



Islamabad POST

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Against child labour – making a promise to Zohra: Androulla

I would love to see England and Pakistan cricket



Opposition urged not to politicize virus



Briefs

Japanese envoy greets Miandad on his birthday

DNA

ISLAMABAD: MATSUDA Kuninori, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, has extended his sincere and heartfelt greetings to the former captain and a legendary cricketer of Pakistan Javed Miandad on his 63rd birthday. Ambassador MATSUDA while conveying his warmest wishes to the super star of the cricketing world has said that "today is a special day for you and all of your valued fans across the world. On this auspicious occasion, I, on behalf of the cricket lovers in Japan and the Embassy of Japan in Pakistan extend our warmest wishes to you for a happy and a healthy life." "The Ambassador said that since cricket is a passion among the Pakistani people but let me tell you that the game is becoming popular in Japan too as more than 200 local/club level cricket teams do exist in Japan as of today.

NAB rejects allegations

DNA

LAHORE: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has advised PML-N President and Opposition Leader in the National Assembly, Shehbaz Sharif, to undergo his coronavirus test from Shaukat Khanum Hospital or the Agha Khan Laboratory other than Chughtai Laboratories. NAB sources while rejecting allegations levelled by PML-N leaders that Shehbaz contracted coronavirus during his appearance before NAB's Combined Investigation Team, said all safety protocols were adopted during the PML-N leader's appearance. Moreover, NAB expressed reservations over Shehbaz testing positive for COVID-19 in a single night.

Police refuse case against Cynthia

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad police have refused to lodge case against US national Cynthia Dawn Ritchie for leveling allegations against former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. According to details, Additional District and Sessions Judge Zeba Chaudhry conducted hearing of a petition filed by a citizen – Waqas Abbasi. The plaintiff had requested the court to order the police to lodge a case against the US national for hurling obscene accusations against the former premier. – DNA

Govt sets size of budget at Rs7.14tr

PTI government deserves credit for not imposing any new taxes on the people. Delving into the achievements of the govt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: All eyes are on the parliament as Federal Minister of Industries and Production Hammad Azhar presented the Rs7.14tr budget 2020-21 on Friday. The federal minister said that the government's top two priorities have been battling corruption and ensuring accountability. He said that during the past five years, there had been no growth in exports. "The reserves of the State Bank of Pakistan declined from \$18bn to \$10bn due to the failed policies of the past," he said, adding that Pakistan had been placed on the FATF grey list due to the

absence of concrete policies to keep terror financing and money laundering in check. As the minister spoke, the opposition MNAs started waving protest banners in the parliament and shout slogans against the government. Azhar said that the government had been successful – during the past nine months – before COVID-19 proved to be a setback for the country's economy – in reducing the trade deficit from \$21bn to \$15bn and the budget deficit was brought down to 3.8% by the incumbent government's policies. The minister said that the PTI government had increased employment opportunities for Pakistanis abroad which led to remit-

tances increasing to \$17bn. Azhar said that the incumbent government had introduced structural reforms in state institutions. He said that a dedicated government task force has presented its report in which eight defunct organisations have been highlighted and 33 will be merged with others. Touching upon the government's efforts in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the minister said that the Centre is taking steps to ensure people's lives are saved and economic activities go on. "The coronavirus pandemic caused our GDP to shrink by Rs3,300bn," he said, adding that the non-tax revenue declined by Rs102bn, adding to the country's poverty and unemployment woes.

Kyrgyz FM, Pak envoy discuss cooperation

DNA

BISHKEK: The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic Chingiz Aidarbekov, received copies of the Credentials of the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Kyrgyz Republic, Sardar Azhar Tariq Khan. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic H.E. Mr. Chingiz Aidarbekov congratulated Ambassador Sardar Azhar Tariq Khan. During the conversation, the parties discussed current areas of Kyrgyz-Pakistani cooperation and the prospects for further coop-



eration between countries in the fight against coronavirus, as well as cooperation in trade, investment, tourism and education. The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

expressed sincere appreciation for the warm welcome and his willingness to make every effort to develop bilateral relations and deepen mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

RCCI terms budget below expectations

RAWALPINDI: Saboor Malik, President, Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), while responding to the budget for fiscal 2020-21, said that the budget falls below expectations for the business community. However, we welcomed that no new tax has been imposed. The revenue target in the budget has been set to 4963 billion. It is impractical and does not reflect the ground realities. We demand that the government must review its revenue targets. The condition of CNIC which was earlier fifty thousand is now proposed to be extended to one hundred thousand. This was our long standing demand and also agenda point of RCCI 12th All Pakistan

Chambers Presidents Conference 2020. He said that the chamber had proposed to reduce the sales tax from 17 to 5 percent. We were disappointed that it was not accepted. It is proposed to enable alternative dispute resolution, ADRC. This was a long standing demand of the Chamber which has been met. At the same time, Rs 650 billion has been earmarked for PSDP, which is less. It should be increased. Last year, Rs 675 billion was allocated. He said the chamber had proposed to abolish the tax for POS point of sales, but the rate has been reduced from 14 per cent to 12 per cent. – DNA



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan attends the Budget Session of National Assembly on Friday. – DNA

ICCI terms budget 2020-21 balanced

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has said that the government has presented a balanced budget in the current difficult situation and hoped that this budget would help in promoting business activities. He said that the government has reduced the customs duty on 40 raw materials of various industries and reduced the customs duty on 90 tariff lines from 11% to 3% or zero% which is very encouraging. The government has also reduced regulatory duties on a number of industrial inputs that would hopefully reduce the production cost. He said this while giving his initial reaction on Federal Budget 2020-21. **Picture on Page-02**

LHC moved over shortage of life-saving drugs

DNA

LAHORE: A plea has been filed in the Lahore High Court (LHC) against shortage of life-saving drugs in the country. Judicial Activism Panel, in its plea stated that there is a shortage of life-saving drugs in the country, while few drugs used to cure coronavirus patients are also out of stock. People are finding difficulty in finding the life-saving drugs, which is sheer violation of the basic rights. The plaintiff has pleaded the court to pass order ensuring the supply of life-saving drugs in the country.

PM IMRAN'S GOODWILL GESTURE TO INDIA

Pak regrets cold shoulder response

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has regretted negative remarks by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs' Spokesperson regarding a goodwill suggestion by the Prime Minister of Pakistan to share Pakistan's successful experience in ameliorating impact of Covid-19 on the poorest sections of the society. Remarks by the MEA's Spokesperson reflect an unprofessional attempt at point-scoring over a serious

issue that involves lives of millions of poor people in the sub-continent, worst affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Prime Minister of Pakistan's suggestion was in the backdrop of a study by a reputable U.S. University that highlighted the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns on Indian households especially the poorest sections of the society and effectiveness of direct cash transfers and food to the poor families affected by lockdowns. International agencies have appreciated positive impact

of the Government of Pakistan's direct cash transfer of Rs. 120 billion to 10 million poor families in Pakistan in most transparent manner. The Prime Minister's offer at this challenging time of a global pandemic was in consonance with the initiative for sharing national experiences among SAARC member countries in dealing with the impact of Covid-19. If that intent was serious, then the MEA's response to Prime Minister Imran Khan's suggestion is inconsistent with the stated position of their own leadership.

Intra-Afghan talks must begin, says Khalilzad

STAFF REPORT

KABUL: The US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad said that the intra-Afghan negotiations "must begin immediately" after the roadblock ahead of the prisoner's release was resolved. In his tweets, Khalilzad said "We welcome the government now having exceeded 3000 Taliban prisoners released and the Taliban 500+. It is important that the process continues and the prisoner's release roadblock resolved". He added that the Afghan-owned, Afghan-led negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban negotiating team "must begin immediately thereafter." "From the start, getting to intra-Afghan negotiations (IAN) has been a key objective of our diplomacy," he said. Meanwhile, the US official has welcomed the Taliban statement

specifying they will participate in the intra-Afghan negotiation within one week of the prisoner release commitment outlined in our agreement. "Although many practical details need to be worked out, these developments are all very positive," he noted. "We are closer to the goal of IAN than ever before," Khalilzad tweeted. He urged all sides to sit around the negotiations table "as soon as possible" and "prevent spoilers from undermining the process and betraying the hopes and yearning of Afghan people for peace." It comes as the Afghan Presidential Palace says that the time and place for holding the Intra-Afghan talks will be determined soon. President Ghani at an event hosted by the Atlantic Council, vowed to release another 2,000 prisoners, something that has been requested from him frequently to move the peace process forward.

Ayaz Sadiq tests positive



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Former National Assembly speaker Ayaz Sadiq has become the latest PML-N leader to test positive for the coronavirus, announced party spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday. The PML-N stated that Sadiq has gone into quarantine in his home after testing positive for the virus. The announcement comes a day after Aurangzeb announced that party president and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shehbaz Sharif had also tested positive for coronavirus. Earlier this week, PML-N Secretary-General Ahsan Iqbal also tested positive for coronavirus.

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Pakistani company signs deal with Chinese wind turbine producer

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Against child labour – making a promise to Zohra

SOMETIMES, when you read the paper or hear the news, there are stories that make you stop in your tracks. Individual stories that hit you like a punch in the stomach. The story about Zohra has been one such story for me: an 8-year-old girl working as a housemaid, beaten to death by her "employers" after she had accidentally let their parrots fly away. As an adult, I feel the need to apologise to Zohra because as adults – we have collectively failed to protect little girls like her. Zohra's story might be a particularly shocking one, but she is unfortunately not an isolated case. The story of Zohra is very relevant because today is the World Day against Child Labour. Globally, there are over 150 million children victims of child labour, almost half of them aged 5-11 years. Not only are they deprived from the joy of childhood, the freedom of play, and time with friends, but also from the learning and exploration that is so essential for all of us, as it makes us who we are. Most of them also work under terrible conditions, in dangerous, dirty and physically strenuous jobs that will leave a mark on their body, soul and health forever even before they have reached the peak of their physical development. Many of them experience abuse by their "employers" – I put this term in quotation marks as it sounds like a terrible euphemism otherwise. Most countries' national laws and international law addresses this problem. For example, the nearly universally ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) explicitly declares protection from

harm as a fundamental child's right. The signatory countries to the ILO Convention No 182, which since 2001 includes Pakistan, declare that they 'shall take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency'. Similarly, ILO Convention 138, on the 'Minimum Age Convention', signed by Pakistan in 2006, declares that each participating state 'undertakes to pursue a national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour...'. In Pakistan, there are an estimated 11 million children (ages 4-14) working. Although the Constitution of Pakistan regards the minimum age of labour as 14 years, poverty and other difficulties pushes many parents to send their children to work long before that. Eradicating child labour and ensuring safe and dignified labour for adolescents is a difficult and complex task requiring multiple interrelated actions including violations of the law to be effectively detected and per-



COMMENT

ANDROULLA KAMINARA

secuted, through inspections and other means. Children who have become victim of child labour need support and protection. It also means that the underlying causes for child labour need to be addressed, namely in poverty and desperation that pushes families to send their children to work and the misery of children without family who have no other ways of surviving. The European Union in partnership with the International Labour Organisation works with the Pakistani authorities to ensure that national labour standards comply with international standards, including on child labour. The EU also supports Ministry of Human Rights' efforts to ensure children's rights and protection through the 'EU Promotion of Human Rights Programme'. We also support education reforms in

Pakistan with a focus on achieving full enrolment in education for all children between 5-14 years, uniform levels of good quality education, so that children are able to develop their potential and gain the skills and knowledge that will enable them to find well-paid decent jobs later on. In addition, both the Rights of the Child Convention (CRC) and the ILO Conventions No.182 and No.138 are part of the UN Conventions linked to the EU GSP+ trade incentive arrangement for Pakistan. On World Day Against Child Labour lets collectively promise to double our efforts to protect little girls and boys, so that stories like Zohra's do not happen again. Rest in Peace little Zohra.

Androulla Kaminara is the Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan.
– Courtesy The Nation

Briefs

NDMA warns against monsoon

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Thursday asked provinces to take precautionary measures to cope with any emergency as above average rains expected in most areas of the country during impending monsoon.

A weather alert issued by the Authority says the monsoon rains had triggered flooding in most areas of Punjab and Sindh last year.

The faulty sewage system choked waterways accelerated flooding in most city areas.

NDMA has asked improving sewage system especially by cleaning mullahs and water channels in Rawalpindi, Karachi, Lahore, Hyderabad and Thatta to avoid damages and losses. — APP

India has crossed all limits

ISLAMABAD: Jammu and Kashmir Pir Panjal Freedom Movement (JKP-PFM) Vice Chairman Qazi Muhammad Imran while paying tributes to the Kashmiri youth recently martyred by Indian troops in Shopian has said that India has crossed all the limits of oppression in occupied Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Qazi Imran said that India was killing innocent Kashmiris every day to eradicate the Muslim majority identity of occupied Kashmir. He said, if India thinks that it will achieve its desired results by massacring the Kashmiri people, then it is mistaken. Kashmiris only want freedom from India and they will one day succeed in their struggle, he added.

Qazi Omar also strongly condemned the unprovoked firing of the Indian Army on the civilian population along the Line of Control (LoC). He expressed condolences to the families of the victims of Indian terrorism in Sahni Chowki, Azad Kashmir. Qazi Imran urged the United Nations to take cognizance of Indian state terrorism in occupied Kashmir and aggression in Azad Kashmir and fulfill its promise of resolving the Kashmir dispute by granting the Kashmiris their right to self-determination. — APP

Power suspension for Peshawar

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Friday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Hayatabad Grid Station on June 14 from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. due to which consumers of 132 KV Hayatabad grid connected feeders will face inconveniences.

It further said that power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Jamrud Grid Station on June 16 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. resultantly consumers of 132 KV Jamrud-Hayatabad transmission line connected feeders will face inconveniences.

The power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Jamrud Grid Station on June 14 from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. owing to which consumers of 11 KV Momand Steel, Northern Bottling feeders will face inconveniences.

The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Nowshera Industrial Grid Station on June 15 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. due to which consumers of 11 KV RA Bazaar, Jalozi, Nowshera Cantt, CST Mill, HPT, Ghee Mill feeders will face inconveniences. Likewise power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Haripur Grid Station on June 16 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Panian 1, Kot 2, Chamba, Zeb Pharma, PIDC feeders will face inconveniences. — APP



ISLAMABAD: President ICCI Muhammad Ahmed addressing post-budget conference. — DNA

PJF imparts virtual lecturers

ISLAMABAD: A four-member panel of Pakistan Judo Federation (PJF) on Friday imparted lectures to over 60 participants on the second day of the Virtual National Judo Referees and Judges Course.

"This was second session of online tutorials for officials and judokas of our provincial associations and affiliated units. We have not been able to hold any activity since the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic. However, we have restarted our activities with this online course," Masood Ahmad, vice president of PJF told APP.

He said judo being a different sort of martial arts sport could not be competed individually, hence the federation decided to arrange online tutorials for referees, judges, coaches and judo players.

"At a time when it has become difficult for officials to work with judokas, this course has provided them an opportunity to remain engaged with their students, provide classes and drills that can be done at home. The course will also help lift the spirits of those who are passing through challenging times due to the pandemic," Masood added. The PJF panel included PJF Vice President Masood Ahmad, PJF Technical Director Muhammad Younis, Director for Judges and Referees Judo Commission Qamar Shakeel and member Judges and Referees Judo Commission Khalid Hussain. — APP

RDA seals offices of 3 housing schemes

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate has sealed site offices of three illegal housing schemes namely Sanam Garden, Judicial Town and OGDC, Mouza Karlot in Tehsil Murree.

The MP&TE Directorate, RDA's staff including Samiullah Niazi Deputy Director Planning, Superintendent Scheme and others with the assistance of the police carried out an operation and took action in accordance with the rules against the violators as the owners of these properties were running illegal housing schemes. They had established illegal booking offices in violation of Punjab Private Housing Schemes and Land Subdivision Rules 2010. According to RDA spokesman, the Director General (DG) RDA had directed the MP&TE Directorate to take strict action against illegal housing schemes, development/construction of booking and site offices without any fear or favour and action should be taken against the violators according to the law.

He said, RDA had advised the general public not to invest in any illegal and unauthorized Housing Scheme. He informed that RDA had also requested Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO), Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd (SNGPL) and PTCL, not to extend services to these illegal housing schemes as their status was unapproved and illegal. — APP

Integrated development partnerships urged to eliminate child labour

Ingrid Christensen, Country Director ILO Pakistan, warned that in the result of covid-19 more than two million more children would be pushed to child labour in Pakistan as the economy collapses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speakers of the international webinar pointed out that increasing child labour gets no appropriate attention of the government and development partners having scope and mandate to curb the menace from society. Deficient and conflicting legislation on child labour and rights is the main hurdle while poor implementation by the local authorities enhances the impact manifolds. Children not only suffer from poverty but physical and mental torture and violence as well.

Decades' old and inefficient data makes the strategies incompetent and irrelevant.

Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan) and DTN organized the webinar on the topic 'covid-19 and Child Labour: the nexus of poverty, population and food security' on Friday to commemorate the World Day Against Child Labour (WDACL).

Ingrid Christensen, Country Director ILO Pakistan, warned that in the result of covid-19 more than two million more children would be pushed to child labour in Pakistan as the economy collapses.

There is a strong link between child labour and socio-economic conditions. To curb the child labour we need to improve rural economy and working conditions for the daily wagers and other marginalized communities that need long term and sustainable partnerships between the development partners and governments. She said the child labour survey was started last year in March with Unicef Pakistan taking lead to access the situation on ground, and after the pandemic it might not be completed in time. After the survey we would be able to realize the

realities for our future interventions. She said by 2025 we have to eliminate the child labour that seems to be a dream without efficient partnerships of stakeholders and partners. We need ample resources and strong will to achieve the targets to contribute to the success of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Senior Programme Officer FAO (HQs) Rome, Ariane Genthon said: We need more data on the involvement of children in harmful tasks in the different sub-sectors of agriculture to help agricultural programmes and stakeholders

take action. The COVID-19 and the locust invasion will have very detrimental effects on farmers, which is likely to exacerbate the number of children in child labour. Agricultural stakeholders, including small-holders, can play a positive role in eliminating child labour in agriculture but we need to involve them. Devcom-Pakistan and DTN Director Munir Ahmed said Child labour in Pakistan is touching the extreme point undoubtedly, and what makes it more vulnerable is relying on the three decades old

data. Somewhere in 1990, it was estimated that 23 million children are out of school and half of them are vulnerably employed in child labour. With Pakistan government restricting the interventions of international development partners in the realm of child rights in particular, some genuinely concerned organizations have packed up their offices from Pakistan and have shifted their development funds to some of the less developed African countries where the child labour is on the peak and child rights are undermined.

AIOU uploads confirmed admissions on its website

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has uploaded the confirmed admissions in Matric and Intermediate programs (Spring-2020) on its official Website, it was stated here on Friday.

Most of the admission process has been completed. By June 19, the entire cases of the confirmed admissions in respect of these two programs would be placed at the website for the students' information. "We have also informed

the students by SMS", said Director Admissions Mian Muhammad Riaz.

The process of uploading the confirmed admissions of post-graduate programs has also been started, and hopefully it will be completed by first week of next month. The students were being facilitated to get ensured their admissions in Spring 2020, in accordance with the directions of the Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, he added.

The data of incomplete admission has also been placed on the website. The nature of objection can

be checked from the link <http://adms.aiou.edu.pk/objections/ssearch.php>.

Those students who could not find information in admission confirmation or objectionable forms sections have been advised to immediately send duplicate admission form to Directorate of Admissions. The duplicate admission form can be downloaded from the university website.

The process of mailing books and other allied material to the enrolled students has already been started, the Director Admissions said.

Rs 660.116 mln for five projects

ISLAMABAD: The government on Friday has allocated around Rs 660.116 million for three ongoing and two new projects of the Ministry of Defence.

According to the Public Sector Development Programme 2020-21, around Rs 570.116 million were allocated for three ongoing schemes of the ministry where Rs 1003.270 million was the total estimated cost of the three ongoing schemes and around Rs 433.154 million were spent till June 30, 2020.

The maximum amount was allocated for Procurement of 3 Nos. Latest Printing Machines for Modernization of Survey of Pakistan which was Rs362.353 million where the total estimated cost of the project was Rs 453.241 million and Rs 90.888 million were spent till June 30, 2020. The least allocation for the ongoing schemes was made for Establishment of FG Degree College for Boys at Kohat which was Rs 87.448 million. — APP

19 cities data for CGPI under review

ISLAMABAD: Around 19 cities of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have provided the data to the Ministry of Climate Change which is under consideration for ranking clean areas under the Clean Green Pakistan Index (CGPI).

According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2019-20, the Prime Minister had launched the CGPI for creating a mechanism of strengthening municipal service delivery by local governments for five pillars of Clean Green Pakistan Movement (CGPM). The CGPI was a composite index of five pillars of the Clean Green Pakistan Movement, i.e., water, sanitation, hygiene, solid waste management, and plantation with equal weightage. The overall sum of scores for five pillars will provide the final score of the Clean Green Pakistan Index. CGPI comprises of more than 35 indicators for ranking the cities.

Baseline of the CGPI was based on the data received from Municipality of 19 selected cities for the month of December and the data of Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2018. The weightage of 50 percent has been allocated for the MICS Household data and 50 percent to Municipality data. The initial three months report for January to March is currently under review and submission of the report for April to June is under process. The base year data for 2019 and 2020 will be available in December 2020.

The service delivery data is being provided by respective city councils and administration working in each district coordinated by Local Government Departments on a monthly basis. The CGPI has been launched as a pilot in 13 cities of Punjab.

Ehsaas Emergency Cash payment crossed the 10 million mark



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ehsaas Emergency Cash program has served more than 10 million beneficiaries since nine weeks of its commencement. The program was launched on April 9, 2020, to extend immediate cash assistance of Rs. 12,000 each to Covid-19 lockdown affected families. Overall, Rs. 144 billion will be disbursed to more than 12 million families. While remarking views on ongoing process of Ehsaas Emergency Cash disbursement, Dr. Sania Nishtar, Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation said, "By the grace of Almighty

Allah we have been able to achieve 10 million mark in Cash disbursement within a period of nine weeks." With the help of district administrations of provinces, law enforcement agencies, NADRA and partner banks, we will meet our target to serve 12 million by the end of this month" she reiterated. Cumulatively, so far, 10.019 million deserving families under categories I, II and III of Ehsaas Emergency Cash program have collected financial assistance of Rs.12,000 each that sums up to Rs. 121.67 billion. This amount has been disbursed among the daily wagers, piece-rate workers and labourers till June 11, 2020 since the beginning of the payment operation under Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program on April 9. To facilitate the beneficiaries amid Covid-19 pandemic, Ehsaas has set up more than 10,000 payment sites across the country.

As per provincial and regional breakdown available on the online Ehsaas disbursements portal, as of today, an amount of Rs. 52.70 billion among 43.42 million beneficiaries in Punjab, Rs.36.63 billion among 30.34 million beneficiaries in Sindh and Rs.22.69 billion has been distributed among 18.45 million beneficiaries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Till today, an amount of Rs.2.12 billion has been disbursed among more than 0.172 million beneficiaries in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Rs. 6.5 billion among 0.497 million beneficiaries of Baluchistan, Rs. 0.88 billion among more than 70,000 beneficiaries in Gilgit-Baltistan and Rs.0.56 billion among more than 46,000 beneficiaries of ICT.

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Azerbaijan to continue close cooperation with Pakistan

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The condominium solution

UNABLE to resolve its border disputes with Pakistan and China, India has now managed to create a dispute with Nepal in the process of building a road to Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet through areas which are claimed by Nepal. History has taught us that such disputes will require disproportionate attention and resources and will remain a bone of contention over a long period, sometimes erupting in wars costing immense human suffering and lives, keeping our relationship with neighbours if not bitter, at least not such that we can trust each other.

Why can't the prime minister who wanted this road built to cater to his Hindu constituency talk to Nepal, with whom India shares its majority religion, to have a joint management of the disputed area, something which may be more difficult to arrive at with Pakistan or China because of the complexity and history of problems involved? It is time to revisit a largely abandoned theory of boundary dispute resolution: The Condominium.

A condominium in international law exists when two or more states exercise joint sovereignty over a territory. More specifically, a condominium exists when "two or more states together exercise joint sovereignty on the same territory, and such sovereignties mutually limit their activities, at least in principle, on the grounds of legal equality."

The condominium has been burdened historically, by the primacy of sovereignty as a consideration in the state system at the cost of peace and loss of lives. Other resolution devices rely upon indivisible notions of sovereignty, which means that, regardless of whether a dispute is resolved peacefully or through armed conflict, one side invariably loses on a claim it believed to be valid.

This resolution is often temporary as the losing side never completely abandons its claim and seizes every opportunity to recapture it. If we look closely, we find that there is nothing in the nature of sovereignty to render impossible a permanent and agreed division of sovereignty as suggested by the very nature of a condominium.

A Framework Agreement was signed on August 3, 2015 by the Narendra Modi government with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) in which a concept of shared sovereignty and inclusive relationship of enduring peaceful co-existence of the two entities has been agreed to, alluding to the government's willingness to accept a flexible nature of sovereignty with an objective to resolving a long-standing dispute with Naga people. Today, the European Union is taken for granted – an institution with its own legislature, its own courts, and even its own currency.

The fact that European states, the paramount forces in the creation of sovereignty in the Westphalian order, have increasingly ceded authority to a non-state entity shows that states are re-evaluating their traditional notions of sovereignty. The willingness of states to cede sovereignty to other bodies suggests that condominiums could, at last, serve as a viable long-term mechanism to resolve boundary disputes.

For a better strategy

WE all know that the Pakistan government's struggle against the Covid-19 pandemic has been a fractured one. The lockdown spoken of never really happened or was at least not seen to have been properly implemented in most parts of the country. Now we hear that after the Eid break, for which the so-called lockdown was formally ended and travel opened up, more and more Covid-19 cases are being reported even from rural areas visited by those from larger cities.

We also know that the virtually non-existent health facilities in these areas cannot cope with the coronavirus and doctors lack the means to manage it, even in terms of protective gear.

As the next step in its campaign, we are told the government has moved towards further intruding into the privacy of citizens. This intrusion had already been a problem, with higher levels of surveillance put on material posted by people and the views they express on social media. According to media reports, the country's top intelligence agencies was to use the counter-militancy track and trace system to detect Covid patients and then their contacts with symptoms, by using phone data and content to determine who may be suffering from the sickness.

However, there is a chance that this measure could further make it seem that acquiring Covid-19 is some sort of offence.

This is hardly the way to build the trust of citizens or combat the pandemic which has now infected around 100,000 persons and claimed over 2,000 lives. The idea that conversations over telephones can be listened in to is an invasion of privacy. The steps that could be taken forward from this point on are potentially even more alarming in an environment where dissent is already being stamped upon, with newspaper columnists and TV anchors threatened.

The 'police state' approach to tackling Covid has been used in other countries, including Israel and Singapore. These however are not the best models of democracy in the world. Far more effective was the tackling of the virus in New Zealand, where the lockdown was lifted nearly three weeks ago and no new cases have been reported for over two weeks. This is indeed success on the highest possible scale of merit. Yet it was achieved without the use of coercive power by the state, beyond imposing a tight lockdown, and even this lockdown was made effective by gaining the cooperation and support of people rather than through potentially illegal methods of surveillance. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Arden made it a point to talk regularly to citizens over the media and even tell stories to young children to educate them about Covid-19. This is leadership at its best.

The methods used by New Zealand worked not just because of its higher economic standing, especially since the island state which depends largely on tourism as a source of income was badly hit, but because people trusted their government and were willing to voluntarily follow the advice given to them. We see just the opposite in our own state.

The Forgotten Lockdown

Moinul Haque



The sweeping victory in the 2019 election further energized Modi and his supporters. With no holds-barred approach, the Hindutva plan was placed on a fast track mode. The first step was the illegal bifurcation of the Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir on 5th August last year. To impose its will, Indian government moved over 100,000 additional troops to the Kashmir valley, cutting the telephone lines and the internet, imposing curfew, and jailing political leaders. This unprecedented lockdown continues to this day sadly pushing the innocent and hapless Kashmiris back to dark ages. Next on the agenda was the pending court's decision about the fate of decades old case of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya

virus of hate, prejudice and intolerance, systematically manufactured in the laboratory of RSS – the ideological waterhead of the Indian ruling party BJP. IOJ&K is under curfew and lock down for more than ten months. This is being enforced brutally by nearly 900,000 Indian military, making the region the most militarized zone in the world. Virtually the people are caged within their homes with one soldier standing in front of a house transforming the place to a gigantic prison. Children cannot go to school, sick to hospitals, nor dead can receive proper burial. These draconian restrictions are not to contain a viral pandemic, but to suppress the will of people who simply want the protection of their fundamental rights and fulfilment of promises made to them by Indian leaders for safeguarding their land and identity. This Virus of Hate being spread in India through a carefully crafted plan targeting minorities especially 200 million Indian Muslims has slowly but surely led to the death of humanity in a country which once took pride in its diversity and secular traditions. Not anymore.

The country had started its slide towards religious intolerance and communal violence immediately after BJP came into power in 2014. Public lynching of innocent Muslim citizens by RSS goons and supporters became a norm. Sadly, the BJP leadership encouraged this crowd vigilantism by themselves preaching hate and violence against Muslims. Yogi Adityanath, the controversial Hindu monk, who is the Chief Minister of Indian largest state Uttar Pradesh (UP), had time and again given statements targeting Muslims. Referring to peaceful rally of women against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), he declared that these women should be fed with 'bullets than buryani'. In one of his public gathering, one of his supporters went to the extreme of exhorting to dig out the bodies of dead Muslim women from their graves and rape them.

BJP and RSS' Hindutva agenda is no more a secret. This hateful and exclusionary plan draws inspiration from Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism. For them, India is only for Hindus, and the remaining Indian Muslims, Christians and Sikhs are second class citizens who must embrace Hindu culture and values in order to earn the right to live in India. According to the celebrated Indian writer Arundhati Roy, RSS compares the Muslims of India to the Jews of Germany believing that Muslims have no place in Hindu India. She noted that BJP leaders in their speeches repeatedly cast Muslims as 'treacherous permanent outsiders', whose only place is either 'graveyard or Pakistan'. The French scholar Christophe Jafferlot notes that 'Hindu nationalists see themselves as the true sons of soil, whereas they view Muslims and Christians as products of bloody foreign invasions'.

After BJP won election in 2014, 'safronzation' of Indian history and cultural practices started with a renewed vigour. Under this project, history textbooks in educational institutions were rewritten to further Hindu supremacist agenda idolizing Hindu icons and effacing references to Muslims contributions during their long rule of India. Roads named after Mughal kings have been renamed, while Muslim rulers have been demonized with accusations of sanctioning 'holocaust' on Hindus. Even the iconic TajMahal was not spared when UP government excluded it from its Tourism Booklet issued in 2017. UP's Chief Minister's Adityanath aversion to this Mughal monument was well known, with his assertion that it was not part of India's culture and he even claimed it to be a Hindu temple. BJP's first term in government was while more ostensibly focussed on its economic agenda and forging international partnerships, but under the close watch of Prime Minister Modi and his cohorts, the grounds were also prepared in a sustained manner for party's Hindu-First agenda and 're-making of India into an authoritarian, Hindu nationalist state'. To achieve this, BJP systematically gained control of key government institutions. Samantha Subramanian writing in the Guardian last year termed it as the most serious crisis of India's 72 years of existence. He noted that India's 'courts, much of its media, its investigative

agencies, its election commission – have been pressured to fall in line with Modi's policies'. The nexus between ultra-nationalist Indian media and BJP, in particular, has reached to dangerous proportions. Many amongst Indian intelligentsia and civil society have characterized the nationalist media as a 'mouthpiece of Modi government'. It is also being feared that Hindutva ideology would ultimately lead to the undoing of Indian constitution. Subramanian in his Guardian piece wrote that 'constitutional niceties' weren't compatible with 'BJP's blueprint for a country in which people are graded and assessed according to their faith'. It was therefore no surprise when BJP leaders repeatedly attacked secular makeup of Indian polity. Pragya Thakur, a BJP politician from Bhopal even called Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Gandhi, as a 'patriot'.

Thus, the decades old RSS' scheme for creating a Hindu nation was being achieved in a methodical manner by infecting the minds of majority with a virus of hate and through constant vilification of the minority communities. As Subramanian asserted that RSS and BJP's success owed to 'adept poisoning of public discourse' and 'indoctrination of media outlets', while 'squadrons of social media trolls lie, polarise and demonize all day long'. Majority of Indian Hindus played along wilfully. Others had no choice but to keep silent as anyone with a dissenting voice would be dubbed as a traitor and anti-national.

For some this psychotic behaviour may seem an aberration in a diverse country like India, yet there was a method in this RSS madness making this hateful pathogen seep deep into the power corridors and the city. This divisive and exclusionary approach may prove unproductive in another democracy, yet in Hindu India it was helping in shoring up BJP votes with vocal support for its Hindutva ideology.

The sweeping victory in the 2019 election further energized Modi and his supporters. With no holds-barred approach, the Hindutva plan was placed on a fast track mode. The first step was the illegal bifurcation of the Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir on 5th August last year. To impose its will, Indian government moved over 100,000 additional troops to the Kashmir valley, cutting the telephone lines and the internet, imposing curfew, and jailing political leaders. This unprecedented lockdown continues to this day sadly pushing the innocent and hapless Kashmiris back to dark ages.

Next on the agenda was the pending court's decision about the fate of decades old case of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. This 16th century mosque was destroyed by a Hindu mob in 1992 in an act of political vandalism on the instigation of BJP led by none other than Modi himself triggering religious riots across India killing nearly two thousand people. The Indian Supreme Court in November last year in its 'bizarre' verdict, while terming the 1992 demolition of mosque as unlawful, handed over the property for a building a temple to the same forces responsible for the destruction in the first place. The ugly mob justice was thus ironically sanctified by the highest court of the country further pushing the India's largest religious minority to live in 'perpetual insecurity'. Third stage of the Hindutva plan was the enactment of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which allowed religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan to acquire Indian citizenship except Muslims. The bill's anti-Muslim slant was too obvious. It was immediately criticized as anti-constitutional and was seen as part of BJP's agenda to marginalise Muslims. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Commission also filed a petition in Indian Supreme Court over the exclusionary nature of the bill.

Despite the country-wide protests against the new law which was also joined by liberal segments of the society, the BJP leadership did not budge. Instead they were now more vocal and open in their bias towards Muslims. BJP parliamentarian Subramanian Swamy in a media interview unashamedly termed Muslims as troublemakers and claimed that they did not deserve equal rights. An astonishing state-

ment only adding to the 'toxic anti-minority discourse'. And then it happened. A lesson was given to these 'troublemakers'. For three days in February this year, Muslim houses, businesses and worship places in north-east New Delhi were burnt and destroyed by frenzied Hindu mobs, dozens of Muslims were killed brutally while police watched silently and even facilitated the rioters. New York Times writing about Delhi Police complicity noted that this was 'the inevitable result of Hindu extremism that has flourished under the government of Narendra Modi'. Politicization of law enforcement machinery by BJP has indeed 'emboldened Hindu extremists on streets'.

The nature of New Delhi violence was hauntingly evocative of Gujrat pogrom of 2002, when over 1,000 Muslims were butchered by extremist Hindus. And then too, the state police was accused of inaction. It was no coincidence that Modi was the Chief Minister of the state at that time. For years, his entry was banned in UK and USA for his alleged role in the Gujrat killings.

Shahzaman Haque, the Director of Urdu Department at INALCO Paris, in his article about Delhi massacre wrote 'Delhi's orchestrated pogrom against Muslim community is a glimpse of the potential genocide which is lurking in our society'. Being an Indian Muslim himself, his personal pain over their fate being 'turning from second-class citizens to full pariahs' could be felt throughout the article.

It was no surprise when US Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended India to be placed on 'blacklist'. The annual report of the bipartisan panel noted the 'drastic' downward trend in the religious freedom conditions under Modi's Hindu nationalist government which 'allowed violence against minorities and their houses of worship to continue with impunity, and also engaged in and tolerated hate speech and incitement to violence.'

And now when the world is facing an unprecedented health crisis, Modi and his Hindutva supporters have found a new way to vilify Muslims by portraying them as alleged spreaders of the coronavirus. Dedicated trolls of social media spread fake news while Islamophobic hashtags like 'CoronaJihad', 'CoronaTerrorism' and 'BioJihad' have created fresh grounds for anti-Muslim propaganda. Arundhati Roy reminded us that the way BJP is using Covid19 against Muslims is similar to Typhus being used by Nazi Germany against Jews to 'stigmatise and ghettoise them'.

BJP government sadly but not surprisingly chose to fight the coronavirus pandemic by unleashing their own signature Virus of Hate. As an article in Washington Post noted 'It didn't take long before India's response to the coronavirus was tainted by the kind of discrimination and Islamophobia that has characterized the nationalist administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi'. There is no relenting to the sufferings of religious minorities in India. BJP's nationalist agenda with all its communal colouring and selective approach is in full bloom. Today everybody is talking about the social distress and economic downturns brought about by few weeks old lockdowns to control coronavirus, yet the untold miseries caused by months old lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir have been regrettably forgotten.

The hateful pathogen propagated under Hindutva plan has already infected large sections of India with no vaccine in sight. Sadly, the international community with its own narrow considerations has been a silent spectator. Unless the conscience of the humanity is awakened, the Indian religious minorities especially the 200 million Muslims would continue to face the impending existential threat. Let there be some sanity, some balance, a tolerant way of living. Major powers who champion democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms must play their due role and demonstrate responsibility in calling out these excesses against minorities in India. Otherwise, as noted by Riaz Muhammad Khan, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, in his recent article in Dawn newspaper, 'the politics of exceptionalism and exclusion, hate and confrontation' might lead the world to its 'ruination'.

Briefs

Pak to have enough ventilators

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Science and Technology Chaudhry Fawad Hussain says Pakistan would be self-sufficient soon in manufacturing ventilators. Talking to a private news channel, he said testing kits were prepared in the country within a week to diagnose the coronavirus patients. The Minister said many countries including Pakistan have eased lockdown to facilitate their people especially daily wagers. He said the government has announced hefty economic relief package in the shape of Ehsaas programme to financially empower common man.

Interior Minister's appeal to masses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Ijaz Shah has appealed to the people to strictly follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in order to stifle the spread of COVID-19. In his media briefing at National Command and Operation Center in Islamabad on Friday, he said the Prime Minister has taken strict notice of the violations of SOPs and directed the provinces to ensure their compliance. The Interior Minister said action has been taken against those not following the precautionary measures but stressed that the government and law enforcement agencies alone cannot control the situation until and unless the people extend their cooperation. Ijaz Shah said we can rid the country of the disease with collective efforts and unity.

Worldwide corona death toll 423,000

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The number of coronavirus infections across the world has risen to over 7 point five million, while the pandemic has so far claimed over 423,000 lives. The United States is at the top with more than two million cases and over 116,000 deaths followed by Brazil with over 800,000 infections and over 41,000 deaths.

OGRA imposes fine

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has imposed fine amounting to 40 million rupees on six Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) for not maintaining the required fuel stocks as per terms and conditions of the licences awarded to them. In a news release, OGRA Spokesman Imran Ghaznavi said fine of five million rupees each has been imposed on Attock Petroleum Limited, Puma, Gas & Oil Pakistan Limited and Hascol, and 10 million rupees each on Shell Pakistan and Total Parco Pakistan Limited. He said all oil marketing companies have been directed to ensure regular supply of petroleum products to their retail outlets, otherwise fine would be imposed on them as per the law.

Rs 80 mln for BOI

ISLAMABAD: The government has allocated Rs80 million in Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2020-21 for one on-going scheme of the Board of Investment (BOI) for the industrial promotion and investment in the country. - APP

EXPANSION OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

Pakistani company signs deal with Chinese wind turbine producer

The plant comprises of 20 wind turbines having a combined capacity to generate 30MW of electricity (each having a capacity of 1.5 MW). The project achieved its Commercial Operations Date on 8th October, 2016. The ACT project Phase II is set to be located in Jhimpir, known as "the pathway of wind" in Sindh province

DNA

BEIJING: A major developer of wind energy in Pakistan, ACT Wind (Pvt) Limited, has signed a contract with Xinjiang Goldwind Science Technology Co., Ltd. to acquire 50MW suite of wind turbine for the Phase II ACT project. The suite is comprised of 20 turbines

with each having a capacity of 2.5MW. It's the second time the two companies stroke a deal and the first can date back to four years ago when ACT project Phase I of 30MW adopted Goldwind's wind turbines, which have been in secure and stable operation since then, China Economic Net reported on Friday. ACT project Phase I is

first of the many power projects jointly owned and operated by Tapal Group, Akhtar Group and Ismail Industries. The plant comprises of 20 wind turbines having a combined capacity to generate 30MW of electricity (each having a capacity of 1.5 MW). The project achieved its Commercial Operations Date on 8th October, 2016. The ACT

project Phase II is set to be located in Jhimpir, known as "the pathway of wind" in Sindh province. Goldwind was the first Chinese wind turbine producer to enter the Pakistani market in 2013. It has customized high-temperature wind turbine for Pakistan that boasts average availability of over 99% in a long term. Meanwhile, Goldwind has

cultivated local talents with knowledge and skills on operation, maintenance and examination of wind power plant. With an edge in providing products that feature high-adaptability to the environment and stable operation, Goldwind has grown to become a model for local wind power projects. So far, Goldwind has played a part in the investment and

operation of 6 power plants in Pakistan. With the order of ACT Phase II project to be implemented, new installation of wind generators in Pakistan provided by Goldwind will reach 150MW by 2022 and the total installment will register 477MW. Such an amount of environment-friendly wind energy is estimated to provide 1.5 billion (Kwh) of electricity,

alleviating the power shortage in a greener way. As the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) lays a solid foundation for the improvement of infrastructure in Pakistan, Goldwind will bring more high-quality products and technologies to this country and support its development with reliable, sustainable and affordable renewable energy.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Indonesia Iwan Amri presiding over a meeting at the Embassy. - DNA

Five virus cases from Pakistan in Shanghai

DNA

BEIJING: Five imported coronavirus cases, all from Pakistan, were reported on Friday morning, said the Shanghai Health Commission. Quoting the Commission,

Gwadar Pro stated, the five individuals from Pakistan departed for Shanghai on June 2 and arrived at Shanghai Pudong airport on the same day, and were placed down quarantine upon arrival. They showed symptoms during the isolated obser-

vation period and were confirmed as COVID-19 patients. Local health authority said the patients have been sent to a designated hospital for medical treatment, while 55 close contacts on the flight have been put under concentrated quar-

antine. By Thursday, Shanghai had registered a total of 348 confirmed imported cases. Sixteen of them remain hospitalized, one suspected case, and the rest were discharged from hospital after recovery, according to the commission.

Iran reports 2,369 new COVID-19 cases

TEHRAN: Iran's confirmed novel coronavirus cases rose to 182,545 on Friday after an overnight registration of 2,369 new infections, according to official IRNA news agency. During her daily briefing, Sima Sadat Lari, the spokeswoman for Iran's Ministry of Health and Medical Education, said out of the new cases in the past 24 hours, 687 were hospitalized. The pandemic has so far claimed the lives of 8,659 Iranians, up by 75 in the past 24 hours, she said. So far, 144,649 have recovered and been discharged from hospitals and 2,739 remain in critical condition. According to Lari, 1,196,947 lab tests for COVID-19 have been carried out in Iran as of Friday. Iran's health official urged the people to wear facemasks in public place, observe social distancing and avoid unnecessary gatherings. She also urged the elderly to stay homes. Iran announced its first cases of COVID-19 on Feb. 19. In mid-February, at the early stage of the coronavirus outbreak in China, Iran lit up the Tehran Azadi (Liberty) Tower to show its solidarity with China, and donated 3 million masks to China. - APP

Shahzad urges opposition not to politicize COVID-19 issue

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the House in Senate Dr Shahzad Waseem on Friday urged the opposition not to politicize coronavirus (COVID-19) issue and to join hands to tackle the pandemic. Responding to points raised by senators, he said the whole world including Pakistan was confronted to COVID-19 as it was a global pandemic. He said the government had adopted a comprehensive strategy since day first to handle the pandemic. After detection of first coronavi-



rus case on February 26, the government devised a national action programme (NAP) in March to effectively deal with the pandemic, he added. He said the federal government had institutionalized the decision process after the pandemic and included all provinces in National Command and Operation Centre (NCO) to control COVID-19. Shahzad Waseem said over 100 laboratories had been functional to conduct COVID-19 tests and daily testing capacity had reached to over 30,000 tests per day. Similarly, number of ventilators had also been increased, he added.

Uzbek MPs hold dialogue on human rights

National parliaments play a key role in international relations, ensuring well-being, protecting human rights and freedoms, strengthening the rule of law at both the national and international levels

DNA

TASHKENT: On 10 June 2020, the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis hosted an international parliamentary forum in the form of a video conference on the theme "The role of parliaments in implementing the recommendations of the UN charter and treaty bodies: the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Committee on human rights." The event for the first time in the history of Uzbek parliamentarism was organized by the Legislative Chamber and Senate of the Oliy Majlis together with the international organization of world

parliamentarians - the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as well as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Permanent Mission in the Republic of Uzbekistan and the National Center for Human Rights of the Republic of Uzbekistan. It was attended by IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong, representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Gianni Magazzeni, heads of the chambers of the Parliament of Uzbekistan, representatives of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, ODIHR / OSCE and other international organizations and foreign experts, deputies of the Legislative Chamber and

members of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis. This event was held ahead of the Inter-

national Day of Parliamentarism. National parliaments play

a key role in international relations, ensuring well-being, protecting hu-

man rights and freedoms, strengthening the rule of law at both the national and international levels. The event became an online platform for constructive dialogue among parliamentarians. It heard reports of the IPU, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Parliament of Uzbekistan. Some work is carried out in this direction by the Senate of the Oliy Majlis. As the Chairman of the upper house of parliament Tanzila Narbaeva noted, in accordance with the recommendations of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a parliamentary commission on SDGs was created in the structure of the Oliy Majlis.



Thailand to open tourism

BANGKOK: Thailand will open "travel bubbles" with countries which have comparably low coronavirus infections, officials said Friday, as the kingdom tries to claw back money for its battered tourism sector. The country closed its borders at the start of April, leading to millions of job losses across a tourism industry which accounts for around 20 percent of GDP. Despite registering the first COVID-19 case outside of China in January, Thailand has recorded just 3,129 infections with 58 deaths. Buoyed by the low figures, tourism officials are hoping to lure back visitors from regional countries with similar levels of the virus, including China, Vietnam, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. - APP

UN: Missiles used to attack Aramco were of Iranian origin

NEW YORK: Cruise missiles used in several attacks on Aramco's oil facilities and an international airport in Saudi Arabia last year were of "Iranian origin," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the Security Council in a report seen by Reuters on Thursday. Guterres also said several items in US seizures of weapons and related materiel in November 2019 and February 2020 were "of Iranian origin." Some have design characteristics similar to those also produced by a commercial entity in Iran, or bear Farsi markings, Guterres said, and some were delivered to the country between February 2016 and April 2018. He said that "these items may have been transferred in a manner inconsistent" with a 2015 Security Council resolution that enshrines Tehran's deal with world powers to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons. Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment on the UN report. Washington is pushing the 15-member council to extend an arms embargo on Iran that is due to expire in October under the nuclear deal. Council veto-powers Russia and China have already signaled their opposition to the move. - DNA