



# Islamabad Daily POST

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**Mireille Zieseniss**  
new US embassy  
spokesperson

**Bill Gates**  
rubbishes theory  
he created virus



**Japan to continue**  
supporting Pak  
against polio



## Briefs

### APNS closed holidays

DNA

KARACHI: APNS has announced closed holidays on account of EID-UL-AZHA on Saturday, August 01 and Sunday, August 02, 2020. Consequently, there will be no morning newspaper on Sunday, August 02 and Monday, August 03, 2020 and newspapers will publish their normal editions on Tuesday, August 04, 2020. Whereas the evening newspapers not appearing on Saturday, August 01 and Sunday, August 02, 2020, may bring out their issues on Monday, August 03, 2020, if they so desire.

### CAA allows Omani airline to operate

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Friday granted permission to Omani-based airline, Salam Air, to operate six repatriation flights from Muscat to Pakistan.

A spokesperson for the CAA said that the decision has been taken so that the stranded Pakistanis in Muscat could celebrate Eidul Azha with their families. The airline has been allowed to operate six flights from Muscat to six cities of Pakistan from July 26 to August 2. "The permission is subject to the condition that no disembarkation of flight crew shall be permitted from the aircraft upon arrival at Karachi, Lahore, Sialkot, Multan and Islamabad airports," read a permit issued to the airline. Earlier on July 14, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) had allowed the country's private airline, SereneAir, to operate special repatriation flights to Sharjah from July 15. The spokesperson of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) had said that SereneAir had been issued a license to operate three special charted flights to assist stranded Pakistani nationals in Sharjah. The aviation authority's air transportation department had issued a certificate to the private airline.

### ECP seeks accounts details

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan on Friday reminds the Political Parties in terms of section 210 of the Elections Act, 2017 read with section 204 of the Act ibid and rule 159 & 160 of the Election Rules, 2017, thereof, that they are required to file with Election Commission their statement of accounts for financial year, 2019-2020 on or before 29th August, 2020.

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## Pak keen to cement defence ties with Italy

Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Andreas Ferrarese meets defence minister; discusses bilateral relations

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Defence Pervez Khattak has said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with the Republic of Italy and wants to further enhance defence collaboration in different fields. In a meeting with the Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Andreas Ferrarese in Islamabad, the minister mentioned that exchanged military training can be mutually beneficial as being part of NATO the Italian armed forces have valuable military exposure while Pakistan's armed forces, who are fighting the war on terror, have rich experience in counter-terrorism operations. Pervez Khattak conveyed gratitude for facil-

itating the provision of military equipment to Pakistan Air Force (PAF). The defence minister further emphasized on the need to explore areas of cooperation in the field of joint defence production. The minister informed that defence co-operation between Pakistan and Italy was established in the 60's, and it has steadily increased over the past few years. The broad domain of defence cooperation is governed by high-level visits, military training and procurement of defence equipment. During the meeting, the latest security situation along the Pak-Afghan border and Pakistan's commitment to peace and stability in the region also came under discussion. The minister appreciated the role, contribution and sacrifices of Italy in Afghanistan.

## Korea extends more assistance to Pakistan

I am encouraged to see Pak new daily COVID-19 cases declining due to timely measures taken by the Pak govt: Korean Ambassador Kwak Sung-Kyu

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Standing by Pakistan in its fight against COVID-19 pandemic, the Korean government this time decided to extend in-kind assistance worth \$500,000, on top of \$300,000 already extended in April. Korea will ship Korea-produced test kits which can be utilized in enhancing Pakistan's testing capacity, and face masks etc. to Pakistan. "I am encouraged to see Pakistan's new daily COVID-19 cases declining due to timely measures taken by the Pakistani government, and Korea will continue to render support for Pakistan's efforts to successfully contain the deadly virus." Korean Ambassador Kwak Sung-Kyu said in his meeting with



Mr. Noor Ahmed, Secretary, Economic Affairs Division in Islamabad on Friday. "Pakistan highly appreciates Korea's additional support for its precautionary actions against the pandemic, and it reflects the wonderful bilateral relations and solidarity during this challenging time." Mr.

Ahmed mentioned. In providing in-kind assistance, the Korean Embassy in Islamabad will closely coordinate with the Pakistani government and the World Health Organization (WHO) office in Islamabad to ensure that the assistance items are delivered to where they are most needed.

## Mireille Zieseniss new US embassy spokesperson

SHUJAAT HAMZA



In that role she will also facilitate media interviews, press briefings, and other activities with the Ambassador, Embassy officers, and visiting U.S. government officials. She succeeds Joe Wierichs, who completed his tenure in Islamabad.

ISLAMABAD: Mireille Zieseniss will serve as the US Embassy Spokesperson effective July 22, 2020, the Embassy made an announcement on Friday. Ms. Zieseniss comes to Embassy Islamabad following postings as the Deputy Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, Director of the U.S. State Department's Regional Media Hub in Brussels, and other diplomatic assignments in Afghanistan, Costa Rica, the Philippines, and Washington, D.C. She began her State Department career in 2006. Ms. Zieseniss holds a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism from the University of Missouri and a Master's Degree in Sociology from the University of Florida. Prior to joining the State Department, she worked as an analyst for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, where she worked to promote voting rights, indigenous rights, and equal education and employment opportunity. She is originally from Miami, Florida.



ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Pervez Khattak presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of Italy Andreas Ferrarese. - DNA

## Govt to take care of Baloch people, says PM

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday said that the government is fully aware of the sense of deprivation of the people of Balochistan and efforts are being made to address it. The second meeting of the National Development Council was held in Islamabad with PM Imran Khan in chair. The meeting considered in detail the national development agenda. The meeting considered various projects to improve transportation, better utilization of water resources, agriculture, energy projects, establishment of border markets and taking full advantage of Gwadar Port in the backward areas of Balochistan. Addressing the meeting on the occasion, the prime minister said that ensuring complete law and order in Balochistan and socio-economic development was the top priority of the government.

## NAB says Ch brothers laundered money

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has claimed that it is investigating assets beyond means cases while fulfilling all legal requirements and that the Chaudhry brothers laundered money through five fake accounts. According to details, NAB investigation against Chaudhry brothers in assets beyond means case is in progress with a new NAB report.

## ERADICATION OF POLIO Japan to continue supporting Pakistan

Since 1996, Japan has been supporting Pakistan's efforts to eradicate polio, with a cumulative total of \$229 million: Ambassador Matsuda

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: MATSUDA Kunitoshi, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, has been encouraged by the announcement by the Government of Pakistan that Pakistan resumed its polio vaccination campaign on July 20 after a four-month suspension due to the COVID-19 outbreak. As a total of 58 polio cases have been reported in Pakistan as of July 20 in the current year, Japan welcomes Pakistan's initiative to eradicate polio in Pakistan including the

first round of the resumed campaign which will cover Faisalabad, Atok, South Waziristan, Karachi and Quetta, with a target of vaccinating about 800,000 children under the age of five. Since 1996, Japan has been supporting Pakistan's efforts to eradicate polio, with a cumulative total of \$229 million. Japan's assistance has been used for vaccines, cooling equipment for vaccines, vaccinators' daily allowance, educational activities, virus inspection equipment to prevent the spread of polio infection in Pakistan. Ambassador MATSUDA

said, "I sincerely hope that the first round of the resumed vaccination campaign will be successful and the subsequent campaign in the second half of this year will be implemented as planned. I would like to salute health staff engaged in the campaign under challenging circumstances such as COVID-19 and security threat. In addition to providing support to Pakistan for fighting against COVID-19, the Government of Japan will continue to work hand-in-hand with the Government of Pakistan and the international community to achieve "polio-free Pakistan."

## ICJ review bill in Pak interest

NEHAL MIRAJ



Naseem Friday urged the opposition to let the government pass the ICJ review and reconsideration ordinance, 2020 aimed at giving consular access to Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav because it was made obligatory by International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its judgment. Speaking in the National Assembly, he said the ordinance was brought so that Pakistan could meet its international obligations as a responsible state. The minister said the federal government could promul-

gate an ordinance when the two houses of Parliament were not in session. The government through a petition put the matter of Kulbhushan Jhadav before the Islamabad High Court in light of the International Court of Justice decision of July 17, 2019, he added. He clarified that it was not an "NRO" as the sentence of Kulbhushan was not being repealed. Pervez Musharraf gave NRO to opposition leaders when he ended their sentences, he remarked. Farogh said opposition parties had not held consultation before bringing ordinances when they were in power as it was not a requirement. He said India took the matter to ICJ when the then federal government decided to not give consular access to Kulbhushan, a RAW operator, who was arrested on March 3, 2016.

## Zardari's indictment postponed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad accountability court adjourned indictment proceedings against former president Asif Ali Zardari and his sister Farah Talpur till July 29. They were to be indicted on Friday in the mega money laundering reference. The hearing was adjourned without any action due to the absence of Judge Azam Khan. Abdul Ghani Majeed and other respondents appeared in court. A plea bargain report on Zain Malik, the son-in-law of Bahria Town chief Malik Riaz, will be submitted at the next hearing.

## Bill Gates rubbishes theory he created virus

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Microsoft founder Bill Gates slammed conspiracy theories on social media that accuse him of inventing the coronavirus that has killed more than 600,000 across the globe. "It's a bad combination of pandemic and social media and people looking for a very simple explanation," he said. Doctored photos and fabricated news articles crafted by conspiracy theorists - shared thousands of times on social media platforms and messaging apps, in various languages - targeting Gates have gained traction online since the start of the pandemic.

## Pakistan-China business avenues still untapped

DNA/STAFF REPORT

BEIJING: Besides extensive collaborations in energy, infrastructure, industrial and socio-economic spectrum, Pakistan and China have another business avenue to tap to further promote their socio-economic partnership. China, which has gained mastery in the field of reclaiming lands from deserts through afforestation, has already channeled its own business fortunes by giving robust impetus to sand economy. This ecological industry has not only unleashed monetary gains but also help catalyze jobs especially for rural areas in China. Pakistan, desperately, needs the sand economy which is also called green economy to

usher in era of afforestation to transform ill-fate into lucrative business. Being a home of five deserts including Cholistan desert, Thal desert, Indus Valley Desert, Thar Desert and Kharan desert, Pakistan's economy may get a booster if the PTI government engages with China to establish ecological industry. The report says, Pakistan should take inspiration from the example of China's success story showcased in Kubuqi desert. Elion, a private ecology and investment enterprise, invested approximately RMB 38 billion (\$5.82 billion) in the Kubuqi desert-greening project since 1988, helping to lift more than 102,000 local farmers and herdsmen out of poverty. If Pakistani economic wizards exploit the scenario, deserts will transform into fertile land to

"Kubuqi project generated over 5000 employment opportunities for local peasants and herdsmen, while free professional training has also been provided to make them the new generation ecological construction workers"

help grow Chinese herbal plants in great number. By exporting them that are in high demand in China, Pakistani may amplify its exports base in China. Environmentalist Dr Javed Iqbal said that Pakistan should welcome Elion Resources Group and its investment proposal in deserts of country. ERG has planted the seed of industrialization of desertification control in people's mind, he adds. Kubuqi project generated over 5000 employment opportunities for local peasants and herdsmen, while free professional training has also been provided to make them the new-generation ecological construction workers, tourist service staff and skilled workers of intensive breeding and planting. The ecological industry in desert has increased the income of natives

by over RMB 300 million per year. The per capita net income of herdsmen has increased from RMB 2,000 in the past to RMB 30,000 at present. All five deserts in Pakistan have been confronting the same worst conditions like once Kubuqi desert in China suffered 32 years ago. Cholistan desert sprawling over 10,200 sq mile is stripped off all civic facilities with scanty water and vegetation. Agriculturist Dr. Humayun Faisal says that Pakistan governments, in past, launched some projects to increase the prospects of irrigation and cultivation in the Thal desert by unveiling Greater Thal Canal project (phase I and Phase II) costing Rs. 30 billion in 2001 but unfortunately project stands incomplete so far.





## Briefs

## Rabies vaccine available in all districts: Dr Yasmin

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Health Dr Yasmin Rashid on Thursday said that rabies vaccine was available in all district hospitals and the government had 25,000 vaccines in store. Responding to the queries by lawmakers during the Punjab Assembly session, she said another 50,000 rabies vaccine would be made available by the end of this month and there was nothing to panic.

Earlier, Punjab Assembly session started two hours behind its scheduled time of 2 p.m. with Panel of Chairman Mian Shafi Muhammad in the chair. The day's agenda pertained to questions relating to Primary and Secondary Health department. Provincial Health Minister Dr. Yasmin Rashid responded to the questions by the lawmakers.

To a supplementary question by the Opposition MPA Shazia Abid, the Health Minister said specialist doctors were usually reluctant to serve in the rural areas and the government faced difficulty in this regard. However, doctors were posted against 70 seats out of 84 and the rest of the 14 posts would be filled by the end of July, she added. — APP

## Ismail Rahu rules out wheat shortage

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu on Friday ruled out any shortage of wheat in the province. There is no shortage of wheat in Sindh as 12,50,000 tons of wheat is stored with the province, Ismail Rahu said in his statement issued here from Karachi.

The minister said flour mills in Sindh are also having wheat stock and added that the provincial cabinet will decide about release of wheat to the flour mills. Rahu also alleged the federal government responsible for shortage of wheat in Punjab. On July 20, Flour Mills Association in the Sindh province hiked prices of flour after they claimed an increase in prices of wheat province-wide. The mill owners had raised the prices of flour No. 2.5 by Rs 3 per kilogram (Kg), fine flour by Rs 1.5 per kg, and Chakki flour by Rs 2 per kg.

## Govt imposes complete ban on tourism on Eid

SWAT: In view of the directives of the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the situation of Coronavirus in the country, there was a complete ban on tourism in the Malakand division including Swat, so people should avoid coming here at any time, especially on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, said an official hand-out issued here on Friday. All those who are not permanent residents of Swat are advised to refrain from coming to Swat for tourism purposes otherwise they will face difficulties. Law enforcement agencies across the district Officials have been directed to take steps to implement the ban on tourism in view of the pandemic situation.

## SPI inflation increases 0.21%

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) based weekly inflation for the week ended on July 23, for the combined consumption group, witnessed an increase of 0.21 percent as compared to the previous week. The SPI for the week under review in the above mentioned group was recorded at 133.89 points against 133.61 points registered in the previous week, according to the latest data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 10.50 percent. — APP



ISLAMABAD: July 24 — CDA workers sapling plants at roadside greenbelt. — APP

## Islamabad High Court directs PTA to lift ban on PUBG

The court has ordered the PTA to unblock the game immediately and explain their reasoning behind banning the game

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday lifted ban on online game PlayerUnknown's Battleground (PUBG). Justice Aamer Farooq announced the verdict on Friday. The Islamabad High Court has ordered the PTA to unblock online game Players' Unknown Battle Ground (PUBG) while approving a petition filed against the Authority's decision to ban the game in Pakistan. It was earlier reserved on July 14.

The court will soon issue a detailed verdict, directing the PTA to make any future decisions on bans after listening to all stakeholders. The court has ordered the PTA to unblock the game immediately and explain their reasoning behind banning the game.

The decision was taken after a company controlling PUBG in Pakistan challenged PTA's move to ban the game due to mental and physical health concerns of its users. During the last hearing, the judge had remarked that the PTA should have taken the advice from

a psychiatrist before taking the extreme decision.

The PTA's lawyer adopted the stance that the game had been banned after the department had witnessed some anti-Islam material on it. PTA had issued a statement in this regard, saying that numerous complaints were received by the authority against the game, calling it addictive, a waste of time and dangerous for the physical and psychological health of young, impressionable children involved in playing it. Earlier, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) on

Friday made it clear that ban to remain enforced on online game PlayerUnknown's Battleground (PUBG), one of the most famous global online games, in the country. According to a declaration issued by the PTA, the administration of the PUBG game failed to give desired information including sessions of the game, number of users and details about its controls. Therefore the ban over PUBG to continue, PTA said.

It may be noted that earlier this month, PTA has decided to temporarily ban online game PUBG

in the country. A PTA spokesman had said that a decision to permanently ban the PUBG would be made after consultations. "We have received many complaints regarding the game," he said adding that complaints termed the game as a waste of time and further claimed that it was causing a negative impact on the children.

The PTA action came in the backdrop of a complaint at the Lahore High Court (LHC) by parents of two children who committed suicide in Lahore after they were denied permission to play the game.

## WFP, Health Dept. jointly working for children: Dr Sania

KHYBER: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Division Dr Sania Nishtar Friday visited the Ehsaas Development Centre at the District Headquarters Hospital, Dogra Khyber district. During the visit she also took a round of various departments including Gynecology wards, OPD, Emergency Centre. MPA Shafiq Afridi, Deputy Commissioner District Khyber, Mahmood Aslam Wazir, were also present on the occasion. Talking to media persons, the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Dr Sa-

nia Nishtar said that the Ehsaas Kifalat Programme was jointly organized by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the provincial health department to reduce the suffering of mother and child in the district. She said the Ehsaas Nourishment Center was in its final stages of completion and it would be inaugurated soon and health problems of the people of the area could be solved on priority basis. She said that according to the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan all available resources would be utilised to facilitate the masses at their doorsteps. — APP

## 'Sports activities resumption to be announced after Eid'

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC), Dr Fehmida Mirza said on Friday that a date would be announced after 'Eid-ul-Azha' as how and when to resume the sports activities across the country by taking on board all the stakeholders. A flare-up in coronavirus pandemic put on halt all the sports activities in Pakistan in the middle of March, while all the events were scrapped for an indefinite period. "We are preparing standard operating procedures (SOPs) with the consensus of all the four provinces, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan to resume sports activities. After the conclusion of the Eid festival, we will announce a date to start the games in three phases," Fehmida told APP. Spelling out the details, she said in the first phase, the games such as badminton and table tennis wherein it was easier to maintain social distancing would be opened. — APP



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi administering oath to Dr. Muhammad Farogh Naseem as Federal Minister, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

## Global recognition for PM's smart lockdown strategy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: With a steep decline from around 6,800 COVID-19 patients a day in mid June to 1,209 during last 24 hours across Pakistan, the world is growingly acknowledging Prime Minister Imran Khan's smart lockdown strategy, mainly focusing balance between lives and livelihood.

On June 13, Pakistan had

reported 6,825 coronavirus cases out of 29,546 tests — the highest score so far in the country. During last 24 hours, only 1,206 persons tested positive of total 22,006 tests. Out of 1,821,296 tests, the country has so far reported 270,399 confirmed cases, with 219,783 recoveries and 5,769 deaths.

However, courtesy of the prime minister's undeterred opposition to the blanket lockdown, the country

ebbed away the feared economic disaster as faced by the countries in the region and in the developed world. "The only solution as the world has discovered is a smart lockdown, which allows for economic activity with SOPs. We are amongst the pioneers of this approach," the prime minister said on Twitter.

In its latest study, Imperial College of London ranked Pakistan at fourth for coronavirus reproduction in the country based on July 20 data. Pakistan has achieved 0.73 rate while the countries getting below 1 rate are considered the best for their anti-COVID efforts.

Interestingly, the countries including Germany and Portugal which rank above Pakistan are also advocating the very concept of smart lockdown to prevent new surge in coronavirus infections. Besides the administrative

measures to ensure strict closure of hotspots, the prime minister repeatedly addressed the nation advising them for strict precautions to avert the disaster. "But now as the results show that the measure works, many developing nations are also promoting the policy. Germany, Italy and Portugal are also discussing urban shutdowns to avert a new increase in infections of coronavirus.

## FPCCI Webinar on the "Impact of BREXIT on Trade and Economy of Pakistan"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan must have same level of market access with UK after BREXIT which Pakistan is enjoying with EU, this was stated by Sheikh Sultan Rehman Vice President of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) in a webinar on "Impact of BREXIT on Trade and Economy of Pakistan" organized by FPCCI Head Office Karachi, Regional Office Lahore and Capital Office Islamabad via Zoom Video Conference. The Webinar was attended by Kamal Shahryar, Adviser on GSP Plus Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, Ms. Aaisha Makhdom and Mr. Baber Khan Joint Secretary and Deputy Secretary Ministry of Commerce, Mr.

Asim Yousuf Vice President Pak-UK Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Zulfiqar Hyder Senior Economist, Syed Ali Raza Media Deputy Director State Bank of Pakistan, Sheikh Muhammad Tariq, Chairman Pak UK Business Council of FPCCI, Mr. Zakaria Usman Former President FPCCI, Ms. Qaisra Sheikh Coordinator Women Entrepreneurs and Executive Committee and General Body Members of FPCCI.

While welcoming the participants, Sheikh Sultan Rehman Vice President FPCCI stated that there was a historical referendum in UK in 2016 wherein the people of UK voted against remaining in EU which created a wave of shock and caused loss of US\$ 2 trillion in a day. He added that UK plays a key role in economic and social development of Pakistan.



At present, the balance of trade between Pakistan and UK is in favor of Pakistan.

In his remarks, TDAP GSP Plus Advisor Kamal Shahryar stated that the negotiation between Pakistan and UK is continuing for getting the similar facility which Pakistan is enjoying under EU GSP Plus. He stated that UK has not shared conditionalities of new trade agreement but in principle agreed for similar level of facilities. He added that after BREXIT the border trade with EU will not take place for moving goods in EU member countries. UK has started revision of its MFN tariff for all countries which will also benefit Pakistan.

Ms. Aaisha Makhdom Joint Secretary Ministry of Commerce informed about their negotiations regarding post BREXIT arrangements with

Trade Department of UK and stated that the demand of UK about adoption of conventions are same which Pakistan is already ratified in EU GSP plus. Mr. Zakaria Usman, Former President FPCCI emphasized to finalize the agreement with UK as Pakistani exporters have made huge investment in textile sector in accordance to EU GSP plus requirements which should not be affected with BREXIT. Mr. Asim Yousuf, Vice President Pakistan UK Chamber of Commerce and Industry added that there are huge opportunities for Pakistan's export in agriculture, textile and food items to UK. In this context, there is a need of early formulation of Pakistan's trade delegation to UK for getting new orders from UK. Sheikh Muhammad Tariq,

Chairman Pakistan UK Business Council of FPCCI informed about the registration of his company for filing of custom declaration service from January 2021. After completion of BREXIT transition period, additional more than 250 millions custom declaration will be filed and processed. He also urged Pakistan to comply with standards and SPS measures as UK is importing 1.2 million ton of meat. Mr. Shariq Vohra underscored the need of research for enhancing exports to potentials market as our Pakistan export is stagnant for 10 years. Ms. Qaisra Sheikh Coordinator Women Entrepreneurs emphasized on the development of mechanism for transformation of informal trade into formal trade as most of the women are exporting to UK informally.

## President emphasizes on research activities at COMSATS

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi has asked the management of COMSATS University to focus on research activities and establish linkages and collaboration with international universities of well repute. He said that academic courses should be designed in a manner to meet requirements and demands of the market. He stated this while talking to Federal Minister for Science and technology, Ch. Fawad Hussain, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The Minister briefed the President about the role of COMSATS in promotion of education. He also introduced the newly appointed Rector, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Tabassum Afzal.

## World's longest cable car project in KP

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government will introduce a cable car project in the Upper Dir district's Kumrat valley which it intends to be the world's largest and highest one. The decision came during a session of the Tourism Department chaired by CM KPK. The meeting granted permission for a detailed feasibility study and engineering design. The 14-km long project will connect the Kumrat valley to Lower Chitral's Madaklasht valley. The planners said that the proposed cable car would be the longest and highest cable car in the world and it would attract eight million local and foreign tourists to the province. The session was told about the major features of the cable car project and that the estimated cost would be around Rs32 billion.



## Briefs

### AIU PG programs' exams from Aug 5

**DNA**  
ISLAMABAD: Final examinations of post graduate programs of Faculty of Sciences, including BS, MSc, MS/ MPhil and PhD, offered in Spring 2020 Semester will commence from August 5, 2020. According to a press statement issued by the University on Friday, these examinations will be conducted at the Main Campus, Islamabad only and would be traditional in nature. Roll number slips are being dispatched to the students and these can be downloaded from the university website as well. Prof Dr Syed Zafar Ilyas, Dean Faculty of Sciences, informed that these examinations will be conducted within the Faculty Campuses of Sciences. Faculty members will perform examination invigilation duties. Exam papers will also be assessed by the faculty members. He further added that this practice will ensure transparency in marking system and timely compilation and announcement of results.

### New projects for Murree announced

**DNA**  
MURREE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar Friday announced new projects for Murree including Kohsar University, media reported. The Punjab CM visited Murree and said 22 crore rupees will be spent on a new water scheme which will provide 6 lac gallons of water to locals, Muzaffarabad Road will be completed with Rs 2.42 crore and 3 lac fruit trees will be planted. Usman Buzdar also hinted at opening tourist spots, including Murree, soon and said standard operating procedures (SOPs) are being finalized for reopening of restaurants and hotels.

### 5 Proclaimed Offenders netted

**RAWALPINDI:** The police on Friday claimed to have arrested five Proclaimed Offenders (POs) including a most wanted criminal who was allegedly perpetrator of heinous crime. According to Rawalpindi Police Spokesman, special raids on the directive of City Police Officer (CPO) Muhammad Ahsan Younas were conducted by Rawalpindi police to net POs, court absconders and other outlaws while Bani police managed to net A category accused namely Muhammad Nabeel. Similarly, New Town police arrested B category criminal namely Muhammad Nadeem Sheikh while Sadiqabad police nabbed Asad, Amanat and Mazhar Rafique, three B category POs. He said, the police's crackdowns against criminals would continue and the outlaws would be sent behind the bars. — APP

### RPO starts projects in Police Lines

**RAWALPINDI:** Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Sohail Habib Tajik on Friday inaugurated different projects in Police Lines here including a mess hall, state of the art auditorium, gymnasium, library hall and cafeteria. Mess in the name of martyr constable Altaf Hussain (Tamgha-e-Shujaat) and auditorium in the name of martyr Sub-Inspector Irshad Hussain were inaugurated to facilitate the police personnel. The RPO lauded efforts of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Muhammad Ahsan Younas made for providing modern facilities to police employees. — APP

## NCOC decides to launch crackdown against illegal cattle markets

The NCOC noted that massive crackdown of administrations in the federal capital, provinces including Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) were initiated for implementation of SOPs and health guidelines

**IBRAR KHAN**  
ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Control Centre (NCOC) has decided to launch a crackdown against illegal cattle markets across the country. As per details, the NCOC in an important decision ahead of Eidul Adha has decided to take action against the cattle markets, which are illegally setup in the country.

The move has been taken to ensure implementation of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in the cattle markets and to ensure health of the masses. Serious violations of health guidelines and SOPs were being reported in cattle markets across the country, it added. The NCOC noted that public health and safety was the top priority where the epidemic could only be controlled by

adopting hygiene principles and precautionary measures against coronavirus. The NCOC noted that massive crackdown of administrations in the federal capital, provinces including Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) were initiated for implementation of SOPs and health guidelines. However, special monitoring teams in all provinces including AJK, GB and Islamabad would

ensure implementation of SOPs whereas would result in fines and the closure of cattle markets. "It is important to keep wearing face masks and maintain social distance outdoors. If these precautions are not implemented, the epidemic will be difficult to control." The special monitoring team would enforce restrictions on working hours in cattle markets, limited entry of people and health guidelines in the mandis.

The Forum urged the masses to avoid mass gatherings on Eid as all recreational spots would be completely closed on Eid. The public was urged to refrain from going to bazaars and entertainment venues on Eid. Individual safety was a guarantee of collective health and safety. As a responsible citizen, it should be realized that coronavirus could only be overcome with the cooperation of the people.

## 16527 virus suspects visit quarantine facilities

**RAWALPINDI:** Around 16527 COVID-19 suspects have so far been brought to the quarantine facilities of the district, out of which 5825 cases were tested positive who were provided the required treatment and 5217 patients discharged after recovery. According to daily situation report issued by Directorate of Public Relations (DPR) Punjab, results of 216 people were awaited while 10769 were declared negative. "Presently 104 COVID-19 confirmed patients were admitted in various quarantine facilities of the district while 230 patients were quarantined in isolation at homes. The 274 were died while only 14 patients were reported at district C centers during last 24 days, he added. Meanwhile Chief Executive Officer Health Authority Dr Sohail Chaudhary talking to APP said that the number of coronavirus cases have considerably decreased due to the government and medical teams efforts. He said that number of people recovering from the virus rapidly and only few cases were being reported on daily basis due to govt effective policy. — APP

## PFA disposes of 8000 liter impure milk

**RAWALPINDI:** Punjab Food Authority's dairy safety teams Friday disposed of 8,000 liter contaminated milk during the operation against adulterates in Rawalpindi. The PFA spokesman said during checking, at Islamabad toll plaza, the teams found milk contaminated with harmful chemicals, powder, urea and polluted water in three vehicles out of total 11 ones and disposed of 8,000 liter contaminated milk. He said the use of tainted milk causes health hazards among the people and as well as children. He said the PFA was checking milk especially coming out of the city on daily basis to ensure the provision of pure milk to the residents. — APP



**ISLAMABAD:** Newly arrived Ambassador of Egypt with Ambassador of Indonesia Iwan S Amri. The Egyptian ambassador paid a courtesy call on the Indonesian ambassador. — DNA

## 50,000 more utility stores underway: NA told

**DNA**  
ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly was informed on Friday that 50,000 new Utility Stores will be set up across country to provide essential food items to the people at affordable prices. Responding to a question in the National Assembly during "Question Hour", Minister for Communication and Postal Services Murad Saeed said youth can also apply for loan to set up Utility Stores under Kamyab Jawan Programme. "As per the government announcement about establishing 50,000 more utilities across the country, the work has started on it," he said while responding to a query of MNA Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali. He said the government is taking all necessary measures to control unnecessary increase in the prices of edible and common use items so that the common many may not face undue inflationary pressure. He said inflation has declined from 14.6 percent in January this year to 8.6 percent in June this year due to proactive policy and administrative measures of the government. Replying to another question, Parliamentary Secre-

tary for Commerce Aliya Hamza said the government has taken several steps to increase exports. She said trade between Norway and Pakistan is picking gradually and the balance is in favour of Pakistan. She further said that trade volume between Pakistan and Qatar has been on the rise and has tilted in favour of Pakistan over the past five years. She said Qatar remained the top export destination of Pakistan showing growth of 36 percent in last fiscal year. Answering a question, Parliamentary Secretary for Finance and Revenue Makhdoom Zain Hussain Qureshi said Zarai Taraqati Bank Limited has set up a network of 482 agriculture lending branches to advance loans to small farmers and has been granting loans to eligible farmers. He said ZTBL is the equal opportunity provider for loans to all eligible farmers all over the country and no one farmer of any district is ignored without any business justification. He said the Bank of Khyber is also extending loans to farmers of the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said ZTBL network will also be extended to these areas once land record is compiled there.

## Criminals' gang busted; snatched vehicle and weapons recovered

**DNA / IBRAR KHAN**

**ISLAMABAD:** Islamabad Khanna Police arrested two gangsters and recovered snatched vehicle, mobile phones, cash, motorbike and weapons from their possession, a police spokesman said. According to details, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Aamir Zulfiqar Khan ordered crackdown against criminal elements. Following these orders, DIG (Operations) Waqar-Ud-Din Syed has directed all zonal officers to accelerate their efforts to curb the crime in the city. As per directions, SP (Rural-Zone) Malik Naeem Iqbal constituted special team under supervision of ASP Muhammad Usman Tipu including SHO KHanna police station Inspector Mirza Muhammad Gul-

fraz along with other officials to ensure arrest of those committing crime in the area. This team arrested two dacoits of a gang identified as Muzamil Shah and Wali Khan. Police has also recovered snatched vehicle, mobiles phones, cash, motorbike and weapons along with ammunition from their possession. During the preliminary investigation, they confessed their involvement in several incident of dacoities and snatching valuables at gun pint in twin cities. Cases have been registered against them and further investigation is underway from them. IGP Islamabad Muhammad Aamir Zulfiqar Khan and DIG Operations Waqar Ud Din Syed have appreciated overall performance of Khanna Police and announced commendation certificates along with cash rewards for policemen who arrested these gangsters.



## Shifa Int'l launches plantation drive

**DNA**

**ISLAMABAD:** A ceremony was held at Shifa International Hospital (SIH) to plant trees as part of the Nationwide Clean & Green Pakistan Campaign. Chief Guest of the ceremony Ch. M Saleem, Deputy Inspector General (HQ) Islamabad Police lauded the efforts of doctors and healthcare professionals during COVID-19 pandemic and planted a tree at the compound as a symbol of hope and courage to fight the pandemic. Addressing the ceremony, Mr. Taimoor Shah, Chief Operation Officer SIH emphasized the importance of plantation in maintaining biodiversity and ecological balance of the environment. As part of the campaign, Shifa International Hospital's management took an initiative by gifting free grape fruit saplings to more than 4,000 of its employees. The saplings were distributed to the employees along with planting instruction handouts. Being part of the plantation drive, Shifa International Hospital has also been planting trees in the green belt.

## AJK President hails performance of state Ombudsman

**DNA**

**ISLAMABAD:** The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan has appreciated the performance of the state Ombudsman's secretariat for dispensing prompt and inexpensive justice to the people and protecting their rights. He was talking to the AJK Ombudsman Zafar Hussain Mirza who called on him on Friday and presented the report of the performance of his institution for the year 2019 to the state president. While hailing the setting up of special implementation cell under the supervision of the ombudsman, the AJK president said that implementation of 80 percent pending judgments was a highly encouraging development and a proof of the excellent performance of the ombudsman. "The appointments made by the ombudsman in his institution purely on merit and through a transparent process, are precedence for other institutions, and this is also a good omen that the AJK ombudsman's institution had established its credibility

on the national and the international levels during the last two years," he added. He said that in 2018, the AJK ombudsman hosted the 19th annual session of the Mohtasib Forum Pakistan which was attended by the Federal and Provincial Ombudsmen from all over the country. Similarly, he maintained the incumbent ombudsman Zafar Hussain Mirza appreciably represented Jammu and Kashmir state at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and international ombudsmen's associations. The state president also expressed the pleasure that the ombudsman's secretariat had planned to digitize its system to ensure implementation of its judgments. On this occasion, the ombudsman Zafar Hussain Mirza apprised the AJK president of salient features of the annual report for the year 2019, and said that besides representing Azad Kashmir on the international forums, he was thinking to establish regional offices of the ombudsman's secretariat in the state in order to provide justice to the people at their doorstep.

## Search operation in Pindi area

**RAWALPINDI:** City police Friday during search operation in the jurisdiction of New Town police station and its adjoining areas searched 10 houses and 27 tenants while collected the data of 140 persons. According to the police spokesman, under the supervision of SDPO New Town, police, elite force and law enforcement agencies were participated in the search operation. The aim of search operation was to ensure best security arrangements and avoid any untoward incident, the spokesman added. — APP

## 'Strict action against illegal parking'

**RAWALPINDI:** City Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi has directed Traffic Wardens to take strict action against illegal parking particularly at Murree Road and Raja Bazaar and make all out efforts to ensure smooth traffic flow. According to a CTP spokesman, CTP has also made special arrangements to clear encroachments. Now lifters and cranes would also be available in Raja Bazar and Murree Road areas to remove encroachments. He said, additional force has also been deployed in commercial areas to regulate traffic load. He informed that CTP had launched a special operation against encroachments and illegal parking particularly to clear City Saddar Road, Imperial Market, Gungmandi Road and Bara Market areas. The City Sector Traffic Police on the directives of DSP Traffic, City Sector Rai Bashir, under the supervision of Incharge City Sector, Chaudhary Muhammad Qasim launched an operation and issued challan slips to rules violators. — APP

## Eighteen and WWF collaborate for tree plantation

**DNA**

**ISLAMABAD:** EIGHTEEN the leading luxury real estate destination in the twin cities, has signed an agreement with WWF-Pakistan (World Wide Fund for Nature) for a Tree Plantation Campaign that aims to uplift the green spaces in the capital's urban areas and to improve the environment of the region. The agreement was signed between Tarek Hamdy CEO Eighteen and Rab Nawaz Senior Director Programmes, on behalf of

Hammad Naqi Khan CEO / Director General WWF-Pakistan at the EIGHTEEN Head Office in Islamabad on July 24th, 2020. Phase I of the tree plantation drive shall commence from 30th July 2020 and will draw to a close on 14th August 2020 with a ceremony. However, the partnership will be extended till 2023 and EIGHTEEN will fund further plantation initiatives which will entail plantation of thousands of trees across the city in collaboration with WWF-Pakistan, the largest conservation organization of Pakistan.

The three-year partnership is geared towards bringing ecological benefits for the capital city. This includes reduction of pollution, improved water table and air quality contrib-



uting to biodiversity, and micro-climate regulation. CEO EIGHTEEN, Tarek Hamdy, said about the initiative, "This plantation is an effort by EIGHTEEN to engage in environmental-

ly-friendly initiatives that help to preserve nature. As socially-responsible investors, we assume the role of protecting and uplifting the environment of the beautiful capital and with this long-term partnership with WWF-Pakistan we are aiming to do exactly that". Talking about this campaign, Hammad Naqi Khan, Director General, WWF-Pakistan said that trees are extremely important for urban areas as they stabilize climate, regulate the water cycle and provide shelter to a number of bird and insect species. He was of the view that

due to multiple factors, Pakistan is losing its forest cover, hence joint efforts need to be made to plant more trees. "This campaign is about recognizing that every small action, like planting a tree, can have a real and positive impact on the environment of Pakistan", he added. EIGHTEEN is an exclusive joint real estate venture of Egypt-based Ora Developers, and Saif Group and Kohistan Builders (KBD) of Pakistan. Located 10 minutes from the New Islamabad international Airport.



## Briefs

## Senate body on minorities meets

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Committee to protect minorities from forced conversions scheduled in its meeting on Friday adopted Rules of Procedures for the Parliamentary Committee and discussed possible avenues of moving forward in the legislative as well as administrative approaches. The Committee met under the chairmanship of Senator Anwar ul Haq Kakar here at the Parliament House on Friday and was attended by members from both Houses of Parliament. The Committee members deliberated upon taking a few cases as case studies and exploring them in detail to identify key areas where gaps need to be filled and measures need to be taken to improve the administrative structures so that citizens belonging to minorities are not forced to convert to any other religion. The Committee members agreed that the issue of forced conversions is not religious but social and needs to be curbed by strengthening our weak areas and loopholes in laws relating to abduction, child marriages and other related areas. The Committee also decided to take input and data from provincial departments, Council of Islamic Ideology and other experts.

## Special committee to facilitate students

ISLAMABAD: The meeting of the special committee, constituted by the Prime Minister Imran Khan to address the connectivity and taxation issues related to Telcos, Friday decided to finalize the relief package for students to facilitate the delivery of online education. The meeting held here under the Chairmanship of Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Shafiqat Mehmood which was also attended by Adviser to PM on Finance and Revenue, Minister for IT and Telecom, Secretary Ministry of IT, Additional Secretary Education Ministry, Chairman PTA, Chairman NADRA, CEO USF and Senior officers from the Education Ministry and Ministry of IT. The committee deliberated on the connectivity issues which students are currently facing in their online classes during COVID-19. The committee decided to finalize the relief package for students to facilitate the delivery of online education which is in line with concept of targeted relief. Adviser on Finance assured that the government will positively look in to this proposal by the ministry of federal education. The Committee also deliberated on the other issues faced by the telecom sector including the taxations issues and it was decided to resolve them as soon as possible including improve quality, access and affordability of services. The Committee will submit its recommendations to the Prime Minister after incorporating views of all stakeholders. — APP

## IRSA releases 262,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 262,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 272,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1459.58 feet, which was 73.58 feet higher than its dead level 1386 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 146,900 cusecs and outflow as 150,000 cusecs. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1228.70 feet, which was 188.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 28,000 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 202,600, 183,100 and 81,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 46,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 20,900 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. — APP



## S.M. Munir asks business community to remain united for resolving problems

S.M. Munir, Patron-in-Chief UBG said that the Covid-19 pandemic has badly affected the economy of Pakistan, but expressed the hope that things would improve soon

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Zafar Bakhtawari, Former Vice President FPCCI and Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari Former Vice President ICCI hosted a breakfast in honor of S.M. Munir, former President FPCCI and Patron-in-Chief of United Business Group (UBG) at their residence. Muhammad Ahmed Waheed President, Tahir Abbasi Senior Vice President, Saif ur Rehman Khan Vice President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Abdul Rauf Alam Former Presi-

dent FPCCI and Chairman UBG Federal Area, Mian Akram Farid, Chairman Founder Group, Zubair A. Tufail Former President FPCCI, Sheikh Khalid Tawab Former Senior Vice President FPCCI, Zahid Chaudhry and Sheikh Nadeem Vice Presidents FPCCI, Malik Sohail Hussain Chief Coordinator UBG-FPCCI, Tariq Sadiq, Khalid Javed, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi, Sheikh Abdul Waheed, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Mian Shaikat Masood, Chaudhry Waheed Din, Zahid Maqbool, Sheikh Amir Waheed, Karim Aziz Malik, Former President Chakwal Chamber Qazi Akbar, Rawalpindi

Chamber Group Leader Sohail Altaf, RCCI former President Dr. Hasan Sarosh, Vice President Muhammad Ahmad Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that S.M. Munir, Patron-in-Chief UBG has rendered invaluable services to the business community of the country which were laudable. He said that the business community of the Federal Capital is with UBG under the leadership of Abdul Rauf Alam Chairman UBG Federal Area. Zafar Bakhtawari, Former Vice-President FPCCI said that in the last election of the federation, group leader S.M.

Munir was in ailing condition due to which the election campaign could not be run effectively. He thanked all the business leaders for coming to his house to participate in the breakfast. Former President FPCCI and Chairman UBG Federal Area Abdul Rauf Alam, Former President FPCCI Zubair A. Tufail, Former Senior Vice President FPCCI Sheikh Khalid Tawab and Chairman Founder Group Mian Akram Farid also expressed their views on the occasion while Former Vice President ICCI Ahsan Bakhtawari hosted the meeting.

resolution of their problems. Expressing his views, Muhammad Ahmad Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that S.M. Munir, Patron-in-Chief UBG has rendered invaluable services to the business community of the country which were laudable. He said that the business community of the Federal Capital is with UBG under the leadership of Abdul Rauf Alam Chairman UBG Federal Area. Zafar Bakhtawari, Former Vice-President FPCCI said that in the last election of the federation, group leader S.M.

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## Gold price reaches all time high

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs1400 on Friday and was traded at Rs118,700 as against its trading at Rs117,300 the previous day, Karachi Sarafa Association reported. Likewise the price of 10 gram gold also witnessed increase of Rs1200 and was traded at Rs101,766 against its sale at Rs100,566. The price of per tola silver increased by Rs50 and was traded at Rs1400 against Rs1350 whereas that of 10 gram silver also went up by Rs42.87 and was traded at Rs1200.27 against at Rs1157.40. The gold prices in the international market increased by \$14 and was traded at \$1896 on Friday against its sale at \$1882 during the last trading day, the association reported. — APP

## No extension in anti-polio drive: PPEP

ISLAMABAD: The spokesperson of the Pakistan Polio Eradication Program (PPEP) has refuted the news about any extension in the ongoing anti-polio drive in the country. "Such news of extension in anti-polio drive are baseless", the spokesperson said and added that the drive will continue till July 25. The drive is underway in the selected districts of the country as per schedule, he added. The campaign kicked-off after suspension of four months on Monday in selected districts across the country. Under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and following the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) guidelines and Polio Oversight Board recommendations, the Pakistan Polio Eradication programme had suspended all Polio related activities in the last week of March, except surveillance. During the campaign, social distance and implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) is being ensured in the wake of coronavirus pandemic. Masks, sanitizers, infrared thermometers have been provided to the polio workers. The decision to revive the campaigns was taken in consultation with all provinces.

## President lauds ombudsman role for women protection against harassment

Kashmla briefed the President about Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection against Harassment (FOSPAH)'s role in creating harassment-free working environment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment Ms. Kashmla Tariq called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. She briefed the President about Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection against Harassment (FOSPAH)'s role in creating harassment-free working environment. She informed the President that her institution provided speedy justice and 93% of the registered cases had been disposed of. She said that the Ombudsman had created awareness by holding seminars and press conferences and



ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment Ms. Kashmla Tariq presenting report to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

as a result of that marked increase in the number of cases had been witnessed. The Federal Ombudsman remarked that women represented over 50 percent of Pakistan's population and they needed to be provided safe working environment. President Arif Alvi appreciated FOSPAH's role in the provision of speedy and cheaper justice to the people. He said that the institution needed to be further strengthened so that speedy justice could be provided to the people. He underscored the need for initiating awareness campaigns through print and digital media so as to sensitize the people about the role of Ombudsman in quick redressal of their complaints. It is worth-stating that FOSPAH is an autonomous quasi-judicial statutory body working for the protection against harassment at workplace. It aims to create harassment-free working environment. Recently, the Government of Pakistan has empowered FOSPAH, under "Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act, 2020", to decide cases related to inheritance of women.

## Textile group imports reduced by 21.48%

ISLAMABAD: The Textile group imports during FY 2019-20 reduced by 21.48 per cent as compared the corresponding period of the last year. According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), the Textile group imports came down from US \$3,221,416 thousand in last financial year to US \$2,529,445 thousand of the same period of current financial year. During the period from July-June this year, imports of Synthetic fiber reduced by 26.99% worth \$427,394 thousand as compared the imports valuing \$585,367 thousand of same period of last year, it added. Meanwhile, synthetic & artificial silk yarn imports decreased by 26.98%, worth \$503,571 thousand as compared the imports of valuing \$689,668 thousand of the corresponding period of last year. During the period under review, buses, Worn clothing imports also came down by 6.79%, valuing \$168,751 thousand imported as compared the imports worth \$181,042 thousand of same period of last year. — APP

## EOBI launches 'Digital Payment' mechanism

ISLAMABAD: The Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) has launched a 'Digital Payment' mechanism to enable its registered employers to submit their monthly contributions online, said its chairman Azhar Hameed on Friday. The initiative is meant to boost EOBI revenue generation through promotion of digital means among its registered employers for submission of their monthly contributions, he said in an exclusive chat with APP. Azhar said the new system of Inter-bank Fund Transfer would allow all the registered employers to deposit their contributions online. It would help curb corruption in the organization, besides ensuring transparency in its affairs.

At the moment, he said most of the employers paid their contributions manually by downloading PR-03 form. The manual submission of contributions undermined the efforts of EOBI in achieving the revenue collection target, he added. He said the EOBI would make all-out efforts to make the payment mechanism completely digital within next three months. "We will make sure in next three months that 90 per cent of employers would pay their contributions online." Highlighting the pensioner-friendly initiatives of present management, the chairman said the concerted efforts had helped the department to pass on double relief to its pensioners and registered employees before Eid-ul-Azha. — APP

## Govt introduces 'Green Selfie' in tiger force app

ISLAMABAD: The government has introduced a 'green selfie' feature in the tiger force application to enable the volunteers to upload their photos while carrying out the plantation drive across the country. "The volunteers of tiger force will set a record by planting one million saplings in a day," said a statement issued by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs Muhammad Usman Dar's office here on Friday. It said the government had begun preparations for the 'tiger force day', which is expected to be celebrated after Eid-ul-Azha. Usman Dar would meet Prime Minister Imran Khan shortly to discuss role of the volunteers in plantation of 10 million saplings. Earlier, the SAPM held a meeting with SAPM on Climate Change Amin Aslam and senior officers of Punjab government to discuss the strategy for 'tiger force day' and plantation drive. — APP

## 2 injured in gas leakage blast

RAWALPINDI: Two persons sustained burn injuries when a blast occurred due to gas leakage in two stories building on Adayala road here on Friday. According to Rescue 1122, blast occurred in a hotel due to gas leakage as pipeline was not properly connected with the stove when someone lit the matchstick to burn the stove. Resultantly, fire erupted and engulfed the whole building. Soon after the blast, Rescue workers, fire fighters, and police rushed to the site to rescue the victims. — APP

## Bilawal visits Matiullah Jan's residence

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Friday visited the residence of journalist Matiullah Jan, who was recently recovered after being kidnapped from Islamabad. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman PPP said that he has come to express solidarity with Matiullah Jan. Pakistan is a democratic Muslim country and such attacks are in fact attacks on our democracy, freedom

of press and human rights. Bilawal appreciated the bravery of the family of Matiullah Jan, who remained steadfast on principles, said a press release. "Matiullah Jan's resolve is a treasure for this generation and generations to come," he said. The kidnapping of Matiullah Jan and all such incidents are fragrant violation of basic human rights and the constitution of Pakistan. The country's issues can't be resolved

sans protecting the freedom of expression. One can agree or disagree with the point of view of Matiullah Jan but no one can usurp his right to speak, Chairman said adding that Peoples Party has always fought for the rights of journalists and will continue to do so. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that Pakistan is a democratic Muslim country and such attacks are in fact attacks on our democracy, freedom of press and human rights. — APP



LAHORE: President Rawalpindi Islamabad Photo Journalists Association Sohail Malik presenting application to Governor Punjab Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar after their meeting. Secretary Finance Waseem Khan, Vice President Wahab Saleem and Joint Secretary Shahid Raju are also present on the occasion. — DNA



## Pakistan's AIDS problem

**W**HILE the latest UNAID report shows that the global AIDS epidemic is decreasing in parts of Asia and the Pacific, it mentions Pakistan as a country where new infections and mortalities are both on the increase. The report focuses on global inequalities which influence progress in tackling AIDS and especially in expanding access to drugs which can keep the disease in control. The report states that this highlights the need for countries to act urgently to reach the millions who have still not been able to benefit from the latest developments.

The report notes an especially sharp increase in HIV/AIDS in Pakistan and the Philippines. It also highlights the difficulty for most countries in reaching targets and says that in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Philippines late diagnosis and poor adherence to treatment are major factors in pushing forward transmissions and AIDS-related deaths. About half of the key populations living with HIV are not aware of their status and there is a need to improve the rate of diagnosis. The report also notes that the goal of reducing AIDS-related death to fewer than 500,000 will not be met this year, especially with the Covid-19 pandemic drawing attention away from other diseases. HIV infections according to the report are rising more sharply among young people aged 15 to 25 years. This is a major concern for Pakistan, with the majority of its population falling in this category or very close to it. UNAIDS states that ending punitive laws and policies and tackling rising stigma can help make progress in dealing with AIDS. T

he countries which offer needles/syringe programmes and moderate coverage of narcotics substitution therapy have fared well in reducing AIDS. These are all factors Pakistan needs to consider. Discriminatory laws and the stigma attached to AIDS are still high in the country today. This is also true of Afghanistan. These factors could help explain why the rate continues to rise in these nations while others including Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Thailand have been able to control it. We must reconsider policies and also put in place large-scale awareness campaigns to give people accurate knowledge about the AIDS issue and the fact that the disease can be successfully treated if it is diagnosed early and proper therapies begun. So far, we have not been able to do this. As a result, people who suspect they may be living with HIV do not seek treatment while the lack of diagnostic facilities also hinders them. Overcoming these challenges is vital to our future and to our success in pushing down the HIV/AIDS rates in our country.

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## Pangs of pain

**O**NCE again acute food insecurity is expected to rise sharply in war-torn Yemen with the problem exacerbated by the coronavirus, states a report by several UN agencies. Hunger in Yemen has been a problem we have seen grow rapidly since the war in the country broke out in 2014 when Houthi rebels took over the capital and displaced the government. The war escalated in March 2015 when the Saudi-led military coalition intervened against the rebels. Despite the fighting, the issue of hunger had begun to come under control in 2019 as the world recognized the scale of the issue. The new UN report, which covers only seven parts of Yemen, forecasts that people facing hunger will increase from 2 million at the start of this year to 3.2 million in the period between July and December. This figure makes up 40 percent of the population of the districts which have been covered.

Alongside fighting economic shocks, floods, locust swarms and the coronavirus pandemic have created a dangerous background for the sharp rise in food insecurity. The World Food Programme and Unicef as well as other partners have called the increase "alarming". The WFP country director has said Yemen is facing a crisis on multiple fronts. It has previously warned that over 20 million people all over Yemen are food insecure and nearly 10 million are facing acute shortages. The population of Yemen is around 27 million. While the UN describes the situation in the country as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, not enough nations or their leaders are listening. These include the wealthy countries that surround Yemen, but which have done little to solve the crisis. While international aid and funding over a long period of time is required, it is also necessary that the conflict in the country be brought to a stop.

The war in Yemen is essentially a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. As such, the allies of both countries need to play a role in bringing about some kind of settlement. Given the acrimony that exists, this may not be easy.

But the humanitarian toll on Yemen should be a factor in persuading all those who are able to help to step up their efforts and persuade both countries to agree at the very least to a ceasefire which will allow time and space for a more permanent solution to be chalked out between the various parties involved in the fighting that has now already continued for well over half a decade.

# Geology of Uzbekistan after Covid-19

Alisher Halmurzaev &  
Muhammadjon Babadjanov

Important features of airborne geophysical technologies are high productivity (up to 30,000 linear kilometers per month with one aircraft) and the absence of anthropogenic load on the studied territories. As a rule of thumb, the use of traditional methods (seismic exploration and drilling) has difficulties associated with logistics, which leads to a significant increase in the cost of project. Application of airborne geophysics methods in these conditions allows obtaining huge data about the geological structure of the study area in a short time by optimizing the planning and implementation of heavy geological and geophysical work due to the reasonable positioning of prospecting wells

**T**HE Republic of Uzbekistan is blessed with rich natural resources including precious, rare and non-ferrous metals, various organic fuel such as oil, natural and condensed gas, different types of coal, shale oil, uranium and many more. The country firmly holds fourth position in stock of gold and seventh in gold mining, eighth in uranium reserve and eleventh in uranium mining. There are more than 2025 mining fields around the country: construction materials - 867, groundwater - 649, hydrocarbons (oil, condensed and natural gas) - 244, precious metals - 97 (gold, silver), non-ferrous and rare metals - 12, radioactive metals - 38, raw materials mines - 37, chemicals - 32, gemstone - 30, coal and oil shale - 7, ferrous metals - 5. Uzbekistan secures leading positions in the world in confirmed stocks of such minerals as gold, uranium, copper, natural gas, tungsten, potassium salts, phosphorite, and kaolin. Not only do the rich stocks of minerals provide the existing mining complexes with a long perspective, but they also allow for increasing facilities and re-organization of the extraction of the most important minerals such as gold, uranium, copper, lead, silver, lithium, phosphorites, potassium salts, agrochemical ores, and other. According to estimates of Boston Consulting Group, over the next ten years, the country's investment potential will amount to \$ 65 billion, of which more than 45 billion falls to the raw materials industries.

On April 2020 the country has developed after pandemic measures to mitigate the adverse effects of pandemic. The conceptual measures tangled different aspects of sector including investment, structural changes, regulatory framework, scientific and innovation potential as well as modernization programs. In particular, measures chase objectives such as increasing the reserves of gold, silver, copper and eight types of non-metallic minerals, the volume of mineral extraction by at least 1.5 times in the framework of ongoing investment projects. Country is devoted to allocation of funds for the modernization of the industry and the digits are only growing over years. In 2017 - 2019 in consecutive three years 6.5, 23 and 18.2 million US dollars were allocated respectively in the framework of modernization program. In this period, a third of the technology and equipment in the industry has been renewed. In 2020, about 53 million US dollars are expected to be allocated to modernize drilling, mining, laboratory, geophysical, energy equipment, special equipment, auxiliary and other types of equipment.

The use of modern equipment allows not only to gain access to facilities previously inaccessible due to technical capabilities, but also to improve the pace and quality of well drilling at previous facilities by reducing time previously spent on repairing. Moreover, the use of modern equipment can reduce the time of work at all stages, reduce the negative impact on the environment and drill wells of complex design. It is estimated that by employing modern equipment will increase the drilling depth from 800 meters to 1200 and productivity by 1.7 times. By July over 100 units of special equipment are expected to be

renewed with funds allocated from the State Budget.

**Attractiveness of the industry for investment**

Given the big potential of the sector, for the successful implementation of the investment attractiveness of the industry (namely, foreign investment), it is necessary to switch to international standards of reporting. Among the widely recognized international standards is the JORC Code, which sets standards, recommendations and principles for applying public reporting on mineral exploration results and ore reserves. The main principles of the code are transparency, materiality and competence. Further measures include reaching an agreement with the World Bank on attracting investors to the Kyzyltuluk (gold) and Sangruntov (oil shale) mines, as well as with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to the Oktepa (silver) and Jetimtov (phosphorite) mines. It is planned to negotiate with international financial institutions on attracting investors to the remaining 16 fields until November 1, 2020. Attracting foreign investors will directly serve to transfer new technologies, to accelerate enriching stocks, and ultimately stimulate regional economic activity, increase employment and tax revenues.

**Organizational improvement: State Committee on Geology and Mineral Resources**

As was mentioned earlier, conceptual measures tangled structural changes. A number of regulatory acts have been adopted to strengthen the functional potential and expand the activities of the State Committee on Geology and Mineral Resources.

**Regulatory framework.**

Regarding the regulatory framework of the after-pandemic development program revised version of the Law "On mineral wealth" is to be adopted. The current law was adopted in 2002 and government believes it should be revised based on industry development trends and best foreign practices in the field. Working group at the State Committee on Geology and Mineral Resources is to develop a new version of the law based on study of the legislation of Turkey, Chile, China, Canada, Germany, the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Australia. One of the recommendations for the upcoming revision of the current law is that the rules and requirements in the new draft law will be direct in nature and will regulate the rights of foreign investors in more detail. At the same time, it is expected that the principles of competition for the transfer of subsoil use rights directly in the norms of the draft law will be reflected. At the same time, the rights of mineral users will be strengthened, and the conditions for government and local authorities to intervene in the activities of subsoil users will be determined in detail.

**Groundwater resources**

The study of groundwater is among the most important areas in geological science. It aims to solve land reclamation problems and to create an optimal water regime on agricultural lands, as well as for hydrogeological substantiation of construction works. Organizational structuring has also been tackled in the program. To

ensure efficient management of groundwater resources in the country State Unitary Enterprise "Uzbekhydrogeology" as a separate authorized body is now assigned to carry unified policy in this area.

Moreover, by the end of the year the country will introduce a system for online monitoring of water consumption in 200 new wells (also at 400 groundwater level wells). The extension of this measure will include development of interactive groundwater maps.

**Potential for scientific and innovation**

In recent years, Earth Remote Sensing (ERS) has become an indispensable tool for the study and management of mineral resources. The observation is carried out by aircraft and spacecraft equipped with special multichannel tools that record electromagnetic radiation in different ranges. There are different methods for studying the earth using remote sensing technology - a surface survey using satellite imagery, as well as processing Airborne geophysical surveys data that reflect the properties of the rock at depth.

Important features of airborne geophysical technologies are high productivity (up to 30,000 linear kilometers per month with one aircraft) and the absence of anthropogenic load on the studied territories. As a rule of thumb, the use of traditional methods (seismic exploration and drilling) has difficulties associated with logistics, which leads to a significant increase in the cost of project. Application of airborne geophysics methods in these conditions allows obtaining huge data about the geological structure of the study area in a short time by optimizing the planning and implementation of heavy geological and geophysical work due to the reasonable positioning of prospecting wells.

Also, in order to support research activities in the field of geology, as part of comprehensive measures, the Ministry of Innovative Development has announced call for application for applied and innovative projects. The purpose of the competition is the generating high-tech products and innovative technologies aimed at solving urgent problems, real needs and regional problems of geology development. According to the resolution, the University of Geological Sciences was established, specializing in the integration of education, research and practice in the field of geology. The University is a specialized higher education and research institute of the republic for the training of qualified personnel in the field of geology and the implementation of research work for the State Committee on Geology and Mineral Resources, mining companies and other sectors of the economy.

The adoption of this decision will serve to implement the results of research in geology, the widespread use of modern teaching methods, radically improve the system of training highly qualified personnel in geology, as well as strengthen the material and technical base of education on the basis of advanced foreign technologies.

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# COVID-19's effects on mental health to last years

Dr. Theodore Karasik



A breaking point is coming if there are not wider efforts to reverse the growing purgatorial landscape. But few are comfortable managing the pandemic's mental health aftermath, whether in themselves or in others, because of the nascent sense of identifying self in an act of ultimate selfishness

**T**HERE is no doubt that the clear and present danger of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic has yet to fully hit many countries around the world. In those countries with a failed response to the epidemic to date, mental wellness issues are becoming more prominent.

Schools and other institutions in certain countries are only now announcing that they will be closed through to the end of the year - an action they should have announced and acted on months ago. The scientific evidence is there to prove that the lack of action against the pathogen in January and February cost the US its ability to contain and mitigate the disease. There is really no excuse for the illusionary thinking that COVID-19 will just magically go away or is some type of hoax. This episode in American history is one of fools. Americans rarely experience a real catastrophe or crisis like other places around the world, where warfare, famine and other acts of violence affect daily lives in highly disruptive ways. The result is that, in America, "Karen and Ken" don't understand the big picture of real-world trauma and violence.

Having to deal with the anxiety caused by the current toxic mix of geopolitics and disease is a completely abnormal environment. Emotions are beginning to fray across many sociocultural fractures that have occurred during the COVID-19 epidemic. Six months-plus into the contagion - with more than a year to go - and the report card is dismal. Some societies may be able to withstand the pathogen spread, others not so much. Mental wellness may even be applied to those who froth at the mouth across the political spectrum. "Revolutionaries" may be seen as suffering from "bloodlust" due to the opportunities of the moment to achieve what may be impossible during non-pandemic normalcy. Questions about behav-

ior and message are increasingly intertwined to produce a Tower of Babel effect, whereby people are simply speaking in tongues, adding to the mental pressure and potential physical side-effects.

As analysts have argued, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic downturn are negatively affecting many people's mental health and creating new barriers for people already suffering from mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

As the pandemic continues into 2021, it is likely the mental health burden will increase, as measures taken to slow the spread of the virus - such as social distancing, business and school closures, and shelter-in-place orders - lead to greater isolation and potential financial distress. Though necessary to prevent loss of life due to COVID-19, these public health measures expose many people to situations that result in poor mental health outcomes, such as social isolation and redundancy. Feelings of anxiety are increasingly common, as people are fearful of themselves or loved ones falling ill, and are uncertain of the repercussions of the pandemic.

After anxiety comes rage: A rage that is beginning to turn discussions into more violent confrontations. For the US, the psychological damage from how the country is changing under the Trump administration is creating a toxic narrative that is damaging to both mental and physical health. The pandemic is likely to have both long and short-term implications for mental health and substance use. Those with existing disorders and those who are newly affected will both likely require an expansion of mental health and substance abuse services in the coming years.

Domestic violence is another factor that is increasing dramatically because of the pathogen and its mental health impact. The World Health Organization reported a 60 percent increase in domestic vi-

olence in April. COVID-19 and domestic violence are effectively creating a double pandemic.

Suicide is also a major and increasingly troublesome issue based on the pandemic's damage to society. Researchers have estimated there could be as many as 3,235 to 8,164 excess suicides in the US in the wake of the coronavirus, as a result of economic shocks, social distancing and what is described as an "unprecedented assault on mental health." Importantly, suicide prevention services are subject to "burnout" and, given the pandemic's longevity and viciousness, COVID-19 magnifies many of these challenges and is taxing any new resources that become available.

Six months-plus into the contagion - with more than a year to go - and the report card is dismal.

**Dr. Theodore Karasik**

A breaking point is coming if there are not wider efforts to reverse the growing purgatorial landscape. But few are comfortable managing the pandemic's mental health aftermath, whether in themselves or in others, because of the nascent sense of identifying self in an act of ultimate selfishness. Even before the pandemic emerged, moral injury and burnout were rampant among clinicians. Coping with COVID-19 has magnified many of those challenges and added new ones thanks to the reality of resource constraints.

There is no doubt this pandemic will mark many Americans with psychological scars, but how big, how complex and how much they will interfere with the function of health care workers will depend on how organizations adapt. The full mental wellness impact of the coronavirus will take years to decipher, and only then can truly helpful and necessary remedies be applied. Whole communities are at stake, so the post-COVID-19 future must be clearly understood.

- Courtesy Arab News



## Briefs

## Slovakia's PM survives no-confidence vote

DNA

PRAGUE: Slovakia's Prime Minister Igor Matovic has survived a parliamentary no-confidence vote over allegations of plagiarism. Only 47 of the 125 present lawmakers in the 150-seat Parliament on Friday voted against Matovic, whose dismissal would mean the end of his coalition government. The result was expected because the coalition led by Matovic has a comfortable majority. The motion was requested by the opposition after a newspaper published allegations that Matovic plagiarised most of his thesis on the impact of the tax system on businesses at Bratislava's Comenius University in 1998. The 47-year-old Matovic said he was not aware of any wrongdoing. He acknowledged he did not pay much attention to his studies at the faculty of management in the final two years because he already focused on his publishing business.

## Bellingham receives racist comment

DNA

DORTMUND: Jude Bellingham, a promising 17-year-old English footballer who signed with top German club Borussia Dortmund this week, has called the racist comment he received on Twitter following his move to the Bundesliga team "disgusting." Bellingham posted a screenshot of the now-deleted message on Twitter which called him an "overrated talent" and said "Black people only think about money." In a statement, West Mercia Police said officers were investigating racist comments made on social media towards a 17-year-old from North Worcestershire, England. Inspector Lee Page said officers are "thoroughly investigating these abhorrent comments" and added that the police had contacted the victim and the victim's family.

## Teams kneel as baseball season opens

WASHINGTON: The Washington Nationals and New York Yankees knelt in a gesture of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement on Thursday as Major League Baseball's coronavirus-delayed season got under way. Before eerily empty stands at Nationals Park, players from both teams dropped to one knee and together lifted a giant black strip of fabric. As the players knelt, a message addressing social injustice recorded by actor Morgan Freeman played over the stadium speakers. After kneeling for around 20 seconds, players got to their feet and stood in unison for a rendition of the US national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." The United States has been convulsed by nationwide protests against racism and police brutality after the May 25 death of unarmed African-American man George Floyd in Minneapolis at the hands of officers. - APP

## Bolivia delays election until October

LA PAZ: Bolivia postponed its general elections for a second time because of the coronavirus pandemic, putting it off until October 18, officials said. The poll was originally supposed to be held in May but had been rescheduled to September 6 after the country went into lockdown following the virus outbreak. The latest postponement comes just two weeks after interim president Jeanine Anez tested positive for the COVID-19. Four cabinet members have also contracted the virus. Salvador Romero, who heads the country's electoral court, said the decision to delay the elections again came after medical experts warned that COVID-19 infections would peak in Bolivia in late August or early September. - APP



MANCHESTER: Kemar Roach of West Indies celebrate after taking the wicket of Dom Sibley, English opener with his teammates. - DNA

## Millions of children affected by flooding in South Asia: UNICEF

"Immediate support, more resources and innovative programmes are urgently needed to address the challenges that these threats represent to the region's children"

ISLAMABAD: Millions of children affected by devastating flooding in South Asia, with many more at risk as COVID-19 brings further challenges. Weeks of torrential monsoon rains, widespread flooding and deadly landslides in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal have affected millions of children and families, UNICEF said. Over 4 million children are currently estimated to be impacted and in urgent need of life-saving support,

with many millions more at risk, a Press release said. "Even for a region that is all-too-familiar with the devastating impact of extreme weather, the recent heavy monsoon rains, rising floods and continued landslides are creating a perfect storm for children and families affected," said Jean Gough, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia. "The COVID-19 pandemic and containment and prevention measures add an additional complication to the

mix, as COVID-19 cases are accelerating in some of the affected areas," she added. Over 700 people have died and dozens are missing in across the four countries, with continuing reports of children drowning. UNICEF is on the ground working in close coordination with respective governments and humanitarian partners to scale up its responses and support the immediate needs of affected children and their families, but the response is complicated by the COVID-19

pandemic and the associated containment and prevention efforts. Measures such as physical distancing and handwashing need to be observed in order to minimize the risk of infections among affected populations, especially those in emergency shelters. Many areas remain inaccessible due to damage to roads, bridges, railways and airports. The most urgent needs for children are clean water, hygiene supplies to prevent

the spread of disease, food supplies and safe places in evacuation centres for children to play. "The fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic is being compounded by climate change and extreme weather events and are arguably the biggest issues affecting children in South Asia right now," said Jean Gough. "Immediate support, more resources and innovative programmes are urgently needed to address the challenges that these threats represent to the region's

children." In Bangladesh alone, more than 2.4 million people are estimated to be affected by flooding, including around 1.3 million children. More than half a million (548,816) families have lost their homes. The flooding has come at a time when Bangladesh is still recovering from Cyclone Amphan, and its already stretched emergency and health response systems are working hard to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. - APP

## Amir departs for England

LAHORE: Fast bowler Mohammad Amir and masseur Mohammad Imran have departed for England to join Pakistan men's national team, media reported. Mohammad Amir and Mohammad Imran have tested negative for novel coronavirus twice. Both will reach Manchester via Dubai and then move to Derby. The left-arm pacer will be in action against England in three Twenty20 Internationals, scheduled on August 28, August 30 and September 1. The T20Is will be played after three-match Test series starting from August 5. As per the revised Covid-19 regulations, Imran is categorized as a low risk after having recovered from the virus and, as such, will be integrated with the national side after one negative test, whereas Amir will remain in self-isolation until he returns two negative tests. - DNA

## IPL 2020 in UAE from September

WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: Indian Premier League (IPL) Chairman Brijesh Patel has confirmed that the 13th edition of the league will be played around the September 19 to November 8 window and the same has been communicated to the franchisees. Speaking to IANS, IPL Chairman Patel said that the window has been zeroed in on. "We have had a discussion and we are looking at the September 19 to

November 8 window for this edition of the league. We have informed the franchise about the same," he said. The window could see some discussion as the England and Australia players will be engaging in a series in the UK till September 15 and that could mean them missing the first few games of their respective franchisees. But Patel said it shouldn't be an issue and these things are set to be discussed in the Governing Council meeting that is to be held next week.

## US admits to 'intercepting' Iranian plane

WASHINGTON: The US Central Command has claimed responsibility for engaging with an Iranian passenger plane in Syrian airspace. Iranian officials have threatened to take legal and political action over the incident. US Central Command on Thursday confirmed that one of its warplanes had intercepted an Iranian passenger plane in Syrian airspace. The F-15 "conducted a standard visual inspection of a Mahan Air passenger airliner at a safe distance of about 1,000 meters (3,280 feet) from the airliner this evening," said Captain Bill Urban, a senior spokesman for US Central Command. "The professional intercept was conducted in accordance with international standards," Urban added. During the interaction, the pilot of the Iranian passenger plane conducted a safety maneuver and dropped the aircraft several hundred feet before stabilizing its altitude. As a result of the maneuver, several passengers received minor injuries, according to Iranian state media. US officials said the F-15 had maintained about 1,000 meters distance between the aircraft. "The visual inspection occurred to ensure the safety of coalition personnel at At Tanf garrison," Urban said, referring to a strategic US ground presence in Syria. "Once the F-15 pilot identified the aircraft as a Mahan Air passenger plane, the F-15 safely opened distance from the aircraft." - DNA

## Coronavirus raises questions over 2021 Tokyo games

WEB DESK

TOKYO: For some athletes, today was the last chance to take part in the Tokyo Olympics. They are too old, too exhausted or too financially stretched to wait for another year, after the pandemic forced its postponement. One of them is 35-year-old Tetsuya Sotomura. When I met him on a sweltering afternoon earlier this week

he was still hard at it in a converted factory building in a north Tokyo suburb, flying high into the air, spinning and tumbling on a massive trampoline. Back in 2008 Tetsuya placed 4th at the Beijing Olympics, just missing a bronze medal. Since then he's fought injury that put him out of London in 2012 and Rio in 2016. Tokyo was to be his last hurrah, a hometown Olympics to end his trampolining career on

a high. But another year is just too much. But there is another reason Tetsuya is getting off the trampoline. He thinks Tokyo 2021 may never happen. "It's so uncertain. No-one knows the probability. If what awaits us next year is cancellation, I would have lost another year for nothing. So that is another reason to go now." TV reporters have been visiting the towns due to host various foreign teams and asking

locals how they feel. The residents of a town north of Tokyo due to host the Brazilian team were clearly struggling to maintain any semblance of enthusiasm. An opinion poll by the Kyodo news agency found just 23% of people in Japan now support holding the games if Covid-19 infections are still widespread next year. The latest figures from the World Health Organization (WHO) do not make for happy viewing. More than 15 million infections world-

wide, and that number is growing by about a million every four to five days. There is one seemingly simple solution: push the Tokyo Games back another year to 2022. It is far more likely the pandemic will have run its course by then. But that has been ruled out by the Japanese government. From his home in Montreal the longest-serving member of the International Olympic Committee, Dick Pound, told me it is now 2021 or bust.



BUCHAREST: Dr. Zafar Iqbal, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Romania presented copy of his credentials to H.E. Mr. Cornel Feruta, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Bucharest today. During the meeting, different issues of mutual interest came up for discussion. Both sides reiterated their common objective of continuing their efforts towards taking Pakistan-Romania relations to a higher pedestal. - DNA

## Vietnam suspends wildlife trade

HANOI: Vietnam, one of Asia's biggest consumers of wildlife products, has suspended all imports of wild animal species "dead or alive" and vowed to "eliminate" illegal markets across the country. The directive signed by the leader of the Communist country follows an international scandal over the sale of wildlife, which has been blamed as the origin of the coronavirus pandemic in neighbouring China. - APP

## UK accuses China of 'gross' human rights abuses

DNA

LONDON: UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has accused China of "gross and egregious" human rights abuses against its Uighur population and said sanctions against those responsible cannot be ruled out. Reports of forced sterilisation and wider persecution

of the Muslim group were "reminiscent of something not seen for a long time", he told. Shown drone footage that appears to show Uighurs being blindfolded and led to trains, and which has been authenticated by Australian security services, he said he "did not know" what the video was showing and "sometimes you have a transfer of pris-

oners, in any country". China previously denied the existence of the camps, before defending them as a necessary measure against terrorism, following separatist violence in the Xinjiang region. The authorities have recently been accused of forcing women to be sterilised or fitted with contraceptive devices in an apparent attempt to limit the

population, prompting calls for the UN to investigate. Asked whether the treatment of the Uighurs met the legal definition of genocide, Mr Raab said the international community had to be "careful" before making such claims. But he said: "Whatever the legal label, it is clear that gross, egregious human rights abuses are going on."

## UK, EU rule out quick post-Brexit deal

LONDON: Britain and the European Union on Friday broke up their latest round of post-Brexit talks by ruling out a quick deal but voicing hope for agreement in the coming months. Prime Minister Boris Johnson had promised to add "a bit of oomph" to the stalled negotiations when he personally joined them last month. His main goal then was to get a framework deal struck by the end July that could assure UK businesses they would not have to start preparing for a messy no-deal breakup when the current transition period ends on December 31. But chief negotiators said it was unlikely because of a fundamental gap on major areas such as fishing rights and fair competition rules. - APP

## Juventus miss chance to seal title

SPORTS DESK

UDINE: Juventus missed out on the chance to wrap up the Serie A title as they fell to what boss Maurizio Sarri called a "messy" defeat at struggling Udinese. Juve, who have been Italian champions for exactly 3,000 days, need to win one of their final three games to win their ninth title in a row. They led through Matthijs de Ligt's powerful drive. But Ilija Nestorovski headed in an equaliser before Seko Fofana's brilliant winner in injury time. As Juve pushed for a winner, Fofana ran from the halfway line, beat Alex Sandro for pace before cutting inside De Ligt and slotting the ball under Wojciech Szczesny. "We paid for a lack of order after a good first half," said Sarri, whose future is reportedly in doubt. "At this stage of the season, it is difficult, we are all tired. We have lost aggression."



## Briefs

## Trump scraps Republican convention in Florida

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump announced Thursday that he was scrapping next month's Republican Party nominating convention in Jacksonville, Florida, because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Trump, speaking at a White House press conference, said it was not the right time to do a "big, crowded convention."

"The timing for this event is not right, it's just not right with what's happened recently," he said.

The convention had been scheduled to be held in Jacksonville from August 24-27. Florida has recently experienced a surge in COVID-19 cases, which topped four million in the United States on Thursday. — APP

## Global stocks tumble as US-China tensions escalate

## WEB DESK

HONG KONG: Global stock markets are sliding Friday as tensions between the United States and China reach new highs, and as more evidence emerges that the US economy is struggling to recover from the coronavirus pandemic. Markets in mainland China and Hong Kong tumbled into the close after Beijing ordered Washington to shut down its consulate in the city of Chengdu. That came days after US authorities forced the Chinese consulate in Houston to cease operations.

The Shanghai Composite Index (SHCOMP) closed down 3.9%, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng (HSI) was last down more than 2%. Asian markets were already struggling to start the day. Momentum on Wall Street has fizzled out as investors digest what is expected to be one of the worst earnings seasons in history.

And the US Department of Labor on Thursday reported an increase in first-time claims for unemployment benefits for the first time in 16 weeks. Adding to the fears: Airline traffic is once again falling, restaurant reservations are slipping and movie theaters remain shut.

European stocks fell sharply in early trading Friday, following the poor showing in Asia and Wall Street's weak close. Germany's DAX (DAX) dropped more than 2%, while France's CAC 40 (CAC40) shed 2%. The FTSE 100 (UKX) in London was off 1.7%.

## Russia accused of testing anti-satellite weapon

WASHINGTON: The United States accused Russia on Friday of test-firing an anti-satellite weapon in space, warning that the threat against Washington's systems was "real, serious and increasing."

US Space Command "has evidence" that Moscow "conducted a non-destructive test of a space-based anti-satellite weapon" on July 15, it said in a statement. "Last week's test is another example that the threats to US and Allied space systems are real, serious and increasing," the statement continued.

"Clearly this is unacceptable," tweeted US nuclear disarmament negotiator Marshall Billingslea, adding that it would be a "major issue" discussed next week in Vienna, where he is in talks on a successor to the New START treaty.

The treaty caps the nuclear warheads of the US and Russia — the two Cold War-era superpowers.

On Thursday, President Donald Trump told his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin that he hopes to avoid an "expensive" arms race with Russia and China. The system used to conduct last week's test is the same one that Space Command raised concerns about earlier this year, when it maneuvered near a US government satellite, said General Jay Raymond, head of US Space Command. — APP

## Turkey: Friday prayers in Hagia Sophia for first time in 86 years

Turkish president joins hundreds of worshippers after iconic Istanbul landmark's controversial reconversion into mosque

## WEB DESK

ISTANBUL: The iconic Hagia Sophia in Istanbul has opened for Muslim prayers for the first time in 86 years after its reconversion into a mosque earlier this month. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on July 10 controversially declared the nearly 1,500-year-old monument open to Muslim worship after a top court ruled the building's conversion to a museum by modern Turkey's founding statesman in the mid-1930s was illegal.

The UNESCO World Heritage Site was built as a cathedral during the reign of Byzantine emperor Justinian I in 537 but converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. It was designated a museum in a key reform of the post-Ottoman authorities under the modern republic's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Erdogan, who joined hundreds of worshippers inside Hagia Sophia on Friday, said last year it had been a "very big mistake" to convert it into a museum. Critics however accuse Erdogan, who has been in power for 17 years, of playing to his nationalistic base, with sup-



port eroding amid a global economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Towering over Istanbul's skyline, its breathtaking domes seemingly afloat, it is also one of Turkey's most popular tourist attractions, with 3.7 million visitors in 2019. The heart of the city, the historical peninsula, is under total lockdown since last night," she

said. "It's closed to traffic because large crowds were expected to arrive in the area outside of Hagia Sophia." The United States, the European Union, Russia and various church leaders expressed concern at the change in status, while neighbouring Greece branded the move an "open provocation to the civilised world". The UN's cultural agency, UNE-

SCO, said it deeply regretted Turkey's decision, which was "taken without prior dialogue". People flock the Hagia Sophia Mosque for the Friday Prayer. Erdogan insisted, however, it was Turkey's "historical and sovereign right". Turkey pledged to keep Hagia Sophia open to tourists and welcome those of all faiths. Entry will now be free. Top religious

authority Diyanet is in charge of the mosque. Its head, Ali Erbas, said between 700 and 1,000 people would be able to pray inside on Friday while maintaining a distance of 1 metre (3.3 feet) from each other. The floor has been covered with a turquoise carpet chosen by Erdogan.

Intricate mosaics of the Virgin Mary, baby Jesus and other Christian symbols will be veiled by curtains at prayer time.

In the sprawling square outside, separate areas will be set up for men and women to worship, according to the Anadolu state news agency. Koseoglu said Erdogan was expected to deliver a short speech after the prayer.

"This is a very historical moment for Turkey, especially the conservatives pro-Islamist electorate who have [long wanted] to pray inside."

On Friday, most roads to the venue will be blocked and public transport curtailed. Istanbul Governor Ali Yerlikaya asked for people to bring four items — "masks, prayer mats, patience and understanding".

Some 736 health personnel, 101 ambulances and a helicopter ambulance will also be available.

## China steps up testing in major port city

BEIJING: A Chinese city of nearly six million people will introduce a wave of coronavirus testing to stamp out a small cluster of cases, authorities said Friday, with state media reporting communities will be locked down.

Since the virus first surfaced in the central city of Wuhan late last year, the country's official number of infections has been restricted to a trickle, mainly among arrivals from abroad. All mass lockdowns have been lifted.

But recent domestic outbreaks have proved the difficulty of stamping out the contagion entirely.

The port city of Dalian in Liaoning province has reported three cases in recent days after going nearly four months without any.

The fresh outbreak has been linked to a seafood processing company that deals with imported products.

On Friday, the Dalian health commission said the city had to "quickly enter wartime mode, go all-out, mobilise all people and resolutely curb the spread of the epidemic". — APP



AMMAN: DHM, Pakistan embassy in Jordan. Taimur Zulfikar, had a meeting with Dr Malik Tawal, Director, Asian and Oceanic Affairs, M/O Foreign Affairs, Jordan, to start working on the formulation of Pak Jordan Joint Working Group on Trade & Investment. — DNA

## 'Govt offering incentives to businessmen to boost exports'

Razak Dawood said the government is working on short and long term policies simultaneously to boost economy besides accelerating the pace of industrialisation throughout the country on top priority

## DNA

LAHORE: Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood Friday said the government is vigorously following a prudent policy to boost export and minimise import for the economic stability through offering lucrative package of incentives to industrialists and businessmen.

It was stated by him while talking to a high level delegation of United Business Group led by President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik. Razak Dawood said the government is working on short and long term policies simultaneously to boost economy besides accelerating the pace of industrialisation throughout the country on top priority.

He said Prime Minister Imran Khan always attached great importance to private sector and directed to address their problems being confronted by business community.

Other members of the delegation included SM Muneer, Khalid Tawab,



Zubair Tufail, Sohail Altaf, Zafar Bakhtawari, Malik Sohail Hussain, Waqar Ahmad Mian and Rehmat Ullah Javed.

The Advisor was of the opinion that due to business friendly policies of the government, Pakistan has climbed 28 points on the World Bank's ease of doing business index that has given an encouraging signal to the investors from abroad.

He said Japan, Vietnam and South Korea as well as the other Pacific and South East Asian markets would also be connected as the government would negotiate with these countries for promotion of trade.

Abdul Razak Dawood assured the delegation that all their viable proposals

and legitimate demands will be given due weight age in policy making process and necessary directions will be issued to concerned quarters for their redressal without loss of time.

Federal Secretary Commerce was also present on the occasion.

About the completion of the state of the art 10 storey building of SAARC Chamber head office in Islamabad, Advisor said that necessary funds will be allocated shortly in this regard to meet their needs.

Patron-in-chief UBG SM Muneer former TDAP chief executive thanked the advisor for giving patient hearing to their proposals and demands and termed today meeting as result oriented which will help a lot to restore the confidence of business community especially exporters and foreign and local investors.

Zubair Tufail reciprocating also assured the advisor that the business community of the country would provide its full support to the government towards implementing its reform agenda and overcoming the current economic challenges in the wake of global pandemic.

## Bill Gates denies conspiracy theories

WASHINGTON: Billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates on Thursday pushed back against some of the conspiracy theories spreading online accusing him of creating the coronavirus outbreak. "It's a bad combination of pandemic and social media and people looking for a very simple explanation," the Microsoft founder said during a CNN Town Hall interview.

Doctored photos and fabricated news articles crafted by conspiracy theorists — shared thousands of times on social media platforms and messaging apps, in various languages — targeting Gates have gained traction online since the start of the pandemic. A video accusing Gates of wanting "to eliminate 15 percent of the population" through vaccination and electronic microchips has racked up millions of views on YouTube. "Our foundation has given more money to buy vaccines to save lives than any group," Gates said, referring to his eponymous foundation. — APP

## EU calls on US to lift tariffs 'immediately'

The European Commission said this removes any grounds for the US to maintain tariffs imposed on EU exports under WTO rulings

## NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Union has called on the United States to lift tariffs imposed in a long-running dispute over aircraft subsidies after Airbus said it had brought itself into compliance with the World Trade Organization rulings.

Airbus said on Friday it had reached an agreement with the French and Spanish governments that raises the interest rates on funds provided to help develop its long-haul A350 jet to levels the WTO considers appropriate.

The European Commission said this removes any grounds for the US to maintain tariffs imposed on EU exports under WTO rulings as well as making a strong case for a rapid settlement of the dispute.

"Unjustified tariffs on European products are not acceptable and, arising from the compliance in the Airbus case, we insist that the United States lifts these unjustified tariffs immediately," Phil Hogan, the EU trade commissioner, said in a statement. A legal battle between Airbus and

Boeing at the WTO began in 2004 when Washington accused the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Spain of providing illegal subsidies and grants to support the production of a range of Airbus products.

A year later, the EU alleged that Boeing had received \$19.1bn worth of prohibited subsidies from 1989 to 2006 from various branches of the US government.

The two cases were then tangled up in a legal quagmire, with each side being given partial vindication after a long series of appeals and counter-appeals.

In 2019, the WTO authorised the US to impose up to 100 percent in taxes on \$7.5bn of European goods, its biggest ever penalty. Washington then slapped 25 percent tariffs on a number of EU goods including wine, cheese and olives.

A 10-percent tariff on Airbus planes was increased to 15 percent in March, which also affects US airlines which buy Airbus aircraft, as the manufacturer points out. In June, the US threatened to levy tariffs on another \$3.1bn in EU goods as it has been authorised to do under a WTO ruling.

## Uzbek President reviews reforms in the construction sector

## DNA

TASHKENT: President Shavkat Mirziyoyev became familiar with the presentation on the results of reforms in architectural and construction sector.

Every year, construction activities are becoming more widespread in Uzbekistan. The process of urbanization in the regions is in progress. Construction work is also underway in rural areas.

This requires improving industry standards, ensuring transparency and developing mortgage market based on new requirements. About 40 Presidential acts on these issues have been adopted over the past three years.

As a consistent continuation of this work, the Presidential Decree of March 13, 2020 identified measures to further deepen reforms in the construction sector, eliminate bureaucratic barriers, en-

sure transparency at all stages, widely apply innovative developments and advanced information technologies.

The Ministry of Construction is tasked with updating 60 out of 337 urban planning rules and regulations this year. At the beginning of the year, the Ministry organized a Center for Technical Regulation in Construction, which attracted 15 qualified specialists. Currently, 33 new norms and rules of urban development have been developed.

At the meeting, an instruction was given to attract a foreign company with advanced experience to accelerate work in this direction.

The President criticized the corruption and "shadow economy" in the sphere and noted the need for digitalizing the process of conducting tenders for construction and selecting contractors. There are 32 thousand construction organizations operating in the country.



The task was set to launch a single platform that will include information on financial indicators, solvency of construction organizations, their participation in public procurement and staff qualifications. This platform will be implemented until November 1 in Tashkent and from the beginning of the next year — throughout the country. It will be integrated with e-workbook system.

According to analysis, over the past two

years, only 182 construction projects out of more than 3,000 were tendered under state programs. Due to complexity of tender procedures, the priority is given to low cost, and the competence of construction company takes a back seat.

In this regard, starting next year, funds will be allocated to construction-contracting companies that are included in the new information system and corresponding rating. A resolution was adopted to improve the author's, technical and state supervision in the construction sector, all conditions were created for this. It was noted that now it is necessary to carry out control not manually, as now, but using IT technologies.

Responsible persons were instructed to create a database of construction companies and facilities within a month. Starting August 1 this year in Tashkent, and starting next year, the supervisory process will be automated in all regions

with introduction of all identified shortcomings with photo-fixing into the online platform. An interactive system will be launched that will allow construction organizations and citizens to get full information about the procedure and conditions of constructions at any time.

The need was noted for transferring all norms and rules of urban planning into electronic form, digitalize the process of examination of design and estimate documentation, and store expert opinions in a single database.

These measures will reduce time for issuing construction permits from 254 to 84 days, reduce the number of permit procedures from 17 to 5 and reduce time spent by citizens by 67 percent.

At the meeting, responsible persons reported on the ongoing work on digitalization of the construction sector, ensuring its transparency, updating urban planning rules and regulation.



**Briefs**

**Buzdar, Saifullah meet PM Imran**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chief Organizer Saifullah Khan Nyazee along with Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar called on Prime Minister Imran Khan and apprised him on the administrative matters and organizational affairs of Punjab province and sought directions from Prime Minister Imran Khan regarding future course of action. According to details released by the Central Media Department, issues pertaining to PTI's political strategy in Punjab and governance in the province came under extensive discussion in the meeting held at the Prime Minister's House. On the other side, PTI constitutes an 8 member parliamentary board to determine its candidates for upcoming elections for the legislative assembly of Gilgit-Baltistan. In a notification issued with the signatures of Chief Organizer Saifullah Khan Nyazee, PTI Central Senior Vice President Arshad Dad has been appointed as chairman of the parliamentary board whereas Ali Amin Gandapur, Syed Jaffar Shah, Shah Nasir and Fateullah Khan have been included as members. Raja Jahanzeb, Khalid Khursheed and Wazir Walayat have been included as Ex-officio member in the Parliamentary board.

**Malaysia reinstates 18 Pakistani pilots**

DNA

KARACHI: Malaysia has verified that all Pakistani pilots currently employed in the country hold valid licences and it has reinstated them with immediate effect, its aviation regulator said in a statement on Friday. The pilots were suspended earlier this month after authorities in Pakistan discovered that up to a third of the country's pilots may have falsified their qualifications. The Malaysian Civil Aviation Authority had written to Pakistan after the matter of fake licenses of pilots in the country was raised. It wanted Pakistan to check the credibility of the licences of the pilots working in Malaysia. After it was confirmed that the licences were credible, the country reinstated all the pilots grounded there. Airlines in 10 countries had demanded proof of valid flying licences for their Pakistani pilots after it emerged that about a third of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) aviators were holding "bogus or suspicious" licences. The announcement came a month after a PIA plane crashed into houses in Karachi, killing 98 people.

**Punjab reports five corona deaths in 24 hours**

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab reported 294 new cases of the novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours, taking the province's total number of confirmed infections to 91,423. According to the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, five more people died from the virus during the period, due to which the death toll in the province rose to 2,105. As many as 68,349 patients have recovered while over all 678,010 tests have been conducted so far. According to a district-wise breakdown of fresh coronavirus cases, Lahore reported 100 cases, six in Sheikhpura, 12 in Rawalpindi, Jhelum 16, Attock 1, Chakwal, 1 and 17 cases were reported in Gujranwala. Seven new COVID-19 cases were reported in Sialkot, 2 in Narowal, 31 in Gujrat, 15 in Multan, 15 in Faisalabad, Toba Tek Singh 10 and 12 cases were reported in Rahim Yar Khan.



ISTANBUL: People gather outside Hagia Sophia where faithful offered Juma prayers after 86 years. In inset Turkish president reciting versus from Quran. – DNA

**USAID, UNDP launch digital platform to train entrepreneurs**

The training supports aspiring business leaders as they develop their ideas and products under the mentorship of highly experienced professionals. Candidates with the most innovative ideas will also receive an implementation grant

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Bahria University and Islamic International University, in partnership with the U.S. Government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the local business community, launched a digital platform to provide business incubation training to select entrepreneurs from the Merged Districts of Khyber, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan.

The shift to online course work offers great new opportunities for developing business skills while COVID-19 public health precautions limit in-person meetings. The training supports aspiring business leaders as they develop their ideas and products under the mentorship of highly experienced professionals. Candidates with the most innovative ideas will also receive an implementation grant.

"This program is aligned with the Government of Pakistan's strategy to empower youth from the merged districts and provide them with the skills to enhance their self-reliance, and thus build resilience," said USAID/Pakistan Khyber Pakhtunkhwa/FATA Director Randy Chester. "We are pleased to see how our partner institutions quickly adapted the formerly in-person course

to an online format given the COVID-19 challenges, preventing a break in learning. It also challenges the participants to revise their business plans to adapt to or address the challenges the pandemic has introduced." "Before this training, I had no idea about the essential components of a business," said Jamaima Afridi, a young entrepreneur from Landi Kotal, Khyber. "Now enlightened with the concepts of marketing, finance, and human resources

through this program, I am planning to open a cafe in Peshawar exclusively run by women for women." Prior to launching the digital platform, the program already provided business incubation training to 369 individuals from Khyber, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan Districts. The program has also provided business incubation grants to 138 individuals to start or scale-up existing innovative enterprises.

**'Pakistanis oppose ban on Chinese video Tik Tok'**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A vast majority of the Pakistanis are against any restriction or ban on Chinese video social media giant Tik Tok which they enjoy on a daily basis, says a report published by Gwadar Pro on Friday. Pakistan's telecommunications regulator earlier banned video streaming platform Bigo and issued a final notice to Tik Tok over concerns that they are encouraging "immoral, obscene and vulgar content". The Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) said that it had earlier raised the allegations with both companies and had received responses that were "not satisfactory". "Therefore, PTA has decided to immediately block Bigo and issue final warning to Tik Tok to put in place a comprehensive mechanism to control obscenity, vulgarity and immorality through its social media application", said a government statement. But Pakistanis who are fans of the Tik Tok maintain the government should not follow India who banned it. "We are friends of China. We should not ban Tik Tok," said Mohammed Ismail, a university student who was among many interviewed on the issue. He said Tik Tok was a great way of spending time and the government should not make allegations against it. Arif Khan, a government employee said he spent his leisure time using Tik Tok. "I am shocked with the news. PTA should think twice before acting against the Tik Tok", he added.



**Beijing NGOs donate 20,000 medical masks to Pakistan**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Three Beijing NGOs donated 20,000 medical masks to Pakistan to help the country fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The masks, donated by Beijing People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (BPAFFC), China NGO Network for International Exchanges (CNIE) and Beijing Minhe Foundation for International Exchanges have been delivered to Pakistan on a chartered flight arranged by the Embassy of Pakistan in Beijing, and handed over to All Pakistan-China Friendship Association (APCFA). At the very beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the



Pakistani government and people have made all-out efforts to donate prevention materials to China, an official with BPAFFC said. "We are very grateful for Pakistan's help", the official said, adding that this once again proves that China and Pakistan are good friends who stay together in difficult times and good brothers who share happiness and sadness. The masks arrive in Islamabad, Pakistan. [Photo/Beijing People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (BPAFFC)] This donation is also an important part of the "Silk Road anti-epidemic joint action", which once again highlights the efforts of China's non-governmental forces in the international cooperation on epidemic prevention and control. Pakistan registered its first COVID-19 patient in the end of February, and the cases saw a spike in the following months. According to the recent figures by the country's health department, Pakistan has 269,190 confirmed cases and it registered over 5,700 deaths across the country, the report added.

**China orders US consulate closure in tit-for-tat move**

BEIJING: China has ordered the closure of the US consulate in the south-western city of Chengdu, in a tit-for-tat escalation between the two countries. China said the move was a "necessary response" to the US, which ordered China to close its consulate in Houston earlier this week. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the US decision was taken because China was "stealing" intellectual property. Tensions have been rising between the US and China over several key issues. President Donald Trump's administration has clashed repeatedly with Beijing over trade and the coronavirus pandemic, as well as China's imposition of a controversial new security law in Hong Kong. China's move came hours after Mr Pompeo hardened his tone further in a speech on Thursday at the library of former President Richard Nixon, whose 1972 China visit heralded a period of improved relations. "Today, China is increasingly authoritarian at home, and more aggressive in its hostility to freedom everywhere else," Mr Pompeo said. "The free world must triumph over this new tyranny." China's foreign ministry said the closure was a "legitimate and necessary response to the unreasonable actions taken by the United States". "The current situation between China and the United States is something China does not want to see, and the US bears all responsibility for that." China gave the US till Monday to close the consulate in Chengdu, according to the editor of China's Global Times. – DNA

**Restructuring PIA, not privatising it: Ghulam Sarwar**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar says the government is looking to take action against PIA pilots with fake licences and restructure the airline. "We are not going to privatise PIA, but restructure it," he said while addressing the Senate session Friday. He said Pakistan had sent the licences of 176 PIA pilots working internationally, of whom 10 had licences suspected to be fake. He accused the former governments of recruiting employees in the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on dubious and fake degrees. The minister said that the European Union and the United Kingdom had

imposed ban on PIA for six months and added that the national flag carrier can challenge the ban in two months. In the past, PIA employees have been hired through nepotism, but we want to ensure transparency and appointments on merit, he added. The minister said he wasn't blaming anyone but only working to avoid any mishaps in future. "We've had four plane crashed in the last few months. We are not pointing fingers...just inquiring into matters," he said. "The inquiry we conducted found that 28 of 260 PIA pilots had fake licences and they were later canceled." He told the house that 17 pilots and 96 technical staff had been dismissed from service over possession dubious degrees.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairing meeting of National Development Council. – DNA