



# Islamabad POST

Wednesday, May 06, 2020

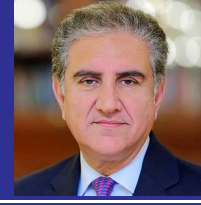
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**Ambassador Stefano NATO's new senior rep in Afghanistan**

**FM Qureshi thanks Bahrain colleague**

**Sania lauds NADRA plans for needy people**



## Stefano NATO's new senior rep in Afghanistan

Ambassador Pontecorvo will take up his new position from June 1, 2020. He brings with him a long standing experience in the field of diplomacy including on Afghanistan and the broad regional context

ANSAR M BHATTI

BRUSSELS / ISLAMABAD: The Secretary General of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Jens Stoltenberg has appointed senior diplomat and former Italian ambassador to Pakistan Stefano Pontecorvo as Senior Civilian Representative of NATO in Afghanistan. In a communication addressed to Ambassador Stefano the NATO Secretary General said that he was glad to appoint you as the senior civilian representative of the Organisation in Afghanistan.

Ambassador Pontecorvo will take up his new position from June 1, 2020. He brings with him a long standing experience in the field of diplomacy including on Afghanistan and the broad regional context. 'I look forward to working closely with him at this critical juncture for Afghanistan's future where all actors need to come together in the interest of peace and to fight the COVID 19 pandemic. The Secretary General also thanked the Italian government for strengthening the peace and security measures in Afghanistan so

that they can achieve sustainable peace in Afghanistan. He said Italy was a framework nation in their resolute support mission contributing brace and highly skilled forces and country's economic development. NATO allies and partners remain committed to Afghanistan's long term security which is important for own security, he added. The Secretary General also thanked the services of the outgoing senior representative Sir Kay for his outstanding services to the cause of peace and security in Afghanistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs meeting of the Federal Cabinet in Islamabad. - DNA

## Sino-Pak military-to-military ties strong

DNA

BEIJING: China firmly believes that its bilateral and military to military relations with Pakistan will embrace new and greater development through joint battle against COVID-19, a spokesperson of China Ministry of National Defense said. "China and Pakistan are good friends, neighbors, partners, and brothers. Mutual help is a tradition between the two countries and the two militaries. As "iron brothers", we can achieve great things with the same mind," Senior Colonel Wu Qian said while commenting frequent interactions between the two countries and militaries since the COVID-19 outbreak to give each other support.

## No proof from US about Wuhan lab claims: WHO

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said Monday that Washington had provided no evidence to support "speculative" claims by the US president that the new coronavirus originated in a Chinese lab. "We have not received any data or specific evidence from the United States government relating to the purported origin of the virus - so from our perspective, this remains speculative," WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan told a virtual briefing. Scientists believe the killer virus jumped from animals to humans, emerging in China late last year, possibly from a market in Wuhan selling exotic animals

for meat. Top US epidemiologist Anthony Fauci echoed the WHO's statement in an interview published Monday evening by National Geographic. "If you look at the evolution of the virus in bats and what's out there now, (the scientific evidence) is very, very strongly leaning toward this could not have been artificially or deliberately manipulated," Fauci told the magazine. "Everything about the stepwise evolution over time strongly indicates that (this virus) evolved in nature and then jumped species," he said. US President Donald Trump, increasingly critical of China's management of the outbreak, claims to have

proof it started in a Wuhan laboratory. And US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday said "enormous evidence" backed up that claim, although the US intelligence community last week said it would continue to study whether the outbreak stemmed from infected animal contact, or a lab accident. China has vehemently denied suggestions the lab was the source. "Like any evidence-based organisation, we would be very willing to receive any information that purports to the origin of the virus," Ryan said, stressing that this was "a very important piece of public health information for future control. - APP

### Briefs

#### ISPR warns India

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Director General ISPR Major General Babar Iftikhar has warned that India's unchecked violations on the Line of Control are worsening the situation in region. In an interview with a private news channel, he said India through this posture is trying to externalize its internal situation through media rhetoric. He said situation has become very serious in view of the Indian Army's behavior and statements of Indian leadership DG ISPR termed the Indian allegations of infiltration as well as transporting COVID-19 into India as ridiculous. He said the uprising in occupied Kashmir is indigenous and there is no reason of any kind of infiltration. He said international community has appreciated Pakistan's measures towards minorities' rights and the iconic steps like opening up the Kartarpur border.

### NAM SUMMIT

## Cuban president lauds Azerbaijan

DNA

HAVANA: The President of Cuba Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, president of the Republic of Cuba has lauded Azerbaijan, the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, for calling to this meeting to exchange on the urgent and needed efforts which allow us to face COVID-19. In his message on the occasion he said, I avail myself of this occasion to congratulate Uganda, which shall as-

sume the NAM Chairmanship in the year of 2022. Due to its seriousness, I must denounce the terrorist attack with an assault rifle and over 30 rounds that hit our embassy in Washington on April 30 last and demand from the United States government a thorough and swift investigation, harsh sanctions and security measures and guarantees for our diplomatic missions in its territory, as it must do under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

That is attested by the Communiqués that have been adopted in support of the World Health Organization and concerning COVID-19 and which call for global unity and international solidarity and cooperation and also for putting aside political differences and eliminating unilateral coercive measures which violate International Law and the United Nations Charter and limit the capacity of States to deal with the pandemic efficiently.

## China to launch new rocket

BEIJING: China said Tuesday it will launch a new rocket at 6pm (1000 GMT), in a test of its ambitions to operate a permanent space station and send astronauts to the Moon. A new large carrier rocket - Long March 5B - is expected to lift off from

the Wenchang launch site in the southern island of Hainan, the China Manned Space Agency said in a statement. The rocket is expected to carry a next-generation spacecraft that is supposed to one day transport astronauts to a space station that China plans to complete by 2022 - and eventually to the Moon. The prototype vessel - designed for low-Earth orbit and deep space exploration - has enough room for six astronauts, compared to three seats in the previous model.

## Kaghan road for traffic opened

DNA

KAGHAN: After seven months the National Highways Authority (NHA) restored Kaghan road for all sorts of traffic by cutting the glacier. According to the details, this year Mansehra Naran Jalkhad road remained blocked for seven months and NHA had opened it till Naran by cutting a huge glacier.

## Cabinet agrees to further ease lockdown

Pakistan has reported 24 more fatalities from novel coronavirus

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal cabinet on Tuesday agreed to further ease lockdown restrictions. The decision was made during a meeting of the cabinet presided over by Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad. It was also decided that

the prime minister and his cabinet members, including all federal ministers, the premier's advisers and special assistants will donate their one month's salary to the PM's Corona Relief Fund. Pakistan has reported 24 more fatalities from novel coronavirus as the death toll in the country has reached 486.

The nationwide tally of COVID-19 patients jumped to 21,501 while 1,315 cases were reported in 24 hours. According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center, Punjab remains the worst-hit province by the pandemic followed by Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

# COVID 19: Pakistan President lauds NAM role

Dr. Arif Alvi, represented Pakistan at the Special Online Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement convened by the Chair, Azerbaijan. Pakistan will remain engaged with NAM initiative of strengthening international response to COVID-19 pandemic

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi, represented Pakistan at the Special Online Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement convened by the Chair, Azerbaijan on the theme of "United against COVID-19". Addressing the Summit, President gave Pakistan's perspective on measures taken at national level to mitigate and respond to COVID-19 and socio-economic challenges arising from the pandemic. He said as an active member of the Movement, Pakistan will remain engaged with NAM initiative of strengthening international response to COVID-19 pandemic. Pakistan's national response includes targeted approach of containment, strengthening health system and fi-

ancial support to the vulnerable individuals and small businesses. Stressing that the crisis should be converted into opportunity, the President underscored the importance of a holistic response to COVID-19 with broader development dimensions taken along with addressing the health system challenges. The President stated "the crisis triggered by the pandemic is also a stark reminder that no country can overcome such threats alone". A global challenge requires a global response, he added. The President also highlighted Pakistan's generosity in providing health access to Afghans refugees, despite immense pressure on Pakistan's health infrastructure. He called upon the UN, UNHCR and IOM to come forward in helping and assisting both the documented and undocumented Afghan Refugees.



Highlighting unprecedented challenge to developing countries' economies, the President reiterated the Prime Minister Imran Khan's call to the in-

ternational community for a "Global Initiative on Debt Relief". The President underscored that the efforts must be focused toward the

most vulnerable countries in the world for relief and revival of economies and livelihoods. The President underlined the importance of fighting COVID-19 pandemic without politicization and pursuit of narrow agendas. The President also rejected deplorable attempts to discriminate against and demonize Muslims in the context of COVID-19. The President highlighted the plight of the Kashmiri people who continue to suffer under Indian occupation against all norms of international law and the UN Security Council resolutions. Noting that the sufferings of the Kashmiris were further compounded due to communication restrictions and lack of unfettered access to medical and other essential supplies, the President underscored that incarceration of Kashmiri leaders and youth also made them vulnerable to the pandemic.

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## Briefs

### Park Enclave facilities improved

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority is adding into civic amenities at Park Enclave with every passing day. In a latest development, Capital Development Authority has installed state of the art security system at main entry gate of Park Enclave I. The security system includes digital security cameras, security barriers and monitoring system. The newly installed security system will maintain complete record of entry and exit at Park Enclave-I. Chairman Capital Development Authority has directed concerned officials to arrange deployment of security guards also at the earliest. Alongwith installation of security system, sanitation and horticulture related development activities are also in full swing at Park enclave I. In this regard garbage trolleys have also reached Park Enclave I for further installation at various locations. Consistent addition in civic amenities at Park Enclave I reflect high priority CDA administration gives to development works at Park Enclave-I.

### PTCL officials distribute ration

KOHAT: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTCL) on Tuesday distributed food packages among deserving people affected by lockdown at a ceremony held at Deputy Commissioner Office Kohat. Adviser to Chief Minister on Science and Information Technology, Ziaullah Bangash was present on this occasion and acknowledged the efforts of PTCL for helping and distributing ration among deserving families and daily wagers due to lockdown after coronavirus outbreak. Speaking on the occasion, he said that Emergency Response Unit has distributed ration among 2500 needy families effected by lockdown due to coronavirus. He said the emergency unit would provide ration to daily wagers and poor people in current situation after coronavirus outbreak. The emergency supply unit comprised NGO workers, social activists, political parties representatives and other local elders. — APP

### Woman dies in road accident

ISLAMABAD: An aged woman died on the spot after being hit by a car near Koral bus stop at Islamabad Expressway on Tuesday. The ill-fated incident took place when the victim, identified as Zubaida Mustafa (65) wife of Ghulam Mustafa, attempted to cross the expressway and became target of a speeding car — Suzuki Mehran, a police spokesman told APP. He said the woman died on the spot while her seven-year grand daughter received injuries. The police injured the dead body and injured to the hospital, while heirs of the dead refused to initiate any legal proceeding against the vehicle owner. — APP

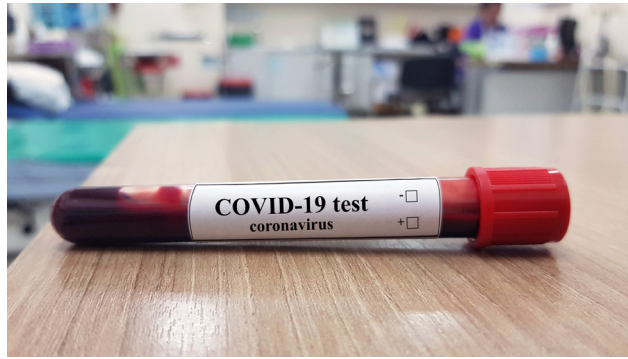
# Karandaaz provides financing for COVID-19 Testing

FIAZ CHAUDRHY

ISLAMABAD: Tuesday, 05 May 2020: Karandaaz Pakistan is providing financing to Excel Labs to initiate COVID-19 testing. With this funding, Excel Labs is building its capacity to carry out an estimated 500 tests daily and more than 10,000 tests a month. This emergency response will help the country build critical testing capacity to test, track and control the spread of COVID-19. At present, Pakistan is administering less than 1,000 tests per one million citizens, compared to more than 18,000 in the US, 12,000 in the UK, 113,000 in the UAE, 30,000 in Germany, and 5,000 tests per one million people in Iran. In addition to the financ-

ing at zero percent mark-up, a grant by Karandaaz will also be provided to Excel Labs for subsidising around 4,000 tests. Subsidized tests will be available to vulnerable categories, including those above 65 years of age, doctors and nurses exposed to the Corona virus, and poor individuals who cannot afford the test. Karandaaz's existing investment in Excel Labs, a laboratory and diagnostic service provider in Pakistan, has already enabled it to expand its service by three times, and created 735 new jobs including almost 700 for women and youth.

Excel Labs has a presence at more than 104 locations across Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The Lab currently offer a total



of 727 types of tests; with this concessional financing from Karandaaz, Excel Labs will be able to expand its diagnostic tests portfolio to identify carriers and patients of the corona virus. The samples collected by Excel Labs will be tested in a WHO standard Lab. Speaking about the significance of this investment, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Chairperson

Karandaaz said, "The novel coronavirus has thrown up unprecedented challenges for every country. In this global fight against the pandemic, it is imperative for each and every country to substantially build its testing capacity to mitigate the spread of this disease through test, trace & quarantine strategy. I am pleased that Karandaaz has been able to

mobilize capital to enable Excel Labs to initiate COVID-19 testing as per WHO standards. Initiatives like these, coupled with the support provided by the Government of Pakistan and the private sector is what will enable Pakistan to contain and overcome this crisis." Mr. Ali Sarfraz, CEO Karandaaz said "The investment in Excel Labs network will enable it to quickly increase its capacity to perform COVID-19 diagnostic tests. We are happy to extend this additional financing to our investee as it will help the country's capacity to undertake many more diagnostic tests to curb the COVID-19 epidemic. In line with the WHO's recommendation to test, test and test, the investment in Excel Labs through Karandaaz will help Pakistan enhance its ca-

capacity to conduct more tests, currently estimated at less than 1,000 tests per million to identify patients and carriers of the COVID-19 virus." Speaking about the investment, CEO Excel Labs, Dr Naseer Ahmad said, "Our partnership with Karandaaz has been really fruitful as it enabled us to have access to growth capital and expand our operations, creating more jobs and offering a wider range of diagnostic services in Pakistan. This new commitment from Karandaaz will help us gear up to deal with this novel virus and offer the much-needed tests to thousands across the country at a concessional rate. We hope that with this test, Excel Labs can play a role in significantly boost the country's overall response to the pandemic."



ISLAMABAD: Yao Jing, Ambassador, Embassy of China in Islamabad called on Mr. Atif R. Bokhari, MOS / Chairman, Board of Investment at BOI Islamabad. — DNA

## Govt releases Rs 7.5 bln

ISLAMABAD: The Federal government has so far authorized to release Rs 7595.950 million for various ongoing and new projects of Finance Division under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2019-20, as against its total allocation of Rs 9930.749 million. Out of the total, all allocated amount of Rs 1000 million have been authorized to be released for Construction of Sibbi Rakhni Road, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives. Likewise, all the budgeted amount of Rs 1000 million have been authorized for release to carry out work on Gwadar Development Authority for which Rs1000 where as an amount of Rs 800 have been authorized for release for necessary facilities of fresh water treatment, water supply and distribution Gwadar,

for which Rs1000 million were earmarked. The ministry also provided authorization for release of Rs 640 to complete the dualization of road from GT Road (Samma) to Gujrat whereas Rs 408.199 million were released for Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Mother and Child Health Care Centre, Nawabshah City. The government also released Rs 400 million for Sea Water Desalination Plant at Gwadar (CPEC), Rs 400 for Construction/Upgradation of Dirgi Shabozai Road, Balochistan (Federal Share 60%) and Rs 240 million for Expo Center Peshawar. It is pertinent to mention here that the federal government has so far authorized release of Rs 533.33 billion for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2019-20, as against the total allocation of Rs 701 billion. — APP

## Matching price of petrol, gas damaging CNG sector

SHAHEEN QURESHI

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan CNG Association (APCNGA) on Tuesday said the compressed natural gas sector is at the verge of destruction due to parity between the price of petrol and local gas. The price of gas should have been reduced after decreasing the price of

petrol to keep the troubled business of CNG viable, said Ghyias Abdullah Paracha, Central Chairman APCNGA. He said that CNG sector is crumbling due to costly natural gas, unbearable burden of taxes, and indifference of the government which will leave thousands of dealers bankrupt, around four hundred thousand people unemployed while wasting an invest-

ment of Rs400 billion. Ghyias Paracha said that there are some five hundred thousand vehicles in the country which cannot be run on the petrol which will be halted resulting in a nightmare for many. He said that some favourite sectors are addicted to subsidies since long while the burden of their gas subsidies is shifted to the CNG sector which makes the fuel costly.

Now the CNG sector is unable to bear the burden of blue-eyed sectors, therefore the government should reduce subsidies to make natural gas economical for the CNG sector, he demanded. He said that gas tariff should be reduced, taxation should be relaxed and GIDC should be abolished to keep CNG stations in Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan viable.

## Cycling race cancelled

ISLAMABAD: The third edition of International Tour de Khanjerab cycle race has been cancelled due to the global coronavirus, Pakistan Cycling Federation (PCF) said on Tuesday. "The event was scheduled to be held from June 18 to 21 in collaboration with the government of Gilgit-Baltistan," Syed Azhar Ali Shah the President of PCF told APP. According to Shah several foreign teams as well as top national athletes were set to participate in the race. "Next year's Tour de Khanjerab will only be held if the conditions improve," he said. He said that as the International Cycling Union (UCI) had cancelled all its events due to the prevailing situation, triggered by coronavirus, the involvement of international teams had become doubtful in Tour de Khanjerab.

## "Online Women Shopping" exhibition from 9th

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Connected Women Pakistan has arranged a week long live online exhibition to support women owned small businesses. The exhibition titled "Virtual Women Shopping Spree" where every woman can buy anything from the comfort of their own homes. The lockdown has undoubtedly affected everyone economically. He said that crisis either breaks something down or creates unity so in challenging time we can sup-

port our small businesses by buying from them. He said that small businesses are important to the economic and social fabric of our society, and we all can play a part in their survival so book stall now by filling this form: <https://forms.gle/ZjiTrUzhonbxj6n29>

port our small businesses by buying from them. He said that small businesses are important to the economic and social fabric of our society, and we all can play a part in their survival so book stall now by filling this form: <https://forms.gle/ZjiTrUzhonbxj6n29>

# PM's idea of easing lockdown supported

Dr Choudry mentioned that Pakistan needs to analyze the Swedish model as they never lockdown the whole country but educated the masses how to protect themselves from the dangerous virus. "They are doing well as compare to many other countries, restaurants always remained open to public, while schools never closed"

DNA

ISLAMABAD / WASHINGTON: Renowned cardiologist in Washington D.C Dr Mubashar Choudry has supported the idea of Prime Minister Imran Khan to gradually ease lockdown to save economy. Prime Minister Imran Khan has announced relaxation in lockdown due to economic situation of the country and problems being faced by common people. Prime Minister also said that "Tiger Force" will help district administrations in providing relief to the people, implementing SOPs and monitoring food stock.

Dr Mubashar Choudry in an exclusive talk said "The corona family of viruses travels through South Asia many times in a year and most probably people in Pakistan have developed immunity "herd" in large scale that is why our infection and death rate is very low" as compare to the Europe and North America. "Prevalence of coronavirus infection is exceptionally low in Pakistan, he added. Dr Mubashar Choudry said relaxation in lockdown is a must due to economic situation of Pakistan. Dr Choudry mentioned that Pakistan needs to analyze the Swedish model as they never

lockdown the whole country but educated the masses how to protect themselves from the dangerous virus. "They are doing well as compare to many other countries, restaurants always remained open to public, while schools never closed". "Sweden took a very practical approach towards social distancing", Dr Choudry remarked. To a question the renowned cardiologist urged to raise public awareness in Pakistan through print, electronic and social media. "The Government needs to educate the people about this virus, make them responsible for taking precautions". "Economy

of Pakistan cannot survive in a such lockdowns when millions of people are already living below the poverty line", he noted. "I must say there is a need of implementing the guidelines like social distancing, using masks, gloves and free testing in the government hospitals but at the same time keep educating the nation instead of forcing the lockdown. Dr Mubashar said that there were number of complaints against private hospitals in Pakistan, refusing patients for treatments without having Corona tests. "Private hospitals should be mandated to admit any patient coming to their

door with the symptoms of shortness of breath". To a question about the approval of the use of experimental drug remdesivir to treat COVID\_19 patients in United States, Dr Choudry was of the view that members of White House Corona Task Force Dr Deborah Birex and Dr Anthony Fauci have spoken publicly about the potential of remdesivir helping treat people sickened with COVID\_19. "United States is willing to provide this drug to other countries too so I think Pakistani Government should make efforts to get remdesivir to treat Coronavirus patients."

## Virus cases soar to 21,501

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Twenty four deaths caused by Coronavirus and 1,315 new infections have been reported in country during the past 24 hours. The total confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country have soared to 21,501. Of these, 7,882 were reported in Sindh, 8,103 in Punjab, 3,288 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 1,321 in Balochistan, 464 in Islamabad Capital Territory, 372 in Gilgit-Baltistan, and 71 in Azad Kashmir. Over five thousand seven hundred patients have recovered in the country.



**Briefs**

**Financing plan by ADB reviewed**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Concept Clearance Committee discussed the financing plan being offered by the ADB in the efforts to support the Covid-19 emergency relief services under the title "Emergency Assistance for Fighting against Covid-19 Pandemic" worth USD 305 Million was presented and was subsequently approved. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Muhammad Jahanzeb Khan which was attended by a delegation of Asian Development Bank led by the Country Director Ms. Xiaohong Yang. ADB will provide USD 200 Million for social protection for the poor and vulnerable and USD 105 Million for public health emergency preparedness.

**Trains to start operation**

DNA

KARACHI: In a major development, the Pakistan Railways on Tuesday decided to partially resume its operation across the country from May 10. According to details, the Pakistan Railways has finalized all preparations in this regard and will seek Prime Minister Imran Khan's approval on May 8 for the restoration of train operation. Initially, 24 trains, including Tezgam, Awam Express, Khyber Mail, Green Line, Jaffer Express, Allama Iqbal and Sukkur Express, Millat Express, and Pak-Business will operate by maintaining the distance between passengers. Passengers and railways staff have been asked to maintain social distancing during the travel, while sixty percent booking of tickets will be made through an online system.

**Sania lauds NADRA plans**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection Dr. Sania Nishtar on Tuesday has expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made by National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) to facilitate the visitors and the services for Ehsaas Programme beneficiaries. She expressed these views during her visit to NADRA Mega Center in Islamabad. Dr Sania Nishtar said opening offices of National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) is vital for beneficiaries of Ehsaas Emergency Cash Programme facing biometric verification problems. She appreciated NADRA for decreasing processing time for issuance of death certificates from seven days to just twenty four hours, which is a great service to the cash recipients. The special assistant also thanked NADRA Chairman for resolving the issue of bio metric verification of Ehsaas Programme beneficiaries by opening NADRA centers.

**FLOODS IN SARDOBA DISTRICT**

**Uzbek govt allocates 100 billion soums for population**

DNA

TASHKENT: Flooding after the dam breakthrough of the Sardoba reservoir in the Syrdarya region caused serious damage to residential settlements, real estate objects, social facilities and agricultural crops on the territory of Yurtdosh, Dushtik, Kurgontepa mahallas of the Sardoba district, Sakhovat, Akhillik and Shodlik mahallas of the Mirzaabad district, as well as Mirzachul, Hakikat and Navbakhor mahallas of the Akaltyn district. According to First Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Akmalxon Ortikov, a government commission, established in accordance with the presidential decree of May 1, determines the scale and magnitude of losses in all directions. In particular, the amount of damaged housing and non-residential premises of the population is



ultimately determined and evaluated. "Financial assistance is being provided to eliminate the consequences of the emergency situation, including those who are affected by the incident. The first 100 billion soums from the republican budget have already been allocated for these purposes," Ortikov said. It is noted that based on the needs of the pop-



ulation, the Ministry of Construction has begun to select land plots and design estimates for the construction of multi-storey buildings in Sardoba, Mirzaabad and Akaltyn districts. "The infrastructure of the social sphere (kindergarten, school, healthcare institution, culture and other institutions) and the market (minimarket, bakery, sewing workshop, dry cleaning, bath-



house, car service, etc.) will be fully present in modern settlements," the deputy minister added. In addition, engineering and transport communications will be restored in these new settlements. According to the information service of the Samarkand regional administration, 5 billion soums were allocated from the regional budget to help victims of the incident in Syrdarya.



LALAMUSA: Sparrows help each other eat something: - Khurshid Nadeem

**Record 19 mln children displaced: UNICEF**

UNITED NATIONS: An estimated 19 million children more than ever before were living in displacement within their own countries due to conflict and violence in 2019 some of them for years, UNICEF said in a new report. The report, 'Lost at Home', looks at the risks and challenges internally displaced children face, and the urgent actions needed to protect them. As coronavirus continues to spread around the world, these children are among the most vulnerable to its direct and indirect impacts, the UN children agency said. "Millions of displaced children around the world are already going without proper care and protection," UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said in a statement. When new crises emerge, like the COVID-19 pandemic, these children are especially vulnerable. - APP

**CPEC a boon for Pak, says Muneer Kamal**

DNA

BEIJING: "COVID-19 pandemic has caused a major, dramatic disruption in the global economy and Pakistan will also face severe consequences of an economic slowdown. With this abrupt change in the economic environment, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is even more crucial for Pakistan's development than it was prior to the advent of COVID-19 early this year," CEO of Karachi Education Initiative (KEI) Muneer Kamal

said while talking to China Economic Net. Muneer who is also former Chairman of Karachi Stock Exchange further said, "Given a gloomy global economic environment in the foreseeable future, it would be difficult for Pakistan to attract foreign direct investment to develop its economic infrastructure. In this very challenging environment, it is fortunate that large CPEC projects have and will continue to be implemented. The continuation of CPEC will counter some of the negative global investment envi-

ronment", Kamal said. "The relationship with China has been and will remain unique and special for Pakistan. The importance of CPEC is magnified if we see regional dynamics and their impact on Pakistan's economy", Kamal added. He explained that Pakistan's trade and investment opportunities are limited with its immediate neighbors except for China. The current environment does not allow a healthy economic interaction with India, and sanctions imposed on Iran limit Pakistan's trade with the Iranian market.

**2 more virus deaths in Israel**

JERUSALEM: Israel's Health Ministry confirmed two more fatalities from the novel coronavirus on Monday, bringing the nationwide death toll to 237. A ministry statement said 22 new cases were registered in the country over the past 24 hours, raising the total to 16,268. According to the ministry, 89 patients remain in critical condition, while at least 10,223 have recovered and been discharged from hospitals so far. - APP

**3 more quarantine centres established**

ISLAMABAD: Three more quarantine centres comprising 1,200 rooms with attached washrooms have been established at Torkham, Taftan and Chaman borders for providing timely health facilities to the patients affected by coronavirus pandemic. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) spokesman, in a statement. - APP

**REPATRIATION OF PAKISTANIS**

**FM Qureshi thanks Bahrain colleague**

NEHAL MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain Dr. Adullatif bin Rashid Alzayani, to discuss matters related to the Covid-19 Pandemic, and enhancing bilateral cooperation to jointly address the situation. Foreign Minister thanked Bahrain for repatriation of Pakistanis. Lauding the timely measures taken by the Bahraini authorities to control the spread of the outbreak, he briefed Foreign Minister Alzayani about the latest situation in Pakistan, and the steps being taken by the Government for containment of the disease. Underscoring the need to create fiscal space to shore up economies and save precious

lives, Foreign Minister Qureshi briefed his Bahraini counterpart about Prime Minister Imran Khan's Global Initiative for Debt Relief for developing countries. In this context, he also highlighted the need for closer economic cooperation between Pakistan and Bahrain to mitigate the impact of the economic slowdown. Foreign Minister Qureshi expressed deep concerns over continuous restrictions on movement and communication in the Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir which were depriving 8 million Kashmiris of means to combat the disease. He called for lifting of restrictions on dissemination of information, and allow unfettered supply of medicines and other essentials. He also called for raising voice against campaign by India to demonize Muslims in the context of the Covid-19 spread.

**LoC violations: protest lodged with India**

NEHAL MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: A senior Indian diplomat was summoned to register Pakistan's strong protest over the ceasefire violations by the Indian occupation forces along the Line of Control (LoC) in Bagesar Sector, on 4th May 2020, resulting in serious injuries to six innocent civilians. Due to indiscriminate and unprovoked firing by the Indian occupation forces, 45 years old, Waheed, 55 years old, Nazima Bibi, and 12 years old, Aqeel, residents of Khaulian village; 50 years old, Zareena Begum, and 30 years old, Shaheen Begum, residents of Penga village; and

45 years old, Jamil, resident of Bandala village, sustained serious injuries. The Indian occupation forces along the LoC and the Working Boundary (WB) have continuously been targeting civilian populated areas with artillery fire, heavy-caliber mortars and automatic weapons. In 2020, India has so far committed 957 ceasefire violations. Condemning the deplorable targeting of innocent civilians by the Indian occupation forces, it was underscored that such senseless acts are in clear violation of the 2003 Ceasefire Understanding, and are also against all established humanitarian norms and professional military conduct.

**UNESCO, EU mark World Press Freedom Day**

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: The webinar on "Press Freedom and Journalism During Crisis" was held in partnership with the European Union Delegation to Pakistan, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Embassy of Sweden in Pakistan and Media Matters for Democracy. The webinar was attended by more than 50 participants from the civil society, media professionals, academia, international organizations and diplomatic

missions. During the Covid19 pandemic, as well as other situations of crisis, it is critical for people to be informed with facts to make well-informed decisions, to avoid patterns of paranoia, fear, and negatively stigmatising others. Noting this, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has called for "countering the scourge of misinformation - a poison putting more lives at risk." [1] Taking stock of the situation the webinar explored the crucial role of media in providing credible information,

addressing misinformation, and the subsequent emerging challenges faced by journalists in fulfilling their tasks. Patricia McPhillips, UNESCO Representative Pakistan, welcomed the participants and emphasised that, "A free and independent press is essential at all times, but is particularly important during a health and economic crisis such as the one we are currently experiencing". Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan Ms. Androulla Kaminara reiterated that, "Journalists are

essential workers, especially during the Covid19 crisis: They provide the information that people need to act responsibly and appropriately to stay safe. They stimulate the public debate about the best way to address challenges and provide accountability that is crucial for any democratic society". Mr. Asad Hashim from Al Jazeera discussed the factors impeding press freedom in Pakistan especially in light of the current health crisis. He also stressed upon the need to provide safeguards to journalists

facing multifarious threats due to the corona virus. While discussing the 'misinformation', Ms. Ramsha Jahangir (DAWN) highlighted the vital need for providing credible and fact based information by news media to counter misinformation. Mr. Tayyab Afridi representing Tribal News Network analysed the coverage of COVID-19 related news in remote and far flung areas. Mr. Shabbir Anwar (Pakistan Peace Collection, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting) described various initiatives launched to

gauge the perception of citizens about corona virus and shared the lessons learnt. In his concluding remarks, Ambassador of Netherlands to Pakistan Mr. Wouter Plomp stated, "In these times of COVID-19 crisis, journalists have the vital task of disseminating reliable information, keeping people informed and holding governments accountable. To recognise the importance of a free press, I would like to say to journalists that you are here to protect our freedoms. It's our duty to protect yours".