353 in one day

LAHORE: Pakistan has reported 54 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 592,453. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 13,281 on Tuesday. According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), 1,353 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Sindh remains the worst hit province by the pandemic in terms of cases followed by Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Most num-

bers of casualties have been reported in Punjab. Punjab has decided on Tuesday to establish corona vaccination centres across the province in the second phase of the drive.

Secretary Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Punjab has issued directives for the vaccination centres. The health department has pointed out 104 places with the cooperation of the district authorities in Punjab. The National Command and Operations Centre (NCOC) on Sunday said that the vaccina-

tion drive for people above 60 years old will begin from Wednesday, March 10. "Vaccinations will be done in reverse order by age. This means the oldest person who has registered will be vaccinated first," federal minister Asad Umar said in a statement. In this second phase of inoculation 700,000 senior citizens aged 60 and above will be inoculated. The health authorities in the country had earlier described the pace of getting vaccinated among the focused group of people as slower.

PPP, PML-N practicing dynastic politics: Shibli Faraz

ISLAMABAD: Federal Information Minister Shibli Faraz has said Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Maryam Nawaz are taking the best revenge from democracy. In a series of tweets on Tuesday, while referring to Maryam and Bilawal, said that they first try to impose their children on the national politics of loot and plunder but the nation can no longer be hoodwinked by the political parties practicing dynastic politics.

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Senator Shibli Faraz, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting briefing the media persons about the decisions taken in the Federal Cabinet Meeting.

Newly elected independent Senator Abdul Qadir joins PTI

ISLAMABAD: Newly elected Senator Abdul Qadir, who won election from Balochistan, on Tuesday joined Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). As per details, Abdul Qadir won the Senate elections on March 3 as an independent candidate with the support from Balochistan Awami Party (BAP). He also called on Prime Minister Imran Khan and expressed full confidence in him while the premier welcomed him in the party.

It merits mention that PTI had awarded party ticket to Abdul Qadir for elections of upper house of parliament but

after strong opposition from provincial leadership of the party, PTI took back ticket from him and nominated Zahoor Agha for the Senate election on a general seat. On the other hand, the newly elected members of the Senate will be sworn in on March 12 as the tenure of the retiring senators ends March 11.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has nominated Sadiq Sanjrani as the PTI's candidate for the slot of Senate chairman while opposition's Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) has announced Yousaf Raza Gilani as its joint candidate.

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All limits were crossed to win support for PM in trust vote: Khaqan Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: The PML-N leader and former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Tuesday said that no-confidence motions in the National Assembly and the Punjab Assembly will be for the country and not for power. Talking to newsmen here, Khaqan Abbasi said Prime Minister Imran Khan had warned the opposition in his speech but the National Assembly remained silent. He said, "His own Finance Minister was defeated by Members National Assembly (MNAs). The minister should have quit on moral grounds afterward." "The incumbent regime has done horse-trading in the Senate elections by giving Rs70 crore in Balochistan and Rs35 crore in Sindh. The promise of funds worth Rs50 crore with assembly members is bribery. Institutions played part in 'winning over' the vote of confidence for Imran Khan," - News Agency

After Senate upset, PM pushes for reforms to ensure "transparent" polls

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday told the federal cabinet that he wanted regular updates on mechanisms being developed to ensure overseas Pakistanis can vote, in addition to the use of technology such as electronic voting machines (EVM). The premier made the comments during the beginning of a session of the federal cabinet which was telecast live by state-run broadcasters. "We can't have the kind of elections which have happened in the past," the prime minister said. "We need to use EVM technology for transparent elections and I want regular updates on it," he told his cabinet.

The prime minister said that he wanted to avoid any excuses of "we're not prepared for this technology" when the time came to use EVMs. He stated that elections in Pakistan should be

similar to the US and cited the example of former US president Donald Trump who could not find any evidence of rigging "despite all his efforts". "Frightening report" During the address, PM Imran also mentioned a "frightening report" by the Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity (FACTI) panel. According to the report, every year \$1,000 billion are transferred from poor countries to rich countries and has avenues through money laundering. "Money belonging to poor countries, stolen through corruption, is lying in tax havens." He said that the ruling elites and office holders of such countries have to send the ill-gotten wealth abroad otherwise it becomes noticeable. "They do this by weakening the institutions responsible for monitoring money laundering and illicit financial flows. - News Agency

EVERY MORNING, EARLY MORNING FROM SINDH

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Who will wipe tear soaked face of Sindh?

Strong souls have wills and feeble ones only wishes" is a Chinese proverb which befittingly applies to Sindh of today. Sindh has thousands of feeble sons and daughters who do not tire of making vows to sacrifice their lives for their land but what they chronically lack is a strong will to league en mass into a well-organized political entity to confront the oligarchs who have been picking up at the precious resources of the province at all levels. Sindh groans with every piece of flesh these predators claw out of its bones. The education and the resultant consciousness is the beacon light that guides people to an avowed political goal and along the distance to it, an illuminated path for them to seek change; urge commitment and vision from political leadership for the uplift of their people; prepares the road map for the loftier journey that leads to the realization of cherished dreams and composes an inspirational message that furnishes the music to keep any caravan marching. The foremost target of oligarchs is education or the political consciousness. However, the prophets of change and the martyrs of truth do not look at discouragements, hindrances; they persevere and persist fixing their sight on their noble cause. This distinguishes men of purpose, strong souls, ideological and political crusaders from the weak, purposeless and silent spectators; a loftier purpose from petty desires. The people of Sindh need a new voice today as ever before, a candle to pierce through the thick darkness of disillusionment, a hope to revive their sagging spirit, a beacon light to illuminate their path to reawakening and change. The nationalists squandered the opportunity of shunning their parochial and narrow factional differences to league together to chart out an alternative political course for the people, while the political and bureaucratic mindsets assumed the brutish form of predators trying to devour the last morsel of the flesh of the people during the past many decades shutting their eyes to the thickening dark clouds of misery, poverty, ignorance and disease hovering over this dear land.

The world has undergone a phenomenal change. This change is also apparent everywhere in Pakistan and even in the far undeveloped rural regions of Sindh. People want good schools, functional healthcare centres, social justice, economic equity, rule of law and equality before law. They want freedom from the existing deprivation, poverty and powerlessness, insecurity and oppression. The young work hard, they aspire to live in an honorable livelihood. The rulers have monopolized powers of recruitment using Sindh Public Service Commission as a tool for promoting cronyism, favoritism and corruption. Should the informed citizens of Sindh compromise with the current political, social and economic conditions or is it their duty to strive to establish a progressive and prosperous society on the basis of social democracy, freedom, justice, fra-

ternity and solidarity where the resources of the province should be treated as the sacred trust of the people. Sindh is afflicted by a scourge that has endangered the right of lower and middle class citizens to an honorable living. It deeply and chronically suffers from the unfair and unjust distribution of economic and production resources among the various segments of its populations enhancing the socio-economic disparity. This has rendered voiceless over half of the population and paved the way for the elite to continue to hold the reigns of political power in autocratic regimes. These autocrats indulge with impunity in corruption, loot and plunder and amass enormous wealth which they freely use for the perpetuation of their power. In today's Sindh, no department from top to toe is free from corruption. Both the political and administrative apparatus of the province is involved in plunder. The raids, arrests, and prosecutions by the National Accountability Bureau have failed to stem the endemic corruption and corrupt practices. Over 500 officers from various departments have returned billions in cash, land, and property, and have been silently reappointed to lucrative positions notwithstanding the clear orders of the superior courts.

Quite recently, the NAB and the Anti-Corruption Establishment have arrested, investigated and prosecuted senior officials of corruption, illegal transfer of state lands, embezzlement of funds and wheat stocks. Among them, there are also provincial Secretaries, a District Food Controller who happens to be the husband of a woman MPA was arrested a week ago for embezzlement of wheat stocks of over Rs.930million. A Food Inspector is under trial for pilferage of wheat worth of millions. Over a dozen food mill owners have been prosecuted for misappropriation of wheat stocks in league with Food Controllers and their Inspectors. All this pilferage, smuggling, hoarding, profiteering has been causing shortage of flour in the province and the country. The scourge seems unstoppable unless the laws of prosecution and trial and the anti-graft institutions are further strengthened to get maximum results. Here, we have the Local Council Service officers in the province have been found involved in mass in corruption and pilferage of funds. The political leadership from their respective Corporations, Municipal and Town Committees has been equal partners in these corrupt practices. The development works shown in papers are not reliable on the ground. Hence, we have the existing shamefully dilapidated civic amenities. The current political administration has damaged beyond imagination the administrative structure, education, healthcare and civic amenities in our towns and cities and left the general populace at the mercy of the callous, corrupt and unresponsive officialdom, fending for the security of their life, honour and property.

Desperate but not serious: America today

Not since 1861 has America faced so many simultaneous, daunting challenges and dangers: a raging pandemic; a nation intractably split over almost every issue including a gross disregard for the legitimacy of the past presidential election; the second impeachment trial of an ex-president with death threats directed at senators who would vote to convict; two political parties riven by extreme animosity towards the other; profound divisions within each party; a stumbling economy; growing debt; the threat of domestic right wing white nationalist and extremist violence; the prospect of a power competition against a hostile China and Russia. When war clouds shrouded the continent prior to World War I, officials in Paris and Berlin had drastically different perceptions about conditions in Europe. In Paris' Quai D'Orsay, the situation was viewed as serious but not yet desperate. In Berlin's Reichstag, the perspective was entirely opposite; desperate but not (fully) serious. Both fit the state of affairs in America. How America got here is important in relieving and mitigating the array of crises confronting the nation. Arnold Toynbee and Oswald Spengler would argue about the rise and fall of nations. Perhaps America is facing victim to the iron grip of history. But other explanations are also relevant. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, America's past four presidents played major and often inadvertent roles in determining America's future. Bill Clinton came into office with the best hand dealt to any modern president. The Soviet Union had collapsed. George H.W. Bush smashed Saddam Hussein and put an economic back on the Soviet foreign policy, the decision to expand NATO would ultimately contribute to creating a hostile Russia.

That did not excuse Russian behavior or assume its intentions were benign. But, today, a quarter of a century later, relations with Russia were never more combative. NATO expansion was not the sole cause but was a contributor to this precarious situation. George W. Bush's interventions into Afghanistan to bring Osama bin Laden to justice and then the invasion of Iraq over weapons of mass destruction that did not exist wrought chaos in the region inflaming extremism. Ironically, the method for radicalizing and recruiting hundreds of thousands of converts to Islamist extremism migrated to this country much as the Corona virus did. Right wing white nationalists and extremists coalesced in large num-

bers, in part due to the forty-fifth president's incendiary tweets and actions using terror and violence to disrupt the old order. How widespread and entrenched these American currents to extremism are is unknown. But with law enforcement's declaration that these groups constitute the most dangerous domestic terrorist threat should be taken with the utmost seriousness. Barack Obama's policies towards Afghanistan and Pakistan extended those conflicts. The "strategic pivot" to Asia provoked China and did nothing to correct the mistaken assumption that as China's economy grew, it would become a more pluralistic society. The failure to act once having set "red lines" over Syria's use of chemical weapons hurt American credibility. Last, Donald Trump exacerbated and exploded these fault lines. "America First" policies largely abandoned America's allies, greatly damaging American credibility and eroding its commitments. At home, Trump's disruptive nature, character and conduct played to the worst instincts and flaws in politics and society neutering fact and truth. That nearly three quarters of Republicans believe the election of Joe Biden was stolen and Trump won is not a healthy sign. And the Trump Covid Vaccination plan was practically non-existent.

Trump's election and the debated the January 6th uprising on Capitol Hill widening the already vast divisions in America. Next week's impeachment trial will only deepen these divides as almost equal numbers of Americans will be outraged or pleased over the verdict. Under these circumstances, what can be done? In a perfect world in which civility and common sense to combat the pandemic, revive the economy and eliminate the threat of domestic terror. None of this will happen. Worse, not all international actors will cease and desist actions inimical to American interests. The attack on Pearl Harbour unified America. The current crisis has opposite effects. As Adam Smith opined after the British were defeated at the Battle of Saratoga in 1778 and one of his students lamented, "We are ruined," the great economist responded, "There is a lot of ruin in a nation." Let us hope so.

SYED QAMAR AZEEL RIZVI

Certainly, narratives are used by the states to create an environment in which foreign policy takes place. This is what true about the US foreign policy. Generally believed, be it the Republican Government or the Democratic Government in Washington, the Israeli factor richly dominates the US foreign policy contours. The world already knows that under the Trump era, the core of US foreign policy was tilted towards the Israeli consideration in one way or another. Though US decades' old foreign policy legacy (with no surprise), holds that Israel has been the linchpin of America's Middle East strategy during both the Cold and the post-Cold War era, President Joe Biden, despite a pro-Israel tilt, adopts a cautious approach in his Middle East policy.

Actually, the US wasn't always so close to Israel. For instance, when Israel (along with France and Britain) invaded Egypt in 1956, the United States sided against Israel, pushing the invaders to leave. The US-Israel relationship grew "by leaps and bounds" after 1967, according to Michael Barnett, George Washington University political scientist, owing largely to "a changing US containment and strategic posture." American presidents and strategists envisaged Israel as a useful tool for

SIKANDAR NOORANI

Joe Biden eventually sworn in peacefully as 46th US President amid threats of violent protests from supporters of Trump. Washington remained in a state of lockdown ahead of oath ceremony and someone rightly pointed out that troop's deployment in capital was much larger than Afghanistan and Iraq. Those who believe firmly in strength of US democracy are feeling relieved with departure of Trump. Farewell shots fired by Trump's hawks mostly aimed at China and Iran. Outgoing Secretary of State Mike Pompeo repeatedly provoked Beijing with allegations pointing to Uighur persecution, Covid outbreak conspiracy and Hong Kong affairs. Despite being cautious in diplomatic responses, China never failed in rebutting the false accusations emerging frequently from Trump's aides.

China responded promptly to Trump's farewell shots by sanctioning 28 prominent US citizens, mostly from Trump camp, tagged as 'anti - China politicians'. The list includes firebrand outgoing Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, ex National Security Advisors John Bolton and Robert O'Brien, former White House strategist Stephen Bannon, ex director of trade policy Peter Navarro. This Chinese diplomatic send-off to outgoing Trump' term is clear indicator of Beijing's response strategy against US' rising hawkish manipulations in

SABBAH UDDIN

The world has changed significantly particularly in the last five decades, and it is continuously changing with each passing day. While it has changed many concepts and ideas, it has also transformed the dynamics of conflict between conflicting states. In addition to intensifying interstate rivalry in multiple dimensions, globalization has now restricted space of acceptance for the manifestation of a conventional war. Non-Kinetic overtures particularly the Information War have taken precedence where manipulated facts and distorted data supplied to a targeted nation acts as fuel for destruction. This manipulation of information helps create an atmosphere that pushes decision-makers or residents of even the strongest of countries to take catastrophic decisions in real-time. Such decisions taken under a purposefully created environment devastate domestic stability, generate turmoil, foment trouble, or even bring about violent revolution as a new form of dispensation for the masses. Such information warfare is far above the precept of social media strategies, although it remains one of the strategies used in this non-traditional war.

The programmed distribution of news, analysis, arguments, and appeals are crafted to affect a nation's views, emotions, and behavior. The entire focus remains on the behavior and manipulation of the masses. The decision-makers are carefully lured into making wrong and hasty decisions. Failure to perform constantly in economically difficult times by governments, especially in a country like ours, becomes an invitation by itself to internal or external conflict. Weak internal indicators such as low

BY ALI SUKHANVAR

Somewhere in 2012, I was in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The purpose of being there was to present my paper in a conference organized by the South Asia Youth for Peace and Prosperity Society (SAYPPS). The hosts provided me with accommodation in a very luxurious guest house; someone told me that it was a State Guest House. One day, when I had some spare time late at night, I simply started searching for some Pakistani channels to learn what was happening in my country. No Pakistani channel was available there on the cable network but one; the most 'popular' one. I was really depressed to know that there was no pleasant or encouraging news on that channel. "A son killed his father. A girl had been stoned to death for eloping with her lover. A deadly bomb blast at a shrine.

A milkman was arrested for selling impure milk." That was all in the news; I could no longer waste my time, I switched off the TV. That was the horrifying picture of my Pakistani society, that the channel was showing to the world. That night practically I realized how pivotal role media could play in building or demolishing, rather damaging, the image of a country. Whatever we write, whatever we say does not remain limited just to our own people; it goes all around the world. A few days back when a renowned Pakistani journalist was allegedly kidnapped from a very busy road of

Does Israeli factor still dominate Biden's Mideast policy?

containing Soviet influence in the Middle East, which was significant among Arab states, and used diplomatic and military support to weave Israel firmly into the anti-Soviet bloc. US support for Israel isn't just about strategic calculation and foreign policy interests, or at least not anymore. For a long time, at the very least since the 1980s, it's also been about domestic politics and the way American politicians read American voters.

Congressional votes on issues relating to Israel are famously lopsided. In the decades since, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute has continually flared into conflict, including multistate wars, armed uprisings (intifadas), and the growing role of the non-state actors. A major turning point was the 1967 Six-Day War, which culminated in Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza. In its aftermath, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 242, which called for Israel to withdraw from occupied lands to secure and recognize borders in exchange for peace. And subsequently, it was the Oslo Peace Accord in 1993-5 a milestone, becoming the basis for future diplomacy to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. But unfortunately, both the Oslo Accord and the Quartet peace diplomacy could not achieve their respective objectives. Under the Trump administration, the past four years have radically changed the political land-

scape for Israelis and Palestinians. While the US has always been a huge backer of Israel - peddling the two-state solution line over the years, even as Israel continued to expropriate Palestinian land and build more settlements - Trump took this policy to new heights.

He cut off US aid to the Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank, formally recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and moved the US embassy there from Tel Aviv. Trump refused to condemn settlement building and expansion as illegal - in defiance of international law. He also withdrew funding to the UN refugee agency. President Joe Biden spent thirty-four years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, beginning in 1975. When he was brought on to be Barack Obama's vice president, it was his nominal status as a national security eminence grise that reportedly attracted political neophyte Obama. Secretary of State Tony Blinken insisted in his nomination hearing that this would be a new era. "We'll engage the world not as it was, but as it is." But that's a problem for Biden, whose national security credibility, such as it is, appears more attuned to a world that was. Biden appears to be moderate in his pro-Israeli thinking. It was he who supported the Obama administration stand on the Israeli settlements.

Delicate balancing of ties

regional affairs. Tensions with Iran have seen new vertex especially after high profile assassinations of General Soleimani and nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. Pompeo added fresh fuel to the fire by blaming Iran for providing bases and sanctuaries to Al-Qaeda.

Matter of Iran nuclear deal is also linking red with Russia, China and some of the EU countries endorsing the stance of Tehran. Biden is expected to follow the Democrat tradition of Obama era by adopting flexible stance on nuclear deal, but concerns on growing ties between Iran and China might affect the decision making process. Newly appointed secretary of state Anthony Blinken clearly stated that US embassy would continue to function in Jerusalem. Continuation of Israel appeasing policy simply means continuation of tensions in Middle Eastern region on many accounts. Trump was irrationally loud and unorthodox in diplomatic communications with China whereas a seasoned political leader like Biden would be adopting a softer tone without losing firmness of policies. No major policy change is expected of China as evident from initial statements of new team of Biden. Beijing remains the top priority concern and global challenge for US.

This China centric stiff policy line has multiple implications for entire South Asian and Asia-Pacific regions. Pakistan cannot remain oblivious of these implications as stakes linked with

Afghanistan, IIOJK, Middle East and China need to be guarded through a well thought-out engagement policy. Indo-China standoff at LAC has entered in seventh month with no possibility of solution in near future. Stand-off has roots attached to Indian unilateral conversion of disputed area in Union Territory in 2019. Pakistan and China, immediately warned India on this provocative act.

In post 5 August scenario, Indo-China border disputes in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh have started raging dangerously. While talking about de-escalation at LAC on diplomatic front, India is continuously investing in military buildup against China. There is alarming rise in cease-fire violations against Pakistan at LoC. India under Modi regime is not expected to adopt a rational non-aggressive policy on Kashmir and CPEC. New lines drawn in the region due to commonality of Indo-US objectives in Trump era have brought China, Russia, Iran and Pakistan closer with a reshaped approach. US continuously backing India in military standoff with China. Troubles all along LAC and LOC may hinder smooth acceleration on CPEC. This means Biden administration will continue to weaken the dialogue or ignore New Delhi's aggression and human rights violations in IIOJK. Indian sponsored terrorism in Balochistan is also poised against CPEC. Complications for Pakistan seems multiplying with surging violence in Afghanistan.

The campaign in the shadows

prosperity rate etc. become exploitable and vulnerable fault lines. Although we traditionally remain staunch on India; our neighbor, traditional foe, and the staunch rival in the world, yet there are many others with an active focus on Pakistan. This focus became more visible after Pakistan's nuclearization in 1999. However, the other interested hostile parties also used the Indian context to target Pakistan. Indian mass media, intelligence, and IT experts have already made inroads into the multinational media powerhouses as part of the well-thought-out approach.

Globalizing on success in the IT sector, domestic media, the massive film industry, and extensive foreign outreach, India aggressively propagated anti-Pakistan themes. The Indian efforts as revealed by a recent report published by Eu Disinfo Lab in the UK are just the tip of the iceberg in this regard. While India and other invisible hostile entities continue with their harsh external and internal maneuvers against Pakistan, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in Pakistan could not become more than a media wing for the sifting governments with the least appeal and appetite for its content amongst the masses. It remains fixated with dressing down speeches against opposition parties, issuing political statements to score political mileage, and seems content with its insignificant role. It lacks authority and trustworthiness even at home.

The Ministry could not earn trust and credibility as a reliable source of information, probably, for the reason that it could not explain or address the systemic and institutional failures and poor governance that exacerbate our vulnerabilities. Despite

understanding the concepts around media onslaught, cultural invasion, it is unfortunate that overly personalized political discourse remains the only focus for the ministry while our susceptibilities such as degradation of our ideology, loss of identity, attempts to weaken the inner front through 'Creative Chaos' etc. are least attended by the government. While the civil governments did not do much in this regard, the military in Pakistan understood and tried to remedy this vulnerability in time. It has done appreciably a great deal in this regard, yet the information operation is not a purely military activity though it involves the military.

It involves psychological operations, electronic warfare, and operations security, but it actually pivots around strategic communication with civil society, public diplomacy, and civil affair clusters. It incorporates civil society, corporate leaders, academics, and other influential entities from the society at large. The information operations conducted by the military mainly focus on cyberspace operations, print, and electronic media, or broadcasting of the desired communications through the same mediums. However, the communication done has a visible signature and recognizable identity of its own, thus it appeals to a particular section in society that follows/supports the military. On the other hand, the convergence of effort to defend against the information warfare is mainly from the Ministry of Information and the Military. While Social media and botnets amplify hostile messages or narratives using all elements of information to foment discord and confusion, it is only the military that seems to be fighting against the onslaught through its public relation organization.

Dark side of the brighter face

the federal capital Islamabad, some mediators started pointing their fingers towards the security agencies of Pakistan without any proof and without any investigation. Whosoever was behind this heinous act must be taken to task, but after thorough investigation.

Blaming abruptly simply means the facts; moreover such type of 'blame-game' defames and discredits not only the working of our security agencies but the whole country and the whole nation. Today countless Indians are sarcastically making investigations. Whosoever was behind the security agencies of Pakistan doing when that journalist was being kidnapped from that busy road of the federal capital? It is the professional responsibility of all media men to file their stories after complete investigation and certainly they must provide proofs in support of their investigative reports. Recently another example of this journalistic 'heat and haste' was observed in different analyses based on a news report on the chief of (defunct) Jama'at-ud-Da'wah Hafiz Muhammad Saed. This news-report said that Pakistan had restored the bank accounts of five top leaders of (defunct) Jama'at-ud-Da'wah (JUD), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) Bhuttavi Hafiz Muhammad Saed, Abdul Salam Bhuttavi, Haji M. Ashraf, Yahya Mujahid and Zafar Iqbal.

All of them are UNSC's enlisted terrorists though and currently facing sentences ranging from one to five years in Lahore jail for terror

financing cases filed against them by the Punjab Counter Terrorism Department. The report further revealed that the defunct JUD leaders had appealed to the United Nations for restoring their bank accounts so that they could run their family affairs. The news report further said that these leaders in their request to government of Pakistan had also mentioned about their financial income and sources of earning. The same was forwarded to the UNSC along with their bank account numbers and other related details.

It means that the government of Pakistan simply acted upon the directions given by the United Nations; there was no personal interest or will of the government in restoring their bank accounts. Unfortunately, keeping the facts and figures aside, some Pakistani analysts tried to convince their audience that this restoration of accounts was the result of that 'soft corner' somewhere hidden in the heart of the government of Pakistan. They tried to misguide the world around that this restoration of bank-accounts was independently done by the government of Pakistan. The facts are altogether otherwise; as Pakistan has never encouraged any kind of terrorism as Pakistan itself has been the worst victim of this menace. Restoration of the bank accounts of all these leaders of (defunct) Jama'at-ud-Da'wah (JUD) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) has nothing to do with the 'will and desire' of the government of Pakistan; it was simply done on the direction of UNSC.



KARACHI: Chairman of Karachi Chamber's Provincial & Local Taxes Sub-Committee Tanveer A. Barry presiding over the first meeting of his Sub-Committee at Alwan-e-Tijarat.

Hub Power Holdings Limited ready to explore the Oil and Gas sector in Pakistan!

KARACHI: HubPower Holdings Limited (HPHL), a wholly owned subsidiary of The Hub Power Company Limited (Hubco), together with ENI's local employees (in a 50:50 joint venture), has executed definitive agreements to acquire all the upstream operations in Pakistan of ENI and renewable energy assets owned by ENI in Pakistan. By a global energy company, which has been operating in Pakistan since the year 2000 in the Exploration & Production. Through this transaction, Hubco, which is the first and largest IPP in Pakistan, will diversify its portfolio by entering the Exploration & Petroleum Sector. At the moment, Hubco has a combined installed power generation capacity of nearly 3,000 MW, through its existing power plants and its holdings in Joint Ventures. Additionally, Hubco has a majority stake in 2 more under construction power plants in Thar, with a power generation capacity of 330MW each. The only power producer in Pakistan with investments in projects listed under CPEC, valued at approximately \$4 billion.

Rs9b being spent on gas transmission network's reinforcement in KP

ISLAMABAD: The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) is working on an extensive plan to reinforce its transmission network in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa aimed at reducing Unaccounted For Gas (UFG) losses at an estimated cost of Rs 9 billion. Accordingly, the company has got approved a project from its board of directors and submitted to the Petroleum Division and Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet for extension and rehabilitation of gas network under 14 SMSs (Sales Meter Stations) in the province. "The project will help resolve the issue of widespread gas theft in high UFG areas permanently," a senior official privy to petroleum sector developments told APP. He said the ECC had approved Phase-I of the project amounting to Rs1.945 billion for four SMSs including Shakardara, Chokara, Karak and Hangu. Under the first phase, around 476 kilometers network of different diameter pipelines would be laid to supply gas to 51 villages by installing 19,200 new domestic connections.

OPPO F19 Pro to be launched soon

LAHORE: OPPO is geared up to launch another iconic addition to its F series soon. Teasing the launch on OPPO's official Facebook page, the smartphone is yet another iconic design curated to set a benchmark in the industry. With innovations in the industry, the brand has become the pioneer of state-of-the-art smartphones. F series has always been very popular in Pakistan as it speaks to the youth directly. From its camera features to its slim and sleek design it has it all. With this latest smartphone, users are in for a treat. The highly eminent F series because of its blend of innovative technology, and design has always been a fan favorite among the youngsters in its price segment. With the eye-catching finishes on the F9 Pro or the gradient design of the F11 Pro, the F series has always showcased the trendiest technology to consumers. The upcoming smartphone, OPPO F19 Pro is expected to elevate the F series with its sleek and fashionable design. A few leaks have revealed that the upcoming technological marvel will be in flowing light design equipped with a 3D curved back cover that will redefine the standards of sleek and stylish smartphones.

Govt proposes absolute autonomy for SBP

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has finally agreed to give absolute autonomy to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), freeing it from responsibilities of supporting economic growth and providing budgetary loans to revive the stalled International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, a draft bill reveals. The SBP Amendment Bill, 2021, says that the central bank's primary objective will be domestic price stability. But neither the inflation target has been set in the bill nor does the government introduce any accountability in case the bank fails to ensure price stability. The federal cabinet will take up the SBP Amendment Bill for approval in its meeting on Tuesday (today), which is a pre-condition along with about 30 other conditions to revive the stalled \$6 billion IMF programme. To meet another condition of the IMF, the government will present the finance bill today (Tuesday) in the Senate to withdraw \$0 income tax exemptions. According to

the SBP bill, supporting economic policies has been declared as "tertiary objective" of the central bank, while the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) cannot investigate the SBP governor, deputy governors, its executives and board and committee members. Former officials have also been provided with immunity from NAB and the FIA. But in another major proposal, the Monetary and Fiscal Policies Coordination Board has been proposed to be abolished, with a view to ending "risk of undue political influence over the SBP's monetary policy," according to the finance ministry. The bill also proposes abolition of the SBP's powers to run quasi fiscal operations.

The central bank had sent the first draft bill to the finance ministry in March last year. However, the ministry did not agree and proposed many changes. In April last year, the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases (CCLC) deferred

the approval of the bill due to difference of opinion between the SBP and the finance ministry over the extent of autonomy. The finance ministry has directly sent the draft bill to the federal cabinet for approval, while bypassing the CCLC, requesting the cabinet to waive the CCLC approval requirement due to "urgency" of the matter. Preamble A major change has been proposed in the preamble of the SBP bill. As against its current dual objectives of regulating the monetary and credit system and fostering growth, it has been proposed that domestic price stability will be the primary objective and fostering development and fuller utilisation of the country's productive resources will be tertiary objective. A new clause has been inserted to make "Price Stability" as the primary objective of the SBP. The central bank will have the freedom to determine and implement monetary policy, formulate and implement the exchange rate policy.

USA, UK, China top 3 destinations of Pak exports in 7 months

ISLAMABAD: United States of America (USA) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the seven months of financial year (2020-21), followed by United Kingdom (UK) and China. Total exports to the USA during July-January (2020-21) were recorded at \$268.250 million against the exports of \$244.386 million during July-January (2019-20), showing growth of 9.82 percent, according to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

This was followed by UK, wherein Pakistani exported goods worth \$135.303 million against the exports of \$104.505 million last year, showing increase of 13.02 percent. China was the third top export destination, where Pakistani exported products worth \$102.660 million

during the months under review against the exports of \$106.818 million during last year, showing decline of 3.46 percent, SBP data revealed. Among other countries, Pakistan exports to Germany stood at \$ 873.241 million against \$799.324 million during last year, showing increase of 9.24 percent while the exports to UAE were recorded at \$82.543 million against \$978.474 million last year, the data revealed. During July-January (2020-21), the exports to Holland were recorded at \$617.931 million against \$597.048 million last year, showing increase of 3.31 percent. The exports to Afghanistan stood at \$543.650 million against \$633.121 million. Pakistan's exports to Italy were recorded at \$415.005 million against the exports of

\$463.043 million while the exports to Spain were recorded at \$439.280 million against \$525.942 million last year. Similarly, the exports to France during the months under review were recorded at \$255.567 million against \$257.808 million while the exports to Saudi Arabia stood at \$276.108 million against \$167.320 million. Pakistan exports to Turkey were recorded at \$147.710 million during the current year compared to \$170.734 million last year whereas the exports to Canada stood at \$167.059 million against \$168.951 million, to Poland \$167.320 million, to Pakistan \$157.183 million whereas the exports to Australia stood at \$139.947 million during the current year against \$117.249 million during last year.

ECC to approve hike in OMC's margins

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) is likely to allow interim increase in margins of oil marketing companies (OMCs) by 6.5% on sale of petroleum products. Earlier, the ECC had considered a proposal to hike margins of OMCs. However, it had constituted a committee to analyse and examine the margins historically before taking any decision. The economic decision making body was informed that a study was not conducted by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) as the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) and oil marketing companies were not ready to bear the expenses. In a recent report, the Petroleum Division had informed the ECC that the committee had proposed a hike in margins of OMCs and dealers of petroleum products on interim basis as the study had not been conducted so far. The ECC had approved the last revision in margins of OMCs and dealers on November 6, 2019 that became effective from December 1, 2019. The committee had recommended that the government should give interim relief to the OMCs and dealers till the PIDE study is completed. The study is likely to conclude by June 2021. The committee deliberated and proposed to revise the margins of OMCs and dealers by 6.8% in line with available average correlation (NFNE-Urb) of CPI (Base 2015=16) as published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) for the period October 2019 to September 2020 (12 months). The committee had recommended an increase in margins of petrol and diesel by Rs0.19 per litre from the existing Rs2.81 to Rs3 per litre each for OMCs. It also proposed a hike of Rs0.25 per litre on petrol and Rs0.21 per litre on diesel for dealers to Rs3.95 and Rs3.33 per litre, respectively. The current margin on petrol stands at Rs3.70 and high speed diesel Rs3.12 per litre. These margins have been proposed on interim basis till the completion of the study by PIDE.



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance & Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Sheikh addressing a press briefing at P.D.

Auto industry growing as govt policies promote completion

ISLAMABAD: At a time when economic activities have slowdown in the country, the motor industry has grown and evolved with an influx of new vehicles. The government has granted functional licenses to six new entrants in order to create competition in the automobile sector under the Automotive Development Policy (ADP 2016-21). Market sources informed The Nation that volume of the auto industry is expected to increase in ongoing fiscal year, which would be mainly led by the new entrants, car companies that have come under ADP 2016-21.

They said that production of all models of the cars is showing increase from last several months. Sale and production declined in last year mainly due to the spread of Covid-19. However, auto industry is now on a path of recovery as it will launch the largest number of new cars in a year in 2021. With low interest rates and economic activities, sales of locally assembled cars in first seven months (July to January) of the ongoing financial year rose to 81,569 from 69,189 units in the same period a year ago. "We expect further demand for cars to grow stronger

owing to low interest rates environment and pickup in economic activity," said a new entrant, who asked not to be named. M/s Kia Lucky Motors Pvt Ltd, M/s United Motors (Pvt) Ltd, M/s Regal Automobile Industries Ltd, M/s Foton JW Auto Park (PVT) Ltd, M/s Master Motors Ltd and M/s Hyundai Nishat Motor (Pvt) Ltd were the new entrants under the Auto Policy.

The new entrants as well as old auto companies will launch the largest number of new cars in a year in 2021, which showed that auto industry is recovering in the current year. United Motors unveiled Alvia, Toyota introduced Corolla X, Changan started taking orders for Axiom and Proton presented X70. In addition, new models were launched in February as well which included ZS by Morris Garages (MG), Sorento by Kia Lucky and Sagay Proton. The industry, which is normally dominated by three Japanese brands, is now facing competition from some new entrants mainly from Korea and China. New entrants have introduced their brands in the Pakistani market under the new entrant's policy given in Auto Industry Development Policy (program) 2016-21. One of the new entrants, M/s Kia Lucky Motors Pvt Ltd

had recently claimed to sell more cars than Honda in consecutive months: December 2020 and January 2021. "For two consecutive months, we have sold more cars than Honda. In December and January, our estimates were higher," said Muhammad Faisal, CEO of Kia Lucky Motors. According to the reports, Suzuki sold the largest number of vehicles. Honda sold 1,764 vehicles, including the Civic, Area, and BR-V, in December 2020 and 1,916 in January 2021. This means that KIA's Sportage and hatchback Picanto crossover SUV numbers were more than that, as according to KIA's claim. Meanwhile, official figures in the Ministry of Industries and Production informed The Nation that government had recently announced new Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy, which would create competition among auto sector players besides pollution-free environment. They said that government would be introducing a public-friendly transport system under the EV policy. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed among Daewoo Express Pakistan, Skywell from China and Hitachi ABB Power Grids from Sweden for introducing electric buses in Pakistan.

CPEC helps Pakistan to alleviate poverty: Economists

ISLAMABAD: CPEC has provided Pakistan an excellent opportunity to transform from an Agriculture-based economy to an industrial-based one that can help decreasing poverty to significant level. According to Gwadar Pro, Economists in Pakistan believe that CPEC to provide solid support to the industrial sector to modernize itself and become more efficient and competitive for achieving the desired goals. The various energy projects, coupled with improvements in infrastructure and road networks have already addressed some of the key constraints to growth and for poverty alleviation. Various projects completed under the CPEC have employed more than 100,000 Pakistanis.

Faysal Bank, Akhuwat join hands to promote low-cost housing

KARACHI: Faysal Bank Limited and Akhuwat have come together in a strategic partnership to promote Shari'ah compliant affordable housing, under the Government of Pakistan's low-cost housing finance facility for low-income individuals. The memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by Faysal Bank's Head of Corporate & Investment Banking, Mr. Ali Waqar, and Dr. Amjad Saqib, CEO of Akhuwat. Akhuwat is the world's largest interest-free microfinance organization that constantly works to alleviate poverty and empower socially and economically marginalized communities. As part of the partnership, Akhuwat will assist Faysal Bank in the identification of eligible individuals who desire to obtain the affordable housing facility. In turn, Faysal Bank the fastest growing Islamic and Best Emerging Bank of the country will proceed with the disbursement of affordable housing finance facility to the applicants as recommended by Akhuwat. Faysal Bank is among the earliest banks to have joined hands with Akhuwat, harnessing the power of the partnership of potential clients from across the country who can benefit from the low-cost housing facility within the Shari'ah principles. Expressing his views on this partnership, Mr. Yousaf Hussain, President and CEO of Faysal Bank said, "We are delighted to move forward in our mission to promote financial inclusivity. Through this partnership with Akhuwat, we look forward to uplifting the living standards of underprivileged communities, ensuring the provision of sustainable low-cost housing units to deserving people with low income, while also promoting the overall social and economic growth of the country." Dr. Amjad Saqib, CEO Akhuwat, also added, "This partnership with Faysal Bank has strengthened our efforts to assist deserving families in the country."

CDWP approves six development projects worth Rs52 billion

ISLAMABAD: The Central Development Working Party Meeting (CDWP) Monday approved six development projects at a total estimated cost of Rs52 billion, including four projects related to the restoration and revamping of rivers and nullahs in Karachi. The Central Development Working Party Meeting was chaired by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan. Secretary Planning Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh, senior officials from Planning Commission and federal ministries/divisions also participated in the meeting while representatives from provincial governments participated through video conference.

Projects related to transport & communications and

Committee formed to complete task of enhancing agri credit for farming sector

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh on Monday constituted a 5-member committee to complete the task of enhancing agriculture credit for the farming sector as directed by PM Imran Khan. The five members committee comprises of Secretary Law and Justice Division, Secretary National Food Security and Research (NFS&R), Governor SBP and other senior officials of the relevant institutions and Ministries. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, chaired a meeting on Agriculture Transformation Plan at the Finance Division. The meeting reviewed the progress on the directions of Prime Minister to enhance the progress on the Agriculture credit for the farming sector. The Deputy Governor, SBP made a presentation on the consultative process followed with key stakeholders and detailed pro-

posals to enhance the agriculture credit. It was recommended to make Loan for Agriculture, Commercial & Industrial Purposes (LACIP) Act 1973 more effective by bringing amendments in areas of foreclosure and simultaneously streamlining procedures for swift processing of agriculture loans. It was also emphasized that judges against vacant positions in Banking Courts need to be appointed on priority. Speaking on the occasion, the finance minister urged all concerned to come up with clear action plan along with timelines and responsibility matrix to finalize different proposals presented in the meeting. He constituted a 5-member committee comprising of Secretary Law and Justice Division, Secretary NFS&R, Governor SBP and other senior officials of the relevant institutions and Ministries to complete the task.

Foreigner among two injured in drive by shooting in Lyari

KARACHI: Shooting at a vehicle in Lyari on Tuesday left two persons injured including a foreign national, rescue sources said. The window glasses of the vehicle shattered in the drive by firing near Kamela Stop in Lyari, according to rescue sources. "Foreign national injured in the attack has been affiliated with the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB)," SSP City Sarfaraz Nawaz told reporters in a chat after initial investigation of the incident. "Foreign citizen who was injured in the shooting, was on a visit of the area when two unidentified mobike riders opened fire at their vehicle," the police official said. "The foreigner was injured in the shooting incident, which also shattered glasses of the vehicle," the SSP said. -News Agency

Sindh sets up committee to scrutinize domiciles, PRCs to avoid forgery

KARACHI: The Sindh Government has put together on Tuesday a committee for the scrutiny of credentials as it launches a crackdown against bogus and counterfeit domiciles and permanent residency certificates (PRCs) across province. The additional chief secretary is put in charge of the committee which will verify the domicile and PRC applications and the applicants will have to establish their residence to get it made. -News Agency

Qureshi discusses ways to strengthen bilateral ties in meeting with Egyptian counterpart

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Egyptian counterpart, Sameh Hassan Shoukry, on Wednesday agreed to strengthen ties between Pakistan and Egypt through increased cooperation in trade and other sectors, APP reported. Both foreign ministers discussed matters of mutual interest in a meeting in Cairo, where Qureshi had arrived on Tuesday on a two-day visit.

Qureshi told Shoukry that Pakistan considered Egypt an important country of the Arab world, adding

that both countries enjoyed "historic religious, cultural and brotherly relations", according to the APP. He also informed Shoukry of Prime Minister Imran Khan's policy to enrich economic relations with African countries. Before leaving for Cairo on a two-day visit on Tuesday, Qureshi had said that Egypt was known as the "Africa's gateway".

During Wednesday's meeting, Shoukry also lauded Pakistan's efforts for peace in Afghanistan, while Qureshi told him about India's hostile activities against Pakistan which

the latter said were a "danger for peace and stability of the region". Qureshi thanked Shoukry for the warm welcome he received in Egypt. The foreign minister also extended an invitation to Shoukry to visit Pakistan, which the latter accepted. In a tweet later, Qureshi said that it was a "pleasure" to meet Shoukry and added: "[I] look forward to hosting FM Shoukry in Pakistan".

"The relationship between Pakistan and Egypt is one of mutual trust and cooperation," Qureshi said in his tweet. "FM Shoukry and I discussed ways to grow our ties, with greater people-to-people contact, trade and sustained engagement."

PM Qureshi also met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi on Wednesday and discussed Pakistan's shifting emphasis from geo-politics to geo-economics. The foreign minister also met members of the Egyptian business community during his trip.



The foreign minister also met members of the Egyptian business community during his trip.

Children's attendants suffer as two out of three elevators not functioning at NICH

KARACHI: The two elevators of National Institute of Child Health (NICH) have not been working since three months, causing grave hardships to children and their family members. There are three elevators at NICH to shift critical children out of which two are out of order due to the some technical problems while only one is working properly. The NICH management is unable to get the elevators repaired. The children and their family members are facing great hardships since last three months as two elevator of the six-storey institution is out of order. -News Agency

Agreement signed for restoration of Edulji Dinshaw Building

KARACHI: Abdul Hamid Akhund, Secretary, Endowment Fund Trust for Preservation of the Heritage of Sindh, Hadi Akberali, COO, Amreli Steels Ltd., and Dr Zeyab Setna, Medical Superintendent, Lady Dufferin Hospital, Karachi signed an agreement on Monday for restoration and rehabilitation of historic Edulji Dinshaw Building for protecting its historical and aesthetic characteristics and to ensure its longevity and continued historic/new use. The Edulji Dinshaw Building, located at Lady Dufferin Hospital, Chaud Bhi Street (Princess Street), Karachi, showcases the history of establishment of hospitals exclusively for women and children in Karachi.

Killing spree forces women Afghan journalists to quit

KABUL: The escalating violence seen in Afghanistan in recent months, which claimed the lives of at least four women journalists, has forced more than 300 others to quit their jobs. Last year, there were at least 1,678 women and young girls working in various media outlets across the country, but that number has now dropped to 1,377, according to a recent study by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in Afghanistan.

It indicated a decrease of 18% women journalists and media workers in the war-torn country, a CPJ press release said on Monday. These

findings are based on a survey conducted in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, it said. The survey findings have shown that more than 300 women journalists and media workers have resigned or lost their jobs due to factors such as security threats, in particular, recent targeted killings, media financial problems due to COVID-19 and low pay, the CPJ said.

"The working environment for female journalists has never been close to ideal in Afghanistan, but it has become seriously life-threatening after the recent killings of female journalists," Dunia Ehsas,

a Kabul-based woman journalist, told Anadolu Agency. Unidentified gunmen shot dead three women media workers associated with private TV channel Enekas in the eastern Nangarhar province on March 2 last year. The same media network lost Malaya Mawid in a similar attack last December. Parallel to the stalled peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban in Doha, the country has been witnessing a frightening surge in unclaimed targeted assassinations.

Prominent female columnist Maryam Mehtar told Anadolu Agency that the negative impact of the cli-

mate of fear is far-reaching. Also read A year to Doha accord - Afghan Taliban urge US to 'honour end of bargain' "Recently, I have been self-censoring myself, I have limited my activity even on social media, and I am too frightened to trust anyone," said the seasoned journalist. She added that not everyone has the choice to quit jobs and seek refuge abroad due to financial and other limitations. According to the CPJ study, of the 1,377 women currently working in the media, 321 are journalists and the rest work in other media sectors, such as media production and administration.

It said the situation in the countryside remains the worst. In nine provinces, including Ghor, Nimroz, Sar-e-Pul, Laghman, Parwan, Kapisa, Uruzgan, Maidan Wardak, and Logar, there are no women journalists and only a few female media workers. In five other provinces - Nuristan, Kunar, Paktia, Paktika, and Zabul - there are no women in the media. "The CPJ Afghanistan said the strong presence of women in the country's media is a critical need. Dunia said that the young generation of Afghan professionals will never give up. -News Agency

3-Day expo on livestock being held from 13

HYDERABAD: Sindh Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Engr Abdul Bari Pitafi has announced a 3-days Livestock Expo 2021 at Hyderabad to support and build Live Stock sector on sustainable basis and boost up economy of the province and country. The Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah will inaugurate the Expo on March 13th whereas Chairman Pakistan People's Party Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will be the Chief Guest of concluding ceremony on its last day.

This was announced by Provincial Minister for Livestock and Fisheries while presiding over a meeting at Shehbaz Hall Hyderabad

to review the arrangements of Livestock Expo 2021. This Expo is being organized at Hatari Bypass ground of Hyderabad with the collaboration of Culture, Sports and Agriculture Departments of Sindh Government.

Mr. Pitafi said that agriculture and livestock sectors are the backbone of our agro-based economy but unfortunately these are very much ignored by the policy makers. "PP is the only party which contributed to the development of agriculture and livestock and in this regard like last year the Expo has again been arranged for farmers, growers and agro based tool manu-

facturer from all over the country, and this year we are expecting more visitors and farmers in exhibition" he added. The Minister directed to DHO Hyderabad to chalk out a proper plan to implement SOPs of Covid-19 during the exhibition and said that wearing masks, social distancing and sanitization will be followed by everyone as a mandatory.

He directed the district administration of Hyderabad to ensure that all the arrangements to ensure the security and traffic plan for the livestock exhibition, and also work out the sitting and route arrangements for VIPs. The Commissioner Hyderabad Mohammad Abbas

Baloch, in the meeting, suggested the Provincial Minister to acquire a ground either of this Hatari bypass or somewhere else permanently to arrange these events of public interest. Mr. Pitafi said that he will talk to higher authorities in this regard.

DIG Hyderabad Range Mr. Sharjeel Ahmed Khari said that in the month of February we organized the PDM public gathering and now the Police Department will also make this event successful with regard to its security. The SSP Hyderabad Abdul Salam Shaikh briefed in detail to the Minister about the security arrangement and deployment of police personals

during the exhibition days.

The SSP said that more than 800 police personals will be deployed for security of event and surveillance activities will be started soon at the different checking points of city. Deputy Commissioner Hyderabad Mr. Fud Ghafor Soomro ensured that district administration will provide all municipal facilities at the ground.

The music program will also be planned by Culture and tourism department government of Sindh to entertain the visitors while Sports and youth affairs department will arrange camel and horse race in the event. -News Agency

World women day observed at Sindh varsity

HYDERABAD: A massive rally was taken out at the University of Sindh Jamshoro to mark the International Women's Day and spread awareness of women's rights in society here on Monday. Organized by SU's Institute of Gender Studies (IGS), a gigantic rally was taken out from Fatima Jinnah Girls Gymnasium to Allama I. Kazi chowk which was led by the chancellor of Sindh University Prof. Dr. Muhammad Siddique Kalhoro and the director of Institute of Gender Studies Dr. Misbah Bibi.

Addressing the rally and later talking to the reporters, the vice chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Siddique Kalhoro said that true liberation of women came from their socio-economic and gender emancipation adding that only a yearly day was not enough to mark women's

importance in society. "We will be organizing seminars and symposiums from time to time and invite the female students to lead and participate in poster, essay writing, short story, debate, street theater, and skits based on women empowerment and the prizes would be distributed to those who would excel in these competitions", he said.

He stressed the importance of women handicrafts, women industries and the increasing role of women in the current complex and challenging economic scenario. "For women empowerment, the universities-industries nexus is necessary; we can provide higher education to the women and the industrialists must come forward to create the sources of livelihood for them in order to help them get on their feet", said Dr. Kalhoro. He also spoke on

how the varsity girls could find out their hidden talents by knowing themselves, enhancing skills to tune and shape themselves for a better future. Dr. Kalhoro underlined the need for educating women so that they could play an active role in the development of the country adding that the goals of development could not be achieved without educating & mainstreaming women as equal partners. Taking to the media, the director IGS Dr. Misbah Bibi said that women were equal to men in every way even in the concept of nationhood and any attempt to isolate, degrade, deprive or marginalize them of their rights should be resisted. She said that the laws for betterment and empowerment to women in the country existed but the implementation upon them was yet open to discussion. -News Agency

Annual Charity Golf Tournament held

KARACHI: The sixth edition of Annual Charity Golf Tournament in support of Deaf Reach Schools was held at DHA Golf & Country Club on Sunday. The women's team took off in the tournament to celebrate the women's day. The 18-hole tournament saw the largest number of participants and was planned in the Texas Scramble format with teams of two players to maintain social distancing. KFC was the platinum sponsor. Gold sponsor for the event were Beverly Hills and

Habib Metro Bank. Silver sponsors included EFU Insurance, Falcon-I, Engro Foundation, and NBP Funds.

The overall proceeds from this yearly tournament contribute towards the education and skills training of over 500 needy deaf students. The players and their families along with friends and supporters of Deaf Reach were hosted for a Luncheon and Award Ceremony in the lush gardens of the club. Richard Geary, Deaf Reach Founder, presented trophies

to each winner provided by Gravitas Packaging. This was followed by Abdullah Gossir's tribute to one of the founding members of the Deaf Reach Golf Tournament Committee, the Late Sir Pervez Hanif.

Winners of the sixth Annual Deaf Reach Golf Tournament are: Winner Team Gross (Abdullah Nasir/Shahid Abdullah); Runner up Team Gross (Azhar Abbas/Pervaiz Ahmed); Second Runner up Team (Omair Bayat/Altaf Hashwani). -News Agency

Another Indian soldier commits suicide in JIOJK

SRINAGAR: In India illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, an Indian soldier committed suicide in Kupwara district, today. According to Kashmir Media Service, the soldier, Trived Prakash, committed suicide by shooting himself with his service rifle at an army camp in Kachhal area of the district. The investigation has been started to ascertain the reasons behind the extreme step. The latest incident raised the number of such deaths among Indian troops and police personnel in the occupied territory to 494 since January 2007. Earlier on Thursday, three Indian soldiers, including a lieutenant colonel, committed suicide in a span of 24 hours in the occupied territory. The extreme step taken by Lt. Colonel Sudeep Bhagat and other Indian soldiers in a span of few days shows the increasing level of depression and demoralization in Indian Army. As per Indian Defense Ministry, during last one decade, over 901 Indian Army, 40 Indian Navy and 182 IAF personnel committed suicide. One of the main reasons behind the highest suicide rate in Indian Army is their deployment in conflict zones like JIOJK and North East states. -News Agency

Ehsaas program dedicated to foster women full participation in society: Sania Nishtar

ISLAMABAD: The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Social Protection Dr. Sania Nishtar said Ehsaas programme is dedicated to fostering full participation of women in all walks of life. She shared these remarks while addressing virtual events held worldwide in connection with the International Women Day (IWD). Speaking at key note speakers at the webinars hosted by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Pakistani Embassy in Washington DC, Athens40, World Economic Forum and The Lancet, she said the women

centered post-COVID strategy of Ehsaas was widely lauded internationally.

Dr Sania alongside senior global experts and panelists, reflected on the Ehsaas 50% plus benefits policy for women at each of these virtual webinars. "Women's empowerment is beneficial to Pakistan's society and economy", she commented. Dr. Nishtar was invited to keynote the event that celebrated the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world especially in sustaining food systems and better nutrition, shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. At the World Economic Forum's virtual global event themed, "Women, Leadership and a Pandemic", Dr. Nishtar shared details about the gender responsive post-Covid Ehsaas Strategy in particular, higher stipend amount for girls under Ehsaas' education and nutrition conditional cash transfer programmes. The commemorations of IWD began with the FAO's webinar on, "Food Systems and Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world". -News Agency

Memon elected Vice President of English Speaking Union International

KARACHI: For the first time in over 100 years history of English Speaking Union International that has over 90 chapters in 54 Commonwealth countries, Aziz Memon, President ESU Pakistan, has been elected as Vice President for two years while Jonathan Calland from Chile has been elected as President. The mission of the ESU is to promote international understanding and human achievement through the English language, according to statement issued on Monday. As an independent, non-political body, it operates with the support of many distinguished public figures.

It has played an important part in fostering cultural links between people

of different nationalities and it corporate members support its activities through sponsorship of individual awards and events. The passionate devotion to the cause of ESU has made ESU International to recognize the contributions of Memon. This office is very prestigious and much sought after owing to its connections with the British Royal Family as Princess Anne is the Patron. Memon is a successful Pakistani entrepreneur who specializes in textiles and Chairman of Kings Group of Companies. In June 2020, he was elected as Trustee, The Rotary Foundation for a period of four years. In fact, it has taken 92 years for a Pakistani to acquire a position on The

Rotary Foundation - an achievement that has been widely applauded.

He is Member of International PolioPlus Committee and Chairman of Pakistan National PolioPlus Committee. In addition, he is Chair of the Trust for Malnutrition and Stunted Growth. He has excelled himself in matters of social welfare and he is renowned for his altruistic commitment to myriad social issues. He is deeply committed to eradicating Polio from Pakistan and has been the leading representative of Rotary International in Pakistan. Memon is Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Suriname and President of the United Memon Jamat of Pakistan. -News Agency



HYDERABAD: Members of Indus Congress are block road as they are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, at bypass.