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Economy revived & on path of development, says Shibli Faraz

Pakistan keen to enhance trade links with Egypt

A Pakistani teacher wins heart of Chinese



Palestine welcomes Pakistan's support

“On behalf of Palestinian people and the Govt of Palestine, the Embassy of Palestine, conveys sincere thanks for extending all sorts of support to Palestinian cause”

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Palestine has welcomed Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent remarks about Palestine issue and Pakistan's continuous support for their just cause. In a letter from the Embassy of Palestine in Pakistan, the firm support of Pakistani leadership and people is appreciated. The letter stated that, “On behalf of Palestinian people and the Government of State of Palestine, the Embassy of Palestine, Islamabad, conveys sincere thanks for extending all sorts of support to Palestinian cause, and especially for condemning, in the strongest terms, the Israeli aggression towards Palestine. We Palestinians consider Pakistan as our second homeland, and Pakistanis as our dearest brothers, who always supported Palestine on every forum of the world. The letter also acknowledged the support from Pakistani previous governments over the years. “Ever since the

creation of Pakistan, every Government has always supported the just cause of Palestine on all the forums. The Embassy heartily appreciates the stance of H.E. Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan when answering to the question about Israel, said that the founder of Pakistan had made it clear that Israel would not be recognized until a just and fair solution to the Palestinian problem is given. The Prime Minister said we will be answerable to Allah on Palestine issue, and his conscience will never allow accepting Israel without a solution to the Palestinian issue. He said that Pakistan's position is very clear, Pakistan can never recognize Israel. If we surrender to Israel, then we must leave Kashmir”.

It noted that this is only because of Pakistanis love towards Palestine that Pakistan-Israel relations have never been established.

The letter quoted Pakistan's founding father Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Dr Allama Iqbal regarding Palestine issue. Quaid-e-Azam Muham-

mad Ali Jinnah said “Pakistan would never recognize Israel until a viable two-state solution is reached in regards to the Israel-Palestine conflict”. Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal said, “If the Jews had a right to the soil of Palestine, why cant the Arab lay claim to Spain? No, British Imperialism has other aims. It's no tale of citron, honey or dates”.

The Embassy thanks H.E. Imran Khan for such a strong response and appreciates every individual of Pakistan, including political parties, media, civil society, who is observing solidarity with Palestine in any possible way, and we are hopeful that this support will be with us until we get an independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem Al Quds as capital.

Earlier, in an interview with a private TV channel, the prime minister assured Pakistan's historical support for Palestine, saying that the founder of Pakistan made it very clear, Pakistan will never recognize Israel until Palestine issue is justly resolved.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Saeed Al Maliki and Ambassador of UAE Hammad Al Zaabi discussing matters of mutual interest. – DNA

Karachi: Major terrorist bid foiled

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: Two militants belonging to a banned organisation were gunned down in a joint operation by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and Sindh Rangers on Wednesday. In-charge CTD Mazhar Mashwani said that a raid was carried out after information was received about the presence of the alleged militants in the area. The suspected terrorists were killed when they allegedly traded fire with CTD officials.

He disclosed that the two alleged militants killed during the exchange of fire, have been identified as Rafiq and Adnan. Adnan allegedly belonged to the Bilal Mansoor group. The same group – according to the CTD – had fought with the Rangers for several hours in Urdu Bazaar a few years ago. CTD said that during that encounter, three wanted terrorists were killed along with the wife and child of one of the militants.

Sindh opposes reopening of schools

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Health Minister Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho has opposed reopening of school up to 9th standard. Provincial health minister, while urging authorities not to take decisions in a hurry without controlling coronavirus, said that matric, intermediate and universities can only be allowed to reopen with strict implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Dr. Azra said that minors, due to their ignorance about the issue, can spread the novel virus though out the community. She added that it is not possible to stop children under the age of 14 from socializing.

‘Economy revived & on path of development’

‘PM Imran vision of austerity, transparency and self-sustainability is being implemented in the projects in letter and spirit’, says Murad Saeed

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Shibli Faraz has said the economy stands revived and the country has been put on the path of development. Flanked by other cabinet members, he was addressing a news conference about the government's two years' performance in Islamabad on [Wednesday].

Shibli Faraz regretted that the opposition parties are trying to create anarchy and spread despondency in

the country. He, however, categorically stated that the mafias and those representing them will not be spared under any circumstances. The Information Minister said the nation which faced the difficult period steadfastly stands by the government and all the conspiracies will be foiled through their support. He expressed confidence that the fruits of development will reach the masses soon. Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Communications Murad Saeed said

Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision of austerity, accountability, transparency and self-sustainability is being implemented in the projects in letter and spirit. He said 750 million rupees were saved under the austerity drive and over 12 billion rupees were recovered through audit under accountability campaign. The Minister said initiatives of introduction of e-bidding, e-bidding and procurement, were introduced in the National Highway Authority to ensure transparency.

Briefs

Saudi Arabia: No Israel deal without Palestinian peace

DNA

BERLIN: Saudi Arabia said Wednesday it would not follow the United Arab Emirates and establish diplomatic ties with Israel until the Jewish state had sealed a peace accord with the Palestinians. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan told reporters on a visit to Berlin that “peace must be achieved with the Palestinians” on the basis of international agreements as a condition for any normalisation of relations with Israel.

“Once that is achieved all things are possible,” he said. The surprise Israel-UAE deal last week is only the third such accord Israel has struck with an Arab country, after Egypt and Jordan, and raises the prospect of similar accords with other pro-Western Gulf states.

CNPC provides \$100,000 for locusts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese state-owned Company, China National Petroleum Corporation has provided 100,000 US dollars to Ministry of National Food Security and Research in order to strengthen its efforts against desert locust.

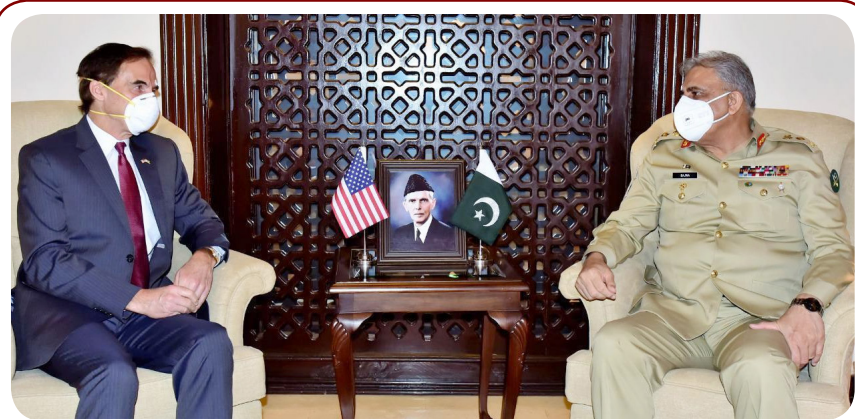
The cheque of 100,000 US dollars was handed over to Federal Minister for National Food Syed Fakhar Imam in ceremony in Islamabad. Speaking on the occasion Syed Fakhar Imam acknowledged the existence of expanding friendly relations between the two friendly countries.

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Pak company manufactures economical face shields Pak, China undertake long-term plan to boost agriculture – Page 04



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Paul W. Jones, US Charge d’Affairs to Pakistan met General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), on his farewell visit today. COAS thanked Ambassador for his services and contributions in Pakistan. Visiting dignity appreciated Pakistan's positive role for Afghan Peace & Reconciliation process and ensuring peace & stability in the region. – DNA

Pak urges humanitarians to assist Kashmiris

‘Pakistan and its people have shown exemplary generosity, compassion and hospitality in hosting more than 3 million Afghans for over 4 decades’

ALLAWASAYO

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of world Humanitarians day, Pakistan delivered its message of appreciation to all the humanitarians for their services in fight against global pandemic.

A press release from Foreign office stated that we join the United Nations and the international community in commemorating the World Humanitarian Day. We pay tribute to the sacrifices rendered by humanitarian workers in saving lives and providing support and protection to people affected by conflict, disasters and emergencies.

We commend the United Nations, its Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other humanitarian organizations for their leadership in mobilizing and delivering assistance to civilians in need, despite challenges of access and restrictions.

We value the active role of and substantial contribution by the humanitarian community, in particular, the United Nations in responding to the unprecedented health and socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

It further added that Pakistan and its people have shown exemplary generosity, compassion and hospi-

tility in hosting more than 3 million Afghans for over 4 decades. We are thankful to our partners, especially the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for helping us in taking care of Afghan Refugees. On this occasion, we would once again urge the global humanitarian fraternity to do everything it can to ameliorate the worsening humanitarian situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJ&K) including call for lifting the year-long draconian military siege and provision of unfettered access and assistance to Kashmiri people in dire need of healthcare.

Pak keen to enhance trade links with Egypt

Egyptian Ambassador said that enhanced institutional linkages and bilateral contacts would further pave the way for exploring new avenues of cooperation. He informed the deputy chairman senate about the initiatives to boost cooperation between Islamabad and Cairo

DNA / SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Saleem Mandviwalla has underlined the need for enhancing trade and business links between Pakistan and Egypt for the mutual benefit of the people of two sides. He said that people to people contacts and business and trade links are on the lower ebb and both sides need to explore the possibilities of boosting trade and economic cooperation. The Deputy Chairman Senate said this in a meeting with Ambassador of Egypt at the Parliament House on Wednesday. He said that both countries enjoy cordial relations since 1948, how-

ever, the trade volume remains below the mark. He said that cultural similarities can help in building

a long lasting economic cooperation. He proposed to promote tourism between the two coun-

tries. He said that parliamentary diplomacy can help in bringing the people of two sides more close

and build on the existing ties. He emphasized frequent exchanges at parliamentary and other levels. Deputy Chairman Senate said that Pakistan appreciates Egyptian support on Kashmir issue. He said that both Pakistan and Egypt enjoy excellent cooperation at international forums. Deputy Chairman Senate underscored the need for making joint efforts to promote peace and security at regional and global level. Egyptian Ambassador said that enhanced institutional linkages and bilateral contacts would further pave the way for exploring new avenues of cooperation. He informed the deputy chairman senate about the initiatives to boost cooperation between Islamabad and Cairo.



Run for Kashmir and Roshan Digital Account launched

DNA

PARIS: An event was held at the Embassy of Pakistan in Paris to launch Run for Kashmir tele-marathon cellphone application and Roshan Digital Account. Members of Pakistani and Kashmir community in Paris and officers of the embassy attended the event.

While explaining the concept behind the app Charge d’Affaires Mr. M. Amjad Aziz Qazi said that virtual Run for Kashmir is a global humanitarian effort aimed at creating awareness about the atrocities being committed by the

Indian occupation forces in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). He said IIOJK has been under the Indian military siege and its status has unilaterally been changed by the Indian government. Our small steps counted by this app will go a long way in giving our Kashmiri brethren a ray of hope that people living across the world are behind their cause, he added. Mr. Qazi invited members of the Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora to form teams and take part in this effort while ensuring following social distancing guidelines in order to slow the spread of Covid-19 virus.

PM Office receives police performance reports

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister Office (PMO) has received progress reports by the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Inspectors General Police (IGPs) after inspection was launched on PM Imran Khan's direction.

According to details, show-cause notices have been served to those officers who have not shown progress and those who have been found guilty of irresponsibility. The PMO informed that the notices have been issued to three DOPs from Punjab including Rahim Yar Khan, Nankana Sahib and Bhakkar – and explanation has been summoned from them within seven days.

613 new corona cases reported

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday reported 613 new coronavirus cases during the past 24 hours. According to the National Command and Operation Centre (NCO), 11 more people died due to coronavirus during this period, raising the death toll from the disease in the country to 6,201.

Pak greets Afghanistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has extended warm greetings and felicitations to the government and people of Afghanistan on their 101st Independence Day. In a tweet, Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast support to the brotherly Afghan people in their quest for durable peace, security, development and prosperity.

Briefs

CM Buzdar visits panagah in Rawalpindi

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief Minister of Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar has visited a panagah located in Raja Bazar of Rawalpindi. Usman Buzdar reviewed food and other arrangements at the facility. Passengers, while talking to the chief minister, praised steps taken by the government said that panagah provides a homelike environment. During the visit, CM Buzdar directed concerned officials to further improve arrangements at the facility. Rawalpindi's first panagah provides breakfast and dinner to about 50 passengers on daily basis and so far more than 64,000 people have benefited from it.

AIOU to establish Iqbal archive

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will soon establish Iqbal Archive and Gandhara Museum at the main campus of the university. While addressing a function in connection with the month-long Independence Day celebrations held here, Professor Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, Vice Chancellor, AIOU, said nations do not forget the sacrifices of their heroes. He viewed that it becomes the foremost responsibility of Allama Iqbal Open University, which is associated with the name of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the Thinker of Pakistan, to inform the youth, coming generation about Iqbal's life, his poetry and philosophy and for this purpose the university is going to establish Iqbal Archive in the Central Library of the university. He said this archive would also help researchers on Iqbal. He said that AIOU would soon establish a museum at the main campus as well. - APP

Nullah Leh flowing below danger level: MD

RAWALPINDI: Nullah Leh is flowing below the danger level and threat of flooding is not there, said Managing Director Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Raja Shaukat Mehmood on Wednesday while visiting the low lying areas along Nullah Leh to see the ground situation. Talking to media persons, he said the Metrological Department has forecast more rains during the current week. To cope with anticipated situation, Rescue 1122, WASA and Civil Defence are fully alert to meet any situation, he said. He said that more than 70% flood water comes from Islamabad catchments area through four major tributaries of Leh and 11 Nullahs of the city also fall into it. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Ahmad Waheed, President ICCI, presenting insignia to Raja Khurram Nawaz, MNA, during his visit to ICCI. Tahir Abbasi SVP, Saif ur Rehman VP ICCI and others are also present. - DNA

MNA Raja Khurram Nawaz assures to present rent control bill in NA

Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, ICCI appreciated the construction package of the govt that has the potential to turn around the economy. However, he stressed that the govt should extend its last from Dec 31 this year to June 30, 2021

FIAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Raja Khurram Shahzad Nawaz, MNA and Chairperson, NA Standing Committee on Interior assured that he would try his best to present the amended bill of rent control act for Islamabad in the next session of the National Assembly so that it could be passed into a law. He said this while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI). He said that the NA Standing Committee on Interior has already passed the bill and all possible efforts would be made to

present it in the next session of the National Assembly for its passage. He said that ICCI should send him written issues of the business community related to CDA, Police, IESCO and other departments and assured that he would play a role for their redress. He said he would try for the inclusion of President ICCI in the CDA Master Plan Revision Committee to get the input of the business community. Raja Khurram Shahzad Nawaz said that efforts were afoot to form a transport authority for Islamabad to address the transport issues of the citizens. He said that the flyover in Bara Kahu would be constructed in next fi-

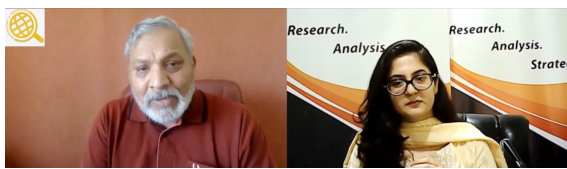
nanial year as some technical reasons have caused its delay this year. He said that a ring road for Islamabad would be developed for which survey was in progress. He said that the business community was a major stakeholder in the economy and the government was focused on promoting ease of doing business for them. He said that in collaboration of business community, Islamabad would be developed as a model city. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry appreciated the construction package of the government that has the potential to turn

around the economy. However, he stressed that the government should extend its last from December 31 this year to June 30, 2021 so that maximum investors could invest in the construction industry. He said that the bill of rent control act should be passed from the parliament as it was a longstanding issue and its enactment into law would address the concerns of traders and help promote business activities. Tahir Abbasi Senior Vice President and Saif ur Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI said that land registry charges in Islamabad were 5 percent as compared to only 1 percent in Punjab and em-

phasized that these charges in the federal capital should be reduced to bring them at par with Punjab that would boost business activity in construction sector. They further said that reconciliation committees in police stations in Islamabad should be revived and strengthened that would reduce pressure on police and help resolve most of the issues amicably. M. Ejaz Abbasi, Zafar Bakhtawari, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Malik Rab Nawaz, Aslam Khokhar, Khalid Qureshi, Waqar Bakhtawari, Khalid Chaudhry and others also spoke at the occasion and highlighted various issues of business community for redress.

Zaheer ud Din Babur's legacy discussed

The interview was conducted by Ms. Palwasha Nawaz, Project Executive, The Platform by CGSS



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Brigadier Akhtar Nawaz Janjua (Retd), Senior Member Advisory Board, CGSS, and an Expert Analyst on History and Central Asia while speaking about the legacy of Zaheer Ud-Din Muhammad Babur, said his legacy was cherished by the people in both countries, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. He said this an exclusive interview was released by the Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) regarding the legacy of the First Mughal Emperor, Zaheer Ud-Din Babur. He also provided a detailed account of the circumstances that encouraged Babur to invade the Sub-

continent. Furthermore, he mentioned how Babur's legacy assisted in shaping the bilateral relations of Pakistan and Uzbekistan and how it will further help in strengthening the already fraternal relations. Additionally, Brigadier Janjua (Retd) also explained about the cultural commonalities present between both, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. This interview is the first of the series on the route to historical and Cultural Linkages between Pakistan and Central Asia. The interview was conducted by Ms. Palwasha Nawaz, Project Executive, The Platform by CGSS. This interview can be viewed on the YouTube channel of Center for Global & Strategic Studies.

RCCI int'l trade forum chapter ECO begins

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Virtual International Trade Forum (ECO chapter), organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) will be held on August 20. The purpose of the trade forum is to make the business community aware of trade and export opportunities in ECO markets. Giving details, Chamber President Saboor Malik said that this forum is the continuity of the Africa Trade Forum organized by RCCI last year. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) formed in 1985, has a unique geo-strategic location, linking the East and the West, he added. This region with its significant economic power, vast natural resources, and dynamic workforce, has a huge development potential which needs exploration in the better interest of all member nations, said Saboor Malik. ECO region is the biggest Muslim region with the population of 488 million people that shares 6 percent (approx) in world population, he added. He said that an increase in trade in food, textile and pharmaceutical sectors could be made possible.



ISLAMABAD: Sadullah Tashmatov, Charge D'affaires of Uzbekistan presents a souvenir to Advisor to PM on Commerce and Investment, Razak Dawood. - DNA

Muharram-ul-Haram crescent sighting today

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee would be held on Thursday (Aug 20) for the sighting of the Muharram-ul-Haram crescent, said an official notification issued by Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. Committee Chairman Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman would hold the meeting in Karachi after Asr prayers whereas the zonal committee would also hold

meetings in their respective areas. The meeting of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) committee would be held at Ministry of Religious Affairs, 1st floor Kohsar block, Pak Secretariat, Constitution Avenue, Islamabad. Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Mufti Munib-ur-Rehman would announce the decision of crescent sighting or otherwise after the conclusion of the meetings. - APP

RCB distributes 4000 saplings

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) under its Monsoon tree plantation drive 'Plant for Pakistan' has distributed over 4000 saplings of different species. According to RCB spokesman, the plantation campaign was inaugurated here on Aug 13 by President Cantonment Board, Brig Ijaz Qamar Kiani. Special stalls were set up at Food Street Saddar, Romi Park, Kohi-noor Mills Green Belt, Golra Mor, EME College Green Belt, Westridge I, II and III, Peshawar Road, Saddar and in parks of the board to provide free of cost saplings to the citizens. He informed, teams were constituted to undertake plantation of fruits, flowers and shady trees at open places, along roads and public parks to make the surrounding green. During the campaign, he said, the residents were also educated about importance of trees and greenery to keep the environment pollution free. Due to effective awareness campaigns, the trend of planting saplings had increased considerably and the citizens had started playing their due role, he added. The officers concerned had been directed to plant maximum saplings with the help and cooperation of the civil society, officials and students during the campaign, he said. - APP

Tourists visit Shah Allah Ditta caves regularly

ISLAMABAD: The government has planned to review various aspects to further improve the Shah Allah Ditta caves in Margalla Hills to attract tourists. According to an official, a large number of local tourists as well as foreigners regularly visit the Shah Allah Ditta caves. He added the number of tourists could be double while taking various measures for promotion of this 2400 years ancient relics and increased facilities for tourists there. The scenic Margalla Hills hides the gem of archeological master piece of Shah Allah Ditta caves preserving around 2400 years old Buddhist era murals. The ancient caves depict one of the nestling places of Buddhism in the region that are located in sector E-11 of the federal capital. Shah Allah Ditta caves have various engravings of Buddha on its wall that are extremely pleasing and appealing, he added. - APP

Lol Virsa, Art Live start Music Program

ISLAMABAD: In Collaboration with National Institute of Cultural and Heritage (Lok Virsa), Heritage Live, the art school has started music residency program in Pakistan. The program aims to empower indigenous musicians through sessions on Music Skills, Music Business, Music Technology, and Personality Development. According to an official, this music residency program would preserve cultural heritage by enhancing music skills in youngsters. He said that the program will traditional music among with cultural heritage. - APP

Easypaisa, RCCI to facilitate digital transactions

Our partnerships enable us to continue expanding our reach across the country, says Khurram Malik, Head of Easypaisa

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Easypaisa, Pakistan's premier digital payments platform, signed an agreement with the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) to enable collection of payments for the organization in a convenient and simplified manner. The agreement was recently signed by Khurram Malik, Head of Easypaisa, Telenor Microfinance Bank and Saboor Malik, President, RCCI at the latter's headquarters. Member businesses of RCCI can now make their fee payments



through Easypaisa, thereby opening a new horizon for digital transactions. RCCI is one of the largest commerce bodies and the first to initiate and adopt digital transactions in Pakistan with more than 12000 members including large

scale organizations as well as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Through this agreement, RCCI Member Registration, Membership Renewal, Visa Letter, Certificate of Origin and Letter of Attestation fees along with all kind of

donations can be paid directly through Easypaisa. Speaking on the occasion, Khurram Malik, Head of Easypaisa, Telenor Microfinance Bank, said: "Our partnerships enable us to continue expanding our reach across the country. At Easypaisa, it is our goal to stretch the boundaries of digital payments by making sure that they are available and accessible to all individuals and organizations alike. We are honoured to be partnering with RCCI in this regard creating a digitally enabled payment mechanism for their members and partners while elevating our reach at the same time."

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Taking things lightly

OFFICIAL coronavirus statistics being reported by the government are encouraging as yesterday saw the lowest number of deaths, six, since April, which was when the pandemic had started gaining steam, to peak in mid-June. While there is justified skepticism over official figures released by the Federal government, the fact that both private and public hospitals are no longer overburdened by Covid-19 patients, rather their capacities have increased, is an undeniable indicator of things getting better. The PTI government, post-Eidul Azha, opened up the country with the exception of schools and marriage halls that are due to be opened next month. All this has been done with the issuance of SOPs that the citizenry has to follow. Unfortunately this is not happening as people are not even taking basic precautions such as wearing masks in public and avoiding unnecessary contact. A dangerous level of complacency has now set in and the more things inch towards normalcy the more there is a feeling that the pandemic perhaps never happened and has simply disappeared from the country. It is up to the government to remedy this and the only way it can do this is to strictly enforce SOPs that it has issued. Mask wearing in countries like the US and the UK has been made mandatory and has to be enforced in order to be effective. Simply instructing the people to do something without enforcing it through monitoring and perhaps even punitive action such as fines will not garner the desired results. That so many countries, having gotten the pandemic under control by flattening the curve have witnessed a sudden resurgence in confirmed cases, should serve as a lesson to countries like Pakistan where the virus has receded but can reemerge owing to lax controls. New Zealand, which handled the virus through a 51-day curfew-like lockdown, got a hold of the situation quick. But with 29 new cases emerging recently, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is taking no chances and has locked down the country again while also delaying the country's general elections till at least October. There are plenty of other examples of countries suffering a second wave after either lifting restrictions too quickly or not making sure people are staying safe or both. Pakistan has a good opportunity at the moment to implement a campaign ensuring a strict adherence to SOPs in order to avoid a second wave and save precious lives. It will only have itself to blame if the worst were to happen.



PTI's performance

IT has been a difficult two-year run for the PTI government. The scorecard today is a mixed one at best, despite the tall claims made by cabinet ministers and assorted spokespeople. Leaders of opposition parties such as Shahbaz Sharif and Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari have issued statements listing a number of failures of the government, while some polls have shown ambivalent responses that belie the extremes pointed out by both the government and the opposition. The PTI hobbled into power carrying the heavy burden of its own lofty rhetoric and expansive promises. That burden did not mix well with the inexperience of wielding power. The first year was therefore marked less by decisive and bold action and more by shaky governance bruised by ill-thought-out decision-making and frequent policy reversals. The handling of the economy – touted as the strongest point of the PTI – was soon judged adversely and the team replaced midstream. The PTI government struggled to define a broad vision that could be sculpted into actionable policy through clarity of ideas and direction. While trying to do everything – from the mundane to the sublime – the government ended up with a vague agenda that promised a lot but was unable to deliver specifics. The Balakot incident and Pakistan's calibrated and mature response to Indian aggression was perhaps Prime Minister Imran Khan's finest hour. This was a pattern that has manifested itself in stable and balanced foreign policy and handling of external issues. However, on the domestic front, the trend has been the opposite: lack of consistency in policy leading to governance problems like sharp price hikes; a politically drenched approach to accountability that has dented the credibility of the process; and a haphazard focus on issues resulting in the neglect of critical structural reform that was supposed to reflect the PTI's manifesto. Media space has also shrunk under the PTI's watch. This continues to be a disturbing trend, but the government's approach amounts to a denial of the problem. On two fronts, however, the PTI government can claim due credit: the successful handling of Covid-19 that has brought the pandemic under control; and the Ehsaas programme that has strengthened the social safety network originally conceived by the PPP through the Benazir Income Support Programme. The NCOC has been a success story, and it managed the Covid-19 crisis with clarity and efficiency. If such efficiency can be replicated in other areas of governance, the PTI could certainly improve its performance in its third year.

Afghan Loya Jirga reinforces peace effort

Iqbal Khan

The report said women and children continue to be disproportionately affected by the direct and indirect impacts of the conflict. It recorded 397 women (138 killed and 259 injured), and 1,067 child casualties (340 killed and 727 injured) in the period of report. The victims included 18 religious leaders, 13 healthcare personnel, 11 members from judiciary, 9 civil society activists, 8 NGO workers and three journalists. Deborah Lyons, the UN secretary-general's special representative for Afghanistan, has urged the warring parties to stop the "carnage" and get to the negotiating table. Another UN report has cautioned about the significant presence of the ISIL-K in Afghanistan, which the UN warns now pursues a global agenda

AFGHANISTAN President Ashraf Ghani agreed to release 400 Taliban prisoners after an Afghan grand assembly, known as the Loya Jirga, passed a resolution on August 09 to approve the move. "In order to remove the hurdles for the start of peace talks, stopping bloodshed, and for the good of the public, the Jirga approves the release of 400 prisoners as demanded by the Taliban," Jirga member Atefa Tayeb announced. According to Al Jazeera, following the Jirga's announcement, President Ghani said: "Today, I will sign the release order of these 400 prisoners." With this at least one, undoubtedly the most massive, stumbling block stands removed; there may be many more! Intra Afghan parleys are poised to be a long winding enterprise, akin to a step forward and two back. In an interview with Axios, on August 03, President Donald Trump said he "expects US troops in Afghanistan to be under 5,000 by Election Day in November. Troop level in Afghanistan has already dropped by more than 3,000 personnel this year, American military footprint has reached the magic figure of 8,500 troops; only a shade lower than the figure when Trump assumed presidency in 2017. Trump said that he expected the troop levels to drop by half "very soon." "We're going down to 4,000, we're negotiating right now," Trump said. "I don't want to tell you (when). But I've always said we will get largely out." When asked what the levels would be on Election Day in November, Trump said he expected "between 4,000 and 5,000 troops there. Under the deal with Taliban, the US side is committed to withdraw all foreign forces from Afghanistan by July 2021. In return, Taliban have pledged to prevent terrorist groups from using Afghan soil for attacks, and to seek reconciliation with other Afghan groups. Military leaders and many members of Congress have withdrawn against too quick of a withdrawal from the region, saying it could destabilize Afghan security forces currently receiving support and logistical help from the US service members. In July, House lawmakers in a bipartisan vote approved limits on the administration's pow-

er to reduce the US troops numbers in Afghanistan below 8,000 without meeting clear security benchmarks first. Senate is yet to approve of it. Concurrent to Trump's interview, Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed the hope that the next phase of Afghan peace process would start soon, leading to the "peaceful end of the lingering conflict". During an Eid Greeting tele-conversation with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, both discussed a host of issues, including Afghan peace process. Two leaders discussed the latest stage in the Afghan peace process. Prime Minister Imran highlighted Pakistan's positive contribution to the peace process, strongly stressing that "peace in Afghanistan was of paramount importance". He expressed the hope that "the current momentum would be built further to implement the US-Taliban peace agreement in its entirety, leading to the intra-Afghan negotiations at the earliest". As regards the peace process and battle like activities, the United Nations has since long been urging Kabul and Taliban for peace talks and reduction in violence. The number of civilian casualties from fighting in Afghanistan fell in the first half of the year after the Taliban-US pact on February 29. According to mid-year report by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 3,458 civilians were killed or injured from fighting in Afghanistan in the first six months of the year; 1,282 killed and 2,176 hurt. Afghanistan continues to "face one of the deadliest conflicts in the world despite a 13 percent fall in the casualties in comparison to the same period last year". Report attributed 43 percent or 1,473 casualties (580 killed and 893 injured) to the Taliban. In contrast, government forces were blamed for attacks in which 789 people were injured (508) or killed (281). The report said women and children continue to be disproportionately affected by the direct and indirect impacts of the conflict. It recorded 397 women (138 killed and 259 injured), and 1,067 child casualties (340 killed and 727 injured) in the period of report. The victims included 18 religious leaders, 13 healthcare personnel, 11 members from judiciary, 9 civil society activists, 8 NGO workers and three journalists. Deb-

orah Lyons, the UN secretary-general's special representative for Afghanistan, has urged the warring parties to stop the "carnage" and get to the negotiating table. Another UN report has cautioned about the significant presence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant Khorasan (ISIL-K) in Afghanistan, which the UN warns now pursues a global agenda. It states that ISIL-K considers Afghan territory a base for spreading terrorist influence across the wider region. The report adds that al-Qaeda is covertly active in 12 Afghan provinces and its leader Aiman al-Zawahiri remains based in Afghanistan. The UN has estimated a total number of al-Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan at between 400 and 600. In addition, the UN report has reported on the strong presence of ISIL-India in Kerala and Karnataka. A number of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan have also been traced back to Indian origin. A big worry for Pakistan is the presence in Afghanistan of militants, particularly linked to the TTP or Jamaat-ul-Ahrar or Lashkar-e-Islam, as well as those with the Baluchistan Liberation Army, which has taken responsibility for high-profile attacks. Under the circumstances, Trump's formulation of peace in Afghanistan appears an over simplification. May be this region is still in for a long haul. In the meanwhile an effective ceasefire on the eve of Eid demonstrated Taliban's responsible behaviour as a combatant force indicating that its rank and file is a disciplined military cadre. The upcoming dialogue will decide the future political dispensation of Afghanistan and the role of Taliban. Earlier, on August 02, the US State Department had issued a statement that "The parties are closer than ever to the start intra-Afghan negotiations. Nonetheless, the conflict has many loose ends in addition to core issue of the US troop withdrawal. There is a need for comprehensive settlement under the auspices of UN Security Council involving all neighbouring states of Afghanistan.

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Is Pakistan dependent on Saudi oil?

Saad Hasan

The oil credit facility was renewed once again after Prime Minister Imran Khan came to power in 2018 and his government sought loans from the IMF as well as other friendly countries in order to avert a balance of payments crisis. In November 2018, Saudi Arabia offered \$6.2 billion in cash and credit to ease Pakistan's financial difficulties. Under the terms of the deal, Pakistan could import \$3.2 billion worth of Saudi oil every year on credit. Generally, a buyer has to pay for an oil shipment within 30 days. Pakistan could postpone Saudi payments for months - even years

Recent spat between the two Muslim countries shines a spotlight on a deal Riyadh used to bailout cash-strapped Islamabad. Pakistan's nuclear tests in May 1998, days after its arch-rival India carried out its own explosions, brought swift and painful sanctions from the United States. An already fragile economy beset by a decade of political turmoil and lacklustre economic growth, was now facing an existential threat as it was cut off from global financial markets. One of the biggest challenges was to arrange money to pay for oil imports and keep cars, factories and aircrafts running, while tensions with neighbouring India deepened. "That's when Saudi Arabia came to our rescue and offered us an oil credit for the first time," recalls G. A Sabri, who has served as the top bureaucrat in Pakistan's petroleum ministry and was part of the negotiations. "I remember it covered around 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) of furnace and crude oil. We got the shipments on a deferred payment which means you take the oil today but paid much later. But really it was sort of a grant as the payments were waived off." Since then, Pakistani leaders have approached Riyadh on a number of occasions asking for similar relief whenever the country's foreign currency reserves have fallen, or it has struggled to settle international payments. The oil credit facility was renewed once again after Prime Minister Imran Khan came to power in 2018 and his government sought loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as well as other friendly countries in order to avert a balance of payments crisis. In November 2018, Saudi Arabia offered \$6.2 billion in cash and credit to ease Pakistan's financial difficulties. Under the terms of the deal, Pakistan could import \$3.2 billion worth of Saudi oil every year on credit.

Generally, a buyer has to pay for an oil shipment within 30 days. Pakistan could postpone Saudi payments for months - even years. That credit, though, has not been available for the past few months. "It was supposed to be renewed in May. It has been three months since the facility expired. They (Saudis) could have done it by now if they wanted to," says Shahbaz Rana, an Islamabad-based journalist who first reported the Saudi reluctance. Riyadh is facing an economic crisis of its own. The ambitions of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman to attract foreign investments and businesses – needed to employ a growing young population – have hit a wall in the wake of his increasingly authoritarian rule. A steep decline in oil prices, a source of nearly two-thirds of the kingdom's budget revenue, has forced Saudi rulers to cut wages, increase fuel prices and roll back generous handouts. In such circumstances, it makes sense for an oil-rich country like Saudi Arabia to find ways to preserve cash. Its relations with Pakistan, however, have been bumpy in recent months, fuelling concerns that the two prominent Muslim countries are not on the same page. Last week, Pakistan Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, uttered an unusually blunt remark during a TV talk show, warning Riyadh to alter its stance on disputed Kashmir territory. Pakistan has for months tried to call a meeting of Muslim diplomats under the aegis of Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Saudi Arabia has stonewalled its request. "The foreign minister should have been careful. Such diplomacy is not done through the media," Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Pakistan's former Prime Minister, who also headed the Ministry of Petroleum at one time, told. "We have a 73-year-long relationship with Saudi Arabia with deep political and economic ties.

We should be considerate about their own problems." Relations have largely endured despite recent hiccups such as when Prime Minister Khan had to cancel his participation in the Kuala Lumpur summit late last year under Saudi pressure. That meeting, attended by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, was seen by Riyadh as a challenge to the OIC, which is headquartered in Jeddah. Some industry people say that Pakistan is no longer too reliant on the oil credit. "Look, this credit is not free. You pay interest on it. Oil refineries in Pakistan have long-term supply agreements with other countries or buy crude oil in the open market," says Irfan Qureshi, the former CEO of PSO, the country's largest fuel retailer. "Its discontinuation won't have any big impact on us." In the last financial year, Pakistan spent \$13.9 billion on importing petroleum products, with \$4.9 billion going towards the purchase of crude oil – this according to the State Bank of Pakistan. Islamabad used just \$769 million, or 24 percent, of the \$3.2 billion Saudi credit last year, mainly because of a drop in price of oil. The low usage of Saudi credit, however, does not imply that Pakistan's finances have improved. It has foreign currency reserves of around \$11 billion and has to pay more than \$9 billion in international loans in next 12 months. Recently, Islamabad repaid Saudi Arabia's \$1 billion cash loan - months ahead of its due date. It did this by taking another loan from China, a country that has already given billions of dollars to Islamabad in order to build power plants and highways, raising concern about Pakistan getting stuck in a debt trap. "How far do you think China will go? There's a limit to everything," says Rana.

Courtesy: Trt World

Briefs

AIIB approves US\$100-m health loan to Uzbekistan

DNA

TASHKENT: The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank's (AIIB) Board of Directors has approved a loan of US\$100 million to Uzbekistan to strengthen the country's public health emergency response and preparedness to address the COVID-19 pandemic and enhance its resilience to future public health disasters. Cofinanced with the Asian Development Bank, the project aims to improve Uzbekistan's capacity for surveillance, diagnostic testing and treatment for COVID-19 and future disease outbreaks. It is expected to benefit the population at large, in particular, those who are infected and at risk, including the elderly, people with chronic conditions and medical personnel. "Addressing emergency healthcare needs to combat COVID-19 and prevent its spread is the immediate priority. The financing will support Uzbekistan's response to the current pandemic and capacity building to effectively manage future outbreaks", said AIIB Director General, Investment Operations, Supee Teravaninthorn. "To alleviate the negative consequences of the global challenge, AIIB continues to work closely with partner international financial institutions to assist our member countries in improving their healthcare systems, and contribute to the recovery of their economies as quickly as possible."

Mali President announces resignation amid chaos

DNA

BAMAKO: Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita announced his immediate resignation on state television late Tuesday, hours after he and the Prime Minister were reportedly arrested by mutinous soldiers in a suspected coup. Tuesday's events sparked international condemnation and are likely to further destabilize the West African nation, following months of anti-government mass protests and a rising insurgency from Islamist militants. Wearing a blue surgical mask amid the coronavirus pandemic, the President said on national broadcaster ORTM that he had little choice but to stand down to avoid bloodshed, and the country's national assembly and government would now be dissolved. "For seven years I have with great joy and happiness tried to put this country back on its feet," Keita said. "If today some people from the armed forces have decided to end it by their intervention, do I have a choice? I should submit to it because I don't want any blood to be shed." Troops arrested the President and Prime Minister Boubou Cisse in a suspected coup earlier on Tuesday, according to the chairman of the African Union Commission.

First vessel of imported wheat to reach next week

ISLAMABAD: The first vessel carrying about 60t,804 metric tons of wheat is expected to arrive on August 26, while, second shipment of 65,000 metric tons (MT) will be arrived on August 28 which help strength local reserves of grains. The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (NFSR) Wednesday said Department of Plant Protection (DPP) has so far issued import permit to 380 private importers for 1,576,000 tons. Meanwhile, Letters of Credit (LCs) are opened and two are under process. Nine vessels have been booked up to October, 2020 for approximately 65,000 metric tons metric tons each.

Pak company manufactures economical face shields

The company is first in Pakistan to be awarded European Union "CE" certification for "Face Shields" to manufacture and export

DNA

LAHORE: Another feather in a cap of a Pakistani company for successfully manufacturing a world class most economical "face shield" for school goers and kids to protect against deadly Coronavirus. Mr Zia designer of the shield here on Wednesday in a briefing to President SAARC Chamber and Chairman United Business Group Iftikhar Ali Malik said that prior to designing of shields he held a series of result oriented consultations with a panel of leading medical professionals, scores

of principals and headmasters/headmistress of the provincial metropolis to understand the psyche of the students so that they feel comfortable while wearing shields in class and their facial impressions should also be clearly visible to teachers. He further stated that "our company is first in Pakistan which was awarded European Union "CE" certification for "Face Shields" to manufacture and export. "SPEL" the manufacturer has been assessed and found to comply with the EU PPE regulations. He disclosed that company in the prevailing circumstances in the country and on the personal

request of the Governor Punjab Muhammad Sarwar Chaudhry has worked out affordable meagre price of Rs 150 for a shield so that even poor people could also buy comfortably. He said features of face shields included lightweight washable with soap and water, full face protection, comfortable to wear, non resistant to breathing and first level of defense against splashes and mist. It is made of transparent PET sheet using indigenous technologies with local resources. Iftikhar Ali Malik congratulated the company for developing the best quality face shield to meet the local demands and hoped it

will help contain the spread of deadly pandemic when schools reopens on September 15 across the country. He urged the federal and provincial governments especially Federal Education Minister Shafiqat Mahmood to make it mandatory for all school going children to wear the face shields for protection against coronavirus as Pakistan can not afford any further lapse. He also lauded the strategy of Prime Minister Imran Khan to contain Coronavirus which showed unprecedented results compared to developed countries in the world. Zahid Iqbal VP Federation of Pa-

kistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry who was also present on the occasion highly lauded the efforts and contribution of company in earning good name worldwide for Pakistan in manufacturing PPE (personal protection equipment). He said that FPCCI will issue letter of appreciations and recognition to acknowledge their skill for developing international standard products. Executive Committee member LCCI Waqar Ahmad Mian, founder Secretary General SAARC Chamber Rehmat Ullah Javed and other senior trade leaders from different markets were also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hamaad Alzaabi presenting souvenir to the outgoing defence attache. – DNA

'Govt has changed narrative of corruption'

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Hussain Chaudhary Wednesday said that indiscriminate accountability for corrupt elements and transparency were remains topmost priorities of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led government. PTI government has changed the overall narrative of corruption and launched a serious campaign against the political bigwigs involved in corruption, he said while speaking in a Radio Pakistan's current affair programme.

Fawad Ch said the previous governments made Pakistan an import based economy, adding, the incumbent government is planting more manufacturing plants to increase exports and decrease the dependency on imports. Pakistan's digital economy is strengthening due to developments in the science and technology sector, he added. – APP

A Pakistani volunteer teacher wins heart of Chinese kids: Report

DNA

BEIJING: A Pakistani volunteer wins heart of Chinese kids, by teaching them English in a professional way, says a report published by Gowadar Pro on Wednesday. The report says, the kids of primary school, Suqian, Jiangsu Province welcomed Ali, a Pakistani, in the summer school of 2020. The 25-day-summer school is a public benefit activity organized by Suqian Yangfan Social Work Organization. Ali is a volunteer of the activity and that's why he is "new" for these students. Ali volunteers to take charge of English training as he is a professional English teacher with several years' experience in China. "Why to teach children? Be-

cause I love children. It is fun to teach them," said Ali. Moreover, he is good at teaching kids. Ali said, "Kids are kids. They love to play activities. We have to be friendly with them." One student of the summer school said, "Mr Ali can turn some words into a song. It is easier for us to learn. He is also friendly to us." As a Pakistani, Ali's bond to China started in Australia. Ali migrated to Australia with his parents when he was a little boy. Ali met his Chinese wife there in his student days. After receiving his MBA degree, Ali and his wife came to China. In the beginning, Ali once had worked as a teacher in Shanghai and Nanjing. Two years later, he came to Suqian. Ali said the relaxed life pace here brings inner peace to him.



Uzbek envoy presents credentials

The parties also discussed other issues on the bilateral agenda

DNA

BAKU: On August 18, the newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Bakhrom Ashrafkhanov, presented his credentials to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. At the meeting that followed the official ceremony, the current state and prospects for development of bilateral cooperation in political, trade-economic, transport-communication and other spheres were considered. President of Azerbaijan highly appreciated the progressive and dynamic development of relations between the two countries, which cover almost all spheres and directions. It was emphasized that the basis for all this is the establishment of close and trusting dialogue at the highest level. The parties also discussed other issues on the bilateral agenda.

Pakistani student pursuing dreams in China

DNA

BEIJING: A Pakistan's student Muhammad Usman said, he and his others colleagues are pursuing dreams in China to serve the country in future, says a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Wednesday. "I hope that when we go back to Pakistan, we would improve the situation of waste management and the production of renewable energy," he said. Having been in China for almost 3 years, Muhammad Usman is doing a PhD on microbiology in Lanzhou University, one of China's top universities. Recently his thesis titled Determination of the inhibitory concentration level of fat, oil, and grease (FOG) towards bacterial and archaeal communities in anaerobic digestion got published on Renewable & Sustainable Energy Reviews, the reputed journal with the highest impact factor in the field of energy as per Elsevier. "Frankly speaking, initially when I came to China in 2017, it was challenging to adjust myself to life here due to the language barrier, the different culture and food habits," he told CEN, "but with



the passage of time, I come to interact with some Chinese fellows and learn Chinese culture and language." "I got my CSC Scholarship offered by China Scholarship Council in 2017. And studying here has been a good experience. The facilities provided by Lanzhou University and my advisors - Prof. Li Xiangkai and Prof. El-Sayed Salama - are the major reasons that I was able to pursue my research dreams here." "Lanzhou University provides a suitable, friendly and scientific environment for international students," Muhammad Usman noted, adding that the friendly nature of Chinese people toward Pakistanis living in China is really good. "I have been to

other cities, too. They treated us with a lot of respect." As Muhammad Usman put it, China has already established a good setup for utilizing most of its food waste for renewable energy and has the highest energy potential from food waste globally. However, the situation in Pakistan is not the same. Muhammad Usman mentioned that China and Pakistan are working together in many fields, including the sharing of scientific and industrial experience and facilities. "The effective utilization of waste in developing countries can solve many issues such as energy crisis and can also improve people's health status and provide a cleaner environment," he said.

Pak, China undertake long-term plan to boost agriculture

Pak-China agricultural cooperation has to focus on the vertical increase in productivity of existing crops, transfer of knowledge and technologies, seed and plant protection as well as disease control

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, China have decided to undertake a long term plan of CPEC (2020-30) to boost agriculture sector. The plan, according to a report published by Gowadar Pro on Wednesday includes upgrading agricultural infrastructure, Promoting the construction of water-saving modern agricultural zones, and increasing the development and remediation of medium- and low-yielding land to achieve efficient use of resources. It also focus on strengthening drip

irrigation technology for water efficiency, strengthening cooperation in the fields such as crop farming, livestock breeding, forestry and food growing and aquatic and Fishery in the regions along the CPEC's route. Under the plan, the two sides will also take steps improving post-harvest handling, storage and transportation of agricultural products, and innovate in marketing and sales models. They will also work to improve water resources operation and management, strengthen development of pastoral areas and desert, and promote application of remote

sensing technology. It was hoped that Pak-China cooperation will lead to strengthening of production of agriculture inputs particularly pesticides, fertilizer, machinery and support services including agriculture education and research. They also intend to collaborate in forestry, horticulture, fisheries and livestock medicines and vaccines and strengthen production of horticulture products. According to the report, agriculture is a major component of Pakistan's economy, if incorporated, it will increase Pakistan's agricultural produce, and explore export

opportunities in China. It will also be in the interest of Chinese government to bring investment in the neglected agriculture sector and export surplus produce to feed the growing Chinese population. Joint ventures, value addition, cold chain management for fruits and vegetables, marketing and branding would help Pakistan overcome weaknesses and increases agriculture exports to China and other countries. Pak-China agricultural cooperation has to focus on the vertical increase in productivity of existing crops, transfer of knowledge and

technologies, seed and plant protection as well as disease control. The CPEC will surely help in boosting the growth of the agriculture sector and making CPEC a 'game changer' for Pakistan's economy, development of infrastructure in any shape leads to growth in GDP derived from agriculture sector. Agricultural development is one of the seven areas of cooperation under CPEC, China is specifically interested to explore areas like cotton productivity, efficient irrigation and post-harvest infrastructure along the CPEC route, the report added.

Joe Biden formally nominated as Democratic candidate

DNA

WASHINGTON: Former vice-president Joe Biden was officially announced as the Democratic candidate to challenge President Donald Trump in the November election. In an unprecedented roll call vote that took place entirely online due to the coronavirus pandemic, all 50 states and seven territories announced their vote tallies that cemented Biden's role as the party flag bearer.

"Well thank you very, very much, from the bottom of my heart," a beaming Biden said in a live video link as he celebrated the nomination. "It means the world to me and my family," he added, reminding viewers he will deliver a formal acceptance speech on Thursday at the conclusion of the four-day jamboree. The nomination was a formality as he had already won the majority of the more than 3,900 delegates back in June.

The roll call came on Day 2 of the mostly virtual Democratic National Convention aimed at celebrating the party's candidate and welcoming independents and frustrated Republicans into their political movement to oust Trump from the White House.

Australia locks in corona vaccine deal

DNA

VICTORIA: A fresh outbreak of infections in Australia's coronavirus hot zone of Victoria appeared to have eased, as the country signed a deal to secure a potential Covid-19 vaccine that it intends to roll out free of cost to its citizens.

Australia has signed a deal with British drugmaker AstraZeneca to produce and distribute enough doses of a potential coronavirus vaccine for its population of 25 million, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said. All Australians will be offered doses but a medical panel will determine the priority list of vaccine recipients, Health Minister Greg Hunt said. According to Reuters, Victoria reported 216 new daily cases in the last 24 hours compared with 222 a day earlier. It reported 12 deaths compared with 17 on Tuesday.

Pact to cut energy cost vital: PIAF Chairman

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) chairman Mian Nauman Kabir has welcomed the agreement between the government and the independent power producers to bring down cost of electricity generation, as the cost of doing business continues to increase manifold. PIAF chairman, in a joint statement with senior vice chairman Nasir Hameed and vice chairman Javed Siddiqi, congratulated the government as well as the IPPs, to reach a deal in the larger national interest under the 1994 and 2002 power policy, agreeing voluntarily to provide concessions, leading to reduce cost of power generation and cut circular debt. He termed revision of IPPs agreements as a good move despite the fact that some sensitive points were not touched by the negotiating committee and the grace marks were given to the power producers. The federal government, through its new agreement with IPPs, was working towards reducing the cost of electricity in the country," he said and added that reforms pertaining to the power sector should also be introduced at the earliest. Mian Nauman Kabir expressed the hope the government's new agreement will promote industries and help reduce the burden of circular debt. He further said that the new pact will help provide cheaper electricity to the end consumers, agriculture sector and small businesses which will help these sectors lower their production costs.