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Indonesian envoy praises Pakistan success against corona

Govt to ensure cheap electricity, says Shibli Faraz

PTI's policies destructive, says Asif Zardari



Briefs

Elderly to get pensions at home

FIJAZ CH.

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Zulfiqar Bukhari has announced that pensions would be delivered to the elderly at home from September 1. Addressing a press conference along with Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry on Saturday, the prime minister's aide said that Rs30 billion were collected for the EOBI during the last three months. He was speaking to the press after inaugurating the field office of the Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) in Pind Dadan Khan. "Now, anyone who does work could get himself registered with the EOBI to get benefits," he said. "Now even the freelance journalists, women, and labourers can be registered with EOBI." He added a summary in this regard had been sent to the Ministry of Law and Justice for approval. Chaudhry added that the prime minister was all for the welfare of the poor. "We have fulfilled the promises made in the elections and there is no leader like Imran Khan," he stated.

Pakistan well is on track: Sh. Rashid

DNA

LAHORE: Minister for Railways, Sheikh Rashid Ahmad has said that Pakistan is on track of success and progress under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Addressing a news conference at Pakistan Railways Headquarters in Lahore, he said Main Line-1 project would prove to be a game changer for the country. The Minister said that a high profile personality from China is expected to visit to Pakistan to lay foundation stone of the project soon. Sheikh Rashid said credit of ML-1 project goes to Prime Minister Imran Khan and Army Chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa who kept the project on top priority during their visits to China.

PIA resumes Paris flights

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has resumed its Paris operations under an alternative arrangement. A flight carrying 260 passengers left the French capital for Islamabad, a month and half after the European Union Air Safety Agency (EASA) had suspended the national carrier's authorisation to operate in its member states for six months. The plane also had 2.5 tons of cargo on board. The passengers were seen off by the PIA's country and station managers. The PIA has made alternative arrangements to resume its operations in European countries through special charter flights.

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PTI Govt to ensure cheap electricity

By 2023, the govt would ensure supply of cheap electricity to the consumers as they no longer could afford costly energy: Shibli

DNA / SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz on Sunday said that Prime Minister Imran Khan has so far saved Rs. 2344 billion of the poor people through his strategy and efforts in two years. In a tweet today, the Information Minister said the amount saved by PM Imran Khan is more than the three year developmental budget of Pakistan. He said the amount includes Reko Diq 1100 billion rupees, Karkay 240 billion rupees, Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC) 400 billion rupees and IPP 604 billion rupees. Meanwhile, addressing a joint press conference along with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Power Shehzad Qasim in Islamabad, Shibli Faraz said that government is taking practical measures to ensure availability of electricity

to the consumers at affordable tariff rates. The Minister said that a basic agreement has been signed with Independent Power Producers as a first major step towards providing cheap electricity to the consumers. The Minister said under the agreement signed with the IPPs, payments would only be made for the electricity acquired and consumed instead of the total installed capacity of a particular power plant. Similarly, the equity return will now be made in rupee rather than the dollar like past. Shibli Faraz said that past rulers signed power production agreements with IPPs at a costly rate for personal gains. He said that these agreements not only forced the consumers to pay more cost of the electricity, but they also affected exports due to increase in cost of production. The Minister promised that by 2023, the government would ensure supply of affordable electricity to the consumers as they no longer could afford costly energy.

Chinese employees return to Sahiwal

Though the situation of COVID-19 has been severe since June, CHNG decided to arrange their 151 technical personnel back to Sahiwal project

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: As many as 151 Chinese technicians from China Huaneng Group (CHNG) from Shandong province returned to Pakistan to put into operation the Sahiwal power station. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, recently Sahiwal power station has been under the pressures brought by both COVID-19 and climate. In addition, the two units of Sahiwal project were supposed to be stopped for ma-

in order to avoid the risk that coronavirus might be brought to Pakistan, CHNG has adopted the highest standard of epidemic prevention measures. The manager said, each staff has passed nucleic acid test 72 hours before the trip. After arriving at Lahore, all the 151 personnel and their luggage were disinfected. Meanwhile, the project manager also adopted a seamless transport for the staff. After a 20-hour journey, the technicians, with normal body temperatures, arrived at Sahiwal power station.

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US Mission brings American speakers on Covid-19

DNA / ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: Esteemed American scientist and global health advocate Dr. Peter Hotez will share his insights with Pakistani audiences as part of the U.S. Mission Pakistan's COVID Speakers Series. In collaboration with Dow University of Health Sciences, all are welcome to attend Dr. Hotez's webinar "Preventing the Next Pandemic: A Discussion on Poverty, Social Determinants, and Neg-

lected Tropical Disease" on Tuesday, August 18, 2020 at 6:00 PM. Dr. Hotez is the dean of the School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, the co-director of the Texas Children's Hospital for Vaccine Development, and a Baker Institute fellow in disease and poverty. An internationally recognized physician-scientist in the fields of global health, vaccinology, and neglected tropical disease control, he has spoken on the impact of COVID-19 extensively.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Ch. Sarwar giving souvenir to Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Saeed Al Maliky. - DNA

Highest global increase in cases so far: WHO

DNA

NEW YORK: The World Health Organization has reported that the number of confirmed global coronavirus cases has increased by more than 294,000 in 24 hours - the highest figure so far. More than 21 million people are known to have been infected with the virus globally, according to the Johns Hopkins University. More than 771,000 people have lost their lives. The highest death toll is far the United States at almost 170,000, out of more than 5 million cases. Meanwhile, Covid-19 situation is improving in Pakistan as the total number of recovered persons from the virus has now reached 266,301. According to the latest statistics, there are now 16,248 active cases in the country. 670 people were tested positive and 6 lost their lives due to the virus over the last twenty-four hours whereas 24,022 tests were carried out during this period.

Committee formed to resolve Sindh issues

The team consisting three members each from both federation and provincial government will discuss strategies for the development of Karachi

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: A committee on Sunday has been formed under the supervision of Chief Minister of Sindh (CM) Murad Ali Shah to resolve issues of entire province including Karachi. According to details, the team consisting three members each from both federation and provincial government will discuss strategies for the development of Karachi. On the occasion, Sindh government spokesperson Murtaza Wahab said that the

problems of the province can only be overcome by joint efforts of federal and provincial authorities. Earlier, Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) had joined hands for the development of Karachi. The agreement was reached during hours-long meeting of the three stakeholders. An important figure of the Pakistan Army was also present in the meeting. Asad Umer, Ali Zaidi, Wa-seem Akhtar, Sindh Chief

Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Saeed Ghani and Nasir Shah attended the meeting. The development came after Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered NDMA to clean all the drains and nullahs in Karachi, remove encroachments and submit report to it within three months in this regard. A three member bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Gulzar Ahmed heard the case pertaining to encroachments on drains and nullahs in the city at Karachi Registry on Wednesday.

PTI's policies destructive: Zardari

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday has called the policies of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government as destructive for Pakistan. In a statement, the PPP leader said that the general masses are not getting relief in any field of life. The government has failed to develop different sectors of the country including foreign affairs, political structure and economy, he added. The former president has also forwarded guidelines to party leaders in Central Executive Committee (CEC) session of the PPP and directed to devise proper strategy. We have

NAB seeks security during Zardari's appearance

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has approached Islamabad police and administration for providing adequate security during the hearing the former President and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Asif Zardari before on August 17. - DNA

to protect the country from difficult time, he asserted. Asif Ali Zardari further said that PTI is pushing back Pakistan from the development.

FM Qureshi for resolution of residual issues in Afghanistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has urged all stakeholders to ensure resolution of the residual issues to commence intra-Afghan negotiations without any delay. In a tweet on Sunday, the Foreign Minister has said the importance of seizing this historic opportunity cannot not be stressed enough. The Foreign Minister said our collective efforts have so far succeeded in advancing Afghan peace process to the current unprecedented point.

CJP forms six benches for next week

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Gulzar Ahmed has constituted two benches at the principal seat Islamabad, two benches at Karachi Registry and two benches at Lahore Registry to hear a number of important cases during the next week, starting from Monday. A three-member headed by Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed and comprising Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Qazi Muhammad Amin Ahmed would hear cases including different appeals filed by government employees regarding appointment, dismissal, regularization and promotion, pension matters of retired employees, suo moto contempt proceedings against Agha Iftikhar-ud-Din Mirza on account of Derogatory, Contemptuous and Scandalous Language against the Institution of Judiciary/Hon'ble Judges in a Video Clip circulating on Social Media and Labour cases while the two-member bench comprising Justice Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Sardar Tariq Masood would hear the cases including appeals against NAB.

Indonesian envoy praises Pakistan success against coronavirus

Ambassador Amri in his remarks said that in the wake of the pandemic Indonesia and Pakistan were faced with the similar challenges and both the countries could cooperate and work together in overcoming challenges particularly those in the economic areas

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Indonesia Ambassador Iwan S. Amri has lauded the success story of Pakistan against COVID 19 pandemic as very impressive. The Ambassador said that it was heartening to learn the steep decline being witnessed in COVID-19 cases and fatalities and congratulated the government and people of Pakistan on this remarkable achievement. The Ambassador was speaking at Hop-A-Thon Ambassadors Congress organized by the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPD) themed as "Surviving Corona, Coming Out Stronger Together". Ambassador Amri in his re-



marks said that in the wake of the pandemic Indonesia and Pakistan were faced with the similar challenges and both the countries could cooperate and work together in overcoming challenges particularly those in the economic areas. On the occasion the Envoy availed the opportunity and on behalf of the people and Government of Indonesia extended the heartiest felicitations and best wishes to the people and Government of Pakistan on the auspicious occasion of the 74th Independence Day of Pakistan. The Ambassador noted with pleasure that Indonesia and Pakistan have been enjoying excellent diplomatic relations which were established even be-

fore the independence of the two countries. Ambassador Amri also expressed his gratitude to the Pakistan authorities especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and PIA for extending their full

support and cooperation in smooth repatriation of stranded Indonesian citizens in Pakistan during the lockdown restrictions. He highlighted that both the countries had a proud history of helping out each other during the natural calamities. Both the countries fully realize that keeping a balance between saving lives and economy at the same time was a daunting task for any underdeveloped country, he added. In this scenario, I must admire Pakistan for devising a dynamic, innovative, comprehensive and successful strategy that included small lockdown, consultation, coordination and monitoring through NCOC, establishment of Tiger Force and launching of economic stimulus package that not only saved many precious lives but served as shock absorber for the economy and helped the vulnerable segments of the society in pandemic critical phase.

The Ambassador highly commended the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPD) for inviting him @ Hop-A-Thon Ambassadors Congress and appreciated the excellent initiative of Mr. Asif Noor for giving him and his colleagues from the diplomatic community an opportunity to share their thoughts on such unprecedented global issue with local implications affecting our lives in so many ways. The Ambassador concluded by wishing peace and prosperity to the people of Pakistan and said that he confidently looks forward to a very cordial, greater all round cooperation and dynamic bilateral relationship between the two brotherly countries in the future ahead.

Briefs

Nanbai association announces shutter-down strike

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Nanbai Association, Rawalpindi on Sunday announced to observe a complete shutter down strike from Monday (tomorrow) to press for fulfillment of their demands. The association has appealed to nanbais across the city to keep their businesses shut and join a march towards D-Chowk in Islamabad to get their demands, including reversal of wheat flour and fine flour rates to their previous prices, accepted. Office-bearers of the association said nanbais are unable to pay their overdue bills of natural gas and shop rents because they are being forced to sell roti and nan (flat-bread) at old rates despite skyrocketing prices of flour. They lamented that the district administration has failed to bring down flour rates. Earlier today, Punjab Chief Minister said the provincial government's effective and timely measures stabilised prices of wheat and flour in the province. In a statement, he said Punjab is the only province where a wheat flour bag weighing 20 kilograms is being sold at official rates. He vowed to keep on taking such steps in future to ensure stability in prices of essential commodities. Being the province's chief executive, it is his responsibility to protect rights of people of the province, CM Buzdar maintained, pledging to not let anyone exploit public.

Students suffer due to delay in BS Programs

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Model Postgraduate College H-8, the biggest postgraduate college of the city, is still waiting for permission from the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) to start the four-year BS Program in the subjects of Economics and Computer Science. According to an official source, the college wrote a letter to FDE in the month of July that it intended to commence the classes of BS Programs in the subjects of Economics and Computer Science in the coming academic session. FDE neither responded to the college request nor asked Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) to visit the college to check the facilities which is mandatory before granting approval for commencement of BS program in these particular subjects. A college professor said, "We fulfill the required criteria; we have excellent teaching faculty and infrastructure like spacious classrooms, library and other facilities in the college campus to run the program". - APP



ISLAMABAD: A view of newly initiated Double Decker tourist bus in capital. - DNA

ICCI and NUST discuss to promote academia-industry linkages

Muhammad Ahmed Waheed said that in this age of knowledge economy where technologies were growing rapidly, industries were increasingly relying on technology based solutions of their various problems

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry along with Malik Sohail Hussain, Chief Coordinator UBG FPCCI called on Lieutenant General Naveed Zaman, HI (M), (Retired) Rector, NUST University and discussed with him the importance of strong industry-academia linkages for commercialization of innovative business ideas of students in order to improve the industrial development and economic growth of the country. Admiral Dr. Nassar Ikram HI(M), (Retired) Pro-Rector (Research, Innovation and Commercialization) NUST was also present at the occasion. Muhammad Ahmed Waheed said that in this age of knowledge economy where technologies were growing rapidly, industries were increasingly relying on technology based solutions of their various problems. He said that universities being



the hub of research & development activities should play an enhanced role in finding out innovative solutions of the key issues of industry and the society at large. He emphasized that universities should focus on applied research to accelerate industrial development. He said that over 60 percent of the population of Pakistan was comprised of youth and universities should focus on fostering entrepreneurship in students to make them job creators instead of job seekers. He appreciated the efforts of NUST for providing quality education to students in various disciplines and hoped that close collaboration between ICCI and NUST would yield beneficial results for students and industry. Speaking at the occasion, Lieutenant General Naveed Zaman, HI (M), (Retired) Rector and Admiral Dr. Nassar Ikram HI(M), (Retired) Pro-Rector NUST said that universities could help in improving the productivity, efficiency and competitiveness of industry with strong academia-industry linkages.

PNCA arranges short film contest award ceremony

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts organized an open contest of short films in celebration of 73rd Independence Day of Pakistan. The contestants from all across Pakistan sent short videos reflecting the various aspects of the diverse Pakistani culture. This contest was aimed to motivate young generation towards celebration of Independence day during these critical times and creating innovative stuff in this regard. PNCA also announced cash prizes for top three shortlisted clips and uploaded the online award ceremony on PNCA, official Facebook page on 14th August 2020. In award ceremony the renowned Pakistani celebrity Mr Farooq Qaiser and Director General PNCA Dr Fouzia Saeed were the guest of honour along with famous film maker/critic Mr Aijaz Gul and Prog-

amme Coordinator PNCA Mr Umer Zaka. The winners were announced and Mr Zaheer Zafraan got 3rd position for his video named "Yeh mera Pakistan". Mr Ahmad Abbas secured 2nd position for his video titled "Wafa us ki". First prize of this esteemed event was given to Mr Omar Nafees for his beautiful short film named "Phurr". Mr Aijaz Gul in his remarks gave an outlook on the selection process and provided some value able tips to the young award holders regarding editing and content selection. Mr Farooq Qaiser appreciated the craft of young film makers and showed his compliments. He briefly described the importance of films as an effective medium of communication and how to improve the power of expression keeping in view the fundamentals. Upon conclusion the Director General PNCA Dr Fouzia Saeed cordially ap-

preciated the participation of all the respected participants for making this event successful. She enlightened the importance of creativity on both individual and collective level, congratulated the award holders for showing some exceptional work. She also gave a brief insight about PNCA recent one year film course and motivated the emerging film makers to adopt it in order to improve their craft. She also congratulated Mr Farooq Qaiser for achieving the most prestigious civil award "Sitara-i-Imtiaz" and showed her regards on behalf of PNCA. She also acknowledged the role of PNCA performing arts team for their smooth coordination and conducting the successful contest in the short span of time. Online speech contest and painting competition among children is part of the Independence Day Programmes of PNCA that will be held on 17-8-2020.

Private schools reopen in Swat

DNA

SWAT: Despite clear directions from the provincial government, private schools have been reopened after a closure of five months due to coronavirus outbreak in Swat, KPK on Saturday. As per details, the management of private schools in Swat have reopened their schools, but the attendance is low. Parents are dropping their children to schools. The administration has not taken action against the violators yet. It may be noted that last week, the Provincial cabinet of KP had endorsed the decisions of NCOC regarding the opening of schools from September 15. Private schools that are not imparting online education will be allowed to open with staff including teachers with numbers not exceeding,

AIOU takes initiatives for education in jails

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is taking initiatives to achieve its objective of promoting and strengthening educational culture in jails by providing educational services to the prisoners of jails throughout the country. The central focus of the campaign is to provide basic education and training to the prisoners so that they may become responsible citizens of the state and play their role in the path of national progress and development once they are free after serving their imprisonment period. In the initial phase of this project, AIOU is establishing libraries in the jails and books have been provided to 12 jails which include 2 jails from each of the four provinces of the country. These views were expressed by Prof Dr Zia Ul Qayyum, VC AIOU while reviewing the effectiveness of the project 'Jail Education'. It is pertinent to mention here that this project is being implemented in collaboration with

jail authorities in accordance with the directives of federal ombudsman. Admission forms and prospectuses for Autumn 2020 semester have, already, been provided to the jail authorities free of cost while teaching workshops, tutorial meetings and final examination will also be organized within the premises of jails. Prof Dr Zia Ul Qayyum further informed that prisoners have been admitted to the university's various educational programs, ranging from primary to higher education, free of cost besides various professional courses. In future, female prisoners will be provided facilities related to vocational and professional education. He further informed that in order to make this project more effective, jail superintendents have been appointed as the coordinators for these programs and they are provided reasonable remuneration in each semester. The teachers appointed for the prisoners also assist jail superintendents and during the examinations they also serve as senior superintendents.

Anti-locust operation over 1mln hectares

ISLAMABAD: The National Locust Control Centre (NLCC) had carried out anti-locust anti-pest operation over 1,111,920 hectares of land in six months and saved agriculture crops from destruction standing over million of hectares. The joint teams of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, provincial agriculture departments and the Pakistan Army were conducting a comprehensive survey and control operation against the locusts in effected districts and succeeded to minimize its threat to only two districts from 61 districts. According to NLCC, the locust spread was completely eliminated from the provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as no presence of the pest was reported during last 24 hours. However, locust was present in one district of Balochistan and one district of Sindh where as anti-locust survey and control operations were in progress. In last six months, control operation has been completed on 1,111,920 hectares of land. - APP

'Environment agency must approve all ICT projects'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court has said that the Environmental Protection Agency must approve all projects in the federal capital. The court was hearing a case on pollution and climate change. The agency has been instructed to act as an independent organisation and take action against violators. We have reached a stage where we should hold people accountable, Chief Justice remarked on Saturday. "Why isn't work being done for the protection of the environment?" The federal government should answer this, he said. The organisation that is responsible for controlling pollution has said that it doesn't have enough employees. Federal Minister and Adviser to Prime Minister of Pakistan for Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam and the climate change secretary have been summoned in person on August 22.

Students from TCF make their way to top-tier universities

ISLAMABAD: As university admissions begin throughout the country, deserving graduates from The Citizens Foundation (TCF) schools from all over Pakistan are making their way to some of the top-tier higher education institutions of the country. The Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and Institute of Business Administration (IBA) announced their admission results this month. 4 TCF alumni secured admission and scholarship under the LUMS - National Outreach Programme. - DNA

Speakers urge youth to follow Quaid's vision

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In connection with 74th Independence Day Celebrations, Inter University Consortium for Promotion of Social Sciences Pakistan, largest network of Pakistani universities and Government College University Lahore jointly organized webinar on the topic "Reshaping Pakistan's Future: Lessons from the Leadership of Quaid-i-Azam for Youth". Addressing on the occasion, Senator Walid Iqbal highlighted the close interaction between Quaid-i-Azam and Dr Allama Iqbal. He also urged the current and future leadership to follow the footsteps of Quaid-i-Azam.

betterment of society. She also expressed that when we talk about the term "individual" we also count women as well. She also highlighted the role of Fatima Jinnah (Māder-e Millat) in support of her brother and as a women leader in formation of Pakistan. She specifically explained three terms "Ishq", "Khudi" and "Fard" by giving reference of Iqbal's poetry. She said that Pakistani youth is full of potential, but due to lack of opportunities, they are unable to play their effective role. She urged that the higher authorities should have to work on capacity building and creation of opportunities for proper facilitation of young talent. Vice-Chancellor QAU Islamabad and Chairman Vice-Chancellors Committee of Pakistan said the realizing importance of educa-

tion, Quaid-i-Azam donated his own property to three educational institutions. Pakistan needs to declare education emergency to overcome challenges being faced in education and higher education. Former Vice Chancellor Sindh Madressatul Islam University and Quaid-i-Azam's biographer, highlighted the vision of Quaid-i-Azam about the youth. He said that Quaid-i-Azam always highlighted importance of effective role of youth and emphasized over inculcating values of tolerance, co-existence and responsible citizenship among the youth. Dr. Iqbal Chaudhary Coordinator General COMSTECH Islamabad said that as per vision of Quaid-i-Azam, the young generation needs to be equipped with modern knowledge. He insisted that

social investment on youth is need of time, he said that the returns can be drawn by effectively engaging the two-third majority of youth through education and other means. Prof. Dr. Asghar Zaidi Vice Chancellor Government College University Lahore (GCUL) reiterated the importance of promotion of merit and understanding of religion and ethics in higher education. He emphasised the role of teachers and their incentives and training. Mr. Murtaza Noor National Coordinator IUCPSS has stressed upon collaborative efforts for empowering youth in every sphere of life as per vision of the founder of nation. Released by Murtaza Noor National Coordinator Inter University Consortium for Promotion of Social Sciences Pakistan.

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Ties with Israel

IN the aftermath of the shock announcement of the establishment of relations between Israel and the UAE, there is feverish speculation about which Arab/Muslim country will be next to forge ties with the Zionist state. Beyond the realm of conjecture, none other than the president of the US has confirmed that this process has begun, and it is a matter of when, not if. The US "believes that more Arab and Muslim countries will follow" the UAE's lead, reads a White House statement. Bahrain is believed to be next in line, while Jared Kushner, Donald Trump's son-in-law and his Middle East emissary, told American media that "it is an inevitability that Saudi Arabia and Israel will have fully normalised relations. ..." However, Riyadh itself has, till now, kept silent on Abu Dhabi's latest move.

For Pakistan, the million-dollar question remains how to react to these fast-changing geopolitical realities, especially if most of our Arab brothers decide to cast their lot with Israel. The Foreign Office's reaction to the UAE-Israel deal has been described as ambiguous. This is to be expected, for the Emiratis are close partners of this country, politically and economically. The FO has said the deal will have "far-reaching" implications, though it reiterated that this country's approach will be guided by how the "Palestinians' rights and aspirations are upheld". Observers were quick to point out that the language of the statement was vague, as Pakistan had always demanded Israel withdraw to the pre-1967 borders, and that Al Quds be the Palestinian capital.

Beyond generalities, the time is not far when Pakistan will have to take a firm stand on this issue, and if more Gulf Arabs decide to recognise Israel, there will be tremendous pressure on this country from our 'friends' in Washington and the Gulf to follow suit.

During the Musharraf era, the idea of establishing ties with Israel was floated, with the then foreign minister meeting his Israeli counterpart in 2005. However, those plans were quickly shelved when the general sensed the public mood here was not ready to accept ties with Tel Aviv. Now, again there is debate about how to proceed. There should be a thorough discussion on the national level on the pros and cons of establishing ties with Israel. However, a few ground realities must be kept in mind. Any such move should be conditioned on Israel ending its brutal treatment of the Palestinians, and moving back to the pre-1967 borders. Without such assurances, Pakistan would join others in rewarding Israel for its blatant disregard for human rights. Moreover, if Israel is embraced by the Muslim world without a just resolution to the Palestine question, the Kashmir cause will also suffer, as India will be further emboldened to crush the Kashmiris. Pakistan must make a decision in a democratic manner, guided by its long-standing support for the fundamental rights of the Palestinians.



Transport for Peshawar

AFTER a long delay, the BRT project for Peshawar is finally up and running. Members of the public rode on the shining new buses along its 27-km route on Independence Day, and of course will be hoping this project will solve the major transport issues Peshawar faces. The Metro system in Lahore and Rawalpindi have both been welcomed by the millions of people who have used them since they were set up. The BRT has been constructed at a cost of about Rs67 billion. This is far higher than the sum of around Rs40 billion originally put forward for the project, when then KP chief minister Pervez Khattak announced in October 2017 that the BRT would be ready in six months. This did not happen and never seemed feasible in any case. Even now it is being pointed out that all the 30 stations along the BRT corridor are not complete and that shopping plazas being constructed alongside the track have also yet to be brought into operation and fully built. The same applies to the bicycle track which is designed to run along the BRT track.

But despite these problems, Peshawar now has a major mass transit system. There have been reports of irregularities in construction which initially led to an investigation being opened up by the FIA but later stopped on judicial orders. The BRT is the only mega scheme on the PTI manifesto and it is therefore important to the party and to the people of Peshawar. The question now is how effective it will be in offering the transport the city needs. Experts have pointed out several design flaws, some of which did not allow buses to cross each other along some portions of the track. There is also concern that with cars also running along the same route, congestion will increase on important thoroughfares such as University Road which forms a central part of Peshawar layout.

The extent of these problems will need to be seen over the coming months as the BRT goes into full operation. The buses brought in from China are currently the pride of the people of Peshawar fitted with Wi-Fi and also fully air-conditioned. A subsidy is likely to be required to ensure that the fares, which range from Rs10 to Rs 50 depending on distance, can be maintained. In the past, the PTI leadership had criticized the Metro system built by the PML-N regime in major cities, terming them a waste of money. That all seems to be a matter of the past now, with both the government and its supporters beaming in pride over the BRT (regardless of any controversy over design and cost). A beaming Prime Minister Imran Khan rode one of the buses as the BRT was inaugurated on August 14. We hope it can improve life for commuters in Peshawar rather than adding to their problems in any way.

Was the Iran nuclear deal meant to last?

Syed Muhammad Saad Zaidi



The United States withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal is a well calculated strategic move. As Iran has already implemented the terms and conditions of the deal – limiting its nuclear technology to levels that will only cater civilian use – under the “International Atomic Energy Agency” (IAEA) strict supervision; therefore, the prominent threat once faced by the United States and its allies by a nuclear capable Iran cease to exist

ON May 8, 2018, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, finally announced the United States (US) withdrawal from the “Iran nuclear deal”, a foreign policy triumph of his predecessor Barack Obama. This decision, while long anticipated, isolates the United States from its key Western allies.

The Iran nuclear deal was negotiated for more than twenty months between Iran, the US, and five other states including regional powers like Russia, China, and key allies of US like United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany before being signed on July 14, 2015. The US withdrawal from the deal has antagonized all the other members to the treaty, as the carefully negotiated deal ensured peace and stability in the region.

There exists a theory that at the time, in order to safeguard its interests, the US signed the nuclear agreement with Iran. One of their primary interests was to stabilize the global oil prices as they skyrocketed to an all-time high due to the sanctions on Iran, one of the largest producers of crude oil. Also, the nuclear deal ensured that the proxy of the west i.e. the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) could keep stern checks and balances on Iran regarding their nuclear program; therefore, effectively deterring the aspirations of Iran to acquire a nuclear bomb. Lastly, the US was in no position whatsoever, after the two military endeavors in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), and the ‘credit crunch crisis’ (2008), to wage a new war. Hence, the only way to contain the threat posed by a nuclear capable Iran to the US and its allies, especially Israel, was to engage Iran by offering them an olive branch in the form of a nuclear deal, and that is what the US did.

Furthermore, at the time, the Iran nuclear deal was eminent for the US in order to keep projecting itself as the all-powerful sole hegemon of the world and the propagator of peace. President Obama's tenure was coming to an end and he needed this deal to be his golden-star. Therefore, the US with the help of its allies and key regional powers rigorously negotiated day and night for almost two years to conclude the treaty that was termed ‘to bring peace in the world’.

Now, the US, has withdrawn from the treaty as it no longer serves in its national interest. The US easily withdrew from the treaty as it was one of the prominent election promises of President Trump. Also, the Iran nuclear agreement was causing strain in the US relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia. Thus, sooner rather than later the US ending the deal was always on the cards.

The US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal is a well calculated strategic move. As Iran has already implemented the terms and conditions of the deal – limiting its nuclear technology to levels that will only cater

civilian use – under the “International Atomic Energy Agency” (IAEA) strict supervision; therefore, the prominent threat once faced by the US and its allies by a nuclear capable Iran cease to exist.

Furthermore, by signing the deal, Iran had once and for all crippled its power to pursue its nuclear ambitions. As now if it intends to peruse nuclear technology development for military purposes it will be defying the multilateral agreement; hence, paving the way for a collective intervention into Iran for its defiance of international law.

In addition; the US unilaterally withdrawing from an agreement reassures the global dominance of the sole hegemon of the world. As it glorifies the unprecedented power of the US that till date allows it to defy its international obligations without any fear of backlash from the international community.

The US indeed played the hand dealt to it tactfully and made the most of the situation. By concluding the Iran nuclear deal, in the short-run, the US successfully diffused the instability and tensions in the Middle East due to the Iranian nuclear ambitions; thus, emerged as the responsible hegemon. In the long run, even by

withdrawing from the nuclear agreement, it made sure that Iran will be held accountable if it ever again opts to peruse its nuclear weapons program. Hence, a win-win for the US.

Not only has the US pulled-out of the Iran nuclear deal, but also has vowed to reimpose sanctions, and this time President Trump has promised stringent sanctions that will force Iran's compliance as per the US wishes. The US under President Trump is perusing an offensive realist approach when it comes to foreign policy initiatives; thus, policies such as null-voiding the Iran nuclear deal and re-imposing harsh sanctions are observed. President Trump, being a realist, is of the view that in order to make America great again the US must let go of the diplomatic or pacifist approach and pursue a proactive dominating role in the global affairs. Thus, we see a more confrontational policy adopted by the US in majority of its global affairs, it be its relations with China, the latest developments regarding the proposed North-Korea – US summit, or the US backing out of the Iran nuclear deal.

– Syed Muhammad Saad Zaidi
is an International Relations expert



COVID-19 vaccine is not for tomorrow

Nidhal Guessoum



Russia has announced that 20 countries have expressed an interest in its vaccine and one can understand people's temptation, especially since we have no indication how much longer we will need to be patient. Despite claims here and there (China, it is said, will have a vaccine in a few weeks), most experts say a vaccine will not be ready for rollout before early or mid-2021

PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin announced on Tuesday that Russia had approved a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine for wide use. Shortly afterward, the Russian health minister said the vaccine would be rolled out gradually, starting with health workers and teachers. Reactions to the announcement ranged from excitement, if not jubilation, by lay people around the world to shock and anger among the scientific community everywhere, even some in Russia. Everyone has been eagerly awaiting the development and availability of a vaccine to the coronavirus, one that would finally bring back our normal activities: Meeting and hugging family members and dear friends, teaching and shopping normally, not wearing face masks or having to worry about touching our faces or washing our hands thoroughly 20 times a day.

The scientific community, however, was furious at how established research and health procedures were so blatantly disregarded. Indeed, never before has a vaccine been approved without “Phase 3” trials having been properly completed. Furthermore, very little information has been given or published about the vaccine or the (few) tests it has undergone. Normally – and more than 200 research teams are following this protocol in pursuit of a coronavirus vaccine – one must go through several phases: A pre-clinical one, where it is tested on animals to check for its safety, followed by a first safety phase on a small number of humans; then a second phase on 50 or so people to assess the vaccine's efficacy; then a third phase on thousands to check for any secondary effects or long-term complications. The Russians tested their vaccine on 76 people, half of whom were a “control group” who were not given the vaccine but served as a comparison to the 38 who did. Brief reports said that those who were given the

vaccine did develop mild symptoms and, most importantly, produced antibodies to fight the virus – a sign of success for the vaccine.

But there are actually at least seven research teams around the world (three in China and one each in the US, UK, Germany and Australia) that have already successfully passed that second phase and 25 others that will reach that stage soon. Why didn't they get their vaccines approved? Because regulators do not normally approve vaccines at this stage. One must follow up with the third phase. The Russians changed the protocol by having the third phase conducted “in parallel” with the rollout. Many scientists boldly stated that they would never take that vaccine because we know nothing about the risks. It is better to be patient for a few more months than to take an unproven vaccine.

Russia has announced that 20 countries have expressed an interest in its vaccine and one can understand people's temptation, especially since we have no indication how much longer we will need to be patient. Despite claims here and there (China, it is said, will have a vaccine in a few weeks), most experts say a vaccine will not be ready for rollout before early or mid-2021.

Why does it take so long? Because we have to wait for enough people who got the test shots (let's say 10,000 people, while another group acts as control) to be infected. If the rate is 1 percent, that would give 100 people. They will then be monitored for their reactions to the (real) virus, any side effects, etc. All this, with the data analysis, takes several months at the very least. Various steps are being taken to speed up the process, including conducting the third phase in countries that currently have many infections, including Brazil and South Africa, and also building the facilities that will be needed to mass-pro-

duce the vaccine once it is (properly) approved. Indeed, billions of doses will be needed, as two shots will most likely have to be given to each recipient.

Sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but there are also additional issues to be aware of. The vaccine will very likely be less effective for older people because their immune systems have been weakened with age and illnesses and will not respond as well to vaccines. We see this with the flu vaccine. Thus, old people will either need multiple shots (a few weeks apart) or have to be given a chemical (an adjuvant) with the vaccine to boost their immune system.

More bad news is that the vaccine will likely not immunize us completely from COVID-19. Like the flu shots, however, it will greatly reduce severe cases and the mortality rate, and will make the disease livable.

Speaking of the flu, the UK government has already decided to offer the flu vaccine for free to 30 million of its citizens. Indeed, there is evidence that a double infection of coronavirus and flu is more deadly than either alone; moreover, the coming (winter) flu season will send thousands of people to hospitals and lessen the facilities' ability to deal with COVID-19 patients. Finally, even when the vaccine is ready, there will be a priority list to go through (health care workers, etc.) and order to follow, because a billion or more doses cannot be produced or given all at once, which means more waiting.

To make a long story short, a coronavirus vaccine, practically speaking, is not for tomorrow or next month. In the meantime, we will just need to keep the discipline (face masks, social distancing, regular cleaning, etc.) as high as possible. Hopefully it won't be for too much longer.

– Coutesy: Arab News

Briefs

Nawaz Sharif challenges NAB's summon

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Saturday challenged his summoning by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in the Toshakhana reference in the Islamabad High Court (IHC). Elder Sharif is given last chance by the court to appear before it on August 17, else proceedings to declare him an absconder will begin. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme has requested the court to nullify the accountability court's decision to advertise his summons in the case. The PML-N supreme maintained in his petition that the NAB is targeting the opposition to silence its voice. Nawaz Sharif requested the IHC to continue his trial through a representative as his medical treatment is ongoing abroad. On July 30, the NAB had decided to seize vehicles of former president Asif Ali Zardari and erstwhile prime minister Mian Nawaz Sharif in Toshakhana case. The NAB had filed a reference with the accountability court against the former heads of the state for not depositing luxury vehicles and valuable gifts received from the foreign leaders in the treasury. NAB sources said that former president Asif Ali Zardari had only paid 15 per cent of the total cost of the vehicles received as gifts through fake accounts.

Railways decide to restore five more trains

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Railways has decided to restore five more trains from August 17 under designed standard operating procedures (SOPs) after a decrease in coronavirus cases, media reported on Saturday. According to a notification issued by the PR, Hazara, Farid, Rehman Baba, Mohenjo Daro and Badar Express will resume their operations from August 17. Earlier, operations of Sir Syed Express, Rehman Baba Express, Hazara Express, Karachi Express and Shalimar Express were resumed by the Pakistan Railways. It may be noted that last month, Pakistan Railways had announced that routine train operation could be resumed in the country by the end of December 2020 while linking it with the improvement in the COVID-19 situation. On May 18, Federal Minister for Railways Sheikh Rasheed had said that Prime Minister Imran Khan has announced to restore train operations in the country from May 20.

NAB put names of 261 accused on ECL in 2019

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Saturday released a yearly performance report, stating that overall names of 1,037 personalities are put on Exit Control List (ECL) over corruption charges. The report revealed that the names of as many as 261 accused facing corruption charges were placed on ECL in the year 2019. As per the report, names of former president Asif Ali Zardari, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leaders, Maryam Nawaz, Ahsan Iqbal, Miftah Ismail, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, and Hamza Shehbaz are placed on ECL. Akram Durrani, Faryal Talpur, Sharjeel Memon, Agha Siraj Durrani, Anwar Majeed and Abdul Ghani Majeed are also placed on the Exit Control List. Names of 42 people including former prime minister Nawaz Sharif were removed from ECL in year 2019, the report read.

Uzbek, Pakistani experts discuss Afghan situation

The participants of the dialogue discussed in detail the issues of economic recovery in Afghanistan, prospects for the implementation of joint projects contributing to the development of trans-regional cooperation between Central and South Asia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An international virtual conference on "Efforts of Uzbekistan and Pakistan in resolving the situation in Afghanistan: Prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation" has been held. The joint event of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Pakistani Center for Global and Strategic Studies (CGSS) was attended by the heads and leading experts of analytical and research centers of the two countries, as well as representatives of political-forming circles of Pakistan: diplomats, scientists and specialists in security and foreign policy.

The central theme of the event was the role of Uzbekistan and Pakistan in resolving the Afghan crisis. The participants of the dialogue discussed in detail the issues of economic recovery in Afghanistan, prospects for the implementation of joint projects contributing to the development of trans-regional cooperation between Central and South Asia. First Deputy Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Akramjon Nematov noted that thanks to the efforts of the international community, including regional countries, significant qualitative shifts are taking place in Afghanistan in promoting the peace process, direct inter-Afghan talks between

the Afghan government and the Taliban in Doha are planned in the coming days. Akramjon Nematov emphasized that Uzbekistan's involvement in solving the Afghan problem is not limited to diplomatic efforts. Today, Uzbekistan makes a significant contribution to improving the socio-economic situation in Afghanistan through the implementation of specific projects in transport, economy, energy and education, supports the neighboring country in overcoming the humanitarian crisis caused by the pandemic. Drawing attention to the significant efforts being made by Uzbekistan in the issue of resolving the situation in Afghanistan, CGSS President, Major General Khalid

Amir Jaffery emphasized that Tashkent Conference, initiated by the President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev, played an important role in achieving the current practical results in conducting inter-Afghan negotiations. According to him, Tashkent Declaration, signed following the conference, is a strategic document covering such key aspects of achieving long-term and sustainable peace in Afghanistan as respect for the independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan, ensuring equal rights for all Afghans and ending violence. Major General Jaffery emphasized that Uzbekistan and Pakistan, being neighbors of Afghanistan, and directly feeling the emerging

situation in this country, can and should play a significant role in the peace process and post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan. He also highlighted the initiatives of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev on involving Afghanistan in the regional trade-economic cooperation, which makes a significant contribution to the process of stabilizing the situation in this country. Following the conference, the participants emphasized that peace and stability in Afghanistan will create necessary conditions for the launch and implementation of large-scale trans-regional projects that can become promising "drivers" for sustainable development of the macro-region of Central and South Asia.

'Political stability vital for economic growth'

DNA

LAHORE: Political stability is prerequisite for sustained economic growth to cope with the multiple challenges in Pakistan. Talking to a delegation of traders from different markets of the city here Sunday as a part of ongoing election campaign Ifkhar Ali Malik Chairman Founder Group in Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry said time has changed as now the influential nations are paying more attention to financial warfare to continue their dominance. The countries are successfully using their weapons of economic destruction to weaken economics of poor nations to achieve their unholy designs while Pakistan's economy is not strong enough to withstand economic terrorism. He said it is indeed important to increase our exports and for that purpose we need to reduce our cost of doing business so that our products can remain competitive in the world markets. He further said trade facilitation is the key to promote industries and we need to remove all the obstacles and create the culture of trade facilitation. "Our Country has tremendous potential as we have enormous talent. What we need is the consistency in the government policies and a clear roadmap to move forward," he added. The veteran trade leader was of the view that all the sectors including the industrial sector should discharge their national obligations and play their role in strengthening the economy while the government should introduce reforms and control the smuggling of raw material and finished goods.

FBR to expedite tax evasion operations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Javed Ghani has issued directions to all the FBR field offices to expedite operation against tax evasion and play an active role to stop the menace of fake and flying invoices. In a statement, the chairman explained that all those who are found involved in fake and flying invoices and causing tax evasion will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the law. The organization will also take prompt action against its own employee if the employee is found involved in crime. On August 10, Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance Abdul Hafeez Shaikh chaired a meeting on tax refund payments at the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) headquarters. Member Inland Revenue (Operations) Dr. Muhammad Ashfaq while briefing the meeting said that refund payments of Rs 142 billion under sales tax and Rs 90 billion under income tax are still pending. "Exporters have been given refunds of Rs 106 billion on a priority basis," he said adding that refund claims under sales tax during the ongoing year stood at Rs 154 billion. It was decided to establish facilitation committees at the level of field offices as another suggestion called for forming complaint cells to facilitate the business community.



ISLAMABAD: Diplomats from Croatia, France, Hungary, Italy, Pakistan, Spain and USA were represented in the Islamabad Sunday Trekking Team on the beautiful Trail 5 with an extension in the wilderness to Pir Sohawa Road when we could befriend beautiful goats after a three-hour happy and joyful trek. – DNA

Algeria turns to Islamic finance

ALGIERS: Algeria has launched Islamic finance products in a bid to attract money from the informal market, but bankers warn it will take more to fix the country's struggling economy. Falling oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic have battered the North African country, triggering alarm bells among officials and experts. The IMF forecast that Algeria's economy will shrink 5.2 percent this year. Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad has warned of an "unprecedented economic situation", and experts have estimated unemployment at nearing 15 percent.

Bajwa announces CPEC internship programme

ISLAMABAD: Chairman China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Authority, Lt. General retired Asim Saleem Bajwa has announced CPEC internship programme, media reported on Saturday. In his tweet, Asim Saleem Bajwa stated, with an aim to empower youth, we have announced an opportunity for the youth to join CPEC specific internship for three months. Earlier on June 18, Chairman China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority Lieutenant General (retired) Asim Saleem Bajwa had announced that the second phase of CPEC would create job opportunities for Pakistani youth. An agreement signing ceremony was held between CPEC Authority and Chinese companies in Taxila. Asif Saleem Bajwa had elaborated the phase-II of the mega project had been started, which would provide further investment opportunities to foreign investors in Special Economic Zones. – DNA

Tensions rise in Thailand ahead of fresh protest

BANGKOK: Protesters were set to rally in Bangkok Sunday against the government as tensions rose in the kingdom after the arrest of three activists leading the pro-democracy movement. Thailand has seen near-daily demonstrations for the past month by student-led groups denouncing Premier Prayut Chan-O-cha – a former military chief who led the 2014 coup – and his pro-establishment administration. Prominent student leader Parit Chiwarak, bailed a day after his arrest Friday night, vowed to attend Sunday's rally at Bangkok's Democracy Monument. "We will not disappoint you," he told a crowd of supporters outside the police station after he was released. – APP

Bill Gates appreciates Pak's success against COVID-19

Bill Gates also conveyed appreciation for Pakistan Army for supporting national polio drive, ensuring proper reach and coverage

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Co-Chair of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates has appreciated Pakistan's success against COVID-19 despite resource constraints. According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), he was talking to Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa on telephone about Pakistan's Covid-19 response and resumption of polio campaign. Bill Gates also conveyed appreciation for Pakistan Army for supporting national polio drive, ensuring proper reach and coverage. The Army Chief attributed the success in fight against

COVID-19 to a true national response executed through the mechanism of National Command and Operation Center, which allowed optimisation of resources. About Pakistan's efforts against polio, the Army Chief said it was a national cause and national effort for a polio free Pakistan. He said credit goes to grassroots workers including mobile teams, Law Enforcement Agencies and healthcare representatives. Both also discussed the safe start and efforts needed to effectively conduct polio campaign under COVID-19 environment. Bill Gates reiterated The Gates foundation ongoing

commitment to fight pandemics around the world and to support Pakistan in its goals of ending polio and improving health for every child. On August 12, Prime Minister Imran Khan had telephoned Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Co-chair Bill Gates to discuss the latest coronavirus situation and resumption of polio vaccination campaigns in Pakistan. During the telephonic conversation, PM Imran apprised Bill Gates about improved COVID-19 situation in the country. He said, "The smart lockdowns policy of the government has proven to be very effective."

COMSATS, WHO train SBAs from provincial telehealth clinics

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Skilled Birth Attendants (SBAs) are the frontline workers in a telehealth system catering to maternal health and childcare needs. Dealing patients on a one-to-one basis to provide the medical care of a very sensitive nature, these attendants are the backbone of sexual and reproductive healthcare system. Realizing the need for the necessary capacity building and skill development in Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal Health (SRMH) domain, the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) in collaboration with WHO, Pakistan, held the second round of virtual training on SRH tailored for SBAs. The

first phase of the training had benefitted doctors from various telehealth clinics across Pakistan. The present phase of the training was held in two batches of 5-days each, wherein twenty-six SBAs, including the Lady Health Visitors (LHVs) and Community Midwives (CMWs) from telehealth clinics of Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan provinces learned new concepts and techniques in SRH along with a recap refresher of the older ones still in use. Professionals that imparted and coordinated training in this phase belonged to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (MoNHSR&C), Government of Pakistan

–COMSATS' partners for the training. Besides, experts and consultants from Health Services Academy Islamabad, Dow Medical College and Civil Hospital in Karachi, and COMSATS Telehealth Islamabad, also conducted the various sessions of the training. Interactive lectures supported by visual aids and video demonstrations were given to the participants on topics which, inter alia, included: effective ways for visual data collection and video interaction; pre-natal care with special considerations for COVID-19 in pregnancy and when to refer; routine care in labour, delivery and post-partum care as per guidelines provided by WHO; significance of good mental health; effective postpartum stress management; adolescent health; and SRH self-care interventions.

Dr. Nirmini Hemachandra from WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean joined the closing ceremony from Egypt. Mentioning these trainings first of its kind initiative in the EMRO region, she appreciated the efforts of the organizers and congratulated participants on successful completion of the training. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Atiya Aabroo, Deputy Director (Programmes) at MoNHSR&C, deemed scaling up of such trainings important so as to benefit relevant actors all across Pakistan. In her closing remarks, Technical Officer WHO, Ms. Ellen Thom, appreciated COMSATS and thanked Executive Director of COMSATS for supporting the activity. Representatives from participating organizations, Sehat Kahani and Hu-

man Development Foundation, also provided feedback and considered the training useful in upgrading participants' knowledge and skills. The training also helped address existing misconceptions and taboos on SRH as SBAs are the first point of care from where such issues can be duly addressed. Building on its competitive advantage of having an ISP, COMSATS is the pioneer in the field of Telehealth in Pakistan. Since its inception in 2001, COMSATS Telehealth has benefitted around 70,000 patients in 17 rural areas across Pakistan, in specialties like Dermatology, Gynecology, Antenatal care, ultrasounds and outpatient care. It focuses on the importance of capacity building of Telemedicine providers to improve their medical knowledge and clinical skills.

