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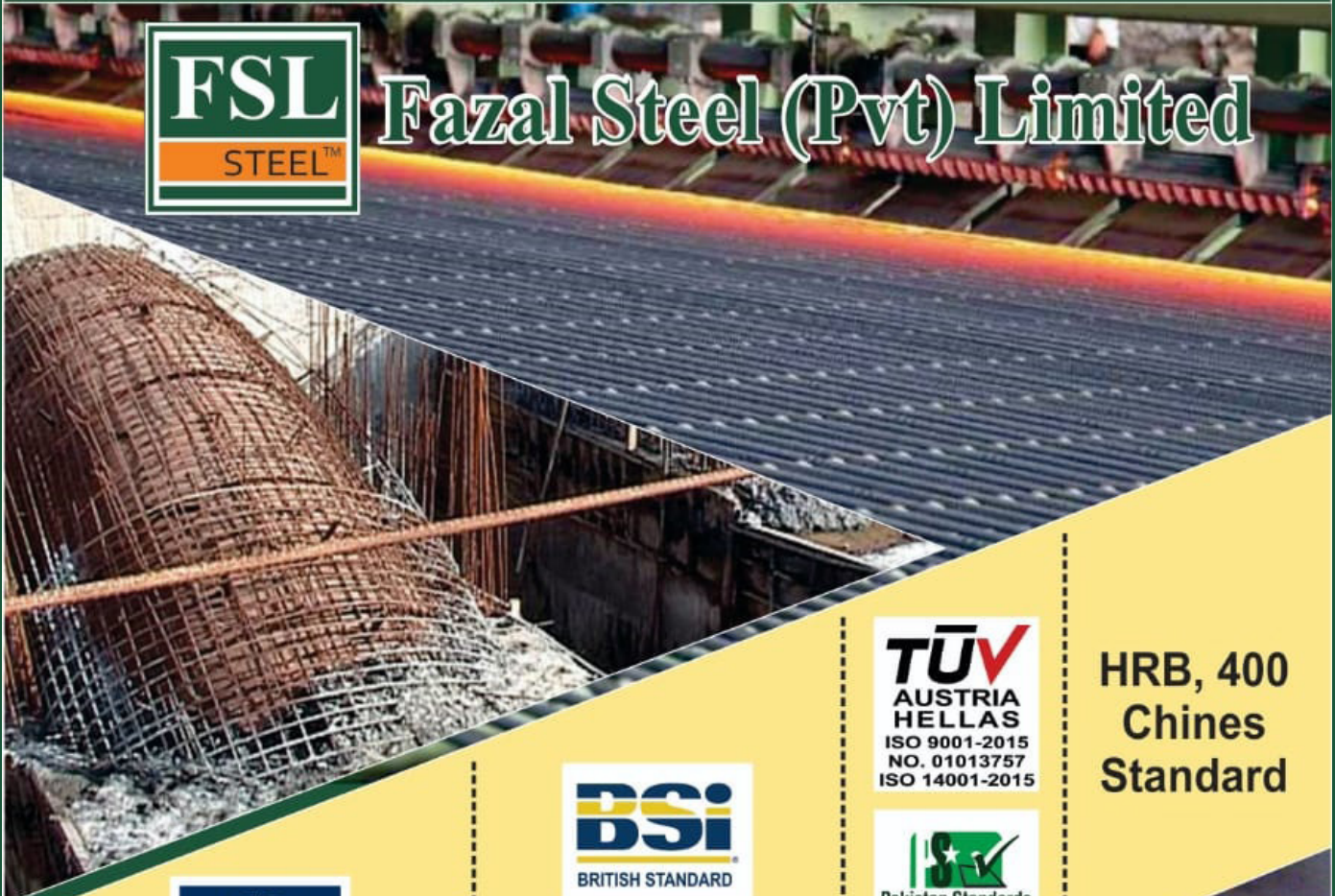
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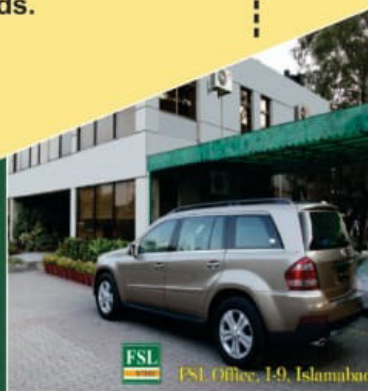
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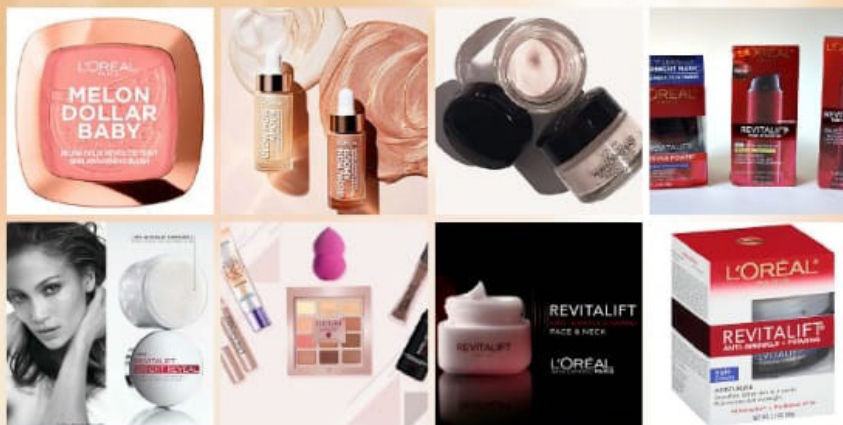


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11 Conferment of Nishan-i-Imtiaz (M) upon Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee

President Dr. Arif Alvi conferred Nishan-i-Imtiaz (M) upon Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Nadeem Raza in a special investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. The President conferred Nishan-i-Imtiaz (M) upon Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Nadeem Raza in recognition of his illustrious services for defence of the country.

14 Prime Minister Imran Khan keynote Speech on World Economic Forum

Recalling that his government had inherited the "worst economic crisis" in the country's history, the premier said he has never had to face the kind of "public attitude" that he encountered in the last one year due to the tough economic decisions taken by the government. "People are hurting."

33 One of the Youngest Business Tycoon of Pakistan Mr. Muhammad Ahmed, President ICCI

Interview of Mr. Muhammad Ahmed, President ICCI to Diplomatic Focus
DF: Being a youngest President of ICCI, which is a great achievement, how do you inspire the youth of Pakistan?
First of all, I would like to thank Allah (SWT) for giving me the honor of becoming the youngest President of ICCI, which has emerged as one of the leading Chambers of the country.

51 Main cause of the Libyan crisis is the hostile foreign interventions," al-Sarraj

With Libya's civil war now in its sixth year, world leaders gathered at a summit in Berlin in an attempt to restore stability and peace to Libya.
The summit was aimed at a stronger commitment from world powers and regional actors to non-interference in the oil-rich North African state and to genuinely support a fragile ceasefire.

66 25th Anniversary of Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan

In 2020, our country celebrates the 25th anniversary of the international recognition of the Neutrality of Turkmenistan, which is certainly a landmark event not only for the Turkmen nation, but for the entire world community.
In this regard, we would like to bring to the attention of our Pakistani friends about what has been significant in the foreign policy of Neutral Turkmenistan recently and about plans for 2020.

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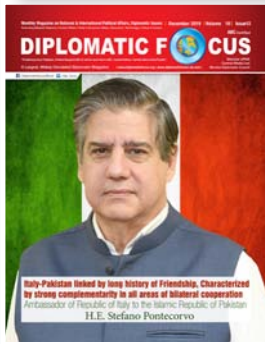
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Mian Fazal Elahi

During his three-day visit, Shah Mehmood Qureshi met with the African country's president, foreign minister, telecommunication and industry ministers.

He stressed the need to improve economic ties between the two countries. The two countries also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at training the diplomats of the two countries. Qureshi reached Kenya to take part in the "Engage Africa" conference as part of the government's policy of economic diplomacy.

The Minister said Advisor on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood will chair the conference and a delegation of about one hundred businessmen from Pakistan will accompany him.

He said important personalities of the business community in African countries have also been invited to the conference with an aim to increase the volume of trade and investment with the African countries.

The Conference participants shall deliberate on ways and means to further strengthen existing relations with African countries and diversify and deepen political, economic, security and socio cultural ties. The Conference will also provide leading manufacturers, exporters and IT organizations the opportunity to brief the Pakistani Envoys on potential goods and services which can be exported to African markets.

Africa is the second largest continent of the world with 20% of the world's landmass and 54 sovereign states, with 1.2 billion people and the largest youth population on the globe. With a collective GDP of over US \$ 2.3 trillion and an import market of around \$500 billion, most countries in Africa are witnessing stable growth.

Due to its rich natural resources and growing middle-class consumer market, the World bank has predicted that most African countries will reach middle income status by 2025. This presents a tremendous opportunity for Pakistani goods and services.

The articles, columns, Opinions are published in Magazine in good faith. However, the contents of these writings may not necessarily match the views of the Editor/Publisher/Organization.

Important Announcement



It has been announced for the general information that Mr. Mian Assad Ullah has been appointed as Editor In Chief of the Monthly "Diplomatic Focus" for the UK/EU Edition. He is entitled to participate official /non-officials diplomatic engagements, events, national days, social evenings/gatherings, press conferences/interviews and can be contacted for all kinds of stuff including articles, supplements and advertisements etc). It is requested to all Diplomatic missions and government high officials of UK, please contact with Mr. Mian Assad Ullah on His mailing address, 4 Ipswich Road, SW17 9RH, London. Cell number: +44-7961005954/ 2087694850, Email: uk.diplomaticfocus@gmail.com, assadmian1@gmail.com

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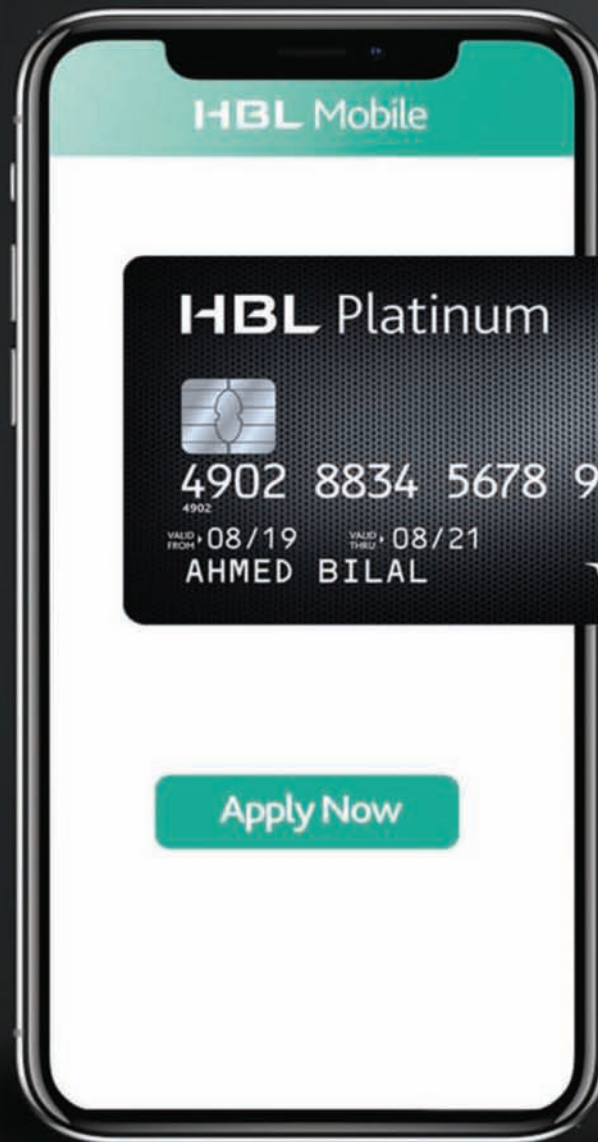


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High Commissioner/Ambassadors-designate of United Kingdom, Tunisia and Iran present their credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi

By Mian Fazal Elahi

High Commissioner/Ambassadors-designate of United Kingdom, Tunisia and Iran presented their credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi in a credentials ceremony at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad. The President felicitated the newly appointed High Commissioner/Ambassadors-designate to Pakistan and hoped that they would

work for further strengthening the existing ties of their respective countries with Pakistan. Among them were Mr. Christian Turner, High Commissioner-designate of United Kingdom, Mr. Borhene El Kamel Ambassador-designate of Tunisia and Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini Ambassador-designate of Iran. Later, the High Commissioner/Ambassadors separately called on the President. Speaking on the occasion, the President said that Pakistan

was desirous of cordial relations with all friendly countries. He stressed that it was incumbent upon the international community to work for the alleviation of the misery that the people of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir were suffering at the hands of the fascist Indian regime. He added that the world peace had been endangered by the reckless and provocative approach adopted by that regime.



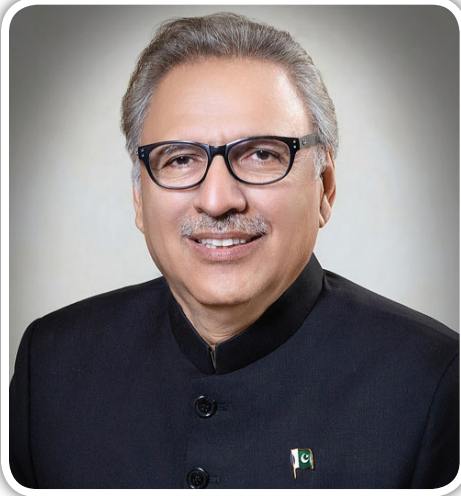
President Dr. Arif Alvi conferring Nishan-i-Imtiaz (M) upon Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Nadeem Raza at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad on January 9, 2020.

Conferment of Nishan-I-Imtiaz (M) upon Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee

President Dr. Arif Alvi conferred Nishan-i-Imtiaz (M) upon Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Nadeem Raza in a special investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. The President conferred

Nishan-i-Imtiaz (M) upon Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Nadeem Raza in recognition of his illustrious services for defence of the country. The special investiture ceremony was attended by Defence Minister

Pervez Khattak, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa NI (M), Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan NI (M) and senior military and civil officers.



BY DR. ARIF ALVI

MUCH of the discourse on 'fake news' conflates three notions. Misinformation which is unintended, or an accidental mistake in narration. Disinformation is fabricated or intentionally modified content to maliciously harm a person. Mal-information is based on reality but is used to inflict harm on a person or to blackmail. I recently visited two institutions in Karachi that are providing much needed service to the poor, the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases and the National Institute of Child Health. There was the usual media talk after the visit, where a reporter asked me what is very clear and audible in unedited video clips that, "In this city there is a huge crisis of (availability of) wheat, who do you think is responsible...?". Because no blame had been appropriated until then my reply was, "I don't know, but I should know." This short interchange was misrepresented by the electronic media stating that the President of Pakistan was totally un-aware of the wheat crisis in the country, though my answer audibly was in specific response to, who was responsible for the crisis. Presented in this way, the news created a deep sense of surprise and resentment in a population suffering from inflation and poverty. The fake angle was created in the morning but by the afternoon almost all channels were eliciting, ridiculing and insulting comments on the President's callousness, being unaware of what is happening to the poor. The way my answer was misquoted, it was now actually rubbing salt in the wounds of those who are going through tough times. The social media time-lines were overflowing with negative responses. Many politicians in their press conferences and talk shows heaped further ridicule on the President for being ignorant and callous. I decided to write a letter to the media, but as I wrote, it dawned on me that this is a far bigger problem than my personal incident. So without trying to blame the channels, their reporters

or their editorial staff, in a society already reeling under the impact of fake or false news, I decided that public debate must be elicited to confront

A conundrum that demands serious discourse in Pakistan

this challenge for to-morrow. Social media with its increasing omni-presence and impact, reports within minutes, television media follows up within hours, and the print press grabs its bite in 24 hours. Television news is married, some may dare to call it 'a marriage made in hell', to the concept of 'breaking news'. There is a race in the market of 'who gets what' first. We do realize that such a 'first', the more shocking the better, provides a competitive edge. However my serious concern is that we should not be 'breaking' people to create breaking news. There are many examples including of fist fights because of such irresponsible reporting. Nobody is perfect, certainly not I, but with the 24 hour presence of political and social personalities in the social and television media, everybody remains under deep scrutiny. That the politicians have opted and chosen a deeper scrutiny is a hazard of their profession, which now appears almost like a perpetual job interview. For the social media surely, Shakespeare wrote 'all the world is a stage'. In real life however, there is also a backstage, people go home where there is privacy to fall back upon, which provides relief from the fixed smile masks and personas carried all day. Not for the players in social and electronic media where the main purpose is to make yourself look good, and for the detractors the purpose seems to be to pick up every wrinkle and flaw, and to illuminate every dark corner of the other's soul. This battle is perpetually on with every post. Casual discussion of morality was not only easy but essential as we formed our adulthood personalities. Today the social glare makes moral living actually very difficult. It seems as there is a moral flattening of the earth, with no room for imperfect and average humans. I hear challenging comment on the dream of the 'State of Madina', where the attitude of some detractors is that 'you must live that perfection' before you are even allowed to dream, and don't you dare talk about it until you have lived it. This leaves little room for us imperfect individuals. Martin Luther's 'I have a dream today' would have been seriously challenged by the media's magnifying glass, focusing on every wart of his life. The white supremacists did try then, but failed. He was human after all, and lived in an age where perfection was not a pre-requisite to dreaming. We are in a state of hyper-awareness and distraction. The media overloads us with more sensory input than mankind has ever had, and where 'important' is overtaken by 'urgent, noisy and petty'. It also destroys our sense of scale. Breaking news shouted into our awareness and conscience, hour upon hour, has been led by an

ecosystem that runs on ratings and exploitation of attention. The commercial package is to get a mass following which becomes a product itself, to be sold to advertisers. The crafters of news therefore, sharpen their instruments daily to win this battle, leaving no room for individuals, who can easily be sacrificed at the altar of 'any news that can grab attention'. In the words of an author these are like 'fire hoses of information and disinformation aimed at our brains' submerging our sense of reality and proportion with no way to calibrate or teach ourselves to separate the banal from the profound. The most viewed programs on the electronic media or posts in the social media are those of most aggressive and unhinged news and views with a responsive din of pros and cons. The major tool for fake news and attacks is 'decontextualization', the specifics of which I suffered from in the incident above and many times in the recent past. To pre-empt 'what aboutism' which is a new word in the current lexicon, let me state that I understand the social media well and have had a good presence in it. I have consoled many that it is a 'chai-khana' where every anonymous passerby from every background, is at liberty to shout profanities. This beast required only a thick skin. But today with the serious possibility of manipulation of our opinions and our decision making by fake news, we as a society are at serious risk of a hybrid war on our collective conscience. We have to develop tools to grapple with it. Responsible journalism should not become a mirror of irresponsible social media like behavior. Fact checking and verification are vital skills in news-rooms. Journalists and editors need these tools in their arsenals to ensure that the news they deliver is fair, unbiased and factual. Rather than go through PEMRA or legal nuances, my intention is to stir a debate, similar to what is taking place the world over, but as this is my precious land and yours the question is, can we lead? This 'social warming' on a human level is like global warming, and is touching our daily lives with an increasing impact. There is a profound echo of every statement and counterstatement, every fact and fiction, every truth and falsehood, every real news and fake news. Ratings on television, numbers of followers on social media, and likes and dislikes, are becoming a measure of man, sometimes leading to serious distress, even suicides in the young throughout the world. Hopefully we humans will evolve to understand, absorb and adjust to this avalanche with the passage of time.

PM Imran highlighted Kashmir and Afghanistan concerns with Trump on sidelines of Davos summit

By Mian Fazal Elahi

US President Donald Trump reiterated his long-standing offer to mediate the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India, during a meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum assembly in Davos, Switzerland.

Trump's offer came during a pre-meeting press briefing featuring the two world leaders, where Trump also called Prime Minister Imran "his friend" and expressed his pleasure over meeting him once more.

The occasion marks the third time the two world leaders have met since the premier assumed office in July 2018. "We're talking about Kashmir [...] if we can help, we certainly will be helping. We've been watching that and following it very, very closely," said Trump.

The premier, in turn, said: "Mr President, it is good to see you again. Yes, there are issues we want to talk about. The main issue is Afghanistan because it concerns the US and Pakistan.

"Fortunately we are on the same page. Both of us are interested in peace there and an orderly transition in Afghanistan with talks with Taliban and the government." He said it is always hoped the US will take part in resolving the issue "because no other country can".

The US president avoided responding concretely to a question by a reporter whether he will "also visit Pakistan" when he makes a trip to India,



Prime Minister Imran Khan meets US President Donald Trump in Davos

instead saying, "Well, we are meeting right now. I wanted to say hello." Trump said that from a relationship standpoint, the US and Pakistan "are getting along very well." "We have never been closer with Pakistan than we are right now."

The meeting comes against the backdrop of Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi's trip to the United States, where he met with his counterpart to defuse regional tensions. The premier left for Davos early on Tuesday to attend the annual meeting. He is accompanied by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Adviser on Commerce Abdul Razaq Dawood, Special Assistant on National Security Moeed Yusuf and Special Assistant on Overseas Pakistanis Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari, while Adviser on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Sheikh and Ambassador at large for Investments Ali Jehangir Siddiqui will join the

delegation in Davos. In Davos, the prime minister will deliver a keynote address at the WEF special session and also interact with corporate leaders at the Pakistan Strategy Dialogue. On the sidelines, Prime Minister Imran will hold bilateral meetings with several world leaders. The premier will also hold meetings with a number of corporate, technology, finance and business representatives of international financial institutions. In addition, he will address senior international media persons and editors during a session with WEF's International Media Council, say official sources. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the forum where political leaders, business executives, heads of international organisations and civil society representatives will "deliberate on contemporary economic, geopolitical, social and environmental issues."





Prime Minister Imran Khan keynote Speech on World Economic Forum

Recalling that his government had inherited the “worst economic crisis” in the country’s history, the premier said he has never had to face the kind of “public attitude” that he encountered in the last one year due to the tough economic decisions taken by the government.

“People are hurting. We have gone through this very tough period,” he told the audience, adding that the economy has now been stabilised. “This year we are looking towards economic growth.”

The premier began his speech by talking about his government’s tree plantation campaign, which he said was expanded across the country after seeing its success in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He said the government aims to plant 10 billion

trees in the next four years to deal with the consequences of climate change. Prime Minister Imran said forestation was crucial because not only is Pakistan vulnerable to global warming but because pollution has become a “silent killer” in cities across the country. Recounting how militancy took root in Pakistan since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the premier said: “You cannot make your economy grow unless and until there is peace and stability.”

He said his government had decided upon coming into power that, “From now onwards, Pakistan will only partner with another country in peace. We will not become part of any other conflict.”

In line with that policy, he said Pakistan has tried to ease tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia as well as Iran and the United States.

In addition, “it is the nearest we are to some sort of a peaceful solution in Afghanistan”, the prime minister said.

He said Pakistan’s top advantage is its youthful population but regretted that “we have neglected this young population because we did not concentrate on skill development [and] equipping them to become entrepreneurs.” He noted that the government has now launched a programme for skills development and made funds available for startups.

Another advantage that Pakistan has is its “untapped” mineral wealth, Prime Minister Imran said, adding that the government’s attention is now on developing these resources.

Talking about Pakistan’s strategic location, the premier highlighted the trade potential among

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

International Media Council on the sidelines of WEF in Davos, the premier said he fears that India might attempt to raise tensions at the border in order to divert attention from domestic protests against two government measures that have been criticised as anti-Muslim.

“You cannot have two nuclear-armed countries even contemplating a conflict,” he said, adding that it is for this reason that the UN and US must take steps. He also demanded that UN observers be allowed along the Line of Control.

The prime minister recalled that he “came across a brick wall” when he reached out to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi after assuming office in 2018, and the relationship deteriorated with India sending fighter jets into Pakistani territory in retaliation for the Pulwama attack in occupied Kashmir.

But “things went from bad to worse” when New Delhi unilaterally annexed occupied Kashmir in August last year, he said, terming the existing state of affairs in India a “disaster” for the people of India and occupied Kashmir.

“I just think that the path which India is going [on] is a disaster for India.”

Prime Minister Imran said the close relationship between India and the US was “understandable” because of the former being a huge market for the latter. But he said his main concern is the “direction” in which India is going and that the sequence of events taking place in India bears “striking resemblance” to Nazi Germany.

Answering a question, the premier said his is probably the first government “that has totally been supported by our military” and that there are no differences between the civilian and military leaderships.

“The reason why the previous clashes used to take place was that [...] the civilian leadership always wanted to control the military because they were scared [and] vulnerable because the military always knew the extent of corruption that was being done.

“My foreign policy which I am following is completely supported by all institutions including the military simply because they believe that we are in the right direction,” the

prime minister added. (Courtesy to Dawn)



the regional countries. “The moment Pakistan and India’s relationship becomes normal and trade starts between the two countries”, immense opportunities for growth will emerge, he said.

Prime Minister Imran said Pakistan has not been able to fulfil its potential because of the way governance deteriorated in the country. “From now on my government’s biggest challenge is how we can improve our state institutions so we can improve our governance so we can tap our potential,” he told the audience.

‘US-Iran war would be a disaster’

During a Q and A session with WEF President Børge Brende following his speech, Prime Minister Imran said the year 2019 was the safest year for Pakistan since the 9/11 attacks and that was reflected in the country’s tourism, which he said doubled between 2018 and 2019.

“Whatever terrorism now comes into Pakistan every now and then is from Afghanistan,” he said, stressing the importance of the Afghan peace process.

In response to a question, he reiterated that a conflict between Iran and the US and its allies will be a “disaster” for Pakistan and the developing world. Prime Minister Imran said he had expressed the same fear during his meeting with US President Donald Trump as well.

When asked by Brende whether Trump had agreed with his concern, the prime minister responded: “He didn’t say anything.”

Prime Minister Imran also highlighted his government’s efforts to synthesise the various education systems that exist in the country, saying the disparity had created “economic differences” among people.

‘No Pakistan-India conflict imminent’

Prime Minister Imran earlier on Wednesday said that although Pakistan and India are currently not close to engaging in an all-out conflict, international powers including the United Nations and United States “must act” to prevent tensions between the two nuclear-armed countries from reaching a point of no return. Speaking during an interview with the



PM Imran meets Azerbaijan, Singapore leaders in Davos

By Bilal Zafar

Prime Minister Imran Khan met his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan on the sidelines of the WEF being held in the Swiss city. The whole spectrum of bilateral relations is discussed that are marked by mutual trust and support.

The Prime Minister appreciated Azerbaijan's valuable contributions including as member of the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir and reiterated Pakistan's support to Azerbaijan on the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh. President Aliyev expressed gratitude for Pakistan's consistent support on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue.

The Prime Minister briefed President Aliyev on the grave and systematic human rights violations in the IOJ&K as well as the devastating impact of the Indian Government's unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019, which were accompanied by an inhumane lockdown which continues to date.

The two sides reiterated mutual support for each other's national causes and resolved to further deepen bilateral relation in all fields.

It was also agreed to maintain frequent bilateral exchanges, including at the highest

level. President Aliyev invited Prime Minister Khan to visit Azerbaijan.

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According to a tweet shared by the PM Office, the two leaders Prime Minister Imran Khan and Prime Minister of Singapore Mr. Lee Hsien Loong discussed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen economic ties between the two countries in the meeting.

The meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Advisor on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Sheikh, Advisor on Commerce Abdul Razaq Dawood, Permanent Representative to UN at Geneva Ambassador Khalil Hashmi and senior officials.



Prime Minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan H.E. Imran Khan meeting with High Dignitaries



Prime Minister Imran Khan meets Executive Chairman of World Economic Forum (WEF) Prof. Dr. Klaus Schwab at WEF Congress Centre in Davos



Mr. Seth Berkley, CEO Global Vaccine Alliance (Gavi) called on Prime Minister Imran Khan on the sidelines of WEF Annual meeting 2020 at Davos



Mr. Joe. Kaeser, CEO of Siemens called on Prime Minister Imran Khan at Davos, on the Sidelines of WEF Annual Meeting 2020.



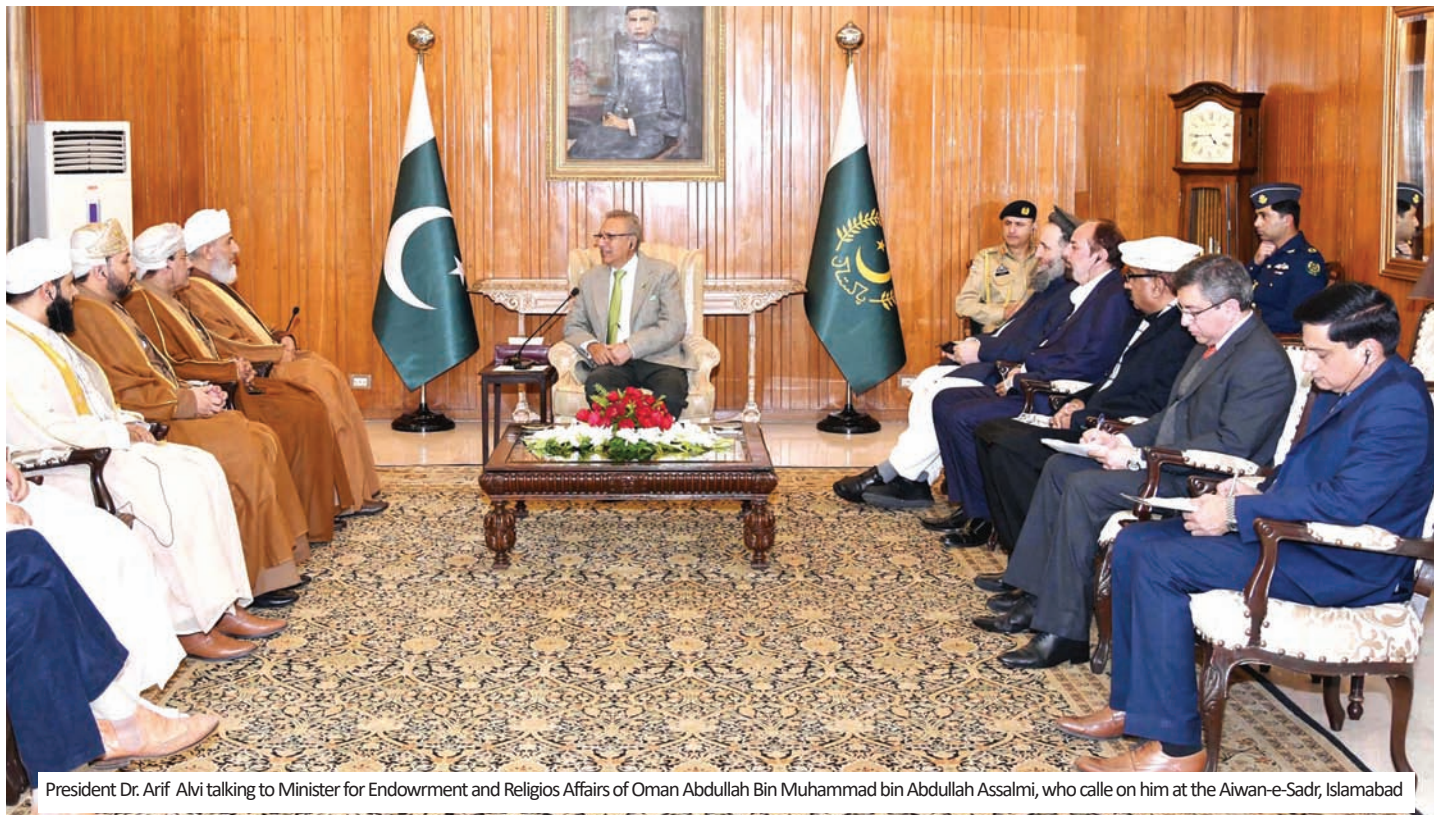
MS. Gun Wærsted, Chairperson Telenor and Mr. Sigve Brekke CEO Telenor called on Prime Minister Imran Khan at Davos, on the sidelines of WEF Annual meeting 2020 at Davos



Mr. Levent Cakiraoglu, CEO Koc Holdings, called on Prime Minister Imran Khan on the sidelines of WEF Annual Meeting 2020 at Davos



President of Asian Development Bank (ADB) Mr. Masatsugu Asakawa called on Prime Minister Imran Khan on the sidelines of WEF Annual Meeting 2020 at Davos



President Dr. Arif Alvi talking to Minister for Endowment and Religious Affairs of Oman Abdullah Bin Muhammad bin Abdullah Assalmi, who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad

Minister for Endowment and Religious affairs Mr. Abdullah calls on President Dr. Arif Alvi

By Staff Reporter

Pakistan attaches immense importance to its fraternal relations with Oman, said President Dr. Arif Alvi, while talking to the Minister for Endowment and Religious Affairs of Oman, Abdullah Bin Muhammad bin Abdullah Assalmi, who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad today. Pakistan's bilateral relations with Oman were deep rooted in common culture, shared history and heritage, he added. He also underlined the need to upgrade bilateral cooperation across all areas of common interest, especially trade and investment. The President emphasized that peace in the region was pivotal for the progress and development of both the countries. He highlighted that Pakistan had been making all possible efforts for the peace and stability in the region. He also appreciated the constructive role Oman had been playing in defusing the regional tension and promoting reconciliation. The President highlighted that Pakistani community had been making valuable contribution to the development of Oman. Moreover, Pakistan could provide both un-skilled and highly professional manpower in various fields including Medicine, Engineering, Information Technology, Accountancy, Education and

Technical workers, he added. He also stressed that relevant departments from both countries should focus on student exchange programmes, joint research projects, split Ph.D. programmes, post-doctorate research and joint seminars. The Minister thanked the President and conveyed the best wishes from the leadership and people of Oman. He also appreciated Pakistani Government's vision for the development of the country and peace in the region.

Prime Minister Imran Khan received Minister for Endowment and Religious Affairs of Oman, Sheikh Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Abdullah Assalmi, today. The Prime Minister extended cordial greetings and best wishes for His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al-Said. Noting the traditionally close fraternal ties between Pakistan and Oman, he expressed the desire to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in all fields. The Prime Minister highlighted the dire human rights and humanitarian situation arising from the inhuman lockdown in IOJ&K for over five months and noted the discriminatory policies of the BJP government against minorities, especially Muslims. He stressed that the international community had to take urgent steps to address this situation. The recent developments in the Middle East

and Gulf region were discussed. Expressing deep concern over the evolving situation, Prime Minister Imran Khan underlined the imperative of avoiding any further escalation. Stressing that war was in nobody's interest, the Prime Minister called for immediate measures for de-escalation. Recalling that Pakistan had suffered greatly due to earlier regional conflicts, the Prime Minister made clear that Pakistan would not be part of any conflict in the region. The Prime Minister also recalled his earlier efforts for facilitation of contacts between the U.S. and Iran as well as Iran and Saudi Arabia for peaceful resolution of differences and disputes. The Prime Minister stressed that Pakistan would always be a partner for peace. In this regard, he said Pakistan would continue to play its role in seeking to defuse tensions, prevent a conflict, and preserve the peace.

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Prime Minister Imran Khan Meeting with Minister for Endowment and Religious Affairs of Oman, Sheikh Abdullah bin Muhammad Bin Abdullah Assalami at Islamabad

Diplomatic Focus Thru Lens



President Dr. Arif Alvi talking to outgoing ambassador of Maldives, Mr. Ahmed Saleem, who paid a farewell call on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, in Islamabad on January 24, 2020.



President Dr. Arif Alvi talking to Ambassador of China to Pakistan, Yao Jing, who called on him at the Alwan-e-sadr in Islamabad on January 17, 2020.



Ambassador Extraordinary And Plenipotentiary Of Yemen To Pakistan, H.E Mohammad Motahar Alashabi called on Minister Of State/Chairman Board Of Investment, Zubair Gilani in Islamabad on January 06, 2020.



Federal minister for education and professional training, Shafqat Mahmood talking with the British high commissioner to Pakistan, H.E Dr Christian Turner who called on him in Islamabad on January 17, 2020.



Saudi Arabian Ambassador, H.E Nawaf bin Said Al Malki called on Abdul Razak Dawood, Advisor to the PM on commerce, Textile, Industries, Production & Investments in Islamabad on January 10, 2020.



H.E Dr. Marc Baret, Ambassador of France to Pakistan called on Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance & Revenue Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in Islamabad on January 14, 2020.



Federal Minister For Law And Justice, Barrister Dr. Muhammad Farogh Nasem held a meeting with Mr. Rafeal Frankel, Facebook's Director Of Policy For Apac Emerging Markets at the Law Ministry, in Islamabad on January 16, 2020.



Ambassador Of The People's Republic Of China To Pakistan, H.E Yao Jing called on Federal Minister For Planning & Development And Special Initiatives, Asad Umar in Islamabad on January 10, 2020.

Diplomatic Focus Thru Lens



Federal Minister for interior Brig (R) Ijaz Ahmad Shah met with Chinese Ambassador H.E. Yao Jing at Ministry of Interior, in Islamabad on January 22nd, 2020.



Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting, Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan in a Meeting with H.E Mr. Marc Baret, Ambassador of France in Islamabad on January 17, 2020.



Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting, Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan in a Meeting with High Commissioner of Canada, Ms Wendy Gilmour in Islamabad on January 17, 2020.



H.e. Mr. Wouter Plomp, Ambassador Of The Kindom Of The Netherlands Accompanied By Mr. Arjen Naut, First Secretary Political Affairs Called On Federal Minister For Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari At Her Office In Islamabad On January 22, 2020.



Malaysian High Commissioner, H.e. Mr. Ikram Bin Mohammad Ibrahim Called On Sardar Ahmad Nawaz Sukhera, Secretry Commerce In Islamabad On January 22,2020.



Federal Minister For Communications Murad Saeed Briefed Ingrid Johansson, Swedish Ambassador To Pakistan About National Road Safety Strategy In His Office, In Islamabad On January 13,2020.



Ms. Zobiaida Jalal, Federal Minister for Defence Production with Oman's Ambassador Sheikh Muhammad bin Umar Al-Marhoon to Condole sad demise of Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said at Oman embassy, in Islamabad on January 22nd,2020.



Federal Minister For Interior Brig (R) Ijaz Ahmad Shah met with British High Commissioner Dr. Christian Turner at Ministry of Interior, in Islamabad on January 22, 2020.



Minister of State of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany Mr. Neils Annen Called on Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser at Islamabad.

Pakistan & Germany relations were based on multifaceted cooperation and shared democratic values

By Mian Fazal Elahi

Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser has said that Pakistan's relations with Germany were based on multifaceted cooperation and shared democratic and human values. He said that both the countries shared perceptions on important international issues and strongly desire to further diversify existing relations through people-to-people contacts and parliamentary cooperation between National Assembly and German Bundestag (Parliament). Speaker Asad Qaiser was talking to German Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mr. Niels Annen and Ambassador of Germany Dr. Bernhard Stephan Schaghrck during a meeting in Islamabad.

The Speaker said that the present Pakistani political hierarchy envisions a qualitative transformation in its relation with Germany for building a broad based, substantive and long term partnership encompassing all areas of mutual cooperation especially parliamentary relations. He appreciated the German leadership's keen interest in expanding and deepening bilateral relations with Pakistan. He acknowledged the generous German assistance for social sector development and during relief/rehabilitation in Pakistan. He also expressed gratitude on Germany's constant support for the wider EU market access and securing trade concession for Pakistan under GSP plus scheme. The Speaker also apprised the German Minister about the ongoing lockdown in occupied Kashmir which had resulted in human

catastrophe. He stressed for international support for settlement of Kashmir dispute in accordance with aspiration of Kashmiri people and international commitments.

The Speaker apprised the German Minister about the ongoing interaction between the Members of the National Assembly of Pakistan and the German Bundestag. He said that Pakistan-Germany Parliamentary Friendship Group had been established in the National

Pakistan Strongly Aspires For Building a Broad Based, Long Term and a Substantive Partnership with Germany: NA Speaker

Assembly with Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, MNA as its convener for carrying out activities of the Friendship Group. The Speaker was of the view that regular interaction between Parliamentarians would further cement bilateral ties between the two friendly countries. He said that Parliamentarians could steer the relations further besides suggesting cooperation at multilateral levels. He apprised the German dignitary about the pro-investment policies of the government besides economic activity generated as result of CPEC project.

Mr. Niels Annen said that Germany also attaches great value to its relations with

Pakistan and needs to further cement them. He said that Pakistan is an important country in region and it was a strong desire of his country to see Pakistan as a prosperous and stable



which was also in the interest of the region and the world. He agreed for enhancing relations between parliaments of both the countries. He assured the Speaker of Germany's continued support and cooperation in diverse fields. He said that Germany believes in settlement of all disputes through negotiation and international commitments and would continue playing its due role in settlement of contentious issues. German Minister appreciated Pakistan's role for peace efforts in Afghanistan. Mr. Niels agreed that Pakistan had immense economic potential and that the German investors were keen for participating in the economic activity in Pakistan.



Minister of State of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany Mr. Neils Annen Called on Chief of Army Staff Gen Bajwa

German Minister of State of Foreign Office Mr. Niels Annen had fruitful meetings with Chief of Army Staff Gen Bajwa & Parliamentary Secretary Andleeb Abbas. During the meeting, he praised the multifaceted German-Pakistani relations & stressed the strategic role of Pakistan in the region

According to Inter-Services public relations (ISPR) wing of the armed forces, matters of mutual interests of the country and regional security were underscored in the meeting.

Furthermore, measures to enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields were discussed.

The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's role for ensuring peace and stability in the region.

German Minister of State of Foreign Office Mr. Niels Annen had fruitful meetings with Parliamentary Secretary Andleeb Abbas



PAKISTAN NAVY SHIPS REINVIGORATING PAKISTAN'S LOOK AFRICA POLICY IN KENYA



By Ubaid Ahmed

Greater collaboration between Pakistan and African countries is accredited with engaging the African countries. Pakistan as of now only has its resident missions in 13 African countries whilst others are engaged and covered through concurrent accreditation. Moreover Pakistan's total trade value with Africa is only 3 billion dollars against the total trade volume of 3 trillion dollars making Pakistan's total trade with African countries to mere 0.3 per cent. Thus in order to further the collaboration between Pakistan and African countries there exist a dire need to engage in addressing common challenges like poverty and illiteracy besides enthralling their cooperation in trade and security.

Pakistan's 'Look Africa' policy is both timely and marvel in its nature for the African economies across the globe are considered as the 'lions on the move'. African continent is a rising market of 1.26 billion people; it is rich in mineral resources and is also an exporter of energy resources. Furthermore, Pakistan has always championed the cause of the African countries at UN and remained in the forefront of peacekeeping missions in Africa. Apart from Africa being a huge potential market for Pakistani goods, the country's geo-strategic location and



PN Ships ASLAT & MOAWIN visit to Kenya - PN Mission Commander Exchanging souvenir with Commander-in-chief Kenya Navy, Major General Levi Franklin Mghalu during Overseas Deployment to African region

connectivity offers opportunity for African goods to reach Central Asia and South Asia. Thus in this milieu Pakistan Navy Ships namely PNS MOAWIN and PNS ASLAT on a support role to further Pakistan's Foreign policy objectives sailed to the shores of the African Continent. The Pakistan Navy Ships with an aim to create goodwill among the residents also established free medical camps during their voyage to the African countries.

The Pakistan Navy Ships' overseas deployment to African continent is also crucial in a way that Pakistan so far has been unfortunate that despite being connected historically and religiously too with many African countries it has negligible trade with them with diplomatic presence to only a few countries. On the contrary India has been assaying to bolster its presence not only in African countries but almost to the whole Western Indian Ocean



Group photo of Kenyan Navy officials onboard Pakistan Navy Ship ASLAT during port call to Mombasa, Kenya



Pakistan Navy Ships ASLAT & MOAWIN Visited Mombasa and established free medical camp for local populace of Kenya during overseas Deployment to African region

Region and the Vanilla Islands. African resources are crucial for the brisk growth of the Asian nations like China and India. In the newly emerging geopolitical equations, these island countries like Madagascar, Mayotte, Reunion and Seychelles are recognising their newfound strategic importance and are therefore looking ahead for forging partnerships with the major powers. This is therefore a high time for the policy makers and foreign office to deliberate and find avenues to integrate trade and commerce ministries to help tap the untapped potential of African countries in their favour.

The Pakistan Navy Ships as part of their overseas deployment to Africa recently visited port Mombasa, Kenya. Pakistan and Kenya maintain and enjoy close and cordial relations which are characterized by a shared sense of history and perceptions on important regional, international and maritime issues. The imprint of this cooperative relationship also transcends down to the cultural,

social and economic fields. Furthermore, the people and government of both countries have been very helpful to each other in the hours of need. Upon arrival at port of Mombasa, visiting Pakistan Navy Ships were extended warm welcome by Kenyan Navy. Mission Commander along with Commanding Officers of Pakistan Navy Ships called on Commander in Chief of Kenyan Navy, County Commissioner of Mombasa and other Kenyan authorities. During engagements both the sides displayed commitment to further enhance brotherly relations and expand bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Pakistan's sacrifices in fight against terrorism and Pakistan Navy's role in ensuring maritime security were also underlined which were duly acknowledged by the host country and the deteriorating situation and human rights violations being committed by Indian Armed Forces against innocent people in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IoK) were also highlighted.

In nutshell the ongoing deployment of Pakistan Navy Ships to Africa is aimed at further strengthening friendly ties with African Countries, extending humanitarian assistance and developing interoperability with the host navies. However, Pakistan can encourage investment in agro-based industry and meat processing units in Africa besides exploring more avenues for cooperation in close coordination with China. There are also prospects for closer defence cooperation with many countries of the region and Pakistan can help meet their defence procurement needs.

"The Writer is an independent researcher and regularly contributes for national dailies. His area of interest includes, Terrorism in regional perspective, nuclear deterrence and Non-proliferation and the Pak-US relationship with special reference to Afghanistan."



A Kenya child is being treated by Pakistan Navy doctor while the visiting PN Ships Established free medical camp for the local populace of Mombasa, Kenya



A Kenya Patient is being treated by Pakistan Navy doctor while the visiting PN Ships Established free medical camp for the local populace of Mombasa, Kenya



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi calls on Sri Lankan PM & Military Heads

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi is on an official visit to Sri Lanka. During the visit, Naval Chief called on Honorable Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksa, Defence Secretary Major General (Retd) Kamal Gunaratne and top military hierarchy.

During separate meetings held with Sri Lankan Prime Minister and Defence Secretary matters related to regional security & stability and mutual interest were discussed. Both the sides acknowledged friendly relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, based on strong historical bonds. The dignitaries highly appreciated the role and contributions of Pakistan in spearheading various initiatives for maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Upon his arrival at Naval, Army & Air Force Headquarters in Colombo, the Admiral was warmly received by respective Services Commanders and presented Guard of Honour at the occasions. The Naval Chief called on Commander of the Navy Vice Admiral Piyal De Silva, Commander of the Army Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva and Commander of the Air Force Air Marshal Sumangala Dias. During the meetings, matters related to maritime security and bilateral defence collaboration were discussed. The Naval Chief emphasized upon Pakistan Navy's focused efforts to combat Maritime terrorism including piracy & drug trafficking etc and various peace initiatives including Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP). The dignitaries appreciated Pakistan Navy's role in support of maritime security and

agreed on further enhancing the interaction in diverse fields of military collaboration. While acknowledging the significance of strong bilateral cooperation in diverse realms, the dignitaries agreed to further enhance mutual interactions in varied military domains.

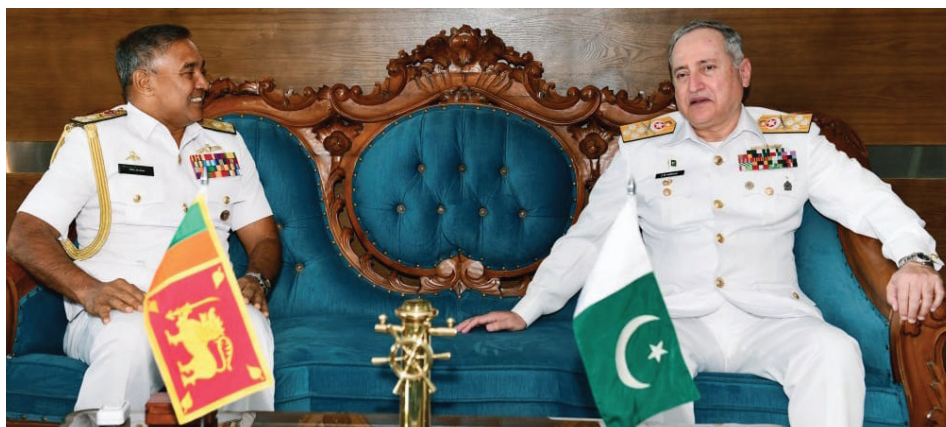
The Admiral also visited Commander Southern Naval Area Rear Admiral Kassapa Paul, Commander Eastern Naval Area Rear Admiral Meril Wickramasinghe and Naval Dockyard where he was given briefings on various aspects of the operational activities of the commands. The Naval Chief lauded the professionalism and commendable work undertaken in various naval areas.

It is expected that current visit of Chief of the Naval Staff would greatly augment the bilateral

cooperation between both the countries in general and the two navies in particular.



Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi exchanging souvenir with Commander of the Sri Lanka Army, Lieutenant General Shavendra Silva during his official visit to Sri Lanka



Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi called on Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, Vice Admiral Piyal De Silva at Naval Headquarters, Colombo during his official visit to Sri Lanka



Naval Diplomacy



Commander Kenya Navy, Major General Levi Franklin Mghalu called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad



Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi presenting souvenir to Ambassador of U.S., H.E. Mr Paul W. Jones at Naval Headquarters Islamabad



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi exchanging views with Ambassador of France, H.E Mr Marc Baret at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi visiting Chinese Navy Ship at Karachi during conduct of exercise Sea Guardians 2020



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi Exchanging views with admiral Nikolay Antolyevich Yevmenov, Commander in Chief Russian Federation Navy at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi interacting with Deputy Commander PLA Southern Theatre Command Vice Admiral Dong Jun onboard Chinese navy ship during of Exercise Sea Guardians 2020



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi exchanging views with Commander Royal Bahrain Naval Force, Rear Admiral M Yusuf Al- Asam at Naval Headquarters Islamabad



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi called on Commander Royal Saudi Naval Forces, Vice Admiral Fahad Bin Abdullah Al-Ghofailly during his official visit to Saudi Arabia



Federal Minister for Defence Production, Ms. Zobiaida Jalal Chairing a meeting at Ministry of Defence Production, Rawalpindi to brief African Ambassadors on products and capabilities of Pakistan's Defence Production Establishments

Pakistan desires to expand defence collaboration with African Countries: Zobiaida Jalal

By Mian Fazal Elahi

The Federal Minister of Defence Production, Ms. Zobiaida Jalal said that Pakistan considers Africa as an important destination for its Defence products and wants to further enhance its relations with them. She said this, on the eve of hosting interactive meeting, organized by Ministry of Defence Production at MoDP Rawalpindi. Ambassadors

of African countries were briefed at MoDP by Director General Defence Export Promotion Organization, about defence products and capabilities of Defence Industries of Pakistan. Ms. Zobiaida Jalal said that, African countries can benefit from the Defence Establishments of Pakistan. African Ambassadors showed keen interest in the Defence products of Pakistan. The envoys thanked the Minister for organizing such an event and providing opportunity to

know about defence production capabilities of Pakistan. The meeting was attended by envoys from 12 African countries i.e. Ambassadors from Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Libya, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia. While Minister, Secretary Defence Production and other high officials of Ministry of Defence Production were also present at the occasion.



Group Photo of African envoys with Ms. Zobiaida Jalal, Federal Minister for Defence Production after the briefing at Ministry of Defence Production at Islamabad.



Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Mr. Nawaf Bin Al-Malki Called on Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser

Pakistan is proud of its all-weather friendship with Saudi Arabia

By M. Bilal Zafar

Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser has said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoy historic friendly relations and Pakistan values high its all-weather friendship with Saudi Arabia. He said that Pakistan wanted to strengthen the bilateral relations through enhanced cooperation in social and economic sectors between two brotherly countries. He expressed these views while talking to the Saudi ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Saad

al-Malki, who met the speaker in Islamabad.

Appreciating Saudi Arabia's role in social economic development of Pakistan, the Speaker said that Saudi Arabia has always provided support for social development in Pakistan and the institutions run in social sector by Saudi Arabia-assistance were playing an important role in the welfare of deprived segments of the society in Pakistan. He also apprised the Ambassador about the Alamabad welfare town to be established in Alamabad, district Swabi to

be established with the cooperation of the Air Force of Pakistan and Social Organizations. He said that Alamabad welfare town would cater food, medical and education facilities besides residence to the orphan, destitute, widows, transgender and other needy people.

The Speaker thanked the Saudi leadership and the people for their warm hospitality during his recent visit to the Saudi Arabia. While recalling his meeting with Khadmain Harmain Sharifain Shah Salman bin Abdul Aziz, applauded the King of Saudi Arabia's comments regarding Pakistan's security and development. He expressed hope that the recent visit of parliamentary delegation would help further strengthen bilateral relations. He emphasized the need for regular contacts between the legislative bodies of the brotherly countries. He said that the contacts between the parliamentarians can play a vital role in strengthening bilateral social and bilateral relations.

Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saad al-Malki has said that Saudi Arabia also considers Pakistan, a sincere friend and a brother and gives immense importance to its brotherly relations with Pakistan. He said the friendship between the two countries is getting stronger with each passing day. He expressed confidence that the recent visit of the Pakistani parliamentary delegation had opened new avenues of co-operation with Saudi Arabia. He said that the trade committees of the Parliament of both the countries could play an important role in promoting bilateral trade. He assured the Speaker National Assembly that Saudi Arabia would continue to cooperate in social sector in Pakistan. He appreciated the role of Pakistani immigrant residing in Saudi Arabia for development of his country.



Pakistan Supports Afghan led and owned peace process: NA Speaker



Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser in a group photo with Afghan delegation at Parliament House on 14.01.2020

Afghan delegation led by Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, Second Deputy Chief Executive of Afghanistan and Head of Hezb-e-Wahadat Mardum-e-Afghanistan called on Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser in Parliament House, this evening.

The delegation comprising sitting and former Members of the Welosi Jirga, Members of the Hezb-e-Wahadat Mardum-e-Afghanistan and Civil Society Representatives is currently visiting Pakistan on the invitation of Lahore Center for Peace Research.

While talking to the delegation, Speaker National Assembly said that Pakistan always desired a peaceful Afghanistan which was not only in its interest but also in the larger interest of the region. He said that both the nations were intertwined in eternal bonds of religion,

culture, history, neighborhood and language. He expressed his satisfaction on the engagement of stakeholders in peace negotiations. He said that Pakistan would always support Afghan led and owned peace process. The Speaker said that both the countries have common threats and challenges and which could be jointly addressed.

Speaker Asad Qaiser said that relations between both the countries could be further consolidated through enhanced interaction between Members of the parliament from both sides. He suggested that Afghanistan's participation in the CPEC could be beneficial for socio-economic development of Afghanistan besides serving as gateway to Central Asia and beyond. He said that rail and road network would be extended up to the border for

facilitating Pak-Afghan Trade.

Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, second Deputy Chief Executive of Afghanistan and Head of Hezb-e-Wahadat Mardum-e-Afghanistan thanked the Speaker for giving them an audience. He said that Pakistan was not only a neighbor of Afghanistan but a dear brother. He said that friends could be chosen by choice but not the neighbors. He said that Afghanistan strongly desires to strengthen its relations with Pakistan. He appreciated the Lahore Institute for peace research for facilitating Intra-Afghan dialogue for bringing peace in the country. He agreed that both the countries could collectively work for the peace and stability in the region. He thanked Pakistan for hosting Afghan people during war in Afghanistan.



Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser in a meeting with Afghan delegation at Parliament House on 14.01.2020



Harry and Meghan are no longer working members of the Royal Family

By **JASON BRESLOW**

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, known more commonly as Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, are no longer working members of the British royal family and will stop receiving public funds for royal duties, Buckingham Palace announced.

The palace also said the couple will stop using their HRH titles shorthand for His/Her Royal Highness and they will be “required to step back from Royal duties, including official military appointments,” according to the palace.

“While they can no longer formally represent The Queen, the Sussexes have made clear that everything they do will continue to uphold the values of Her Majesty,” the palace said.

The new arrangement for Harry, who is sixth in line of succession for the British throne, and Meghan will formally take effect this spring and follows the couple’s announcement earlier this month that they intended to “to step back as ‘senior’ members of the Royal Family.”

“Following many months of conversations and more recent discussions, I am pleased that together we have found a constructive and supportive way forward for my grandson and his family,” Queen Elizabeth II said in a

statement.

The queen said Harry, Meghan and their 8-month-old son, Archie, “will always be much loved members of my family” and expressed her “hope that today’s agreement allows them to start building a happy and peaceful new life.”

Announcement provided new details on what the couple’s new life will look like in their reduced capacity as members of the royal family.

Frogmore Cottage in Windsor, England, will remain the couple’s family home in the United Kingdom, according to the statement, but the palace said they have expressed a wish to repay taxpayers for the cost of refurbishing the home. The BBC pegged that amount at £2.4 million, or roughly \$3.1 million. The couple has said they plan to split their time between the U.K. and North America and to work to become financially independent from the royal family as they move to “carve out a progressive new role within this institution.”

Prior to Saturday’s announcement, little was known about what this new chapter would look like for the two. On Monday, the queen hosted Harry; his father, Prince Charles; and his brother, Prince William, at her Sandringham

estate in Norfolk to discuss the “complex matters” involved in the couple’s desire to step back from official duties.

Among other changes Harry and Meghan have announced in recent days is that they will no longer participate in the royal rota system, which has provided a select pool of U.K. media outlets exclusive access to official engagements of the royal family. The announcement came amid ongoing friction between the couple and members of the media.

In October, Harry released a statement against members of the tabloid press decrying what he called “a ruthless campaign” of “relentless propaganda” against both his wife and newborn son.

“I’ve seen what happens when someone I love is commoditised to the point that they are no longer treated or seen as a real person,” he wrote at the time. “I lost my mother and now I watch my wife falling victim to the same powerful forces.”

In her own statement on Saturday, the queen said she recognized “the challenges” that Harry and Meghan have “experienced as a result of intense scrutiny over the last two years and support their wish for a more independent life.”

U.S. says it won't discuss withdrawing troops from Iraq

Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said he had asked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to send a delegation to Baghdad to prepare for the withdrawal of American troops.

The State Department rebuffed the Iraqi government's request to begin discussions on pulling out troops, saying that any American officials going to Baghdad during a state of heightened tensions would not discuss a "troop withdrawal." Instead, discussions would be about the "appropriate force posture in the Middle East."

The statement from Washington was a direct rejoinder to Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi of Iraq, and was certain to add to the friction between the two nations.

The prime minister said earlier that he had asked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to send a delegation from the United States to discuss steps for the withdrawal of the approximately 5,200 American troops from his country, in the aftermath of a deadly American military strike ordered by President Trump that many Iraqis say violated their country's sovereignty.

"We are happy to continue the conversation with the Iraqis about what the right structure is," Mr. Pompeo said at a news conference after the State Department had made its announcement. He stressed that the mission of the United States in Iraq was to train Iraqi forces to fight the Islamic State, and "we're going to continue that mission."

"But as times change and we get to a place where we can deliver up on what I believe and the president believes is our right structure, with fewer resources dedicated to that mission, we will do so," he added.

Pressed on the issue, Mr. Trump sounded less like his secretary of state and more like he did during the presidential campaign in 2016, when he pledged to withdraw American troops from overseas conflicts.

In an interview on Fox News, the president was asked whether this was an opportunity to bring American troops home from Iraq. "I'm O.K. with it," Mr. Trump said. But the president also said that while Iraqi officials may call for an American withdrawal in public, "They don't say that privately."

Iraqi lawmakers voted on Sunday to expel United States forces after the American drone strike that killed 10 people in a two-car convoy — Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, a top Iranian commander, four of his Iranian aides and five Iraqis, including a senior militia leader, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. The prime minister has not signed the bill yet, but had been criticizing the American troop presence in Iraq since a series of recent actions by the United States military.

The killing caused widespread outrage in Iraq, where neighboring Iran has great influence, and its consequences continue to ripple across the Middle East. Iraqi officials said the United States had violated the sovereignty of their nation, both with that attack and with airstrikes on Dec. 29 on five sites in Iraq and Syria that left at least 25 members of the militia dead and at least 50 wounded. American officials say those strikes were in response to the death of an American interpreter in Iraq in a Dec. 27 rocket attack by the Iran-backed militia led by Mr. al-Muhandis, called Kataib Hezbollah, though the militia denied responsibility.

In a phone call, which Mr. Abdul Mahdi's office said Mr. Pompeo had initiated, the Iraqi prime minister said he had objected to dual violations of his country's sovereignty referring to both the American drone strike of Jan. 3 on a convoy outside Baghdad International Airport, where General Suleimani and his aides had arrived on a flight from Damascus, and retaliatory missile strikes by Iran early Wednesday on bases in Iraq that house American troops. The missiles damaged equipment but caused no deaths or injuries.

"Iraq is keen on keeping the best of relations with its neighbors and its friends in the international community," the prime minister's office said in the statement.

Iraq's priority is to "fight terrorism," according to the statement, including violence from the Islamic State, the Sunni militant group that tore through the region before being routed with support from Iran, notably General Suleimani's elite units, and a coalition of Western forces last year.

The State Department spokeswoman, Morgan Ortagus, released the statement that pushed back against Mr. Abdul Mahdi's request.

"Our military presence in Iraq is to continue the fight against ISIS and as the secretary has said, we are committed to protecting Americans, Iraqis, and our coalition partners," she said. "At this time, any delegation sent to Iraq would be dedicated to discussing how to best recommit to our strategic partnership — not to discuss troop withdrawal, but our right, appropriate force posture in the Middle East."

She added that a delegation from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO, was at the State Department to discuss the alliance's role in Iraq, "in line with the president's desire for burden sharing in all of our collective defense efforts." On Tuesday, NATO said it was withdrawing some trainers from Iraq who had been working with Iraqi soldiers fighting the Islamic State.



By Edward Wong and Megan Specia

Ms. Ortagus said that Mr. Pompeo and Mr. Abdul Mahdi had spoken by telephone. In a brief summary of the call, she said Mr. Pompeo "reiterated the United States' condemnation of the Iranian regime's launch of ballistic missiles into two sites on Wednesday in Iraq that host Iraqi, American and coalition forces working together to defeat ISIS."

Mr. Pompeo stressed that the United States "will do whatever it takes to protect the American and Iraqi people and defend our collective interests," she added.

The summary of the call did not mention the request for a delegation to discuss troop withdrawal.

United States forces have been stationed in Iraq, and to a much lesser degree in eastern Syria, as part of that operation. President George W. Bush ordered an invasion of Iraq in 2003 to topple Saddam Hussein, and the American military has been at war there ever since. Mr. Trump has strongly criticized Mr. Bush's decision to invade Iraq and made campaign promises in 2016 to withdraw troops from the region.

Mr. Trump said he would impose "very big sanctions" on Iraq if it expelled American troops. And since the end of December, he has ordered 4,500 more troops to the Middle East to bolster the 50,000 or so already in the region.

The Iraqi vote to expel the American forces was nonbinding, and nearly half of the members of the parliament — primarily those representing ethnic Kurdish and Sunni Muslim minorities — did not vote. But there was no doubt of Mr. Abdul Mahdi's support for the measure, because he quickly drafted a bill calling for the troops' withdrawal.

In his statement, the Iraqi prime minister said that American forces entering the country and drones flying over Iraq did so "without permission from the Iraqi government."

Edward Wong reported from Washington, and Megan Specia from London. Fahim Hassan contributed reporting from Baghdad

“Let us introduce a dynamic and an ambitious personality who has achieved the corridors of success in a very young age and in no time. In the economic sector, trade and commerce carry a great deal of weight. We need such an energetic human resource like Mr. Ahmed who can devise the pragmatic approach toward economic challenges currently faced by Pakistan. His achievements are enumerable. After being elected as a president for the ICCI, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry he has worked unprecedentedly within a short span of time. One of the biggest achievement by him will be to organize the “All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conclave 2020” on June 20-21, 2020 where 47 Presidents of leading chambers of commerce and industry of the country will be gathered to discuss key issues being faced by the business community of the entire country and give suggestions to the government for resolving them. Previously, no one has tried to address the issues of business community let alone youth unemployment. A graduate from London School of Economics is with diplomatic focus today to tell us how we can tackle with the growing problems of economy, trade, commerce and industry.”

One of the Youngest Business Tycoon of Pakistan Mr. Muhammad Ahmed, President ICCI



interview of Mr. Muhammad Ahmed, President ICCI to Diplomatic Focus

DF: Being a youngest President of ICCI, which is a great achievement, how do you inspire the youth of Pakistan?

First of all, I would like to thank Allah (SWT) for giving me the honor of becoming the youngest President of ICCI, which has emerged as one of the leading Chambers of the country. The business community of Islamabad has posed confidence in me and elected me with highest margin of votes,

which is a great achievement for me. As a young business leader, I convey my message to the youth that they can achieve any milestone and excel in any field with hard work, commitment, dedication and having clear direction and goals to reach their destination. Our young generation has great talent





and abilities, but they need direction to perform with excellence in any profession. Being young President of ICCI, whenever, I go to local universities, colleges and schools, I inspire youth towards

I am working hard with CDA and government authorities for allocation of land in Islamabad for establishment of a new industrial zone in order to promote industrialization in the region and contribute more effectively to enhance country's exports



entrepreneurship by sharing with them the success stories of young and growing businessmen of this region so that they could become job creators instead of job seekers and play more effective role in the economic development of the country.

DF: What are the major achievements that you made through the platform of ICCI for Pakistan?

I have been recently elected as President ICCI,

however, during this short period of 4 months, I have taken many good initiatives for the benefit of business community. I have held meetings with government bodies and other stakeholder organizations to highlight the key issues of business community and gave suggestions to address them. My biggest achievement is to organize the "All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conclave 2020" on June 20-21, 2020 where we managed to gather





47 Presidents of leading chambers of commerce and industry of the country. This was for the first time in the history of ICCI that a large number of business leaders of the country were brought at one platform to discuss key issues being faced by the business community of the entire country and give suggestions to the government for resolving them. On June 20, 2020, I along with Presidents of chambers of commerce and industry of Pakistan held a meeting with Hon'ble Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan where Mr. Omar Ayub Federal Minister for Energy, Chairman FBR, Chairman Board of Investment and other key stakeholders were present. This provided us a good opportunity to share issues of business community with the Prime Minister and know about the government's plans for promoting ease of doing business. On January 21, 2020, President of Pakistan Hon'ble Dr. Arif Alvi was the Chief Guest at the Presidents Conclave while Mr. Asad Umar Federal Minister for Planning & Development, Dr. Ishrat Hussain Advisor to Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms, Syed Shabbar Zaidi Chairman FBR, Mr. Jameel Ahmed Deputy Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Mr. Zubair Gilani Chairman Board of Investment, Mr. Sakib Sherani renowned economist and other dignitaries were also present at the occasion. It provided business leaders of the country an excellent opportunity to highlight key issues of business community while the government side briefed them about various initiatives for creating conducive business environment in the country. Thus it was a great win-win event for private and public sectors. ICCI has also launched a "Go Green Islamabad" campaign in collaboration with MCI and local Administration to plant one million trees in Islamabad during 2020. The purpose of this initiative is to make Islamabad a green and environmental friendly city as well as to support the Prime Minister's mission of Clean and Green Pakistan.

DF: Country is facing economic challenges. What you suggest that in such an environment how businesses can be successful?

It is a fact that Pakistan is currently facing great

economic challenges due to which almost all sectors of the economy including trade, industry and services sectors are facing stagnation. The adjustment measures taken by the government under IMF program has created additional problems for business sector. High policy interest rate of 13.25 percent, high utility charges, galloping inflation and many other factors have caused great slowdown in business activities. It is, therefore, essential that government should decrease policy interest rate to single digit level, ensure stable rupee, reduce high utility charges to bring down cost of doing business, take measures for improving purchasing power of people and provide good incentives to local industry that would enable businesses to flourish and play more effective role in strengthening the economy.

DF: What is your educational background?

I got my secondary level education from Cadet College, Hasanabadal and then I went to UK for higher studies where I graduated with major in account and finance from the London School of Economics.

DF: : What motivated you to join ICCI? What made you to participate in ICCI elections and politics?

I have been associated with Young Entrepreneurs Forum of ICCI for the last many years. I also observed that ICCI encouraged young businessmen to come forward and play their role at leadership positions. Therefore, I decided to take part in ICCI elections and Alhamdulillah I was elected with highest number of votes.

DF: How can CPEC influence the business and industry in Pakistan?

CPEC from its beginning is considered to be a game changer for Pakistan. In my opinion, such



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projects are important for economic development and prosperity of Pakistan. However, business community has not been fully informed about this important projects due to which they don't know how they can get benefits from it. I would suggest that government should provide a level playing field in CPEC projects to local and Chinese investors and should take measures to upgrade the local industry so that our industrialists could make win-win JVs with Chinese counterparts. Government should encourage local industry by procuring material from it for CPEC projects and absorb local labor in these projects that would give more opportunities to local industry for growth and reduce unemployment.

DF: What tax reforms should be done to make a conducive environment for business in Pakistan?

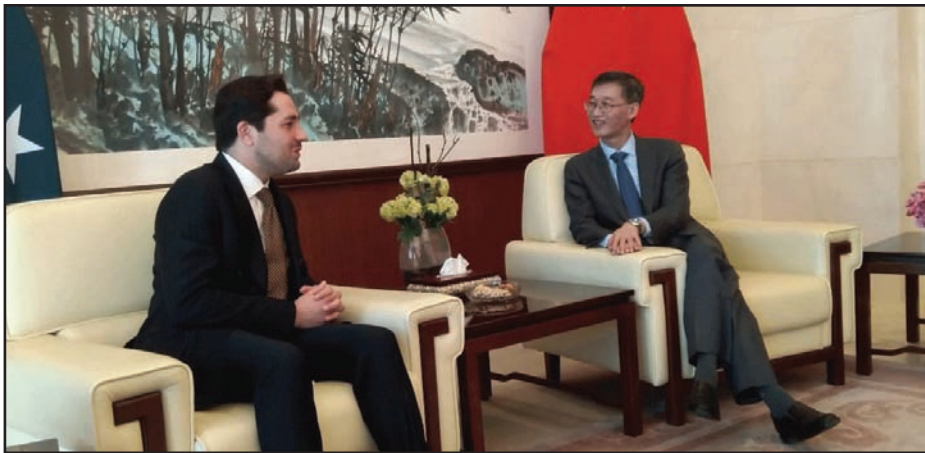
Pakistani businesses are currently facing multiple taxes and high tax rates as instead of broadening the tax base, government is milking the existing taxpayers by burdening them with more taxes. The industry is currently making highest contribution to the tax revenue of the country as compared to agriculture and services sectors, which shows that the prevailing tax system is not fair. To create conducive environment for businesses, government should focus on reducing high tax rates including high GST, make tax system fair, just and very simple to reduce its compliance cost and provide tangible benefits to businesses in return for tax payment and use tax money more judiciously that would improve their confidence on taxation system.

DF: What are your future course of action regarding business and industry?

ICCI has been making efforts since long for the establishment of a new industrial estate in Islamabad as the current three industrial areas in Islamabad have reached saturation point due to which setting up new industrial units has become difficult. I am working hard with CDA and government authorities for allocation of land in Islamabad for establishment of a new industrial zone in order to promote industrialization in the region and contribute more effectively to enhance country's exports. I am also working closely with FBR, CDA, MCI and other relevant organizations to resolve key issues of business community and initiative development works in local markets to improve basic infrastructure in business centres. I am also working to setup facilitation desks of FBR, SECP, Islamabad Police and other organizations at ICCI to provide one stop shop facility to members so that they could promote business activities smoothly. I also plan to set up more departments in ICCI to provide maximum facilitation to our members. We are developing a new website and mobile application so that members could get all required and updated information at one click.

DF: How industrialization is important for trade balance in Pakistan?

Answer: History shows that all developed countries achieved fast economic growth by focusing on industrialization. Unfortunately, for the last many



years, Pakistan has experienced deindustrialization due to lack of focus on the part of the government side. I believe that government should pay top priority to promoting industrialization and focus on hi-tech industries for producing value added products that would give significant boost to our exports and greatly improve our trade balance enabling Pakistan to get rid of foreign loans and stand on its own feet.

DF: How expatriate Pakistanis can contribute in business in Pakistan and how it will improve their growth of economy?

By working in rapidly growing and advanced economies, large number of expatriate Pakistanis have acquired great skills, professional expertise and best business practices. Therefore, they should be considered as a great asset for Pakistan. Many of them have the capital and financial resources to invest in Pakistan and they want to return to Pakistan for playing their role in the development of the country. However, no encouraging measures have been taken by the government for them so far. I understand that government should provide them good incentives and attractive opportunities for growth so that they could return to Pakistan to setup businesses that would greatly help in economic revival of Pakistan and put our country on the path of sustainable development.

DF: How digitization of economy can accelerate economic growth of Pakistan?

It's the age of technology and digitization of economy would greatly reduce cost of doing business, improve governance and help in improved service delivery to people. Digitization offers great prospects to new start-ups and SMEs to go global and contribute more effectively towards promoting country's exports. Therefore, government should pay high attention to digitize the economy that would help the country to achieve accelerated economic growth.

DF: Pakistan has improved in 'ease of doing businesses. What you think, what hurdles are still remaining in 'ease of doing businesses in Pakistan?

Answer: There are 10 comprehensive areas in the life cycle of business that should be reformed to promote ease of doing business. Pakistan has been able to bring reforms in 6 areas including starting a business, registering property, construction permits, paying taxes, getting electricity and trading across borders. However, Pakistan should also bring reforms in other areas that would promote ease of doing business in the country and enable Pakistan to accelerate the pace of economic development.

DF: What is the 'rent control act' that has been passed by National Assembly with the help of ICCI recently?

Promulgation of a balanced rent control act is a longstanding demand of the local traders. An amended bill for a balanced rent control act was drafted with the cooperation of ICCI that was presented many times in the parliament, but could not be passed into law. This time the said amended



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bill was presented by Mr. Asad Umar, MNA from Islamabad in the national assembly. The NA Standing Committee on Interior has passed the bill and it is now to be passed by the national assembly after which it will go to senate. We are in touch with the government on this issue and we are hopeful that the said bill will soon be passed by the parliament to address the very old demand of local traders.

How ICCI can address the youth bulge in Pakistan as it is facing unemployment despite having talent and education?

Answer: Over sixty percent population of Pakistan is comprised of youth and with better policies and close focus, this youth mass could be transformed into a great dividend for the country. ICCI has established a Young Entrepreneurs Forum which has already taken many initiatives to foster entrepreneurship in youth so that they could become job creators instead of job seekers. We have developed close nexus with local universities to attract maximum youth towards business field that offers them great prospects to achieve prosperous career and we will continue to focus on youth entrepreneurship to engage them in productive activities.

DF: Does ICCI help in any capacity in women economic empowerment?

Women are almost half of our population and focusing on their economic empowerment is very important to enhance their role in the economic development of the country. ICCI has organized many programs on capacity building and skills development of women for their economic empowerment. ICCI has established a Women Business Growth Cell that would be linked with incubation departments for promoting women-led start-ups. We are providing them full guidance from starting a business to going global so that they could be brought into the mainstream of economy and play their due role in the nation building.

We are thankful for the great talk to Mr. Ahmed. It was an exhaustive interview that not only open the personality of the president of ICCI, Mr. Ahmed, but also give us an opportunity to explore the reasons behind the growing menace of economic problems viz-a viz strategies that will address the issues of youth, industry and trade. Pakistan being a developing country who is struggling from the various problems in social, political and economic sector demand such enthusiastic people like the president of ICCI to make the country get out of the plethora of problems. Thank you very much



FM Qureshi arrives in Tehran to diffuse Middle East tensions

By Mian Fazal Elahi



Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi arrived in Tehran to help play a role in diffusing tensions in the Middle East following threats of a military confrontation between Iran and the United States.

The foreign minister arrived first at Mashhad and paid a visit to Imam Raza after which he went to Tehran.

According to Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyyed Abbas Mousavi, Qureshi will hold talks with Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and other officials on the current situation in the region.

Qureshi's visit comes amid heightened tensions between Tehran and Washington after the latter killed top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani in an airstrike on January 3 and the subsequent missile attacks by Iran on US bases in Iraq.

Qureshi in a statement said that Iran owning up to its mistake of downing Ukrainian passenger plane would likely ease up tensions in the region.

"Iran's confession of downing Ukrainian passenger plane should ease up tensions as the region can neither endure tension nor can it tolerate war anymore," he said.

FM Qureshi reiterated that Pakistan would play an active role to reduce growing tensions in the region.

Iranian armed forces admitted that they unintentionally shot down the Ukrainian airliner that crashed this week and blamed "human error" for the mistake.

The plane, which crashed earlier killing all 176 people on board, was mistaken for a "hostile plane" and was hit while enemy threats were at the highest level, according to a press statement published by the official IRNA news agency.



FOREIGN MINISTER MAKHDOOM SHAH MEHMOOD QURESHI IN A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT OF IRAN, HASSAN ROUHANI IN TEHRAN, IRAN ON 12-01-2020



FOREIGN MINISTER MAKHDOOM SHAH MEHMOOD QURESHI SHAKING HAND WITH PRESIDENT OF IRAN, HASSAN ROUHANI IN TEHRAN, IRAN ON 12-01-2020



FM Qureshi conveys condolence to Oman over Sultan Qaboos's demise



By News Agency

Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi conveyed Pakistan's condolence to the Omani Royal family over the demise of Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

The foreign minister was received by Pakistan Ambassador to Muscat Ahsan Wagan and other officials of Omani Foreign Ministry upon his arrival in Muscat. Oman's ailing Sultan, one of the Middle East's longest-serving rulers, passed away on Friday after a being unwell for years.

Haitham bin Tariq, Oman's culture minister and the 65-year-old cousin of late Sultan Qaboos, was



Qaboos bin Said
SULTAN OF OMAN(LATE)



In his meeting with the new ruler, the foreign minister conveyed the president, prime minister and the Pakistani nation's deepest condolences over the sad demise of Sultan Qaboos.

"Oman made sweeping economic changes during the Sultan's time," Qureshi said during

the meeting, adding that he was a great friend of Pakistan.

The foreign minister added in the coming days the relations between Oman and Pakistan will become even better. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi left for Pakistan after completion of his trip to Oman.



Deep grief and condolences on the demise of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said of Oman

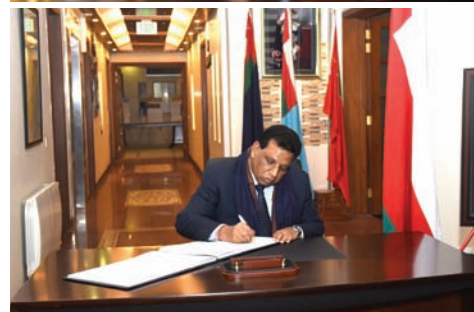
Prime Minister Imran Khan termed late Sultan Qaboos bin Said of Oman as a visionary leader while extending the deepest condolences to the people of Oman, who had lost their beloved leader. The prime minister said Sultan Qaboos was a close and trusted friend of Pakistan, whose soul may rest in eternal peace. He tweeted, "I extend our deepest condolences to people of Oman on the passing of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said. He was a visionary & transformed

Oman into a vibrant, modern state. Oman has lost a beloved leader & Pakistan a close, trusted friend. May his soul rest in eternal peace."

Separately, Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani expressed deep grief and condolences on the demise of Sultan Qaboos. He said in a message that "we are deeply saddened and with the passing away of Sultan Qaboos, Pakistan has lost a sincere friend and Muslim has lost a visionary leader".

He paid glowing tributes to the contributions made by Sultan Qaboos towards the social and economic development of Oman. He said that people, Parliament and government of Pakistan mourn the demise of Sultan Qaboos.

Deputy Chairman Senate Saleem Mandviwalla, Leader of the House in the Senate Shibli Faraz and Leader of the Opposition in Senate Raja Zafarul Haq also expressed their condolences.





Pakistan values its relations with African countries: FM

By Mian Fazal Elahi

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi says Pakistan has all the ingredients to become a twenty-first century success.

Addressing the inaugural session of Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference in Nairobi, he said with resolute action, we have turned the tide against the scourge of terrorism and transformative structural reforms are turning challenges into opportunities.

The Foreign Minister said Pakistan is known to possess 92 minerals, of which 52 are commercially exploited.

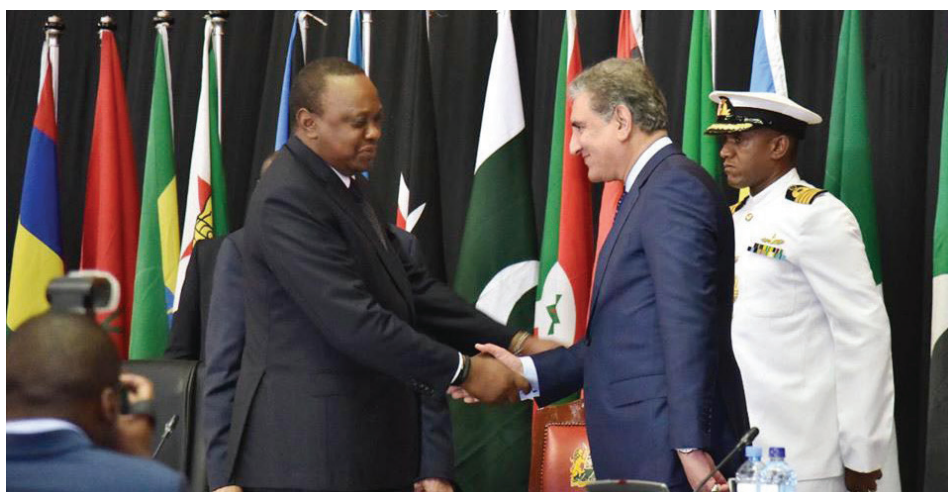
The Foreign Minister said Pakistan's economy has stabilized, and is on path for sustained growth, over a longer trajectory.

Meanwhile, Pakistan and Kenya have signed a Memorandum of Understanding for extending cooperation in training of diplomats.

The MoU pertaining to the two countries' Foreign Service Academies was signed by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Kenyan counterpart Ray Chellea Omamo in Nairobi.

It will give diplomats from Pakistan and Kenya a chance to benefit from each other's experiences regarding advanced practical training.

Many diplomats from the African countries have already received practical training from the Foreign Service Academy of Pakistan.





The two foreign ministers described the signing of MoU as an important step towards further promotion of bilateral ties.

Meanwhile, in an one-on-one meeting with his Kenyan counterpart Raychelle Omamo in Nairobi, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said Pakistan values its relations with African countries including Kenya, which is the gateway to eastern Africa.

The Foreign Minister briefed his Kenyan counterpart about the salient features of Pakistan's "Engage Africa" vision.

He said that after China, Kenya is the biggest

market for Pakistani products.

The Foreign Minister said holding of Trade Conference in Nairobi is reflective of Kenya's importance for Pakistan in particular and that of Africa in general.

He said Pakistan is desirous of joining the African Union. He expressed the hope that Kenya will extend its support in this regard.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi apprised his Kenyan counterpart regarding the grave human rights violations in Occupied Kashmir by Indian forces and urged Kenya to raise its voice in getting the armless Kashmiris rid of Indian atrocities.



“We have achieved milestones in streamlining documentation and curbing illegal immigration” Says Ijaz Shah

By Mian Fazal Elahi

Federal Minister for Interior Brig (R) Ijaz Ahmad Shah met with H.E Ambassador Alice Wells, the acting Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of South and Central Asia Affairs along with H.E Ambassador Paul Jones and delegation at the Ministry of Interior, Islamabad on 20th January 2020. While addressing the issue of illegal immigrants, the Federal Minister of Interior, Brig (R) Ijaz Ahmad Shah said that the government had successfully managed to streamline the process to curb this menace. He

The Acting US Secretary of State, Alice Wells, said that to ensure smooth functioning of the matters, there should be a sustainable method derived that can work in longer run. Brig (R) Ijaz Ahmad Shah welcomed the suggestion and agreed on mutual cooperation in this regard. In order to facilitate the cooperation, the verification process of traveling documents including passports has been streamlined. This has greatly helped in expediting the processes. Alice Wells appreciated the efforts being put in by the Government of Pakistan. While discussing the point pertaining to INGOs, the Minister of Interior said that a

delegation of Ministry of Interior explained in detail the progress made on FATF matters assigned to Interior Ministry. Additional Secretary said that there has been significant progress on both legislative and administrative matters. He further added that execution process has also been completed to a greater extent. The Minister for Interior said that these regulations have proved to be very helpful in our progress. The US Delegation applauded the progress made by the Government of Pakistan despite the scarcity of resources. The meeting concluded with a promise to enhance ties in future ventures.



Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce, Industries & Production and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood In a meeting with Ms. Alice Wells, Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of South & Central Asia Affairs along with Ambassador Paul Jones in Islamabad

further added that there has been satisfactory progress in this regard, Interior Ministry's delegation informed that the solved cases for the months of November, December and January had been delivered to the US correspondents.

proper systematic way has been formulated to register these organizations. The ones who fail to fulfill the criteria are given a second chance to explain their stance, however, the ones who meet the set standards are fully facilitated. The

Ambassador Alice Wells, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, called on Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood today. A range of bilateral issues, including political engagement and economic



Federal Minister for Interior Brig (R) Ijaz Ahmad Shah Met with us Ambassador H.E Alice Wells the Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of South and Central Asia Affairs in Islamabad



Acting Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Ambassador Alice wells, Called on Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Islamabad.



Acting Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Ambassador Alice wells, called on Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Islamabad

partnership, were discussed. It was emphasized that a strong trade and investment relationship was key to advancing the shared vision of the leadership of both countries for a long term, broad-based and enduring partnership. The Foreign Secretary highlighted the grave human rights and humanitarian situation in IOJ&K, intensified ceasefire violations from the Indian side, belligerent rhetoric of the Indian civil and military figures, and India's aggressive measures along the LoC. The

importance of the international community playing its role in peaceful resolution of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute was emphasized. The two sides also discussed recent developments regarding the Afghan peace and reconciliation process. The Foreign Secretary reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to continue to support the peace process and pursue positive development of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. Referring to Foreign Minister's recent visits to Saudi Arabia, Iran

and the United States, and his telephone conversations with other Foreign Ministers, the Foreign Secretary underscored that Pakistan remained committed to supporting the efforts for de-escalation of tensions and promoting the prospects of a diplomatic way forward on the differences and disputes in the Middle East.



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas met with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas met with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Jan. 23, 2020 in the southern West Bank city of Bethlehem, briefing him on the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian situation.

The two leaders discussed the “Deal of the Century” proposed by the United States, Israel’s current confiscation of Palestinian land, and Palestine’s efforts to hold its legislative and

presidential elections, according to the official Palestinian news agency WAFA.

Abbas welcomed Putin’s visit to Palestine, describing the Russian president as his “personal friend and the friend of the Palestinian people.”

“I welcome my dear friend, President Vladimir Putin ... who never misses an opportunity to talk about or support the Palestinian cause, and

this is what we are accustomed to,” said Abbas.

For his part, the Russian president praised the historical relations between the two sides, expressing his readiness to cooperate with and support Palestine in all fields.

This is Putin’s third visit to Palestine. His first visit was in 2005 and the second was in 2012.

Minister Hammad Azhar met Mr. Taro Aso, Deputy Prime Minister / Finance Minister of Japan

By M. Bilal Zafar

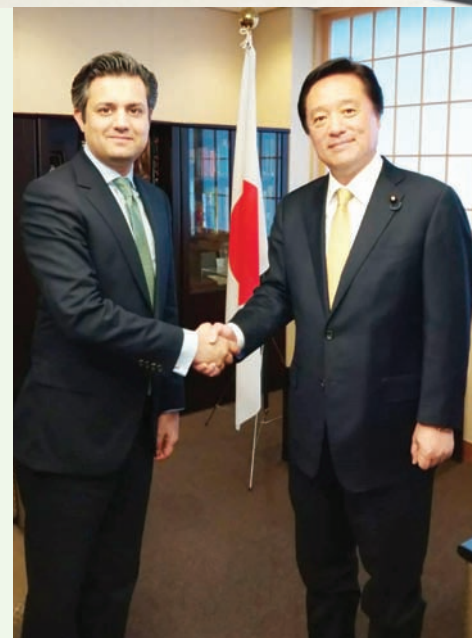
Mr. Muhammad Hammad Azhar, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, called on Mr. Taro Aso, Deputy Prime Minister/Finance Minister of Japan, in Tokyo today.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on the ways to enhance the existing bilateral economic relations. It was agreed that there was a huge potential to increase the current level of bilateral trade and investments from Japan into Pakistan.

Minister Azhar, while appreciating Japan's role as one of the premier development partners of Pakistan over decades, briefed Minister Aso on the current economic situation of Pakistan. He highlighted the difficult policy decisions that the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan had to take to bring the economy out of balance of payment and fiscal crisis. It was emphasized that owing to timely and appropriate decisions, Pakistan's economy had stabilized and Pakistan was now looking to revive faster growth. The recent successful review of the IMF programme by its Board, improvement in Pakistan's ranking by Moody's and the 28-point improvement in Pakistan's Ease of Doing Business in just one year were also highlighted by the Minister.

Minister Taro Aso appreciated the steps taken by Pakistan to stabilize its economy and expressed the desire of the Japanese government to comprehensively take the existing economic and commercial relations to the next level.

Minister Hammad Azhar is currently visiting Japan to explore and discuss way to enhance the economic relations between Pakistan and Japan.



Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Muhammad Hammad Azhar met Japanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kenji Wakamiya in Tokyo, Japan on January 09, 2020



Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Muhammad Hammad Azhar Addressing member of the Pakistan Community at the Embassy of Pakistan Tokyo, Japan.

Malaysia, Pakistan keen to enhance trade in commodities



Malaysia and Pakistan are keen to further explore ways to enhance trade in commodities as well as avenues to further expand Malaysian palm oil's share in Pakistan.

A statement issued in conjunction with Primary Industries Minister Teresa Kok's official visit to the country said the minister and Pakistan's Advisor for Commerce, Textile, Industry and Production and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood took the opportunity in a bilateral dialogue to explore various issues of common interest to both countries.

During the meeting, both leaders emphasised the excellent cordial bilateral relations and further explored areas for enhancing trade.

"For example, Pakistan is a net exporter of rice, fruits and other produce that are required by Malaysia and Abdul Razak Dawood encouraged Malaysia to consider instituting trading practices that could allow smoother passage of these products into Malaysia.

"On her part, Kok highlighted that Medium Density Fibreboard (MDF) exporters from Sri Lanka enjoyed lower duties whereas Malaysia's

higher quality MDF was subjected to higher import tariffs," she said.

Other product opportunities were also discussed and both leaders agreed to convey these matters to the concerned authorities in their respective countries so that solutions could be worked out to benefit better trade relations between Malaysia and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, she said Pakistan is a key importer of Malaysian palm oil and products -- in 2018, it imported 1.16 million metric tonnes (MT) of palm oil valued at RM2.97 billion.

She highlighted the importance of Pakistan as an end-user of Malaysian palm oil and facilitated by the joint venture refinery between Malaysia and Pakistan in Port Qasim.

She said while Pakistan is one of the most regular and dependable buyers of Malaysian palm oil and products, the commodity has the potential for a higher uptake in Pakistan given that its local production of oils and fats meets only around 20 per cent of its consumption needs.

"It thus depends heavily on imports to meet growing domestic demand and consumption.



Demand has been increasing at a rate of 4.5 per cent per year for the past seven years, due to increasing population, income and consumer spending.

"Palm oil is widely used for the manufacture of vanaspati (ghee) and it is also the preferred raw material for the food industry in Pakistan, especially for frying and in confectionery items," she added.

During her visit there, Kok was also invited to deliver the keynote address at the 5th Pakistan Edible Oil Conference on Jan 10.





Main cause of the Libyan crisis is the hostile foreign interventions,” al-Sarraj

With Libya’s civil war now in its sixth year, world leaders gathered at a summit in Berlin in an attempt to restore stability and peace to Libya.

The summit was aimed at a stronger commitment from world powers and regional actors to non-interference in the oil-rich North African state and to genuinely support a fragile ceasefire.

All participating parties pledged to respect a UN-imposed arms embargo that has so far failed to stop an influx of troops, money and weapons to the country.

Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, who leads the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) based in Tripoli, and renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar, who heads the eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA), attended the talks, but not in the same room.

“The main cause of the Libyan crisis is the hostile foreign interventions,” al-Sarraj told Al Jazeera in an exclusive interview.

“Violations to the arms embargo have been taking place for years. This is what led the opposition to believe that they have military power and pushed them away from finding

While Haftar is “not a serious partner for achieving peace in Libya”, a political solution is the only way to end the conflict and to avoid for Libya to become “another Syria or a source of conflict or a proxy war on Libyan soil”
Al-Sarraj says

a political solution. This is because of its excessive military and security support.”

Al-Sarraj says, while Haftar is “not a serious partner for achieving peace in Libya”, a political solution is the only way to end the conflict and to avoid for Libya to become “another Syria or a source of conflict or a proxy war on Libyan soil”.

“We know that some countries, including Russia, have interests and ambitions in Libya ... We wonder why the UAE is building a military base in eastern Libya, sending its planes and supporting one side at the expense of the other ... It is not correct to recognize a party and then support the other party the way they are doing it.”

He adds that countries “should review their position on Libya” because the region would benefit more from a stable and unified Libya.

“Libya, in its current situation, leads to security problems and terrorism, uncontrolled borders and violence. This can impact neighboring countries, too,” he warned. “Everyone is now talking about stopping the flow of arms to Libya. We hope that this will be the last conference. And hopefully, the Libyan crisis will finally be resolved.”



The Berlin Conference was convened in haste, when the GNA signed MoU with Turkey

Berlin Conference on Libya, at the invitation of German Chancellor Merkel, has gathered the Governments of Algeria, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Turkey, and the Republic of the Congo, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and High Representatives of the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, and the League of Arab States. . The Berlin Conference was convened in haste, when the Government of National Accord signed the Memorandum of

Understanding with Turkey.

Only a Libyan-led and Libyan owned political process can end the conflict and bring lasting peace. The participants note the Co-Chair's statement on the political, security and humanitarian situation in Libya of the meeting at Foreign Ministers' level convened by France and Italy on the margins of the 74th General Assembly of the UN in New York on 26 September 2019. The Conference reaffirms strong commitment

to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Libya.

The Government of National Accord is the legitimate government supported by the United Nations, and it has the right to make any agreement with any country to place it at the United Nations. In this regard, it is defending the capital, Tripoli

The "Berlin Process", in which we engaged to support the plan presented by Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General



(SMSG)

Ghassan Salamé to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has the sole objective of assisting the United Nations in unifying the International Community in their support for a peaceful solution to the Libyan crisis. There can be no military solution in Libya.

The Berlin Conference commits to refraining from interference in the armed conflict or in the internal affairs of Libya and urge all international actors to do the same.

The Conference recognize the central role of the United Nations to facilitate an inclusive intra-Libyan political and reconciliation process, based on the Libyan Political Agreement of 2015 and its institutions, UNSC Resolution 2259 (2015), other relevant UNSC Resolutions and the principles agreed in Paris, Palermo and Abu Dhabi, as well as the important roles of the African Union and its High Level Committee of Heads of State and Government on Libya, the League of Arab States, the European Union and the neighboring countries in Libya's stabilization with particular regard to intra-Libyan national reconciliation, peace and security and political dialogue. All these International Organizations will closely work together. In this context we welcome the organization by the African Union of the Reconciliation Forum in the spring of 2020.

The Berlin Conference fully supports the good offices and mediation efforts of the United Nations Support Mission to Libya (UNSMIL) and SMSG Salamé. The Conference stress that a durable solution in Libya requires a comprehensive approach that addresses simultaneously the different aspects.

Need to respect the stopping of the provision of combat equipment to General Haftar by the countries that support him

There is need to respect the stopping of the provision of combat equipment to General Haftar by the countries that support him. The conflict in Libya, the instability in the country, the external interferences, the institutional divisions, the proliferation of a vast amount of unchecked weapons combat equipment sending to General Haftar and the economy of predation continue to be a threat to international peace and security by providing fertile grounds for traffickers, armed groups and terrorist organizations. It has allowed Al Qaida and ISIS to flourish on the Libyan territory and to launch operations in Libya and in neighboring countries. It

has facilitated a destabilizing wave of illegal migration in the region and an important deterioration of the humanitarian situation. The Conference is committed to support Libyans in addressing those structural governance and security issues.

General Haftar did not respect the decisions of the Berlin Conference and continues to attack the capital, Tripoli.

Forces of Khalifa Haftar attacked the Libyan capital from the city's southern Hallat front, ignoring the calls for a cease-fire. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres co-hosted the Berlin conference, which sought a stronger commitment from world powers and regional actors to noninterference in Libya, genuine support for the cease-fire and

adherence to the U.N.'s arms embargo yet no concrete result was achieved.

Bombings could be heard starting from early hours indicated that the Haftar's forces tried to gather and advance from their position in Tripoli's southern Ramla district. GNA forces pushed back these militias. Clashes took place from time to time as GNA forces tried to eliminate the Haftar militias' mortar and artillery attacks.

The conflict parties announced a cease-fire in response to a joint call by the Turkish and Russian leaders. But the talks for a permanent cease-fire deal ended without an agreement after Haftar left Moscow without signing the deal.





Chinese President Xi Jinping, addresses a Chinese Lunar New Year reception

Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed racing against time and keeping abreast with history to reach the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

"Time and history wait for no one as they are both on the side of hard workers," said Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission.

Xi made the remarks while addressing a Chinese Lunar New Year reception held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Under the strong leadership of the CPC, all members of the Party, armed forces and people of all ethnic groups must fear no wind or wave, rise up to challenges and keep marching toward the glorious goal of national rejuvenation and the great prospect of building a community with a shared future for humanity, Xi said.

At the reception, held by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, Xi extended Lunar New Year's greetings to Chinese people of all ethnic groups, compatriots in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan and overseas Chinese.

Party and state leaders Li Keqiang, Li Zhanshu, Wang Yang, Wang Huning, Zhao Leji, Han Zheng and Wang Qishan were among the more than 2,000 people attending the reception. Li Keqiang chaired the event.

Xi noted in his speech that new and significant progress has been made in the past year toward building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

He mentioned major events during the year, including the fourth plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, celebrations marking the 20th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland and resolute efforts to safeguard

"Time and history wait for no one as they are both on the side of hard workers," said Xi

the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao, as well as celebrations marking the 70th founding anniversary of the People's Republic of China.

A campaign themed "staying true to our founding mission" was also carried out to demand the more than 90 million Party members remember to always stay with the

people.

"In the new year, we must secure a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and fighting poverty," Xi said, adding that achieving this first centenary goal is a milestone in the process of realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation.

The results, Xi said, must be recognized by the people and stand the test of time.

Xi said the Chinese nation, with a civilization stretching back over 5,000 years, has made indelible contributions to the civilization and progress of mankind. But the nation was held back for too long by various internal and external troubles in modern times.

That is why, Xi said, the Chinese people have always had an extraordinary sense of urgency and appreciation of the underlying trend of the times.

From now to the middle of this century, the Chinese people will strive to build China into a great modern socialist country. It will be a great era in which a new splendid chapter of the Chinese civilization will be written, he said.

Every Chinese person must feel proud of living in such a great era, Xi said.

"We must maintain strategic direction and resolve, stay united, work hard and forge ahead against all odds," Xi said.

20,000 'Panda Packs' distributed among School Children

By Staff Reporter

A ceremony was held here at Islamabad Model School for Girls, Sector F-7/1, to distribute 'Panda Packs' among the students. Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mehmood graced the event as Chief Guest. Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing was the Guest of Honor, PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq, PRCS Secretary General Khalid bin Majeed, China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation Vice President Wang Xingzui, diplomats, officers of Federal Directorate of Education, teachers, volunteers and students were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the ceremony, Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mehmood said the economic cooperation between Pakistan and China is fast turning into people-to-people collaboration, adding that the distribution of thousands of Panda Packs in Islamabad by China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation in collaboration with the PRCS is a proof of the growing multi-faceted relations between the two countries.

The minister congratulated Abrar ul Haq on assuming the charge of chairman of Pakistan Red Crescent Society. He hoped that the PRCS will achieve remarkable progress under the visionary leadership of Abrar ul Haq.

In his speech, Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing said his country is ready to help Pakistan in its 'Education for All' project, adding that Chinese companies are willing to channelize more resources for human development in Pakistan. He also congratulated Abrar ul Haq on taking over as chairman of the PRCS. He offered China's all-out support to the PRCS in its services for the ailing humanity.

PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq said the Panda Packs are



FEDERAL MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING, SHAFQAT MAHMOOD DISTRIBUTING PANDA PACKS AMONG STUDENTS OF ISLAMABAD MODEL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, ON JANUARY 09, 2020. CHAIRMAN RED CRESCENT SOCIETY ABRAR UL HAQUE ALSO PRESENT ON THE OCCASION

not just school bags but a 'package of love' by China for the people of Pakistan. He said this beautiful gift will stay in the minds of the young kids for their whole life. Abrar ul Haq said around 61 per cent population of Pakistan lives in rural areas, where educational facilities are not up to the mark. He said distribution of school bags among rural students of the federal capital is a highly welcome initiative.

Abrar ul Haq said China has always been on the forefront in helping Pakistan in the time of need, and hoped that cooperation between PRCS and the Red Cross Society of China will grow in the times to come. "Together, we will serve humanity. Long live Pakistan-China friendship."

In his speech, PRCS Secretary General Khalid

bin Majeed said the PRCS envisages a long and productive partnership with the China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation to keep carrying out such effective and fruitful ventures in future.

China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation Vice President Wang Xingzui said Panda is a symbol of peace in China. He said the Panda Packs for the young kids are a token of best wishes and love for the Pakistani nation.

Under the project, 20,000 school bags are to be distributed among students from grade 1 to 5 studying at government schools mostly in rural areas of the federal capital. More than 12,000 bags have already been distributed among the students in the targeted areas.



FEDERAL MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING, SHAFQAT MAHMOOD ADDRESSING THE DISTRIBUTION CEREMONY OF PANDA PACKS ORGANIZED BY RED CRESCENT SOCIETY AT ISLAMABAD MODEL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS ON JANUARY 09, 2020



Pakistani handicrafts displayed at the Chinese embassy

Ambassador China Yao Jing has said relations between China and Pakistan are excellent adding these relations are getting stronger with the each passing day. The Chinese ambassador made these remarks while speaking on the occasion of opening of Pakistan Crafts Exhibition held at the Chinese embassy.

Pakistan Handicrafts Association arranged the exhibition in collaboration with the Chinese embassy. Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Azam Swati was the chief guest. The ambassador further said Pakistan handicrafts were famous worldwide adding both countries can cooperate in this sector also. Ambassador Jing congratulated the handicrafts association for holding the mega event at the premises of the Chinese embassy. He assured that the embassy would continue to supporting such events even in the coming days. Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Azam Swati in his speech thanked the Chinese embassy for facilitating the event and providing the Pakistani artisan with an opportunity of exhibition their works. The minister and lauded the role of handicrafts association and exhorted them to continue the work with the same spirit.



Marriott Hotel celebrated Chinese New Year

H.E. Yao Jing, the ambassador of China to Pakistan and Maurizio Romani, General Manager Islamabad Marriott Hotel invited the denizens of Islamabad and Chinese expats and diplomats to Dynasty Restaurant, Marriott Islamabad to celebrate Lunar Year.

The vestibule adorned Chinese imprints and the lobby leading to the Dynasty Restaurant was giving a majestic look. Chinese lanterns, zodiac paper cuts, motifs, LED decorations not only managed to impress the guests invited to the event but also one could see visitors taking photos and selfies while appreciating the decor.





Ambassador of China to Pakistan Yao Jing and GM Marriott Hotel Maurizio Rmani with artists during a ceremony of Chinese New Year at Marriott Hotel.

Lunar New Year: An Epic Event for China and Beyond

By Yasir Masood

China as one of the most ancient civilizations carries a mammoth history of more than 5,000 years that astonishingly still preserves its unruffled taboos, traditions, and events. One of the year's most illustrious events is the Lunar New Year, also known as the Chinese New Year or "Spring Festival." It's being celebrated worldwide by ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese citizens. The festivities usually last 16 days, from a New Year's Eve family feast through to the Lantern Festival on Day 15. The holiday season begins with the Laba Festival in (lunar) December. That is about 40 days of festivities! Nevertheless, Spring Festival is the first day of the first lunar month, the start of a new year for China.

Also, Chinese New Year ranges from January 21 to February 20, unlike western holidays such as Thanksgiving or Christmas. This marks the beginning of the lunar calendar, and is the most important holiday in China, a time seen as celebrating the ethos such as harmony and family reunion. Citizens get a formal 7-day holiday from New Year's Eve, which this year starts on Saturday, January the 25th; the 2020 is the year of the rat.

The Largest Human Migration and Travel Rush

Chinese diaspora from near and far and domestic travelling of the masses to their hometowns during Spring Festival gives rise to what's known as "the largest annual human migration in the world". This Lunar New Year which comes earlier than normal is expected to make 2.9 billion trips to celebrate the

"Spring Festival". It's estimated that 400 million people are on the move in China alone. The scale of the migration is astounding: While an estimated 116 million Americans were on the move around the Christmas and New Year's holidays, Chinese citizens will rack up about 3 billion trips during this year's travel-fest.

China's railways expect 440 million trips to take place during the 40-day official travel season called Chunyun, up 8% from the last year. (That translates as "Spring Festival Transportation" and typically starts 15 days before the beginning of the Lunar New Year; this year it's Jan. 10-Feb. 18.) And some 79 million passengers can take flights, up over 8% from 2019. There will be more than 17,000 flights a day on average, an increase of about 13% from 2019. The new Daxing airport in south Beijing is expected to handle 1.9 million trips.

Festival, Feast and China's Growing Market

A blossoming market reflects the vivacity of the economy. Despite a cloud of challenges, China's economy committed 2019 with 6.1% GDP growth, approaching 100 trillion yuan (14.49 trillion U.S. dollars) and outperforming comparable economies. More excitingly, the country has achieved a new milestone with GDP per capita exceeding 10,000 dollars last year, a threshold that several believe ushers in a very new stage for income level, consumption pattern and market size.

China is recognized as a world factory and an enormous global market with the world's largest and fast-growing middle-income group. With consumption upgrading and also the development of cross-border e-commerce and

logistics, overseas products can reach big cities and tiny towns across the country. Worldwide places of interest lure Chinese tourists abroad, making outbound traveling a brand new trend during the feast.

Last year, China's domestic tourism revenue gained 513.9 billion yuan (about 76.21 billion U.S. dollars) during the week-long Spring Festival, an annual increase of 8.2%, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. During the Spring Festival holiday last year, 386 million trips were made domestically, contributing to an increase of 475 billion yuan in China's travel revenue which is expected to be much more this year.

Spring Festival Gala

Before the Year of the Rat begins, China will celebrate the year with the 37th Spring Festival Gala, mentioned as Chunwan. Each year, the four-hour New Year Gala is that the most-watched program within the world, with a minimum of 700 million viewers glued to the televisions.

According to China Jiangsu Net, the gala this year will feature a number of new technologies such as 5 G, Virtual Reality (VR) and ultra-high-definition 4k/8k television. Besides, this year, a number of new language programs are being launched to address broader social issues. The galas will be held in Beijing, Zhengzhou in Henan province and the Greater Bay

of Guangdong-Macau-Hong Kong.

Film Season

The Spring Festival has developed into the year's most lucrative film season, with box office records being set each year as Chinese people have begun embracing films as

a source of family entertainment during the week-long holiday. During the seven-day Spring Festival holiday in 2019, new films were grossing 5.9 billion yuan (\$857 million), reaching a new record for seven days. The Spring Festival could surpass that this year.

Food Imports on the Lunar New Year

Consumers spent 2.3 times more on imported foods during the first round of Spring Festival shopping from Dec. 28 to Jan. 5 compared with the same period last season, according to the latest data from JD Daojia, Dada Group's on-demand retail platform.

According to official data, China became the world's largest imported food buyer in 2017, when, the total cost of importing food from over 170 countries and regions exceeded US\$60 billion. This year, the figure can only be higher, as imported food items are no longer the residents' exclusive preserve in first-and second-tier cities. With the rise in people's disposable income in third-to-fifth-tier cities, Belgian beer, Thai rice, and New Zealand milk and milk products have all become part of a long list of affordable options for consumers in cities of lower rank.

Biggest Spending Power on New Year

China's Lunar New Year is also generating the biggest spending power as the most critical festival in a year. Since the inception of the Belt and Road Initiative, and with China International Import Expo's two popular models, China has remained consistent on the path of



openness. The Lunar New Year has now been transcended through the maritime routes and direct freight train service from China to Europe to be resonated across the continents.

Rationally speaking, a market that connects 1.4 billion Chinese people to global supply chains believes in President Xi Jinping's words,

“only when the world is good, is China

good. The world can only get better when China is good.”

“The author is a former Director of Media and Publications at the Centre of Excellence-China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Islamabad. He is also a Senior International Relations Analyst with a special focus on China Affairs. He contributes regularly on print and electronic Media. He is currently a PhD Scholar at the UIBE, Beijing.”



Raja Zafar ul Haq hails Chinese govt's generosity towards Pakistan

Leader of Opposition Senator Raja Zafar ul Haq has appreciated the generosity shown by the Chinese government

towards Pakistan's long term economic development. This, he said was extremely important for the people of Pakistan.

The Opposition Leader was talking to Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Mr. Yao Jing who made a courtesy call on in his Chamber at Parliament House, Islamabad, and exchanged views over issues of mutual interest.

Senator Raja Muhammad Zafar ul Haq thanked the Chinese Ambassador for China's continuing support on the Kashmir issue, raising it thrice, as a permanent member of the Security Council and discussing it with other countries that possess international clout.

China respects Pakistan as a trust worthy friend and all agencies and organization are on one page over this stance, he added.

Senator Raja Muhammad Zafar ul Haq said that Pakistan looked forward to a long term arrangement with the People's Republic of China on sustained development especially economically backward areas, that are politically sensitive.



U.S., China Sign Deal Easing Trade Tensions

By Bob Davis, Lingling Wei & William Mauldin

The U.S. and China signed a trade deal that officials say will lead to a sharp increase in sales of U.S. goods and services to China, further open Chinese markets to foreign firms—especially in financial services and provide strong new protections for trade secrets and intellectual property.

The eight-part agreement acts as a cease-fire in a two-year trade war that has roiled markets world-wide and cut into global growth. But it leaves in place U.S. tariffs on about \$370 billion in Chinese goods, or about three-quarters of Chinese imports to the U.S.

Possible tariff reductions will be left to later negotiations, which will cover a host of difficult issues at the heart of the trade battle, including Chinese subsidies to domestic companies and Beijing's oversight of Chinese state-owned firms. Those talks are expected to begin fairly soon but not

conclude until after the U.S. presidential election in November.

Speaking to a packed audience of business and political leaders in the East Room of the White House, President Trump said the remaining tariffs “will all come off” if the talks produce a second agreement. He called the deal a “momentous step—one that has never been taken before with China—toward a future of fair and reciprocal trade.”

Vice Premier Liu He of China, who signed the

agreement for Beijing, played up the need for both countries to act together to tackle challenges such as terrorism, aging and environmental protection.

“China has established a political system and an economic-development model that suits its own characteristics,” Mr. Liu said. “But that doesn’t mean China and the U.S. can’t work together.”

While the deal contains wins for the U.S., the fact that most tariffs will remain on



Chinese imports clouds prospects for growth in business investment between the two countries, said John Frisbie, a China expert at the trade consulting firm of Hills & Co.

“Overall uncertainty is not reduced much because there is no removal of existing tariffs [and] questions whether China can buy the quantities of goods and services the administration wants,” he said.

Duty Calls

The U.S.-China trade agreement acts as a cease-fire in a two-year trade war, but it leaves in place U.S. tariffs on about \$370 billion in Chinese goods, or about three-quarters of Chinese imports to the U.S.

U.S. stocks have surged since the countries said they were nearing a deal, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed above 29000 for the first time on Wednesday. But market reaction to the actual signing was muted, suggesting investors saw little that was surprising within the text of the agreement.

“Basically, we’ve been told repeatedly that this deal was done,” said Mike O’Rourke, chief market strategist at JonesTrading.

The Republican president sees the trade deal as a win politically going into the November election. The president can laud the agreement and argue that he is the only one who can successfully press Beijing for more concessions. “President Trump saw an



opportunity to advance the U.S. positioning at a time when the Chinese are seeing great political and economic turbulence,” said Jason Miller, a former Trump campaign spokesman.

Democrats have been critical of the deal. Former Vice President Joe Biden, who is running for the Democratic presidential nomination, made clear that he wasn’t going to cede the issue to Mr. Trump. He criticized many of the pact’s provisions as “vague, weak, or covered by previous announcements and existing agreements.”

The agreement is structured as one between equals, but Beijing is making nearly all the changes in policy and purchases. The pact

focuses heavily on U.S. complaints that the Chinese government and companies coerce U.S. ones into handing over their technology to their rivals, and Mr. Trump’s focus on trying to close the vast trade deficit with China.

Beijing has denied it engages in coercion and has, in the past, pledged to make sure no pressure is applied. The two pages on technology transfer go beyond other agreements China has signed that dealt with that issue.

“Neither party shall require or pressure persons” to transfer technology to do business or to get regulatory approvals, the agreement said. The deal also banned pressure “formally or informally” on companies to use a certain technology to get a license.

However, the section doesn’t require China to change any law or regulation to fulfill its obligations. A draft agreement that fell apart in May required dozens of changes in Chinese law. Top officials in Beijing nixed that deal, and the U.S. negotiators sought to retain as much of the tentative deal as possible. The deal is written in legalese and trade jargon that will be pored over by trade experts and lawyers.

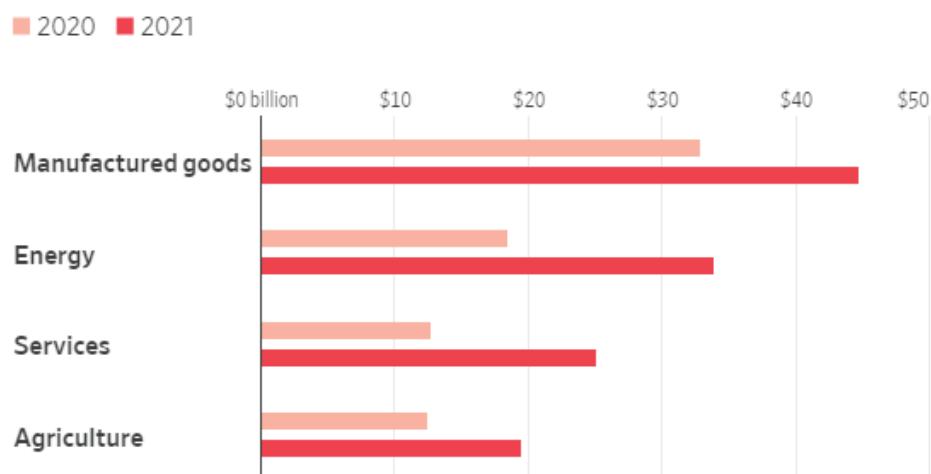
As a condition of Beijing signing the deal, the U.S. agreed to cut tariffs on \$120 billion in Chinese goods by half, to 7.5%, within about 30 days, and to forgo other planned tariffs. None of those commitments are part of the text.

In the intellectual-property section, China agreed to stiffen protection of trade secrets

Planned Purchases

China agreed to increase its U.S. imports by about \$200 billion over two years.

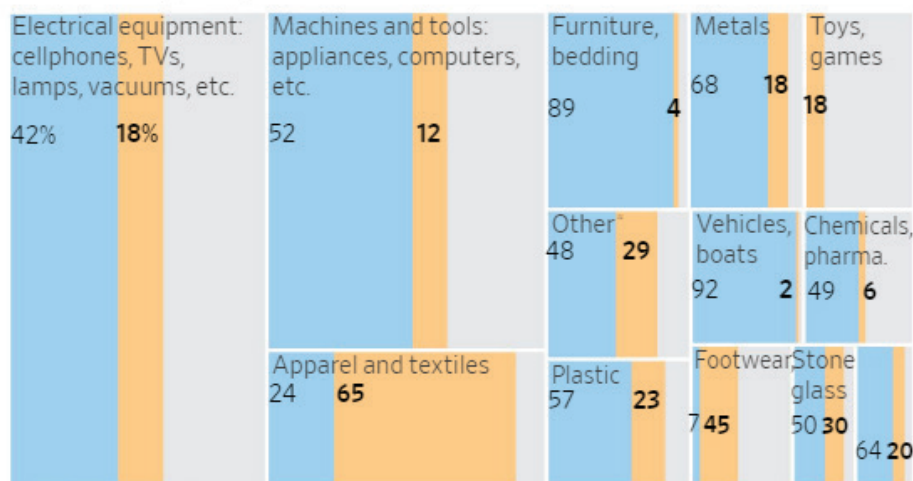
Proposed increases in imports by category



Source: U.S.-China Trade Agreement

15% tariffs being lowered to 7.5% (\$120B)

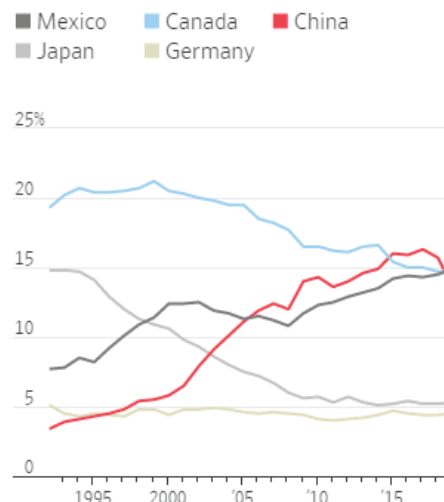
No tariffs (\$170B)



*Includes food, minerals, optical products, musical instruments, etc. . Note: Categories may include finished products, components and raw materials.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau (export values); U.S. Trade Representative (tariffs)

Share of total U.S. trade in goods



Note: 2019 data through November

Source: Census Bureau

and to assess criminal penalties for “willful trade secret misappropriation.” Increasing penalties was a priority of Mr. Trump’s administration.

But much of the intellectual-property language was light on specific rules in new areas. The pharmaceutical portion didn’t include specific targets and didn’t have language about defending biologic drugs from generic imitators, a major goal of big U.S. drugmakers.

The agreement also requires China to act quickly to accept applications from bank cards and payments systems seeking to access the Chinese market, and the deal’s text cites Mastercard, Visa and American Express by name. The U.S. had previously fought cases at the World Trade Organization to win access for U.S. payment providers, but China hasn’t followed through with permitting access to the firms in all cases.

The U.S. also pledged to continue to open its market to China’s UnionPay system. The provisions of the deal are subject to an enforcement mechanism that calls for several rounds of consultations. If the two sides don’t reach an agreement, the complaining party could take “remedial measure in a proportionate way”—trade lingo for reimposing tariffs. In practice, the U.S. would likely be the party bringing the complaint because it is China that is pledging to make changes and increase purchases.

So long as the tariff imposition is in good

faith, Beijing agreed not to retaliate. But the good-faith and proportionality requirements give China a lot of room to act. Rather than retaliate with tariffs, the deal says the party whose actions led to the complaint could withdraw from the deal—although then China would be free to retaliate. A senior U.S. administration official said he figured Beijing would be very reluctant to take such steps, which would shatter the deal.

But it is unclear whether U.S. companies, wary of retaliation by China, will refer disputes to the enforcement mechanism. Most trade deals use arbitration panels to settle disputes, figuring they can be impartial.

“There is a strong element of Yogi Berra’s quip about déjà vu all over again,” said James Green, a former U.S. trade negotiator in Beijing under Mr. Trump. “The dispute resolution section will have the same problem we’ve always faced—U.S. companies are reluctant to become poster children for market access problems or discriminatory treatment.”

The biggest section of the deal covers Chinese purchases. Beijing pledged to buy an additional \$200 billion in goods and split across 2020 and 2021, with the deal calling for \$77 billion in additional trade the first year and \$123 billion the second year.

Across the two years, the targets call for China to boost its purchasing above the levels seen in 2017, by about \$78 billion in manufacturing, by an extra \$32 billion of

agriculture, by \$52 billion of energy and by \$38 billion of services. The deal said targets have been agreed on for narrower categories of items, but these targets weren’t disclosed, the administration said, to avoid distorting markets.

In 2017, the U.S. exported \$186 billion of goods and services. To fulfill the targets in the deal, U.S. exports to China would need to climb to \$263 billion in 2020 and \$309 billion in 2021, an increase without precedent in the history of U.S. trade.

The projected steep climb in exports left some potential beneficiaries skeptical. For instance, Mr. Liu said the purchases wouldn’t come at the expense of other countries. That could make it harder for Beijing to meet the purchase goals.

The deal also has some terms that China could use to claim that the U.S. is at fault if it doesn’t meet the purchase targets. For instance, China could request consultations if China’s purchases are “affected by an action or inaction by the United States,” the text says. That could come into play if U.S. export rules limit the technology products the U.S. lets China buy.

A senior administration official said the provision just allows for discussions and wouldn’t be a basis for China to claim it can’t fulfill its commitments. (Courtesy to The Wall Street Journal)



Rashid A Mughal

US & China driving global economy to new heights

GLOBAL economy in 2019 might just be the best year investors have ever had. The numbers are staggering. Global stocks have piled on more than \$10 trillion, bonds have been on fire, oil has surged almost 25 per cent, former crisis spots Greece and Ukraine have top performed, and even gold has sparkled. Wall Street and other 50 country world index have both stormed to record highs after 30pc and 24pc leaps. Europe, Japan, China and Brazil are all up at least 20pc in dollar terms too. Remarkable and promising! This was quite in contrast to 2018 when almost everything fell. But there have been a couple of important drivers. One was China's commitment. It was serious about stimulus for its \$14 trillion economy. The other was the screeching change of direction by the world's top central banks led by the Federal Reserve which cut US interest rates for the first time since the financial crisis more than a decade earlier. The last cut was in end of December 2019 which sent the New York and other stock markets skyrocketing. "Whereas a year ago the Fed was reigning rates and earnings were rolling over, this year you have felt the Fed has been on your side", said James Cluny who manages asset firm "Jupiter's Absolute Return Fund". "They are willing to do QE-4 at a stock market (record) high, which is extra ordinary" he added, referring to Fed efforts to bring down a spike in money market rates that some suggest could presage a fourth round of quantitative easing asset purchase. That Fed shift and the worldwide blizzards of rate cuts that have come since have fired bond markets up like a rocket. US Treasuries, the world's benchmark government IOU have made a whopping 9.4pc after yields. That followed a near 40 basis point fall the last quarter of 2018, after five quarters in which they had consistently risen. German Bunds-Europe's safest asset have had their best year in five years,

making roughly 5.5pc in Euro terms as the European Central Bank has reversed course too. The yield on 10 year debt had dropped below zero per cent for the first time since 2016 in March and dived as deep as 0.74pc in September. In commodities, oil has raced up almost 25pc following its best first quarter since 2009. That, plus key dividend rule changes has also made Russia's stock market the best in the world with a 40pc rise and also made the Ruble as one of the top three currencies.

Statistics likely to make most jaws drop is that Greek banks-remember all that Euro debt crisis and capital controls stuff a few years back?-have been some of the world's best performing stocks this year. The country's biggest lender Piraeus Bank is up 250pc as is smaller Attica Bank, helping make Athens Europe's strongest bourse this year. Tech has remained on top more broadly. Apple may just have lost its crown to world's most valuable firm, Saudi Aramco, but it can console itself with its 77pc leap this year. Facebook has surged 57pc, Microsoft 53pc Google 30pc, Netflix 24pc and Amazon 19pc. China's tech sector is right in mix too with a 64pc rally and online Alibaba up 53pc.

Despite almost daily Brexit chaos, the loss of two prime ministers and a general election, UK gilts have returned 4.5pc and a near 6pc rise could land sterling its best quarter since 2009. As usual the big swings have been in emerging markets. Argentina's Peso and Turkey's Lira, 2018's punch bags have taken another beating. Argentina's woes have worsened such that it is restructuring its debt again while Turkey's worries have not really gone away. At the other end of the spectrum a new president and a new reform agenda have seen Ukraine's Hryvnia rocket 19pc. Russia's Ruble is up 11pc and Egypt's Pound is sandwiched in between with an 11.7pc gain. As stability became the key word at China's annual Central Economic Work Conference, head of the UK Investment Office at UBS Wealth Management noted that the realization of China's objectives for 2020 can help reduce uncertainty for the world economy.

I am struck by the breadth and scope of China's engagement with the world. There is now no matter of global importance in which Chi-

na does not participate, said Robert Lawrence Kuhn Chairman of the Kuhn Foundation. China has been a major growth engine for the world economy and its economics health bears global significance, said International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. There is a clear commitment of the Chinese government to continue its "integration with global economy", said Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Roberto Azevedo. "Connecting more to others, importing more, exporting more, all those connectives are fundamental if we are looking at the long term sustainable process of development. I think the role and performance of Chinese economy reflects China's global importance precisely as a precursor of international trade", said Jose Luis de la Cruz, Director of Mexico's Institute of Industrial Development and Economic Growth.

In recent years especially the past decade, China has been open to trade with the entire world and that benefits not only China's development, but also the world's. Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said, "At a time when we are seeing major players "look inward" or look for protectionism, which excludes others, China advocates that we embrace international solidarity, we open up opportunity in our economies for greater and deeper engagement. Maintaining steady and consistent exports plays a vital role in boosting economic growth for all member states, especially for the poor countries. If China keeps its market wide open to all, it will dramatically help boost related countries economic growth," said Former Vice Chairman of the United Nations (UN) Business Council, John W. Allen. The trade war between the US and China which held the global economy hostage for almost two years finally signalled an end on the 15 January 2020 when both sign phase one of the agreement for trade regulation. The decision will not only benefit both countries but also benefit other countries whose economies are dependent on these two economic juggernauts.

"The writer is former DG (Emigration) and consultant ILO, IOM"

Chinese embassy rejects Alice Wells' 'negative' remarks internationally recognized Chinese companies working on CPEC



A spokesperson of the Chinese embassy in Pakistan took strong exception to a negative statement by the US Secretary of State Alice Wells with regard to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and said it was nothing but just denying the basic facts and spreading rumors. "There is no truth whatsoever in her reported allegations that there was no transparency in CPEC projects, and that Pakistan's debt burden was growing due to the Chinese financing. Alice in her statement had alleged cost escalation in railways ML-1 upgrade project, and said the Chinese companies joining CPEC were blacklisted by the World Bank.

When asked to comment on her statement, a spokesperson of the Chinese embassy said: "We noted that during her recent visit to Pakistan, Ms Alice Wells Acting Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs of the US State Department, made negative comments on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor again. The comments hold nothing new, but the same cliché in her speech in November 2019, which has been repeatedly rejected by China and Pakistan. However the US side still ignores the facts and is obsessed with the story it made for the CPEC.

We would be more than glad to see the US develop its relationship with Pakistan, but we strongly oppose the US interferes into China-Pakistan relations and the CPEC, said the Chinese spokesperson adding, although one can never wake up a person who is pretending to be asleep, we have to make our position clear and reject the negative propaganda by the US.

"We must not let the truth be distorted and the lies run wild," the spokesperson said. In CPEC projects, China and Pakistan have been

firmly committed to the principles of mutual consultation and cooperation for shared benefits, the spokesperson further said. We put Pakistani people's interests first. Major progress has been achieved in the past 5 years, with 32 projects achieving early harvests.

It shows that the CPEC is playing an important role in boosting Pakistan's socioeconomic development and improving people's livelihood. Whether the CPEC works, the answer should be given by the Pakistani people rather than the US.

Under the CPEC, during its planning or implementation, every project is equally discussed, carefully studied and jointly implemented by both China and Pakistan. The Chinese government always requests the Chinese companies to operate according to local laws and regulations.

All Chinese companies joining the CPEC enjoy international reputation and all projects strictly follow the market-oriented and internationally accepted business model, adopt state of art technology and strict environmental protection standards. The entire process is open and transparent and is in line with international norm. The spokesperson said, "We keep in touch with the relative accountability agencies of Pakistan and it is agreed that the CPEC is clean. The US holds a stick of sanction all over the world blacklists this and that country, but it is not for global economy, just ways to serve its own political purpose."

Regarding the so-called debt issue, according to statistics from the State Bank of Pakistan, the total foreign debt of Pakistan is US\$110 billion.

In fact, international financial institutions including the Paris Club and IMF are the largest creditors of Pakistan. Loan for the CPEC is about US\$ 5.8 billion said the spokesperson adding accounting for

5.3% of Pakistan's total foreign debt, with a repayment period of 20-25 years and an interest rate of approximately 2%.

Its repayments will start in 2021, with annual repayments of about US\$ 300 million and it will never be a burden to Pakistan, he spokesperson said. Moreover, China has never forced other countries to pay debts, and will not make unreasonable demands on Pakistan. The US keeps fabricating the so-called debt story, their mathematics is bad, and their intention is worse.

As to the cost of the ML-1 project, we have said many times the initial design of the project was jointly accomplished by the China Railway No 2 Bureau, National Engineering Services Pakistan Limited (NESPAC), and Pakistan Railway Advisory & Consultancy Services Ltd (PRACS). The project was launched in 2016, and the initial designs were submitted in May 2017.

In April, 2019, it has successfully passed the initial design review, organized by Pakistan Railways (PR), of the complex including Mott McDonald Pakistan (MMP), Canarail and the Crimson, the spokesperson further said adding, as the project has not yet been approved, the amounts of the project will be adjusted according to the actual condition and the needs of Pakistan. After finalizing the design of the project, we would initiate bidding in accordance with international practice and this is a completely normal business practice.

China-Pakistan ties are rock-solid and unbreakable. China will continue to work with the Pakistani government and people to steadily advance the BRI and CPEC to promote regional peace and development, the spokesperson said.

Alice Wells' Anti-CPEC sentiments ignore the facts



By Zamir Ahmed Awan

Acting US Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Alice Wells visited Pakistan on 19-22 January 2020. She met with Pakistani Officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Trade, Commerce, Industry, and Textile.

A broad range of issues were discussed at official meetings including bilateral relations, trade and investment, passport and visa issues, political and diplomatic issues, Afghan peace issues, regional, geopolitical, India and Kashmir issues. Wells also interacted with civil society and expressed her concerns over CPEC. She again criticized CPEC as being a debt trap, expensive, and lacking transparency. Although all these questions have been clarified in detail many times already, from her anti-CPEC sentiments, it seems that she had specifically planned on an anti-CPEC mission.

Pakistan's civil society responded precisely and conveyed the strong message that Pakistan wants to restore its relations with the US while keeping its national interests as a prime and strategic interest with China intact.

China and Pakistan have been firmly committed to CPEC. It is a consensus-based decision, based on principles of mutual consultation and cooperation for shared benefits. Major progress has been achieved in the past five years, with 32 projects achieving early results. This has significantly improved local transportation infrastructure and power supply, directly created over 75,000 jobs and contributed one to two percent to GDP growth in Pakistan. It shows that CPEC is playing an important role in boosting Pakistan's socio-economic development and improving people's livelihoods.

Under the CPEC, during its planning or implementation, every project is mutually discussed, carefully studied and jointly implemented by both China and Pakistan. All Chinese companies participating in the CPEC enjoy an international reputation. All projects strictly follow market-oriented and internationally accepted business models, adopt state of the art technology and strict environmental protection standards.



Alice Wells Acting US Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia.

The entire process is open and transparent and is in line with international norms.

Regarding the so-called debt issue, according to statistics from the State Bank of Pakistan, the total foreign debt of Pakistan is 110 billion US dollars. In fact, international financial institutions including the Paris Club and IMF are the largest creditors of Pakistan. Loans from the CPEC total about 5.8 billion US dollars, accounting for 5.3 percent of Pakistan's total foreign debt. This will never be a burden for Pakistan. Moreover, China will not make unreasonable demands on Pakistan.

Pakistan understands well the ongoing rivalry between China and the US. The US is openly opposing BRI, resisting the rise of China and is overly engaged in containing and countering China. But if they choose Pakistan for this purpose, they might have taken the wrong option. China-Pakistan relations are unique in nature,

and cannot be compared with any other countries. During the seven decades of our friendship, we never had any issue or hurdle and hope in future our relations are set to strengthen even further. We are time-tested, all-weather and trustworthy friends. We have stood with each other in all difficult moments. We have supported each other on all domestic, regional and global issues. There exists an absolute harmony between the two "Iron Brothers" – a unique term used only for China-Pakistan relations.

The opinions expressed in this article belong solely to the author.

"Zamir Ahmed Awan is a senior fellow with the Center for China and Globalization (CCG) and a sinologist at the National University of Sciences and Technology in Pakistan."



25th Anniversary of Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan

By Ms. Amina Malik

Home of Neutrality

In 2020, our country celebrates the 25th anniversary of the international recognition of the Neutrality of Turkmenistan, which is certainly a landmark event not only for the Turkmen nation, but for the entire world community.

In this regard, we would like to bring to the attention of our Pakistani friends about what has been significant in the foreign policy of Neutral Turkmenistan recently and about plans for 2020.

Chairmanship of Turkmenistan in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea

Taking an active position in solving the pressing problems of our time, Turkmenistan advocates deepening and expanding a fruitful partnership in the format of the UN, the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, and other large authoritative organizations and structures, striving to help optimize interaction on issues that concern all of humanity today. (that is why we also invited representatives of the UN in Pakistan to today's event).

The initiatives voiced by the Turkmen leader at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio + 20", the UN Summit on Sustainable Development for the period after 2015, held at

the 70th session of the UN General Assembly, and other international forums are aimed at this.

Among these initiatives are proposals to open a Regional Center for Technologies Related to Climate Change in Central Asia in Ashgabat, as well as to develop a special UN Program for Saving the Aral Sea and the UN Water Strategy.

Back in 2012, at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio + 20," President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov outlined the problem of the Aral Sea:

"Another difficult problem is the salvation of the Aral Sea. Without its solution it is difficult to talk about fulfilling the tasks of sustainable development in Central Asia. The Aral Sea today is a disaster zone, the consequences of which directly affect the lives and health of hundreds of thousands of people, have a negative impact on the economic, social and environmental situation throughout the region ... In this regard, our country proposes to begin to develop measures that would be advisable to implement in as a separate area of UN activity."

From 2017 to 2019, Turkmenistan chaired the



International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and during this period Turkmenistan organized and carried out a number of important events aimed at realizing the goals and objectives of the Fund. First of all, it should be noted that the Summit of the founders of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea held on August 24, 2018 in the city of Turkmenbashi.

The subject of extensive discussion at the Summit of the Presidents of the five Central Asian countries was the joint actions of these states to improve the environmental situation and the integrated use of water resources of the Aral Sea basin in the context of climate change, further strengthen partnerships to address water, environmental and socio-economic issues, interaction with international organizations.

One of the main outcomes of the summit was the fact that the leaders of the five countries reaffirmed their commitment to the previously adopted decisions on the joint management and rational use of water resources and environmental protection in the Aral Basin, taking into account the interests of all parties on the principles of good neighborliness and mutual respect.

In particular, they expressed their readiness to further improve the organizational structure and the legal framework of IFAS in order to create an effective and sustainable institutional mechanism capable of responding to new challenges in a timely manner.

In addition, unanimity was reached on the implementation of regional projects and programs aimed at saving the Aral Sea, ecological recovery of the Aral Sea and the Aral Sea basin, as well as in the integrated use and protection of water resources of transboundary watercourses, water management, energy and socio-economic development.

In addition, this was reflected in the Joint Communiqué adopted at the end of the Summit.

In accordance with the decisions taken at the meetings of the Board of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in January and August 2018, regional working groups were created to develop a "Program of Action to Assist the Aral Sea Basin Countries (ASBP-4)" and "Improving the institutional and legal mechanisms of IFAS".

During 2018-2019, three meetings of the above groups were held, with the participation of national experts and international partners, the draft ASBP-4 was prepared and sent for approval to the founding countries of IFAS.

Multilateral consultations were also held on the development of a UN Special Program for the countries of the Aral Sea region, organized by the IFAS Executive Committee together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.



Representatives of UN agencies and specialized agencies, other international organizations, specialists and experts attended them from specialized structures of Central Asian countries.

Along with this, the IFAS Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development adopted the Regional Environmental Program for Sustainable Development of Central Asia (CAEEP), aimed at implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals and environmental conventions, introducing the principles of a green economy and adapting to climate change.

The constructive position of the President of Turkmenistan in this direction is supported by the international community. A clear evidences of this are the two Resolutions of UNGA "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for the Saving of the Aral Sea", the first of which was unanimously adopted in April 2018 at the 82nd meeting of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, the second - at May 2019 85 meeting of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly. (<https://undocs.org/ru/A/RES/73/297>)

These documents, developed at the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan, were a significant step towards the formation of a legal framework for interaction between the UN and IFAS on a systematic basis.

In general, during the chairmanship of Turkmenistan in the IFAS, a new impetus was given to the cooperation of Central

Asian countries on the whole spectrum of environmental protection issues based on successful experience gained, intensification of interaction between the states of the region with the largest international organizations, primarily the UN, its specialized agencies and institutions.

In this regard, Turkmenistan is grateful to international partners, including the UN structures for their support in implementing the activities of the IFAS Executive Committee.

Cooperation in the Caspian Sea and the First Caspian Economic Forum

Strengthening constructive cooperation in the Caspian is one of the priority vectors of Turkmenistan's foreign policy based on the principles of positive neutrality, good neighborliness and "open doors". Our country makes a significant contribution to realizing the impressive diverse potential of the ancient Khazar, fully contributing to securing for it the status of a sea of peace, friendship and harmony.

Turkmenistan has repeatedly become the venue for various international conferences, negotiations, meetings, and seminars on Caspian issues.

As the head of state emphasizes, Turkmenistan will always take an active position on issues of the Caspian Sea in order to ensure peace, security and stability in the region, strengthen friendship, good neighborliness and broad





interaction between coastal states and their peoples, united by centuries-old historical and cultural ties.

Vivid evidence of practical steps in this direction is the fact that it was on the initiative of the head of the Turkmen state Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov that important documents on partnership in the Caspian were prepared and subsequently adopted.

Among them are Agreements on cooperation in the field of conservation and rational use of aquatic biological resources of the Caspian Sea, prevention and liquidation of emergencies, as well as in trade, economic and transport sectors.

During the chairmanship of Turkmenistan in CASCOM, the regional committee for hydrometeorology, work on the relevant agreement was completed.

Currently, expert meetings are held in our country to agree on draft agreements, the initiative for the development of which was put forward by the President of Turkmenistan at the Fifth Caspian Summit - in the field of scientific research and the search and rescue operations in the Caspian.

In addition, Turkmenistan provides a negotiation platform for the development of two protocols to the Agreement in the field of security in the Caspian Sea - in the field of combating illegal extraction of biological resources (poaching) and ensuring the safety of navigation.

Since 2013, a training course on the Caspian Sea - Sustainable Development and Management is held annually in the Avaza National Tourist Zone. This event, initiated by President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, was organized by the Turkmen side in conjunction with the International Ocean Institute, a United Nations partner for all countries of the Caspian region.

Another striking evidence of the foreign policy of positive neutrality of Turkmenistan was the first Caspian Economic Forum, which was held on August 11-12, 2019 in Turkmenistan in the Avaza National Tourist Zone.

As the President of Turkmenistan said in a welcoming speech to the participants of the Forum:

“A new, promising format of international partnerships is emerging, based on shared values and united by common goals and objectives.”

The results of the Forum were:

1. Agreements “to take the necessary steps to increase the attractiveness of the economies of the Caspian countries with a view to further actively integrating the Caspian region into the international economic space”. This is stated in a joint statement adopted at the end of the first Caspian Economic Forum.
2. Assessment of the potential of the transport infrastructure of Turkmenistan, especially the delivery of large and heavy cargoes to the Caspian region by various modes of transport, their transit to other Central Asian states.
3. 256 deals worth \$ 380 million and 96.6 thousand manats (\$ 27.6 thousand) were concluded. In addition, this is for only 2 days of the forum.
4. Turkmen entrepreneurs concluded deals worth 43 million manat (\$ 12.3 million) in the domestic market.
5. Entrepreneurs from Russia, China, the UAE, Afghanistan and other countries, purchased the oil and gas and chemical industries of Turkmenistan. The total amount of transactions amounted to \$ 335 million.
6. Businesspersons from Turkey and

Switzerland concluded deals in the field of agriculture in the amount of \$ 36.9 million.

7. The signing ceremony of the documents fixing the agreements reached during the meetings and sessions held on the fields of the KEF-2019 took place. In general, 57 international documents were adopted at various levels, which relate to cooperation in such areas as information technology, investment cooperation, trade, economic and financial sphere, diplomacy, transport, electricity, light industry, agriculture and water management, sports, etc.

8. The “Statement of the Chairmanship of the First Caspian Economic Forum” held on August 11-12, 2019 at the Avaza NTZ was adopted and distributed as a document of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly and published in the official languages of this international organization, which emphasized the historical significance. The final document of the First KEF and the conceptual proposals of the President of Turkmenistan included in it, examining the Caspian problems in the context of global contemporary tasks - preserving peace on the planet Land, environmental protection, ensuring economic, energy and food security, an effective fight against universal threats.

2020- Turkmenistan Home of Neutrality

In 2020, Turkmenistan marks a significant event - the 25th anniversary of the international recognition of the neutrality of Turkmenistan. In this regard, 2020 will be held according to the slogan: “Turkmenistan Home of Neutrality”.

An important partner of Turkmenistan in the international arena is international organizations, and one of the first important events in Turkmenistan in the new 2020 year was the International Conference “Turkmenistan and International Organizations: Cooperation for Peace and Development”, held on January 14, 2020 in Ashgabat, dedicated to the celebration of 2020- The year of the 25th anniversary of the permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan under the slogan “Turkmenistan is the homeland of Neutrality.”

The President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov attended the grand opening of the International Conference.

At the beginning of his speech, the President of Turkmenistan announced an international high-level conference “The policy of neutrality and its importance in ensuring international peace, security and sustainable development”, which is scheduled to be held on December 12 this year in Ashgabat and called for the participation of representatives of the UN and friendly countries.

Further, the head of state spoke about the background of the neutrality of our country, and also outlined the main directions of



Turkmenistan's foreign policy at this stage.

For Turkmenistan, which gained independence in a hard time, when the entire system of international relations was going through a period of radical changes, the issue of choosing a foreign policy had become one of the most important, the President said.

Turkmenistan chose a model called positive neutrality and formulated its fundamental provisions: peacefulness, non-interference in the affairs of other states, respect for their sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-participation in international military organizations and treaties.

We began to purposefully pursue a sovereign, neutral, but at the same time active and constructive foreign policy. It is not surprising, therefore, that the world has kindly and understandingly reacted to our efforts to consolidate the neutrality of Turkmenistan as an international legal status. Our country received support first from its neighbors in the region, then in the Non-Aligned Movement.

On December 12, 1995, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution "Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan."

It was a wise, visionary decision. Time has shown its conformity with the long-term goals of the United Nations, the interests of the development of the states and peoples of the planet in peace and security. Subsequent events have confirmed this clearly.

President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov emphasized that the neutrality of Turkmenistan has become a significant factor in international peacekeeping efforts in our region, recalling that a series of negotiations were held in Ashgabat under the auspices of the UN, which

played an important role in achieving peace and harmony in Tajikistan. The capital of our neutral state has become the venue for negotiations to resolve the intra-Afghan conflict in the late 90s of the last century.

Turkmenistan has become a reliable ally and effective UN partner in maintaining and maintaining political stability in the region, developing good neighborliness, friendship and cooperation. This was also confirmed in the decision of the international community with the support of all the states of the region on the opening in 2007 in Ashgabat of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

"We took this as a huge responsibility and at the same time as evidence of confidence in Turkmenistan from the United Nations," the head of state said.

"Today, Turkmen neutrality is a significant factor in regional security. Its basic principles are fully consistent with the UN strategic objectives in Central Asia, aimed at turning the region into a zone of peace and cooperation, a strong link of continental stability. In this context, the UN can always count on the support of Turkmenistan, using the political and diplomatic means inherent in neutrality to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust, favorable conditions for equal and constructive partnership," said President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

The head of state noted that the importance of neutrality in modern conditions is eloquently evidenced by the fact that the UN General Assembly proclaimed Turkmenistan on December 12 as the International Day of Neutrality (February 2, 2017, the UN General Assembly, by its resolution (A / RES / 71/275), proclaimed December 12 as International Day

neutrality).

The unanimously adopted resolution, in particular, emphasizes the importance of the policy of neutrality in strengthening international peace and security at the regional and global levels, its role in the development of peaceful, friendly and mutually beneficial relations between countries.

Turkmenistan sees the establishment of a culture of dialogue in resolving emerging issues and contradictions as one of its priorities as a neutral state.

As you know, on September 12 last year, the UN General Assembly unanimously and co-sponsored 73 member states adopted a resolution initiated by Turkmenistan to declare 2021 the International Year of Peace and Confidence.

It is significant that in the text of the resolution the great importance of preventive diplomacy, which is consistently promoted by Turkmenistan, is recorded. "There is every reason to believe that after the adoption of the resolution, preventive diplomacy will play a more significant role in preventing conflicts, consolidating and maintaining peace and stability in different parts of the world, and act as one of the most effective practical tools of multilateral diplomacy," the Turkmen leader said.

The head of state expressed his conviction that the adopted resolution is highly relevant and timely, especially against the background of those difficult trends in international politics, when, despite the efforts of the world community, the situation in a number of regions of the globe remains difficult, there is an expansion of conflict zones and, at the same time, a decrease in the general level of trust and mutual understanding in views on the



paths and prospects of global development.

“In this context, our country will develop and submit for consideration by the UN a number of proposals for the International Year of Peace and Confidence with the maximum practical benefit for efforts to ensure peace and security,” the President of Turkmenistan said, noting that “in the formation of these initiatives and their further implementation, we look forward to working closely with relevant UN entities and other international organizations.”

Also at the current session of the UN General Assembly, Turkmenistan took the initiative to develop a Code of Practice on the application of the principles of neutralism in ensuring peace and security. “We believe that this is a very useful initiative, and we count on your support in its implementation,” said the head of state, addressing the forum participants.

Such a document could be used by the international community as an effective lever for preventing possible confrontations, preventing their escalation and escalating into a power stage, for transferring conflict-generating processes into a peaceful, negotiating channel.

“Recently, we also proposed the creation of the Group of Friends of Neutrality in the Interests of Peace and Security,” President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov continued, expressing readiness for the closest cooperation with all parties interested in promoting this initiative.

In our country, together with international organizations, a number of national and regional programs and projects are being implemented. In particular, on December 6 last year, the National Strategy of Turkmenistan on preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism for 2020–2024 and the National Action Plan for 2020–2022 on combating human trafficking were adopted.

As the Turkmen leader further emphasized, today the issue of supporting reconciliation processes in Afghanistan is of particular importance. The head of state reaffirmed the position of Turkmenistan: as a neutral state and a direct neighbor of Afghanistan, our country is ready to provide all the necessary conditions for establishing a peaceful dialogue on Afghanistan. “There is no alternative to the negotiation

process,” the President of Turkmenistan said. All previous experience has shown that force methods are counterproductive and have no prospects.

For many years, Turkmenistan has provided Afghanistan with concrete, targeted economic and humanitarian support. It is expressed in the construction of medical and educational institutions in the territory of a neighboring country, the preferential supply of electricity, the training of Afghan students in Turkmen educational institutions, the regular dispatch of humanitarian supplies to Afghanistan, and other types of assistance and assistance. All this is financed by Turkmenistan from its own resources.

The key condition for the political stabilization, economic and social recovery of Afghanistan, its successful integration into regional and world economic processes is the implementation of large infrastructure projects with Afghan participation, primarily in such vital areas as energy, transport and communications.

Noting that today the priority is given to the economic aspect of Turkmen neutrality, which implies the creation of conditions for the accelerated socio-economic growth of our country, the development of its mutually beneficial foreign economic and trade ties, the President emphasized that neutrality guarantees such cooperation from any politicization and ensures equal treatment to all our foreign partners. The determining criteria here are mutual benefit, economic and commercial feasibility, respect for the traditions and laws of our country.

The provisions of neutrality of Turkmenistan, a non-confrontational worldview, our strict adherence to the UN Charter and international legal norms are fully manifested in the implementation of international projects in which the country participates. Their focus is determined not only by commercial and economic benefits, but also by the desire to ensure the rapprochement of states and create an atmosphere of greater trust and predictability in their relations.

In this context, the head of state emphasized that Turkmenistan, fully supporting the UN Agenda 2030, immediately began to take

consistent and substantive steps to implement the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level. About 150 tasks and about 200 indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals, approved at the government level, were selected. Thus, according to the UN, Turkmenistan became the first country in the region of Eastern Europe and the CIS, which determined its priorities for sustainable development for implementation over the next 15 years.

Today, the most important parameters of the Sustainable Development Goals are organically integrated into the Program for the Socio-Economic Development of Turkmenistan for the period 2019-2025. In the economic part of this Program, the implementation of the SDGs is designed to promote universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy supply, sustainable economic growth and full employment, the creation of a flexible infrastructure, support for sustainable industrialization and the promotion of innovation. Most important is given to the widespread digitalization of the economy.

“Turkmenistan is entering the anniversary year of the 25th anniversary of its neutrality in an atmosphere of peace and creation, good neighborliness, respect and mutual understanding with its friends and partners in the world community,” the Turkmen leader concluded the speech.

December 11-12, 2020

On December 11-12, 2020, a high-level international conference “The policy of neutrality and its importance in ensuring international peace, security and sustainable development” is planned. Within the framework of the conference, a special website was created: <https://neutrality.gov.tm/>

Planned Activities:

1. Exhibition “Turkmenistan - Home of Neutrality”
2. Sessions in seven areas within the framework of the international conference “The policy of Neutrality and its importance in ensuring international peace, security and sustainable development”

Potential of the Pakistan-Turkmenistan cooperation.

Despite the fact that the countries of Pakistan and Turkmenistan appeared on the world map relatively recently, between the peoples living in these territories, relations were established in ancient times. Harappan civilization influenced Bactria and Margiana, for some time the territories were united by Arians, and finally, a native of the steppes of Turkmenistan, Mahmoud Ghaznevi, founded the Delhi Sultanate. The Mughal Empire conducted trade

and political relations with the peoples of the steppe and the future Pakistanis and Turkmens became divided during the Great Game and the division of zones of influence of the Russian and British empires.

Thus, the modern rapprochement between Turkmenistan and Pakistan is a logical continuation of the long historical stage of continuous interaction and cooperation.

Interaction points: - First of all, the implementation of joint projects - TAPI, an Optical fiber line (cable simultaneously with TAPI) and TAP.

The President of Turkmenistan His Excellency Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov:

In the short term, the gas pipeline Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan – India will intensify economic development and brotherhood relations and contribute to the prosperity and well-being of the countries of the entire region. The year 2018 named “Turkmenistan – The Heart of the Great Silk Road” will be written on the golden pages of history of humanity. This year Turkmenistan intensifies relations with international partners and orients on the revival of the Great Silk Road. Today the supportive fiber-optic system of Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan – India gas pipeline, Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan electric line is laid, Serkhetabad – Turgundi railroad are put into operation, and this festive event will shine over the whole world.

TAPI

TAPI gas pipeline - a gas pipeline under construction with a length of 1,634 km from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The design capacity is 33 billion cubic meters of gas per year. Thanks to the policy of “neutrality,” Turkmenistan was able to work on the same project with Pakistan and India, which are formally at war, adding Afghanistan to this cocktail, the situation in which is also far from calm.

Estimated area: Galkynysh (Turkmenistan) - Herat (Afghanistan) - Kandahar (Afghanistan) - Quetta (Pakistan) - Multan (Pakistan) - Fazilka (India).

On December 13, 2015, in the Turkmen city of Mary, the ceremony of laying the first stone of the construction of the gas pipeline, which will run along the route Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan - India (TAPI), was held.

Effects of TAPI for Pakistan:

1. Reducing the cost of gas for Pakistan and better security (even residents of the capital experience a permanent gas shortage in Pakistan, especially in the winter, most Pakistani villages are still not gasified)
2. Pakistan, periodically confronted



with power outages, needs a reliable supply of oil and gas, both for growing consumption by the population and for developing industry

3. Establishment of active partnerships between TAPI countries (position “pipeline-peacekeeper”)

4. Restoring Afghanistan’s economy and stability in the Baluchistan region.

On January 20, 2020, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, during a government meeting on social and economic development programs, instructed officials to take measures to accelerate the implementation of the TAPI gas pipeline construction project.

Fiber optic line

The countries connected by TAPI are supposed to be combined due to the fiber optic line running parallel to the gas pipe.

817 km of fiber-optic cable will be laid in Afghanistan with 100 Gb / s speed with the capacity to increase it to 6 Tb / s. The laying of fiber-optic cable facility of the Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan - India - currently is one of the most critical projects. The Ministry of Communication of Turkmenistan implements this project. The fiber-optic facility will conduct the monitoring of gas pipeline and provides the data of Europe, Asia and south-east Asia.

TAP

Power line Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan. Like the gas sector, Pakistan needs to export electricity. The country’s existing power plants are not able to meet the growing needs of the population and industry. Fan blackouts are an ordinary event for the country, even for the capital.

It has been in development since the heads of state of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a power interconnection project in December 2015 at Mary, Turkmenistan.

In Ashgabat in December 31, 2017, bilateral Memorandum of understanding between Energetics Ministry of Turkmenistan and “Çalyk Holding A.Ş.” on implementation of the project of electric line Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan was signed.

In February 2018, the laying of power lines along the route Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan took place.

Power transmission line will be laid along the route

- Mary (Turkmenistan)- Herat (Afghanistan) - Kandahar (Afghanistan) – Quetta (Pakistan)

At the same time, the benefit of Pakistan from this power line is obvious:

1. Meeting the needs of the growing population in electricity
2. Meeting industry’s electricity needs
3. Electricity cost reduction
4. Increasing safety and reducing injuries for the population (currently, with a shortage of state electricity supplies, the population is actively using generators and other handicraft equipment with a high degree of injury)

On January 24, 2020, Ashgabat signed the Agreement on cooperation in the implementation of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) transmission line project. It was concluded between the Ministry of Energy of Turkmenistan and TAPP-500 Power Transmission Line FZE, a subsidiary of Çalyk Holding A.Ş. (Turkey).

The document prescribed to begin construction work in February 2020 and pass the power lines in August 2021. We are talking about the construction at the first stage of a power line to the Turkmen-Afghan border in the direction of Mary hydroelectric station - the city of Herat (Afghanistan).

Thus, the TAP project takes on reality.



Diplomatic Focus Hosted Dinner Reception

The Editor/CEO and Publisher of a very prestigious magazine "Diplomatic Focus" **Mr. Mian Fazal Elahi** hosted beautiful evening to honor the extremely honorable, esteemed and legendary envoys to welcome and congratulate and also gave farewell to the outgoing Envoys. H. E. Mr. Borhene El Kamel, Ambassador of Republic of Tunisia to Islamic Republic of Pakistan and H. E. Mr. Sayed Mohammad Al Hosseini Ambassador of Republic of Iran. Both Ambassadors are going to contribute their valuable services for strengthening Pakistan relations with their countries throughout their tenure here in Pakistan and we hope that as ambassador they will deliver more efforts to strengthen the relations of Pakistan with other countries. The role of the ambassadors, envoys and high commissioners and diplomats during their tenure is commendable and their services for promoting bilateral and trade relations between their respectable countries and Pakistan are indeed laudable. The outgoing Envoys are H.E. Mr. & Mrs. Stefano Pontecorvo, Ambassador of the Republic of Italy to Islamic Republic of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. & Mrs. Ahmed Saleem High commissioner of Maldives, H.E. Mr. & Mrs. Ahmed Fadel yacoub Ambassador of Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Mr. & Mrs. Noordeen Mohamad Shaheid High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan. On behalf of Diplomatic Focus and its team Mian Fazal Elahi would also wish best of luck to Pakistani Friends who has recently designated in different countries. H.E. Mr. Dr. Ali Ahmed Arain designated Ambassador of Pakistan to Senegal, H.E. Mr. Mohammad Nadeem Khan designated Ambassador of Pakistan to Greece, H.E. Mr. Mohammad Faisal designated Ambassador of Pakistan to Germany, H.E. Mr. Dr. Zafar Iqbal designated Ambassador of Pakistan to Romania, H.E. Mr. Malik M. Farooq designated Ambassador of Pakistan to Poland, H.E. Mr. Ahmad Farooq designated Ambassador of Pakistan to Denmark, H.E. Mr. Vice Admiral (R) Ather Mukhtar designated High Commissioner of Pakistan to Maldives, H.E. Mr. Major General (R) Umar Farooq Burki Designated Ambassador of Pakistan to Jordan.

In the end of the reception Mian Fazal Elahi convey vote of thanks and said it is indeed a great pleasure as well an honor to have such distinguished guests with us this evening.









Pakistan a Safe Country to Travel, Dr Christian Turner, BHC to Pakistan

By Monitoring Desk

The United Kingdom has changed its travel advice after assessment of the security situation in Pakistan terming it much improved and safe for Pakistanis. According to an announcement by the High Commission of the United Kingdom the decision (change of travel advisory) is the result of a comprehensive review of UK travel advice for Pakistan, based on a wideranging assessment of the country's security situation. This is the first major update in the travel advice since 2015, the statement further says. Earlier, last year the improved security situation allowed for the return of

British Airways to Pakistan in June 2019 and then the visit by The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in October 2019. Among other changes, the advice now allows for travel by road to the North of Pakistan as well as the Kalesh and Bamboret Valleys, the statement further said. British High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr Christian Turner while welcoming the improved security situation in Pakistan said, "Following my arrival in December 2019, I made this review of the travel advice a priority." It is great credit to the hard work of the Government of Pakistan in delivering improved security over the past five years. I am delighted that British nationals will be

able to see more of what Pakistan has to offer, further said the UK high commissioner. Meanwhile, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Information & Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan has welcomed the new travel advisory issued by the UK government to its citizens for visiting Pakistan. "We welcome the UK revision of travel advisory for Pakistan. This augurs well for promotion of tourism here making Pakistan destination of choice for international tourists. Heartening to see that under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan," says Dr Firdous in a twitter post.

Ms. Rohi Rizwan has taken charge as the Regional Chairperson of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) here at the FPCCI regional office Lahore.



By Staff Reporter

The newly elected President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Mian Anjum Nisar has appointed Vice President Roohi Rizwan as the Regional Chairperson of Punjab.

Roohi Rizwan took charge as the regional



chairperson at the FPCCI regional office. Addressing the members of the business community of Punjab, Nisar discussed in detail the economic outlook of Pakistan and plan of activities for the year 2020. she highlighted the problems faced by the business community in ease of doing business particularly in terms of rising interest rate, utility prices, and tax refunds etc. which were causing deindustrialization.

she assured of his full support and cooperation to member trade bodies for resolving their genuine issues related to trade and industry. She also emphasized on further strengthening the research and development activities in FPCCI for policy advocacy and improving the economic growth, reducing unemployment, poverty, removing twin deficit and enhancing exports.



Palestine gifts two mobile health units to Pakistan

The government of Palestine presented two Mobile Health Units for Pakistanis who do not have easy access to healthcare services by virtue of their geographical location.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on

Health Dr. Zafar Mirza received the Mobile Health Units as a gift from the people and government of Palestine at a ceremony attended by Palestine's Ambassador to Pakistan and Secretary Health Dr. Allah Bakhsh Malik. The event was held at the Embassy of

Palestine. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Zafar appreciated the value of the gift in the context of the crying need for health services in areas that are remotely located, with practically no health facilities in close proximity.





SATRANG Art Gallery

Satrang Gallery is honored to host the pride of performance winning artist and KB19 HM Habib Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Akram Dost Baloch in this amazing collection of new work titled 'Shanakht'. Akram Dost Baloch's imagery is not only a visual treat using bold colors and strong lines with traditional motifs but a socio-economic narrative of society and his people.



Dinner hosted in the honor of Ambassador of Spain & Rector of NUML

H.E Manual Duran the ambassador of Spain, Maj Gen Muhammad (r)Jaffar Malik Rector NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, Mr. Muhammad Ahmed President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) , Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik , Abdul Rauf Alam , Mr. Khalid Javid , Mr. Zafar Bakhtawari , Ch. Wahid Ud din , Mr. Tariq Sadiq , Ejaz abbasi , Mian Shaukat Masood , Sheikh Amir Waheed Mr.Zahid Maqbool ,Tahir Abbasi , Raja Humayyun Sarwar ,Asif Shah , Rehman Khan Ansar Mehmood Bhatti , Mian Fazal Elahi , Syed Anees Ahmed and Waqar Bakhtawari at a dinner in honor of the ambassador of Spain & Rector of NUML.



Nigerian Armed Forces Remembrance Day celebrated



The Defence Adviser Brigadier General Nasiru Usman Muktar & his spouse Hajiya Hauwa N Muktar hosted a reception on the occasion of Nigerian Armed Forces Remembrance Day. Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan Tbt, NI(M), Chief of Air Staff of the Pakistan Air Force was the chief guest. High commissioners, ambassadors, senior military officers of the Pakistan Armed Forces, defence advisers and attachés of different countries' High Commissioners and High Commissioner of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Amb Maj Gen Ashimiyu Adebayo Olaniyi, OON, mni and Dean of diplomatic corps & Ambassador of Turkmenistan Atadjan Movlamov present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan said both Nigeria and Pakistan have cordial relation. He said that the Nigerian and Pakistan's defence cooperation has spanned decades, beginning in the early 60s. The military cooperation between the two brotherly countries span areas of training, acquisition of hardware, logistics and platforms of the NA, NN and NAF. Pakistan has also cooperated with Nigeria in terms of military hardware to prosecute the counter terrorism war against Boko Haram insurgents.

Celebrating the Armed Force Day, the Brigadier General Nasiru Usman Muktar said that Nigerian Armed Forces have partnered with many friendly countries, most of whom are represented in this esteemed audience, in our bid to build a peaceful and prosperous nation and contribute to a better world. Pakistan Armed Forces have been a key ally in this regard.





Dean of Diplomatic Corps honored outgoing Envoys

Ambassador of Turkmenistan and Dean of Diplomatic Corps H.E. Atadjan Movlamov hosted farewell dinner reception in the honor of outgoing diplomats. The bid farewell is given to H.E. Mr. and Mrs. Stefano Pontecorvo, Ambassador of Republic of Italy, H.E. Mr. and Mrs. Ahmed Saleem High Commissioner of Maldives and H.E. Mr. and Mrs. Claudio Raja Gabaglia Lins Ambassador of Brazil at Marriott Hotel Islamabad. Member of Diplomatic Community, Government Officials, High dignitaries and media persons also graced the occasion.







Uzbek armed forces day celebrated

The embassy of Uzbekistan in Islamabad hosted its armed forces day in style with Uzbek Army Band presenting melodious tunes. The audiences were simply left spell-bound when an Uzbek female army officer sang famous Pakistani song 'Chanda karay salam, suraj karay salam.'

Another hallmark of the event was mesmerising performances of Uzbek children clad in traditional Uzbek dresses. The performers received huge applause from the audiences. Last but not the least, the Uzbek pilaf

(pullao) was yet another delicacy that attracted attention of especially the food lovers.

Ambassador of Uzbekistan Furqat Sikikov in his remarks said he was delighted to present these traditional Uzbek delicacies to the people of Pakistan and assured he will continue to do so even in the coming days.

The ambassador was all praise for the people of Pakistan for extending great love and affection to their Uzbek brothers and sisters and hoped both countries would continue to enjoy cordial and warm relations in the years

to come.

Ambassador Furqat said he was glad to announce that bilateral relations between the two countries had trounced new heights adding this relationship for sure would grow deeper and deeper and stronger with the each passing day.

It may be mentioned here that Uzbekistan has started direct flights from Lahore to Tashkent, which has given spur to trade and business activity besides boosting tourism prospects between the two countries.



Conference on Implications of Artificial Intelligence by COPAIR



Centre of Pakistan and International Relations (COPAIR) was established in 2016 as think-tank to develop policy matrix and propose actionable reforms in economic diplomacy and development agenda. Its President

Excellency Amna Malik has worked tirelessly to create an impact to bring about the change that all of us aspire for. Recommendations made by COPAIR on various forums need serious consideration. President

COPAIR Ms. Amna Malik organized a Conference on Implications of Artificial Intelligence on Governance in Islamabad. Ch. Fawad Hussain was the chief guest on the occasion.



Dr. Jamal Nasir Chairman Qamar Jahan Foundation hosted a dinner reception

Dr. Jamal Nasir Chairman Qamar Jahan Foundation hosted a dinner reception in the honor of His Excellency Abdul Rehman Al Matter Secretary General International Organization for Relief, welfare and rehabilitation Saudi Arabia. Members of Business Community, Government Officials, High dignitaries and media persons also graced the occasion.



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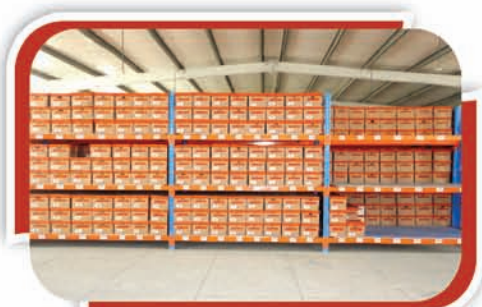
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