



# Islamabad POST

Thursday, July 30, 2020

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**MCI plans tourist buses for Capital, says Sh. Anser Aziz**

**British envoy with mangoes from his garden**



**Pakistan summons Indian diplomat over CFVs: Aisha**



## Briefs

**Shehbaz, British HC hold video chat**



DNA

LAHORE: Opposition Leader of National Assembly Mian Shehbaz Sharif and British High Commissioner to Pakistan Christian Turner held a video meeting to discuss issues of mutual interest. According to details, social development and other programs were discussed during the meeting. President of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Shehbaz Sharif said that relations between Pakistan and United Kingdom (UK) are based on mutual respect and Britain always cooperated for development and rights of masses.

**Coronavirus kills 27 Pakistanis**

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan has confirmed 27 deaths in a single day by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 276,288. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 5,892. According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center (NCO) 1,063 persons have been tested positive for COVID-19 in 24 hours. Sindh remains the worst-hit province by the pandemic in terms of cases followed by Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. Till now 119,398 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 92,452 in Punjab, 33,724 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 14,963 in Islamabad, 11,654 in Balochistan, 2,055 in Azad Kashmir and 2,042 in Gilgit-Baltistan.

**Annual Hajj rituals begin in Makkah**

DNA

MAKKAH: Annual Hajj rituals have begun in Makkah with the arrival of pilgrims in Mina. Only around one thousand pilgrims will perform Hajj this year due to crowd control restrictions put in place by Saudi Arabia in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic. Normally, over two million people perform Hajj. For the first time in decades, international travelers have been barred from the Hajj due to Coronavirus pandemic.

## Ruckus in NA as anti-terror bill passed

PML-N member said the impression was given that opposition parties are trying to create hurdles for NAB law

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly (NA) has on Wednesday approved the Anti-Terrorism Act amendment bill tabled by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan while the opposition tore up copies of the agenda. Ruckus was created earlier in the NA as well when Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi tried to give clarification following Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Khawaja Asif's allegations. The foreign minister said nobody will address the house if he is not allowed to speak. The opposition disappears when Federal Minister for Communications and Postal Services addresses the NA, Shah Mahmood Qureshi said. Let it be known that Khawaja Asif had lashed out at Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, saying that he has

## Qureshi seeks Opp support on FATF

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi has invited the opposition to support the government on FATF related legislation in the national interest, delinking it with their demands for amendments in the NAB laws. He was addressing a news conference along with Advisor on Interior and Accountability Shahzad Akbar and Parliamentary Secretary for Law and Justice, Maleeka Bukhari in Islamabad today (Wednesday). Shah Mahmood Qureshi said Pakistan has to make necessary time-barred legislation for its exclusion from the FATF grey list, and the opposition is required to support to the government in this matter.

crossed all the limits regarding National Accountability Bureau (NAB) bill. Speaking in the NA, the PML-N member said the impression was given that opposition parties are trying to create hurdles for NAB law. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is a heavenly place where only angels live. All

the honest leaders are residing there, he taunted. Khawaja Asif said that some political personalities are nothing more than a curse. We only want to end the tradition of filing fake cases against opposition leaders. PML-N's Rana Sanaullah was illegally booked in drugs case, he went on to say.

## Zafar Mirza, Tania Aidrus resign as SAPM

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Tania Aidrus and Dr Zafar Mirza have resigned as special assistants to the prime minister. The ex-Google executive Tania Aidrus in a post on Twitter said she was resigning "in the greater public interest". "Criticism levied towards the state as a consequence of my citizenship status is clouding the purpose of Digital Pakistan. In the greater public interest, I have submitted my resignation from the SAPM role. I will continue to serve my country and the PM's vision to my best ability," Aidrus tweeted. Meanwhile, Dr Zafar Mirza,



the special assistant to the prime minister for health, also resigned from his post on Wednesday. He announced the decision on Twitter. "I have resigned as SAPM. I came to Pakistan on a personal invitation of Imran Khan leaving WHO," said Dr Mirza. "I worked hard and honestly. It was a privilege to

serve Pakistan. I am satisfied that I leave at a time when COVID-19 has declined in as a result of a grand national effort." His resignation came less than an hour after Tania Aidrus resigned. Before joining the government, Dr Mirza was the director of health systems development at the WHO EMRO office.



ISLAMABAD: German ambassador Bernhard Schlagheck and Secretary Overseas Ministry oversee MoU signing between OPF and GIZ. – DNA

## Afghan gov't, Taliban agree Eid ceasefire

DNA

**US welcomes ceasefire**

DOHA: The Taliban has announced a three-day ceasefire in Afghanistan during the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha starting on Friday. The move could signal the start of the long-delayed peace talks after President Ashraf Ghani signalled negotiations with the Taliban could start next week. The Taliban proposed the ceasefire after President Ghani described progress in a contentious prisoner exchange that has thrown up numerous hurdles to talks starting. "To demonstrate the government's commitment to peace, the Islamic Re-

**KABUL: Top US officials on Wednesday hailed a three-day ceasefire proposed by the Taliban and agreed by Kabul, raising hopes that the long-delayed peace talks between the two foes could begin next week. The Taliban declared that the truce would start Friday, the first day of the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha, and continue for the duration of the religious holiday. – DNA**

public will soon complete the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners," Ghani told officials, referring to the number of inmates the government originally pledged to free under the US-Taliban deal in February. "With this action, we look forward to the start of direct negotiations with the Taliban in a week's time," Ghani added. The president's spokesperson Sediq Sediqi told that Kabul would observe the ceasefire, but cautioned the temporary nature of it did not go far enough. "The people of Afghanistan demand a lasting ceasefire and the start of direct talks between the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan," Sediqi said.

## Pakistan summons Indian diplomat

NEHAL MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: A senior Indian diplomat was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday to register Pakistan's strong protest over the ceasefire violations by the Indian occupation forces along the Line of Control. In a statement, Foreign Office Spokesperson Aisha Farooqui said three innocent civilians sustained serious injuries in indiscriminate and unprovoked firing by the Indian occupation forces in Rakhchikri Sector of the Line of Control yesterday.

## Opposition's bubble will burst after eid: Shibli

ABID RAZA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Shibli Faraz on Wednesday said that the opposition parties want to "wheel and deal" for personal interests and the culprits, at any cost, would not be given any sort of concession under the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO). "The opposition wants to bargain for personal interests. It is not possible that they have us close the jails and facilitate them with NROs. After Eid, the opposition's bubble will burst," the minister said. Talking to media on the oc-

casional, Faraz said that the focus of the PTI-led government is on the real problems of the people. He said the "rule of merit" is the hallmark of the incumbent government. "The PTI team is united under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan; if PTI does not have Imran Khan then PTI is nothing," the

minister asserted. He said that under the governance of "Naya Pakistan", there will only be politics of honesty and integrity and that the best judges of the government's performance are the people of Pakistan. Faraz said that the words "minus one" are an invention of the opposition and that "Naya Pakistan" is progressing forward under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Lambasting PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for placing personal gains over national interests, the information minister said: "Bilawal Bhutto took over Sindh and has made his national party a regional party."

## MCI plans tourist buses for Capital: Sh. Anser

Buses to take tourists at all tourists places; beautification of the diplomatic area was also at top of MCI; he personally enjoyed excellent relations with the diplomatic community therefore was well aware of their needs and issues

EXCLUSIVE

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Mayor of Islamabad Sheikh Anser Aziz has said the Municipal Corporation of Islamabad (MCI) is planning to launch a tourist bus service for the facilitation of those visiting the Capital city adding the project paper is already finalized and tender shall soon be floated. The Mayor disclosed this while talking to Daily Islamabad Post. Sheikh Anser Aziz further said the MCI is in the process of buying, to begin with, two double Decker buses. These buses would take tourists to all historical and touristic places of Islamabad at highly nominal charges. "We have conceived this plan in order to facilitate people of twin cities and especially those who come from far off areas to see beauty of Islamabad. This addition would certainly add color to visit of all such people desiring to get first hand information about various places", he added. The Mayor to a question said, beautification of the diplomatic area was also at top of MCI agenda adding he personally enjoyed excellent relations with the diplomatic community therefore was well aware of their needs and issues.



Editor Daily Islamabad Post Ansar Mahmood Bhatti with Mayor Islamabad Sh. Anser Aziz

The Mayor told, the MCI has planned new parks in the diplomatic enclave with a view to providing families and staff of the diplomatic missions to have some leisure time in a pure and clean environment. Sharing details of this project Mayor Sheikh Anser told the MCI had already earmarked area which is to be converted into Park. It is located just in front of the Azerbaijan embassy. Work shall soon start there, he added. To yet another question the Mayor told

the MCI plans to undertake tree plantation drive in collaboration with diplomatic missions and sought proposals from various embassies in this regard. "We want to ensure a green diplomatic enclave and seek cooperation from missions to come forward and help us achieve this end", he added. He said road infrastructure of the Enclave is also being refurbished adding almost all roads have been carpeted. He in this regard again sought diplomatic

missions support and requested them to let the MCI know in case their road or street has not been repaired so far. The Mayor also talked about ongoing monsoon tree plantation drive and told the MCI has set a target to plant maximum number of trees during this season. He said the MCI on its own and with the collaboration of private sector was carrying out this drive. He said his doors were open for everybody and he was available round the

clock to serve masses of Islamabad. The Mayor requested people to approach his office in case they had any issues. He said people can also lodge their complaints at the helpline adding early rectification shall be ensured. Regarding Eid, he said the MCI had chalked out elaborate arrangements for quick and safe disposal of waste. He also requested citizens to dispose of waste at the designated locations so that the MCI staff could take it away.

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Saudi Arabia posts \$29bn 2Q deficit as low oil prices bite – Page 07

Pak olive oil producers prepare to enter global market: Report – Page 08

## Briefs

## Govt taking various initiatives for energy sector: Omar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Division Omar Ayub Khan says the government is taking various initiatives for development in energy sector. Addressing the launching ceremony of Pakistan's First Electric Charging Station in Islamabad on Wednesday, he said it is a welcoming initiative and an important step towards Clean and Green Pakistan. Omar Ayub Khan said twenty four electric stations will be set up in future, which will help common people of the country. He said the government is taking solid steps to control environmental pollution. Speaking on the occasion, Special Assistant on Petroleum Nadeem Babar said opening of a charging station in Islamabad will help encourage electric vehicles as future transportation in the country. He said this initiative is a welcoming move for the country, which will soon witness electric vehicles running on roads. The special assistant said it will also help the Prime Minister campaign of Clean and Green Pakistan.

## Sh. Rasheed assures upgradation of employees

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed Wednesday assured the delegation of Mazdoor Ittehad of Pakistan Railways to address their demands including upgradation of Grade 1-16 employees shortly. During a meeting with Pakistan Railways' Mazdoor Ittehad consisting of eight Labour Unions here, the delegation apprised the federal minister of their demands, said a press release. The minister accepted the genuine demands of the delegation and assured to take steps for resolving their grievances. Later, the Labour Unions of Pakistan Railways call off strike which was scheduled on August 5. Pakistan Railways had approved the increase of 25 percent in the technical allowance of employees working under scale 4-16. — APP

## Edhi service suspended as rain disrupts helpline

DNA

KARACHI: The ambulance services of Pakistan's largest charity organisation Edhi Foundation on Wednesday were suspended in Karachi after all the helpline numbers were blocked due to heavy rains in the city. According to the Edhi Foundation spokesperson, the ambulance service 115 and all other information bureau phones are blocked due to rains, therefore, the ambulance network is currently not operational at the moment.

The spokesperson also apologised for the inconvenience caused to citizens due to the inaccessibility of the helpline. A number was restored by the Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) for emergencies, but according to the citizens, that number is also not accessible when they call.

## 'Olive oil producers to enter global market'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani olive oil producers are preparing to enter the global market as 27.5 million olive trees on more than 30,000 acres of land have been planted. The plantation extends through Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan, Islamabad and Azad Kashmir, on Wednesday. Pakistan has 10 million-acre suitable land for olive plantation, almost double than Spain which is currently the largest olive oil producer in the world. With an increase in the area under cultivation, Pakistan is passing through a silent revolution of olive oil production.

## Eid cleanliness plan finalized by District Administration

District administration in the city completed arrangements before Eid. Steps taken for cleanliness plan include; Deployment of waste workers with heavy machinery in all cattle markets, Organized by establishment of hygiene and awareness camps in cattle markets

MUHAMMAD TAHIR

FAISALABAD: Chief Executive Officer Faisalabad Waste Management Company Kashif Raza Awan said that collection of animal waste carcasses on Eid-ul-Adha has been finalized and a comprehensive plan for their elimination in an environment friendly manner has been made. The Eid plan will run until August 3. District administration in the city completed arrangements before Eid. Steps taken for cleanliness plan include; Deployment of waste workers with heavy machinery in all cattle markets, Organized by establishment of hygiene and awareness camps in cattle markets. Establishment of 16 West Transfer Stations at Union Council level. 40 awareness camps in union councils are also set up. In addition to cleaning the city's major mosques and Eid venues, zero waste operation is included in the important places and markets of the city on moon night. On the three days of Eid, the vehicles will be transported from the streets to the transfer stations with the help



of small and big vehicles. Later with the help of big dumpers, the carcasses will be moved to the dump site. On the first day of Eid-ul-Adha 474, on the second day 439 and on the third day of Eid 250 small and large vehicles will be part of the operation. Special dumping points

and mechanical washing of communal altars in the city are also part of the plan. Under the sanitation plan by FWMC,

For the first time, door-to-door eco-friendly bags will also be distributed. Specialized biodegradable bags will help in proper disposal

of sacrificial animal carcasses. In addition, these bags will be available at important places and camps in the city during awareness activities. That Operations Manager Ijaz Bandisha told Punjab Govt. FWMC is active in providing best sanitation facilities to

the citizens in all cases.

In this regard, the leave of all officers and 4,000 sanitary workers has been canceled. For the convenience of the citizens, extraordinary cleaning measures will be taken by the organization on Eid. And citizens' grievances will be addressed immediately. Operations manager said that meetings were also being held with other district bodies, elected representatives, religious scholars and especially citizens to share Eid plans and to ensure the best results.

FWMC Public Relations Officer Muteeb Virk said that for the convenience of the citizens, the helpline 1139 and social media will be kept fully active. The Eid cleaning plan has been prepared after thorough scrutiny Every effort will be made for its successful implementation But it includes the government's commitment, as well as civil society And citizens will be desperately needed There is also an appeal from the citizens Instead of throwing away the debris, hand it over to the FWMC staff. And for hygiene complaints, contact our helpline 1139.

## First child court in tribal districts

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court will open a child protection court in Ghalanai area of Mohmand tribal district after Eidul Azha.

It will be the first such court in the merged tribal districts and fourth in the province.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has three of the six countrywide child protection courts.

They're functioning in Peshawar, Mardan and Abbottabad under the KP Child Protection and Welfare Act, 2010, and Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018. Until now, the three courts have convicted 11 men and a woman for offences against children, including rape, murder, unnatural offence and kidnapping.

Peshawar High Court registrar Khawaja Wajihuddin said that seven virtual child courts would be established at divisional level in near future with trained and appointed judicial teams to ensure child-sensitive dispensation of justice in the context of Covid-19 pandemic.

## Jubilee Life wins prestigious Effie Award

DNA

KARACHI: Jubilee Life Insurance, Pakistan's leading private sector life insurance provider, has been awarded the prestigious Effie Award in the Insurance Category at this year's awards ceremony which was held virtually. This is the first time any insurance company has won the award in this category and Jubilee Life has been recognized for their 'Hum Insurance NibhatayHain' campaign. Jubilee Life was the only shortlisted company in the Insurance category. The award is a testament to Jubilee Life's winning approach and unrelenting commitment towards creatively communicating with their customers and building a genuine relationship. The assessment by Effie Pakistan is based on identifying and ranking the most active marketers, brands and agencies and analyzing

finalists and winners keeping strict criteria of the effective marketing efforts made in the previous year.

Speaking about this achievement, Javed Ahmed, Managing Director & CEO, Jubilee Life Insurance stated, "Winning the award is a great achievement for everyone at Jubilee Life and our partner Prestige Communications.

It is a reminder of the hard work and effort that they have put all throughout the previous year. It, of course, always feels good to receive acknowledgement for any work which has been executed with a lot of passion. There had been several challenges along the way, but our team managed to deliver excellent work, and we are grateful to all jury members of Effie Pakistan for recognizing it. This will serve as motivation for us to continue working even harder to craft narratives which resonate with our customers."

## 'COVID-19 causes severe global economic crisis'

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Makhdoom Khuroo Bakhtyar Tuesday said the COVID-19 pandemic had caused severe disruptions in the global economic system, stress on the health infrastructure and social distress.

The minister said this while addressing to the annual meeting of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) through a video link. The minister appreciated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank for successfully arranging the event during COVID-19 pandemic, said press release issued here. "The impact is more pronounced in case of emerging markets and developing countries. I wish an early end to the pandemic and recovery of the global economy," the minister said. He said in this backdrop, the COVID-19 Crisis Response Facility of AIIB, which was announced to support economies of member countries was highly commendable. — APP



## AJK president condemns shelling at LoC

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Sardar Masood Khan has strongly condemned the shelling on the civilian population in Neelum valley and targeting an archaeological site in Sharda by the Indian Army and warned that such cowardly acts and frequent violations of the ceasefire agreement will escalate tension in the region. In a statement on Wednesday, he said that on late Tuesday night, the Indian Army fired mortar shells on government-run girls school in Neelum valley and destroyed a portion of the school. The unprovoked Indian firing from across the Line of Control damaged a residential house completely and destroyed 17 other residential

units partially, he added. The AJK President said that the Indian occupation troops also attempted to target the site of an ancient Hindu University in Sharda Peeth, which is a highly condemnable act. Earlier on Monday, one civilian was martyred when a landmine laid by the Indian Army had gone off near the Line of Control in Samahani sector. While describing unprovoked Indian Army shelling at the LoC as a well thought out strategy of India, the AJK president said that these provocative acts of India were designed to divert the attention of the international community from its illegal actions in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and to hide the worst human rights violations. However, he maintained that the people of occupied Kashmir were fighting the war of their

freedom and the right to self-determination, and the Indian repression and brutalities cannot deter them from their heroic struggle. Strongly condemning amendment in the Jammu and Kashmir Development Act which gives Indian army an authority to declare any place in IOJK as a strategic area, Khan said this would allow Indian troops to grab that land of Kashmiri people. Saying that India is following the Israeli and the Nazi model of the previous century by settling Hindus in the occupied territory, Sardar Masood Khan appealed to the people of occupied Kashmir to hold forceful protest against this Indian trap, and expose the Indian conspiracies. The AJK President also regretted the martyrdom of three Kashmiris in Rajouri district of occupied

Kashmir, and expressed sympathy with the bereaved families. Meanwhile, in an online interview with the President Advisory Board of Iqbal Institute of Policy Studies (IIPS), Lt Gen (ret) Haroon Aslam, the AJK president said that the unilateral unlawful actions of India in the held territory have invalidated Simla Accord as India claims that whatever actions it had taken in the disputed territory of occupied Kashmir are its internal matter. Kashmiris, he said have been struggling for their freedom and liberty for the past 200 and they have been fighting against foreign occupation, colonial rule and alien domination since 1947. Their struggle to end foreign occupation is legitimate under international law and UN Charters, he asserted.

## FBR holds electronic Katchery

PESHAWAR: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on Wednesday held electronic open forum (katchery) via facebook in its regional office Peshawar to immediately resolve taxpayers' problems. The accessible platform was provided to taxpayers by the Chief Commissioner FBR Peshawar Sardar Ali Khawaja in light of special directives of the prime minister. Zonal Commissioners Tariq Jamal Khattak, Muhammad Tariq Arbab, Tariq Bakhtyar, AC Headquarters Ajmal Khan, Deputy Commissioner Headquarters Mohsin Ehsan and Assistant Commissioner Naem Orakzai were also in attendance. He said that all available resources would be utilized to resolve problems being faced by taxpayers at the earliest. — APP

## PPP, PML-N using each other: Fayyaz

Chairman PPP called on PML-N President in Model Town Lahore late Tuesday following a meeting with the JUI-F Chief

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Fayyaz-ul-Hassan Chohan on Wednesday said that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) are using each other. Talking to media persons, Fayyaz-ul-Hassan Chohan said that Chief of JUI-F Maulana Fazal-ul-Rehman arranged a meeting between Shehbaz Sharif and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as a broker and an agent. The provincial minister, while criticizing opposition parties, said that opposition can never become righteous or united. He said that PPP and PML-N are not ready to trust each other and both parties are trying to use one another. Earlier, Chairman PPP called on PML-N President in Model Town Lahore late

Tuesday following a meeting with the JUI-F Chief. While talking to media after the meeting, Mian Shahbaz Sharif said that never before has the economy been in such a dire state, this government has completely failed, and its continued existence will be dangerous for the country. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that the public and opposition are on the same page. After Eid-ul-Azha, meetings between leaders and the APC will bear welcome news for Pakistan, he said. Earlier, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman who called on Bilawal Zardari said that Prime Minister Imran Khan has put the general public in difficulties, adding that the people were on the same page against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government.

JULY 2020

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11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,

G-8 Markaz, ISLAMABAD-PAKISAN

Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165



## Briefs

### Pakistan to plant one million trees

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Usman Dar said that Tiger Force volunteers will plant one million saplings across the country on August 9.

Addressing a news conference in Islamabad, the special assistant said that Tiger Force volunteers will fully participate in tree plantation campaigns on Tiger Force Day to be observed on the ninth of the next month.

Usman Dar said the forest department will identify the sites of tree plantation, and the Tiger Force volunteers in collaboration with the district administration will plant the saplings. "A Tiger Force App has been launched to empower the volunteers", he said, adding that the government has decided to reopen Tiger Force registration.

He said that one million youth have been registered under Tiger Force and the government has so far benefited from three hundred thousand volunteers. These volunteers have played an important role during the Coronavirus crisis, said Dar and added that the services of Tiger Force were lauded at the international level too. He urged Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah to benefit from the services of Tiger Force. Earlier, Prime Minister Imran Khan had announced on Tuesday that country would observe Tiger Force Day on August 9 aimed to accelerate efforts for tree plantation across the country.

### Fraudster held for minting money through fake letters

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police along with other law enforcement agency conducted raid in sector E-11 and nabbed a fraudster involved in minting money from people by offering them fake appointment letters against various jobs, police said.

According to details, a police team of Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) headed by DSP Hakim Khan including Assistant Sub-Inspectors Sadheer Ahmed Abbasi, Irfan Ullah along with personnel of an intelligence agency nabbed a proclaimed offender wanted in various fraud cases. He was wanted to law enforcers in cheque dishonor cases, impersonating himself as government official of various government departments to mint money from people and also extortion activities. He has been identified as Nadeem Khan s/o Mewa Khan resident of sector E-11/3 and permanent resident of Tehsil Barya District Nowshera Feeroz Sindh. Law enforcers also recovered VIGO vehicle (ICT-AQF-799) with fake number plate, wireless sets, shackles, fake stamps of 28 government departments, fake service cards, fake number plates and fake weapons license.

### Gov't borrowing from SBP down 71%

ISLAMABAD: The government borrowing from State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) massively declined by 71 percent in fiscal year 2019-20 as compared to last year. According to official figures, the borrowing declined from Rs 285.7 billion as of July 12 2019 to Rs 82.7 billion as of July 10 2020. Similarly credit to private sector has also been improved from negative Rs 119.2 billion as of July 12 2019 to negative Rs 84.3 billion as of July 10 2020. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Mayor Islamabad Sheikh Anser Aziz planting a sapling as part of MCI tree plantation drive. - DNA

## Experts urge for steps for better business regulation for SMEs

Ms Ammara Malik, a social entrepreneur, lamented that no assessment has been made yet on how Covid-19 has impacted social enterprises across the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs) need enabling policy measures to recover from the worst impacts of Covid19 pandemic. The provincial governments also need to evaluate the situation to respond with urgent facilitation to save such business. The experts and analysts on the economy from public and private sectors said this while sharing their views with the participants at online consultative dialogue 'Better business regulation for SME sector in Punjab Province' organized by the Sustainable Development

Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Wednesday. Director (Projects and Policy), Punjab Board of Investment and Trade, Mr Sohail Qadiri, informed the participants that his institution was aiming to create a buying house platform for the capacity building services to SMEs and to help them in exploring global markets. He suggested that the institutions such as Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) and Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) need to collaborate and help SMEs to mitigate Covid19 related difficulties. The needs of SMEs should also be prioritized in the rel-

evant policies and efforts so that more clusters of smaller firms could be created, he added. Dr Vaqar, Joint Executive Director, SDPI, while moderating the discussion, opined that it was need of the hour for SECP to ease laws for SMEs and startups across the country. He said that the current laws are preventing idle liquidity in the economy to move from real estate to investments in innovative firms. Likewise, Pakistani diaspora, willing to invest in Pakistan, continues to complain of lack of credible venture capital and crowdsourcing framework. Therefore, SECP needs to evaluate the existing facilitation and regulatory

framework. An evaluation is also desired to see if anticipated gains from SECP's startup portal, facilitation desk and regulatory Sandbox initiatives were achieved. "Deeper consultation with private sector and think tanks around amendments to the private equity and venture capital regulatory framework is required," Ahmed said and added further that the provincial government also needs to study the rise in business costs related to compliance with Covid19 related SOPs. Founding President of the Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry-Lahore Division, Dr Shehla Javed Akram, was of view that

there is a lack of interest on the part of the government to engage businesses and understand their issues. She added further that the women-led businesses even find it more difficult to access the refinance facility and collateral-free loan facility announced by the State Bank of Pakistan and likewise, the commercial banks don't understand the problems faced by women-led SMEs. The Punjab government needs to learn from peer economies and how they have supported SMEs, particularly women-led businesses. The central banks in other countries have been more innovative in launching support schemes for women-led

enterprises. Mr Kamran Niazi from USAID, on the occasion highlighted the need to unpack which SMEs need more support in Covid19 times. The provincial governments need to study how to integrate rural SMEs with major markets in mainstream cities and urban centers in a better manner. Moreover, e-commerce policy and interventions should be customized to bring consumers from rural areas online, he concluded. He also said that the donor organisations trying to help Pakistan face difficulties as they cannot plan their support better in the absence of timely and credible data on SMEs. - APP

### 15 outlaws held, weapons and valuables recovered

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police have arrested 15 outlaws including seven absconders in various areas of the city and recovered weapons and valuables from them, a police spokesman said. According to details, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Amir Zulfikar Khan has ordered crackdown against criminals especially drug pushers. Following these orders, DIG (Operations) Waqar-Uddin Syed has directed all zonal officers to accelerate the efforts to curb the crime and drug pushing activities across the city and said that no laxity would be tolerated in this regard.

Margalla police team apprehended a bike lifter namely Azhar Khan and recovered stolen motorbike from him. Secretariat police arrested an accused Ibrahim and recovered stolen valuable from him. Kohsar police arrested accused Mumraiz and recovered one bottle wine from him.

### 'No new toll plaza set up during last two years'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Communications Murad Saeed Wednesday said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government had not set up even a single toll plaza in any part of the country during the last two years, since it came into power in 2018.

"All toll plazas had been established during the tenures of previous governments," he said while responding to a query of PML-N's Tahira Aurangzeb during the question hour of National Assembly. Replying to a question, he said currently one new Motorway Hyderabad-Sukkur (M-6) was under consideration, which would pass through Tando Allahyar, Sakrand, Tando Adam, Shandadpur, Daur, Padidan, Bhriya Road, Mehrabpur, Ranipur and Pirjo Goth. He said Executive Committee of National Economic Council had approved the project and it was now in improvement phase. - APP

### SBP issues instructions for Islamic Banking

RAWALPINDI: Keeping in view the significant potential of Islamic Banking Windows (IBWs) in enhancing the share and outreach of Shariah compliant financial services and increase in financial inclusion, SBP has issued on Wednesday revised instructions for banks to expand the scope of operations of IBWs.

IBWs can now offer all types of financing products to their customers including Corporates, SMEs, Agriculture, Housing, and Consumers. However, this facility is subject to the condition that respective IBW branch shall be converted into full-fledged Islamic banking branch within a period of three years. For details: <http://www.sbp.org.pk/ibd/2020/C2.htm>. At present, Islamic banking products and services are being offered by full-fledged Islamic banks, Islamic banking subsidiaries and Islamic banking branches of conventional banks after getting approval/license from SBP. Conventional banks can open IBWs, which are dedicated counters in conventional branches, after getting permission from SBP; however, these were not allowed to offer any financing products. With 1,400 IBWs of 11 banks currently operational in the country, their potential to improve access to finance will increase significantly. Further, it will contribute towards increase in financial inclusion through provision of Shariah compliant financing facilities to vast majority of population.

The revised instructions also incorporate different amendments or additions to existing regulations and include policy formulation on IBWs, submission of annual IBWs expansion plan, physical setup & display requirements for IBWs, opening & closure of IBWs, their fee structure, and revisions in reporting requirements. These revised instructions will supersede all previous instructions issued on IBWs by SBP from time to time. - DNA

### IIUI extends last date for applications

DNA

ISLAMABAD: International Islamic University Islamabad has extended the last date for submission of application forms for admission (Fall 2020 semester) till August 07 2020. The decision has been taken to facilitate more candidates who intend to apply for admission. IIU has offered admission to BS/MS/PhD programs in 09 faculties including Social Sciences, Basic and Applied Sciences, Management Sciences, International institute for Islamic Economics, Arabic, Usuluddin, Languages and Literature, Engineering and Technology and Shariah and Law. Applicants may apply online by visiting the IIU website or this link <http://admission.iiu.edu.pk>. Male applicants may call at 051-9019567 and female applicants may call at 051-9019327 for guidance and details.



ISLAMABAD: Boys feeding their sacrificial camel with tree leaves outside their house in federal capital. - DNA

## FPCCI urges Govt to stop protecting local manufacturers of PFY

In an online meeting of the FPCCI Standing Committee with Importers, unanimous recommendations were made. Khawar Noorani requested Abdul Razaq Dawood to play a role for reducing import duties & taxes on polyester filament yarn (PFY) and allow import without sales tax, advance value added sales tax & advance income tax

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Khawar Noorani, Chairman Standing committee on imports, convenor yarn trade committee, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and former chairman Pakistan Yarn Merchants Association (PYMA), has expressed serious concerns over the government's move to protect local manufacturers of polyester filament yarn

for the last 30 years and destroy the yarn import sector and appealed Abdul Razaq Dawood, advisor to the Prime Minister on commerce & investment to eliminate the monopoly of local manufacturers and provide level playing field. He also requested for imposing uniform duties & taxes for commercial & industrial importers at the import stage.

In an online meeting of the FPCCI Standing Committee with Importers, un-

animous recommendations were made. Khawar Noorani requested Abdul Razaq Dawood to play a role for reducing import duties & taxes on polyester filament yarn (PFY) and allow import without sales tax, advance value added sales tax & advance income tax. He said that anti-dumping duty on PFY should also be suspended until local industries meet the demand of local factories. He further said that the basic raw material of tex-

tile industry and SMEs is polyester filament yarn (5402.4700, 5402.3300) with additional customs duty, regulatory duty, anti-dumping duty, advance sales tax, advance withholding sales tax 3pc, advance withholding Income Tax 2pc, higher customs valuation rulings, while anti-dumping duty has already imposed to support local manufacturers of PFY is subject to 2pc duty, income tax & 17pc sales tax, which constitute a total of 45pc

tax on raw materials. imposing an additional regulatory duty of 2.5pc will increase smuggling and destroy local industries. "Local manufacturers unable to fulfill raw material demands and can barely meet the demand of 20 to 25pc of polyester filament yarn while the rest is met by imports and commercial importers supply raw materials to small factories, so if SMEs continued to get expensive raw materials, most of the factories will

shut down, which would have a negative impact on the country's exports and increase unemployment", he feared. Khawar Noorani pointed out that due to COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, the commercial importers have to invest too much amount than give their goods to end users on credit basis, in past few months they are not getting even their old payments from the manufacturers, but commercial importers are still playing

an effective role in continuing the production activities in the best economic interest of the country, regardless of their losses.

"Government should reverse its decision to impose a 2.5pc regulatory duty on polyester filament yarn and impose uniform import duties & taxes for commercial & industrial importers, so that industries especially SMEs can get cheaper raw materials and to boost domestic exports", Khawar requested.

## Briefs

**'No proper plan devised to deal with garbage'**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi on Wednesday said that over the past 70 years local and provincial governments have not devised any proper plan to deal with garbage or animal waste collection.

In a statement on social media networking site, he said that they have all been busy siphoning off tax payer money and amassing personal assets around the world. "Yesterday, in the cabinet Prime Minister took a very serious notice of the situation in Karachi," he said. The minister said that the federal government was determined to solve people's problems, despite the fact that after 18th amendment resources rest with the provincial governments.

He urged people of Karachi to take extra precautions. "I had been warning Sindh Government for months that monsoon season is coming and rain will play havoc with our city, unless they clean the storm drains. He said that "sadly, the incompetent crooks of PPP who have ruled us for decades did nothing and left us at the mercy of nature". — APP

**Hearing in Rawal Lake poison case adjourned**

ISLAMABAD: An anti terrorism court (ATC) in Islamabad on Wednesday adjourned the hearing till August 11 in third and last case being tried against three accused for mixing poison in Rawal Lake for catching fishes. Accused Jahangir Abbasi and two others had been acquitted in two cases of same nature by the same court of Raja Jawad Abbas Hassan.

During the hearing the prosecution pleaded the court that witnesses summoned for the day were unable to attend court proceedings due to certain reasons and pleaded for adjournment. The court accepted the request and adjourned the hearing till August 11 and also summoned the witnesses for the day. It is worth mentioning here that secretariat police had registered three FIRs against the accused Jahangir Ahmed Abbasi and two others, allegedly involved in catching fish after mixing poison into the Rawal Lake water. An FIR was registered on behalf of the contractor of fishing of Rawal Lake in which the accused had been acquitted by the same court. Such case was being tried in one of two other FIRs registered on behalf of fisheries department under the terrorism clauses. The accused had also been acquitted by the court in one of these two FIRs. — APP

**8016 vehicles booked over wrong parking**

RAWALPINDI: The City Traffic Police (CTP), in order to ensure smooth flow of traffic on city roads, issued challan slips to 8016 vehicles on no parking, double parking and wrong parking changes during July and also picked up a large number of vehicles and motorcycles parked in no parking areas. According to a CTP spokesman, City Traffic Police (CTP) on the directive of Chief Traffic Officer Rawalpindi, Syed Ali Akbar, launched a grand operation against wrong parking, double parking and parking in no-parking areas in different sectors of the city.

On the special directives of the CTO, traffic wardens and field officers were directed to take strict action against parking rules violators as they create hurdles in smooth flow of traffic on city roads, the spokesman said. He said, wrong parking which was one of the main cause of traffic mess particularly in Raja Bazar, College Road, Murree Road and other roads would not be tolerated adding the vehicles and motorcycles found parked out of parking areas would be impounded in respective police stations. He urged the citizens not to violate the traffic rules and park vehicles at designated places which would help ensure smooth traffic flow in commercial areas. — APP



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi talking to citizens during his visit to Panahgah at Taramri. — DNA

**President stresses active role of welfare bodies in helping poor**

The President reviewed the arrangements made for the homeless and needy at the shelter home and interacted with the people

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday urged upon the welfare organizations, civil society and philanthropists to step forward in caring for financially weaker segments of society during the difficult times of pandemic. During his visit to a shelter home set up by the government at Taramri in the outskirts of capital, the President said helping poor and deserving people on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha was a religious and national obligation.

The President reviewed the arrangements made for the homeless and needy at the shelter home and interacted with the people. He instructed Managing Director Bait ul Maal Aun Abbas Bappi on the occasion to take special care of elderly. He lauded the contribution of Saylani Welfare Trust for providing quality food to the helpless and laborers at shelter home. He also expressed satisfaction over the implementation of stand-

ard operating procedures (SOPs) at the shelter home to contain the spread of coronavirus. The President was given a briefing by PM's Focal person for Shelter Homes Naseem ur Rehman about the measures taken to provide relief to the workers and out-of-town laborers. It was highlighted that the number of people at the shelter home has increased after the opening of construction sector by the government.

Later, the President also visited a nearby market of sacrificial animals set up ahead of Eid-ul-Azha where he reviewed the implementation of SOPs and safety measures to control coronavirus. It is worth mentioning that Panahgahs are Government's initiative to provide shelter and food for homeless and poor citizens. The 'Panahgah' management is striving to improve the basic services beyond bed and breakfast to include water, sanitation and hy-

giene for promoting healthy lives. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has provided thousands of masks which were distributed in six Panahgahs in the twin cities which saw a rise in the number of daily wage earners. The daily wage earners went to different rural areas to help farmers harvest wheat crop. After harvesting, they started returning to urban areas for jobs particularly in the construction industry. — APP

**PRCS to co-chair global committee**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In another honour for the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Secretary General Khalid bin Majeed has been nominated as Co-Chairman of the Red Cross Red Crescent Global Committee for Covid-19 Vaccination, Advocacy, Fundraising and Resource Mobilization. The coveted post has been bestowed upon Secretary General Khalid bin Majeed keeping in view his professional excellence, innovative approach, dedication towards the humanitarian cause and meritorious contribution to the ongoing fight against Covid-19, which has been acknowledged and appreciated even at the international level. The nomination has been made from among Na-



tional Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of 194 countries who are member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. As the global spread of Covid-19 continues to accelerate, in addition to the direct effects, the pandemic has triggered secondary effects that are threatening life-saving immunization services around the world. A report released by the WHO, UNICEF, and Gavi,

the Vaccine Alliance, indicates that the disruption of immunization activities has put more than 80 million children under one at risk of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs), including polio, measles and rubella. Several models predict that the secondary impact of the pandemic can result in more lives lost from VPDs than from Covid-19. The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement along with the United Nations has called for unity to scale up efforts to develop, test, and scale-up production of safe, effective, quality, affordable diagnostics, therapeutics, medicines and vaccines. Specifically, the governments, the private sector, international organizations and civil society have been urged to unite towards 'a people's vaccine'.

**Two Bears still at Islamabad zoo**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two bears at the Islamabad zoo still haven't been shifted to Balkasar Bear Sanctuary due to health concerns, the Islamabad High Court was informed on Wednesday. The sanctuary authorities said that the temperature at the sanctuary is not suitable for the two bears. A German vet is currently treating them. Justice Athar, while hearing a case on implementation of the court's verdict on shifting all animals at the Marghazar zoo to suitable sanctuaries, asked why it shouldn't be investigated why the bears were brought to Islamabad and on whose orders. "Why are you harming animals for the sake of recreation?"

He was informed that former wildlife director Raja Jawad issued a tender and purchased them for the zoo. The court summoned more details on the transfer of the bears by July 29 and adjourned the hearing. Many activists rejoiced after the court had ordered the transfer of animals from Marghazar zoo to suitable sanctuaries on May 22. The verdict was announced on three combined petitions: relocation of two brown bears, treatment of Kaavan, and stopping the shooting of stray dogs. Kaavan, the only elephant at the Islamabad Zoo, is being shifted to Cambodia.

**RCCI inks MOU with EO for improve networking**

Saboor Malik, President, RCCI, said, "RCCI has always envisioned providing services to the business community and has already initiated many projects for the improved networking and promotion of entrepreneurship



RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) and Entrepreneur's Organization Islamabad inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote and carry out collaborative activities in furtherance of common interest of the organizations. Saboor Malik, President, RCCI and Usman Shaukat, President EO Islamabad signed and exchanged the documents at a ceremony held at Chamber House Rawalpindi here on Wednesday which was also attended by senior vice president Noshawan Khalil Khan, Vice President Hamza Sarosh, Khalid Farooq Qazi EO Board Member, amongst others. Speaking on the occasion, Saboor Malik, President, RCCI, said, "RCCI has always envisioned providing services to the business community and has already initiated many projects for the improved networking and promotion of entrepreneurship. Usman Shaukat said that this MoU will help in developing linkages among the entrepreneurs and provides a platform for peer-to-peer network exclusively for entrepreneurs.

Under the agreement, RCCI and EO Islamabad will share and assist in communication coordination and information sharing necessary to provide support to entrepreneurs. Both organizations will ensure networking, liaison with public-private entities for visibility. Both parties will promote Women Business Incubation Center and Women Entrepreneurs training programs in the different cohorts. — DNA

**USA, China, UK top three destinations of Pak exports**

ISLAMABAD: The United States of America (USA) remained the top export destinations of the Pakistani products during the fiscal year (2019-20), followed by China and United Kingdom (UK). The total exports to the USA during July-June (2019-20) were recorded at US \$ 3897.852 million against the exports of US \$ 4042.701 million during July-June (2018-

19), showing negative growth of 3.58 percent during the period under review, according to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth \$ 1663.672 million against the exports of \$1858.878 million last year, showing decrease of 10.50 percent. UK was the at third top export destination, where Pakistan

exported products worth US \$ 1637.280 million during fiscal year under review against the exports of US \$ 1758.050 million during last year, showing decrease of 6.86 percent, SBP data revealed. Pakistan's exports to Spain were recorded at US \$ 869.736m against US \$ 929.421m last year where as the exports to Italy stood at US \$ 750.917m against US \$ 805.399m. — APP

**Online Conference urges for promoting bilateral trade between Pak and Fujian**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China should focus on promoting direct business linkages between their entrepreneurs to further enhance bilateral trade and explore JVs in potential areas of mutual interest between the two countries. This was observed by Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry while delivering his message to the China-Fujian - Pakistan Two-Way Trade Online Promotion Conference that was organized by the Department of Commerce of Fujian Province of China in collaboration with Consulate General of Pakistan in Guangzhou and Islamabad Chamber of

Commerce & Industry. He said that organizing such online video conferences between the private sectors of both countries was very important to explore prospects for business matchmakings and trade promotion, especially at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic has restricted the international travels. Mr. Huang Dezhi, Deputy Director General of the Department of Commerce of Fujian Province in his address said that Pakistan and China were strategic partners and the leadership of both countries was determined to further strengthen economic ties. He said Fujian Province wanted to diversify cooperation with Pakistan to further expand bilateral trade. He said that CPEC was creating



new opportunities for long-term cooperation between the two countries and added that Fujian was ready for increased industrial cooperation with Pakistan with technology transfer to further develop its industrial sector. Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Diyar Khan, Consul General of Pakistan in Guang-

zhou said that organizing online conferences between the entrepreneurs of Pakistan and Fujian Province of China in post-Covid-19 scenario was a good initiative to explore bilateral trade and investment cooperation. He said Fujian was a gateway for South East China and Pakistan could achieve

beneficial results for its economy by strengthening cooperation with it. He said Pak-Fujian Province bilateral trade was around USD 1 billion, that could be further enhanced by more efforts from both sides. He said that China-Pakistan Joint Business and Investment Council should be activated to further strengthen trade and investment relations between the two countries. Mr. Muhammad Irfan, Trade and Investment Counsellor of Pakistan in Guangzhou gave a presentation on trade, investment and tourism opportunities in Pakistan. He identified construction, food processing, automobile, textiles, logistics, information technology and tourism as priority sectors for Chinese investors in Pakistan. Mr. Muhammad Shakeel-

Munir, former Senior Vice President ICCI highlighted the potential of Pakistan's marble and granite sector and stressed that Chinese investors should explore JVs and investment in Pakistan to produce valued added finished marble products that have great potential for exports around the world. Representatives of Nan'an and Fu uan Municipal Bureau of Commerce, Nan'an Stone International Trade Enterprises Association and Fujian Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Mechanical and Electrical Technology Products also spoke at the occasion and highlighted the need for promoting mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Fujian Province of China.

**Amazon Web Services are not being Disrupted**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: With regards to the disruption in Amazon Web Services reportedly faced by some users recently, the impression being created on social media is that it was due to the PUBG ban is wrong and baseless. The ban on PUBG is in place since 10th July whereas AWS users faced issues reportedly on 23rd July. Complaints received by operators from AWS users also show that they experienced intermittent accessibility issues and not complete blocking of AWS IPs or services. Furthermore, this phenomenon was not specific to Pakistan only but users in other countries including United States also experienced similar issues.

PTA has already clarified the matter through its social media accounts as well when this trend was first seen on social media. Currently, PTA is not doing any VPN blocking and the apprehensions are unfounded. In terms of VPN registration, the requirements are tailored around users working from home either for a local or a foreign company. Users can get their VPNs registered without having a static IP on their end. To facilitate the public, PTA has already clarified VPN registration process / requirements on its official website and has also engaged on Industry forums to create awareness. On Industry requests, online mechanism for VPN registration is also being launched. Moreover, contact details of operators are available on PTA website (www.pta.gov.pk) so users can easily initiate VPN registration request through their respective service provider.

**Govt decides to reopen Tiger Force registration**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Usman Dar has said that it has been decided to reopen the Tiger Force registration on PM Imran Khan's direction. The SAPM held a news conference on Wednesday and said the Tiger Force will take full part in tree planting campaign on August 9 to achieve the target of plantation of one million trees. Usman Dar further said that the purpose of the Tiger Force is to empower the youth and the force is being recognized internationally as well. It is pertinent here to mention that PM Imran Khan had earlier announced to celebrate Tiger Force Day on August 9 and said he would himself be a part of the tree planting campaign.

**Virtual meeting of electoral group held**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A virtual meeting of Gender and Disability Electoral Group was held at the Election Commission of Pakistan under the chairmanship of the Secretary Election Commission. The meeting was also attended by the Special Secretary, ECP, Additional DG, Gender Affairs Wing, officials of the ECP and members of the civil society. In his opening remarks, Secretary ECP appreciated contribution of the Civil Society for strengthening democratic processes in Pakistan. He said that the ECP is determined that all segments of the society would be given equal opportunity to participate in the electoral and political process. He further stated that the third Strategic Plan 2019-2023 of the ECP reiterated ECP's commitments for gender mainstreaming and inclusion of all segments of the society. The Election Commission of Pakistan continued to discharge its duties even at the time of pandemic for the continuation of the democratic process in the country as the working on the delimitation of constituencies in the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was underway, he further said. In the end, Special Secretary, ECP thanked the members of the Civil Society and appreciated their involvement and suggestions.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti  
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Vol: 01 Issue: 110

Email: [dailyisbpost@gmail.com](mailto:dailyisbpost@gmail.com)

Website: [www.islamabadpost.com.pk](http://www.islamabadpost.com.pk)

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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

## Attempting agreement

**T**HE government and the opposition have extended the conversation held on Monday to discuss amendments to NAB laws and also discuss how to meet FATF conditions. There is quite evidently still a wide gap between the PTI government and the opposition, notably on NAB laws. One of the key points that came up on Monday was the issue of the extension in the tenure of the NAB chairman.

The draft presented by the government stated this would be extended, presumably for an indefinite period. The opposition has said this is not what was agreed on at any point and that it has already been decided in previous talks that the term of the chairperson would be limited to four years. The government on its part states a clerical mistake was made in the draft presented at the meeting. Further dialogue is continuing.

The other crucial points brought up by the opposition were the powers of arrest available to NAB. They have asked why the body has such far-reaching powers in contrast to other organizations which are also responsible for investigating matters. The question is a relevant one given that it has been repeatedly brought up by courts hearing matters pertaining to NAB. When an individual is perfectly willing to appear before NAB, arrest seems unnecessary and it has been argued it is being used simply as a means to humiliate the individual and their family. The opposition has also suggested that the government is keen to bring in changes before the Malam Jabba case opens up for NAB.

While the government states it is attempting to improve the process of accountability in the country and make it more transparent and more effective, the issue that arises is why a full-fledged plan for NAB working was not put in place before the government came to power. Accountability after all had always been its main rallying point and its senior members with the help of experts should have been able to chalk out a fair mechanism to achieve this without creating the controversy that has now arisen.

The extent of this controversy has affected many factions of society with traders, bureaucrats and the business community already being pulled out of NAB's grasp after they raised protest. The law under which NAB functions is now chiefly directed at politicians. While the concentration on amendments in NAB and the FATF demands is a good step forward, we hope that the government is sincere in keeping a stance that is fair to all. Its request that the opposition chalk out what it seeks from NAB in a clear-cut fashion is logical. Rather than merely arguing every point, the opposition too needs to put down in black and white precisely what it wishes for. Its objections are perfectly valid. We already have an agreement that the FBR will be the body looking into assets and determining their value. To ensure accountability can be useful, we need broader agreement and a consensus among all political parties about how it should be carried out so that accountability can move forward – but with transparency and without bias and witch-hunts.



## Pakistan's digital ecosystem

MUHAMMAD OMAR IFTIKHAR

**T**HE digital landscape of Pakistan began to change when the key players started adopting best practices when it comes to utilizing digital media. Such players include start-up ventures, entrepreneurs along with investors who evaluate the potential of entrepreneurial objectives and invest accordingly. Fortunately for Pakistan, the young entrepreneurs and seed investors are on the same page when it comes to developing digital resources, e-commerce platforms, and Android or iOS applications that fulfill a need of the market. Unfortunately, tech-based enterprises are not able to acquire a loan from banks. Pakistan's digital media landscape has several players.

These include digital media advertising agencies including those working in the domain of developing brand image, content marketing, public relations, and offer an e-commerce platform. However, the digital ecosystem of Pakistan needs to be materialized at the earliest. Although it will take time for Pakistan to build a Silicon Valley akin to the one in California, USA, Pakistan can have its version of it. However, more than having Pakistan's Silicon Valley of its own, the need of the hour is to build Pakistan's digital ecosystem. In simple terms, a digital ecosystem is a network of stakeholders that connect online and interact digitally. Such interaction and sharing of knowledge benefit everyone, especially the digital companies including start-up ventures and established companies. Pakistan is a part of the IT industry as its IT-based companies have been offering services and fulfilling the market's needs. Pakistan's digital ecosystem, however, will realize much more than that.

It will bring to a single platform all digital companies offering a product, service; perform content marketing; investors including banks, angel investors, peer-to-peer lenders, and venture capitalists; enable freelancers, home-based women entrepreneurs and such entrepreneurs offering selective or customized products or services through social media. A digital ecosystem in Pakistan will benefit all those whose business models, products, or services are related to digital media.

## COVID-19's potential bridge over troubled water

Cecilia Tortajada & Asit K. Biswas

Australia, which has also detected the virus in untreated wastewater, now plans to carry out routine testing to anticipate outbreaks. Tokyo has already begun to take weekly samples from untreated and treated sewage. Samples from 15 sewage treatment plants will be frozen and stored until methods for extracting and analyzing the virus are established. In Singapore, the National Environment Agency has initiated a pilot surveillance program to screen wastewater samples. Crucially, such approaches can work only in places with effective wastewater collection and management

**T**HE coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is likely to transform our behaviors, attitudes and policies in many areas. For the sake of overcoming the public health crisis and enabling economic recovery, one must hope that water and wastewater management will be among them.

Delivering clean water and ensuring proper wastewater management has been a global concern since the late 1970s. Significant progress toward this objective was made during the 1980s, which the UN declared the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. But the ultimate goal – to ensure that every human on the planet had access to clean water and sanitation by 1990 – was not achieved.

The world tried again in 2000, with the less ambitious Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of halving the share of the population without sustainable access to clean water and sanitation by 2015. This time, the UN declared victory, but included anyone with access to water at all – clean or not.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the UN's members in 2015, were supposed to pick up where the MDGs left off. Again, the target is clean water and proper sanitation for all. The deadline this time is 2030. But, as in the past, the barriers to success are formidable. When the SDGs were introduced, the UN estimated that 785 million people worldwide lacked access to “even a basic drinking water service.” The true number is probably far larger. According to UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), some 2.2 billion people do not have safely managed drinking water services and 4.2 billion do not have safely managed sanitation services.

Contaminated water and poor sanitation are linked to the transmission of diseases – such as cholera, diarrhea, dysentery, hepatitis A, typhoid, and polio – that affect hundreds of millions of people every year. Making matters worse, nearly 25 percent of health care facilities worldwide lack even basic water services. This is not a developing economy problem. In the US, for example, 2 million people do not

have access to piped water. Moreover, the water that people do receive often does not qualify as clean or safe: The high-profile cases of Flint, Michigan, and Walkerton, Canada – where people are suffering long-term health problems, and even premature death, owing to contaminated water – make that abundantly clear.

Not surprisingly, such incidents have eroded trust in water utilities. Today, at least 3.5 billion people worldwide, in both developed and developing countries, lack confidence in the quality of the water they receive. In South Asia, with more than 1.7 billion people, there is not a single town or city where people trust their water utilities. Those who can often rely on bottled water or point-of-use water treatment systems.

The COVID-19 crisis could be a turning point. Yes, universal access to clean water and sanitation has been on the world's radar since the late 1970s, but the current pandemic has made it a universal interest. While frequent hand-washing is widely regarded as one of the most effective ways to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, the UNICEF/WHO estimate implies that 3 billion people worldwide lack the facilities to do so. And, with the pandemic underscoring the link between clean water and public health, the bar for what qualifies as “clean” has been raised.

The COVID-19 crisis is also changing how people think about wastewater – a resource that has been grossly undervalued in the past. As some cities have recognized, properly treated wastewater can be channeled toward human, industrial, agricultural, and environmental uses. Wastewater is also a valuable source of energy, but very few utilities worldwide use it that way. Overall, cities in developed countries have a much better record when it comes to collecting and treating wastewater, but even they are not realizing its full potential. As the WHO has noted, analysis of wastewater's composition can provide reliable information on pathogens and chemicals at the population level. In 1989, Israel introduced wastewater surveillance to measure the spread of poliovirus strains that could cause poliomyelitis.

Now, wastewater analysis is emerging as an im-

portant way to assess community spread of COVID-19. Contaminated untreated wastewater itself does not appear to pose a transmission risk, but it offers a means of gauging infection rates in communities, and a possible early-warning system for new outbreaks.

In the Netherlands, traces of COVID-19 were detected in untreated wastewater six days before the first case was reported. Traces were detected in untreated wastewater in the Swiss city of Lugano when only one case had been confirmed, and in Zurich after only six infections. Wastewater surveillance showed that community transmission in Valencia, Spain, began earlier than previously believed.

Australia, which has also detected the virus in untreated wastewater, now plans to carry out routine testing to anticipate outbreaks. Tokyo has already begun to take weekly samples from untreated and treated sewage. Samples from 15 sewage treatment plants will be frozen and stored until methods for extracting and analyzing the virus are established. In Singapore, the National Environment Agency has initiated a pilot surveillance program to screen wastewater samples. Crucially, such approaches can work only in places with effective wastewater collection and management.

It seems likely that the COVID-19 crisis will increase demand for cleaner, safer water and more reliable and effective wastewater treatment everywhere. This could accelerate progress toward the SDG on water and wastewater. But success is far from guaranteed, not least because the pandemic also seems to be strengthening another trend: Declining trust in public institutions. Changing this will require water utilities all over the world to improve their management and communication practices significantly.

• Cecilia Tortajada, editor-in-chief of the International Journal of Water Resources Development, is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Water Policy at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

• Asit K. Biswas is Visiting Professor at the University of Glasgow.

– Courtesy Arab News

## Pandemics and human interference with the nature

Sahil Yar Muhammad

The first is that the increase in population has led to an increase of demand and it is that increase of demand which has led to massive industrialization which has led to increased air pollution through burning and other processes as well as releasing toxic wastes into rivers, lakes, seas and other water bodies. These actions which has devastated nature, destroyed habitats, precariously affected marine life, melted glaciers and snow caps raising the sea level and putting island countries like those in the Caribbean

**H**UMAN beings after the renaissance or the age of enlightenment as it is also called has made breakthrough in many fields leading to an unprecedented advancement in technology which further increased after the start of industrial age. However, the sticking point is that despite the advancement in technology and civilization, despite the leaps in knowledge and disciplines, we are more ignorant than we were in the Middle Ages when man's eyes were to the heaven.

We thought we could do what we want, advance as much as we can, exploit nature as much as we can, increase the population as much as we want, expand urban areas to accommodate the increasing population as much as our greed demands and many other similar actions without any thing to fear as if we were the only living things in the world and we had a right to everything which the world had to offer, something which we knew were limited but supposed would never deplete.

Newsflash, we were completely wrong. Unfortunately, other living things also exist in the world which were at one time numerically higher than humans, resources were abundant once, now they are scarce, people are living in poverty, children are impoverished and many places in the world especially in the third world are a scene straight out of a medieval time movie when such things were commonplace or even worse, much worse.

It is not an understatement or an exaggeration to say that majority of the population lives in poverty and by poverty I don't mean the criteria which changes from country to country but those poor people who find it extremely difficult to make ends meet which also include many middle class people. Not many people can argue or maybe they can, that a huge chunk of the population resides in that category. The increase in population is a result of our ignorance which has come to haunt us in some stoic ways.

The first is that the increase in population has led to an increase of demand and it is that increase of demand which has led to massive industrialization which has led to increased air pollution through burn-

ing and other processes as well as releasing toxic wastes into rivers, lakes, seas and other water bodies. These actions which has devastated nature, destroyed habitats, precariously affected marine life, melted glaciers and snow caps raising the sea level and putting island countries like those in the Caribbean and elsewhere at the risk of being submerged, increasing heat waves leading to increasing forest fires and droughts and according to some researchers, an increase in seismic activity.

It is ironic that despite these multitude of existential problems, we are worrying about Covid-19 something which Noam Chomsky spoke about a little during an interview with Mehdi Hassan on the intercept that the present situation is the most dangerous “not because of the pandemic but what is looming right behind; we are gonna get over the pandemic but we are not gonna get over the melting polar ice caps”. Problems such as climate change are real and it will not go away and neither will its consequence no matter how much U.S President Donald Trump or Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro or other influential figures term it a conspiracy and a hoax, or in Trump's case, “a democrats hoax”. The explosion of population which still continues unchecked and the rapid industrialization are one of the many sources of the aforementioned problems. The second is the urbanization which has gone neck to neck with the increase in population. The need for space to adjust and provide for the needs of the rising population has led to the trespassing of people into the natural habitats of other species. This is not only folly but quite harmful as the coronavirus has so clearly illustrated. It is widely believed and is backed up by studies and research that the virus has originated from bats [SYM2] after the Wuhan Institute of Virology found a 96% match with a pathogen it had discovered in horseshoe bats in 2014 and has passed through an intermediary animal to cross the species gap between bats and humans which some scientists believe although it has not been proven yet that the pangolin is the intermediary suspect. If that is true, then the coronavirus was a result of the wrong bat meeting the wrong pangolin at the wrong time.

The chances are purely astronomical the conditions of which were met by human interference because when you encroach upon a habitat and exploit it, you also take with you something which was best left there. It is now that we are learning the hard way that when we exploit nature, nature will also exploit us. The wet markets of Wuhan was a perfect place for such a virus to jump from animal to animal until it overcame the species barrier and jumped to humans.

The third which is not so much as related with population is the arrogance of people as they act all high and mighty, taking and destroying what they want as if it is their right to do so and the ignorance which comes with it is also a big problem to address. It is time to be grateful for the bounties which nature has given us and stop sucking her dry. Oxygen and most fruits are provided by the trees which we so ruthlessly cut, meat and fur is provided by animals some of which we have brought close to extinction, crops, vegetables, etc, are provided to us by the earth which we pollute through many ways, drinking water is mostly provided to us by through rivers, lakes and other water bodies in which we throw so much waste, many of which are toxic. It is time to take responsibility for what we have done and atone for our actions by living in such a way which is vitalizing to the environment if we first survive that is and to follow the saying, “Excess of everything is bad.”

There are many other problems also but now it remains to be seen what will happen once we dive deeper into the abyss although it would be best to avoid the abyss. The situation now is whether we want to admit it or not; the sword of Damocles is hanging over our heads. It would be wise to take steps to make an Aegis to protect us no matter how much or in what way it affects our precious daily lives because either we take care of this problem or nature will take care of it for us and it is a safe bet that the latter option will not be so gentle on us. It would then remain to be seen whether the Aegis deflects the sword of Damocles leading us to salvation or the sword of Damocles destroys the Aegis plunging us into oblivion.

– The writer is a student of International Relations.

## Briefs

Saudi  
arrests 244  
for illegally  
entering  
pilgrim site

DNA

MAKKAH: Hajj security forces arrested 244 people trying to enter the holy sites illegally, state news agency SPA reported.

"The security men have created a tight security cordon in and around the holy sites to enforce these regulations and catch the violators," a security spokesman said as he urged people to avoid entering the holy premises without a permit.

Approximately 1,000 pilgrims will converge on the Mina Valley outside Makkah on Wednesday to begin their spiritual journey, in comparison to almost 2.5 million in 2019.

The Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah announced in June that it was severely limiting the number of pilgrims this year to preserve global public health in the face of the ongoing coronavirus threat.

US Congress  
far from  
agreement on  
new aid plan

WASHINGTON: Democrats and Republicans in the US Congress late Tuesday were far from reaching an agreement on a new package to support the world's leading economy, brought to its knees by the virus pandemic.

"Very sadly, after months of deadly delay, the Republicans have unveiled a proposal that would only prolong the suffering for millions of workers and families across America," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi wrote in letter to her fellow Democrats, following two rounds of negotiations with the White House and Republican lawmakers.

In the Senate, Republican majority leader Mitch McConnell defended his party's proposal, unveiled on Monday, that calls for \$1 trillion in stimulus aid. Back in May, the House Democrats unveiled a \$3 trillion coronavirus response package, the largest yet, to fund efforts to fight the pandemic and provide emergency payments to millions of Americans.

With only 100 days to go before the US presidential election, talks are tense between the parties - but also among Republicans, some of whom are refusing to spend much and are even criticizing the White House. - APP

Canada:  
public inquiry  
of mass  
shooting

MONTREAL: Canada said Tuesday it was launching a public inquiry into the country's deadliest mass shooting to shed light on the tragedy and respond to demands for transparency by victims' families. The Nova Scotia arson and shooting rampage that killed 22 people April 18-19 ended with police gunning down the shooter after a 13-hour manhunt.

Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair said that Canadians "deserve answers to how such a tragedy could occur" as he announced the full public inquiry.

"We have heard calls from families, survivors, advocates, and Nova Scotia Members of Parliament for more transparency," he said in a statement.

The killing spree was carried out by a male dental health care professional identified as Gabriel Wortman, 51. Authorities said he was wearing a police uniform, driving a mock police car and had several guns with him, including at least one assault-style weapon. - APP



CINCINNATI: FC Cincinnati take on Portland Timbers in knockout stage of MLS is Back Tournament. - DNA

'More than half of Mumbai  
slum-dwellers had Covid-19'

Scientists say the survey does not claim to be representative of the prevalence of the coronavirus infection in the entire city - it was carried out in three of the 24 "wards" or administrative unit areas

DNA

MUMBAI: More than half the residents of slums in three areas in India's commercial capital, Mumbai, tested positive for antibodies to the coronavirus, a new survey has found. Only 16% of people living outside slums in the same areas were found to be exposed to the infection.

The results are from random testing of some 7,000 people in three densely-packed areas in early July. Mumbai has reported more than 110,000 cases and 6,187 deaths as of 28 July. The survey was carried

out by the city's municipality, the government think-tank Niti Aayog and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.

It found that 57% of the people tested in slum areas of Chembur, Matunga and Dahisar had been exposed to the novel coronavirus. Some 1.5 million people live in these three areas located in the western, eastern and central parts of the city. Scientists involved with the study said that the results pointed to a number of things about the prevalence of the infection in one of India's worst-hit cities.

For one, the virus has spread more widely than was earlier believed

in the city's slums, where more than half of Mumbai's 12.5 million people live. Scientists believe the sample tested was "statistically robust" and representative.

"The three areas we chose for the tests had a varying number of reported coronavirus infections, and they were a mix of slums and stand-alone houses and housing complexes. The idea was to see whether population density was driving changes in the prevalence of infection," Dr Ullas S Kolthur of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) said.

Scientists say the survey does not claim to be representative of the

prevalence of the coronavirus infection in the entire city - it was carried out in three of the 24 "wards" or administrative unit areas. "But we believe the prevalence rate in other areas should not be terribly far away from the numbers in the survey," Dr Sandeep Juneja, who is also at the TIFR, said.

City-wide surveys in other big cities have found a lower prevalence rate among the population. One of every six London residents, and one in five in New York City, tested positive for antibodies, according to surveys in May and July respectively. A government survey in Delhi in July found

that nearly one in four residents in India's capital had been exposed to Covid-19.

The high prevalence rate in the Mumbai slums could partly be explained by the fact that residents share common facilities such as toilets. "The results showed how crowding plays a key role in the spread of the infection," Dr Juneja said. The study also found that a large section of people had been infected and survived with no or little symptoms, leading to a low fatality rate in these areas - one in 1,000 to one in 2,000. This also lowers the city-wide death rate from Covid-19.

Azharuddin sees Babar as one  
of future's greatest batsmen

ISLAMABAD: Former Indian Skipper Mohammad Azharuddin sees limited-overs captain Babar Azam to be regarded as one of Pakistan's greatest batsmen in future, provided the Lahore-born cricketer remains consistent in his performance.

The former Indian cricketer said fans should enjoy Babar's batting rather than comparing him with Indian captain Virat Kohli.

"Babar is still young and has a lot of cricket ahead of him. He has the ability to become a top batsman and register his name among the great Pakistani batsmen

of the past," cricketpakistan.com.pk quoted Azharuddin as saying.

"I don't believe in comparisons. If a batsman is good, then his batting should be enjoyed and he should be praised rather than comparing him with someone else," he said.

The 57-year-old has fond memories of leading India in World Cup matches against Pakistan and believes pressure might have got better of the Men in Green in high pressure encounters.

"Pressure can be a reason. Out of three World Cup games against Pakistan in which I captained India, only



the match in Bangalore was a high scoring encounter. In the other two games, Pakistan was chasing around 230 and lost early wickets. If you lose early wickets in a

World Cup game while chasing, then even a small target like 230 also looks like 300 or 350. We played positive cricket and performed in all departments, which is

why we won those games," he said.

Azharuddin said any future bilateral series between the arch-rivals depends on the political relations between the two countries.

"This decision depends on the government of both countries. Once talk resumes between both countries, only then a series can happen," he said.

During Pakistan's 2016 tour of England, Younis had sought Azharuddin's advice, following which he scored 218 runs at the Oval to help the Men in Green level the four-match Test series. "I want to thank Younis for

giving me credit. I watched him bat on TV and he was playing in an ungainly way. Sometimes he was playing from outside the crease and sometimes he was trying other things. I didn't like seeing a player, who has scored 10,000 runs, bat in this manner. So I just called him on the phone and advised him to stay still and play from inside the crease, as it will be easier for him," he said.

"I know Younis since he made his debut in 2000. We played a game in Sharjah and he caught me in that match. He is a very good friend and a human being," he added. - APP

US states  
see record  
rise in  
infections

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: Six southern and western US states registered record numbers of new coronavirus infections on Tuesday - California, Arkansas, Florida, Montana, Oregon, and Texas.

Texas joined California and New York to register more than 400,000 cases. President Donald Trump, who has come under widespread criticism for his handling of the crisis, insisted that large parts of the US were virus-free, even though federal data shows just one state, Vermont, doing well. The US now has more than 4.3 million reported cases of Covid-19, and more than 149,000 deaths.

Man City  
showed Uefa  
'blatant  
disregard'

SPORTS DESK

MANCHESTER: Manchester City showed a "blatant disregard" to Uefa's investigation into potential Financial Fair Play (FFP) breaches, says the Court of Arbitration for Sport (Cas), even though it found "no conclusive evidence that they disguised funding from their owner as sponsorship". Last month, Cas overturned City's two-year ban from European competition and the club's fine was also cut from 30m euros (£26.9m) to 10m euros. While City were criticised for a "severe breach" by failing to co-operate with Uefa the club did provide Cas with all of the emails that had formed the basis of Uefa's charges.

Cas' written findings said the panel found "no adverse inferences" could be drawn from City's failure to produce evidence.

The club said it co-operated "in the face of a shifting and still unparalysed case involving allegations of fraud and conspiracy" and the reason Uefa knew about the disputed transactions is because the club co-operated and "explained those transactions in great detail".

Child dies,  
700 sick in  
Jordan food  
poisoning

AMMAN: Mass food poisoning in Jordan has sickened at least 700 people and killed a child, all of whom ate cut-price shawarma from a restaurant outside Amman, the health ministry said Wednesday.

The owner of the restaurant selling the popular rotisserie meat and bread snacks in Baqqa'a district northwest of the capital was arrested, local media reported.

"A five-year-old boy died of massive poisoning," the ministry said in a statement, adding that at least 100 people had been hospitalised by Tuesday morning before the number reached 700 by Wednesday morning. "Laboratory tests carried out by specialised investigation teams from the General Food and Drug Administration showed bacteria in the meat and poultry."

Italian coast  
guard rescues  
migrants  
off Libya

LAMPEDUSA: Italy's coast guard said on Wednesday it had rescued nearly 100 migrants on a "half deflated" dinghy off the coast of Libya after authorities in other countries failed to intervene. The coast guard said the inflatable boat was spotted by aircraft on Tuesday afternoon in the Libyan Search and Rescue (SAR) zone, "without an engine and half deflated."

"The Libyan authority responsible for search and rescue activities at sea did not take over the coordination of the rescue operations due to the lack of naval resources," the coast guard said in a statement. The coast guard then informed Maltese authorities, whose search and rescue zone is close to that of Libya. It said it also alerted Gibraltar, as a supply vessel flying the Gibraltar flag was nine nautical miles from the dinghy, as well as French authorities due to a Total oil platform in the area. - APP

Umar Akmal's suspension  
reduced to 18 months

"I am not happy with the year-and-a-half suspension. Will appeal after consulting my lawyers," the 30-year-old said

DNA

LAHORE: Batsman Umar Akmal's three-year suspension, which was slapped on him by the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) Disciplinary Panel for not reporting approaches by corrupt elements, has been

reduced to 18 months. The PCB had imposed a three-year-ban on Akmal after he had violated the Article 2.4.4 of the PCB's code of conduct on two occasions.

Speaking to the media after his appearance in front of the disciplinary panel, Akmal said he was thank-

ful that his suspension was reduced and that he would appeal again to get the remaining suspension further reduced.

"I am not happy with the year-and-a-half suspension. Will appeal after consulting my lawyers," the 30-year-old said. Akmal in an interview had said that

he was offered \$200,000 by fixers to leave two deliveries in one of the matches. He also claimed that he was offered money to skip matches against India. The batsman also said that he was approached during ICC World Cup, including the 2015 edition played in Australia and New Zealand.

Iran launches underground  
ballistic missiles during exercise

The drill - and the American response to it - underlined the lingering threat of military conflict between Iran and the US after a series of escalating incidents last year led to the January drone strike

WEB DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard launched underground ballistic missiles as part of an exercise involving a fake aircraft carrier in the Strait of Hormuz, state television reported Wednesday, the latest barrage in a drill that saw two American bases temporarily go on alert over the launches.

Drones separately targeted the bridge of the fake air-

craft carrier, according to the state TV report. The TV did not immediately air footage of the launches or the drone attack, nor did it identify the missiles used in the drill.

However, the message of the drill was clearly targeted at the United States. A semi-official news agency close to the Guard published a graphic overnight that photoshopped the image of an American carrier into the shape of a casket, with a caption quoting Su-

preme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei pledging to seek revenge for the US drone strike that killed a top Iranian general in January.

The drill - and the American response to it - underlined the lingering threat of military conflict between Iran and the US after a series of escalating incidents last year led to the January drone strike. Tehran responded to that strike by firing ballistic missiles that wounded dozens of American forces in Iraq.

Biden to pick  
VP next week

WILMINGTON (US): Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, said Tuesday that he will pick his running mate next week for the November election against President Donald Trump.

"I'm going to have a choice in the first week in August," Biden told reporters. "And I promise, I'll let you know when I do." Biden, who has pledged to put a woman on the Democratic ticket, was asked whether he would be able to meet face-to-face with his vice presidential pick because of the coronavirus pandemic. "We'll see," the 77-year-old former vice president said. - APP

NBA readies  
for relaunch

ORLANDO: Four months after COVID-19 sent basketball into an unprecedented shutdown, the NBA takes a leap into the unknown on Thursday as the league bids to resurrect its season at Disney World in Florida.

The Utah Jazz launch the rebooted campaign against the New Orleans Pelicans before LeBron James and Kawhi Leonard go head-to-head in a heavyweight Los Angeles derby between the Lakers and the Clippers. The two games mark the start of a painstakingly crafted plan to stage the remainder of the basketball season safely in the midst of an ongoing pandemic which has already claimed around 150,000 lives in the United States.

To mitigate the risks, the NBA is basing 22 teams within a tightly controlled "bubble" inside Disney World's sprawling 40-square mile campus in Orlando. Teams will play games at three venues inside the ESPN World Wide of Sports complex inside the park, with no fans in attendance and only a smattering of journalists at each game. Just over 350 players will be housed at three hotels located throughout Disney World, with access to each location severely restricted and visits from outsiders strictly forbidden until the playoffs start.

Players arriving in Orlando were required to spend 48 hours isolated in their hotel rooms until they had received two negative tests for COVID-19. - DNA

Badminton tournaments  
axed because of corona

TOKYO: Badminton's prestigious China and Japan Opens were cancelled Wednesday by the Badminton World Federation as it announced that four September tournaments in Asia would not be played because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Taipei Open from September 1-6, the Korea Open (Sept 8-13), the China Open (Sept 15-20) and the Japan Open (Sept 22-27) were all

axed. "We are deeply disappointed to have to cancel tournaments, but feel that the wellbeing of everyone involved is most important at this time," BWF Secretary General Thomas Lund said in a statement.

The pandemic has upended sports events around the world, from the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics to the cancellation of Wimbledon. - APP

## Briefs

## Trump sticks by discredited treatment

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has again defended the use of hydroxychloroquine to ward off coronavirus, contradicting his own public health officials. He said the malaria medication was only rejected as a Covid-19 treatment because he had recommended its use. His remarks come after Twitter banned his eldest son for posting a clip promoting hydroxychloroquine. There is no evidence the drug can fight the virus, and regulators warn it may cause heart problems. Last month, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) cautioned against using the drug to treat coronavirus patients, following reports of "serious heart rhythm problems" and other health issues. The FDA also revoked its emergency-use authorisation for the drug to treat Covid-19. The World Health Organization (WHO) says "there is currently no proof" that it is effective as a treatment or prevents Covid-19.

## Turkey passes bill tightening grip on social media

DNA

ISTANBUL: Turkey's Parliament has passed a controversial bill which gives the government greater control of social media, sparking concerns about freedom of expression in the country. Under the new law approved on Wednesday, social media giants such as Facebook and Twitter have to ensure they have local representatives in Turkey and to comply with court orders over the removal of certain content. Companies could face fines, the blocking of advertisements or have bandwidth slashed by up to 90 percent, essentially blocking access, under the new regulations. The law, which targets social networks with more than a million unique daily visits, also says servers with Turkish users' data must be stored in Turkey. It was submitted by the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party and its nationalist partner, the National Movement Party (MHP), which have a majority in the parliament. Human rights groups and the opposition are worried over what they call the erosion of freedom of expression in Turkey, where criminal proceedings for "insulting" President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on social media are common.

## UK signs fourth vaccine deal

DNA

LONDON: The UK government has signed a fourth coronavirus vaccine deal, securing up to 60 million doses of an experimental treatment being developed by drug giants GSK and Sanofi. Regulatory approval could be achieved by the first half of 2021 if trials are successful, according to Sanofi, which is leading the vaccine's clinical development. The government has already signed up for 100 million doses of the Oxford University vaccine being developed by AstraZeneca. It has also secured another 90 million doses of two other promising vaccines. However, it is still uncertain which - if any - of the vaccines will work.

## Egypt executes 7 over killing of policeman

CAIRO: Egypt has executed seven people over the killing of a police officer in the northeastern city of Ismailiya in 2013, a security official said Tuesday. "The prison service on Tuesday carried out the sentence of death by hanging against seven people convicted of killing Captain Ahmad Abu Douma," the security official told AFP. Their bodies had been handed to their families, he added. - APP



HORMUZ: Iran's Revolutionary Guards conducted military exercises and blew up a dummy aircraft carrier in Strait of Hormuz. - DNA

## Saudi Arabia posts \$29bn 2Q deficit as low oil prices bite

A pullback in spending is essential for containing the deficit, said Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank. The proactive stance of the government was already reflected in the austerity measures announced in April

## NEWS DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia posted a deficit of 109.2 billion riyals (\$29.12bn) for the second quarter of this year as low oil prices hurt revenues, a finance ministry report published on Tuesday showed. The coronavirus crisis has hurt the non-oil sectors of the world's largest crude exporter this year, exacerbating the negative impact of historic price lows on the kingdom's economy.

Second-quarter oil revenues fell by 45 percent year-on-year to \$25.5bn. Total revenues dropped 49 percent to nearly \$36bn. Total second-quarter expenditures dropped annually by 17 percent to approximately \$65bn, the report on quarterly budget performance showed, although spending increased when compared with Q1 by 7.5 percent. "A pullback in spending is essential for containing the deficit," said Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank.

"The proactive stance of the government was already reflected in the austerity measures announced in April. However, these will dampen the recovery outlook," she said. Facing deep recession this year, Riyadh has introduced steps such as removing a cost-of-living allowance for state employees and tripling value-added tax to 15 percent to bolster state revenues. Economists have said this could restrict recovery as curbs aimed at reducing the spread of the coronavirus are lifted.

The IMF has estimated the economy could shrink by 6.8 percent this year, a figure Saudi officials have said was "pessimistic". Saudi Arabia, which in the first three months of 2020 posted a nine-billion-dollar deficit, has raised \$12bn in international markets so far this year and has borrowed 41.1 billion riyals (\$10.96bn) in the domestic market, the document showed. Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan said this month the kingdom plans to tap international

debt investors at least once more this year. In addition to borrowing, the government has used about \$13bn in government reserves in the second quarter to finance its deficit, budget data showed. That is largely within a \$32bn drawdown limit targeted by the government this year. Between March and April, however, the kingdom used \$40bn in foreign reserves to back overseas investments of its sovereign fund, the Public Investment Fund.

## Sheikh Abdullah Al-Manea to deliver Arafat sermon

DNA

MAKKAH: Sheikh Abdullah Bin Suleiman Al-Manea, a member of the Council of Senior Scholars and Adviser at the Royal Court, will deliver Arafat sermon during this year's Hajj, the General Presidency of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque Affairs announced in a statement on Tuesday carried by the Saudi Press Agency. The announcement was made following the approval of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman.

It is worth mentioning that the sermon on the Day of Arafat has a great place in the hearts of Muslims and the Saudi government is taking all care in translating the sermon. Last week, Sheikh Abdul Rahman Al-Sudais, chief of the General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques, had said during the annual media briefing on the Presidency's plan for this year's Hajj season that the sermon this year will be translated into 10 languages in a bid to deliver the message of Islam to the widest possible audience.



## PIAF backs traders to run businesses till Eid

Mian Nauman Kabir flays govt for not consulting businessmen to impose lockdown

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front, while announcing full support to the traders, has appealed to the government to extend permission to the business community to run their businesses 24/7 till Eid-ul-Azha, reopening of all markets with strict implementation of the government SOPs to avoid spread of coronavirus. PIAF chairman Mian Nauman Kabir,

in a joint statement with senior vice chairman Nasir Hameed and vice chairman Javed Siddiqi, shown his serious concern over the Punjab government's sudden decision of lockdown, saying it is totally unilateral and unexpected move, which was taken without consultation of business community. It was better for the government to take the real stakeholders onboard before finalizing any plan of market closure especially on Eid days, he stated. Mian Nauman Kabir said that partial implementation of SOPs was just due to the limited market hours,

which remained closed for two days in a week. He said that the Eid was an important event for the business community when business liabilities were paid off along with benefits to hundreds of thousands of people attached to different operations of the economic activities; hence, all economic areas should be functioning smoothly. Mian Nauman Kabir also appreciated the government for taking the immediate measure to control the outbreak in the country. At the same time, instead of creating an environment of fear and stress, we

must recognize the symptoms and exercise as many precautions as possible, he suggested. He observed that COVID-19 was diagnosed in China in Jan 2020 and till now no vaccine was available to treat the patients, and preparing a vaccine might take a long time, therefore; it was very important to get adapted to the situation while recognizing all precautionary measures such as washing hands very often, wearing face masks, and avoiding unnecessary contact with everyone, etc instead of shutting the businesses altogether.

## US-Russia launch talks in Vienna

MOSCOW: The United States and Russia have entered a new phase of talks on nuclear arms control in Vienna, with working groups comprising government experts from both sides starting to meet for the first time. Over the course of three days, starting Tuesday, the groups of experts will deal with military doctrines and potentials, transparency and verification, as well as with security in space, according to the Russian foreign ministry. The new format was set up in June in negotiations between US arms-control envoy Marshall Billingslea and Russia Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov in the Austrian capital. The talks are taking place less than a year before the expiration of the New START agreement, the last remaining nuclear arms-control deal between the countries, which together possess about 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons. - DNA

## China reports most virus cases since April

DNA

BEIJING: Mainland China has reported 101 new cases of coronavirus - the highest number in more than three and a half months. Of the new cases, 89 are in the far western region of Xinjiang. A \$1 trillion coronavirus relief plan is under discussion in the United States Congress, but the only element the Republicans and Democrats can agree on is a one-time payout of \$1,200 to all Americans. The country's death toll - the highest in the world - is closing in on 150,000. Nearly 16.7 million people around the world have been diagnosed with the coronavirus. Some 9.7 million patients have recovered, and more than 659,000 have died, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

## Top American CEO's to testify before US Congress

DNA

NEW YORK: The CEOs of four of the most powerful tech companies Facebook, Amazon, Apple and Google will testify before the US Congress amid rising concerns over Big Tech dominance. Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg will tell a major antitrust hearing Wednesday that the internet giant would not have succeeded without US laws fostering competition, but that the rules of the internet now need updating. "Facebook is a proudly American company," Zuckerberg said in prepared remarks ahead of what will be a closely-watched House Judiciary Committee hearing. "Our story would not have been possible without US laws that encourage competition and innovation."

## Libyan authorities shot dead three migrants: UN

DNA

DOHA: Libyan authorities have shot dead three Sudanese migrants who tried to escape after they were intercepted by the coast-guard in the Mediterranean Sea and returned to the North African country, the United Nations said. The three were among the 73 Europe-bound migrants, mostly from Sudan, who were returned late on Monday to the western coastal town of Khoms, said Safa Msehli, spokesperson for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), on Tuesday. Khoms is about 120km (75 miles) east of Tripoli. The IOM said local authorities started shooting when the migrants attempted to escape from the disembarkation point. Two migrants died on site and a third died of his

wounds while being transported to a hospital, Msehli told Al Jazeera. Two other migrants were wounded and were taken to local hospitals while survivors were moved to detention centres, the IOM added. "This is not the first time people are subjected to this senseless violence and confirms yet again that no one should be returned to Libya," Msehli said. There was no immediate comment from the UN-recognised government in the capital, Tripoli. Violence, human rights abuses, disappearances and deaths - that is how the situation on the Mediterranean is being described as with migrants and refugees, who flee Libya hoping to reach Europe, losing their lives at sea and also in Libya. Since 2014, more than 20,000 migrants and refugees have died at sea while trying to reach Europe from Africa.

## US defense chief for allied effort to challenge China

"Make no mistake, the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) has been engaged in this sort of behavior for many years," Esper said. "But today, its true intentions are on full display for all to see"

HONG KONG: United States Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Tuesday that Washington is counting on Asian partners to help rein in an increasingly aggressive China, as two of the US Navy's most powerful warships conducted drills with allies in the Indian and Pacific oceans. Esper accused Beijing of bullying nations around the Pacific, depriving countries with claims in the South China Sea of fishing rights and trillions of dollars of oil and gas revenue. He also accused China of "brazen disregard of international commitments." "Make no mistake, the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) has been engaged in this sort of behavior for many years," Esper said. "But today, its true intentions are on full display for all to see." Adm. Philip Davidson, the head of the US Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii, kept up the tough rhetoric against China on Wednesday. "It's important to keep Beijing from achieving its goal of overturning the rules-based international order in the pernicious manner in which they're trying to do it," Davidson told the Defense Writers Group in Washington. - DNA



TEHRAN: Iran released 14 Pakistani prisoners on Eid. - DNA

## Briefs

### Court postpones indictment of Zardari

DNA

KARACHI: Accountability court on Wednesday has postponed indictment of former president and co-chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Asif Ali Zardari and his sister Faryal Talpur in mega money laundering case till August 7. Exemption pleas of both the accused were submitted in the court. On the other hand, during the hearing on a plea seeking dismissal of Park Lane reference against PPP leader, National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has submitted a pay order of transferring money into bank accounts of rickshaw owner and faloda seller. The anti-graft watchdog said that Rs20 crore was transferred to rickshaw owner account with name of Dream Trading while another Rs20 crore was sent into the account of faloda seller with the name of Ocean Enterprises. Both rickshaw owner and faloda seller have already appeared before the court for testimonies. White collar crimes are being carried out in such a way to avoid suspicion, NAB stated. It is to be mentioned here that the accountability court will also indict Asif Ali Zardari in Thatta water supply reference on August 4. All the accused have also been on the same day for further proceedings.

### SBP issues instructions for promotion of Islamic Banking

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Keeping in view the significant potential of Islamic Banking Windows (IBWs) in enhancing the share and outreach of Shariah compliant financial services and increase in financial inclusion, SBP has issued on Wednesday revised instructions for banks to expand the scope of operations of IBWs. IBWs can now offer all types of financing products to their customers including Corporates, SMEs, Agriculture, Housing, and Consumers. However, this facility is subject to the condition that respective IBW branch shall be converted into full-fledged Islamic banking branch within a period of three years. For details: <http://www.sbp.org.pk/ibd/2020/C2.htm>. At present, Islamic banking products and services are being offered by full-fledged Islamic banks, Islamic banking subsidiaries and Islamic banking branches of conventional banks after getting approval/license from SBP.

### Punjab reports 173 novel corona

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab reported 173 new cases of the novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours, taking the province's total number of confirmed infections to 92,452. According to the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, eight more patients died from the virus during the period, due to which the death toll in the province rose to 2,133. In Lahore 86 more cases diagnosed, while 34 new cases surfaced in Rawalpindi during last 24 hours, a spokesperson of the health department said. The province has conducted overall 7,13,688 COVID-19 tests so far, according to the statement. The number of the patients recuperated from the disease in the province has now reached to 82,592, the spokesperson said. The Punjab government has decided to close markets and shopping malls till August 05 to avoid the spread of coronavirus in the province during Eid-ul-Azha. Sources said that cattle markets, utility stores, milk shops, tandoors and medical stores will remain open during the lockdown.

## Pak olive oil producers prepare to enter global market: Report

Pakistan has 10 million-acre suitable land for olive plantation, almost double than Spain which is currently the largest olive oil producer in the world

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani olive oil producers are preparing to enter the global market as 27.5 million olive trees on more than 30,000 acres of land have been planted. The plantation extends through Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan, Islamabad and Azad Kashmir, says a report published by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday. Pakistan has 10 million-acre suitable land for olive plantation, almost double than Spain which is currently the largest olive oil producer in the world. With an increase in the area under cultivation, Pakistan is

passing through a silent revolution of olive oil production. The sector is rapidly moving the country towards self-reliance by introducing Pakistan's national brand under the name of 'Pak Olive' by 2021. According to the report, the Pakistan Olive Oil Council will be established under the Ministry Of National Food Security and Research to suggest policy measures for the promotion of olive oil in the country. Muhammad Tariq, director of Pak Olive said that within the 2019/20 season, the estimated olive oil production capacity in Pakistan will reach approximately 1,400 tons. By the year 2027, pro-



duction is expected to reach 16,000 tons. The government also plans to issue certifications for the marketing and branding of olive oil for the private sector. The project targets plantations of over 50,000

acres in the country by 2022. The available potential area for olive cultivation is about 10 million acres in Punjab, particularly the Pothwar region, Baluchistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and erstwhile Fata, Azad Jammu

and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan. The report added: By 2024, the value of olive oil production will increase to Rs1.727 billion. In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, over a million olive plants are being grown on an area of 9,391 acres, engaging 768 farmers. The production of olive oil is estimated to reach the value of Rs1.458bn in 2024. Thus, by 2024, the country will have about 3 million fruit-bearing olive plants producing roughly 1,415 tons of olive oil with an estimated value of Rs4.416 billion. Olive oil processing mills have been established by both public and private sectors in Punjab, Khyber-Pa-

khunkhwa and Baluchistan. In all, nine plants have been established in Pakistan for oil extracting. Eight out of nine plants are already operational and one will be functional by October. According to an expert, the olive plants would also mitigate the effects of climate change. They also provide permanent crop cover that not only saves land from erosion and further degradation but also minimizes silt load to downstream water reservoirs. Olive orchards require less water, fertilizers, pesticides and fuel energy as compared to other major annual oilseed crops, the report added.

### CM Punjab to ensure good governance

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister of Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar has vowed to do his utmost to ensure good governance in the province. According to details, a Good Governance Council has been formed on directives of Usman Buzdar. The council, which will be chaired by CM Punjab, consists of Mian Mehmood ur Rashid, Yasmin Rashid, Yasir Humayun, Murad Raas and Fayyaz-ul-Hassan Chohan. Chief Minister Usman Buzdar, while reiterating his resolve to do his utmost to ensure good governance in the province announced to make surprise visits to other cities of the province.

### PMD forecast light rain

DNA

KARACHI: Karachi, Thatta and Badin will likely to receive light rainfall or drizzle on Wednesday, Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said in its weather report. The met office forecast hot and humid weather in other parts of Sindh on Wednesday. Karachi, Thatta, Hyderabad, Mirpur Khas, Sanghar, Nawabshah and Badin will likely to receive rainfall with thunderstorm on Thursday, the weather report further said. The city's several localities also received light rainfall on Tuesday morning as the monsoon system exited from Karachi and other parts of the region. Maximum temperature in Karachi will remain between 33 - 35 Celsius and the humidity will be 70-80 % in morning and 55 - 65 % in the evening, according to the weather department. The winds are blowing in westerly and southwesterly direction. Heavy rainfall flooded Orangi Town, Surjani Town, Clifton, Gadap Town, Garden Town, Federal B Area, Jamshed Road and the old city areas on Sunday causing power outages in several areas of the city. The rain played havoc in the city, as most of the roads were submerged with rainwater. The presence of rainwater caused accidents and affected underground power cables, the city's power utility spokesperson said.

### CM Murad releases Rs463m funds

DNA

KARACHI: The Sindh government on Wednesday released Rs463 million funds to counter emergency situations after heavy rainfall lashed different parts of Karachi during the recent monsoon spells. The funds were released on the orders of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah. According to details, Rs200 million funds had been released by the provincial government for the Solid Waste Emergency and Efficiency Project (SWEEP) on July 26. The spokesperson said the funds have been utilized for rain emergency purposes and cleaning of Karachi's stormwater drains. While giving details of funds, CM Murad, in a statement, said that the Sindh government on July 2 had released Rs229 million funds to divisional commissioners. "Out of total Rs229 million funds, Rs30 million were given to Karachi Commissioner for rain emergency measures," said Murad. "The Sindh government had released Rs four million for District East, Karachi, Sadi Town and Mehran Drain as rains had badly affected these areas last year." Murad Ali Shah said that he has directed the local government department to prepare a detailed plan, highlighting low-lying areas, encroachments clogging drains (nallahs) in Karachi. "I need a solid mechanism for saving low-lying areas where rainwater has flooded the houses," he said. It is pertinent to inform that Karachi has been marred with civic issues, the conditions worsened amid the recent spell of rains leading to clogged drains and several areas of the metropolis flooded with rainwater mixed with sewage.



LAHORE: Federal Information Minister Senator Shibli Faraz in a meeting with Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar. - DNA

### PM's debt relief initiative highlighted

NEW YORK: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's debt relief initiative was designed to provide adequate fiscal space for the developing countries to manage and recover from the grave crisis set off by the coronavirus pandemic, Ambassador Munir Akram said Tuesday, while speaking at a webinar in which noted international experts took part. Ambassador Akram was participating in the online discussion on "Sovereign Debt: Emerging Issues and Challenges" in his capacity as the President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and co-chairman of the group on debt relief. The webinar was convened by the Intergovernmental Group of 24 on international monetary affairs and development, which was established in 1971 as a chapter of the Group of 77 (developing countries) to coordinate the positions of developing countries on development finance issues. Launching his initiative in April, Prime Minister Imran Khan urged international stakeholders for urgent debt relief for developing countries so they can deal more effectively with the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. In his remarks, Ambassador Akram said, "In the group that we have convened following the Prime Minister of Pakistan's debt proposal and the UN Secretary General's initiative on financing, the debt group is considering four areas: the G-20's debt suspension initiative; debt restructuring for Middle income countries; alternatives to debt relief and restructuring, and reform of the financial architecture". - APP

### FM crosses all limits regarding NAB bill: Kh. Asif

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Khawaja Asif on Wednesday lashed out at Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, saying that he has crossed all the limits regarding National Accountability Bureau (NAB) bill. Speaking in National Assembly (NA), the PML-N member said the impression was given that opposition parties are trying to create hurdles for NAB law. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is a heavenly place where only angels live. All the honest leaders are residing there, he taunted. Khawaja Asif said that some political personalities are nothing more than a curse. We only want to end the tradition of filing

### 250,000 Pak brought back: NA told

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly was informed on Wednesday that around 250,000 Pakistanis, other than zaireen, had been brought back from different countries, who stranded there after the breakout of coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. During the question hour, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Andleeb Abbas said as many as 8,465 zaireen had also been brought back to Pakistan after the virus outbreak. As per estimates, she said, currently there were about 20-25 Pakistani zaireen stranded in Iran. Andleeb Abbas said the holy shrines in Qom and Mashhad cities were currently closed due to second wave of COVID-19 in Iran. "These remaining zaireen are likely to return to Pakistan by next flight of Iran Air on July 30, 2020 from Tehran to Karachi. Some are also, reportedly, planning to return to Pakistan by Taftan border." - APP

### Lance Naik martyrs in firing

DNA

BAJAUR AGENCY: Afghanistan's territory was once again used against Pakistan as Pakistan Army's Lance Naik was martyred in firing from across the border by terrorists. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) told that a check-post of security forces was targeted from Afghanistan and Lance Naik Sami Ullah got martyred in the attack. Let it be known that the presence of anti-Pakistan elements and terrorists in Afghanistan was also mentioned in a recent report by the United Nations. On the other hand, an Afghan National Defence Forces soldier has returned to his country through Torkham Border after getting medical treatment at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Peshawar.

### Two NBP ex-presidents become approvers in Park Lane case against Zardari

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two former presidents of National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) on Wednesday have become approvers in Park Lane reference against Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari. According to details, Syed Ali Raza and Syed Qamar Hussain have been pardoned by National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Justice (r) Javed Iqbal over their testimonies. On the other hand, during the hearing on a plea seeking dismissal of Park Lane reference against Asif Ali Zardari, NAB has submitted a pay order of transferring money into bank accounts of rickshaw owner and faloda seller.

The anti-graft watchdog said that Rs20 crore was transferred to rickshaw owner account with name of Dream Trading while another Rs20 crore was sent into the account of faloda seller with the name of Ocean Enterprises. Both rickshaw owner and faloda seller have already appeared before the court for testimonies. White collar crimes are being carried out in such a way to avoid suspicion, NAB stated. In December 2019, former president Asif Ali Zardari was released on medical grounds after an accountability court in Islamabad issued separate robkars (mandamuses) in the Park Lane Estate Company and the money laundering through fake bank accounts cases against him.

The charges in the latest case centre around allegations Zardari laundered vast sums of money through suspect bank accounts and companies. NAB is conducting investigations in pursuance of the Supreme Court's verdict in the money laundering of billions through fake accounts case wherein it forwarded the joint investigation team (JIT) report with directions to investigate and file references. Zardari has repeatedly dismissed allegations he had a hand in the scheme. Never popular and always shrouded in controversy, Zardari - who was once jailed for 11 years for corruption - stepped down from the president's office in 2013. But he has continued to serve as co-chairman of the opposition PPP.

### POL products prices revision on fortnightly basis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has approved a proposal by the Ministry of Energy for revision of prices of petroleum products on fortnightly basis instead of the existing monthly basis. The ECC chaired by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh also gave go-ahead to a proposal by the Ministry of Industries and Production for import of up to 300,000 tonnes of refined white sugar to maintain buffer stocks and prevent any shortage of sugar in the coming months before the start of next crushing season. The ECC decided to adopt a revised pricing method-

ology for motor gasoline and high speed diesel on a fortnightly basis, based on Platts average, in view of its advantages for ensuring fair competition, alignment of margins with international pricing trend and smoothing out of volatility and distortions because of purchasing dates of one OMC. The revision of oil prices on fortnightly basis, coming into effect from 1st August 2020 subject to endorsement from the federal Cabinet, would also allow for planning for three months ahead with refineries and OMCs, better inventory management, better reporting of sales and enforcement of stock requirements, transparency and visibility of prices and reduced dependence on one OMC. As per the existing system, the prices of petroleum

products are determined by allowing refineries to fix and announce the ex-refinery sale prices on a monthly basis subject to the condition that the ex-refinery price of the petroleum products cannot be more than the PSO's average actual landed import price of previous months. The ECC also considered a proposal by the Ministry of Industries and Production for import of refined sugar from the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) to maintain buffer stocks, and allowed import of up to 300,000 metric tonnes of white sugar through a mode of procurement and other modalities to be decided by a three-member committee comprising Secretary Industries and Production, Secretary Commerce and Secretary Finance.