

Since
2012

ABC Certified

Vol. # 10 Issue # 03 www.diplomaticstar.com.pk

March 2021

Monthly

Islamabad

DIPLOMATIC STAR

Pakistan's Leading Diplomatic Affairs Magazine



Imran Khan's historic visit to Sri Lanka PM advises Sri Lanka to benefit from CPEC

Pakistan ready to
resolve disputes with
neighbors



COAS General Bajwa



Pakistan Day
Australian High
Commissioner's message



Tariq Mahmood Awan
Exposing Indian atrocities
digitally need of hour
Chairman Kashmir forum Berlin



APPLY NOW FOR GRADUATE STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES

FULBRIGHT 2022

About the Fulbright

Fulbright is the flagship scholarship program of the U.S. Department of State. The Fulbright-HEC PhD scholarship is funded by the Government of Pakistan and managed by the United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP) under Fulbright policies and regulations. The Fulbright scholarship funds graduate study in the United States for a Master's or PhD degree, including tuition, required textbooks, airfare, a living stipend, and health insurance. USEFP also assists with the visa process. Pakistani Fulbrighters are studying at universities all over the United States.

Application Process

For more information on eligibility and to download an application form, visit www.usefp.org. Complete application with all the required documents must be submitted online. Paper applications will not be considered.

Women, people with disabilities, and individuals from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan, Balochistan, Northern Sindh and Southern Punjab are highly encouraged to apply.

Eligibility

- Pakistani citizens with strong academic histories, residing in Pakistan and committed to returning and serving Pakistan are welcome to apply.
- All disciplines are eligible except clinical medicine. People in the fields of energy, water, agriculture, public health, education, social sciences, journalism and mass communication, arts and culture management including heritage conservation and museum studies, urban and regional planning, environmental science/studies, security/peace studies, and data science are strongly encouraged to apply.
- Eligible Master's applicants will have a four-year Bachelor's degree or a Bachelor's and Master's combination (16 years of formal education) and PhD applicants will have Master's, M.Phil., or a comparable degree (18 years of formal education) from an accredited university.
- The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is required for all applicants.
- Applicants should be prepared to complete grants without accompanying dependents, if need be.

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) will be required from all the selected candidates.

Plagiarism and misrepresentation in an application will lead to disqualification at any stage of the program.

**DEADLINE
JUNE 9, 2021**

Chief Editor

Raja Aamir Mahmood Bhatti

Publisher

Zahida Perveen

Executive Editor

Raja Asif Mahmood Bhatti

Chief Reporter

Khalid Ali Khan

Special Correspondent

Mohsin Ali

Photographer

Ramzan Mughal

Legal Advisors**Sajid Ilyas (Advocate)**

High Court & Supreme Court of Pakistan

Javid Iqbal (Advocate)

Supreme Court of Pakistan

Graphic Designer

Muhammad Ikhlaq

Printer:

Roohani Art Press, Islamabad

Office:House # R-62, St # 12, Ghouri Town,
Phase 4-A, Islamabad**Contact:** 0312-5077006

0333-5164302

Email: journalistbhatti@gmail.com**Price Rs:** 500**USA:** \$10**Euro zone:** €10

Afghan peace process

With Russia lending its support for a rapidly evolving new peace process in Afghanistan, it is possible for it to move faster in developing a new plan. Both the United States and Russia have now indicated that a power partnership between the Afghan Taliban and the government is the best way to move forward. The Afghan government also wants fresh elections to bring the Taliban into the national mainstream.

However, even large-scale strategies, despite blocking their stakes on new strategies, still address many concerns that have not been addressed. The most important factor, of course is violence. Civilians are deliberately targeted and while the Taliban do not claim every attack, the violence justifies their rhetoric and stance. Every attack and civilian death brings more fatigue to the issue in the West, the Afghan government and civilians.

The power-sharing agreement if accepted would require an end to bloodshed. Otherwise, bringing the Taliban into government will raise their voices but suppress others who are the subject of constant controversy. Any offer that the US and its allies make to the Taliban must set an end to violence as a precondition this time. If not we can see that non-state actors use any adjustment in the contract as a reason to continue to bleed.

It is also worrying that foreign powers do not maintain the protection of the rights of women, minorities and others as a central concern in any debate. All stakeholders must recognize that, above all, a "peaceful Afghanistan" means that there is no threat to its citizens. Regional peace is certainly important, but it does not exist if internal conflicts persist.

The road ahead is full of challenges. All stakeholders need to move around and find the best possible solution. But hastily charted and ignoring important internal sections of the people will only stop the violence not end it.

The pressure on the Biden administration to withdraw all US troops from Afghanistan, according to the May 1 deadline does not seem to die down anytime soon. The Taliban themselves are the latest to enter the heated debate with a warning. Staying beyond the previously-agreed-upon way out would tantamount to "violation of the agreement. There will be a reaction to their violation. Washington has been consistently advised not to leave war-torn areas without a lasting peace agreement. Congress has been repeatedly warned that such an unfortunate development would be a "disaster." There are fears that without US support Kabul will not stand any chance. Today's Afghanistan is no longer afraid of evil bloodshed.

Chief Editor

Raja Aamir Mahmood Bhatti

Disclaimer!

The views of the writers do not necessarily reflect the view of the magazine



Tariq Mahmood Awan

Exposing Indian atrocities digitally need of hour

Chairman Kashmir forum Berlin, Germany

By Shabbir Hussain

A high-level social media task force on a national level was more imperative in the wake of growing Indian Propaganda against Pakistan and Kashmir and counter them by exposing digitally to the world about ongoing atrocities of Indian Armed forces in Indian Illegal Occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

These views were expressed by the Chairman Kashmir Forum Berlin, Germany Tariq Mahmood Awan in an exclusive Interview with Diplomatic Star, he said the whole world is witnessing most worst Human Right situation in Kashmir where crimes against children, women at their peak in the valley.

Digitalized Social Media Campaign vital in a wake of growing Indian Propaganda against IIOJK and Pakistan

Taking advantage of the world-wide health crisis of COVID-19, he said the fascist Indian Government under the leadership of Narendra Modi has put its Hindu resettlement plan on fast-track to bring demographic changes in the Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), possibly for winning a long due public opinion or world attention in its favour.

Tariq Mahmood said that Narendra Modi's government was only promoting the Hinduvta ideology through its extremists organization called Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)

which inspired by the Nazis regime of Germany.

Chairman Kashmir Forum Berlin, Germany said that it was RRS mind set and philosophy that India has eliminated the special status of IIOJK by revoking articles 35-A and 370 of the Indian constitution on August 05, 2019 that barred non-Kashmiris to purchase a piece of land in the valley.

The August 5 move of India was followed by a strict curfew, compounded with the coronavirus lockdown and complete communication blackout in the valley was also a RRS mind set. He said the Indian initiative, under which it raised its army to 900,000 in the valley, received worldwide condemnation and

Kashmiris' outcry.

Narendra Modi promoting the Hinduvta ideology through its extremists organization RSS

The President of pro-India Peoples Democratic Party, Mehbooba Muftif, who had been puppet Chief Minister of IIOJK before the August 5 illegal, unconstitutional and immoral move, said that "none of us can forget August 5 robbery and insult." In an audio clip, posted by her on twitter said, "I have been set free after more than a year today. All this while the dark day of August 5, 2019 and the decisions taken on this day kept troubling me heart within hearts. I fully realise that the same feeling would have been that of all the people of Jammu and Kashmir. None of us can forget the robbery and insult committed on that day (August 5, 2019) and now we all must firmly decide that what was snatched away in an unconstitutional and undemocratic manner would be restored." Every act, which has been taken by India in IIOJK after revocation of the articles 370 and 35-A, is considered illegal. New Delhi has not only flouted the United

India also introduced a new domicile Act in the IIOJK and has reportedly issued over 500,000 to non-Kashmiris for gaining a majority in the plebiscite, which was long-due in line with the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

He said It was an attempt to muzzle the freedom voices in

compelling Kashmiris to sell their properties to non-Kashmiris. Earlier, the Indian government abolished Rooshni Act to compel Muslims to sell their properties they had purchased under the act in Jammu region. The sole aim was to maintain Hindu dominance in Jammu district.



By taking effective and target originated measures by Imran Khan give a new life to the Kashmir issue on all world forums including UNGA

Nations Security Council resolution but also violated its own constitution and bilateral agreements with Pakistan. Since then, India has stepped up its efforts to roll out its other illegal initiatives, aimed at turning the valley into a Hindu-dominant state by implementing its Hindu resettlement plan, which envisioned settlement of over 300,000 Hindu that had left the valley during 1989 protests.

Kashmir Scenario after August 5 move

Pointing about a briskly implementation of its Hindu Resettlement plan, Tariq Mahmood said

the IIOJK, it also amended the Public Safety Act depriving the Kashmiri people of their fundamental rights by allowing the armed forces to jail the freedom leaders outside Kashmir.

The Indian authorities have also recently locked Kashmir news Service (KNS) office and English Daily "The Kashmir Times" in Srinagar, which is an attempt to divert world attention from its brutalities on innocent and unarmed Kashmiris, fighting for liberation.

He said that the BJP government has imposed a tax on lands and properties to colonize IIOJK by

It was very shocking for me he said "At a time when the Indian Illegally Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) is already reeling under double lockdown, the military siege following August 5 illegal decisions and lockdown on the pretext of COVID-19), the extremist BJP government has amended municipal laws of the occupied state."

Reports emanating from IIOJK quote official documents stating, Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and Municipal Committees in their respective areas have been vested with powers by way of several amendments in the Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Act, 2000 and Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Corporation Act, 2000 carried through the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Adaptation of State Laws) Order, 2020. By virtue of the amendments, a J&K

Property Tax board has also been constituted, he added.

Pakistan's Role in Kashmir Diplomacy on International Fora, Tariq Mahmood said that Pakistan, particularly Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government under the leadership Prime Minister Imran Khan had played a very significant role to highlight the Kashmir issue on International forums, besides

majority to impose its Hindu-tva ideology was remarkable achievement of Imran Khan regime and as the aspiration of Kashmir's people.

The recent illegal and immoral acts should serve as an eye opener for the world to take immediate measures to get the issue resolved in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmir people and under the ambit of

sending a big number of remittances and it was equally imperative for the government to introduce welfare policies for Overseas Pakistanis.

He said Overseas Pakistanis are keen to invest in the country and want to be the part of national tax system by declaring all their assets and resources, if government facilitate them through one-window operation



exposing the dark face of India to the world and showing brutal lethal ongoing Indian Atrocities in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK).

By taking effective and target originated measures by Imran Khan and his teams give a new life to this issue on all world forums, including during the session of United Nation General Assembly (UNGA).

Taking on board the friend countries, briefed them about Indian Aggression of occupied forces on women and children in IIOJK was milestone initiatives of the PTI government in support to freedom struggle of Kashmir.

Spotting the issue like Indian move to transform the Muslim dominant state into to Hindu

UNSC resolutions. The resolution of the dispute is also imperative to ensure durable peace as well as regional development, he said.

What are the grievances of Overseas Pakistanis and their expectation from Government?

regarding Property Tax on all properties falling within their jurisdictions.

Eulogizes performance of present government, Tariq Mahmood Awan said that increase in foreign remittances was a clear indication that the overseas Pakistanis trust has increased

Overseas Pakistanis are playing a vital role in the country's development and up lifting the national economy by sending a big number of remittances

Chairman Kashmir Forum Berlin, Germany Tariq Mahmood Awan said Overseas Pakistanis are playing a vital role in the country's development and up-lifting the national economy by

on the transparent leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan. The acknowledgment and contribution of overseas Pakistanis for national economy by Prime Minister was very encouraging,

he said.

Government Initiatives for Overseas Pakistanis and their analysis

Tariq Mahmood said that Pakistan Citizen Portal one of major and was indeed a remarkable step of the incumbent government for providing a good platform to Overseas Pakistani, where they can register their problems at the right forum. Touching 3 million registration mark within two years, showing the efficiency and effectiveness of the platform. He urged more people to use the forum for their empowerment as well as officers' accountability.

Appreciating the Prime Minister were remarked about Citizen Portal, He said "I want more people to use it (Citizen Portal). We will strengthen it further for it being the best method to register citizens' complaints. As Prime Minister, it is also easy for me to know which minister or department is working well and which bureaucrat is performing bad."

Tariq Mahmood said that Pakistan Citizen Portal proved to be a very handy where the matters related to Foreign Affairs and other could be sorted out very smoothly while sitting abroad, earlier this it was like an impossible attempt to tackle these issues.

Setting up the more dedicated commissions in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) on the pattern of Punjab to ensure swift redressal of the expatriates' complaints was a good omen that government taking serious steps for Overseas.

Appreciating the performance of the Punjab Overseas Pakistanis Commission and SAPM Zulfikar Bukhari, Chairman Kashmir Forum Berlin Germany, Tariq said Overseas Pakistanis Commission was a successful model which should be replicated in other provinces as well.

Tariq Mahmood underline the need for establishing fast-track court for addressing the cases of Overseas Diaspora and called for prompt resolution of the expats

complaints and termed them as a precious asset of the country as "They send huge amount of money in shape of foreign exchange."

Pakistani Diaspora, he said has lauded former Minister for Interior, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan step who had directed the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and passport officials to bring further improvement in the facilities being provided to the overseas Pakistanis.

Tariq Mahmood was of the view that still there was a need to recheck and ensure better fa-

their family and added reports showed that just in five months they have sent \$500 million to the country.

He said that it was a major initiative of the Government of Pakistan to provide banking facilities for millions of non-resident Pakistanis (NRPs) seeking to undertake banking, payments and investment activities in Pakistan.

He emphasized that the overseas Pakistanis were the most valuable asset of the country, and providing all possible facilities to them and their families should be the top priority of the



cilities were being provided to expats Pakistanis regarding biometric and registration system at NADRA which should be addressed immediately.

State Bank's Roshan Digital Accounts for Pakistani Diaspora:

Chairman Kashmir Forum Berlin Germany, Tariq Mahmood Awan expressed his gratitude to the government of Pakistan over opening of the State Bank's Roshan Digital Accounts for Pakistani Diaspora and said Roshan Digital Account would integrate overseas Pakistanis with banking system.

He said overseas Pakistanis responding so strongly to Roshan Digital Account as it looks very easier for them to send money to

government.

Chairman Kashmir Forum Berlin Germany, Tariq Mahmood Awan demanded of the government to bring reforms in their tax laws based upon the recommendations and feedback from the diaspora in the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 through Tax Laws (amendment) Ordinance 2021 to make the taxation regime simple, convenient and hassle-free for Non Resident Pakistanis (NRPs) maintaining Roshan Digital Accounts (RDAs). Tariq Mahmood said the amendments was imperative that should be simplify and understandable that would ultimately lead towards attracting huge no of new tax-payer in the system which would enhance the tax compliance.

Australian High Commissioner's Message on the occasion of Pakistan Day



The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr Geoffrey Shaw congratulated Pakistanis on Pakistan Day. In his Pakistan Day message, he said:

“I congratulate the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as they celebrate the 81st anniversary of the passing of the Pakistan Resolution – the proposal inked in Lahore in 1940, which envisioned and created Pakistan.

Since its independence, Pakistan has made great strides in building its democracy and economic development and Australia has been a steadfast friend throughout. We will con-

tinue to stand with Pakistan as it strives to achieve its aspirations for economic security and long-term prosperity.

Our two nations have much in common. Our common love of cricket and Commonwealth ties continue to colour and underpin our warm and longstanding bilateral relations.

I look forward to the continued strengthening of our two nations’ cooperation on defence, trade, education and development - including our assistance to support Pakistan’s response to the COVID19 pandemic. As friends we are there for each other in

the tough times as well as the good.

Globally, our work together in the United Nations, as well as regional and international institutions, supports our mutual interest in ensuring comprehensive peace and prosperity in our shared region.

On this day I also congratulate the Pakistani diaspora in Australia. I salute the contribution this vibrant community makes, in so many ways, to a strong, prosperous and inclusive multicultural Australia.

On behalf of Australia, I wish our good friend Pakistan Yaum-e-Pakistan Mubarak!”

European Union to support Pakistani civil society: Androulla Kaminara

ISLAMABAD, (DS): European Union Ambassador to Pakistan Androulla Kaminara Wednesday said the EU would support Pakistan's civil society by co-financing three projects, for a total amount of 7, 237,500 EUR, to alleviate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on communities and increase the voice of youth in the society.

She was speaking at the ceremony of signing of three contracts by her as the EU representative with the main implementing partners, including Agha Khan Foundation, Norwegian Church Aid and Deutsche Welthungerhilfe. The three projects were selected through a call for proposals launched in April 2020 and focus on Punjab, Sindh and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Androulla Kaminara said, "As the world continues to battle the COVID pandemic, it is important to focus our efforts on supporting the most vulnerable." She said, "The civil society organisations are important partners for the EU wherever we work, and have been crucial in Pakistan's efforts to respond to the current crisis.

The initiative leading to today's successful proposals is one of the first concrete actions taken by the EU last year to alleviate the effects of the pandemic in the short and long term in Pakistan." The pandemic, she said, had had a disproportionate impact on young people, which was reflected in the areas prioritised by the projects, including youth engagement and economic empowerment.

Dr Matt Reed, Chief Executive Officer of Agha Kahn Foundation (UK), said: "During this pandemic, in Pakistan and around the world,



civil society has been vital: raising awareness, teaching people how to help their families and neighbours safely, protecting their communities from COVID-19.

"The Agha Khan Foundation is delighted to partner with the European Union in strengthening community organisations and civil society at this crucial time," he added.

Anne Masterson, Country Director of the Norwegian Church Aid, in her speech, said,

"Through this project young people will have opportunities to improve and diversify their skills, obtain training and establish livelihoods. Youth, particularly young women, will

become more effective change agents by strengthening their voice within their communities and in the wider society."

Aisha Jamshed, Country Director of Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, stated "Through the project, CSOs will build the skills of young men and women, provide them with income opportunities and giving them a voice by advocating for improved service delivery with Local Authorities.

Welthungerhilfe values the consistent contribution of the European Union to the organization over the past ten years, along with EUs contribution to the civil society development across Pakistan."

Imran Khan, Sri Lankan PM discuss bilateral, regional matters



COLOMBO, Feb 23, (DS): Prime Minister Imran Khan and his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa held a one-on-one meeting here in Colombo and discussed issues of bilateral and regional importance. The two leaders affirmed resolve to strengthen relations in diverse areas in a meeting held at Temple Trees – the office of Sri Lanka Prime Minister.

The two sides focused on strengthening ties in areas of trade and investment, health, education, agriculture and science & technology, security, culture and tourism.

Prime Minister Imran Khan arrived here in Sri Lanka's capital Colombo on a two-day official visit this afternoon. Earlier, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa received Prime Minister Imran Khan at the Bandaranaike International Airport.

The Prime Minister was given guard of honour by the contingent of Sri Lankan forces and a gun salute at a special welcome reception ceremony held at the airport. A red carpet was rolled out for Prime Minister Imran Khan and the national anthems of Pakistan and Sri Lanka were played on the occasion. Cultural troupe attired in traditional dresses pre-

sented a welcome dance.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Commerce Adviser Abdul Razzak Dawood and Special Assistant Syed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari. Prime Minis-



ter Imran Khan is the first Head of Government to visit Sri Lanka after President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa assumed office last year.

Imran Khan is undertaking the visit to the island nation on the invitation of his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa. Besides meeting the Sri Lankan top leadership, Imran Khan will also lead the delegation-level talks, covering all areas of cooperation between the two countries, including trade and investment, health and ed-

ucation, agriculture and science & technology, defence and security, and culture and tourism.

The Foreign Office said the reconstitution of the Sri Lanka-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Association will also be announced during the visit to further promote parliamentary exchanges between the two countries. The Prime Minister will participate in a joint 'Trade and Investment Conference' aimed at promoting trade and investment between the two countries. A number of memorandums of understanding to enhance bilateral cooperation will be signed during the visit.

The prime minister's visit would help further strengthen the Pakistan-Sri Lanka relationship and enhance mutual cooperation in diverse fields, the FO concluded. A Sri Lankan foreign ministry

statement said the visit would feature "a business and investment forum, as well as a sports diplomacy initiative".

Pakistan and Sri Lanka have maintained close, cordial and mutually supportive relations since 1948. The two countries share commonality of views on a wide range of international and regional issues. Both the sides also work closely at the international and regional fora, including the United Nations and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Ties with Sri Lanka

Malik Muhammad Ashraf

In the backdrop of persistent efforts by India to isolate Pakistan in the region and beyond, the two-day visit to Sri Lanka by Prime Minister Imran Khan was of great significance. The visit has surely produced positive outcomes with regard to further strengthening the historically cordial ties between the two countries which have agreed to enhance bilateral relations in diverse areas, including defence, trade and tourism through greater connectivity. PM Imran Khan also offered a \$50 million line of credit to Sri Lanka for defence purchases. The visit was also aimed at building a strategic relationship with Sri Lanka, as Prime Minister Imran Khan invited the Sri Lankan leadership to join CPEC for regional connectivity. The move was part of a well-conceived and proactive strategy to engage South Asian countries in view of the worsening ties with India. Sri Lanka is an important member of Saarc and the South Asian region. Taking relations with Sri Lanka to a higher level would surely scuttle Indian efforts to isolate Pakistan in the region. India has strained relations with the government of Sri Lanka, particularly with the present leadership of the country, for the support India had extended to the Tamil Tigers during the insurgency. India along with the US also played a role in the defeat of Rajapaksa in the 2015 elections to install a pro-India and Pro-US government there. Rajapaksa served as president of Sri Lanka from 2005 to 2015, during which he was able to end the three decades old insurgency in the country and establish peace. It was during the regime of Rajapaksa that relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka became very strong. Sri Lanka started buying arms and ammunition from Pakistan in a big way from 1999 to quell insurgency in the country. The total purchases until December 2007 were worth \$50 million while there was a sudden jump in the quantity of merchandise ordered in 2009. Much opinion in Sri Lanka in fact favoured and promoted the idea of the Sri Lankan government finalizing a defence cooperation agree-

ment with Islamabad.

In May 2000, Pakistan supplied millions of dollars of much-needed weapons to the Sri Lankan government, when Tamil Tiger rebels were about to recapture their former capital of Jaffna.

In April 2009, Sri Lanka requested \$25 million worth of 81 mm, 120 mm and 130 mm mortar ammunition to be delivered within a month. Sri Lanka also evinced interest in the purchase of Pakistani al-Khalid Main Battle Tanks, light weapons and ammunition, and the Sino-Pak joint venture product JF-17 Thunder aircraft. Till the recent past, the relationship between the two countries predominantly focused on defence cooperation because of Sri Lanka's war against the Tamil Tigers.

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa visited Pakistan in February 2012 which gave a new dimension to bilateral relations between the two countries. They agreed to enhance bilateral trade from \$375 million to \$2 billion within three years, besides expanding cooperation in the field of economy, defence, media and technical education. Pakistan and Sri Lanka agreed to strengthen multi-sectoral cooperation and consequently, one MOU and three agreements were signed during the visit to formalize the cooperation in different fields.

One agreement pertained to waiving off visas for officials and diplomats to facilitate an increased level of interaction between the two countries. Under the second agreement on customs, both the countries agreed to cooperate with each other in the prevention, investigation, prosecution, transfer of illicit substances and illicit trafficking in narcotics.

The third agreement for cultural cooperation expressed commitment in the fields of arts, culture, creative studies, archaeology, sports, education, information and media; to achieve this objective, it was agreed to enhance exchange of cultural delegations, besides the holding of exhibitions for promoting and highlighting cultural heritage of both the countries. The MOU on agriculture focused on cooperation for mutual benefits. Pakistan also offered Sri Lanka a \$200 million

buyer's credit loan, giving it the option to make the payment either on barter or in local currency that was much appreciated by the Sri Lankan government.

The two countries also decided to reinvigorate the Joint Economic Commission, and task it to work out modalities for a new and unconventional phase of economic cooperation marked by barter trade, currency exchanges and banking interchanges. Sri Lanka was the first country that signed a free trade agreement with Pakistan, which became effective in June 2005 under which 4,000 items could be imported.

The process of the expansion and diversification of bilateral relations between the two countries set rolling during Rajapaksa's regime has continued to be on the higher trajectory. The relationship is characterized by the realization between the two sides that their cultural heritage provides a sound basis for building a multifaceted partnership to their mutual advantage. Their shared values and concerns about regional security justify an increased synergy of their economies and reinforcing of the institutional framework for cooperation. More so, Sri Lanka, like Pakistan, rejects India's hegemony in the region. The commonality of views on this issue is yet another strong pillar of the Pak-Sri Lanka relationship. Further, Sri Lanka has always stood by Pakistan like a true friend. For instance, when all the cricket playing nations of the world showed reluctance to send their teams to Pakistan on the pretext of terrorism, it was the Sri Lankan administration that showed solidarity with us and sent its team to Lahore. It was, however, most unfortunate that the terrorists were able to make things worse by attacking it. Pakistan's government and people appreciate that gesture and hold the Sri Lankans in the highest esteem.

The return of Rajapaksa and his party to power in Sri Lanka augurs well for bilateral relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka as well as with respect to the development of strategic relations for regional connectivity and stability.

Pakistan announces \$50 million defence credit line facility to Sri Lanka



COLOMBO, Feb 24 (DS): Pakistan on Wednesday offered \$50 million new credit line to Sri Lanka for co-operation in the field of defence and security. The announcement was made by Prime Minister Imran Khan who concluded his two-day official visit to the island nation, said the Joint Communique issued by the foreign ministries of the two countries from Colombo and Islamabad.

“The two sides stressed the need for stronger partnership for supporting and coordinating with each other in dealing with matters related to security, terrorism, organized crime and drug and narcotic trafficking as well as intelligence-sharing,” the Communique read.

The two sides expressed satisfaction over the existing bilateral co-operation in the field of defence and noted that the elevation of staff-level talks to Defence Dialogue had provided an opportunity to expand security sector relations. To strengthen sports diplomacy, Pakistan will provide Rs 52 million for promotion of sports in Sri Lanka.

Prime Minister Imran Khan at an interactive session with the sports community of Sri Lanka announced the commissioning of the ‘Imran Khan High Performance Sports Centre’ in Colombo.

Pakistan also announced to establish Asian Civilization and Culture Centre at University of Peradeniya at the Sri Lankan resort Kandy.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka have agreed on a broad consensus on ways and means to further strengthen cooperation in diverse fields and promote high-level and delegation-level exchanges. This was the first visit by the Prime Minister of Pakistan to Sri Lanka since the formation of the new governments in both the countries, clearly reflecting the warmth and goodwill between the governments and peoples of the two countries.

During the visit, Prime Minister Imran Khan held delegation-level meetings with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka. Both sides comprehensively reviewed the multifaceted bilateral relationship in diverse fields of co-operation.

“The talks were held in a warm and cordial atmosphere, marked by mutual trust and respect. The visit afforded a timely opportunity to both sides to further build upon their close and regular consultations, particularly in the areas identified during the recently held Foreign Secretary-level Bilateral Political Consultations, Joint Economic Commission session,

and the Commerce Secretaries-level Talks,” the Joint Communique said.

Pakistan announced 100 scholarships in the field of medicines (MBBS and BDS) as part of the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme (PSL-HECP). Both sides reached broad consensus on ways and means to further strengthen cooperation in a comprehensive manner and agreed to hold frequent meetings, promote high-level and delegation-level exchanges and enhance the process of consultations.

Prime Minister Imran Khan reiterated Pakistan’s support for the socio-economic development of Sri Lanka in line with the vision of a “peaceful neighborhood”. The two sides reviewed the extensive engagement that exists between the two countries in promoting cultural linkages, human resource development, and capacity building in diverse areas as well as educational and technical cooperation.

Realizing the existence of great potential of religious tourism to Buddhist archeological sites and noting the close ancient and cultural ties dating back to Gandhara civilization, the two sides underscored the importance of enhancing cooperation in the field of tourism and highlighted the ben-

efits of sharing expertise in the hospitality industry, including training and capacity building. At the high-level Pakistan-Sri Lanka Trade and Investment Conference held in Colombo, the two countries stressed the importance of realizing the goal of achieving US\$1 billion bilateral trade target and also agreed to work towards broadening and deepening of Pakistan Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

The Memoranda of Understanding signed during the visit include i) MoU on Cooperation in Tourism, ii) MoU between the Boards of Investment, iii) MoU between Industrial Technology Institute (ITI), Sri Lanka and International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences, University of Karachi Islamic Republic of Pakistan, iv) Intent of Cooperation between Industrial Technology Institute of Sri Lanka and COMSATS University Islamabad and v) MoU between University of Colombo, Sri Lanka and Lahore School of Economics, Pakistan.

Prime Minister Imran Khan and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa jointly acknowledged the reconstitution of

the Sri Lanka-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Association. Both sides underlined the importance of inter-religious dialogue and harmony as a key to promote cultural diversity, peaceful co-existence and mutual empathy.

The two sides noted the close cooperation between the two countries at regional and international fora on issues of mutual interest, and agreed to further strengthen a coordinated approach on such matters. Both sides stressed the need to convene the Charter Based bodies and agreed to take forward the SAARC process for further strengthening regional cooperation to achieve prosperity in the region.

Discussing the developments in regional and global environment the two sides reaffirmed their joint commitment to regional peace, security and stability. Prime Minister Imran Khan underscored the need for peaceful resolution of outstanding disputes through constructive dialogue in accordance with international legitimacy.

In the context of regional con-

nectivity, Prime Minister Imran Khan highlighted the opportunities presented by China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of BRI, for regional economic growth and prosperity. Discussing the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, the two sides underscored the need for collective efforts to deal with the pandemic. Sri Lanka thanked Pakistan for the tremendous assistance extended to the repatriation of stranded Sri Lankans in Pakistan since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Reiterating the commitment of the new government to further strengthen the bilateral relations, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka thanked the government, and people of Pakistan for the constant support extended by Pakistan to safeguard the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

Prime Minister Imran Khan extended an invitation to the President and the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka to visit Pakistan at their earliest convenience and thanked them for the warm hospitality extended to him and his delegation.

Pakistan, Turkey call for further strengthening long-cherished brotherly relations

Islamabad, March 12, (DS):

Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul called on Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan in Islamabad.

During the meeting, the two sides stressed the need for further strengthening the existing long-cherished brotherly relations between the two countries. They also discussed the matters relating to promoting bilateral ties in diverse fields including Aviation.

Speaking on this occasion, Ghulam Sarwar said the bilateral cooperation in all technical aspects of the aviation sector is being further increased.

The Minister said both countries enjoying good cultural and tour-



ism relations, which would prove beneficial in promotion of the aviation sector. He said Pakistan and

Turkey are playing an important role in peace, stability and economic development in the region.

Food security, economic stability new addition to Pakistan's national security domain: PM



ISLAMABAD, March 17 (DS): Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said it was time for Pakistan to get a stronghold of national security by expanding its domain inclusive of climate change, economic stability and food security, besides focusing on military strength.

Addressing at the launch of the first annual Islamabad Security Dialogue themed "Together for Ideas", the Prime Minister stressed the need for addressing the challenges of several non-traditional security threats confronting the general population.

"A secure State is where common people own it and believe that they have stakes in it," he said, pointing that the "goals of national security could not be achieved in an environment with a handful of affluent and a sea of the poor populace".

The Prime Minister paid tribute to the country's armed forces and law enforcement agencies for their "remarkable role in making the nation feel secure" during tough situations, particularly in the wake of 9/11. He termed food security a big challenge for Pakistan in the coming decades and expressed concern over the situation of importing 4 million ton of wheat in a year.

In April, he said, the government would launch a comprehensive strategy to address the availability of food through accurate mapping of the exact demand of the com-

modities. On economic prosperity, he said the dollar inflow must be consistently greater than dollar outflow in order to expand the national resource pie for its use for human welfare and robust defence.

Prime Minister Imran Khan addresses at the Islamabad Security Dialogue here at PM Secretariat. He added that deficit leads to a weakening of the rupee, thus leading to inflation and poverty. The Prime Minister said under his government, the country was able to fight a debilitating current account deficit, increase exports and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

On climate change, he warned that Pakistan was among the most vulnerable countries and said his government was making strenuous efforts in protecting the country. He mentioned the dedicated climate security programmes including the internationally acknowledged Ten Billion Tree Tsunami project and expressed satisfaction for its inclusion in the Comprehensive Security Framework.

Imran Khan said his government had prioritized human welfare through the Ehsaas programme where the largest cash transfers were made in the country's history to the poor during a pandemic. On regional peace, he said economic prosperity could not be sustained without peace in the neighborhood, adding that Pakistan was poised to become a trade

and transit hub for the extended region.

He mentioned that Pakistan was situated at the confluence of two big markets, namely Iran for petroleum and also Central Asia besides an economically strong China. The Prime Minister called upon India to give Kashmiris their right to self-determination as per the United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

He said India's unilateral and illegal action of August 5 had strained the environment for bilateral negotiations with Pakistan, adding that for an enabling environment, "India must take the first step forward". Resolution of Kashmir through negotiation would be beneficial for both India and Pakistan, he said.

On Afghanistan, he said Pakistan had the highest stakes in the Afghan peace and vowed to continue extending assistance for the political settlement. "Peace in Afghanistan is the key to unlocking the connectivity potential of the region," he added.

First-ever Policy Advisory Portal launched

PM Imran Khan launches the first-ever Policy Advisory Portal by clicking button at the PM Secretariat. Earlier, the Prime Minister on the occasion launched the first of its kind Policy Advisory Portal developed by the National Security Division to engage over 100 think-tanks and academia in policy-making.

The Prime Minister congratulated the National Security Division for the initiative and termed it an example of the government's commitment to inclusive decision-making. PM's Special Assistant on National Security Division and Strategic Policy Planning Dr Moeed Yusuf said the first ever Islamabad Security Dialogue was in line with Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision who had pointed out the gap between strategic thinkers and the government's policy-makers.

PM's Special Assistant on National Security Dr Moeed Yusuf

speaks at the inaugural session of Islamabad Policy Dialogue. Dr Yusuf said National Security Division had developed strategies focusing on leveraging Pakistan's economic footprint and also stressing upon a cultural shift to promote the coun-

try's soft image abroad. He said the Advisory Portal would be an integrated platform through which major think-tanks and universities working on the subject of comprehensive national security would share recommendations directly to

the national leadership. The two-day Islamabad Security Dialogue is being attended by global and regional foreign policy experts and members of the diplomatic corps with the main theme of Comprehensive Security Framework.

Pakistan ready to resolve disputes with neighbours through dialogue: COAS General Bajwa

Islamabad, March 18 (DS): Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa has said Pakistan is ready to resolve all outstanding disputes with its neighbors through dialogue in a dignified and peaceful manner. He was addressing Islamabad Security Dialogue in the federal capital on Thursday.

The Army Chief however stressed that this choice is deliberate and based on rationality, and not as a result of any pressure. General Qamar Javed Bajwa said it is time that synergies are created in South Asia through connectivity, peaceful coexistence and resource sharing to fight hunger, illiteracy and disease instead of fighting each other.

The Army Chief said stable Indo-Pak relations are a key to unlock the untapped potential of South and Central Asia by ensuring connectivity between East and West Asia.

He however regretted that the potential has remained hostage to the disputes and issues between the two neighbors. He said without resolution of Kashmir dispute through peaceful means, process of sub continental rapprochement will always remain susceptible to derailment due to politically motivated bellicosity.

He said it is time to bury the past and move forward. He however said our neighbor will have to create a conducive environment particularly in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir for the resumption of dialogue process. The Army Chief said Pakistan has learnt from the past and willing to move ahead towards a new future. However all this is contingent upon reciprocity.



The Army Chief said despite being an impoverished region, we end up spending a lot of money on defense which naturally comes at the expense of human development.

He said Pakistan is on the few countries which despite rising security challenges has resisted the temptation of involving itself in an arms race. He said Pakistan's defense expenditure has rather reduced instead of increasing. This is not an easy undertaking especially in a hostile and unstable neighborhood.

The Army Chief said Pakistan's robust role in current quest for peace in Afghanistan is a proof of our goodwill. He pointed out that our close collaboration and crucial support for peace process has led to the historic engagement between the Taliban and the US and paved the way for Intra Afghan dialogue. He said Pakistan will continue to emphasize on a sustained and inclusive peace process for the betterment of people of Afghanistan and the regional peace.

The Army Chief said Pakistan has also undertaken unprecedented steps to enhance Afghan trade and connectivity by reenergizing Afghan-Pakistan transit trade agreement and also providing access to Afghanistan to export its goods to India.

The Army Chief said our efforts for peace in Afghanistan and responsible and mature behaviour towards India manifests our desire to change the narrative of geo political contestation to geo economic integration.

General Qamar Javed Bajwa said Pakistan's long campaign against terrorism and extremism also manifests our resolve and national will. He said we have come a long way and yet we are a bit short of our final objective. But we are determined to stay the course. The Army Chief said Pakistan has begun to work towards sustainable development and improving economic conditions of underprivileged areas. He said Pakistan Army has contributed immensely towards this national cause by rebuilding and mainstreaming some of the most neglected areas through massive development, besides ensuring peace and security.

The Army Chief said the CPEC has been at the heart of our economic transformational plan. He said we have made sincere efforts to make the mega project inclusive, transparent, and attractive for all global and regional players with the aim of bringing its benefits to everyone.

Speaking on the occasion, Special Assistant on National Security Division and Strategic Policy Planning Moeed Yusuf said expansion in the political diplomacy is of vital importance for the economic development. He said we are also working on the policy with regard to the economic sector. He said there is need to expose those who are involved in negative propaganda against Pakistan.

Pakistan's emphasis shifting from geo-politics to geo-economics despite volatile developments: FM Qureshi



ISLAMABAD, Mar 18 (DS): Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi Thursday said while resolving to protect its vital national security interests, Pakistan was shifting its emphasis from geo-politics to geo-economics besides calling for preferring cooperation over confrontation.

The foreign minister, in his keynote speech at Islamabad Dialogue here, said the enhanced trade, investment, energy security, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges were Pakistan's higher priorities.

"Our primary interest is in sustaining a peaceful, stable and prosperous world order, that takes everyone on board and leaves no one behind. We call for shedding zero-sum perspectives, and for preferring cooperation over confrontation," he said in his address at the third session of the high-level event.

He reiterated that Pakistan would remain committed to peaceful co-existence, cooperative multilateralism, and win-win outcomes besides supporting a rules-based and inclusive global order, for advancing the shared objectives of peace, progress and prosperity.

He told the audience that the world was going through a profound transformation as new security partnerships were being forged and old alliances being further fortified.

"Policies of 'containment' are once again ascendant, perhaps sowing the seeds of a 'New Cold War'. Globalization and multilateralism were severely undermined by uni-

lateralism and sharpening geopolitical tensions. Major power competition has become distinct," the foreign minister remarked.

Qureshi said the mix of old and new conflicts and disputes was threatening peace and security in different parts of the world. Amidst these complex global dynamics, threats are being magnified by some in order to justify their relentless arms build-ups and hegemonic designs, he added. "The misplaced notion of 'net security provider' is being applied in our own region, in disregard to the legitimate security interests of others. New and emerging technologies are being weaponized at breakneck speed," he said. Moreover, he said the frontiers were being constantly pushed in the outer space, cyber space, and in the domain of Artificial Intelligence. Disinformation and fake news is being spread as tools of statecraft.

"Terrorism in Pakistan has been actively sponsored, aided and abetted from across our borders. The introduction of destabilizing weapons systems in our region, coupled with offensive doctrines and a growing propensity for military mis-adventurism, is accentuating challenges to strategic stability," Qureshi stated.

He said despite all these developments around Pakistan, marked by turbulence and volatility, the vision of Naya Pakistan by country's leadership was focused around economic security - for the well-being and welfare of its people.

He told the gathering that Pakistan's location made it a natural hub for economic confluence for competing states. Rather than partake in geo-political competition and rivalries, Pakistan is advocating co-existence and win-win cooperation.

He said Pakistan had decided not to be a part of any regional conflict and has consciously chosen to be only a partner for peace and development.

He said recently, Pakistan hosted the Navies from 45 countries in a multinational naval exercise - with members of NATO to Russia and China among its participants. Specifically, he said Pakistan was calling for inclusive and cooperative approaches based on enhanced economic partnerships.

"We are positioning Pakistan as an economic hub and melting pot for positive global interests. Centered on economic security, our focus is on the three pillars of: connectivity; providing economic bases as development strategy; and peace within our borders and beyond," he said.

Foreign Minister Qureshi said in order to leverage the economic potential of the country, multiple variants of diplomacy were being actively employed by the foreign ministry - including economic diplomacy, public diplomacy, digital diplomacy and science diplomacy. New avenues are being explored beyond our traditional partnerships, expanding to Africa through the "Engage Africa" Initiative. Economic outreach to ASEAN and EU is being qualitatively upgraded, he remarked.

Qureshi reiterated that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was the quintessential connectivity project. Pakistan offers the shortest route to international seas to the western parts of China, and to the Central Asian Republics, through the Karachi and Gwadar ports.

"We envision Pakistan emerging as the gateway to landlocked Central Asia and Afghanistan. We will endeavor to reap peace dividends

in Afghanistan in the form of enhanced connectivity with Central Asia,” he added.

Recounting Pakistan’s steadfast support for an Afghan-led an Afghan-owned peace process, the foreign minister said it was imperative for the Afghan parties to seize this historic opportunity and work together to secure an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive political settlement.

Regarding South Asia, he said durable peace, security and development in the region hinged on

peaceful resolution of the long-standing Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

He said India’s illegal and unilateral actions of August 5, 2019 in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), and the ensuing military siege and indiscriminate repression of Kashmiris, caused incalculable damage to the prospects of peace.

He urged India to stop violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in IIOJK; halt its illegal attempts to change the

demographic structure in the occupied territory; and implement the UN Security Council resolutions which guarantee the Kashmiris’ right to self-determination through a free and impartial plebiscite under UN auspices.

He also asked India to rethink its policy of fomenting destabilization in Pakistan and embrace a progressive agenda that can benefit the entire region. “In essence, the onus is on India to create an enabling environment,” Qureshi added.

Pakistan striving for peace sans compromise on key national interests: Dr Moeed

ISLAMABAD, Mar 18, (DS): The two-day Islamabad Security Dialogue has ended with its clear message to the world that the country’s national leadership with clear vision and direction is striving to unveil a new era of regional peace, stability and development with Pakistan at the core of all global economic activities amid its geo-economic location potential.

At the opening session of the country’s first ever hosted international security dialogue, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on National Security Division Dr Moeed Yusuf said Pakistan was striving for peace and would never compromise on her key national interests along with unveiling its economic security paradigm shift.

The country’s national leadership was on the same page to roll out a comprehensive national security framework based on a clear strategic vision which it scarcely had any in the past. It was the formal task of the National Security Division to put the well deliberated and thought out national security framework in a documented form for consistent implementation. National Security was a combination of traditional and non-traditional pillars of the security policy.

National Cohesion was paramount to ensure national security whereas three pillars were identified to lay the foundation of comprehensive the country’s first comprehensive national security framework. The National Security Adviser said the New Comprehensive Security Framework (CSF) was based on the



three pillars of military, economic and human security with economic progress at the core.

The Economic Security lens of National Security framework namely connectivity, development partnerships and regional peace were interlinked. “It will also lead to a cultural shift as it demands to have all inclusive approach of the government and proactive policy making,” he added.

The new National Security framework encapsulated unapologetic and self-confident behavior of Pakistan, firm stand on principle stance and consistency of policies along with introspective and pragmatic approach, the SAPM said. The National Security Adviser was of the view that it was the country’s vision to benefit from the geo-economic location as the country wants to be the center of economic activities in the world.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a North to South Connectivity benefiting all neighbouring

countries and expediting Pakistan’s linkage with Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan whereas it could be extended for Eastern connectivity. However, the burden lies on India’s shoulder to resolve principle disputes on equitable basis to maintain regional peace.

The Security Dialogue was divided into interactive sessions with leading experts, federal ministers and the Prime Minister’s special assistants enunciating diverse opinions on multifaceted issues starting from Comprehensive National Security, Economic Security at the Core, Responsibility Within: Instituting a Human Security Paradigm, Regional Peace and Security and Evolving World Order and Pakistan. The first consultative session titled “Comprehensive National Security” was convened by Director Regional and Global Studies of Institute of Strategic Studies, Research and Analysis (ISSRA) of the National Defence University (NDU) Ambassador (R) Fouzia M Sana.

The session was moderated by Former Foreign Secretary Ambassador (R) Riaz Khokhar where former President NDU Lieutenant General (R) Aamir Riaz, former Foreign Secretary Ambassador (R) Riaz Muhammad Khan deliberated on Security Challenges in a Transforming Global and Regional Environment and Geostrategic Compulsions in a Troubled Neighbourhood respectively whereas US Ambassador (R) Cameron Munter who virtually participated in the session discussed Pakistan’s Security Imperatives, A View from Abroad.

CJCSC, Azerbaijan President discussed mutual ties

RAWALPINDI: March 5, (DS): Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Nadeem Raza during his official visit to Azerbaijan, called on President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.

Chairman JCS also held separate meetings with Minister of Defence Colonel General Zakir Hasanov, Chief of State Security Service Colonel General Ali Naghi Oglu Naghiyev and other military leadership, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) press release.

During the meetings, important facets of defence and security relationship between Pakistan and Azerbaijan came under discussion. Both sides also deliberated upon various areas of bilateral cooperation and prevailing regional environment particu-



larly with reference to Kashmir and Afghanistan.

The CJCSC reaffirmed solidarity of Pakistan Armed Forces with the Armed Forces and brotherly nation of Azerbaijan. Earlier,

upon arrival at Ministry of Defence, Chairman JCS was given Guard of Honour by a smartly turned out contingent of Azerbaijan Armed Forces. CJCSC also laid wreath at Alley of Martyrs.

General Nadeem Raza meets Iraqi defence leaders

ISLAMABAD, March 19 (DS): Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), General Nadeem Raza, during his official visit to Iraq, called on Defence Minister of Iraq Juma Enad Sadoon Khattab Al Jibori and Iraqi military leadership.

Chairman JCS also held separate meetings with Iraqi Chief of Staff General Abdul Ameer Rasheed Yar Allah Al Lami and Commander Iraqi Air Force Lieutenant General Shahab Jihad Ali, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) media released received here on Friday. During the meetings, both sides deliberated upon various areas of interest including security, defence cooperation and prevailing regional environment.

The dignitaries dilated upon measures to enhance the level and scope of bilateral military engagements and cooperation



between both countries and reaffirmed to continue to forge deeper ties.

Chairman JCS also visited Defence University for Higher Military Studies (DUFHMS) and called on its Rector Lieutenant General Saad Mizhir Muhsin Hashim Al Allaq.

During the interaction, CJCSC highlighted the positive role

of Pakistan in countering violent extremism and also shared Pakistan's efforts for regional peace and stability especially in Afghanistan.

Earlier upon arrival at Ministry of Defence, Chairman JCS was presented Guard of Honour by a smartly turned out contingent of Iraqi Armed Forces.

Afghanistan: the end game

Shahid Javed Burki

It appears that the Americans may be finally heading towards spelling out the terms on which they would end their two-decade long involvement in Afghanistan. While he served as vice-president in the administration headed by president Barack Obama, Joe Biden even then wanted the US to exit. “Nearly 20 years into the US effort to modernise and liberalise that notoriously difficult land, Taliban forces once more control the countryside, and they appear to be poised for a final spring offensive against the parts of Afghan cities that remain under government control,” wrote David Von Drehle in one of the several “obituaries” of the misguided and misunderstood US effort in the landlocked country. “President Biden faces a choice — but it is not really a choice. He can continue the process begun under president Barack Obama, and ramped up under president Donald Trump, to cut losses and get out of Afghanistan.” This seems to be the direction President Biden seems to be taking.

While the Biden administration was involved in studying its options in Afghanistan, it thought it prudent to test some of the ideas it was considering by sending a letter to President Ashraf Ghani with a copy to the Taliban. The content of the three-page letter with an eight-page attachment signed by Secretary of State Antony Blinken was first made public on March 7, 2021, by an Afghanistan news agency. It covered a great deal of ground. There was a warning to the Afghan President that he had to move to bring peace to his troubled nation. The time had arrived to prepare the country for the entry of the Taliban in the system of government. Until that happened, an interim government should be established and given the responsibility for drafting a new constitution. There was the need to protect female rights in the country. The role of religion in Afghan society needed to be defined. Finally, some regional powers should be involved in overseeing the process that needed to bring peace back to this long-troubled country.

“I am making this clear so that you understand the urgency of my tones,” said Blinken to Ghani. The Secretary requested the Afghan leader’s “urgent leadership in the coming weeks. We have reached an initial conclusion that the best way to advance our shared interests is to do all we can to accelerate peace talks and to bring all parties into compliance with their commitments.” But the letter warned that the US was

looking at a wide range of options. “I must make clear to you, Mr President, that as our policy process continues in Washington, the United States has not ruled out any option.” Among these, the letter said, was “the full withdrawal of our forces by May 1”. The interim government would be responsible for coming up with a new constitution that would use as a template the one that was written in 2004.

The letter proposed sweeping plans for an interim power-sharing government between the Taliban and other Afghan leaders. The letter provided some details for the work the interim government would be assigned to do. The “transitional Peace Government of Afghanistan”, it said, should “include separate but coequal executive, parliamentary and judicial branches adhering to the current 2004 Constitution until it can be revised”.

Under a section titled “Guiding Principles” the US proposal took up the matter of the role of religion in the country. It said that Islam would be Afghanistan’s official religion with a new High Council of Islamic Jurisprudence (HCIJ) to provide guidance to all levels of government but an independent judiciary would have the last word. Although the Taliban had said that they would not encroach upon the rights of women in their country, they had made the promise subject to what they considered as Islamic principles. Ultimately the issue would be debated and decided upon by the proposed HCIJ.

Continued the Blinken letter: “To move matters more fundamentally and quickly toward a settlement and a permanent and a comprehensive ceasefire we are immediately pursuing a high-level diplomatic effort”, including a request to the United Nations to convene a meeting among foreign ministers of regional countries and the US. Secretary Blinken suggested that invitees should include Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran and India. “It is my belief that these countries share an abiding interest in a stable Afghanistan and must work together if we are to succeed,” said the letter. Blinken also wrote that Washington would ask Turkey to host a senior-level meeting between the Taliban and the Afghan government “in the coming weeks”. The letter also suggested what needed to happen after the peace agreement it had proposed was signed. “Each side shall immediately announce and implement an end to all military and offensive operations and hostile activities against the other.” The process of transition should be watched by a joint

commission from each side, with three international observers, that would follow written rules for monitoring.

By now the Taliban have a history of reacting with common citizens that has lasted for more than a quarter century. They were founded in 1994 in the country’s southern province of Kandahar on the border with Pakistan. Sidelining the Mujahideen groups that were successful in pushing out the forces of the Soviet Union that had invaded the country, they were able to create a government in Kabul. They allowed Osama bin Laden, the founder of the Al Qaeda, to operate from Kandahar. It was from there that they planned and launched attacks on some highly visible targets in the US. George W Bush, the then US president, vowed to avenge these acts and the result was the invasion of Afghanistan. This was done in December 2001 with the help of a militia that went under the name of Northern Alliance. The alliance drew mostly from the Tajik community in the northeast of the country. The Taliban drew upon the Pashtun population that accounted for 45% of the ethnically diverse country.

How would Afghanistan be affected once the Americans pull their troops out from the country after a presence of 40 years? Would the government-controlled security forces have the wherewithal to prevent the insurgents from establishing their dominion over the country? Two American journalists set out to find answers to these questions. They interviewed 19 civilians living or working in the territories controlled by the Taliban. “Over two decades of conflict and politicking, Taliban control in Afghanistan has become a patchwork of edicts and codes, with some areas seeing modest reform,” they wrote in a dispatch. Reviewing the situation in different parts of the country, they found that in some cases elders in the local population succeeded in getting the Taliban to open high schools for girls. During their 1996-2001 rule over the country, they had banned female education. “But in those same places, harsh often public punishments remain common. Torture and imprisonment are widely used for infringements as minor as possession of the wrong SIM card.” The deliberate, often slow, putting to death of captives also occurs. The US hopes that their departure would not recreate that situation.

The writer is a former caretaker finance minister and served as vice-president at the World Bank.

China eliminated extreme poverty: Governance for the people



Nong Rong
The writer is the Chinese
Ambassador to Pakistan

It is universally acknowledged that one of the huge challenges the world faces is the eradication of poverty, which has become a common goal for all humanity. As the largest developing country in the world, China, through its own persistence and struggle, has won a complete victory in the fight against poverty on the occasion of marking the first centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC) by accomplishing the arduous task of eliminating extreme poverty, thus working another miracle in the annals of history.

Over 40 years since China's reform and opening-up, more than 700 million Chinese people have successfully shaken off poverty. Especially in the past eight years, the number of people in China lifted out of poverty has reached an average of more than 10 million per year, equal to the population of a medium-sized country. So curious as to what has dramatically elevated the livelihood of the formerly poverty-stricken Chinese people, the world community wishes to decipher the very code behind China's success in poverty alleviation.

Unarguably, it is the strong leadership of the CPC that has played the most fundamental role in achieving China's success in poverty alleviation. Since its founding in 1921, while sticking to its original mission of seeking happiness for the Chinese people and achieving national rejuvenation, CPC has strived to serve the people and rely on the people at every stage of development.

Generations of top leaders of the CPC have deeply cared about its people. As President Xi Jinping once said, "During my work of more than 40 years at various levels of Chinese governments, successively from that of the county, to the municipal, the provincial and finally the central, poverty alleviation has always been my focus which consumed most of my energy." After the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, President Xi Jinping called on the whole

CPC and people throughout the country to participate in the cause of eradicating poverty under his leadership and led the battles against poverty—the largest and most fierce in human history—trying with the spirit of hammering nails to get the work concerning poverty eradication thoroughly implemented. In the process, millions of cadres and ordinary CPC members responded to the call actively and worked in the frontline for projects of poverty alleviation, among whom more than 1800 comrades sacrificed their lives for this great cause.

In view of its national conditions, China insists on eliminating the root of poverty by abiding by the law of poverty reduction and by means of sustainable development. The development since the founding of New China, especially the rapid development since the reform and opening up, has laid a solid material foundation for poverty reduction. For more than 40 years, China has made unremitting efforts to promote industrialisation, urbanisation and agricultural modernisation. In the last mile of poverty alleviation, China adheres to the ideas of targeted poverty alleviation and development-oriented poverty reduction, in order to achieve a transfer in strategies from resorting to others to relying on itself. In addition, such attempts of empowering the people by building up their determination, helping them acquire knowledge, along with efforts of highlighting input in education are made to block intergenerational transmission of poverty.

China has benefited from the political advantages of the socialist system that can coordinate all resources to complete key national undertakings. It also advanced the initiative that those who get rich first should help others lagging behind. China has pooled a lot of financial, human and material resources on the main battlefields of poverty alleviation, established a top-down working mechanism from the central to the very grassroots level, the big system of collecting assistance from different regions, sectors, industries, enterprises or other sources in the society for this noble cause. In the past eight years, the financial and social assistance from nine developed provinces and cities of eastern China to less developed regions alone have reached over 100.5 billion yuan. So far, no other country in the modern world can lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in such a short time like China; nor ever did one in history. This achievement belongs to China, and to the world as well. With these efforts, China has contributed much to the accelerated process of poverty reduction in the world, accounting for more than 70 percent of the global poverty reduction population, achieving 10 years ahead of schedule the poverty reduction goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations Member States. Under the new context, China will effectively

combine its efforts of consolidating and expanding the achievements of poverty alleviation with its new policy of rural revitalisation to cement the outcome of poverty alleviation and contribute more sustainable development of the rural areas.

Eliminating poverty is a common mission of mankind. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly called on the international community to pay active attention to people's rights of subsistence and development in developing countries and make joint and unremitting efforts to build a poverty-free community with a shared future for mankind with common development. While promoting its own poverty reduction process, China has provided much assistance to developing countries within its capacity. For instance, by setting up a "China-UN Peace and Development Fund" and the "South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund", China has actively used multilateral and bilateral channels to help international cooperation in poverty reduction. China has carried forward the "Belt and Road Initiative", making a new contribution to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. According to the estimation in a report of the World Bank, thanks to the "Belt and Road Initiative", 7.6 million people would get rid of extreme poverty, and 32 million would walk out of the shade of moderate poverty. China will continue its unwavering support to developing countries in eradicating poverty through economic development and improvement of people's livelihood, to inject new impetus into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners. China sees Pakistan as a priority in its foreign relations. Both countries pay high attention to poverty alleviation. Prime Minister Imran Khan himself has repeatedly emphasised learning from China's experience. He said that with determination and commitment that Pakistan can do the same for its people. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. China will further promote practical cooperation in various fields between the two countries, actively share experience in poverty reduction, adhere to high-quality development of the CPEC and focus on supporting Pakistan's industrialisation and urbanisation. China will also continue to deepen cooperation in education, vocational training and agricultural cooperation.

During President Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan, he said, "When brothers work together, their sharpness cuts through gold." I believe that with the joint efforts of two sides, China-Pakistan cooperation will achieve greater success for betterment of the well-being of the people of the two countries and help build a closer China-Pakistan community of a shared future in the new era.

The Surprise Pakistan, India Agreement on LoC Ceasefire



Dr. Huma Baqai

THE first Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement between Pakistan and India was signed in 2003. It came after 2001-02 military standoff between the two countries. The post-Kargil agreement was signed by President Musharraf and Prime Minister Vajpayee. It held on for next ten years. This agreement was seen by many as a milestone because it brought complete peace along the Line of Control (LoC) until 2006. Between 2003 and 2006, not a single bullet was fired on the LoC.

Since 2006, ceasefire violations became a norm. The situation in 2013 was so bad that an Indian General referred to it as a mini-war. Recent years have witnessed a worsening of the situation with increasing number of violations by the Indian side, resulting in civilian casualties on Pakistani side. All this despite an agreement reached in 2018, to adhere to the 2003 ceasefire agreement.

The cross-border firing became more serious post the Pulwama incident in February 2019. The so-called Balakot surgical strike and India's unconstitutional decision to scrape Jammu and Kashmir status in the August of the same year. Indian troops committed more than 2,900 ceasefire violations across the LoC in 2020, leaving as many as 33 innocent civilians martyred and another 260 wounded in different parts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

India also targeted the UN military observers in December 2020, that was on a routine monitoring mission along the LoC. The violation continued despite the pandemic. Thus, the latest ceasefire agreement comes as a surprise to many. Both sides have kept communication, restricted to a few, prior to the announcement of the ceasefire.

As per media reports, post the announcement, Ajit Doval from the Indian side and Dr Moeed Yusuf from Pakistan's side were involved in the tricky back door diplomacy to reach this agreement. It is seen as a very encouraging step. Top officials on both sides have

been cautiously optimistic, when commenting on this development.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi welcomed it, saying, "It could be a good start for the future. India will have to abide by this ceasefire agreement with sincerity. How can we make progress on the issue of occupied Kashmir unless the environment is conducive?" US envoy Asad Majeed Khan said, "Pakistan is committed to a peaceful neighborhood, the onus is now on India to create the right conditions."

He further added that US should play its role. The US and UN welcomed the "positive step", which will provide an opportunity for further dialogue. On the other side, Indian Ministry of External Affairs said, "India desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan.

We have always maintained that we are committed to addressing issues, if any, in a peaceful bilateral manner." The agreement is both comprehensive in its focus and adherence. It includes three areas: the international border; the Line of Control; and the actual ground position line in Jammu and Kashmir.

Thus, it covers the region from Siachen in the north to the creeks of Sindh and Gujrat. The joint statement published by both the Ministries in Pakistan and India on 25 February 2021, is self-explanatory.

"In the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders," the two DGMOs agreed to address each other's core issues and concerns, which have the propensity to disturb peace and lead to violence.

Both sides agreed for strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease firing along the LoC and all other sectors with effect from midnight, 24th/25th February 2021. The statement also reiterated to make use of existing mechanisms of hotline contact and border flag meetings to resolve any unforeseen situation or misunderstanding.

Although the statement covers purely military matters, buried within it are the seeds of normalization. Should both sides, particularly India, wish to pursue deconfliction. Nobody is under the illusion that the bitterness afflicting the bilateral ties between India and Pakistan will magically disappear.

The relationship is extremely complex. The conflict between the two countries has seen many transformations. The relationship follows a cyclic pattern of highs and lows. This particular return to some normalcy took a very long time, and the costs were high. It is hard to speculate as to what triggered it. The Sino-Indian border situation, the new administration in the US, and the initiation of peace process in Afghanistan, can only be very small contributing fac-

tors.

On Jammu and Kashmir, external factors only have a limited influence, and the institutional interest and internal politics on both sides are the main determining factors. The realization that this cannot go on forever seems to have dawned on both sides. The agreement is seen as a breakthrough by many. In the short term, the development bodes well for the people living along the LoC, who have paid with their lives the cost of Indian aggression.

In the longer view, the hope is that New Delhi genuinely wants peace with Pakistan, and the ceasefire agreement should culminate in restarting the dialogue process. Pakistan is genuinely interested in pursuing at least a functional relationship with India. This aligns with the paradigm shift in its foreign policy thrust from being a geopolitical state to a geo-economics state. It never took dialogue off the table, despite Indian belligerence under the Modi Administration. History is witness to the dividends the ceasefire agreement of 2003 resulted in. Both countries had started bus and truck services between the two parts of Jammu and Kashmir. The easing allowed normalcy to return and facilitated regular life along the LoC. NC Astana, former Indian Police Officer, respected for his insight on security affairs, in his book, *National Security and Conventional Arms Race: Spector of a Nuclear War*, categorically says, "India has no clarity about its military and strategic objectives vis-à-vis its stated adversaries, Pakistan and China, and can defeat neither of them in a war."

The Wire carried a review of the book. It quotes the book as seeing "a huge mismatch between the militaristic officials and media rhetoric, on the one hand, and the reality on the other hand, which is that India cannot defeat either country [Pakistan and China] militarily. The reviewer, Siddharth Varadarajan, Editor of the esteemed current affairs portal quotes the author as suggesting that instead of pouring vast sums of money into expensive weapons imports, India would be better served by finding solutions to the security challenges both Pakistan and China present by strengthening itself internally and pursuing non-military solutions, including diplomacy.

Both Pakistan and India need to seize this moment and let the ceasefire culminate into peace building or at least normalcy. Let not this just be a military and operational endeavor, let's take it further. Let's do it for our people and give diplomacy a fair chance.

The author is Associate Professor of Social Sciences at the Institute of Business Administration Karachi.

The power of Womenomics



Knut Ostby

Women globally are moving into a growing space as innovators, entrepreneurs, startup founders, techies, businesswomen, as well as home-based workers. From their existing roles in traditional economic sectors of agriculture, health, education, etc., women are now making inroads in the Fourth Industrial Revolution to drive global and regional knowledge economies of scale.

The idea of women as drivers of a nation's economy can be understood by 'Womenomics' — a term coined by Kathy Matsui, a strategist at Goldman Sachs, and launched by former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe in 2013 to stimulate his country's economic growth and promote gender equality in the workforce.

Womenomics is not just a good social move, it is also good for business: \$12 trillion could be added to the global GDP by 2025 by advancing women's equality. Yet, while women's control of investible wealth is on the rise, major barriers continue to prevent achieving SDG Goal 5 of Gender Equality in developing economies like Pakistan. At the global level, women currently represent 38.8% of the global labour force, and just 20% in Pakistan.

Inequality in opportunity and in working Pakistan's barriers against women's economic empowerment generally include lack of gender-sensitive policies, income inequality, attitudes/harassment at workplaces, and stereotypes defining women's role in society. For those already stepping into the workforce, however, additional barriers include a lack of gendered infrastructure at

workplaces, gender pay gaps, limited mobility, scarcity of public toilets, denial/discrimination of professional development and leadership opportunities, job security, and other occupational hazards.

For Womenomics to become a reality in Pakistan, both traditional and emerging occupational barriers need to be structurally and systemically addressed.

Out of the only 13.5 million (20%) women taking part in Pakistan's labour force, seven million women working in agriculture fall under the category of contributing family workers and remain unrecognised and unpaid. The gap between men and women's earnings has also increased. In 2018-2019, women earned just 18% of what men earned. Cultural expectations must also be addressed, as they contribute to women's 'time poverty'. For example, women in Pakistan spend nearly 10 times the hours as men in unpaid care work.

Meanwhile, in all too many households, women are compelled to give all their earnings to their family and have no financial independence or freedom to spend as they choose. This perpetuates a vicious cycle of silent exploitation and abuse — one where women are made to be completely dependent upon male family members for good.

Financial inclusion is imperative for women to access loans, credit, and to save for a more secure future. In Pakistan, however, 94% of adult women do not have a formal bank account, according to the World Bank. Of late, a number of efforts have been made to promote women's financial inclusion in the country. These include adoption of targets for improving access to bank accounts (at least 20 million adult women should have an active bank account by 2023); improving financial literacy of women under the State Bank of Pakistan's National Financial Literacy Program; and provision of loans of up to Rs5 million for women entrepreneurs under the Refinance & Credit Guarantee Scheme.

Financial inclusion can benefit greatly from technology. Mobile access can transform economic isolation into connectivity, thereby

empowering women in rural areas and inhibiting social environments. Unfortunately, there is a 33% gender gap in mobile usage in Pakistan — something that must be addressed in order to realise women's full potential. Similarly, investment in skills and training is the need of the hour. Women must be imparted skills as ship keepers, business agents, goods sellers, market

More research and development are needed on exploring the linkages between innovation, growth, and women's economic participation to demonstrate their direct contribution to the national GDP. The ongoing Covid-19 response and recovery initiatives have digitised the way things work, with major impact in the education and health sectors. The key question then is to see how these revolutionary trends and innovations can foster women-led economic recovery and growth.

Recognising these needs, UNDP Pakistan is providing economic empowerment opportunities to women through vocational skills training, startup tool kits, and support in establishing businesses through partnerships with microfinance institutions. Our Business Incubation Programme focuses on creating income-generation opportunities for young women in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Our Youth Innovation Challenge provides grants to women for youth-led initiatives and enterprises working to solve development challenges in Balochistan. With the help of the European Union, we have established women's dormitory and childcare facility at a Regional Training Centre in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for women police officers. We also support Gender Desks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Merged Districts, Sindh, and Punjab provinces, which serve to link local women to government service providers and enhance their agency and mobility.

As part of Pakistan's national commitment to achieving Agenda 2030 of 'Leave No One Behind' in sustainable development, we have a clear opportunity pathway ahead of us — invest in women as drivers of Pakistan's economic growth.

The writer is the Resident Representative UNDP Pakistan.

Indonesia to establish noodle factory in Faisalabad: Ambassador Adam Mulawarman Tugio



FAISALABAD, Mar 11 (DS): Ambassador of Indonesia Adam Mulawarman Tugio on Thursday said that Indonesia had entered into the value-added food sector and would establish a state of the art noodle factory in Faisalabad. He was addressing a meeting of the business community in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI). The meeting was also attended by a delegation of the Chaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Mr. Tugio said, "Pakistan and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries form a big market of one billion people and we must try our optimum best to exploit its maximum potential." He said that Indonesia was already exporting palm oil to Pakistan and now it had planned to enter into the val-

ue added food chain. In this connection, some factories had already been established in different countries while Faisalabad was selected in Pakistan because of its geographical location, he added. He said, "From Faisalabad we could ensure supplies to every nook and corner of Pakistan within just a few hours." Regarding China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he said that it had laid down a strong foundation for infrastructure development in Pakistan and it would also spur economic activities in this region. He also mentioned the tourist destinations in both countries and said, "We must cooperate for the promotion of tourism as a full-fledged industry in Pakistan." About duty on Pakistani textile products, he said that the business community of Pakistan should raise this issue at the Trade in Good Agreement (TIGA). He further said that Indonesian spare parts were being imported by Pakistan through other countries. Pakistan should also ensure direct import of spare parts from

Indonesia, he added. Regarding educational scholarships, he said that he would try that Indonesia should also extend at least the same number of scholarships as offered by Pakistan. He said that Indonesia had a well-developed pharmaceutical industry. "We are preparing an anti-corona vaccine and are ready to share our expertise with Pakistan," he added. He further said that Indonesia was regularly organizing trade expos in October or November but last year it was cancelled due to corona. However, this year it would be held and he wanted maximum physical participation of Pakistani businessmen. Haji Jalat Khan Achakzai, President Chaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry also addressed the meeting and invited Indonesian ambassador to Chaman. Earlier, President FCCI Engineer Ihtasham Javed welcomed the Indonesian ambassador and his team and said that both countries were linked with strong religious, cultural and economic relations. He said that bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Indonesia was 2.3 billion dollars. "Pakistani imports are 2.22 billion dollars while our exports are only 146.22 million dollars. Hence the balance of trade is in favor of Indonesia." Later, Senior Vice President FCCI Chaudhry Talat Mahmood presented FCCI shield to Ambassador of Indonesia Adam Mulawarman Tugio.

COAS General Bajwa called on US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad

RAWALPINDI: March 8, (DS): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa called on the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad and General Austin Scott Miller, the Commander Resolute Support Mission Afghanistan, on Monday at the General Headquarters.

According to a statement issued by the military's media wing in this regard, matters of mutual interest were discussed during the meeting.

The leaders also shed light on matters related to regional security and the ongoing Afghanistan Reconciliation Process.



During the meeting, the visiting dignitaries greatly appreciated Pakistan's role in the ongoing peace process.

Sri Lankan Army Chief hails Pakistan's efforts for regional peace

RAWALPINDI, Mar 19 (DS): Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and Commander of Sri Lankan Army General L H S C Silva WWV, RWP, RSP, VSV, USP, Friday called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa here at General Headquarters.

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security issues with particular reference to enhance military cooperation were discussed, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) media release.

The visiting dignitary acknowledged Pakistan's continuous efforts for peace and stability in the region, especially in Afghan Peace Process and pledged to



further enhance bilateral relations between both countries. Earlier, on arrival at GHQ, visiting dignitary laid a floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada (the martyrs memorial). A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Army presented the Guard of Honour to visiting dignitary.

Non-Muslim students to be taught their religious values in new curriculum: Shafqat Mahmood



Islamabad, Mar 02 (DS): Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mahmood on Tuesday said Non-Muslim students would be taught their religious values rather than Islamic studies in the New National Single Curriculum.

During a meeting held here at his office with the British High Commissioner Dr Christian Turner, the education minister said students of Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Bhai Matt and Kelash community would be taught separate subjects that had been prepared in consultation and cooperation of their scholars.

Expressing his views over new uniform educational curriculum, Federal Minister said till grade five, the subjects including English, Mathematics and Science would be taught in English, while the students would read Urdu and Islamic studies in Urdu.

Social Studies and General Knowledge would also be taught in Urdu while English terms would also be included in these subjects. However, English objects would also be included phase-wise from class six to

eight. After class eight, the students could select national or international qualification according to their own choice, he added.

Federal Minister further said private book publishers had been given permission for books publishing, adding, the provinces and private educational institutions could teach any book.

However, the federal education ministry had ensured that the publisher's books in that regard, should meet the criteria of single national curriculum and should not have any kind of hate material.

He is it was right of all citizens to give their suggestions on the new national single curriculum, therefore it had been uploaded on the official website of education ministry.

He said several experts had criticised the single national curriculum without reading and knowing its benefits.

While talking about the single national curriculum till middle class, the minister said the provinces and private educational institutions had been given permission to teach additional material.

The elite private schools were free in holding music and dance classes. Similarly, the Madaris could also teach additional material of their Dars-e-Nizami, he added. During the meeting, both sides also discussed the procedure of Madaris registration.

Shafqat said that the registration process of Madaris was continued across the country and under the Directorate General of Religious Education, an attached department of federal education ministry, a total of sixteen offices had been established for this purpose.

So far, 2000 Madaris had been registered, while on the demand of few Madaris, five new educational boards had also been established, he informed. He said that before the education ministry, Madaris were working under interior ministry.

"We had brought Madaris under the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training where the doors of the best carrier opportunities will be opened for students due to implementation of single national curriculum", he remarked.

Economic security



Hassan Baig

The security of the state has been of utmost importance in the annals of history and has in fact gained momentum with time. There has been transformation in the dynamics of state security. Kingship was once thriving over conventional military might and territorial occupation was the hallmark of security. With time, the concept of security of the state changed from conventional manpower-based military might to knowledge-based progress in the field of war arsenal to ensure security of the state.

After the disintegration of the former Soviet Union (USSR), the war arsenals strategy has substantially changed and now first comes economic security to support the military strategy ensuring security of the state.

Economic security has prime importance in the national security paradigm; we see that all the most important developed countries right from the United States of America to European countries and now an emerging new power of China – all have strong economies safeguarding their national security interests. It is now a proven fact that the economic security paradigm has become almost synonymous to national security in the world.

The economic security paradigm revolves around a strong inclusive political system, a strong economy with robust industrial infrastructure, technology driven advancements with a strong institutional setup and an equitable judicious system ensuring delivery of services to the people at their doorstep. In fact, the political system is the engine of all the systems, followed by the economic system. Education should be rightly prioritised along with scientific and technological innovations, which are

key to progress ensuring national security. But the billion-dollar question is: how does one achieve these goal posts and milestones?

Developing countries like Pakistan need more economic security to avoid existential threats. Vast populations, with the majority of them illiterate, are in fact a big threat to its security. All we need is to devise a strategy to address this issue first, as resources are limited to cope with the situation to feed such a huge crowd going nowhere. There is an immediate and crucial need to address this population issue. Unfortunately, no government is serious about this problem. If other Muslim countries could successfully arrest high birth rates, then why can't Pakistan adopt a serious family planning strategy in place?

Pakistan is also facing governance issues, as exclusivity has become the order of the day. It is poisonous for

is a need of long-term visionary policy initiatives to support this idea of export-led growth. A large population in the shape of labour and manpower can be accommodated in such industrial clusters. All sorts of administrative issues and unrest emanating from the thousands jobless and threatening the peaceful atmosphere of the country could be addressed through this approach.

Third, there is a need to ensure economic recovery through a better strategy of producing skilled manpower by imparting vocational and technical training via improved institutional reforms initiatives. The human resource exports of raw labour cannot ensure long-term robust earnings and foreign remittances. A large youth bulge can only be a useful resource for Pakistan if the youth are skilful and technically trained to earn more, thereby ensuring the livelihood



the social fabric of any society. The concept of selective rule of law has marred society, discouraging investors from coming into the country. There is a serious need to address this issue of selective use of institutions, which in fact shows bad governance. There is a need for confidence building in and amongst investors so as to invest in Pakistan.

Second, an inclusive economic growth model is needed with export-led growth supported by a large industrial infrastructure to ensure security of the modern state. The best strategy would be to create special economic zones and industrial clusters on the pattern of China to enhance exports.

An inclusive economic growth model is urgently required, for which there

and security of their families.

Fourth, there is an imminent threat of the debt burden crossing all limits and disturbing all sorts of economic initiatives. The government needs to focus on this highly disturbing factor and try and stabilise the economic progress in the coming days and months. The debt-to-GDP ratio has crossed all limits, which is a clear violation of the Debt and Fiscal Responsibility Act passed by parliament.

To put it in a nutshell, the security of the state can only be ensured through economic security and economic progress in the country. And that can only be done by taking initiatives addressing issues highlighted in the lines above. The rest lies with the policymakers and the government of Pakistan.

The writer is an economist.

Women's role becomes more significant for soio-economic uplifts: Russian Envoy

Shabbir Hussain

ISLAMABAD, Mar 7 (DS): Russian envoy to Pakistan Danila Ganich Saturday said in the era of digitalization women's role had become more significant and imperative in national development and soio-economic uplifts of thriving societies.

The envoy, in a video message posted on the embassy official Facebook account, congratulated the women across the globe on the International Women's Day to be celebrated on Monday (March 08).

He particularly lauded the women who were rendering great services in the field of education, and mentioned those who were associated with the noble profession of teaching at the National University of Modern Languages (Islamabad).

Highlighting the importance of the day, Ambassador Danila Ganich told APP that International Women's Day was a day to celebrate the social, economic, cul-



tural and political achievements of women, and eulogize their contributions in national developments.

"The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. Significant activity is witnessed worldwide as groups come together to celebrate women's achievements or rally for women's equality," he

remarked.

Following the decision agreed at Copenhagen in 1911, International Women's Day was honoured the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland on March 19 in which more than one million women and men attended allies campaigning for women's rights to work and vote.

Pakistan asked to organise fairs in South Africa

Islamabad, Mar 11, (DS): There is a need to enter into partnerships in crop sciences, technological innovation and livestock sciences for mutual benefit of Pakistan and South Africa, said South African High Commissioner to Pakistan M Madikiza. In a meeting with Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam, the envoy suggested that Pakistan should organise exhibitions in South Africa to woo investors to pour capital into value addition to Pakistani mangoes and oranges.

Speaking on the occasion, Imam called for promoting bilateral trade and investment relations between Pakistan and South Africa. The minister also highlighted the export potential for



processed mango from Pakistan to South Africa.

It was also mutually decided that Pakistan and South Africa's ties regarding sports could be strengthened for the establishment of an even better relation-

ship between the two countries. The minister suggested researcher exchange programs and students exchange programs. Both dignitaries stressed upon the need to promote tourism in Pakistan.

Compliance with the FATF standards a challenging task



Idrees Khawaja

One question being asked feverishly today is: will Pakistan exit the FATF gray list? Predicting one or the other way is difficult, however, one thing is certain—Pakistan will not go on the blacklist. Whether we will come out depends more on our foreign relations than compliance with the technical standards. Compliance or no compliance, India, being one of the 39 members of FATF, will for sure oppose our exit from the grey list. China, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia had earlier supported our exit but we need 13 members to be on our side, not just 3. If we can win the new Biden administration to our side then surely we will exit. The million-dollar question is, can we win Biden? This will crucially depend on how the Biden administration views the peace deal with Afghanistan.

Geo-politics and foreign relations apart, the technical standards given by the FATF are difficult to meet. At the last meeting, the task force asked Pakistan to comply with a list of 27 points standards. The recent FATF-related legislation in Pakistan, the arrest/detention of certain people, different checks on banking transactions, and foreign currency dealings are an attempt to meet the conditions laid down by the FATF. Purely, on merit there seems to be a lot of progress, however, still, the diplomatic overtures underpin by national interests of member countries will have the final say.

The original recommendations of the FATF drawn up in 1990 were designed to combat the use of financial systems for laundering drug money. Immediately after 9/11, they expanded the mandate of FATF to include financing of terrorist acts and terrorist organizations in its fold. The FATF mandate says: “Countries should identify, assess, and understand the

money laundering and terrorist financing risks for the country, and should take action, including designating an authority or mechanism to... ensuring that the risks are mitigated effectively... Countries should apply a risk-based approach (RBA) to ensure that measures to prevent... money laundering and terrorist financing are commensurate with the risks identified”.

The wording of the mandate implies that countries have to identify for themselves whether they are a high-risk or low-risk country and what measures will combat money laun-

jurisdiction that earned fame during the leak’s time was the British Virgin Islands—but it is not on FATF’s watch list of countries. Could this be because of the special nature of its jurisdiction, ‘overseas British territory’, or is there something else to it. Britain of course is a member of the FATF.

Compliance with the FATF standards means introducing measures that have made it slightly more difficult to open and operate a bank account in Pakistan. Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements have increased for the banks. This is bound to affect financial inclusion adversely. If banks



dering and terrorist financing within their country. However, the judge, jury, and executioner over the risk assessment and the combat measures taken by a country, is the FATF. Given the subjective nature of the risk assessment and the combat measures undertaken, it is not too difficult to change the goal post, asking a country to ‘do more’, if the geopolitical dynamics so demand.

We owe some of this trouble to ourselves. If we receive billions through wire transfer in the account of a very poor person and these transfers make headlines as well, then this will not help Pakistan’s cause at the FATF. Such transfers imply that the country’s financial systems are quite weak. However, for any money laundered into Pakistan or out of the country, there has to be a sender or a recipient country of such money—one wonders whether such sender or recipient country is also on the grey list? The list of countries under the increased watch of FATF includes Pakistan and it also includes Panama—famous for the Panama Leaks. Another

and the country at large decide to embrace the use of technology, woes of the customers will be less—rather than asking clients to run helter-skelter for providing a copy of the national ID card, the banks must link with the NADRA database to allow direct verification of the details of a client from the certified database. This will also kill the potential of submitting someone else’s ID card to support a transaction without his/her explicit permission. This would also make us more compliant with the FATF.

Given our serious efforts to comply, if we exit the grey list, we should remain on our toes. Any member country of the FATF can report another country needing to be watched more closely, and this can start proceedings for a greater watch. With India being a member of the FATF, our FATF-woes are not likely to end too soon. The solution lies in making ourselves economically strong enough that twisting our arm hurt the Have-countries—but this will take time and effort.

The writer is affiliated with PIDE.

The USEFP in Pakistan Announces 2022 Fulbright Student Program

Islamabad, March 8, (DS): The United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP) has announced the opening of the 2022 Fulbright Student competition. The prestigious Fulbright Program is the flagship academic scholarship program of the U.S. Department of State and is offered in 160 countries. Since 2005, Pakistan's Fulbright Program is the world's largest in terms of financial contribution from the U.S. Government. The Government of Pakistan, through the Higher Education Commission (HEC), has also provided generous support. Every year approximately 100 Pakistanis begin master's programs, and another 50 begin PhD studies on Fulbright scholarships at leading U.S. universities.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Fulbright program, which has been operating in Pakistan for 71 years. The Pakistan Fulbright Student Program fully funds graduate degree study, including tuition, maintenance, insurance, and air travel. On completing their degrees, returning Fulbright participants contribute to Pakistan's development and growth by teaching at Pakistani universities, or otherwise engaging in important civic and government service. The scholarship



is merit-based, but merit is defined broadly and not restricted to grades and test scores. The application form is available online at www.usefp.org, and the application deadline is June 09, 2021. This year the Graduate Record Examination (GRE General) will be required of all applicants, and the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) requirement set for last year has been removed.

USEFP especially welcomes applicants in the disciplines of energy, water, agriculture, public health, education, social sciences, journalism, mass communication, arts and culture management, urban and regional planning, environmental science, security and peace studies, and data science. Please note that clinical medicine is not included in the Fulbright program.

"The U.S. government is very proud of its long partnership with Pakistan in pro-

moting higher education for its citizens, and the Fulbright program is a highlight of this partnership," said U.S. Embassy Chargé d'affaires Angela P. Aggeler. "In particular, it is very important to us that Fulbright students represent the rich diversity of Pakistan. For this reason, we strongly encourage women, people with disabilities, and students from rural and underrepresented areas to apply."

"I would like to encourage anyone who is eligible and interested in graduate education to consider applying to the prestigious Fulbright Program. Fulbrighters come from all regions of Pakistan. The 2021 cohort was drawn from 38 different universities. Among successful applicants, some are fresh graduates, others are working professionals, and in recent years more than half are women," said USEFP Executive Director Rita Akhtar.

Japanese Ambassador Matsuda Kuninori calls on Zobiaida Jalal Minister for Defence Production

ISLAMABAD, March 10 (DS): Ambassador of Japan Matsuda Kuninori called on Ms Zobiaida Jalal, Minister for Defence Production in her office at Islamabad. The ambassador mentioned the participation of Japanese Maritime Self Defence Forces in International Maritime Exercise of Aman 2021.

He appreciated Pakistan's efforts for successfully holding the Aman 2021 exercises and said that Japan would continue to participate in such exercises in future too. The ambassador also highlighted the prospective areas of cooperation between the two countries in the domains of IT, Education and Agriculture in addition to defence production.

Zobiaida Jalal said that Japan is very important for us and Pakistan believes that there exists a great potential of cooperation between the two countries. Both countries need to



identify new areas of cooperation and give a boost to their bilateral ties. She thanked the government of Japan for participating in the recently held Aman2021 exercises and said that Pakistan is a peace loving country and

would continue to make endeavors for peace. Pakistan believes that holding Aman (peace) exercises on regular basis would promote maritime security which is essential for regional and global peace, she added.

Pakistan to facilitate Uzbekistan's access to Gwadar, Karachi ports: PM Imran Khan



ISLAMABAD, March 10 (DS): Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said Pakistan would facilitate Uzbekistan to get access to its seaports of Gwadar and Karachi in a bid to enhance regional connectivity and trade. In a meeting with Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdalaziz Kamilov at the PM House, the Prime Minister said Pakistan offered a shortest route to international seas to all Central Asian Republics including Uzbekistan and could prove as a gateway to landlocked Central Asia. Imran Khan expressed Pakistan's resolve to forge closer ties with Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia in areas of trade, investment, energy, and people-to-people exchanges. Expressing appreciation for the proposed Trans-Afghan railway project between Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, he underscored Pakistan's commitment to support all efforts for the earliest realization of the im-

portant connectivity project. Prime Minister Imran Khan fondly recalled his interactions with President Mirziyoyev in Beijing and Bishkek and reiterated his invitation to the Uzbek President to visit Pakistan at the earliest convenience. Underlining the historic and civilizational links between the two countries, the Prime Minister underlined that Pakistan highly valued its close fraternal ties with Uzbekistan and wished to deepen bilateral cooperation in all areas. The Prime Minister particularly emphasized that enhanced trade and regional connectivity were the cornerstones of economic growth and development. The Prime Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast support to the Afghan peace process, stressing the imperative of negotiated political solution. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the Afghan sides will seize this historic opportunity to work together constructively and secure an inclusive,

broad-based and comprehensive negotiated political settlement. In the context of South Asia, the Prime Minister underscored that durable peace and economic development in the region hinged on peaceful resolution of long-standing unresolved disputes. Foreign Minister Kamilov conveyed cordial greetings of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and reiterated Uzbekistan's commitment to expand bilateral cooperation with Pakistan in diverse fields. He also handed over a letter from President Mirziyoyev addressed to Prime Minister Imran Khan, inviting him to participate in a Central Asia-South Asia Connectivity Conference in Tashkent in July 2021. The Prime Minister thanked for the invitation and mentioned that he was looking forward to visiting Uzbekistan. The meeting was attended by Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood and senior government officials of Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan eyes Gwadar Port as gateway for seaborne cotton exports: Global Times



BEIJING, March 18 (APP): Uzbekistan, one of the world's leading cotton exporters, sent a high-level delegation earlier this week to the Chinese-invested Gwadar Port in Pakistan to look for logistics opportunities that might help it export its cotton, the Global Times has learned. Analysts said the move highlighted the big potential demand countries have for an international public facility such as the Gwadar Port, a deep-water port that may open a coveted sea trade option for landlocked Central Asian countries.

A 16-member high-level delegation from Uzbekistan, led by Vice Minister of Railways Akmal Kamalov and the country's Ambassador to Pakistan Oybek Arif Usmanov, visited the port a day before yesterday, according to a press release from the China Overseas Ports Holding Co, the port's operator.

Accompanied by Gwadar Port Authority Chairman Naseer Khan Kashani and Zhang Baozhong, chairman of the China Overseas Ports Holding Co, the delegation observed the loading/offloading of cargoes by a containership operated by Chinese shipping giant

COSCO Shipping Holdings.

They discussed the matter of regional connectivity and the possibility of building and investing in a logistics park at the Gwadar free trade area, according to Global Times on Thursday.

On his WeChat account, Zhang noted that Uzbekistan is the world's sixth-largest producer and second-largest exporter of cotton. He also wrote that Uzbekistan is pushing for a diplomatic move among Central Asian countries, including top-level diplomatic visits to Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, for a southbound logistics corridor via the Gwadar Port.

Afghanistan has become the first landlocked Central Asian country to benefit from using the Gwadar Port in trans-shipment trade. In 2020, the country imported 43,000 tons of fertilizers via the port, contributing to its agricultural development.

The port's dry bulk cargo business grew more than 1,100 percent to 57,000 tons in 2020 compared with 2018. Zhou Rong, a senior research fellow at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, said

that the Gwadar Port has the best infrastructure among all ports in the region.

"The infrastructure there is superb. Both in terms of its deep-water berths and its onshore port infrastructure, the Gwadar Port beats its peers in Iran and India," Zhou told the Global Times.

However, for such a southbound corridor to work, other regional countries including China and Iran will have to be involved to make an overland passage possible, given the current instability in Afghanistan, Zhou said. Located in Pakistan's southwest province of Balochistan, the Gwadar Port is a key project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship project of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative.

According to data from the US Department of Agriculture, Uzbekistan exported 503,000 tons of cotton in 2015, with Bangladesh and China as its leading destinations.

The country's cotton exports fell in recent years due to a shrinking planting area and an increase in domestic consumption.

How to empower NACTA

Khawaja Khalid Farooq

Pakistan's capacity to respond to terrorism and targeted violence depends on its ability to understand these phenomena, and to adapt as they evolve. For that, the National Counter Terrorism Authority, or Nacta, is our best suited institution. Its role in spearheading Pakistan's FATF compliance efforts cannot be underestimated. However, there is much more that it can achieve.

Nacta must work alongside its domestic and international partners to gather, produce and share information regarding current and emerging threats, and use innovative technologies to better anticipate changes and prepare responses.

Nacta should invest in a multidirectional information-gathering and -sharing infrastructure, focused on four key elements: the National Network or intelligence sharing centers, the provincial Counter Terrorism Departments, the FATF regulatory system, and the "If You See Something, Say something" public awareness campaign.

Intelligence coordination provides law enforcement with resources and training to identify and prevent terrorism, targeted violence, and mass attacks. It facilitates national capacity for identifying, evaluating and sharing leads related to those threats as appropriate. In addition, the Nacta Information Network should be the official system for sharing sensitive but unclassified information between federal, provincial, international and private sector partners.

Through this multidirectional approach to gathering and sharing intelligence and information, Nacta enables all levels of government and the private sector to better understand and prepare for threats of terrorism and targeted violence.

The department should, in coordination with the CTDs, and any other appropriate partners, produce an annual product that evaluates the strategic threat environment within Pakistan related to terrorism and targeted violence, and anticipates future threats. A common baseline understanding of threats within Pakistan will support interagency policymaking, agency prioritizations, resource allocations, and intergovernmental partnerships.

In order to encourage new perspectives and challenge long-standing assumptions, the department will continuously evaluate and measure the impact over time of anticipatory intelligence that appears in Pakistan. The point of anticipatory intelligence is not to predict who will become a terrorist or attacker, but rather to understand the impact that changes in the world will have on the problem set; the trajectory of terrorist

organizations or movements that may influence attackers; or specific adaptations in tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) that these actors will undertake.

A strong methodology for evaluating anticipatory intelligence will allow continual improvements in the department's ability to produce intelligence that highlights emerging trends, changing conditions in the strategic environment, and threats from hostile actors.

Nacta may consult with other departments and agencies, academia and relevant NGOs to fashion a definition of targeted violence that is more precise and actionable for the department's mission. Following this process, the new definition will be introduced into the Pakistani legal lexicon, and be employed to further shape the mission of the CTDs and its components and offices as it pertains to targeted violence. This effort will help build a common understanding of the threat for all people and organizations focused on combating targeted violence, allowing for better discussion, approaches to mitigation and resource allocation.

The current national-level statistics on terrorism and targeted violence in all its forms are not comprehensive. Nacta can work with other departments and agencies and, as appropriate, academic and non-governmental organizations, to determine the best methods of collecting accurate and comprehensive national-level statistics on terrorism and targeted violence, including hate crimes. After determining the best methods, the department can prioritize resources toward the collection of this data and encourage its partners to do the same.

Nacta can improve intelligence-driven operations with increased information sharing to produce and disseminate actionable intelligence that can identify and characterize terrorist and related threats to the nation's various modes of transportation, including: aviation, freight rail, mass transit and passenger rail, pipeline, highway and motor carrier, and maritime. The department may seek to close gaps between traveler information available within the aviation transportation and maritime transportation systems to facilitate the same level of passenger/crew vetting across both domains.

The department requires a sound understanding of technological advances that attackers will employ, and those that can help counter terrorism and targeted violence. Nacta may conduct risk-based assessments of technological advances in the near, medium, and long term, examining the promise and peril of emerging technologies, including unmanned systems. The department may

collaborate with other federal agencies, organizations, and industry partners to share findings and promote awareness of the risks and potential mitigation measures.

One critical purpose of understanding the strategic environment is to leverage the department's knowledge, including highly specialized knowledge, to support active missions to protect Pakistan. Law enforcement investigations are a critical area into which departmental knowledge about the strategic environment is directly applied.

While personal networks and operational coordination are useful means to share information, Nacta will increasingly supplement these relationships with technology that can share high-volume data - governed by appropriate privacy protections and rules - at a level of speed and accuracy that human networks cannot replicate. These efforts should achieve or beat the "near real-time" information-sharing goals.

Significant work remains to ensure that Nacta reaches its full potential, enabling other adjudicating agencies to have timely access to the information they need to properly vet travelers and immigrants, and identify threats. Nacta can support additional vetting programs, extending its support beyond the current counterterrorism focus and deepening its capabilities through biometrics and advanced analytics. This will improve information sharing to provide greater intelligence and feedback on vetting decisions to those responsible for vetting individuals for access to Pakistan, or immigration benefits, especially from countries which are not friendly with Pakistan.

The department leverages analytical resources to augment its targeting and vetting initiatives to investigate suspect travelers during the visa application process.

Law-enforcement efforts have identified links between terrorist groups and the sale of counterfeit goods and illicit material in e-commerce. Nacta may work to enhance end-to-end visibility into supply chains, implement technological solutions to more effectively segment risk among millions of daily trade transactions, and better align targeting efforts to detect and disrupt these illicit financial operations. These ties into the FATF and grey list ongoing issue for Pakistan.

These are not mere wish lists; Nacta is the premier homeland security organization of Pakistan, and these roles are all suited for this organization. All this lies within reach of Nacta's capabilities; we just need to support it in good faith.

The writer is a retired inspector general of police and ex head of NACTA.

Durable peace in Afghanistan common goal of Pakistan, US: Sheikh Rasheed

ISLAMABAD, Mar 2 (DS): Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Tuesday said Pakistan had rendered unmatched sacrifices for achieving the lasting peace in Afghanistan, which was the common goal of Pakistan and the United States.

“Pakistan has rendered immense human and financial sacrifices for durable peace in the Afghanistan,” he expressed these views during a meeting with acting US Ambassador to Pakistan Angela P Aggeler who called on him here, a news release said.

The minister said Pakistan would continue extending its full support to the new US administration for securing lasting peace in Afghanistan. During the meeting, the minister and envoy also discussed the existing ties and the matters related to mutual interest.

Sheikh Rasheed said Pakistan and US were enjoying old relations and hoped that there would be considerable improvement in these ties under the new US administration. The acting ambassador said there existed ample opportunities



to bring improvement in the existing bilateral ties under the new US administration. The envoy said Afghanistan also valued Pakistan's efforts it made for achieving the durable peace.

The meeting also discussed the case of American journalist Daniel Pearl and the accused involved in it. The envoy said it was expected that the family of Daniel Pearl's was get justice from Pakistan's court. The

minister said the courts in Pakistan were functioning with absolute independence and he was confident that their decision in this particular case would be based on justice and in line with the law.

The US envoy appreciated Pakistani measures for effectively controlling the spread of deadly coronavirus in the country. Federal Interior Secretary Yousaf Naseem Khokhar was also present in the meeting.

Pakistan, Iran reiterate resolve to strengthen economic, trade linkages

ISLAMABAD, March 12 (DS): Pakistan and Iran Friday reiterated resolve to promote economic and trade linkages between the two countries by building upon historical ties, geographical proximity, cultural affinities and economic commonalities.

The reiteration was made during a call on meeting of Hassan Abghari, Iran's Deputy Minister of Economic and Finance Affairs and the Managing Director, Iran Foreign Investment Company (IFIC) with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh.

The Iranian Deputy Minister was accompanied by the Deputy Head of Mission Embassy of Iran, Muhammad Surkhabi, said a press statement issued by the Finance Ministry. They exchanged views on matters of common interests; the statement said adding that the Finance Minister on the occasion emphasized the need to find ways for furthering trade relations. The Pakistan Iran Investment Com-



pany could play a pivotal role in strengthening trade and investment between the two countries, he added.

Hafeez Shaikh, briefed the Deputy Minister that the government of Pakistan was pursuing a broad-based economic reform agenda to achieve export led growth and sustainable economic development. He apprised about the economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and outlined socio-economic measures taken by the government to lessen the adverse impact of the

pandemic on marginalized sections of the society.

The government announced largest ever Fiscal Stimulus Package and introduced the strategy of a smart lockdown to protect the vulnerable segments of the society which has been acknowledged worldwide, he stated. The government, he said, was firmly committed to correct fundamentals of the economy through effective policy making and targeted reforms with an aim to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth strategy.

Islamabad, Beijing launch year-long celebrations marking seven decades of friendship



Islamabad, March 02, (DS): Pakistan and China on Tuesday commenced the year-long celebrations marking 70th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. The capitals - Islamabad and Beijing, witnessed the launch of series of events at a virtual ceremony simultaneously held at the respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi formally commenced the activities at the event attended by high-ranking officials from both sides. Foreign Minister Qureshi emphasized that successive generations of leaders and people of both Pakistan and China had made invaluable contributions to strengthen the ties. He expressed confidence that China Pakistan Economic Corridor would become a high-quality demonstration project of Belt and Road Initiative. He paid tribute to Chinese leadership for the "incredible job in changing the lives and

destiny of its people, and said that President Xi Jinping had greatly helped Chinese nation achieve its national aspirations. Foreign Minister Wang Yi underlined that Pakistan-China friendship had a time-honored history as the two countries "stood together in rain or shine, and built an exceptional, iron-clad friendship". A logo was launched at the ceremony epitomizing historic nature of Pak-

istan-China ties. To mark the historic occasion, both Foreign Ministers authored articles that were published today highlighting how the two countries had solidified and deepened their "All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" over seven decades, despite vicissitudes of times in the international system.

Pakistan's Foreign Office launched a video documentary highlighting the 'Higher than Himalayas and Sweeter than Honey friendship'. For the 70th anniversary, both sides have planned a series of events, including people-to-people exchanges, spanned over the entire year to commemorate the historic milestone in a befitting manner.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong held a meeting and discussed ways to further strengthen the relationship in diverse fields. Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood also attended the meeting.



Pakistan-China 70 years of growing together

Shakeel Ahmad Ramay

Pakistan-China relationship cannot be understood by applying conventional theories or conceptual frameworks of diplomacy and international relation. The relationship is unique, wide-ranging and encompasses all fields of life. It is based on two inimitable ingredients, love and care, which are scarce commodities in international relation. It is not mere statement, history is full of events and incidents, where both countries exhibited the strength of their relationship and uniqueness. They stood by each other no matter what the situation was.

The journey of relationship started right after the establishment of China. Howbeit, the strong footing was provided by the first interaction between Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Bogra and Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in 1955 at the Non-alignment conference. The meeting paved the way for future interaction and relationship. Again, being foreign minister of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Bogra led the efforts to conclude the boundary agreement between China and Pakistan. Thus, Muhammad Ali Bogra is considered the mastermind from Pakistani side to steer the relationship. Since then, Pakistan and China are together in multiple fields but well-being of people through economic cooperation is prime area of relationship.

The economic cooperation started way back in 1952 through a trade transaction of US\$ 86 million (Pakistani export US\$84 million). The trade agreement in 1963 was second major event. It was also important because it was signed right after the boundary agreement. Along the course of time, Pakistan and China kept on signing agreements on cooperation in different sectors like agreement on cultural cooperation 1965, science and cultural cooperation 1976 and education exchanges 1983 etc. China also provided Pakistan different types of grants and loans. First loan of US\$ 60 million was provided in 1965. Pakistan was also offered loans of US\$ 217 million during the period of 1970-75. China also provided the textile machinery to promote textile industry.

The major milestone on economic front was achieved in 1989. Pakistan-China signed an agreement of "promotion and protection of investments" to enhance the investment and economic cooperation. It led to first major investment in Pakistan from China. Huawei in 1998 opened its operations in Pakistan. Since then it is leading player in the field of technology. It is also one of

the major taxpayers, as it paid US\$ 43 million in 2018. It is also contributing in job creation and employed 16000+ Pakistanis. The indirect contribution in jobmarket is also substantial and it contributed 25000 indirect jobs. Haier Pakistan was next company to invest in Pakistan. It started its operations in 2001. It gave a new dimension to home appliances industry in Pakistan. It has created thousands of the job and opportunities for Pakistanis.

Zong Pakistan, which is part of China mobile is a big name in telecommunication market of Pakistan. It has revolutionized the mobile communication in Pakistan. It is biggest provider of data services and PTA highlighted that the Zong hold 55 percent share. It is also leading player of 4-G services. The investment of Zong has reached the level of US\$ 2.2 billion in 2018, which is on increasing mode.

It is also believed among wider community that the investment agreement of 1989, also paved the way for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). As, right after the signing the agreement both countries started to enhance cooperation in multiple economic fields. Government and non-government entities started to investment in Pakistan. Both governments also started to finalize trade agreements, energy cooperation, agriculture collaboration and science and technology cooperation. High level exchanges between the countries started to put more efforts to finalize different economic agreements.

Howbeit, the real impetus was provided by the Beijing Declaration, which was signed by President Musharraf and President Hu Jintao in 2003 in Beijing. In 2004 Pakistan and China signed preferential trade agreement to foster the trade. Simultaneously Pakistan and China started to negotiate the free trade agreement which concluded with signing the first FTA. President Musharraf again visited China in 2006 and signed multiple MoUs. President Hu Jintao visited Pakistan in 2006 and both countries agreed to enhance cooperation in diverse fields. The visit ended with signing two landmark agreements 1) Free Trade Agreement and 2) Framework Agreement on Energy Cooperation. In 2009, both countries also signed the FTA on services.

Pakistan and China kept on working closely to enhance the cooperation. In 2013, Prime Minister Li Keqiang of China, visited Pakistan. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Li Keqiang finalized the comprehensive framework of economic cooperation. In 2015, President Xi Jinping came on state visit to Pakistan. He started his visit

by declaring Pakistan and China iron brother. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was launched during his visit. It is a multidimensional initiative, which has been designed by keeping in mind the needs of Pakistan. Pakistan and China jointly developed the long-term plan of CPEC. The long-term plan includes 1) Connectivity, 2) Energy, 3) Trade and industrial parks, 4) Agriculture development and poverty alleviation, 5) Tourism, 6) Cooperation in connecting people's livelihoods and non-government exchanges and 7) Financial cooperation. The second free trade agreement was also signed in 2019. The focus of agreement is to create special opportunities to enhance trade.

Pakistan and China even continued to enhance cooperation during the COVID-19, when whole world was on hold. In March 2020, during the visit of President Arif Alvi, both countries signed two MoUs; 1) Agriculture Cooperation and 2) Science and Technology Cooperation. Agriculture MoU includes in 1) technology transfer, 2) capacity building for R&D 3) trade development, 4) agro-industry, 5) business development and 6) livestock and dairy industry development. Science and Technology MoU has been signed by keeping in sight the fourth industrial revolution and needs of Pakistan. Both countries are still working to enhance the cooperation.

The analysis of cooperation highlights few important things. First, economic cooperation always remained the prime area of focus between two countries. It is pertinent to mention here this because the opponents always tried to ignore the economic dimension and try to only focus on security cooperation. Second, Pakistan and China always keep on looking for avenue to enhance cooperation. Third, the cooperation was always followed the principle of win-win cooperation. Fourth, diversification is important element.

However, the most important aspect of cooperation is that it keeps growing with growing of countries. For example, after the 1978 reforms China started to emerge as major country at global level. As China continue to grow, China continued to enhance investment in Pakistan, to help Pakistan to grow. First glimpse came in 1989, which culminated with signing of CPEC in 2015. Now, Pakistan is one major investment hub for China. The investment is being designed to help Pakistan to come out of economic crises and emerge as a stable and economically sound country. Hence, it can be concluded that 70 years of Pakistan-China relationship are 70 years of growing together.

*The writer is Director,
Asia Study Center SDPI.*

FM, Uzbek counterpart firm on boosting high-level interaction to strengthen bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD, March 10 (DS): Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Uzbekistan counterpart Dr Abdulaziz Kamilov expressed their firm resolve to boost high-level interactions for giving impetus to the existing positive momentum in bilateral relations.

This resolve was expressed during the delegation-level talks led by Foreign Minister Qureshi and his Uzbek counterpart here at Foreign Office. Views were exchanged on enhancement of economic cooperation, mutual support in international fora, regional connectivity and tourism promotion, a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here said.

Outlining the vision of “Naya Pakistan” centered around economic security, the foreign minister underlined the importance of shifting focus from geo-politics to geo-economics, to advance the goals of national economic development. It was agreed to maximally utilize the existing institutional mechanisms by regularly convening sessions of Bilateral Political Consultations and Joint Ministerial Commission.

The two foreign ministers expressed satisfaction on the progress achieved in advancing rail connectivity between the two countries, and agreed on early completion of the trans-Afghan railway project.

Foreign Minister Qureshi emphasized the importance of direct air connectivity to further trade and

tourism. He also stressed facilitation of visas for businessmen and tourists. He underlined the need to further strengthen the existing parliamentary cooperation between the two countries through



exchange of visits.

He welcomed the proposed “Reconnect Silk Route Conference” scheduled for July 2021. The event would help showcase Pakistani exports and products in Central Asia. Qureshi also underscored the importance of closer agricultural cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the cotton seed sector.

He expressed satisfaction at the level of cooperation between the two countries in the multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, Organisation of Islamic

Cooperation, Economic Cooperation Organisation and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

The foreign minister highlighted Pakistan’s positive role for the facilitation of Intra-Afghan Nego-

tiations. He reiterated Pakistan’s support to Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process culminating in an inclusive and broad-based political solution.

Establishment of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan would contribute to progress on various connectivity initiatives leading to regional prosperity, he added. Qureshi also underlined the grave and systemic human rights violations in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir by the Indian security forces.

Army Chief, Uzbek FM reiterate desire to further enhance bilateral relations

Rawalpindi, March 10, (DS): Uzbekistan’s Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov called on Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa in Rawalpindi. Matters of mutual interest, overall regional situation including Afghan Peace Process and bilateral cooperation in various fields were discussed. Both sides reiterated the desire to further enhance bilateral relations including efforts for peace and security in the region.

The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan’s positive role for regional peace and stability, especially Afghan Peace Process and pledged to keep working for better relations between two brotherly countries.



Australian High Commissioner, Army Chief discuss matters of mutual interest

Rawalpindi, March 12 (DS): Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr Geoffrey Shaw called on Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa at GHQ in Rawalpindi.

During the meeting matters of mutual interest, overall regional situation including Afghan Peace Process and bilateral cooperation in various fields were discussed. The Army Chief said Pakistan values its strong diplomatic, economic and defence relations with Australia.

Both sides reiterated the desire to further enhance bilateral co-



operation including efforts for peace and security in the region. The Australian High Commis-

sioner appreciated Pakistan's positive role for regional peace and stability

Pakistan, Tunisia agree to upgrade economic relationship at par with excellent political ties

Islamabad, Mar 17, (DS): Pakistan and Tunisia agreed to upgrade the overall bilateral economic relationship and bring it at par with the excellent political ties. This was agreed during the 3rd round of Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC) held virtually. Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood and his Tunisian counterpart, Secretary of State Ambassador Mohamed Ali Nafti led their respective sides.

The exchanges covered the full spectrum of bilateral relations and regional and international issues of common interest. Mutual collaboration at the regional and multilateral fora was also reviewed, a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here said.

The Foreign Secretary underscored the importance Pakistan attached to its historic and long-standing fraternal ties with Tunisia and reaffirmed the resolve to deepen cooperation in the fields of trade, investments, se-

curity, defence, education, culture and science and technology. He highlighted Pakistan's economic security paradigm and the focus on geo-economics. In particular, Prime Minister Imran Khan's central emphasis on peace, development and connectivity was highlighted.

The Foreign Secretary apprised his counterpart of 'Engage Africa' initiative aimed at enhancing Pakistan's diplomatic footprint in Africa and deepening economic engagement with the Continent. Welcoming the initiative, the Secretary of State offered Tunisian support in the advancement of this outreach in the North African region. The transformational China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was also highlighted by the Foreign Secretary. He called upon Tunisia to consider the beneficial opportunities offered by this important project.

The Foreign Secretary lauded Tunisian efforts for regional peace and apprised his coun-

terpart of Pakistan's positive contribution to Afghan peace process. Appreciating Tunisia's role as non-permanent member of UN Security Council, the Foreign Secretary thanked Tunisia for its principled position on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute at the forums of United Nations and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Both sides highlighted the convergence between their leadership in fostering regional peace and stability and the need to counter Islamophobia through collective endeavours — including by correct projection of Islam's message of peace and harmony and promotion of inter-faith harmony worldwide.

Pakistan and Tunisia have institutional mechanisms for regular interface in the political, parliamentary, diplomatic, defence, economic & trade domains. It was agreed that high-level exchanges will be enhanced and bilateral cooperation expanded through specific initiatives.

Forest restoration helps out biodiversity, local communities' development: Amin Aslam

ISLAMABAD, March 21, (DS): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam Sunday said forest restoration was killing two birds with one stone as it helped in biodiversity conservation and local communities' well being and development.

In his message on World Forests Day, he said Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision of Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Plantation (TBTP) project aimed at forest conservation. The theme for this year's International Day of Forests 2021 is "Forest restoration: a path to recovery and well-being."

Amin said the TBTP plantation project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa helped generate half a million green jobs in the form of forest guards, wild fire fighters, youth working in nursery to raise saplings and women raising plant nurseries under the massive afforestation project. He added that the TBTP launched in 2018 had the objective to revive forest and wild-life resources in the country to improve the overall conservation and restoration.



The TBTP in 2018 was hit by the COVID-19 like everything else whereas it came to rescue Pakistan by providing green jobs for Covid-idled masses and protect the country by generating employment opportunities, he added.

The SAPM said we had managed to create 85,000 jobs in COVID-19 era which was a respite of fresh air in

the country. Forest restoration, he said went hand in hand with the well-being and development of the local masses living in and around the forest areas, he added.

Amin said, "Prime Minister Imran Khan's TBTP is not about timber rather about people who live in forest and they are benefiting by it in various ways." The SAPM presented the instance of thriving mangroves in the Southern region of the country, he said, "Mangroves have increased 300 percent in the coastal areas of Sindh and Pakistan is the only country with such large number of mangroves."

He highlighted that we were employing rural women under TBTP to plant mangroves and they were becoming protectors of mangrove forests under this unique initiative. "Pakistan's message for the day is that forest conservation not deals with improving, conserving and enhancing green cover only rather it assists protecting the communities that inhabit forests or live around it," the PM's aide remarked.

Bilateral cooperation between Pak-Nepal stressed

ISLAMABAD, March 10 (DS):

Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan, Tapas Adhikari called on Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam and discussed issues related to mutual cooperation between the two countries.

Both sides discussed the importance of agriculture sector in socio-economic development of region and stressed the need to enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of agriculture research and development.

The minister also highlighted the need for enhancing mutual cooperation in other areas of economy for the betterment of Pak-Nepal relationship with respect to the agriculture sector.

Speaking on the occasion Ambassador of Nepal called for activating agricultural working groups of both the countries and organizing their meeting to make agricultural ties stronger.

He said that last agricultural working level meeting was held over a decade ago,



adding that regular meeting would help promote bilateral cooperation in agriculture research and development.

During the meeting, the both sides also agreed for the advancement of

agriculture sector of two countries, besides working to make bilateral relations of Pakistan and Nepal more cordial for the benefit of both the countries.

COMPLAINTS REDRESSAL

REGARDING CORRUPTION & MALPRACTICES

MADE SIMPLE



Register your complaints against Corruption and Malpractices of Tax Authorities by



Calling at
051-111-772-772



Visiting **IMC/RIC**
at field offices



Submitting
via **Post**



emailing at
complaints@fbr.gov.pk



Filing complaints
on **FBR portal**

HOW IT WORKS

- 1 A tracking number and response will be generated and assigned to complainant requesting for the complaint's evidence.
- 2 IMC will inquire/investigate the complaint forwarding it to the respective RIC and place it before Probe Committee.
- 3 Complaint will be sent to Incharge IMC for an appropriate action.

Dr. Abrar & Associates

Dental Surgeons



House No 6-A, Ismail Zabeeh Road,
(Service Road Parallel to Faisal Avenue) Sector F-8/3 Islamabad

Ph: +92 (51) 228 7691- 228 7692
Fax: +92 (51) 228 7693

E-Mail: abrar_associates@yahoo.com
Web: www.drabrarassociates.com