



# Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

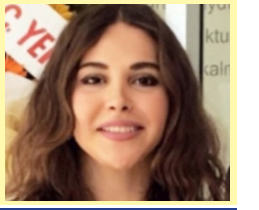
Price Rs. 20

**Humanitarian space of SCO connected with names of thinkers**

**Indonesian envoy all praise for Pakistan doctors**



**Azerbaijan artists show rare solidarity**



## HAFEEZ TELLS ECC

# Pak says no to commercial loans refinancing

NEHAL MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh while chairing the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet here at the Prime Minister's Office said that Pakistan will not go for commercial loans refinancing. On the recommendations of the Committee formed under the Chairmanship

of Adviser to PM on Institutional Reforms and Austerity and comprising Secretary Finance Division and Secretary Power Division to look into the issues of servicing of power sector loans and stock handling in a holistic manner, ECC allowed allocation of Rs.10 billion from Stimulus Package as a stop gap arrangement for the payment of interest on the Pakistan Energy Sukuk II for a period of six months or amendment in NEPA

Act whichever is earlier. Subject to the approval of the Cabinet, ECC approved in principal to allow EAD to sign an MOU for availing the G-20 relief initiative. Pakistan is required to enter into this MoU with all official bilateral creditors including Paris Club creditors to implement the debt relief initiative of G-20. Chairman ECC unequivocally informed the forum that Pakistan has no intention of seeking any kind of relief for repayment

of its commercial loans/borrowings. He also informed that Pakistan has the means and will to honor its commercial commitments. ECC also assigned the role of Chairman, to Mr. Hammad Azhar, being the Federal Minister for Industries and production, of the Committee to oversee the effective utilization of subsidies, Ramadan relief package and PM's relief Package of 50 billion by Utility Stores Corporation.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, DG ISI and others in a meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan. – DNA

## Briefs

### Indian troops violate LoC

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Indian Army troops initiated unprovoked ceasefire violation using mortars and automatics in Nikial Sector along LOC deliberately targeting civilian population. Due to indiscriminate fire in Khanni and Ooli villages, three innocent civilians received critical injuries. All injured evacuated and being provided with medical care.

### PM Imran stresses Ulema's vital role

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said the role of Ulema and religious leaders was vital in raising awareness about adopting safety measures against coronavirus. The Ulema presented several proposals for improving system of regulating mosques and shrines.

## Palestine ends security accords with Israel, US

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Wednesday declared an end to the agreements and understandings signed with Israel and the United States and turned over responsibility on the occupied territories back to Israel. "The Palestine Liberation Organization and the State of Palestine are absolved, as of today, of all the agreements and understandings with the American and Israeli governments and of all the obligations based on these understandings and agreements, including the security ones," Abbas declared at an emergency meeting held in Ramallah, the Palestinian city located in the West Bank. The meeting was held to

discuss Israeli plans to annex parts of the occupied Palestinian land as declared in the new Israeli government's coalition agreement, the embassy of Palestine in Islamabad stated. President Abbas said the Israeli occupation authority had to shoulder all responsibilities and obligations in front of the international community as an occupying power over the territory of the occupied state of Palestine, "with all its consequences and repercussions based on international law and international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949". The president mentioned



that the Convention held the occupying power responsible for the protection of the civilian population under occupation and their property, criminalized punishment, banned theft of resources, appropriation and annexation of land, banned forced transfer of the population of the occupied territory and also banned transfer of the population of the occupying state (the colonialists) to the land it occupies. In his speech, President Mahmoud Abbas referred to the provisions of the Israeli government coalition agreement, which stated that "the Prime Minister will be able to bring the agreement that was reached with the United States on applying sovereignty starting on 1 July 2020 to the Cabinet and the Knesset".

## China's biggest meet today

Two sessions will be held under strict measures

DNA

BEIJING: The long-The annual sessions of China's top legislative and political advisory bodies, the National People's Congress and the National Committee of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, which was delayed by COVID-19 for over two months,

will start on Thursday. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the two sessions will be held under strict anti-epidemic measures, including social distancing, and will be significantly shorter and rely more on videoconferences. The opening of the annual meetings was postponed from the usual date in early March due to the novel

coronavirus outbreak. The two sessions will see around 3,000 legislators gather in Beijing to discuss major laws and regulations as well as discuss and approve several key documents, including the Government Work Report and the national budget, along with more than 2,000 political advisers from the CPPCC.

## UAE can now test virus in seconds

ISLAMABAD: QuantLase Imaging Lab, the medical-research arm of the Abu Dhabi Stock Exchange-listed International Holdings Company (IHC), Tuesday announced that it had developed an equipment for faster mass screenings with test results available in seconds of coronavirus suspects. The technology will reinforce the UAE's position as a hub of research and innovation, as scientists around the world scramble to devise a faster method of testing for coronavirus suspected patients.

## CPEC pioneers battle corona

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chinese company, China Railway 19 Bureau Group Mining Investment stated that it has provided necessary infection prevention and control material to its staff at its coal-mining project (Thar-block II) in Tharparkar, Sindh, says a report published by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday. It was noted that during COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan stands one of the worst-hit countries in South Asia.

## German spy agency asked to curb intel gathering

The foreign intelligence service violated the constitution by spying on internet data

DNA

BERLIN: Germany's foreign-intelligence agency, which is banned from spying on Germans, now faces strict limits on its overseas activities after the country's constitutional court decided that the protections against arbitrary surveillance Germans enjoy applied to everyone world-wide. The foreign intelligence service violated the constitution by spying on internet data from foreigners abroad, Germany's top court ruled Tuesday in a victory for overseas journalists who brought the case. The BND agency's sur-

veillance violates "the fundamental right to privacy of telecommunications" and freedom of the press, judges at the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe said in their verdict. But given the "great importance" of foreign surveillance to German security, the court gave the BND until the end of 2021 to change its practices to comply with the law. The ruling marked the first time the Constitutional Court clearly stated that the BND must respect fundamental rights accorded by the constitution even when operating abroad. German intelligence services are already not allowed to monitor the internet traffic of Germans

in such a vast way. The case was brought by journalists and civil society groups who were outraged after the BND was granted sweeping new powers to carry out "strategic telecommunications surveillance" under amended legislation in 2016. This allowed the BND to tap into internet traffic from non-Germans abroad, often through monitoring the use of keywords, phone numbers or email addresses, and to share this information with other secret services. One of the plaintiffs, Reporters Without Borders, argued that this allowed the agency to spy on journalists "almost without restrictions".

## Indonesian envoy praises doctors' work

The ambassador hoped that things will soon return to normalcy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan Iwan S Amri has extended his sincere appreciation for doctors and medical staffs who have been dedicating their services of saving human life in Pakistan during the



testing time of pandemic covid 19. The ambassador in his message thanked the PIA and Pakistan authorities for repatriation of Indonesian citizens who left few days ago through a special flight. The ambassador hoped that things will soon return to normalcy.

## Inside...

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# Rare show of solidarity by Azerbaijan artists

Singing of Pakistani song Dil Dil Pakistan by Ms. Turan and her family indeed won hearts and minds of Pakistani people

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan are getting deeper and deeper with each passing day. The hallmark of these relations is growing interest on both sides to give these ties versatile dimensions. Cultural cooperation happens to be the cornerstone of these splendid relations. Maintaining cultural connections even during the difficult times of corona pandemic is a clear manifestation of earnest desire especially on the part of the Azerbaijan to protect and preserve these re-

lations. The Azerbaijan embassy spearheaded by Ambassador Ali Alizada has been instrumental in promotion of bilateral

links in all fields. Just recently the Ambassador took an initiative of promoting Pakistani national songs in Azerbaijan with

a view to further strengthening friendship and brotherly bonds. In this connection a wonderful family of Azerbaijan, well

known for their singing skills performed Pakistani national song Dil Dil Pakistan on Piano. The performance of Ms. Turan

and her family indeed presented a mesmerizing performance and won hearts and minds of Pakistani people. Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Ali Alizada in his Tweet said that the wonderful joint performance of the popular Pakistani song "Dil Dil Pakistan" by Ms. Turan Manafzadeh and her parents Maestro Islam Manafov, the honored artist of Azerbaijan and Mrs. Shukufra Manafova in solidarity with brotherly country Pakistan fighting coronavirus pandemic. He further said that Ms. Turan is the honored artist of Azerbaijan, composer and one of the few women conductors of the world.



**Briefs**

**OGDCL injects nine new wells**

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has injected nine new wells, producing 137,230 Barrels crude oil and 5,562 Million Cubic Feet (MMCF) gas, in its production gathering system during three quarters of the current fiscal year. "As many as nine operated wells have been injected in the production gathering system viz., Qadirpur-14&61, Pasakhi Deep-4&5, Nashpa-9, Chanda-5, Qadirpur Deep X-1, TAY North-land Uch-17A which cumulatively yielded gross crude oil and gas production of 137,230 barrels and 5,562 MMCF respectively, whereas installation of Electrical Submersible Pump at Pasakhi-5 produced a positive impact of 500 barrels per day," the company said in its third quarterly report for the financial year 2019-20. - APP

**CTP launches operation against transporters**

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) has launched a grand operation against transporters, overcharging the passengers particularly those who are going to their hometowns to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr with their near and dear ones and not following Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). According to Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Syed Ali Akbar, the transporters had been warned to avoid from overcharging and follow SOPs issued by Punjab Government to control spread of Covid-19, otherwise, strict action in accordance with the law would be taken. The public service vehicles found involved in overcharging, overloading and other severe violations would be issued challan slips and imposed heavy fines. He said that special squads of city traffic police had been formed that were conducting raids and checking the overcharging. The CTO directed the DSPs traffic, sector in-charges and wardens to perform their role effectively to check the overcharging and implementation of SOPs in public transport. - APP

**Pakistan's earns US \$427 million**

ISLAMABAD, May 20 (APP):Pakistan earned US \$ 427.024 million by providing different travel services in various countries during the first three quarters of the ongoing fiscal year 2019-20. This shows growth of 33.42 percent as compared to US \$ 320.070 million same services were provided during the corresponding period of fiscal year 2018-19, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said. During the period under review, the personal travel services grew by 33.42 percent, from US \$ 316.620 million last year to US \$ 422.434 million during July-March (2019-20). Among these personal services, the exports of personal expenditure and education related expenditure decreased by 60.43 and 32.67 percent respectively. - APP

**40% complaints resolution thru PCP**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Citizen Portal (PCP) has been successful in achieving a complaint resolution rate of 40 percent, with redressing matters as grave as abductions, forgery and harassment. As justice and fair play have remained a primary manifesto of the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the Prime Minister's performance Delivery Unit was reorganized in October 2018 to promote citizen centric and participatory governance, said a press release. One of the most significant initiatives taken by PMDU has been the establishment of Pakistan Citizen Portal mobile application. This portal was a complaint redressal platform which operates through certain standard operating procedures (SOPs). - APP

**European Film Festival launched online showcasing European movie culture**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad, 20 May 2020: The European Union has launched the European Film Festival for a worldwide audience, including Pakistan. Unlike previous years when the festival included screenings, panel discussions and workshops in several Pakistani cities, it takes place this year online. The audience will be able to watch, free of charge, a selection of films until June 18th. The festival promotes the European Union to Pakistan, Androulla Kaminara explained: "We initially hoped to screen a wide range of films in cinemas,

universities and cultural centers across the country. This was to showcase the diversity of European cinema, but more importantly to engage with a Pakistani audience to discuss the stories behind the films and how these stories relate to their lives. Due to Covid19, we had to move the festival online. But we hope it will be a teaser that trigger curiosity for more. Because we hope to organize a real festival again, when the public health situation allows doing so safely." The festival promotes European films that reflect the diverse cultures, languages and societies within, but also outside of Europe. The films cen-



tre around artificial borders and preconceptions that separate us despite the fundamental human traits that unite us. This topic remains more relevant than ever during the Corona Virus, which has destroyed and disrupted many lives, but it has also sparked global solidarity and cooperation across borders. The selection includes a Finnish-Bulgarian biographical documentary about coping with childhood traumas, a tragic comedy about a dog not respecting borders, a family drama about a young boy feeling ashamed of

his younger brother with down syndrome, an Austrian documentary exploring what the footprint of humans will be once we are gone, and a documentary about the conspiracy theories surrounding the death of the former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. In addition, short films focus, among other topics, on climate change and its impact on lives across the globe - a topic highly relevant for Pakistan, one of the worst affected countries. The European Film Festival is hosted simultaneously by EU Delegations around the world and presented by the Goethe Institut, the Institut Francais, the Lux Film Prize and Cineuropa. The five different feature length films and seven short films are available for the Pakistani audience until June 18th. However, only a limited number of virtual "seats" are available and will be available on a first come, first served basis.

**Ufone wins two Global Gold Awards**



FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Ufone brings Pakistan pride by winning Two Golds in Global Eventex Awards for its Ufone Balochistan Football Cup 2019. Amongst 444 entries from 39 countries, the Pakistani telecom operator emerged as the winner in two categories i.e. People's Choice Award and Best CSR Event Award. Despite stiff competition

ties for the young sportsmen of the province. This award is a reflection of the exceptional performance put forward by the entire team to make this tournament an international success story. "I'd like to congratulate and thank all contestants for the endless inspiration and innovation they bring to our industry - we feel privileged to be the ones recognizing the best among them! I am positive the industry will push forward in spite of the crisis and we will continue to support the event profs community with different initiatives and activities", Ovanes Ovanessian, Co-founder of Eventex Awards commented. Over 180 brands belonging to different regions i.e. Europe, South Asia, Asia Pacific and North America participated in various categories. In the CSR category, Ufone won the Gold award along with the Gold award in People's Choice category

**Artists paint corona awareness messages**

SHAHEEN QURESHI

ISLAMABAD: Some senior artists of twin cities wearing masks and gloves participated in a coronavirus public awareness live painting event at the Rose and Jasmine Garden on Tuesday. They painted flocks flouting the precautionary measures while some wearing masks and living in the state of fear

and uncertainty. Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan) and DTN organized the event. The participating artists included Nahida Raza, Asrar Farooqi, Riffat Khat-tak, Riffat Ara Baig, Saima Aamir and Roobia Gul-faraz. Metropolitan Corporation of Islamabad Deputy Mayor Syed Zeeshan Ali Naqvi was the guest of honour.

Nahida Raza in her oil-on-canvas painting reflected a woman covering her nose and mouth with a mask while the coronavirus is trying to enter through the glass-window. Her message was obvious that only preventive measures would help save lives. She said lockdown or no lockdown we need to observe all instructions given by the government and health experts.

**Telenor introduces digital education**

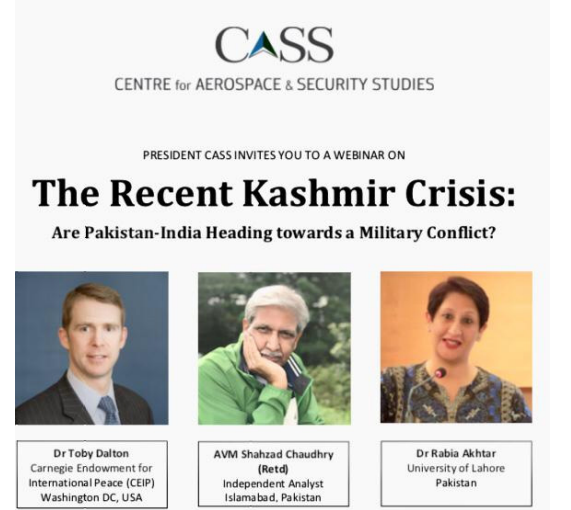
DNA

ISLAMABAD: Telenor Velocity, digital startup accelerator by Telenor Pakistan has introduced its "EdTech Innovation programme" forging strategic alliances with EdTech startups for making a rapid shift to online learning and skill development. This initiative was launched in response to closure of educational institutions and offices due to coronavirus outbreak, said a news release issued here on Wednesday. The ongoing crisis has impacted students across the nation, but the circumstances have also resulted in a speedy transition to online learning, and e-education has become the need of the hour.

**Death condoled**

ISLAMABAD: President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarian (PPPP) Asif Ali Zardari Wednesday condoled the death of both of Awami National Party (ANP) leader Mian Iftikhar Hussain. In condolence message issued here, Asif Zardari expressed his heartfelt grief and sorrow over the demise of brother of Secretary General ANP. He prayed to Almighty Allah to rest the departed soul in eternal peace. - APP

**CASS conducts webinar on Kashmir**



DNA

ISLAMABAD: To discuss growing tension along the Line of Control (LoC) and its potential to end up into a serious military escalation between the two nuclear armed neighbours in South Asia, Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS) organized an international webinar titled "The Recent Kashmir Crisis: Are Pakistan-India Heading towards a Military Conflict?" Worthy panelists included, Dr Toby Dalton from Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) Washington DC, USA, AVM Shahzad Chaudhry (Retd) Independent Analyst Islamabad, Pakistan, and Dr. Rabia Akhtar from the University of Lahore. Dr Dalton said that the use of air force by India and Pakistan during Balakot crisis was unprecedented and crossed ideational and military thresholds but did not bring any structural change, as the basics of the problem continue to be the same. He added that the Indian domestic politics and Modi factor

do not change the larger picture where both nuclear powers cannot claim to have a decisive victory in a war against one another. AVM Shahzad Chaudhry highlighted that India's actions in the Indian occupied Kashmir (IoK) following the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, and the J&K reorganization Act of 2019, could be termed as demographic re-engineering of J&K. While discussing the international response to a future Indian military adventure against Pakistan, he emphasized that Balakot crisis evinced an example where only a serious escalation induced reaction from international community. Dr Rabia Akhtar, criticized the notion of a 'new normal', which India and some analysts are using to justify the Feb 2019 surgical strike against Pakistan. She emphasized that Covid-19 would not change anything as India's war mongering is only growing with time and fear of war on LoC is real and Pakistan must remain ready and vigilant.

**AIOU declares result of its SSC/HSSC programs**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Directorate of Education, May 20: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Wednesday declared its SSC/HSSC programs' result on the basis of the students' continuous assessment, in view of the current crisis situation in wake of COVID-19 in the whole country. The decision was taken in

line with the approval of Academic Council of the AIOU and the policy of the government that aimed at saving the academic session of the students in the prevailing crisis. It also as per the University's annual academic calendar, according to which semester begins from this month. The result of both the programs has been uploaded at the University's official Website and the same is

being communicated to the students through post. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Qayyum hoped that the students who have been promoted will take greater interest in their academic pursuits, while staying at the home and improving their intellectual skills. The University will continue to try its best to serve students' interest through Online learning system and other modes of distant education.



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## Briefs

### India's COVID-19 death toll rises

NEW DELHI: India's health ministry said Wednesday morning that 140 new deaths due to COVID-19, besides fresh 5,611 positive cases were reported since Tuesday in the country, taking the number of deaths to 3,303 and total cases to 106,750. This is the highest one-day spike in COVID-19 cases so far in the country. "As on 8:00 a.m. (local time) Wednesday, 3,303 deaths related to novel coronavirus have been recorded in the country," reads an information released by the ministry. On Tuesday morning, the number of COVID-19 cases in the country was 101,139, and the death toll was 3,163. According to ministry officials, so far 42,298 people have been discharged from hospitals after showing improvement. — APP

### Spaniards ordered to wear masks

MADRID: Everyone in Spain aged six and above must wear a mask in public places where social distancing is not possible, officials said on Wednesday. A government decree declared the new rule would be enforced from Thursday, without specifying penalties for failing to comply. Commuters are already obliged to wear masks on public transport in Spain, one of the hardest-hit countries with almost 28,000 deaths from the pandemic. But the death rate has slowed and the strict lockdown measures are being gradually eased, although population centres including Madrid and Barcelona have not been allowed to relax their rules. — APP

### More virus cases in Russia

MOSCOW: Russia on Wednesday reported its highest daily coronavirus toll with 135 fatalities as the number of infections surpassed 300,000. Health authorities reported a total of 2,972 deaths while the number of infections hit 308,705 after 8,764 new cases were registered, the lowest daily increase since May 1. — APP

### OIC rejects India's domicile law in IoK

ISLAMABAD, May 20 (dna):The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has strongly condemned and categorically rejected the India's recently introduced 'Jammu and Kashmir Grant of Domicile Certificate (Procedure) Rules, 2020'.

## Humanitarian space of the SCO is connected with the names of the greatest thinkers

It is quite symbolic that in the year of UNESCO's adoption of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001, the SCO was established, one of the most important activities of which is cultural and humanitarian cooperation. Recognizing the need to strengthen the potential of culture, our Organization makes a significant contribution every year to support cultural diversity through prosperity, sustainable development, and global peaceful coexistence

VLADIMIR NOROV

ON 21 May, the world celebrates World Cultural Diversity Day for Dialogue and Development, launched by UNESCO in 2001. In 2002, the UN General Assembly proclaimed a resolution on World Cultural Diversity Day for dialogue and development. This year marks this momentous day for the 19th time. This holiday date has taken on special significance in promoting and preserving culture, intercultural dialogue, and sustainable development. The events on this day aim to promote the importance and value of cultural diversity and the rich civilizational heritage of mankind. It is quite symbolic that in the year of UNESCO's adoption of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001, the SCO was established, one of the most important activities of which is cultural and humanitarian cooperation. Recognizing the need to strengthen the potential of culture, our Organization makes a significant contribution every year to support cultural diversity through prosperity, sustainable development, and global peaceful coexistence.

Today, the SCO unites 18 states, the number of which reaches more than 44% of the world's population. The SCO family, which includes various peoples, with its original culture, is a colorful palette of ethnic groups, nations, religions, and civilizations, ready for further rapprochement and fruitful cultural and humanitarian cooperation. Speaking of this cooperation, it is important to keep in mind that the peoples of the "SCO family" are united by several objective factors that form a solid basis for the successful development of mutually beneficial relations. We are connected by many historical, cultural points of contact, common cultural heritage, common traditions, the similarity of languages and cultures, ethnocultural proximity, good-neighborly relations, and much more. The humanitarian space of the SCO is connected with the names of the greatest thinkers and scientists who have made an invaluable contribution to world culture. In the Ancient and Middle Ages, the geographical area of Eurasia was one of the most developed in the world. Thanks to the Great Silk Road, one of the most advanced models of economic devel-



opment has been developed in the region, and the most advanced cultural policy has been created. Revenues from the operation of the Great Silk Road allowed the countries of the region to invest in cultural construction. Today, every ninth UNESCO World Heritage Site, listed in the World Heritage Fund, is located in the SCO space. Currently, in the SCO states, along with the important work to preserve the historical cultural heritage, active activities are being carried out to revive the past intensive cultural contacts between the peoples of the region, on the model of humanitarian communications of the Great Silk Road, to promote the popularization of the traditions and customs of the peoples living in the SCO space. One of the main mis-

sions in the SCO's activities is consistently and purposefully implemented - strengthening mutual understanding between peoples, cognition and convergence of their cultures and civilizations. The basis for building such multifaceted cooperation is the SCO Charter, a fundamental document that defines the main areas of cultural and humanitarian cooperation of our Organization. Practical work on this area of cooperation is entrusted to the Meeting of Ministers of Culture of SCO Member States, a coordinating and advisory mechanism for cooperation, the functioning of which is in line with the provisions of the SCO Charter and other documents adopted within the Organization. The results of practical coop-

eration are reflected in the documents adopted at the annual SCO summits. At the summit of Heads of State in 2007 in Bishkek, the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation was signed, and at the summit of Heads of Government in 2016 in Tashkent, further outlines of improving multifaceted cooperation within the SCO, including in the field of cultural and humanitarian cooperation, were identified. United by the "Shanghai spirit", SCO Member States, based on the principles of mutual respect and equal dialogue, from year to year intensify practical work in the fields of culture, education, science and technology, health, sports, tourism, and youth contacts. These aspects of cooperation will continue to be an essential part of the Organization's activities and will continue to serve the goals of cultural construction in the SCO space. The SCO's expanding cultural and humanitarian cooperation from year to year contributes to the further deepening of interstate cultural dialogue, in order to bring the SCO countries and peoples closer together. A striking example of this is the comprehensive SCO-our Common Home program, which includes the days of

SCO culture, the cycle of piano concerts "Nine Magic Notes", the annual "SCO Marathons" and the "Eight Wonders of the SCO" project aimed at creating a single tourist space. The world community is now facing serious challenges related to a sudden attack called COVID-19. The consequences of the pandemic for further favourable world development are unpredictable and may cause dramatic changes in the modern world order. All this further actualizes the value of a single human civilization with the diversity of its forms of existence, the self-identification of the peoples and ethnicities of the world and their responsibility for its future. We need to raise our many voices in defence of the importance of a day of cultural diversity in the name of dialogue and development. This is the best response and moral support in the fight against humanity's most dangerous enemies, including the COVID-19 pandemic. I am convinced that, based on the rich cultural traditions of our peoples, we will be able to overcome all difficulties and trials together and in close cooperation. *The writer is the SCO Secretary General*

## Three Pakistani universities join efforts to fight COVID-19

In addition, S&SE ASIAN UN will launch anti-pandemic vlog competition and promote international cooperation in public health research

DNA

KUNMING: Three Pakistani universities and other 54 universities in 11 countries from the South and Southeast Asian University Network (S&SE Asian UN) vowed on Tuesday to join efforts in fighting against the COVID-19, as the pandemic continues to spread across the world, reports Gwadar Pro. According to S&SE Asian UN, a total of 57 universities in 12 countries from the network signed the Statement of the South & Southeast Asian University Network on Joining Efforts in Fighting against COVID-19 in China's Kunming to call on universities and colleges to play

their special role in combating the pandemic. Besides Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS), Karakoram International University, and University of Peshawar from Pakistan, other universities that co-signed the Statement are from South and Southeast Asian countries including China, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The Statement has put forward ten proposals to universities and colleges around the world, including actively supporting the anti-pandemic efforts made by government of all

countries, giving full play to advantages in scientific research and strengthening the international cooperation in vaccine research and development, material support and experience sharing, and supporting global and regional international organizations to play a greater role in fighting against the pandemic. The Statement also called on universities and colleges to fulfill their social responsibilities in educating the public and popularizing knowledge and skills in COVID-19 prevention, oppose pursuing of benefits at the expense of others and politicization of the pandemic, enhance researches on post-pandemic

countries, and to provide intellectual support for regional and global economic recovery. Based on the Statement, Secretariat of S&SE Asian UN will hold a series of online workshops themed "Fighting against COVID-19 in Campus and Online Teaching during the Outbreak" for member universities to share experience. The first webinar will be held on May 20, presidents or representatives from 12 universities will gather to exchange ideas and experience. In addition, S&SE Asian UN will launch anti-pandemic vlog competition and promote international cooperation in public health research.

## PM asks public for caution on Eid



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday urged upon the general public to follow safety procedures against coronavirus during Eid holidays. In a meeting with his Adviser on Parliamentary Affairs Dr Babar Awan, the prime minister said the government was devising strategy to effectively control the spread of disease in the country.

## UK welcomes Afghan accord

LONDON: The United Kingdom (UK) on Wednesday welcomed the agreement between Afghanistan leaders on forming an inclusive government. A statement issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) London said. The FCO Minister for South Asia Lord Ahmad Tariq of Wimbledon while commenting on the agreement said, "I welcome the agreement

between Afghan leaders on forming an inclusive government". Lord Tariq said that a strong and unified government was vital at this critical time for Afghanistan. "There is a real opportunity to end decades of conflict, the devastating impact of which has been brought into focus by recent attacks, and a need to slow the spread of COVID-19 throughout the country. — APP

## Rupee weakens

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The exchange rate of Pakistani rupee declined by 03 paisas against US dollar in the interbank on Wednesday to close at Rs 160.77 compared to the last closing of Rs 160.74. However, according to Forex Association of Pakistan, the buying and selling rates of Dollar in open market were recorded at Rs 161 and Rs 162, respectively.

# The fight against the pandemic requires concerted multilateral efforts: SCO

The SCO countries have demonstrated a high level of solidarity in the fight against the pandemic, said Secretary-General of SCO

DNA

BEIJING: The member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have demonstrated solidarity and mutual support in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, said the SCO Secretary-General Vladimir Norov on Wednesday. In his opening remarks, at the video-conferencing of the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers, V.Norov expressed his gratitude to the Russian Federation on the initiative to convene the meeting, in its capacity as current chair of the SCO. "The SCO member states, guided by the principles of the 'Shanghai Spirit', have shown a high level of solidarity and mutual support in combating the Coronavirus epidemic", said Norov. Considering China's experience, the Secretary-Gener-



al further added that the Chinese side received timely information about the impending threat and took appropriate preventive measures accordingly. V. Norov noted the importance of increasing the efficiency of the organization's mechanisms for rapid response to new outbreaks of infectious diseases, as well as the need for SCO's effective interaction with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other relevant international institutions.

Referring to a draft regulation "on the Coordinating Council for Joint Counteraction to Epidemic Threats", developed by the SCO Secretariat, would help develop and implement comprehensive early measures to prevent and reduce the negative impact of epidemic diseases, added the Secretary-General. **Overcome the consequences** Besides the issues of overcoming social and economic impacts of the pandemic, the SCO Secretary-General called

for strengthening cooperation in the field of food security, and proposed development of an Action Plan in this regard. Stressing the importance of wide application of digital technologies in public administration and business leading business enterprises; he expressed concern over the growing cyber security challenges related to Internet fraud and hacker attacks on government and financial institutions and proposed measures to be incorporated in the "Action Plan for Implementation of the SCO Concept of Cooperation in Digitalization and ICT". **Afghan problem** Since the epidemic has suspended many SCO mechanisms involved in the process of harmonizing documents for consideration by SCO leaders, the Secretary-General proposed further enhancing the role of the mechanism of permanent



representatives of the SCO Member States to the SCO Secretariat. Regardless of the pandemic, the member countries of SCO continued to provide comprehensive assistance for a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan, he noted the growing importance of the organization in promoting the solution of the Afghan problem within the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group mechanism. **About SCO**

The SCO currently comprises of eight Member States (India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), four Observer States (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia) and six "Dialogue Partners" (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey, and Sri Lanka). The Secretariat of SCO is the primary executive body of the organization - headquartered in Beijing, China.