

# Samana

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Business climate of Pakistan improved, says Spanish Ambassador

Pak army working closely with GB govt



Kyrgyz envoy keen to cement ties with Pakistan



# PM unfurls hefty relief package

Rs 200 billion allocated for the labour class; for small industry, agriculture sector, another amount of Rs 100 billion set aside: for the construction industry, the government would announce a separate package; calls upon people not to panic

#### STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Tuesday announced a huge relief package aimed at providing financial support to the different sectors of economy affected by the economic slowdown unleashed by the coronavirus (COVID-19) all over the globe.

During an interaction with media persons, the prime minister said the government had decided to allocate Rs 200 billion for the labour class, which had been hit hard in the difficult times.

To help the industrial sector and especially the export sector, it was decided to release tax refunds amounting to Rs100 billion, besides, deferring of the interest payment to bolster this sector, he added.

For the small and medium industry, and agriculture sector, another amount of Rs 100 billion was set aside with deferred interest pay-

**Briefs** 

Pakistani

American

man dies of

coronavirus

**APP** 

NEW YORK: Coronavi-

rus, the deadly pandem-

ic sweeping the United

States and many parts

of the world, claimed its

first Pakistani-American

victim here on March

Haji Muhammad Anjum

Iqbal, a resident of Long

Island, New York, died

of the virus on Monday.

Iqbal, a businessman

who ran a gas station

in Queens, a borough

of New York City, tested

positive to coronavirus

at a hospital where he

went on March 16 after

U.S. first

lady tests

negative

APP

BEIJING: The world is now in a battle against the

common threat of COV-

ID-19, a disease caused by a previously unknown

coronavirus that has

spread to over 192 countries and regions.

**SBP** cuts

interest

rate

**DNA** 

KARACHI: The State

Bank of Pakistan (SBP)

on Tuesday slashed its

key interest rate by 150

basis points to 11 per

cent. The Monetary Pol-

icy Committee (MPC)

of the country's central

bank in an emergency

meeting decided to cut

the benchmark interest.

He was 63.

feeling sick.

23, the Pakistan day.

ment, the prime minister said, adding concessional loans would also being extended to the sectors. The government wanted to bring down the input costs for the farmers.

Other packages, he said, included additional amount of 50 billion for the Utility Stores, Rs 280 billion for the wheat procurement, slashing of petrol and diesel prices by Rs15 per liter for which the government would have to bear the burden of Rs75 billion. An amount of Rs100 billion was allocated separately for the emergency situation, he added.

The prime minister said power consumers using 300 units and gas users with Rs 2,000 monthly bills would be facilitated to deposit their bills through three monthly installments. A sum of Rs 50 billion was also allocated for the medical staff.

The National Disaster Management Authority would get Rs 25 billion for purchase and procuring

Morocco to build

mosque in Islamabad

**DNA** 

ISLAMABAD: Moroc-

can Government will

Build a mosque in the

CDA Project Park En-

clave -I. In this regard,

the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs had forwarded

a request of Moroccan

Government through its

Embassy to the CDA.

The Moroccan Gov-

ernment will construct

this mosque as token of

brotherhood and cordial

relations between the

governments and peo-

The mosque would be

built on Moroccan style

ple of both countries.

and would be a master-

piece. The CDA has

already allocated 11 ka-

nals of land in the Park

Enclave -I for the con-

Ministry of Foreign

Affairs has asked the

CDA to identify the site

to for the mosque and

provide site possession,

as well as the title and

other details for the

construction of the

mosque so that Moroc-

can Government could

The mosque will be sign

of brotherly relations

between the two coun-

be informed.

struction of mosque.

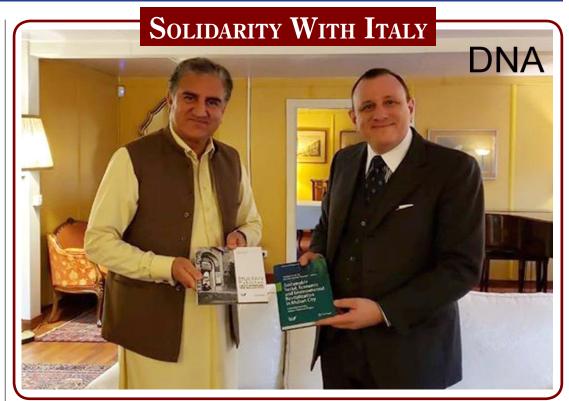
of kits, he announced.

Imran Khan said for the vulnerable families who were bearing the brunt of the difficult time, it was decided to allocate an amount of Rs 150 billion for a period of four

He said they were also expanding the network of Panagah (shelter houses) where the precautionary measures had been strictly prac-

Besides, he said, it was decided to either completely cut taxes or reduce them on different edible items. For the construction industry, the government would announce a separate package within days, which, he promised, had never been witnessed in the country's

Reiterating that the country could not afford a complete lockdown with the imposition of curfew, the prime minister said the situation in the country so far did not warrant for resorting to that last step.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi visited Italian embassy and met with Ambassador Andreas Ferrarese to show slidarity with Italian govt and people. - DNA photo

#### China boosts cross border trade, counters **COVID-19 strains**

AGENCIES

BEIJING: China pledged to to ramp up support for cross-border trade in further effort to facilitate foreign trade amid the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

The country will seek to minimize the impact on the industry chain and supply chain of cross-border trade by tackling difficulties like financing and cash liquidity for companies in the border and cross-border economic cooperation zones in seven provincial regions including Heilongjiang, Yunan, and Guangxi, said a circular released Monday by the Minis-

try of Commerce and the Export-Import Bank of China.

More efforts should be made to nurture small industry clusters within three square km while the country enhances credit support to help establish integrated platforms featuring trade, processing, production, services and logistics in the economic cooperation zones, according to the circular.

The document also called on the cooper ation zones to expand export to emerging economies and import of agricultural products and key technologies, as well as to deepen involvement in the Belt and Road Initiative.

#### **Pak army** working closely with **GB** govt

**DNA** 

ISLAMABAD: In the wkae

of COVID 19", Pakistan Army is cognizant of the challenges facing the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. We are working closely with GB Govt and civil administration to provide all possible support while additional resources are being arranged on war footing. He added, 'We will never leave the people of GB alone in these challenging times. Pakistanis will fight against COVID-19 as one

#### China to provide doctors protection, testing kits

**DNA** 

ISLAMABAD: National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Chairman Lieutenant General Mohammad Afzal has urged people to help other nationals instead of profiteering amid coronavirus crisis.

NDMA chairman Lt Gen Mohammad Afzal, while addressing a group of journalists, said the authorities are making decisions as per available resources.

"We have tried to place purchase orders for medical equipment including ventilators around the world but it is unfortunate to find nothing from the countries except China. China has assured to pro-

vide ventilators and other 
It is the time to help others equipment to Pakistan and the first shipment of N95 will arrive in the country tomorrow from China."

"Our actual work will commence from Friday when medical equipment starts arriving in the country. China will provide us with doctors' protection kits, 50,000 testing kits and other necessary equipment. It is possible that Pakistan will temporarily open border for one day on March 28. We will place the order to China on March 27 and the equipment will reach to Pakistan on March 28." "Pakistan has booked six orders during the last 1.5 months. People should avoid profiteering and step forward to help the nation.

and you can earn money as well when [the crisis of] coronavirus ends."

"Many European countries booked orders with Chinese companies for one year each. However, China has still assisting Pakistan and timely providing all necessary equipment," said Afzal. Earlier, Prime Minister Imran Khan announced a multi-billion package involving relief for labour and underprivileged class, business community and industries and farmers besides lowering fuel prices in the country amid shutdown in various parts of the country out of coronavirus fear that has already claimed sev-

#### Wuhan to lift travel restrictions on April 8

nation.

WUHAN: Wuhan, the Chinese city hardest hit by the novel coronavirus outbreak, will lift outbound travel restrictions from April 8 after over two months of lockdown, local authorities said Tuesday. People in Wuhan will be allowed to leave the city and Hubei Province, where Wuhan is the capital, if they hold a green health code, meaning no contact with any infected or suspected COVID-19 cases, according to a circular issued by the provincial COVID-19 control headquarters.

## PM to launch App

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday will launch a modern-tech mobile application, developed by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) administration, to ensure provision of 43 different online services to the residents of the federal city at their door-

steps. Upon a direction of the prime minister, these services would be provided to the residents online by utilizing the latest information technology, PM office media wing in a press release on Tuesday said.

The App will feature services, like e-Police, emergency services, payment of utility bills, notifications verification.

#### KARACHI: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on

Tuesday announced to reduce the non-essential staff working in its offices aimed at taking precautionary measures to tackle the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

CAA reduces

non-essential

staff

**DNA** 

According to a circular issued from the authority, non-essential staffers including old age and ailing officials, either male or female, are exempted from duty for 13 days beginning from 24 March uptil 05 April.

It said that the officials are encouraged to work from home through internet and telephone to meet official requirements, wherever possible.

The directives also asked the CAA employees to urge official visitors to discuss the matters on phone and should only visit if necessary while asking to limit any non-official visitors to reception desk only. The aviation authority directed to discourage handshakes and social em-

bracing.

## **Business climate of Pakistan improved,** says Spanish Ambassador Manuel Duran

Ansar M Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Spain Manuel Duran has said business climate of Pakistan has improved adding many Spanish companies and businessmen are keen to set up businesses in Pakistan. He said a Spanish compaday needs of people.

ny is opening super markets in various cities of Pakistan catering to day to The Spanish ambassador made these remarks during a reception hosted in his honour by the business community of Islamabad.

The President Islamabad

Chamber of Commerce and Industry and former Presidents of the chamber also attended the function. The ambassador further said a company wants to build a mosque in Pakistan on the pattern of Qurtaba mosque in Spain.

The ambassador also appreciated the initiative of Islamabad Chamber to make the city clean and green and assured his support in this regard.

Spain association Zafar Bakhtawari also spoke on the occasion and hoped revival of the association will

Secretary General Pakcontribute towards further



strengthening of bilateral relations.

Zafar Bakhtawari added

country of European Un-Spain was an important ion therefore can help

Pakistani product have access to EU markets.

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**Azerbaijan** efforts

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#### **CITY BRIEFS**

## Capital's resdients adopting social distancing

APP

ISLAMABAD: Citizens of Islamabad were practicing social distancing under government's orders amid the increasing health situation in country due to Coronavirus as roads and streets of Islamabad were desolated on Tuesday here even after long weekend.

All the main markets and business centers witnessed less human presence on Tuesday after practical measures were taken by the capital's administration including the deployment of army on main roads of the city.

Bazars and malls, which were allowed to remain open to ensure the supply of essential goods to citizens, looked bereft of customers.

After spending a long weekend including public holiday of Pakistan Day at homes, islooiites were only allowed to come out in extreme emergency situations or those who were bound to be present at offices.

Although, many public and private offices have directed their employees to 'work from home' for those who can perform their duties online.

Despite the pleasant weather with light rains in the federal capital, recreational sites such as Shakarparian, National Monument, Marga lla Hills, etc looked deserted.

With practical cooperation with the administration, the residents of Islamabad have shown that they have realized that the government alone cannot prevent the outbreak if people do not abide by the laws and performs their civic duties.

A local, Nabeel Ahmad, said that he was preferring to stay home to fully support the measures announced by the government. "It was not only for my safety but also for others' sake as I don't want to be source of spreading the virus if any", he added.

Another resident Umer Shaukat told APP that unnecessarily going out or buying essential good more than you need will only create panic among public.

## CDNS achieves collection target of Rs 155 billion

APP

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved collection net target of Rs155 billion by March, 20 of fiscal year 2019-20.

The CDNS has set Rs352 billion annual collection target for the year 2019-20 as compared to Rs324 billion for the previous year's 2018-19 to enhance savings and promoting saving culture in the country, senior official of CDNS told APP here on Tuesday.

The directorate has also revised and increased the gross target of Rs1570 billion for fiscal year 2019-20, he said

Replying to a question, he said CDNS had collected Rs410 billion by June 30, exceeding the target of Rs324 billion set for the year while during the preceding year of 2017-18, CDNS collected Rs155 billion. The total savings held by the CDNS stood at Rs1,150 billion by June 30 while the directorate had Rs774 billion savings by the same date, a year ago, he said. The senior official said due to the rationalization of CDNS certificates' rates, the directorate had collected more savings than expected, therefore CDNS revised its target upward from Rs 224 to 324 billion for FY 2018-19.

Replying to a question, he said CDNS interest rate on the investment bonds observed no revision of certificates rates due to current market situation and stand un-changed.

"The National Savings interest rates are linked with the policy of PIB set by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)", said a senior official of CDNS said.

CDNS has decided no reversion on interest rates and remain un-changed the rates of different Certificates for March 1, 2020, he said.

## KP Govt announces public holidays till Mar 28

APP

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced public holidays till March 28 across the province and has banned public transport for seven-day as part of precautionary measures against coronavirus pandemic.

Talking to media, KP Government spokesman Ajmal Wazir said on Tuesday that 38 cases of corona were confirmed in KP, 235 are suspected, 120 found negative and three deaths were reported.

The government was monitoring the situation on hourly basis and facts would be presented before public, he told.

The government had put in place several stringent precautionary measures only to create public distancing and restrain the spread of corona pandemic in the province.

He, Chief Minister KP Mehmood Khan was himself monitoring the corona situation by visiting different areas and supervising the special cells set up each at CM secretariat, health directorate, Relief Department and at all DC offices.

## Visitors entry banned in NAB

Agencies

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Justice (Retd) Javed Iqbal has immediately banned the entry of visitors at NAB offices.

According to a press release, the visitors were not allowed to enter NAB headquarters, Islamabad, regional bureaus including Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Multan, Sukkur, Multan and Gilgit-Baltistan.



**ISLAMABAD:** A person on the way under cover of an umbrella to protect from rain at Ghouri Town. – **APP photo** 

#### KP minister directs strict check on price of flour

APP

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Qalandar Khan Lodhi has directed guaranteeing the selling of 20 kilogram bag of flour at the official rate of Rs.808 per bag in all districts of the province, said an official statement issued here Tuesday.

Through these directives the provincial minister has further directed district administration to ensure availability of the official flour with the nominated dealers. He has also directed the authorities of the Food Department for keeping flour mills under strict monitoring and strict action against those involved in hoarding and profiteering.

## **Kyrgyz ambassador keen to strengthen ties with Pakistan**

As a result of over twenty five years' of bilateral cooperation a number of positive developments have taken place adding both countries are taking every possible step to further strengthen and develop this collaboration



A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The relationship between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan is a worthy example of successful interaction and cooperation and that leadership of both the countries is determined to further strengthen the existing connectivity between the two countries.

Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Erik Beishembiev said this while opening a Round Table entitled 'Kyrgyzstan – Pakistan Partnership for Trade and Investment' organized by the Embassy of Kyrgyzstan.

He said that it was a matter of great pride for his country that Pakistan was amongst the first countries which acknowledged its independence.

The Ambassador went on to say that as a result of over

twenty five years' of bilateral cooperation a number of positive developments have taken place adding both countries are taking every possible step to further strengthen and develop this collaboration.

The ambassador added that both the sides were agreed to enhance the volume of bilateral trade and promote joint projects in the field of energy, communications, agriculture and tourism.

Erik Beishembiev went on to say that his country was quite interested in supporting Pakistan in solving its energy crisis and is actively promoting implementation of CASA-1000 power export project and that at the same time renewal of transport links between the two countries through quadrilateral agreement on transit transport between Pakistan-China Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan as part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor will bring both the countries more closer to each other. The Ambassador made

the mention of several priority areas for bilateral cooperation like electricity production and supply, mining, food industry, textile, medicine, pharmaceutical and Information Technology.

He also underlined the need for intensifying people to people contacts, information sharing and enhancing visits of businessmen of both the sides.

The Ambassador expressed the hope that the Event will go a long way in further strengthening the Pakistan-Kyrgyzstan close friendship.

On his part, Lt. Col (R) Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director Centre for Global and Strategic Studies gave a comprehensive presentation regarding the available opportunities for promotion of trade and investment between the two countries.

On their part Ashique Hamdani, Ms. Samra Naz and Dr. Shahid Hussain also shed light on the possible avenues of cooperation between the two countries.



#### Civil Defense Dept starts distribution of food

APP

PESHAWAR: The Civil Defense Department KP has started distribution of free food among poor people and daily wages labourers following partial lockdown being witnessed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to stop spread of Corona virus in the province.

The spokesman of Relief Department told APP on Tuesday that officials of Civil Defense and volunteers distributed free food including cooked rice, pulses, naan and others essential food items among orphans, widows and poor people in Hangu district.

The distribution of foods among poor people would continue till the situation comes to normalcy.

The officials of district administration and Civil Defense have appealed people of Hangu and adjoining Orakzai tribal districts to stay at homes and avoid unnecessary visits besides keep social distancing.

# AIOU activates Helpline in wake of coronavirus

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has activated its Helpline to provide necessary information to its around 1.4 million students across the country, in wake of coronavirus outbreak.

Online-Help-Desk has also been made available through the University's website, in line with the instructions of the Vice-Chancellors Professor Dr. Zia-Ul-Qayyum, it was stated here on Tuesday.

The students have been restricted to visit the University during the spread of the epidemic. However, they may seek necessary information regarding admissions, examination and other academic activities through the online facility. The University's universal helpline number is: 051-111112468.

The students could apply for the admission through online. Admission forms and prospectus have been made available at the website. According to Regional Di-

rector, Rawalpindi Syed

Zia-Hussnain Naqvi, the region has also provided Whatsapp link at the facebook, through which necessary information could be sought. The students may contact the region on helpline numbers 051-9334264, 0518480860 and 051-8480863.

dents Affairs, Rana Tariq Javed, the University has suspended all its academic/research activities (workshops, exams, classes etc.) till April 5.

According to Director Stu-

However, necessary staff is available at the University's main campus and the regional offices to do the routine work, relating to administration, academic and students' services.

The University has already announced that it will enroll students for the 2nd phase admissions of the semester Spring, 2020 till April 15.

against Pandemic COV-ID-19, the students have been advised not to visit the University or its regional campuses till April 5. In this connection, they are required to strictly follow the government's policy and instructions.

As preventive measures

#### Poets remember Habib Jalib

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The revolutionary poet Habib Jalib was remembered across the country among literary circles on his 92nd birth anniversary on Tuesday. Habib Jalib was born on 24 March 1928 in Hoshiarpur of Indian Punjab. He was entitled as the poet of the people by his followers.

He migrated to Pakistan after the partition and worked with a newspaper as a proof-reader. The greatest poets of his era Habib Jalib died on March 12, 1993.

#### QAU students provide foods to daily wages labourers

APP

ISLAMABAD: As part of governments' efforts to eradicate CoronaVirus by locking down the country, the ex and present students of Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad had launched a campaign to provide foods to the needy people.

According to the sources from the university on Tuesday, QAU students were providing necessary and suitable food items to the daily wages labourers sitting on the footpaths of different areas.

Talking to APP, they said that the initiative had been taken in wake of pandemic which had effected mostly the labourers who were unable to work due to epidemic terror. The campaign would continue on daily basis, they said.

Under the campaign, the poor labourers were being provided cooked vegetables and rice.

They were also being given awareness message, hand sanitizer and dettol soaps for their safety.

From tomorrow, the number of said above items will be doubled for labourers and would also be provided for their children, a student Tahir informed.

During the campaign, he said, the labourers on daily wages were briefed in details about keeping social distancing with others, its method and benefits.

"The Quaidians had given a message to the students of other universities while urging them to play their effective role by helping the needy people as they were residents of our country" he maintained.

The students asked the community, especially the youth to share the location of such people on whatsapp so that such people could be approached and provided foods. This nobel initiative had been launched with special prayers.

#### Time for Taliban, Kabul to seize opportunity

ONSIDERING that the Afghan Taliban have often referred to the Western-backed government in Kabul as a 'puppet regime', the fact that both sides communicated via videoconference on Sunday is something to be welcomed. While it may not herald the beginning of an 'official' dialogue between the two warring parties, it should definitely be considered an ice-breaker.

The conversation centred on the exchange of prisoners – a key sticking point which has threatened to scuttle the peace deal signed between Washington and the Taliban in February. While the Afghan authorities were initially reluctant to release any Taliban prisoners, that stance may be about to change. As per a Taliban spokesman, "... there were initial agreements on some issues regarding the release of prisoners" during Sunday's discussion.

Both sides hold thousands of each other's men, and the mutual exchange of prisoners could be a confidence-building measure to further the intra-Afghan dialogue. Officials from the US and Qatar had helped set up the videocon-

Clearly, it appears that the Americans, eager to get their troops out of Afghanistan, are using all the tactics in their playbook to 'convince' the Kabul government to help save the deal with the Taliban. The first batch of American troops has already left Afghanistan, while Washington is trying to bring together rival Afghan power elites to put up a united face in front of the Taliban.

Despite the global coronavirus pandemic, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was in Kabul on Monday to try and make Afghan President Ashraf Ghani – who won the presidential election – and his arch-rival and former CEO of the country Abdullah Abdullah - who 'inaugurated' himself on the same day as Mr Ghani – patch up.

The Americans know that if there is infighting in the Afghan government, the peace deal will be worthless, as the Taliban will battle all other pretenders to Kabul's throne for power as soon as the last American

Therefore, to prevent further chaos in the country, unity is needed in Kabul to show the Taliban and the world that the dispensation in Afghanistan is legitimate and functioning.

Moreover, dialogue between the Kabul power elite and the Taliban should continue, for any peace deal the militants sign with foreign powers will not amount to much unless all Afghan stakeholders are on board. To prevent a return to chaos in Afghanistan, the focus should now be on the intra-Afghan dialogue. - Courtesy Dawn

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#### America should reinvent itself - II

any attribute that shift to the increasing role of "money politics" campaign contributions, traditional lobbying, and the elimination of constraints on corporate political spending by the Supreme Court's notorious Citizens United decision in 2010. But an even more fundamental factor may have been the rise of "status politics," whereby political power accrues disproportionately to well-to-do, highly educated, coastal elites. Tech entrepreneurs, Wall Street tycoons, and management consultants have become increasingly influential in Washington, DC, not just because they are rich but because they seem to represent enlightened competency.

These are the conditions that gave rise to Trump, who might still ride a wave of misinformation to win re-election in November, especially if the opposition remains fractured. But even if Trump is defeated, the task of radically reforming America's economic and political institutions will have only just begun.

What would an effective anti-Trump reform agenda look like? For starters, it must include a plan to generate more good jobs.

This objective is different from simply strengthening the social safety net (which is necessary, but insufficient), and it is worlds apart from diversionary schemes like a universal basic income. Creating good jobs requires increased investments in technologies that raise worker productivity and lead to new employment opportunities. It also requires stronger labour-market institutions and protections for workers, including minimum wages and collective agreements that induce firms to build long-term relationships with their employees, rather than opting for labour-replacing automation or offshoring. By the same token, better regulation and stronger antitrust enforcement would reduce large corporations' labour-market power and foster more competition and innovation, setting the stage for faster labour-demand growth.

The agenda also must include reforms to give a majority of Americans a voice in politics once again. In the 1960s, political scientist Robert A. Dahl concluded that most of the power in local politics resided not with highstatus elites or political parties but with regular people who were actively engaged in local issues. That finding may have never been completely true (Dahl's study focused on Connecticut); but we should nonetheless aspire to citizen-driven politics.

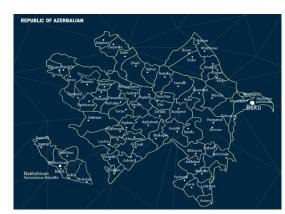
Here, the priority should be to break the cozy relations between politicians and their CEO, consultant, and financier friends. That will take systematic changes in how access to politicians and top civil servants is regulated, as well as greater transparency at all stages of the policymaking process. Creating new agencies to represent the interests of labour and other neglected constituencies would also be helpful.

## Growing business opportunities in the Azerbaijan

Lt. Col. Khalid TaimurAkram (Retd)



Azerbaijan's strength is not only in its economy but being a multi-ethnic country and representative of multiculturalism, a spirit of tolerance has always prevailed in Azerbaijan. Thus, the Republic of Azerbaijan has managed to maintain its economic stability and sustainability



Turrently, Azerbaijan is ranked among the top twenty countries in terms of fabricating reforms in "Doing Business 2020". The country has focused vigorously on its socio-economic reformation, structural development, and industrial advancement through ensuring transparency. Structural changes within the government are also an imperative step towards efficiency and productivity of the state apparatus. To ensure more sustainable development, a strategic roadmap has been adopted by the government of Azerbaijan including comprehensive, institutional, monetary, financial modifications, tax, and customs management.

Azerbaijan's strength is not only in its economy but being a multi-ethnic country and representative of multiculturalism, a spirit of tolerance has always prevailed in Azerbaijan. Thus, the Republic of Azerbaijan has managed to maintain its economic stability and sustainability.

Azerbaijan is a strategic meeting point for entire Eurasia. This has led the country to trade advancement for economic outcomes. The oil-enriched country has redefined itself over the past two decades from a struggling newly independent state to a major regional energy player.It is a hybrid of Turkic, Persian, European, and Caucasian influences, which gives this part of the region a unique history. The period of cultural and economic growth in Azerbaijan started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This economic rise also led to a cultural revival. During the last 15 years, Azerbaijan's economy grew more than three times. Approximately, \$260 billion worth of investments have supported the country to modernize its infrastructure and transportation. As far as diversification is concerned, primarily the attention is aimed at the development of industry, agriculture, tourism services, and information communications technologies. The multiple pipelines to transport the oil and gas to international markets are aimed to diversify the state economy, to invest foreign capital and to create sustainable opportunities for growth. Azerbaijan through utilizing its geographical location has invested in building bridges between Asia and Europe. Today, the business climate in Azerbaijan is one of the most advanced in the world. According to the latest report of the World Bank and International Finance Corporation, Azerbaijan has ranked 25th among 190 countries in the "Doing-Business-2019" rating.

Witnessing Economic Boom



President Ilham Aliyev's visionary and comprehensive policy initiatives have turned Azerbaijan's natural recourses into a sustainable development tool for the country. His pragmatic strategy has yielded enormous benefits to Azerbaijan.Strategically positioned at the confluence of southwestern Asia with southeastern Europe north of Iran and south of Russia, the Republic of

imports and exports level. The momentous export products contain minerals, vegetables, metal, precious pearls, and stone articles. Similarly, the imports comprise of heavy machinery, mechanical, and electrical equipment. The top export destinations of Azerbaijan are Italy, Israel, Turkey, Germany, and the Czech Republic. The prominent import origins are Russia, Turkey, China, Germany, and Ukraine.

Azerbaijan has maintained a positive trade balance in its

Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO) under the Ministry of Economic Development has organized nine export missions in 2019 including seven countries containing; UAE, China, Poland, Latvia, Qatar, Switzerland, and Russia in 2019 to promote national products under the "Made in Azerbaijan brand". Other strengths include gas abundance in the Caspian Sea, an increase in exports to Turkey and Europe, facilitating as a geographic liaison between China and Europe, and a positive general business environment.

**Indicators of Economic Stability** 

GDP (BLN USD)	75.2	53	37.8	40.8	46.9
GDP GROWTH	2.8	1.1	-3.1	0.1	1.4
NON-OIL GDP (BLN USD)	45.9	23.2	24.9	25.6	27.6
NON-OIL GDP GROWTH	7.0	1.1	-4.5	2.7	1.8
GDP PER CAPITA (USD)	7 986	5 559	3 927	4 186	4 780
INFLATION (%)	1.4	4	12.4	12.9	2.3
TOTAL INVESTMENT (BLN USD)	27.7	19.4	14.3	13.9	15.2
FOREIGN INVESTMENT (BLN USD)	11.5	10.7	10.1	9.1	8.2
DOMESTIC INVESTMENT (BLN USD)	16.2	8.7	4.2	4.7	7.0
FDI (BLN USD)	7.6	7.5	7.3	5.7	4.1
FOREIGN TRADE (BLN USD)	31.0	20.6	17.6	22.6	30.9
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018

During the previous five years, Azerbaijan's GDP growth exceeded 2% in 2019, while non-oil GDP grew by 3.5 % and exceeded the pace of economic growth worldwide. In the last ten years, GDP and foreign trade have doubled in size. Investments grow to worth \$ 270 billion. The country has benefited from high oil reserves andincreased gas production, although its non-oil and gas sectors have also shown an ascendant trend.

The GDP composition by sectors is changing by the course of time. The non-oil sector is forming an increasing portion of the economy in the current scenario. The share of the non-oil sector in GDP is approximately 58.85%. This ratio shows how Azerbaijan has diversified its economy and converted its reliance from the oil and gas sector to the non-oil zone. The country has shipped US\$19.6 billion worth of goods around the globe in 2019. **Establishment of Reformed Business Environment** The Republic of Azerbaijan has implemented severalfundamental reforms aimed to promote exports and investment prospects. The novel economic reforms have launched by the President through the series of "Strategic Road Map". Also, Azerbaijan has improved access to



the tourism and business industry through launching the ASAN e-visa system. The government has made the regulation system flexible for strengthening the business environment. The legislative reforms are also among the top priority areas of the current administration, following the "Azerbaijan 2020: The Vision of the Future" and national development model.

Attractive Investment Climate and Skilled Labour Force Azerbaijan is providing excellent investment incentive schemes to foreign investors. There is no restriction related to the capital input and output and the repatriation of profits. All the necessary measures have been taken to protect and promote foreign investment. There exist 49 bilateral investment treaties and double taxation accords with various countries. Along with the wide-ranged investment prospects, the country possesses about halfof its economically active population and holds one of the highest employment rates in the region. The major driver of employment ratio is the private sector. The Republic of Azerbaijan has an extremely high literacy rate of 99.8%.

Regional Hub with Abundant Resources

Azerbaijan located on the south-eastern border of Europe is serving as the natural bridge between Europe and Asia. The Trans-Caspian East-West Trade and Transit Corridor is a key route connecting two major global economies, China and Europe. The South-North Transit Corridor spreads across Iran to Europe, proving the Republic of Azerbaijan as a regional hub with numerous resources. It is renowned as the logistic hub for the Caspian region as well as possessing the biggest airport, seaport, and rail network.

The territory of Azerbaijan stands for its complex geological structure and diversity of minerals. It holds 9 climatic zones out of 11 which are existed in the world ranging from humid subtropical climate to semi-arctic. Azerbaijan has major deposits of oil and gas. Ferrous and nonferrous, rare and fine metals: iron and chromite ores, copper, lead and zinc, cobalt, molybdenum, aluminium, quicksilver, and gold are in abundance. Nonferrous minerals and construction materials: building stone, facing stone, clay, cement raw materials, construction stone, sand-gravel, sand, bituminous sands, perlite, pumice, gypsum, anhydride, alabaster, bentonite clays, sodium chloride, dolomite, quartzite, limestone for flux and soda, and ceramic raw materials are the precious natural resources contributing in country's revenue generation.

Developed Infrastructure

One can observe the utmost state of the art transport infrastructure in the Republic of Azerbaijan across the region. The state has built about 19,000 Km of hard-surface roads, 6 international airports, in which Baku operates the largest international airport in the entire region. The new international seaport, located at Alat, amid to add 10 to 11.5 million tons of cargo with annual capacity are the mega projects initiated by the current government. The rail network of 2000 Km, the "Iron Silk Way", Baku-Tbilisi-Kars trunk-railway connecting European and Asian railway systems, is under construction. Thus, Azerbaijan has become the center of trade between Asia and Europe for millennia, as the silk Road is passed through Azerbaijan. Today, as trade flows increase between Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan is



emerging as a transport and logistic hub at the crossroad of Eurasia. Also, it will become a strategic interna-

#### tional logistics pivot by 2025. **Tourists Destination**

Azerbaijan's capital Baku is among the top 10 world's tourist destinations. Presently, it is enjoying a tourism boom due to its easy visa system and attractive tourist sites. The world Economic Forum named Azerbaijan the most improved country in the travel and tourism competitiveness index of 2017.

The "Strategic Roadmap" for the development of the Tourism industry aims to push the sector into the next stage of development. This includes the promotion of tourism based on the national values of Azerbaijan in the international marketplace and locally. Moreover, it contains improvements in the tourism communications infrastructure and classified hotel's certification.

This will create opportunities for companies with expertise in the service industry, investing in human capital and practical anticipation within the country.

Reform Initiatives for Enhancing Business Prospects Azerbaijan has been revolutionized by the constant structural reforms. The era of President Aliyev inthe office is marked by overcoming major political and economic challenges, achieving economic expansion and steady growth. Following Reforms initiatives have been taken to ensure transparency and structural modifica-

Significant changes have been implemented in the customs and taxation fields to tackle monopolies and to

## **TOURISM & HOSPITALITY** 2.6 MLN 2.7 MLN USD 3.0 MLN

equalize the regulatory regimes for import and export

The taxation procedures have made updated to fully comply with major global transparency indexes following successful reforms in the field of taxation. The upgraded functions are dedicated to cover taxation and privatization of state properties, which is expected to accelerate the privatization of numerous state companies while attracting foreign investments in the upcom-

"Industrial parks" and "Free Trade Zones" have been formed, giving tax incentives, anda "seven-years taxfree regime", to foreign investors. Furthermore, "Special Economic Zones", like the new Baku port of Alat are exempt from duties and taxes.

President Aliyev has signed a verdict of judicial reforms in April 2019, urged for the rapid execution of focused reforms to counter corruption in the legal system and increasing transparency and consistency of judicial processes.

The diversification of the economy and the state program has introduced during 2014-2018 entitled as the socio-economic development of Azerbaijan. This particular initiative has made a huge contribution to the non-oil sector, due to its potential for production of non-oil products of Azerbaijan.

The Republic of Azerbaijan is gaining ground in the fields of business and investment with its sound legal system, simplified land ownership, and property rights, regularized licensing, and valid taxation mechanism. The systematic and efficient policy reforms receive a positive attitude and outcome from the people of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's policy based on national interests, security, stability, economic, social development, and its growing role in the international arena provides a solid base for its future progress and prosperity. The results achieved in all spheres of life have made a great contribution to the overall development of the country.

The writer is Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad.







**RCCI lauds** economic relief package

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) welcomed the Economic Relief Package announced by the government. In a statement, President RCCI Saboor Malik said the business community was anxiously awaiting for this package. The interest rate drops by a hundred and a half basic points. This will restore the confidence of the manufacturer and local investor. He said inflation would come down in purview of drop in Rs 15 per liter in petroleum products.

He said that the immediate release of 100 billion refunds for exporters is very much appreciated. He expressed hope that similar relief package will be announced for the real estate and construction sector too soon.

He said that the Rawalpindi Chamber has also set up a fund in the wake of the Corona virus. Under this fund ration packets will be provided to the needy people, especially the daily wagers and the patients.

#### Nobelwinning peace negotiator Ahtisaari has coronavirus

APP

HELSINKI: Nobel laureate and former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari has contracted the new coronavirus, his office said on Tuesday.

The 82-year-old was awarded the Peace Prize in 2008 for his career over three decades mediating peace deals to conflicts around the world, including Indonesia Kosovo and Namibia The former UN diplomat, who went on to serve in Finland's highest office between 1994 and 2000, was confirmed to have caught the virus on Monday, the Finnish president's Office said in a statement.

"President Ahtisaari is doing well given the circumstances," it said. On Saturday, Ahtisaari's 83-year-old wife Eeva also tested positive for the infection.

#### Over 71,150 people discharged from China hospitals

**DNA** 

BEIJING: According to the latest figures from the NHC, March 19 saw 730 patients cured and discharged from hospital in China's mainland, bringing the tally to 71,150.

China and Latin American and Caribbean countries will hold a video conference on COVID-19 next Tuesday, March 24. Officials from the Chinese Foreign Ministry and National Health Commission and experts in the areas of disease control, clinical treatment, civil aviation, customs and community-based quarantine will share information and experience with their counterparts from Latin American and Caribbean countries.

## Kazakhstan minister calls for further cementing of bilateral ties

The minister also talked about the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) which is an inter-governmental forum for enhancing cooperation towards promoting peace, security and stability in Asia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: First Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Shakhrat Nuryshev has said both Kazakhstan and Pakistan enjoy close relations adding both countries have huge potential to further promote and deepen these relations.

He expressed these views while speaking during an interaction with Pakistani media and intellectuals facilitated by thinktank CGSS. The Kazakh minister along with his delegation visited Pakistan for the Inaugural Session of Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC) between Pakistan and Kazakhstan.

The minister thanked the Pakistani hosts for facilitating the dialogue in a constructive and friendly environment. He said both countries possess geographic and

strategic importance and have been cooperating with each other on various forums. The minister also talked about the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) which is an inter-governmental forum for enhancing cooperation towards promoting peace, security and stability in Asia. It is a forum based on the recognition that there is close link between peace, security and stability in Asia and in the rest of the world. The key idea of the Conference is based on the priority of the indivisibility of security, joint initiative and mutually beneficial interaction of small and large states. He told that the idea of convening the CICA was first proposed by Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev at the United Nations General Assembly.





try strongly believes in nuclear non proliferation. He said Kazakhstan happens to be the biggest producer of natural uranium, which is essential for developing civil-nuclear technologies.

Nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation have remained a hallmark of Kazakhstan's foreign policy since the country got sovereignty in 1991 and up to the present. Our country was among those former Soviet republics, who inherited a massive nuclear arms arsenal of the late USSR. The uneasy dilemma of whether to keep or get rid of them was solved by the first President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev in favor of the latter. Following his decision nuclear weaponry was either dismantled in Kazakhstan or removed out of the country.

Dilating further on bilateral relations the minister said both sides during the interaction also discussed ways and means to further enhance bilateral relations especially in trade, politics and economy. Both sides also discussed cooperation

in energy sector as well. Kazakhstan intends to export energy to neighboring countries through various initiatives including CASA 1000.

Apart from those medicines, pharmaceuticals and textiles are other sectors that provide both countries an excuse to come close to each other adding both sides shall be able to further cement bilateral cooperation in these sectors also.

The minister assured that the Kazakhstan side will do its best to promote, diversify and strengthen relations with Pakistan.

#### Cutlery exports increase 7.80% in 8 months

APP

ISLAMABAD: The cutlery exports from the country witnessed an increase of 7.80 percent during the first eight months of current financial year (2019-20) as against the exports of corresponding period of last year (2018-19).

Pakistan exported cutlery worth \$62.676 million during July-February (2019-20) against the exports of \$ 58.142 million during July-February (2018-19), showing growth of 7.80 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). On year-on-year basis, the cutlery exports from the country during February 2020 also grew by 11.23 percent when compared to the same month of the last year.

The cutlery exports during February 2020 were recorded at US \$ 7.857 million against the export of US \$ 7.064 million in February 2019. Meanwhile, on month-on-month basis, the cutlery export in February 2020 increase by 6.30 percent when compared to the export of US \$ 7.391 million in January 2019.

#### 'Naya Pakistan' expects ten areas of cooperation with China: Ambassador Hashmi

APP

BEIJING: Pakistan Ambassador to China, Naghmana Hashmi has listed more than 10 areas that Pakistan expected investment and welcomed cooperation without a break, including renewable energy, electric vehicles, aviation and transportation, telecommunications, distance education, medical facilities, IT, mechanized agriculture and drip irrigation, pest control and dairy industry. "It is a huge era of opportunities between Pakistan and China. You must take advantage of the opportunities and possibilities which are now opening up in "New Pakistan," she told

DNA

Minister Makhdoom Shah

Mahmood Qureshi held a

telephone conversation

with his French and Span-

sih counterparts, Foreign

Minister Jean-Yves Le Dri-

an. The two Ministers held

detailed discussions on

the COVID-19 pandemic

as well as ways to enhance

cooperation to combat

the spread of the disease.

Expressing deep concern

over the loss of precious

lives, Foreign Minister

ISLAMABAD:

Foreign

in an interview with China Economic Net (CEN). About the impact of epidemic on the two countries' economy and trade, Ambassador Hashmi said there was no need to excessively worry about that. "The first and second quarters will be affected, but we should be able to make it up in the third and the fourth quarters. The FTA that has become operational from January this year has already resulted in 17% increase in our exports to China."

When it came to a proposal on hundreds of Pakistani and Chinese enterprises making joint efforts to achieve small goals of development after the ep-

Qureshi lauded the steps

being taken by the French

authorities to contain the

virus, and thanked the For-

eign Minister for looking

after 13 Pakistanis affect-

He also briefed Foreign

Minister Le Drian about

the measures underway

in Pakistan to contain the

outbreak. Foreign Minis-

ter Qureshi informed that

the number of affected

people in Pakistan due to

COVID-19 was increasing.

COVID-19 had spread to

almost all countries of the

ed in France.

idemic, she expressed her appreciation, "It's a very good message. There is no other way of achieving development except when everybody plays his part. The infrastructure projects of the first phase of CPEC have now been completed. The energy shortage is a thing of the past." Ambassador urged all the entrepreneurs and business people in Pakistan, and urged all the Chinese business strength and companies and enterprises to look at Pakistan, adding, "Now is the time to look at Pakistan. This is the time to actually put your heart and soul and effort towards in-

creasing bilateral invest-

world and the situation

demanded a coordinated

approach by the interna-

tional community to com-

In view of the situation

in Iran, Foreign Minis-

ter Qureshi underscored

the need for immediate

lifting of sanctions and

extending humanitarian

assistance to enable Irani-

an authorities to save pre-

cious human lives. He also

expressed deep concern

over the continuing com-

munication and movement

lockdown in Indian Occu-

bat its spread.

FM Qureshi talks to his French

and Spanish counterparts

ments, bilateral trade and setting up joint ventures." On bilateral relations between the two countries, she said, "As President Xi Jinping himself said that gold becomes solid and shining when it goes through fire. The friendship between China and Pakistan has grown stronger and stronger because of the difficult times that it has gone through previously.'

Also this time it had withstood the test of time like a true good neighbour, true all-weather strategic cooperative partner and true iron brother, she said and added, "Our president's visit shows that Pakistani people will stand

pied Jammu and Kashmir

which was depriving 8 mil-

lion Kashmiris of critical

information and essential

medical supplies needed

to effectively contain the

COVID-19 pandemic. For-

eign Minister Qureshi also

expressed concern over

the fragile state of finan-

cial systems of the devel-

To allow developing coun-

tries to cope with the

crisis, and mitigate the

economic fallout, he under-

lined the Prime Minister's

call for debt restructuring.

oping world.

by Chinese people in both good times and difficult times. We are very happy to see that China has a lot of good leadership vision, strategy and faith. They have been able to overcome this very difficult epidemic."

About the decision not to evacuate Pakistanis from China, Ambassador Hashmi talked more about her understanding of the public opinion. "We have 28,000 students in China, of which about 1,200 are in Hubei."We genuinely felt that our children were safer here than if we were to evacuate them from there. Therefore, a very conscious decision was made."

#### "We'll die like cattle': Kashmiris

**APP** 

fear

ISLAMABAD: As the world scrambles to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, fear and anxiety prevail in Indian Occupied Kashmir after four COV-ID-19 cases were detected. Hospitals in the disputed Himalayan region have an acute shortage of doctors and paramedics, while its healthcare facilities are insufficient to meet the

### **Shehbaz calls for** national unity to face coronavirus

APP

LAHORE Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif Tuesday called on the nation to rise to the occasion and forge unity among its ranks for combating the novel coronavirus.

Collective efforts could help convert the challenge into an opportunity and everyone would have to play their role to fight the pandemic, instead of doing politics, which was not be appropriate, he said while addressing a

press conference. Shehbaz Sharif said the effective steps being taken by the government to control the spread of coronavirus should be appreciated while highlighting any loopholes in a

positive manner. He expressed the optimism that despite economic problems, Pakistan would overcome the challenge with combined efforts of the entire nation. The PML-N president urged the Federal Government to convene a meeting of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) and take all the provincial governments into confidence on the strategy to deal with the contagion. A national task force should be constituted

with representation from



all the political parties, he added.

Shehbaz Sharif said the government should take steps on war footing to ensure all the required medical equipment and gadgets to treat the coronavirus, including safety kits for the medical staff and ventilators for the patients. The poor people should be given free of charge testing facilities for the coronavirus, besides financial assistance. he added.

He announced that the PML-N would provide 10,000 safety kits to the medical staff treating coronavirus patients in hospitals.

Shehbaz Sharif also called for decreasing petroleum prices to Rs 70 per liter as it might help control inflation in the country. Interest rate should also be brought down, besides deferring the payment of electricity and gas bills of upto Rs 5,000, he added.

## WHO highly appreciates Azerbaijan's preventive measures, says Hikmet Hajiyev

**DNA** 

BAKU: Azerbaijan's necessary preventive measures are highly appreciated by the World Health Organization (WHO), Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan, Head of Foreign Policy Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration Hikmet Hajivey said.

Hajiyev made the remark in Baku at the briefing in connection with the special quarantine regime Trend reports.

announced in Azerbaijan. "WHO has not yet raised

an alarm in relation to the situation in Azerbaijan," assistant to the president of Azerbaijan added.

"This is the result of organizing the governance system in Azerbaijan at the perfect level under the leadership of the president," Hajiyev said. "At the same time, this shows the country's preparedness for such emergency situations. Azerbaijan took the necessary preparatory measures in early January when the epidemic was slightly observed. All this is highly appreciated by



During the meeting of the Azerbaijani Cabinet of Ministers held on March 23 under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Ali Asadov, a decision was

made to impose a special

quarantine regime to prevent the spread of corona-

Taking into account the experience of various countries in combating coronavirus COV-

worldwide in order to protect the population's health and prevent its spread in the country and possible consequences caused as a result of infection, Azerbaijan announced a special quarantine regime from 00:00 (GMT+4) March 24 through April 20 in accordance with the Article 25 of the Law of the Azerbaijan Republic about Sanitary and Epidemiologic Wellbeing.

Azerbaijan remains one of the countries, least affected by the rapidly spreading coronavirus disease

(COVID-19). The country's official structures are applying necessary measures to prevent any possible exposure of coronavirus. Azerbaijan has also imported necessary medical equipment to carry out coronavirus tests. Azerbaijan's official structures have also set up quarantine centers in the country's districts. which would allow to react faster to the possible outbreak due to joint borders. Azerbaijan shares border with Iran, where

coronavirus is currently

spreading rapidly.

#### Turkey puts 348 passengers under quarantine

**APP** 

SAKARYA: Turkey placed 348 passengers arriving from overseas under quarantine as part of measures to contain the novel coronavirus on March 23, 2020 in Sakarya. The passengers were checked by medical staff at Istanbul Airport and transferred to Sakarya province.