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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

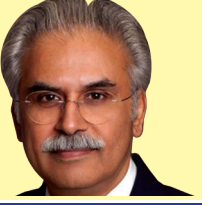
Price Rs. 20

Ramadan is a great mercy of Allah, says Iwan Amri

UAE envoy thankful to Pakistan govt



Protection of lives of doctors priority: Zafar



COVID-19

UAE sends medical, food aid to Pakistan

As part of the bilateral cooperation that has underpinned the brotherly relations between our two countries for decades, the UAE is proud to extend assistance to Pakistan in furtherance of global solidarity in the fight against COVID-19: Ambassador Alzaabi

DNA
 ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates sent an aid plane containing 14 metric tons of medical and food supplies to Pakistan to bolster the country's efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19. The aid will assist approximately 7,000 medical pro-

fessionals as they work to contain the virus. Commenting on the aid delivery, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al Zaabi, UAE Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, said: "As part of the bilateral cooperation that has underpinned the brotherly relations between our two countries for decades, the UAE is proud to extend

assistance to Pakistan in furtherance of global solidarity in the fight against COVID-19." "Through this aid, we honor the frontline healthcare workers in Pakistan and around the world who are working tirelessly to put an end to this crisis," he remarked. The UAE delivered the first batch of critical med-

ical supplies to Pakistan on April 2. On April 5, the second batch of 11 metric tons of medical supplies provided by the UAE arrived in Islamabad. To date, the UAE has provided more than 320 metric tons of aid to over 30 countries, supporting nearly 320,000 medical professionals in the process.



ISLAMABAD: Newly appointed Federal Information Minister Senator Shibli Faraz and SAPM Lt. Gen (R) Asim Saleem Bajwa called on PM Imran Khan. - DNA

Shibli takes oath as Info Minister

DNA
 ISLAMABAD: Senator Syed Shibli Faraz took oath as Minister for Information and Broadcasting on Tuesday. President Dr. Arif Alvi administered the oath at a ceremony at President House in Islamabad. Social distancing was strictly followed by the participants during the ceremony. Syed Shibli Faraz is the son of prominent Urdu poet Ahmad Faraz and nephew of former speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Barrister Masood Kausar. He did Masters in International Relations from the University de Los Andes (Colombia) in 1994. Syed Shibli Faraz is also the current leader of the House in Senate of Pakistan.

Ban on export of edible items

Imran Khan says government has planned to offer government owned land located in major cities to the overseas Pakistanis in order to generate much need financial resources

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has directed to ban export of all edible items which are consumed by common man in the wake of current situation. The direction was made during meeting of the Federal Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad on Tuesday. The decision will be reviewed after two weeks. While approving 75 billion rupees relief package in the first phase for laborers, the Prime Minister directed Special Assistant for Social Welfare and Minister for Industries to devise a comprehensive mechanism for providing relief to the workers. Imran Khan said the government has planned to offer government owned

land located in major cities to the overseas Pakistanis in order to generate much need financial resources. He also directed all ministries to expedite setting up of think-tank comprising of area experts and professionals in the ministries in order to bring about qualitative improvement in the overall performance and output. The Cabinet ratified the recommendations of the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases made in its meeting. The Cabinet approved appointment of Shaista Bano Gillani as Acting Chairperson Competition Commission of Pakistan. The Cabinet approved, in principle, "Netting of Financial Contracts Bill, 2020" to remove any uncertainty in enforcing the netting rights in case of a termination event, bankruptcy, insolvency proceedings, limits the

power of the liquidators to prevent any cherry picking of qualified financial contracts/transactions, which fall under the ambit of netting provisions and allows financial collateral arrangements under such netting rights. The Cabinet accorded approval to a proposal to notify that all companies supplying electricity or gas through distribution or transmission line be members of a Credit Bureau and to furnish information in accordance with the Credit Bureau Act, 2015. The Cabinet while approving allocation for grant-in-aid from the Federal Government for the journalists and journalistic bodies especially press clubs, tasked Minister for Information and SAPM for Information to finalize procedure/SOPs for disbursement of the grant to the deserving journalists and journalistic bodies.

Briefs

PM okays stimulus package

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan says addressing climatic issues and enhancing green cover of the country is among the foremost priorities of the present government. He was speaking after approving "Green Stimulus" package in Islamabad on Tuesday as part of government's efforts to extend green cover in the county and to create job opportunities for the youth, especially in the wake of COVID-19 crisis. The PM said Green Stimulus Package, especially the Green Nigehbaan initiative, will offer employment opportunities to the youth and also 65,000 daily wagers besides helping in promotion of the objectives of Clean and Green Pakistan. The PM directed that all stakeholders including provincial governments and international bodies should be engaged to enhance the scope of the program and create additional jobs.

11,529 Pakistanis brought back: FM told

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Director General Emergency Crises Management Unit of Foreign office Salman Athar Tuesday briefed Foreign Minister Mahmood Shah Mahmood Qureshi that so far 11,529 Pakistanis were brought back to home from abroad, whereas a total of 62, 709 registered Pakistanis were waiting for their return from the foreign countries. The foreign minister visited different sections of the unit and put differ-



ent queries to the officials and employees to ascertain performance of the unit, a press release said. He also reviewed the steps taken for resolving the issues and complaints of expatriate Pakistanis which were received by the unit.

DG Salman Athar gave a detailed briefing to the foreign minister about the Pakistanis waiting to return to their homeland in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. On the occasion, the foreign minister said that they were fully cognizant of the issues and problems faced by expatriates and the government was utilizing all resources for their immediate return through a phased process. He also appreciated the performance of the unit led by director general and congratulated them.

Ambassador Moin meets Pak businessmen in France

MUBASHAR BHATTI

PARIS: The Ambassador of Pakistan to France Moin ul Haque held a virtual meeting with the France based Pakistani businessmen, traders and investors to brief them about government's special economic relief package and social welfare 'Ehsaas' Programme for the underprivileged segments of the society. The Ambassador said that

while Covid 19 crisis has brought many challenges for businesses yet there were also new opportunities especially in the fields of pharmaceutical and health sector, IT and food business which can be exploited by Pakistani businessmen. He assured them of government's full support to resolve issues faced by them due to COVID 19 lockdown. During the meeting, the participants gave useful

suggestions for bringing diversity in our range of products, for promotion of tourism with focus on eco-tourism, and for establishing local supply chains to reduce reliance on imports. The Ambassador also availed the opportunity to urge the participants to contribute generously in the Prime Minister's Fund for COVID 19 to help the Government to provide relief to poor and needy people in Pakistan.

US telling lies: China

BEIJING: Beijing has accused US politicians of "telling barefaced lies" over the coronavirus pandemic that has swept the globe, after President Donald Trump threatened to seek damages from China for the outbreak. "They have only one objective: shirk their responsibility for their own poor epidemic prevention and control measures, and divert public attention," said foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang at a press briefing Tuesday. - APP

Kazakh President thanks Pak govt

DNA

NUR SULTAN: Qasym Jomart Toqayev President of Kazakhstan has congratulated Pakistan government for extending support to Kazakhstan. In his Tweet the Kazakh President further said he sincerely thanked the Government of Pakistan and personally Prime Minister



Imran Khan for sending medical supplies as humanitarian aid to Kazakhstan to treat coronavirus infected patients.

PIA workers treatment in CMH

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar javed Bajwa has announced that employees of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) who are suffering from novel coronavirus will be treated at Combined Military Hospital (CMH). He further said that PIA is operating special flights to repatriate Pakistanis who are stranded abroad and so far more than 24,000 people have reached their homes through PIA.

ADB to provide loan worth \$15m

ISLAMABAD: Asian Development Bank will provide Pakistan a concessional loan worth 15 million dollars for urban development projects in Punjab. A signing ceremony to this effect was held in Islamabad in which Secretary, Economic Affairs Division Dr. Syed Pervez Abbas and Country Director, ADB Ms. Xiaohong Yang inked the document.

Indonesian Embassy hosts Virtual Iftar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In every difficulty we find convenience because every crisis provides an even rather greater opportunity if we innovatively look for the way out and strive to overcome the challenges. These positive ,heart warming and spirit lifting remarks were made by the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia Iwan S. Amri, as the host of an Iftar organized the virtual wayon the first day of Ramadan . In the midst of the corona virus pandemic in Pakistan and social distancing,



was an unparalleled and perhaps once in a lifetime experience. The experience that teaches us that difficulties should encourage us to be more creative and breaking our fast together in virtual way was an example, he said. On the occasion, Director Student Affairs IIUI,

Dr.Ibrar Anver on behalf of the IIUI lauded the initiative of the Indonesian Embassy in Islamabad and admired the creativity of the Indonesian students at their campus. Showing unanimity of views and acknowledging the Ambassador, Dr.Anver said in his remarks that "God will fa-

cilitate one's life as long as he strives for the benefit of humanity." During the program, the students were also provided information about the latest trends in the corona outbreak by Defence Attache of the Embassy, Colonel Kav.DodyTaufik with the view to further enhance self protection and awareness. In the spirit of social solidarity, staff from the Indonesian Embassy in Islamabad also raised funds for the Community Ramadan activities. On the occasion, Firdaus Alfin Hudaya, Chair of the Indonesian Student Association (PPMI) of Pakistan appreciated the

Ambassador and conveyed the feelings of the students by saying that the students long for the fasting arrangement back home, but even in Islamabad they feel like at home because they have parents at the Indonesian Embassy who are caring and attentive to them" As per the arrangement, Indonesian students independently prepare iftar at the campus dormitory kitchen. To have traditional Indonesian Ramadhan atmosphere in their campus, they prepare the typical Indonesian Iftar menu such as rendang, soto Betawi and grilled chicken, and banana compote.

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Briefs

IESCO gives over 7400 new connections

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has given over 7400 new electricity connections of various categories in its all five circles region during March. Sharing the details of the new connections, the IESCO spokesman told that out of total 6608 connections were given to domestic consumers, 751 commercial, 26 industrial, 9 tube wells and other 8 miscellaneous during the said period. He said that these connections were given in five circles including Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Jhelum, Attock and Chakwal. Similarly, he said that the IESCO teams detected 1870 suspected connections of power pilferage in its five circles. Over 1.76 million units were charged to them besides imposing fine of Rs 33.1 million, he added. — APP

Govt asked to break the cement cartel

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the business community and former President ICCI Shahid Rasheed Butt on Tuesday said cement manufacturers have increased prices up to Rs55 per bag that should be noticed by the authorities. The increase in price amid reduced coal price, curtailed interest rates and low demand will hurt the construction package recently announced by the Prime Minister Imran Khan to boost the economic activities, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the move would increase the cost of doing business for the construction sector that can hit projects, jobs and fifty industries linked to this labour-intensive industry.

Footwear exports increase 15.86 %

ISLAMABAD, Apr 28 (APP):The footwear exports witnessed an increase of 15.86 percent during the first three quarters of current financial year (2019-20) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Pakistan exported footwear worth US \$104.351 million during July-March (2019-20) against the exports of \$90.069 million during July-March (2018-19), showing a growth of 15.86 percent, according to the latest data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among the footwear products, the exports of leather footwear increased by 11.29 percent as it surged from \$79.282 million last year to \$88.232 million during the current year. The canvas footwear exports of the country stood at just \$ 0.344 million during the current year against \$ 0.078 million during last year, showing increase of 341.03 percent. — APP



ISLAMABAD: American Center has prepared 3D printed 50 face shields to protect Islamabad's medical workers from coronavirus. — DNA

Protection of lives of health professionals priority: Zafar

On the occasion, Interior Minister, Brig (Retd) Ijaz Ahmed Shah asked the provinces to educate store owners that only those people be allowed in who follow guidelines on surgical masks and social distancing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on National Health Services Dr. Zafar Mirza says protection of lives of health professionals is top priority of the government. He was chairing a meeting to review the implementation of Ramazan guidelines and health situation in coronavirus outbreak.

He said the government has taken several steps to ensure provision of personal protection equipment kits to doctors and health workers besides their training. Dr Zafar Mirza said a comprehensive strategy has been planned for hospitals to provide treatment to corona patients. On the occasion, Interior Minister, Brig (Retd) Ijaz Ahmed Shah asked the provinces to educate store owners that only those



people be allowed in who follow guidelines on surgical masks and social distancing. The meeting was informed that inter-city movement may be curtailed on weekends to avoid crowding for public safety and health. Chief Secretaries, focal persons from all provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Commissioner Islamabad Capital Territory joined the meeting through video link.

AIOU allows assignments' submission till May 13

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has allowed its students of BA/BS/ B.Ed, MA/MSc and other post-graduate programs to submit their academic assignments for autumn 2019 semester, till May 13. Earlier, the last date for the submission of assignments was April 27. The students

were given further time for accomplishing this academic work in view of the current situation of country-wide lock-down in wake of COVID-19. It was notified that all regional heads of the University will be required to ensure collection of completed punched results before May 20, said Director Admissions Mian Muhammad Riaz. It was decided that no

further extension will be considered beyond the stipulated date. The timely submission of the assignments will enable the University to finalize the result of the respective programs according to the annual calendar, approved earlier by the Academic Council, he added. The students have been advised that they must send their assignments to their assigned tutors

by the stipulated date, since this is an essential requirement on their part for qualifying their respective academic program. It was added, that as per the directives of the Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, the University was trying its best to facilitate its around 1.4 million students across the country in their academic pursuits during the lock-down period.

IPPs bankrupting country: FPCCI

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Convener FPCCI Central Standing Committee on Insurance Dr. Murtaza Mughal on Tuesday said private power companies are bankrupting country for profits. He said that the issue of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) merits the whole truth as it's not only the businessmen who are making billions but bureaucracy and politicians are equally responsible for the mess. Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that during 1994 the government decided to ignore state-run powerhouses and started inking deals with the private sector which led to massive losses to the economy. There is not a single notable politician who has not remained part of the government or opposition during the last 25 years.

Shafqat lauds PNCA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education, Professional Training and National Heritage Shafqat Mahmood Tuesday hailed the role of Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) for holding an 'Online short film' competition for home bound people to express their experiences and a handful entertainment opportunity for people staying at home. Online short film competition announced by PNCA is providing people who are restricted to their homes, wholesome entertainment and invigorating content which help provide relief during the period of lock-down," the minister said while talking to PTV. The minister also extended warmest congrat-

ulations to those who won the competition. He said the short films aim to "show the victory of life: that no matter how difficult the situation is, the human mind can still breath freely through this competition". He further urged public that anti-COVID 19 precautionary measures guidelines are crucial to prevent the disease. He asked people to stay safe during this extraordinary period, and take care of one another with showing positive vibes and activities. He explained the Pakistan National Council of Arts had announced an online short film competition on the theme of 'Homebound' showing how is one's experience to be homebound amidst coronavirus pandemic when the entire world is in a lockdown.

'Khajoor' in high demand during holy month of Ramazan

ISLAMABAD: As holy month of fasting has begun, Dates (khajoor) are the top hot selling item as compared to any other fruit where fruit sellers exclusively offer dates on their stalls and carts all around the cities to attract the customers. During the month of Ramazan the demand of dates is exponentially high as people purchase different varieties of dates, which are a sweet treat at Iftar (fast breaking). According to retailers, the consumption of dates is 90 percent more during Ramazan in comparison to the rest of the year

even in Coronavirus lockdown the sale of Dates are much in demand because as Prophet Mohammad to eat dates in the month of Ramazan is considered to be a Sunnah (Prophetic tradition), a report aired by a private news channel said. "I buy dates before Ramazan and gift them to my family members and friends back home," said Usman Ikram a citizen of KP. A shopkeeper said that during Ramadan different varieties of dates are imported from various countries as Muslims like to consume large quantities of the fruit during the holy month. — APP



PTCL Group contributes Rs.100 mln to PM fund

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Being one of the largest telecom group and backbone of connectivity in the country, Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has contributed Rs. 100 Million to the Prime Minister's COVID-19 Pandemic



Relief Fund-2020 to support the government's efforts and serve the nation during these trying times. Rashid Khan, President and CEO, PTCL & Ufone, presented the cheque to Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan. Shoaib Ahmad Siddiqui, Secretary, Ministry of IT & Telecom (MoITT) and Chairman Board of Directors, PTCL, was also present on the occasion. Rashid Khan lauded the efforts of the government to curb the spread of Coronavirus and promised support in future also to all their relief efforts.

Emerging techs can be tool to combat COVID-19

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China-Pakistan Study Center (CPSC), Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with Mishal Pakistan and Wusool hosted a webinar 'Emerging Technologies: Important Tool to Combat COVID-19'. The webinar was attended by senior academics, researcher, media, diplomats and members of the civil society community. Speakers from government, development sector and international institution expressed their views on significance of technology to combat the crisis. Almost 100 participants joined the online session and took part in the discussion. The session was moderated by Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director China Pakistan Study Center, Institute of

Strategic Studies, Islamabad. Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad in his keynote remarks emphasized on the significance of technology to deal with COVID-19 and said that this pandemic has also brought in the consideration, how to use modern technology in a more efficient way to communicate and connect. He further said that although the technology race has already begun, but it is important to ensure its equitable access every segment of society. Moreover, for Indigenization of technology, we need to have more home-grown solutions. Research and Development at home is extremely important to detection, vaccine development, data collection and analysis. In order to deal with current health crisis, it is important to

enhance regional cooperation. Regionalism could become more popular, offering new opportunities. He further said, the responsibility to combat the COVID-19 situation rests with the private sector, civil society, media and other institutions and they should work together to lessen the suffering of the people of Pakistan. Sharing his views, Amir Jahangir, Chief Executive Officer, Mishal Pakistan, said that it is the need of hour to understand and make use of emerging technologies. Government needs to devise a system to use digital technologies for welfare of the people. Also, tax regimes on technologies help fight COVID-19 should be revisited to create more value for the citizens. Addressing the webinar, Mr. Barkan Saeed, founder of Vizteck Solutions stated that China is successfully using

thermal detectors & cameras to detect COVID19 patients. This technological advancement is helping China to combat Corona effectively. Mr. Hassan Syed, founding member BIR Ventures during his remarks opined that to keep everything going in this hard time we need to focus on care and cure. Our top priority should be producing more ventilators, test kits and #telemedicine should be made available for masses. Ms. Aamna Rafiq, Research Associate at ISSI stated that Corona tracking can be improved by data control, air traffic, social distance patterns, medical histories and how government handles epidemiological parameters at local/national levels of AI systems. While sharing his views Dr. Akber Gardezi, said that while the use of technology is very important to deal with this

crisis, however, it is important to note that due to weak access to technology along with poor infrastructure, the marginalized community has become more marginalized. So it is important to create inclusion, such that the wider segment of society is benefited. Dr. Shumail Daud, a healthcare business professional, said that Pakistan and the world needs to invest more in healthcare systems and for this technology and digitization will be the best tool. Based on the world experiences, data scientists should be working with not only the private sector but also with the public sector. The China Pakistan Study Center, ISSI has initiated a series of webinars (Convergences) to bring topics of public policy into debate with the stakeholders to provide input from all quarters on issues impacting the society.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

Voices from the world

IT has been over six weeks now that Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman has been under NAB detention on dubious charges pertaining to a private property deal in Lahore 34 years ago. As the period of remand has been extended again and again, it is drawing condemnation from notable personalities from around the world. These personalities include academia, human-rights activists, journalists, and other prominent figures in various fields.

Academics such as Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, Ayesha Jalal, and Noam Chomsky are not only renowned scholars but also command immense respect for their integrity, intellectual honesty, and their ability to see through the ruses that various governments employ to target free expression. They have called for an immediate release of the editor-in-chief of Geo/ Jang Media Group who is being victimized by NAB for exposing its highhandedness and its mismanagement of cases, most of which have ultimately resulted in the release of many accused persons.

In addition to the above mentioned personalities, there are others such as John Pilger, Rajmohan Gandhi, and Shahla Haeri, who have endorsed a statement for release and fair trial of Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman. The fact that the arrest took place without a free trial or any conviction, and in fact during the investigation stage, has prompted these noted scholars to endorse the statement.

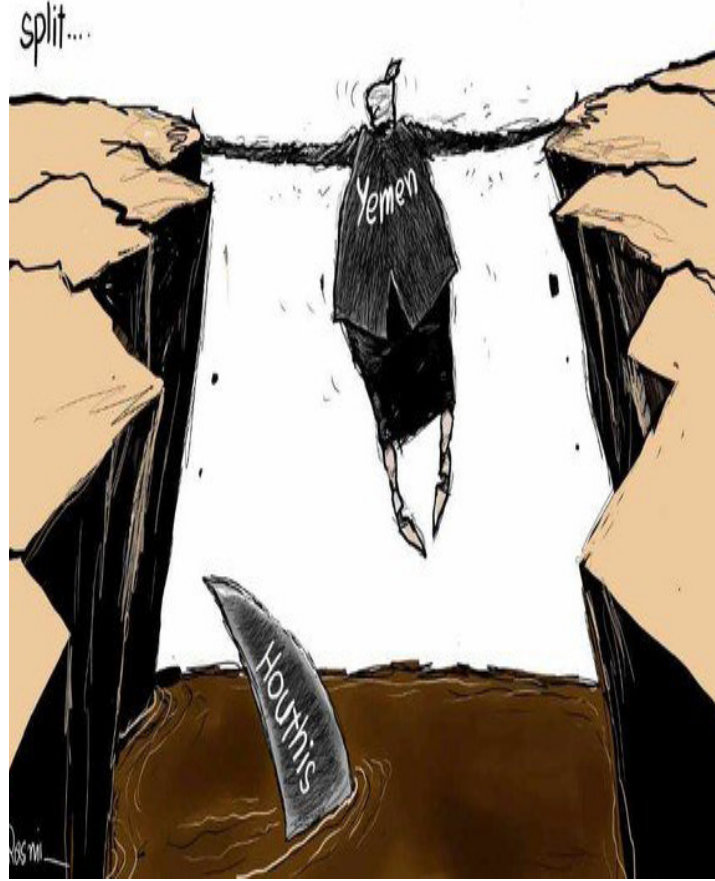
We reiterate that an arrest before trial, and without even charges being framed, violates due process and may result in miscarriage of justice. Moreover, even under international law, if a prisoner spends more than 22 hours alone in prison without meaningful human interaction, it is considered solitary confinement and may result in health complications for the detainee. Within the country too, civil society activists, political leaders and workers and professionals belonging to various walks of life have been raising a voice for the release of Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman.

They have asked the courts to take notice of the illegal arrest and detention. Both internationally and nationally it has been stressed that the rights guaranteed by the constitution of Pakistan must be respected and should not be violated at the whims of NAB.

Multiple resolutions have been adopted by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists and other media workers calling for the protection of the fundamental rights of journalists and media personnel.

These calls – both domestically and at the world level – must not go unheard and a prompt action in this matter is called for.

A fair trial is one of the basic legal requirements that must be fulfilled in all cases, especially when it involves the right to freedom of expression.



Centralising power

THE 18th Amendment passed in 2010 by the PPP government was intended to hand over far greater powers to the provinces, and redistribute subjects on the common list including health, education, local government and other important spheres. We are now hearing reports that the current government may wish to make major changes in both the 18th Amendment and the National Finance Commission Award. The award determines financial distribution between the provinces, and both articles together are key to provincial autonomy. Though in the absence of the required calculus in parliament such discussions regarding changing the amendments or the award peter out soon, these fanciful ideas give the government a chance to divert people's attention from the real issues Pakistan is facing and which the government is either incapable or unwilling to do much about. According to media reports, the federal government has contacted several political parties and a federal minister has even claimed that the government has been able to get some support on a possible amendment in the 18th Amendment. This year Pakistan should be celebrating the 10th anniversary of the passage of the 18th Amendment which inter alia facilitated a democratic consensus on the best NFC Award for the provinces to date. The amendment was a rare demonstration of how the government and the opposition can come together to enact democratic legislation, rather than imposing presidential ordinances without much discussion. The amendment was an attempt to provide the provinces with significant decision-making autonomy. And the NFC Award pertains to a better resource distribution formula among the provinces. These constitutional obligations should not be turned into contentious issues that we can hardly afford in the middle of a pandemic.

This provision is beneficial for both the federation and the provinces and there should be no conspiracies to roll back the 18th Amendment or amend the NFC Award without due process. This will require a new constitutional amendment or review committee comprising members from all major parties which will deliberate on any such alterations. Revoking even a minor clause of the constitution without due process of deliberations is a bad idea, and at this moment the least we need is anything that saps the energy of the governments both at the national and subnational levels. Now, as expected, the opposition leaders will start lashing out at the federal government. In this way the only thing that will have happened is deflection from the accusation of incompetence and mismanagement. The federal government must comprehend that provincial autonomy keeps the federation functioning and well-oiled. This whole issue requires a great deal of wisdom, a great deal of thought and a great deal of discussion in both houses of parliament. There must be no haste, and no creation of angst at this point or a further division between parties.

The effective national response of Uzbekistan against COVID-19

Furqat Sidikov



The Government of Uzbekistan has also initiated comprehensive measures in the field of customs. According to the Presidential Decree, starting from 1 April 2020, customs clearance of imported food products will be carried out in an accelerated mode, including by issuing permits before the arrival of goods on the territory of Uzbekistan

3, about 2,200 violations of the rules were registered, mostly individuals being outside without face masks. Today, more than 100 thousand people are quarantined. At the same time, almost 13 thousand citizens, who were returned to Uzbekistan, were also in quarantine. A special and unique quarantine zone with 10 thousand beds has been created in the Tashkent region. More than 2.2 thousand citizens, who have returned from abroad, have already been placed there and successfully finished their quarantine period.

The Government of Uzbekistan has also initiated comprehensive measures in the field of customs. According to the Presidential Decree, starting from 1 April 2020, customs clearance of imported food products will be carried out in an accelerated mode, including by issuing permits before the arrival of goods on the territory of Uzbekistan. The State Customs Committee and other authorized agencies responsible for permits issuance will implement these measures.

The Ministry of Finance on 6 April 2020 announced certain tax relief measures in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In particular, the tax relief generally is aimed at small and medium size enterprises and individual entrepreneurs, and includes the following:

- funds received by business entities in the form of interest-free financial assistance will not be subject to income tax;
- annual audits of certain taxpayers are postponed;
- there is a moratorium on initiating or declaring bankruptcy by enterprises faced with financial difficulties;
- planned increase in the rates of excise tax on gasoline, diesel fuel, and alcohol and alcohol products is canceled;
- rate of customs duty and excise tax on "primary goods" (generally food products and hygiene products) is assigned zero percent (0%);
- moratorium on tax audits will be effective until 1 January 2021 (tax audits will only be limited to tax audits conducted based on criminal cases and liquidation of legal entities);
- property tax, land tax and water use tax payment deadlines for legal entities can be extended for 6 months by local authorities based on the application of the taxpayer (late payment interest on these taxes is not assessed by the tax authorities until 1 October 2020 in relation to entities experiencing temporary difficulties, and measures on forced tax collection measures shall not be applied);
- water use tax rate for water volumes used for the purposes of agricultural irrigation is reduced by 50% in 2020;
- social tax for individual entrepreneurs is reduced to 50% of the specified base value for the period between 1 April 2020 to 1 October 2020. In kind benefits received by individuals from charity institutions are exempt from individual income tax from 1 April 2020;
- the individual income tax declaration filing deadline is extended from 1 April to 1 August 2020;
- property tax and land tax payment deadlines for individuals are extended from 15 April to 15 October 2020;
- touristic duty is not levied during the period from 1 April to 1 October 2020;
- penalties for having overdue receivables from foreign trade operations are not applied until 1 October 2020;
- export of goods without guaranteed payment is allowed if the overdue receivables do not exceed 10% of the total annual export (previously export of goods without guaranteed payment was allowed only if there were no overdue receivables).

It should be noted that President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is

paying great attention to communication and cooperation with foreign partners, especially with Central Asian countries. For example, Uzbek leader had telephone talks with leaders of Central Asia: President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Turkmen President Gubanguly Berdimuhamedov on March 18 and 27; Kazakh First President Nursultan Nazarbayev on March 20; Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on March 26; Kyrgyz President Sooronbay Jeenbekov on March 27; Russian President Vladimir Putin on March 20; Chinese President Xi Jinping on March 24; and UN Secretary General António Guterres on March 24.

It is very important that, this very difficult time for the world and Uzbek Nation, the President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is paying a great emphasis on providing support to vulnerable segments of the population and ensuring full operation of industrial enterprises, construction area and country's infrastructure.

On 24 April, the next video-conference on the issues of ensuring employment of the population and the resumption of activities of economic sectors was chaired by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The quarantine regime, which has been going on for more than a month, is becoming a test and experience for everyone, especially the heads of government. Video-conference calls are held to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the life of the population, the activities of entrepreneurs and economic sectors, and specific tasks are identified.

At a regular meeting held on 22 April, issues of the stable functioning of economic sectors, employment, social support for needy families were discussed using the example of Samarkand and Namangan regions. At today's meeting, the work carried out in the Ferghana and Kashkadarya regions was reviewed.

As for the epidemiological situation in these regions, in Ferghana region, coronavirus was detected in 120, in Kashkadarya region - in 6 citizens.

During the quarantine period, production fell sharply at 10 thousand enterprises in Ferghana and 11 thousand in Kashkadarya. As a result, the number of unemployed has grown significantly. In addition, 56 thousand live in Ferghana, and 91 thousand families in need in Kashkadarya.

At the meeting, the Ministry of Health and khokims of these areas were instructed to analyze the regions and activities for high, medium and low risk of spread of infection, and taking into account this, make proposals for the phased mitigation of quarantine restrictions for consideration by the Republican Special Commission.

This year, 632 billion soums were allocated for the construction and reconstruction of 130 objects in the Ferghana region, 536 billion soums in 132 objects in Kashkadarya. However, in the first quarter, disbursement of funds and implementation of projects lagged behind the targets.

Given that to ensure employment, permission was given to continue the construction industry, the President noted the need to accelerate work at all facilities in these regions.

Uninterrupted supply of food to the population and maintaining stable prices in the domestic market is the most pressing issue. A large reserve in this regard is the space between the rows of gardens and vineyards.

In Ferghana and Kashkadarya there are orchards and vineyards with an area of 34 thousand hectares and more than 22 thousand hectares, respectively. However, usu-

ally only 20 percent of the row spacing is planted. With this in mind, the regional khokimiyats (provincial administrations) were instructed to organize a complete planting of row-spacing of orchards and vineyards with various crops and thereby ensure employment of the population. The importance of the construction of wells on withdrawn from circulation and rainfed lands, to divide the plots among the population, was emphasized. For these purposes, 15 and 11 billion soums were allocated to Ferghana and Kashkadarya, respectively.

Instructions were given to provide work for low-income families through the distribution of livestock, poultry and bee hives, and to increase the procurement of products. Due to the expected shortage of water this year, difficulties may arise in the irrigation of re-crops in Uzbekistan, Uchkuprik, Yazayvan, Kushtepa, Mirishkarsky, Nishansky, Mubarek and Kasbinsky districts. Therefore, as emphasized at the meeting, it is possible to grow export-oriented legumes less demanding on water.

The feasibility of cultivating 50-60 percent of the land freed from grain by farmers themselves and the distribution of the remainder among the population temporarily left without work and in need of assistance under quarantine is noted. The khokims (governors) of Ferghana and Kashkadarya regions reported on the upcoming work to resume the activities of enterprises in compliance with the rules of quarantine, ensuring employment.

Bearing in mind historic and spiritual values of Uzbek nation, its generosity and care for other people, the President of Uzbekistan suggested establishing "Kindness and Support" nationwide movement.

The initiative aims to further ensure the supply of food and medical facilities to families in need and temporary jobless individuals. Particularly, entrepreneurs are encouraged to take selfless responsibility to support families in their neighborhood. In light of upcoming Ramadan, an act of goodwill is becoming more noble.

President said that the Holy month of Ramadan is approaching, and with this in mind, helping low-income and needy families during this period is a good deed.

Uzbek Leader instructed the Special Republican Commission to gradually ease quarantine restrictions in regions, districts and cities with no cases of coronavirus infection or where the epidemiological situation has improved. Facilities that have restored their activity will have to strictly observe sanitary and hygienic rules.

Moreover, Uzbekistan's President H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev regularly hold a Government meetings and videoconferences with regional administrations on the measures taken in Uzbekistan to combat the coronavirus pandemic. Uzbek Leader noted that the current situation with the rapid spread of coronavirus in many countries of the world proves that we in Uzbekistan introduced quarantine and restrictive measures quite in time.

He is also grateful to our citizens who properly understand and share this view, patiently observe the rules of home self-isolation and lockdown, as well as to doctors who have proved courageous and steadfast in their duty performance. As my President always emphasize, we will use all our strengths and capabilities, whether inside the country or outside its borders, to combat this challenge. Not a single person, not a single family in our country should be left without the attention and care of the state and society.

The writer is Ambassador of Republic of Uzbekistan in Pakistan.

Female leadership and heroism in the face of pandemic

Baria Alamuddin

Women make up about 90 percent of nursing and social care workers. One in three US jobs held by women has been designated as essential (the figure is even higher for non-white women).

Women are found in high numbers in cutting-edge scientific efforts to find a vaccine, while, as morticians

MOST of us have little concept of the devastating impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on the bodies of severely impacted victims. Yet courageous medical staff – often with woefully inadequate protective clothing – are staring death in the face every day.

A lot has been written about how men appear more susceptible to COVID-19 than women. However, one Italian study found higher contagion risks among working-age women; apparently due to their overrepresentation in essential sectors like medicine, social care and education. Some 73 percent of US health care workers infected with coronavirus are women.

Women make up about 90 percent of nursing and social care workers. One in three US jobs held by women has been designated as essential (the figure is even higher for non-white women).

Women are found in high numbers in cutting-edge scientific efforts to find a vaccine, while, as morticians, they are compassionately managing piles of dead bodies in epidemic hotspots.

Even though less than 7 percent of world leaders are women, many of their countries – such as New Zealand, Germany, Taiwan, Finland, Norway, Iceland, and Denmark – are near the top of the global list for rapidly and effectively combating the epidemic. These states are today best positioned to cautiously relax emergency measures.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern won plaudits for the swift decisions to close borders and enforce a lockdown (after only six cases) and her effective messaging; stopping the disease in its tracks.

Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg also implemented an early lockdown, allowing scientists to take the lead. Iceland's Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir offered free tests to all citizens.

The only Nordic state with a male leader – Sweden – gained notoriety for refusing to close schools and businesses, and it has since notched up one of Europe's highest death rates.

Chancellor Angela Merkel (a scientist by training) bluntly but calmly addressed her nation at an early stage, with

Germany's world-class health system maintaining a mortality rate far below those of its near neighbors.

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen's rapid initiatives (such as inspections of planes from Wuhan as early as December and mandatory health checks) have meant Taiwan has only suffered six deaths so far, despite its proximity to China. Prime Minister Silveria Jacobs, from the Caribbean island of Sint Maarten, became an internet sensation for her no-nonsense public messaging, saying: "Simply. Stop. Moving. If you do not have the type of bread you like in your house, eat crackers."

While it would be facile to claim that these leaders performed exceptionally well just because they are women, commentators have noted that, due to the extreme difficulties women face in reaching the top, they must be truly exceptional individuals (while figures like Donald Trump and Boris Johnson were born into privilege). All these leaders are exceptional communicators. Merkel is affectionately referred to as "Mutti" (mummy), and is respected for steadily steering Germany through successive crises.

Briefs

US oil sinks towards US \$ 10

LONDON: US oil nose-dived towards US \$ 10 a barrel Tuesday after a major exchange-traded fund started selling its short-term contracts of the commodity, and storage concerns mounted as the coronavirus strangled demand. In morning London deals, West Texas Intermediate crude for June delivery tumbled more than 21 percent to \$10.07 - having plunged 25 percent a day earlier. International benchmark Brent crude slid 4.9 percent to trade at \$19.01 a barrel. The latest market drop was driven by the United States Oil Fund - a massive, oil-backed exchange-traded fund (ETF) - saying it would sell all its holdings in the contract for June delivery. By investing in longer-dated contracts, the fund's move put pressure on the June contract, analysts said. - APP

Libya govt accuses Haftar of coup

TRIPOLI: Libya's UN-recognised government Tuesday accused rival military strongman Khalifa Haftar of seeking to stage a new coup after he claimed to have a "mandate" from the people to govern the country. "It's a farce and the latest in a long series of coups d'etat," the Government of National Accord (GNA), which is based in the capital Tripoli, said in a pre-dawn statement. The oil-rich North African nation has been gripped by chaos since the ouster and killing of longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011, with rival administrations in the east and west vying for power. Haftar, who controls swathes of eastern Libya and in April last year launched an offensive to seize Tripoli, on Monday said his self-styled "army" had "accepted the will of the people and its mandate". The military commander did not make clear however if a parliament elected in 2014 and also based in the east of the country backed his move. - APP

India's virus death toll rises to 934

NEW DELHI: India's federal health ministry Tuesday morning said 48 new deaths due to COVID-19, besides fresh 1,055 positive cases were reported since Monday evening across the country, taking the number of deaths to 934 and total cases to 29,435. "As on 8:00 a.m. (local time), today 934 deaths related to novel coronavirus have been recorded in the country," according to the information released by the ministry. On Monday evening, the number of COVID-19 cases in the country was 28,380 and the death toll was 886. According to ministry officials, so far 6,869 people have been discharged from hospitals after showing improvement. - APP

Makkah Grand Mosque imam joins workers cleaning the Kaa'ba

DNA

MAKKAH: Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, the president of the General Presidency of the Two Holy Mosques, on Monday joined workers at the Grand Mosque in Makkah as they washed and sterilized the Kaaba and Maqam Ibrahim before the call to night prayer. In line with recommendations and instructions from the health authorities, a range of precautionary measures are in place at the mosque to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including maintaining a safe distance between worshippers. The cleaning is one of a number of operations organized by the General Presidency, which also include the preservation of the black stone and the Kiswa cloth.



MAKKAH: Imam e Kaaba, Sheikh Sudais putting traditional perfume on Hajr-e-Aswad. - DNA

Remittances expected to touch \$21 bln

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The remittances from overseas Pakistanis are expected to reach to US \$ 20-US \$ 21 billion during the current fiscal year (2019-20), the Finance Ministry said on Tuesday. According to statement issued here Tuesday, the measures, announced by the government recently to boost remittances, paid off as the money remitted by overseas Pakistanis touched US \$ 17 billion figure during the

first nine months of the current fiscal year (Jul-Mar, FY2020) against US \$ 16 billion last year, registering a growth of 6.2 per cent. "This trend shows that apprehensions and estimates as reported recently in the media with regard to estimates of the World Bank that there would be no inflows of remittances from March onwards, are highly unrealistic and on the basis of current trend in remittances and estimated COVID-19 impact. The figure of remittanc-

es inflows is expected to reach US \$ 20- US \$ 21 billion during the current fiscal year," the statement added. The Finance Division noted that in order to encourage and facilitate the overseas Pakistanis to send their remittances through official banking channels, various initiatives had already been taken by the government. According to the statement under these initiatives, the prevailing rate of TT (Telegraphic Transfer) charges had been enhanced from SAR 10 to

SAR 20 for transactions between USD 100-200. It would cost an additional amount of Rs. three billion to the government. The existing incentive scheme for the marketing of home remittances i.e. PKR 01 against USD 01 of remittance amount beyond 15 per cent growth over last year may now be based on tiered growth i.e. Rs.0.50 on 5 per cent growth, Rs.0.75 on 10 per cent growth and Rs.01 on 15 per cent growth. It would cost an additional Rs.600 million to the government.

PM prays for Sindh Governor

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Tuesday prayed for the speedy recovery of Sindh Governor Imran Ismail, who was diagnosed with COVID-19 infection. On his Twitter account, the prime minister posted, "Praying for Governor Imran Ismail's speedy recovery from COVID-19. May Allah grant him the strength to fight this." "I have just been tested COVID-19 positive," the Governor had announced his illness on his Twitter account yesterday. "Imran Khan thought us to fight out the most difficult in life and I believe this is nothing against what we are prepared for. May Allah give strength to fight this pandemic insha Allah," he further posted. - APP

Bank Alfalah porfit Rs. 2.821 bln

DNA

KARACHI: The Board of Directors of Bank Alfalah Limited in its meeting held on April 26, 2020, approved the Bank's unaudited condensed interim financial statements for the quarter ended Mar 31, 2020. The Bank's pre-tax profit and post-tax profit stood at Rs. 4.757 billion and Rs. 2.821 billion respectively, translating into an EPS of Rs. 1.59 per share (Mar 2019: Rs. 1.76). The profit for the first quarter of 2020 depicted a decline of 9.6% versus the same period last year. This is mainly due to prudent approach adopted towards provisioning

against both the credit portfolio and investment impairment. On credit front, certain loans have been subjectively downgraded, while full impairment charge has been taken on equity book instead of availing the relaxation allowed by SBP of deferring charge over the year. On the revenue front, net markup income and non-markup income showed combined growth of 7.7% with strong contribution from FX income of Rs. 1.056 billion. Last year net Markup income included recovery of suspended markup on a non-performing loan. Non Markup income was impacted by bearish stock market sentiments amid corona virus fear.

China has 850 mln online video users

BEIJING: As of March, the number of online video users in China had hit 850 million, up by 126 million from the end of 2018, according to a report on China's internet development released Tuesday. The online video users accounted for 94.1 percent of the country's netizen population. The number of short video users reached 773 million, or 85.6 percent of all internet users, representing an increase of 125 mil-

lion from the end of 2018, said the report issued by the China Internet Network Information Center. Both the user number and usage time of online video have seen a significant rise early this year due to the novel coronavirus epidemic, said the report, noting that online videos had become the second most used internet application next to instant messaging. Short video platforms are increasing-

ly integrated with other industries, in particular playing an important role in driving economic development in impoverished regions, it said. Users of online entertainment applications have grown in number during the epidemic, with online music users reaching 635 million and online game users 532 million, accounting for 70.3 percent and 58.9 percent of the total netizen population respectively, according to the report.

S. Korea reports 14 more cases

SEOUL: South Korea reported 14 more cases of the COVID-19 compared to 24 hours ago as of 0:00 a.m. Tuesday local time, raising the total number of infections to 10,752. The daily caseload hovered around 10 for the 10th straight day. Of the new cases, 12 were imported from overseas, lifting the combined number to 1,056. - APP

Turkey delivers medical aid to US

ANKARA: A Turkish military cargo plane carrying medical supplies for use against the coronavirus pandemic departed on Tuesday for the US. "The loading process of the medical aid supplies to be delivered to the US by Turkish Armed Forces aircraft has been completed. Our aircraft carrying the medical aid supplies to be used in combating COVID-19 has departed from Etimesgut Airfield/Ankara," the Turkish Defense Ministry said on Twitter. The medical aid supplies also carried on a message for the people of the US, saying: "After hopelessness, there is so much hope and after darkness, there is the much brighter sun. Rumi." The ministry also released a statement saying that the medical aid supplies leaving for Washington were prepared under the instructions of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. - APP

Special measures needed to fight vrius

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A special video link session Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on budget proposals for the year 2020-2021 was held at Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). Speaking via video link, Chamber President Saboor Malik suggested that urgent and special measures are required due to the Corona epidemic and lockdown. The chamber had earlier proposed that the sales tax rate be dropped to five per cent with immediate effect. All kinds of tax audits, recoveries and collections should be deferred and harassment should not be taken place on the account of tax collection and recoveries. The FBR should put efforts and their focus must be on the tax structure. Maximum benefits should



be given to tax payers. Revenue targets should be set at a minimum level in the budget. The filers should be given credit on their income on the basis of average tax being paid on a monthly basis. Incentive and relief packages should be given to all sectors. No source of income should be sought for investment in any sector. Better negotiations should be made with the IMF and other financial institutions and relief should be sought, foreign loans taken from the World Bank and friendly countries should be right off, he suggested.

Chinese Co. to set up industrial unit in Pakistan

Qingdao Hongzhu specializes in the production of potato machinery, and its products are exported to Russia, the United States, Canada, South Asia, Southeast Asia and other countries and regions

DNA

BEIJING: A leading Chinese company, currently exporting agriculture machinery to Pakistan, has a plan to build a factory to manufacture machines and equipment to meet the growing demand of the local agriculture sector. "At present, the company is exporting agricultural machinery to Pakistan, and there is also an intention to build a factory in

Pakistan. We have plans in this regard to build a factory, but we still need a comprehensive understanding of the market there," General Manager of Qingdao Hongzhu Agriculture Machinery Co. Ltd, Wu Hongzhu told Economic Daily-China Economic Net in interview on Tuesday. Qingdao Hongzhu specializes in the production of potato machinery, and its products are exported to Russia, the United States, Canada, South Asia,

Southeast Asia and other countries and regions. He said the novel coronavirus epidemic had little effect on the company's international orders, adding, the orders from Pakistan, Japan and Syria were almost the same as last year, and there were no problems in logistics. "We sold more than 200 agricultural machines in Pakistan last year, and we plan to double this year," he added. Wu Hongzhu believed that the company's products were get-

ting better and better in Pakistan. One of the reasons was that their products had been modified according to Pakistan's local cultivation model. "Pakistani potatoes have a different cultivation pattern than our country's potatoes, which is similar to ours 20 years ago. For example, irrigation methods, Pakistan is generally not covered with plastic film, often flooded with water, and the size of potato ridges is different from China. "In order to understand the lo-

cal planting model, we will send technicians for improvement in the equipment," he added. He informed that the company would also invite people from Pakistan to visit the planting model here and teach them advanced techniques that can increase production. With our soil-cultivator and planter, their potato output has increased to nearly double," he added. Wu Hongzhu said his company also had plans for the next step, starting before they plant (to

guide), to help in a series of aspects such as seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, etc. "Last year our company's overall sales were about 200 million yuan, and this year's growth of 30% is no problem." When talking about the company's sales target this year, Wu Hongzhu is very optimistic. "This year we plan to start with product development and launch an intelligent large-scale joint harvesting machine reduces costs.