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EU supports Pakistan civil society, says Androulla Kaminara

Japanese envoy assures help in coming days



UK and Pak have huge trade potential: envoy



Briefs

E. Union launches "Team Europe" package

DNA

BRUSSELS: THE European Union has launched its "Team Europe" package to support partner countries in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences. The objective of the "Team Europe" approach is to combine resources from the EU, its Member States, and financial institutions, in particular the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The European Commission and the European Investment Bank have already pledged financial support amounting to more than 15.6 billion from existing programmes. EU Member States underlined today their commitment to contribute to this joint endeavour and to make similar contributions, as well as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The overall figure of the "Team Europe" package reaches more than 20 billion euros.

IMF meeting on 16th

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An International Monetary Fund (IMF) board meeting has been called on April 16 for the approval of a \$1.4bn loan for Pakistan. According to details, as the global economic landscape has been badly damaged by the coronavirus pandemic, international economic agencies have started arranging economic support for various countries through loans and grants. The EFF is still there. We're working on that.

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Japan to expand support at grassroots level

Emergency support reflects the sentiments of the people of Japan for the weakest segment of the society in Pakistan; special persons need special attention particularly in challenging times such as COVID-19: Matsuda Kuninori

ASNAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: MATSUDA Kuninori, Ambassador of Japan, has said that circle of support by Japan and its various organizations shall be expanded at the grass-roots level with the passage of time. He said special persons need special attention particularly in challenging times such as COVID-19, emphatically. The ambassador made these re-

marks on the occasion of emergency support extended by Japanese NGO for the weakest segments. He said this emergency support reflects the sentiments of the people of Japan for the weakest segment of the society in Pakistan. It may be mentioned here that as a part of goodwill gesture by the people of Japan and to support the vulnerable segments of the society in Pakistan to protect themselves against COVID-19, a Japanese international NGO, AAR-JAPAN (Association for Aid and Relief, Japan) started providing hygiene material as well as food items as an emergency support to the deserving people in Haripur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This emergency support which is being provided by AAR-JAPAN on behalf of the Japanese people has a scale of JPY 500,000 (ca. PKR 770,000) and will be provided particularly to the disabled persons, widows

and orphans in the district. The AAR-JAPAN will continue to provide such support to the lesser privileged people of Pakistan as soon as it receives further donations from the people of Japan. The AAR-JAPAN has provided improved hygiene facilities at various girls schools in the district to encourage girls students to come to schools with confidence and get education in an enabling and conducive environment. A project "Enhance-

ment of sanitation and Maintenance of Hygienic Environment in girls schools in Haripur district" successfully promoted hygiene education with slogans like 'wash your hands after visiting bathroom' or 'keep your classrooms clean'. The AAR-JAPAN is continuously working in education sector to establish "inclusive education" in schools to promote mutual understanding between students with disabilities and those without.

UAE suspends prayers at all worship places

ISLAMABAD: The United Arab Emirates has announced suspension of prayers at all places of worship including mosques and churches amid the Coronavirus epidemic, Emirates News Agency (WAM) said Friday. The decision has been taken in coordination with the UAE's National Crisis Emergency and Disasters Management Authority and the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments and will remain in force until further notice. — APP



ISLAMABAD: More medical supplies arrive from China. — DNA

UK, Pakistan have huge trade potential

RAJA FURQAN

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr. Christian Turner CMG has stated that the two countries have immense trade potential which should be fulfilled in order to further strengthen bilateral ties. He said this during his meeting with Aviation



Minister Ghulam Sarwar. The minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment towards enhancing aviation operations with the United Kingdom and assured the British High Commissioner of his full support in accommodating all of the stranded UK nationals in Pakistan. He further stated that the future of the two countries is very bright and that

there is a high potential for trade. The two dignitaries agreed to speed up efforts to accommodate stranded nationals of the two countries. The Aviation Minister highlighted the strong relationship and the long history between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. He inquired about the health of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Mr. Boris Johnson and conveyed his best wishes for his speedy recovery. British High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr. Christian Turner CMG thanked the Aviation Minister for his efforts to evacuate 2,000 stranded UK nationals back to their country.

Boris Johnson shifted to ward

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson was recovering in a hospital ward Friday after ending three days in intensive care for COVID-19, as his government urged Britons to stay at home over Easter. The 55-year-old leader left intensive care at London's St Thomas' Hospital on Thursday evening and will now be monitored closely during what Downing Street called "the early phase of his recovery". — APP

PM to be briefed on coronavirus strategy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar on Friday chaired the National Command and Operation Center meeting in Islamabad, which noted with satisfaction regarding improvement in recovery ratio of COVID-19 patients. The meeting decided to continuously remain in touch at diplomatic level to ensure availability of ventilators and other medical equipment in the country. It observed that the actual number of pro-

jective cases is less than projections which is a positive development. According to the health ministry spokesman, the meeting was briefed over the coronavirus situation in the country as the members expressed their satisfaction over the measures taken by health ministry to tackle the virus spread. "Around 727 patients have recovered from the virus till today," he said while quoting the briefing given by Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health Dr Zafar Mirza. The national health ministry has also devised a code of con-

duct for movement of people and goods. The food items could be brought from Iran to four border areas of the Balochistan province under the guidelines issued from the authorities. The cargo trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan will also be allowed for three days in a week and food items and medicines could be imported to the neighbouring war-torn country. Pakistanis returning from Afghanistan will have to undergo virus testing process and will be put in quarantine for a prescribed time period.

COVID 19 Azeri President allocates AZN 97m

DNA

BAKU: President Ilham Aliyev has signed an Order to allocate funds for the supply of necessary medical equipment and other medical devices as part of the health measures implemented in the Republic of Azerbaijan against the coronavirus pandemic. Under the presidential Order, the State Agency on Mandatory Health Insurance is allocated 97 million manats for the



supply of necessary medical equipment and other medical devices in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and strengthen the fight against it.

Qureshi talks to Korean colleague

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a telephone conversation this morning with the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, Ms. Kang Kyung-wha. The discussion focussed on the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftermath. Foreign Minister Qureshi commended the South Korean government for its effective response against Covid-19 that had been widely acknowledged by the international community. He thanked the RoK government for the support extended to the Pakistani community in South Korea.

Sindh has been left with 6,000 testing kits

KARACHI: Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho on Friday revealed that the province has been left with only 6,000 coronavirus testing kits, which were likely to last for 12 days. In an interview to British media, the minister said, "We have a capacity of conducting 2,600 tests every day, but we are only holding 400 to 500 tests." — DNA

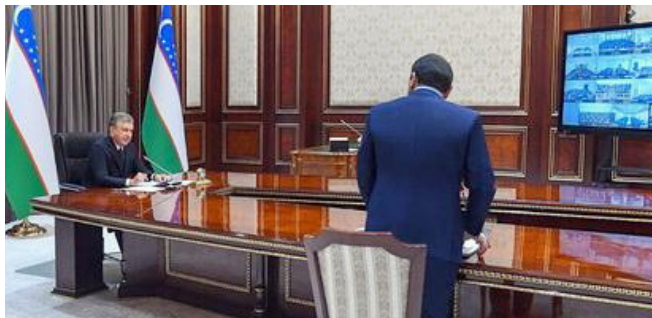
Uzbek President reviews COVID 19 combat plans

DNA

TASHKENT: A video-conference was held under the chairmanship of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to analyze the effectiveness of fieldwork on combating the coronavirus pandemic and the development of a private household, which is an important factor in ensuring food security, employment and incomes of the population. The head of state adopted a number of important decisions aimed at limiting the spread of coronavirus, minimizing its negative impact on the life of the population and the country's economy. In particular, a Special Republican Commission has been formed, full-scale work has been launched to stabilize the epidemiological situation, pro-

tect public health, and introduce a quarantine regime. Particular attention is paid to increasing the degree of preparedness of medical institutions and the construction of additional facilities. In particular, a special hospital with 10 thousand beds in the Zangiata district is being built at an accelerated pace. In Yukorichirchik district, a quarantine zone for 10 thousand people began to work, and the construction of another quarantine base for 10 thousand places began, which will be put into operation by 15 May. At the meeting, it was noted that over the past month, 6 thousand citizens were returned to the country by 20 charter flights, another 10 thousand returned by rail and through border posts. All of them are quarantined and placed in 160 objects. An operational headquarters has

been formed, consisting of experienced doctors and professors who conduct round-the-clock online counseling for the treatment of patients. Virologists from China and South Korea are invited. Using telemedicine technologies, interaction is carried out with specialists from Russia, Germany, Japan, Turkey and other countries. The most important thing is that the vast majority of our



people soberly assess the situation, work remotely, strictly follow the recommendations of doctors and the requirements of quarantine, set an example for everyone with their culture, consciousness and discipline. Our pupils and students continue to receive education through online lessons, the head of state said. The system of uninterrupted supply of food products, medicines and medical devices has

been effectively established. The free sponsorship provided by our generous compatriots is targeted and timely delivered to socially vulnerable segments of the population. As the President noted, the readiness of our people to fight this threat shoulder to shoulder is clearly evidenced by the fact that over a short period of time, citizens, state and non-governmental organizations transferred more than 50 billion soums to the Charity and Health Fund of Uzbekistan. "In this difficult time, our multinational people do not succumb to panic and confusion, but, on the contrary, again show iron will, mutual respect and solidarity with the confidence that this disaster that has come from outside will soon pass and better days will come," said Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Briefs

Govt should invoke force majeure clause

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Alteration in energy purchase agreements amid coronavirus outbreak can help the country save billions of dollars, a business leader said Friday. It can help the government reduce electricity and gas tariff to boot agriculture, industrial production, exports and employment, said Shahid Rasheed Butt former President ICCI.

He said that the government could consider invoking force majeure clause which is part of the power purchase agreements with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and LNG purchase deal with Qatar. Force majeure provisions in commercial contracts can be used in case of unforeseen consequences which are outside the reasonable control of a party and which prevents that party from performing its obligations, he informed.

President, others offer Salaat u Tauba

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi offered Salaat u Tauba along with Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser and Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani at Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad Friday and prayed to God Almighty to purge the world of the coronavirus pandemic. The call for Salaat u Tauba was given by the religious scholars during a meeting with the President yesterday. The President prayed to the Creator of world to have His blessings and kindness on the people across the globe who faced the catastrophe to their lives and health. The Council of Islamic Ideology has also appealed to the nation to offer two rakats of Salat ul Tauba as a repentance before Allah Almighty to seek His forgiveness.

Ministry to repair, ventilators

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and technology, Fawad Chaudhry announced that the ministry has undertaken the mammoth task to repair and reuse discarded ventilators from private and government healthcare centers to meet the requirement surge due to coronavirus pandemic. Fawad Chaudhry in a media talk on the matter said that close to 1000 ventilators are currently ruled redundant and unusable across the country. The minister said that teams have been formulated by the ministry to round up all the ventilators and repair them as quickly and efficiently as possible.



ISLAMABAD: China's CGGC (China Gezhouba Group Company) Pakistan Country Head Mr. Shi YU donate 12000 surgical disposable masks to PEDO (Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Board) as a part of Chinese Companies courtesy to join hands with their Pakistani counterparts and friends to counter the COVID-19. In a simple & graceful handing over ceremony held at CGGC Pakistan office, CGGC Country Head Pakistan Mr. Shi YU handover these to Mr Narinder Electrical Director PEDO, which was largely appreciated and accept with thanks to China. – DNA

China firmly stands with Pakistan in fight against COVID-19: Report

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China's friendship examples are given all over the globe and it is the fact that Pakistan is not fighting alone against the novel coronavirus; China is firmly standing with its "all-weather friend".

This was stated in a report carried by Gwadar Pro App on Friday. Pakistan and China have proven that they would not abandon each other in these testing times and perhaps that is why President of Pakistan Dr Arif Alvi visited China last month conveying strong support and solidarity of Pakistan towards the government and the people of China in their battle against Covid-19.

When China was hard-hit by the coronavirus, it was Pakistan – from President to Prime Minister Imran Khan to the common people – which provided a large amount of support of solidarity and unity to China. Delighted by the support, the Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan Yao Jing not only appreciated the gesture but also offered to reciprocate it with even more in 'Chinese style'. "A drop of water received will be reciprocated with a well of spring. China stands with Pakistan on fighting COVID-19," Ambassador Yao Jing said in a video message while assuring Pakistani people that "Chinese people, as always, will stand here, stay here and work with you. We have a firm belief and firm confidence that the Pakistani government and people will finally win this battle against the coronavirus." These were not mere words to impress people and nations across the world as China immediately increased the supplies of medical personnel and equipment to help one of the most populous nations in the world – Pakistan – to fight the spread of the coronavirus.

Even before Yao Jing's statement, China had helped Pakistan in every possible way ranging from taking care of Pakistani students in Wuhan to providing tones of medical goods.

China has always played a vital role in Pakistan's growth and development. Apart from sending medical supplies, including tones of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), testing kits, ventilators, masks, sanitizers, the Chinese government assured authorities in Pakistan that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects would start functioning soon.

It gave the much-needed push to the Pakistani government and Prime Minister Imran Khan while presiding a meeting of the National Coordination Committee on coronavirus situation on April 2 decided to start work on CPEC projects, saying employment of the laborers belonged to the construction industry and CPEC projects would help stabilizing economy.

Prime Minister Imran Khan while declaring that the "working class is the top priority of the government" said that the work on the ongoing projects on CPEC in the country would soon be reopened.

"True to the description of an 'Iron Brother', China has stood by Pakistan through thick and thin, in times of war & peace. Recent Chinese support to fight corona is case in point," the leader of the opposition in Pakistan's National Assembly and the president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Shehbaz Sharif, tweeted on April 4 while lauding Chinese help.

"At a time when no other country was ready to invest even a single penny, China came up with a multi-billion dollar CPEC that has helped us end load-shedding & kick-start moribund economy," the PML-N leader added.

Following the coronavirus crisis, China has portrayed itself as a global leader in the fight against the outbreak. For Pakistan, China has not just sent medical equipment but showed the willingness to open the ambitious multi-billion-dollar project to reduce the economic shortfalls.

With a population of 220 million, Pakistan's coronavirus cases pass 4,200, including 63 deaths from the illness it causes. Most of the infected people there were travelers returning from neighboring Iran but not a single case came from China.

Prime Minister Imran Khan repeatedly reminded the nation that China not only took care of the Pakistani students in Wuhan but also ensured that the virus was not transmitted in any way to Pakistan. "Pakistan did not witness a single case coming from China," PM Khan said while lauding China's efforts to control the spread of the disease. There are countless examples of Pakistan and China's friendship but standing with each other during a pandemic is a new chapter added onto the recent political history, the report added.

27,000 employees await residences allotment

ISLAMABAD: More than 27,000 government employees in the federal capital are still awaiting the allotment of the official residences from the Estate Office of the Ministry of Housing and Works.

The government officials, living in the rented apartments, have been bearing the brunt of the chronic shortage of official accommodations, faced by the MoHW at the moment.

"At the present, 29,000 federal government employees have been residing in the government residences," an official source said, confirming that the shortage of facility.

The waiting list has been growing gradually due to increase in number of new applicants, he added.

He informed APP that concentrated efforts were being made at the governmental level since the country had been facing a shortfall of approximately 9-10 million housing units.

The official pointed out that no government houses had been built since 1995 as a ban was imposed on the construction of new facility by the then federal cabinet.

Sharing the ministry's endeavors for streamlining the allotment process, he said the MoHW had completed the data entry of all allotments of government accommodations (category wise) at the website of Estate Office to ensure transparency in the allotment process. – APP

1100 kites confiscated

RAWALPINDI: Police conducted an operation and confiscated 1100 kites, strings rolls and material used for kite flying besides rounded up a kite sellers here on Friday. According to police spokesman, Race Course Police while acting on a tip off raided and confiscated 1100 kites, strings rolls and material used for kite flying besides arrested a kite seller identified as Muhammad Imran.

City Police Officer (CPO), Muhammad Ahsan Younis has said strict action would be taken against kite flying and added that no one would be allowed to violate rule of law. The spokesman said, district police on the special directive of City Police Officer (CPO), Muhammad Ahsan Younis conducting raids and netting kite sellers and kite flying ban violators. – APP

74 emergency relief cash centers established

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTACK: To give relief to the needy families under Ehsas Kafalat Program, 74 Emergency Relief Cash Centers have been established in different areas of the district. These centers have been set up in government schools and union council offices of the district. Incharge officers of these centers have been directed to ensure implementation of Corona Preventive Measures specially social distancing while dispersing cash to the needy families. The police force has been deployed on these centers to ensure peaceful environment and security. The cash relief centers include 11 in Attock, 15 in tehsil Jand, 08 in tehsil Hasanabdal, 14 in Fatehang, 11 in Pindigheb

Govt releases Rs 47,305.087 mln for water projects

ISLAMABAD: The government has released a sum of Rs47,305.087 million for various water resource projects under annual Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for fiscal year 2019-20 so far.

According to the data of Planning Commission, an amount of Rs 85,727.359 million was allocated for various water resource sectors in the current fiscal year.

A sum of Rs12,800 million has been released for Diamer Basha Dam (Dam part), Rs 3309.154 million for Diamer Basha dam (Land Acquisition & Resettlement), Rs 5283.842 million for Kachhi Canal Project Dera Bugthi, Rs1321.780 million Lower Indus Right Bank Irrigation & Drainage Project (RBOD-I) and Rs800 million for construction of 100 dams in Balochistan.

Similarly an amount of Rs12,000 million has been released for Mohmand Dam (Dam Part), Rs1200 million for Balochistan Effluent Disposal into (RBOD-I, RBOD-III), Jafarabad, Rs880 million for construction of Basool Dam (Ormara), Rs201.20 million for construction of Khazeena Dam Zamri, Rs480 million for construction of small dams in Sindh, Rs400 million for construction of small dams in Mansehra district, Rs1076 million for Garuk Storage Dam Kharan, Rs1065.825 million for Remedial Measures to Control waterlogging (Muzaffargarh), Rs1200 million for Balochistan Effluent Disposal into RBOD.I (RBOD-III), Jafarabad, Nasirabad, Rs400 million for small dams in KPK. – APP

Railways to install six more water filtration plants

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways was all set to install six more water filtration plants at different railway stations across the country for the provision of safe and clean drinking water to the passengers.

"The water filtration plants will be installed shortly at Gujrat, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Nankana Sahib, Hassan Abdal and Bahawalpur railway stations," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

To provide clean drinking water at the railway stations, he said that water filtration plants have been installed at twelve railway stations included Okara, Raiwind, Gujranwala, Multan, Rahim Yar Khan, Sadiqabad, Mirpur Mathelo, Ghotki, Jhelum, Lahore, Rohri and Sukkur. – APP

900 kites confiscated in police raid

DNA

ATTACK: Police conducted an operation and confiscated 900 kites, strings rolls and material used for kite flying besides rounded up a kite sellers here on Friday. According to police spokesman, Attock Police while acting on a tip off raided and confiscated 900 kites, strings rolls and material used for kite flying besides arrested a kite seller identified as Muhammad Imran.

District Police Officer (DPO), Khalid Hamdani has said strict action would be taken against kite flying and added that no one would be allowed to violate rule of law.

Gamblers arrested in Attock

DNA

ATTACK: The Saddar police Friday raided at a gambling den and arrested 2 persons involved in gambling. According to police spokesman, Rangoo Police raided at a gambling den and arrested eight persons, Pindigheab Police rounded up five persons from gambling den, while Hassanabdal Police arrested 19 persons in raids on two different gambling dens.

During crackdown, the police also seized bet money worth thousands of rupees, cocks, car, motorcycles, cell phones and gambling tools.

ICCI starts distribution of food items among Covid-19 affected poor people

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) has started distribution of free food items among Covid-19 affected poor people from its Corona Relief Camp. The relief package is comprised of flour, rice, lentils and other food items. For this purpose, a ceremony was held at ICCI in which Mirza Shahzad Akbar Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior was the chief guest. Mr. Muhammad Aamir Zulfiqar Khan Inspector General Po-

lice Islamabad and Mr. Hamza Shafqaat Deputy Commissioner Islamabad were also present at this occasion.

Speaking at the occasion, Mirza Shehzad Akbar, SAPM on Accountability and Interior lauded the initiative of ICCI for distributing free food items among the poor families. He said that business community had always demonstrated great generosity and cooperated with government in coping with trying time. He said that government strategy was to control the spread of Covid-19 and save business activities from destruction as well. He said that to open the construc-

tion industry and its allied industries, government was working on SOPs and stressed that business community should fully abide those SOPs to save their own lives and lives of their workers. He said that government was considering to address the issues of importers, hotel industry and other affected businesses. He said the providing relief in rents and utility bills to business community was also under consideration.

He said that Covid-19 was a life changing pandemic and we all have to take extra precautionary measures to control its spread. He hoped that ICCI would con-

tinue to provide free food items to poor people to complement the efforts of government for protection of these people.

Muhammad Amir Zulfiqar Khan, IG Islamabad said that taking care of poor people in these testing times was the responsibility of us all.

He assured that Islamabad Police would fully cooperate with ICCI in distributing ration among poor families without any disturbance. He said that Islamabad Police has cooperated in distribution ration among 8000 persons and would continue to play its role for this purpose. He also thanked D.Watson and

Shaheen Chemists for providing protective equipment to Islamabad Police including masks, sanitizers, gloves etc.

In his welcome address, Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that business community always played frontline role in every crisis and would also play this role to reduce the difficulties of poor people due to lockdown caused by Covid-19. He said that ICCI in collaboration with ICT Administration and Islamabad Police would distribute ration at the doorsteps of poor families in Islamabad.

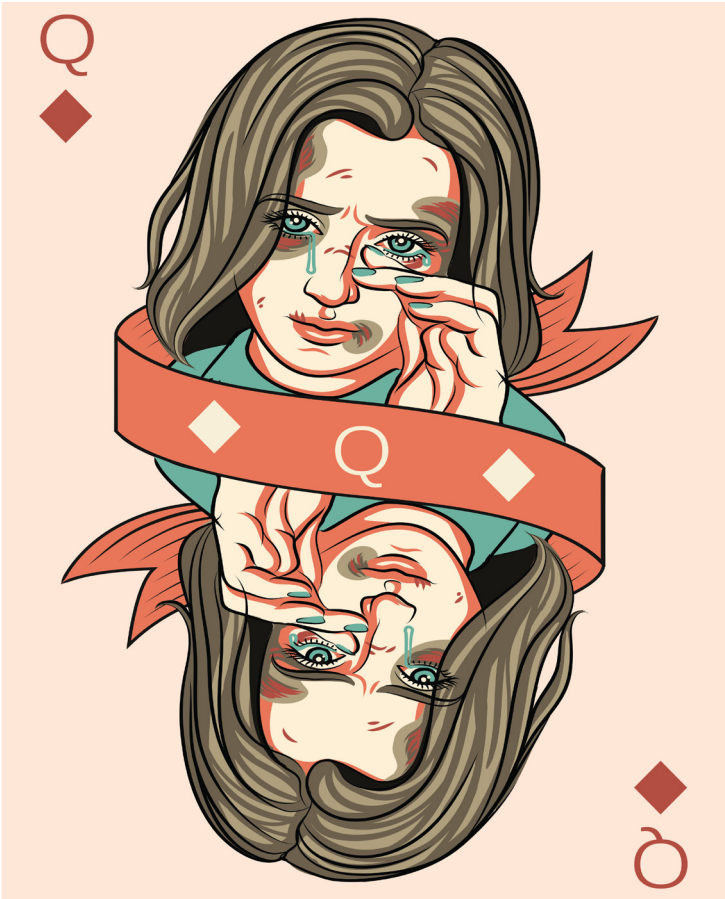
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Yemen truce: will it hold

AMIDST much doom and gloom across the world, a faint flicker of hope has appeared for the impoverished and war-weary people of Yemen as a two-week unilateral ceasefire declared by the Saudi-led coalition took effect on Thursday. The coalition had been pummelling Yemen since March 2015 in an effort to drive out the Houthis 'Ansar Allah' movement, believed to be allied with Iran, and that controls the capital Sana'a. Far from dislodging the Houthis, the Saudi-led war, supported by some of Riyadh's Gulf allies as well as the US and many in Europe, has been an unmitigated disaster for the people of Yemen, unleashing death, destruction and hunger upon some of the world's poorest, most vulnerable people. The truce comes after the UN appealed for a cessation of hostilities, while the Saudis say they made the move to prevent a coronavirus outbreak in Yemen. As opposed to previous reckless decisions, this appears to be a mature move from Riyadh, and all parties in Yemen, specifically the Houthis, should reciprocate. However, a Houthi spokesman has been quoted as saying that they will continue to fight until the blockade of Yemen – enforced by the coalition – has been lifted. Considering the miseries confronting the Yemeni people, and the threat Covid-19 poses to the country, the Houthis should reconsider their rigid stance. Continuing to target Saudi cities and installations will surely draw a response from Riyadh, and the grim cycle of death in Yemen will only be prolonged. For the sake of the Yemeni people, the ceasefire must be respected by all. Moreover, the fact is that a coronavirus outbreak would have an even more devastating impact on Yemen, shattered as it has been after years of conflict. Many in the international community have been unmoved by the plight of Yemenis, despite harrowing images coming out of the country of malnourished children and tiny coffins. However, now with Covid-19 – a foe that does not discriminate on national, religious or political grounds – ravaging the planet, the realisation seems to have dawned on those involved in the Yemeni conflict that something needs to be done. Saudi Arabia is grappling with its own coronavirus outbreak, with over 3,000 reported cases, and this may have played a role in the declaration of the ceasefire. And while no cases have been reported in Yemen, one shudders to think what the situation would be in the country should a Covid-19 outbreak be confirmed, as the health system barely exists, and infrastructure is in a shambles. However, the Houthis have a point in their demand for the blockade to be lifted. Considering the situation, aid must reach the Yemeni people unhindered, and were the blockade to be lifted, the ceasefire may increase the chances of success. If this experiment in peacemaking succeeds, more formal peace talks would also be given an impetus. – *COURTESY DAWN*



Alarming situation of Quarantine lapses

THE consequences of the leaden-footed initial response to the coronavirus cases in much of the country are becoming clearer by the day. It has recently emerged that a large number of the 1,160 pilgrims who had arrived in Multan on March 20 from Iran via Taftan and earlier tested negative for the virus have since contracted the disease – a result of shambolic quarantine conditions in which they were detained in Multan. What makes the lapse so grave is that upon being released from detention, during which they interacted freely with infected patients housed in the same facility, they were allowed to return to their home districts. And even though they were quarantined at the end of their journey, they would have unwittingly spread the disease among uninfected fellow travelers and those they mingled with along the way. It seems the Multan district administration was not sufficiently backed by the provincial authorities in its efforts to prevent the spread of the virus among the pilgrims. The Punjab health department, despite requests by senior district officials, reportedly dragged its feet on testing them again before they went to their hometowns. Then, when the pilgrims— who had already spent a fortnight each of quarantine in Taftan and Multan – grew agitated upon being informed they would be tested again after all and have to remain in place pending the results, the police refused to intervene and restore order. The situation became fraught enough for the army to be called in. As a 'compromise', the pilgrims agreed to their samples being collected and sent off for testing while they were returned to their home districts. As the results of those tests reveal, these are precisely the lapses in judgement, on the part of both the public and officialdom, which have spurred the spread of the virus. They will make it all the more difficult to 'flatten the curve', which would prevent the country's already inadequate health facilities from being overwhelmed. Health protocols to address the various challenges posed by the pandemic, including those arising from the public's cultural predispositions, should have been defined more clearly. After all, it was two months between the lockdown in Wuhan and the discovery of the first Covid-19 case in Pakistan – although to be fair, many other countries too dropped the ball. There needs to be a more coordinated, holistic approach to this crisis: half-measures and mixed messaging will merely exacerbate it. – *Courtesy DAWN*

Illegal Elections in Nagorno-Karabakh: a Critical Review

Dr Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan



Somehow, with the hidden help of its allies, Armenia succeeded to capture 20 percent territories of Azerbaijan and brutally killed/assassinated 30,000 of its people and one million were forced to leave their houses in the occupied lands. According to the government data, around 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan, including 265 women and 67 children are still in captivity of Armenia in the wake of war

ALTHOUGH elections are one of the important "trinity" of modern democratic system but illegal elections only "provoke" social disharmony, political derailing, economic insecurity and human isolation in the world. Modern civilization witnessed "numerous" incidents where people of occupied territories remained "detached" with the so called parliamentary and presidential elections and the Republic of Azerbaijan is not any exception because its population belonging to Nagorno-Karabakh region, illegally occupied by Armenia totally rejected the most recently held election's "via-

bility", "validity" and "relevance". Resultantly, civilized world has now termed it "ashamed" democracy and discarded the recently held elections by the Armenian government. On its part, the foreign ministry of Azerbaijan issued an immediate statement to denounce the so-called "elections" and labeled it as illegal which did not have any valid lawful basis and obviously violated the Constitution of Azerbaijan, the charter of the United Nations (UN), and the resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council (UNSC). "Elections in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan may be held only within the framework of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan and with the participation of the entire population belonging to the said region with free will and complete withdrawal of the Armenian occupying forces from the occupied territories, the return of the displaced Azerbaijanis to their native lands, as well as the restoration of dialogue and cooperation between the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of the region. Ironically, no presidential candidates secured the desired percentage and according to Russian media outlet Kommersant will go to runoff "polls" on April 14. However, a political party led by Arutunyan has won the fictitious and engineered elections to the self-designed parliament in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. The illegal regime established by the Republic of Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is the result of aggression, ethnic cleansing and racial discrimination; it is under the leadership and control of Armenia," foreign ministry said. The governments of the various countries, including United Kingdom (UK), Georgia and Moldova, along with international organizations such as the OIC, NATO, GUAM, OSCE Minsk Group and the European Union, as well as the officials of NATO issued statements to denounce the illegal "elections" in the internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan as the violation of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and undermining of political negotiations. Fascist Armenia launched a military campaign against Azerbaijan in 1991 which lasted until a ceasefire agreement in 1994. Three-year war ensured Armenia's illegal occupation of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven surrounding districts Lachin, Kalbajar, Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Qubadli, and Zangilan. Somehow, with the hidden help of its allies, Armenia succeeded to capture 20 percent territories of Azerbaijan and brutally killed/assassinated 30,000 of its people and one million

were forced to leave their houses in the occupied lands. According to the government data, around 4,000 citizens of Azerbaijan, including 265 women and 67 children are still in captivity of Armenia in the wake of war. In 1993, the UN Security Council adopted resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), condemning the occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan and reaffirming respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inviolability of its internationally-recognized borders, it said. Furthermore, the Security Council also confirmed that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is an "integral part" of Azerbaijan, and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Armenia notorious for its "state terrorism" "planned ethnic cleansing" and "dirty schemes". Its carries a "atrocious past" and upholds a "heartless present" due to which people of Azerbaijan living in the illegally occupied territories of Azerbaijan are still "debarred" from the right of self-determination, free choice, participation of entire community, under the provision of constitution of Azerbaijan after complete withdrawal of occupiers i.e. Armenia from occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and its seven adjacent areas. Modern democracy is based on "free will" of the people and "complete transparency" of the government's organs, having free and fair "electoral process" but in case of most recently presidential and parliamentary elections in occupied Nagorno-Karabakh by Armenia it is a "blatant infringement" of basic human rights of the Azerbaijanis who have been subjected to ethnic cleansing and expelled from their native lands. The UN, OSCE, other international organizations and the world community have repeatedly condemned the illegal "elections" in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, highlighting the blessedness of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized borders. Pakistan's parliament and Senate has also strongly condemned illegal occupation of Azerbaijan's territories by Armenia and demanded its withdrawal immediately. According to official record the majority of people living in Nagorno-Karabakh are Armenian Christians, but the area legally belongs to Muslim-majority Azerbaijan for centuries. Therefore, holding elections in an occupied territory is not only illegal but also threatens the peace efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. Denial of basic human rights, suppression of democratic rights, constant execution of brutal programs and last

but not least, state sponsored terrorism will achieve nothing in Nagorno-Karabakh region but worldwide "condemnation", further "political isolation", "economic marginalization" and hardship. Modern international engagements and regional dialogues are derived from the golden principles of international law whereas; most recently elections in Nagorno-Karabakh are against the true spirits of international law. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has already instructed Armenia to withdraw its troops from Azerbaijan territories through its four 1993 resolutions because withdrawal of troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is a precondition for peace. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) slammed so-called presidential and parliamentary elections held in Nagorno-Karabakh. It viewed the holding of elections in the occupied region of the Republic of Azerbaijan on March 31, 2020 as in contravention to the relevant UN Security Council resolutions concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The OIC also highlighted the importance of resolutions and decisions of the OIC and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to encourage a "peaceful solution to the conflict on the basis of sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan". Armenia unvarying regional annexation and hegemonic designs are potential threats to regional security of South Caucasus and even EU. Unfinished agenda of UN resolutions and UNSC, and constant peaceful persuasions of all the regional as well as global organizations for nonviolent resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh have been intentionally ignoring by the Armenia which has now created "stalemate" in the ongoing negotiation process between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Armenia stands for genocide and does not for democratic generosity wherein, people are given equal rights to vote or business equity. Armenia stands for ethnic cleansing and does not for community development. Last but not least, Armenia is famous for racial discrimination and does not stand for rigorous development. Furthermore, polluting the concepts of modern democracy by holding "fake", "fictitious" and "flagrant" elections in occupied territories of Nagorno-Karabakh by Armenia is nothing but "self-depiction", "illusion" and disclaimer of bitter realities. Illegal occupation, refutation of international law, denunciation of international resolutions and means of cold-blooded tactics by the Armenia is no service to democracy, development and dialogue but it may geared up regional conflict in the days to come.

Parliament and the pandemic: in-depth analysis

Sherry Rehman



As part of the first-step lockdown and air travel bans, Pakistan's parliament, both the upper and lower Houses, are in forced recess, understandably missing their scheduled calendar dates for sessions

AS global coronavirus cases passed the million mark on Thursday, the world struggles to cope with containment and mitigation without any roadmaps for such a pandemic. With the situation in Pakistan still at a stage where the virus is spreading without knowledge or capacity to test, isolate, treat, the necessity of harsh lockdowns confronts every sector of the economy and every aspect of human life, so dependent on social activity for work,

prayer, communities and the business of government. Life in the times of corona, as we see it, has altered how societies work, and will continue to re-shape how the workplace as well as human activity can adapt to the possibility of its recurrence while we re-assess national priorities. Even as we speak, urgent choices at all levels have to be made with limited resources. As part of the first-step lockdown and air travel bans, Pakistan's parliament, both the upper and lower Houses, are in forced recess, understandably missing their scheduled calendar dates for sessions. Yet as policy decisions unfold from Islamabad as well as provincial capitals, the need for parliaments to exercise oversight on emergency measures, fiscal re-prioritisation, revenue disbursements, social transfers to the immediately vulnerable, and health as well as other priorities, re-emerges as essential. In the search for solutions, the one advantage that global connectivity can leverage right now are internet and tech-based communications for virtual conferencing. For this, Pakistan's parliament has taken some tentative measures to resume skeletal committee sessions, while observing social-distancing mandates. So far, one specially notified committee of parliamentary leaders from both the Senate and the National Assembly has met to discuss the corona crisis, and shape shared responses, but the meeting was marred by the PM making his own virtual intervention and then quitting the meeting without listening to any of the political leadership present. It was a wasted opportunity to not only create political capital for the government itself, but to build a platform of unified national responses given the unprecedented nature of the threat. All opposition parties had clearly indicated their willingness to let partisan politics take second place to protecting the people of Pakistan from the pandemic, but the PM decided

he had better things to do, unfortunately. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had even stoically refused to criticise the PM in a press conference convened to create leadership messaging on the need for social distancing and Sindh's measures in coping with the emergent risks. This must change if all provinces and the federal government are to work in lockstep with another, which is essential. The coronavirus emergency is a national challenge and must be treated as such. Although Pakistan's parliament has not been a big innovator, both Speaker Asad Qaiser and Chairman Sanjrani are quite open to ideas at this point. Despite not having the initial capacity to host web meetings, they have gone further than Pakistan's neighbours in instituting special committees and creating common ground in crisis. So far, in the SAARC region, only Pakistan, Bhutan and the Maldives are taking the lead in convening online meetings. If the pandemic continues to rage through South Asia, with low health infrastructure and high poverty indices, a round of essential committee meetings such as Health, Finance, Planning, IT, Interior, Law and others must be convened online to plan for contingent futures. Parliament's urgent role of scrutinising government, authorising spending, making laws, and providing leadership during difficult times cannot be pushed aside. MNAs, MPAs, senators are swamped for distress relief provision, health assistance and other queries from an anxious public, which also suggests that physical sittings in some remote future cannot be the only way out. The provinces too may need to follow suit. What can be done to plan ahead? Parliament should urgently ramp up its e-tech capacity by seeking changes in its internal budget. All members of the budget committees can be mobilised on the web, and there is little likelihood of any party objecting to diverting resources for urgent staff training and higher internet coverage. At the same time, resources and fresh protocols for protecting parliament's

staff will have to be created. Senate staff runs at 1,115 people, while 2,200 NA staff including CDA officials are posted during sessions. For legislation, rules will have to be made to allow online voting, which parliaments are testing. To facilitate this in Pakistan, a joint rules committee meeting of both Houses can be called online immediately. The European Parliament has trial-run email voting already, while in Spain, which has been hit hard by crisis, a remote voting infrastructure has been set up even before the pandemic to ensure participation to reduce legislators' travel load. For democracy to be meaningful, its institutions must adapt to the future and to public needs in real time. Pakistan's economy is on ventilator, and little coordination is visible from Islamabad. Our informal sector and daily wagers are in urgent need of social protection, while health professionals are in desperate need of equipment. Parliaments must seek answers on economic transparency and aid inflows while ensuring the delivery of government benefits with both care and compassion. For web hosting large numbers, many Parliaments are turning to commercial providers offering cloud-based solutions such as Office 365, including UK, Netherlands Senate, the Danish Folketinget, and Norway's Stortinget. Bhutan is using G-Suite from Google Cloud, while Zoom was used by Pakistan's parliament. There is much work to be done in the days ahead. Nothing is certain anymore, and the changed world will require new ways of working, travelling, and the questioning of orthodoxies, both economic and otherwise. Parliaments all over the world cannot be exempt from exploring urgent innovations to conduct crucial business. Our task as representatives has become even more acute in times of crisis and legislators must continue to be answerable and available to the public.

Briefs

US threatens to block China Telecom

WASHINGTON: The United States has threatened to cut off Beijing-controlled China Telecom from serving the US market because of legal and security risks, announced the Justice Department. A recommendation by the government's top departments, including Defense, State and Homeland Security, said the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) should "revoke and terminate" all authorizations for the Chinese giant's US subsidiary, China Telecom (Americas), to provide international telecommunications services to and from the United States. "The Executive Branch agencies identified substantial and unacceptable national security and law enforcement risks associated with China Telecom's operations, which render the FCC authorizations inconsistent with the public interest," the Justice Department said in a statement Thursday. — APP

Russian COVID-19 cases rise to nearly 12,000

MOSCOW: Russia has tallied a total of 11,917 cases of COVID-19 in 82 out of 85 regions of the country as of Friday, with the number of infections rising by a new daily record of 1,786, latest official data showed. The death toll rose to 94 from the previous day's 76, with 795 recovered so far, including 97 in the last 24 hours, Russia's coronavirus response center said in a statement. Moscow, the worst hit part of the country, has confirmed 1,124 new cases in the last 24 hours, with the total number of infected rising to 7,822 in the Russian capital. To prevent the spread of coronavirus, President Vladimir Putin extended paid leave for all employed citizens until the end of April. Nearly every Russian region has introduced mandatory self-isolation for all residents during this period. — APP

Iran reports 122 virus deaths

TEHRAN: Iran on Friday announced another 122 deaths from the novel coronavirus, taking the overall toll in the Middle East's worst-hit country to 4,232. The health ministry said 1,972 people tested positive for the COVID-19 virus in the past 24 hours, putting the total at 68,192. "In the last 24 hours, we have unfortunately seen an increase in cases of disease in perhaps five to eight tourist provinces, including Tehran," spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour told a televised news conference. — APP

Pakistan, China to minimize negative impact of COVID-19

From 2015 till now, there has been a unanimous opinion in Pakistan that CPEC is very useful to Pakistan. Therefore, any adverse impact on such a proven project would be of great concern to both countries

STAFF REPORT

BEIJING: The spread of COVID-19 worldwide posing severe challenges to economic development, and it might affect to China-Pakistan Economy Corridor (CPEC) as well. A report published in China Economic Net says after arduous efforts, the Chinese people have just come out of the most difficult period and are accelerating the restoration of normal production and daily life. What kind of impact will this pandemic have on China's economy and Pakistan's economy yet to be determined. This to be examined, to what extent

the CPEC, will suffer from these effects? What are the implications and what may be the consequences? It is important to pay attention to this as CPEC is of extraordinary importance not only for China but for Pakistan. From 2015 till now, there has been a unanimous opinion in Pakistan that CPEC is very useful to Pakistan. Therefore, any adverse impact on such a proven project would be of great concern to both countries. When the Corona virus outbreak began to spread in China, it was also linked to the operation of CPEC in Pakistan. As many Chinese citizens working in different places of CPEC traveled to

Wuhan, China to celebrate their New Year's celebrations, after Wuhan's lockdown, it was impossible for these Chinese engineers, experts and management people to return to Pakistan on time. So it was difficult for many enterprises, business centers and factories to run smoothly. This situation was seen by both China and Pakistan with great concern, as 100,000 to 15,000 Chinese engineers, experts and management staff were concerned with the CPEC. It was necessary to fill this gap as soon as possible. At that time, it was only the beginning of the outbreak in Pakistan, but measures had been introduced to prevent it.

China and Pakistan decided that the Chinese engineers and management staff should be sent to Pakistan and the policy of double quarantine should be adopted. People who were to send to Pakistan first were kept in quarantine for 14 days in China and then again in Pakistan. Later they went to do their jobs, but despite all of this, these Chinese people should not have any connection with the locals to ensure that they are kept from the danger of the corona virus. China and Pakistan succeeded in this strategy. The Chinese people's arrival in Pakistan won the hearts of the Pakistanis as they saw that the Chinese were returning to their

jobs faster and playing their role in advancing the CPEC projects. In the meantime, the lockdown was announced in Pakistan to keep the citizens away from this deadly disease. The effects will inevitably fall onto the CPEC. An eight-week delay can be tolerated, but if this delay is exceeded, the disadvantages will be even greater. It is learnt that the lockdown has stopped the steel tube factory construction in Gawadar port. All business zones and business centers are completely closed in Gawadar port and the impact of all these issues is on CPEC and its affiliates. But it is hopeful news that Gwadar port is still working under strict

policies. There can be no other opinion that China and Pakistan should begin preparing for a strategy to minimize the negative impact on the CPEC. The devastation of epidemic has been kept in mind, but as the world gets rid of this deadly epidemic, the two countries must also jointly study the damage done to the CPEC and reduce its severity. The effects can last for months if the effective policy is not adopted and the effects can extend beyond the months to years, which is very regrettable. This should not be limited to academic study, and the suggestions to solve these problems should be implemented, the report added.

NDMA brings medical equipment from China

ISLAMABAD: National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) brings its procured consignment of medical goods and protective equipment from China through Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) aircraft. According to NDMA spokesperson, this cache of goods was not the aid from China rather these goods were purchased by NDMA to expand the health sector's capacity to deal with the Corona virus pandemic. The equipment was purchased through a \$50 million grant from the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) and the Asian Development Bank, he added.

Iftikhar for efforts against coronavirus



DNA

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) President-designate Iftikhar Ali Malik Friday welcoming Pakistan's donation of \$3 million towards emergency fund for SAARC nations to fight pandemic called for closer cooperation among national health emergency agencies and a long-term economic recovery plan for the region. Talking to a traders dele-

gation led by internationally acclaimed SME expert Rehmat Ullah Javed here today, Iftikhar Ali Malik suggested that SAARC should adopt a shared telemedicine framework to provide health care to remote areas. He said this is good sign that all the SAARC countries are ready now to fight this lethal coronavirus outbreak collectively and he also appreciated Pakistan's suggestion to hold a SAARC health ministers video conference to enhance cooperation and proposed establishing a working group of national authorities to exchange information and data in real time. Sri Lanka reiterated the need to work together, create social awareness, and have one central depository to disseminate

information. He said South Asians have long suffered from intraregional tariff and nontariff barriers that make it difficult to move goods and people across borders. "Home to one-fourth of the world's poorest people, the region has disproportionately high trade costs, poor logistics infrastructure, and inefficient trade facilitation. He said the promise of regional trade in South Asia estimates that the trade within the region could be worth \$67 billion rather than its recent value of \$23 billion. South Asia also has significant constraints on its services trade, even though the services sector accounts for more than half of the economies in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.



HYDERABAD. Needy women getting compensation. — Jan Ali Laghari

UNHCR extends support

RAJA FURQAN AHMED

QUETTA: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency has delivered large Rubb halls and housing units to the Balochistan Government to support quarantine facilities. UNHCR has provided 14 self-standing and durable housing units to the provincial Health Department. These have been set up at the Balochistan Institute of Nephrology. The large Rubb Halls that were delivered to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority in Balochistan are expected to accommodate a number of suspected COVID-19 patients.

EU supports Pak civil society, youth: envoy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The EU Delegation to Pakistan has launched a call for proposals, amounting to 6 650 000 EUR, for projects by civil society organizations to alleviate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on communities and at the same time increase the voice of youth in society. The COVID-19 pandemic has a major health, social and economic impact on societies around the globe. In Pakistan as much as in Europe, the virus is posing a threat to people's lives, straining communities, overwhelming health systems and endangering livelihoods. In a true spirit of partner-

ship and solidarity, the EU is supporting Pakistan in mitigating the consequences of the crisis in the short and long term. Detailed information, including guidelines for grant applicants, are available directly here and on the website of the European Union Delegation in Pakistan: https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/pakistan_en

All proposed projects will need to be consistent with

the COVID-19 response strategies developed by the federal and provincial authorities.

The deadline for submission of concept notes is 26 May 2020 at 3PM (Islamabad date and time). Androulla Kaminara, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, said: "The Corona pandemic is requiring us all to work together - to slow down the spread of the disease and to address the disastrous consequences that it will have on the economy, our societies and especially the most vulnerable people. Civil Society Organization are playing a crucial part in these efforts. A vibrant range of CSOs makes a society and a nation stronger and more resilient."



China presents distance learning models in wake of COVID-19

BUREAU REPORT

BEIJING: Large-scale, national efforts to boost remote learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic are emerging in Pakistan in education institutions across the country may remain closed till May 31. Distance learning is no novelty to many. As confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Pakistan ticks over 4000, online learning returned to the limelight in the field of education. Providers of online learning products and services offer valuable education resources when schools are closed. Gwadar Pro App, quoting Pakistan's Ministry of Professional and Technical Training (MoFPT), stated on Friday that free educational resources available online now includes Sabaq Foundation, Knowledge Platform, SABAQ,

Taleemabad, Online Campus and International Online Platform. On top of these platforms, the Internet is flooded with educational apps offering learning opportunities for students. Web-based school management softwares such as the Academic Institute Management System (AIMS) have a number of modules to conduct remote learning. As per AIMS's official website, its functionality is fully integrated using a single, powerful and completely secure database on Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model allowing operations where boundaries do not matter as long as there is a cellular coverage in the area. However, some Pakistanis may not have easy access to Internet at any time. Provided that there is not sufficient available bandwidth, education-

al radio and television are feasible options. According to Rapid response reference note: Remote Learning and COVID-19, a brief carried out by the World Bank on March 20, in many developing countries where broadband access to the Internet is not widely available or where online learning is simply not a viable option in the near term, the use of more traditional distance education approaches, such as educational radio and television, is potentially very relevant. It was also mentioned in the report that Pakistan's iron-clad friend China offers many potential models for policymakers to consider and learn from since different approaches to the use of online learning emerges at mass scale during the current COVID-19 outbreak in the country, representing a leading edge laboratory for experi-

mentation and quick implementation that should be of relevant interest for policymakers around the world. "China is in many ways unique in its ability and capacity to transition its schools quickly to online learning, given strong government support for the digitization of learning materials in the past, a comparatively high level of device ownership and broadband connectivity among learners, especially in richer, more urban areas of the countries," said the report, adding experiences almost two decades ago under the SARS epidemic also helped. With schools in China remaining closed due to the pandemic, China has launched a national cloud learning platform and started broadcasting primary school classes on public TV in February, so as to help millions of students who are restricted to homes

"keep learning even with classes suspended", according to China's Ministry of Education and Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. Also, China has launched an online program to help teachers in middle and primary schools and kindergartens improve their online teaching ability in March. In light of nationwide school closure due to COVID-19, Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mehmood Wednesday announced that the education ministry in cooperation with the state-run PTV channel had launched an initiative called 'Teleschool' to disseminate SLO based educational content for Grade 1-12. The channel would begin broadcasting educational programmes next week for students affected by the closure of education institutions amid the COVID-19 outbreak, said Shafqat Mehmood.