



# Islamabad POST

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**Aggression left us with no option but to respond: Alizada**

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### Qatar air force chief meets COAS

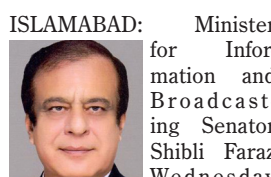
NAVEED MIRAJ



RAWALPINDI: Major General (Pilot) Salem Hamad Eqail Al-Nabet, Commander Qatar Emiri Air Force called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), on Wednesday. During the meeting matters of mutual & professional interest and regional security situation were discussed. COAS said that Pakistan values its brotherly relations with Qatar and Pakistan Army also looks forward for enhanced defence and security cooperation with Qatar Armed Forces.

### Opposition not showing responsibility

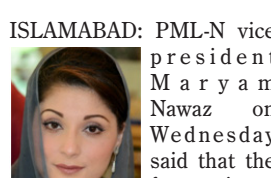
RANA FARRUKH



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz Wednesday said the opposition parties were showing irresponsibility for adopting Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) during their public gatherings to contain the coronavirus. The opposition had not followed SOPs during its political meeting in Manshera which caused serious spreading of COVID-19, he said talking to a private news channel. The minister said the people should avoid attending the public gatherings and the government had already cancelled its political activities in the country that would help containing the outbreak of the deadly virus.

### Maryam takes PM to task

ABID RAZA



ISLAMABAD: PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz on Wednesday said that the functioning of a 220-million strong country has been left in the hands of someone "who was incapable of running a union council even". Maryam was addressing a mammoth rally in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Mansehra district. Maryam, as she began her address, said that wherever she goes to hold a rally, she sees a swarm of youth present to support PML-N.

## PM says govt to support industry

It is the primary responsibility of the govt to provide facilities to its people adding that Faisalabad can never be fixed from provincial development funds

BUREAU REPORT

FAISLABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said the government will fully support wealth creation and industrialization in Pakistan to promote economic activities in the country. Addressing businessmen and industrialists in Faisalabad on Wednesday, he said it is main policy of the government to industrialize Pakistan, which is vital for job creation as well. He said suggestions and input from the business community will be welcomed to strengthen economy. The Prime Minister emphasized the need on imparting training to labourers for value addition of Pakistani products. He asked the Punjab Chief Minister to work for the establishment of textile skills institutions in this regard. He also urged the business community to take care of labour class' interests with the growth of their businesses. Talking about people's demand for the establishment of high court in Faisalabad, Imran Khan said there should be a high court bench at every divisional headquarters. He said his government believes in solving people's problems at the primary level for which a new local government system is being introduced in the country. He said under

### PM Imran Khan due in Kabul

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan will travel to Kabul today at the invitation of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, confirmed Pakistan's envoy to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmed Khan. "Prime Minister Imran Khan visiting Kabul today for meeting Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to discuss strengthening of bilateral ties," said Ambassador Mansoor. Last week, Afghan Foreign Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Gran Hewad had announced that the PM Imran's visit will focus on the Afghan peace process and strengthening political, security, trade and economic ties will be discussed during this trip. - DNA

the new system, every urban center will have its own directly elected mayor. He said cities will be made more empowered to resolve their problems at the local level and without looking for any help from the provincial or the federal government. Earlier, speaking on the occasion, Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar announced a development package worth 13 billion rupees for Faisalabad.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Ali Alizada speaking during a seminar on Nagorno-Karabakh organized by Measac Research Institute. - DNA

## Aggression left us with no option but to respond

Ambassador of Azerbaijan Ali Alizada thanks Pakistan for support; speakers highlight valiant struggle of Azerbaijani armed forces

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Ali Alizada has thanked Pakistan govt and people of Pakistan for wholeheartedly supporting Azerbaijan on the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh. He expressed these views while speaking on the oc-

casation of seminar organized by Measac Research Institute (MRC) on Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, military and political resolution in collaboration with the Embassy of Azerbaijan. Message of President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev was also screened on the occasion. The Azerbaijan president described events

that led to war and how Armenian aggression left Azerbaijan with no option but to go into war to defend its territories. Ali Alizada praised the organizers and speakers. He talked about the latest provocations, aggression and war crimes of Armenia against Azerbaijan, and the successful peace enforcement oper-

ation and victory of Azerbaijan on this conflict. He thanked Pakistan for the political and moral support extended for the just cause of Azerbaijan. Diplomats and opinion makers applauded this intellectual activity within bounds of COVID-19 environment.

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## UAE halts tourist visas for Pakistanis

DNA/STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The United Arab Emirates has temporarily suspended the issuance of visit visas to a dozen countries, including Pakistan until further notice, Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri confirmed on Wednesday. The decision by the UAE authorities is "believed to be related to the second wave of Covid-19", Chaudhri said in a state-



ment. "We are seeking official confirmation from the concerned UAE authorities in this regard," he said. In a statement, Chaudhri clarified that the suspen-

sion will not apply to visas that have already been issued. In June, when cases in Pakistan were on the rise, UAE airline Emirates had announced temporary suspension of passenger services from Pakistan till July 3. The decision came after around 30 Pakistanis who arrived in Hong Kong onboard an Emirates flight tested positive for the virus. The airline resumed its flights in July.

Continued on Page 06

### Pakistan witnesses 2208 corona cases

ISLAMABAD: The total active COVID-19 cases in Pakistan on Wednesday were recorded 30,362 as 2208 more people tested positive for the deadly virus during the last 24 hours. A total 37 corona patients, 34 of whom were under treatment died in hospital while three died out of hospital on Tuesday, according to the latest update issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC). No COVID affected person was on ventilator in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Balochistan, while 228 ventilators elsewhere in Pakistan were occupied, out of 1,869 allocated for COVID-19 patients. - APP

### Taliban welcome troops withdrawal

KABUL: The Taliban on Wednesday welcomed the Pentagon's announcement it would soon pull about 2,000 US troops from Afghanistan as a "good step" that will help end the country's long-running conflict. The Pentagon on Tuesday said the US will slash troop levels in Afghanistan and Iraq to their lowest levels in nearly 20 years of war after President Donald Trump pledged to end conflicts abroad. "It is a good step and in the interest of the people of both countries," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told AFP, referring to the US and Afghanistan. - APP

## Moin, SCO secy gen discuss cooperation

Norov noted the contribution that Pak, as a member state, is making to strengthen the organization as well as cooperation in different spheres



DNA

BEIJING: Secretary General of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Vladimir Norov held a

meeting with Pakistan Ambassador to China Moin-ul-Haque in Beijing. They exchanged views on current international issues and strengthening of multifaceted cooperation within

the SCO. Vladimir Norov noted the contribution that Pakistan, as a member state, is making to strengthen the organization as well as cooperation in the political, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres. Pakistan has recently joined the powerful block SCO and is playing important role in its development. The SCO Secretary General has a special interest in building strong relations with Pakistan. The Secretary General has been contributing his articles in various Pakistani newspapers.

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## Briefs

## 597 new cases of virus reported in Punjab

LAHORE: The novel coronavirus claimed 17 more lives and infected 597 people during the past 24 hours in Punjab. According to a spokesperson of the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, 17 more people lost their lives due to COVID-19 in 24 hours, surging the death toll to 2,492 in the province. He maintained that the province reported record 597 new cases of COVID-19 in a single day in the second wave of the pandemic. The overall tally of people infected with the pandemic has reached to 1,11,137. The count of recuperated patients of the disease in Punjab has reached to 97,789, health department spokesman said. Pakistan has reported fresh 2,208 COVID-19 cases and 37 deaths by the virus in the last 24 hours. According to the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), with fresh addition of the infections in the country the national tally of cases now stands at 363,380, whereas, the active cases stood at 30,362. In the past 24 hours, 37 more people succumbed to the disease, taking the death toll to 7,193. A total of 38,544 tests were conducted across the country during this period. Overall tally of recovered patients from the disease has reached to 325,788, while 5,018,483 samples have been tested thus far. — APP

## Dist admin holds mehfil e Milad

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Under the arrangements of district administration mehfil melad was organized at the Metropolitan Corporation Hall in connection with the celebrations of Shaan Rehmatullil Alameen (PBUH) Week. CEO Education Ali Ahmad Siyan, Chief Corporation Officer Naeem Ullah Warriach and people from different walks of life participated. Naats and Durood-o-Salam ceremonies were also held on the occasion. Speakers said that extremist elements were persecuting Muslims under a conspiracy. They highlighted various aspects of the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). They said that PBUH is a benefactor of humanity. They also read Naats in honor of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Later a women Mehfil e Milad was also organized at Parveen Shakir Complex. On the occasion, Quran was recited and Durood-o-Salam was also recited. DMO said that Success is assured by following the life of Hazrat Muhammad PBUH. She strongly condemned the publication of blasphemous sketches in France and said that blasphemy in the name of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is unacceptable. She said that love for the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is part of our faith. She said that success can be achieved in every field by sincerely following the biography of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). The students paid homage to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and recited his glorious. A speech competition was also held at Tehsil Samundri.

## Traffic police booked 1732 underage motorcyclists

ABBOTTABAD: Hazara traffic police Wednesday booked 1732 underage motorcyclists during a massive drive against underage drivers, one wheeling and motorcyclists without a helmet. On the directives of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police Hazara region Qazi Jameel ur Rehman traffic police of 8 districts in the region have started a massive campaign, seized 1732 motorcycles issued them challan and also got written surety bond from their parents that they would never use motorcycle till legal age. Traffic police while taking action against speeding issued challans to 407 riders, also booked 137 one wheeler and fined 1620 motorcyclists without a helmet. DIG Hazara in a message to the parents and motorcyclists said that bike is a very useful but also dangerous, without safety gears motorcycling is risky for life, he also directed District Police Officers (DPOs) to call the violators parents at their office get written surety bond for strict enforcement of the underage driving ban and inform them next time police will take action against them. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Tunisia signing the condolence book on the sad demise of foreign minister of Syria. Syrian embassy opened the book. — DNA

## Pre-COVID-19 economy was on steady recovery: SBP

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said Wednesday that following the difficult but necessary stabilization efforts during the first nine months of the fiscal year 2019-20, the country's economy was well on course for a steady recovery on the eve of Covid-19 pandemic. The State of Pakistan's Economy for the fiscal year 2019-20 report released by the State Bank says that by February 2020, the unprecedented balance of payments crisis created by the unsustainable macroeconomic policies of previous years had been forcefully addressed through sizable reductions in the twin fiscal and current account deficits. Following a round of monetary tightening during FY19, core

inflation remained relatively stable, notwithstanding an uptick in headline inflation due to one-off and seasonal factors. In turn, this hard-won stabilization was beginning to lead to the revival of economic activity and the restoration of business and consumer confidence. However, the report adds, this momentum was temporarily disrupted around the last quarter of the fiscal year by the global and domestic spread of Covid-19 and the lockdown measures that it necessitated. While these measures were remarkably successful in containing the outbreak in Pakistan, they simultaneously strained manufacturing, retail, transport and trade-related activities. As a result,

Pakistan's real GDP is estimated to have contracted by 0.4 percent in FY20 — the country's first brush with negative economic growth since FY52. The report highlights that it was only due to the earlier gains on the macroeconomic stability front that policymakers in Pakistan were able to extend aggressive support to businesses and households in response to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Without this support, the private sector would have found it even more challenging to cope with the fallout from the mobility restrictions and supply-chain disruptions created by the biggest global economic crisis since the Great Depression.

In an unprecedented move, the government was able to expand the volume and outreach of its social uplift programs, enabling over 14.8 million households to receive emergency cash transfers for meeting essential needs to date. For the first-time ever, the SBP arranged multiple emergency meetings of the Monetary Policy Committee to react to the fast-evolving situation, and cut the policy rate by 625 bps over a roughly 3-month time period, the second-largest cut among emerging markets in the wake of Covid-19. In addition, the SBP also rolled out targeted and time-bound liquidity support for firms and households, including the defer-

ment of principal repayments; loan restructuring; refinancing for firms to pay salaries to their employees in exchange for job protection; relaxations in performance criteria for export-related refinance schemes; and concessional refinance facilities for long-term investment projects and for hospitals on the frontlines of the battle against the pandemic. Together, these measures — mainly aimed at preventing liquidity problems from turning into solvency problems — represented the largest liquidity backstops ever deployed by the SBP, and their estimated impact on the cash flow of households and businesses was equivalent to 4.1 percent of GDP as of end-October 2020. — APP

## FCCI stresses regional chambers to share resources

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Regional Chambers of Commerce & Industry must share their resources, database and problems to ensure comprehensive and balanced economic growth of their regions, said Engineer Hafiz Ihtesham Javed, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). He was talking to a delegation of the Mirpur Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MCCI) that met him at FCCI here today.



RAWALPINDI: Major General (Pilot) Salem Hamad Eqail Al-Nabet, Commander Qatar Emiri Air Force called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS). — DNA

## 'CPEC a game changer for the entire region'

Governor Punjab Ch Muhammad Sarwar who was the chief guest on the occasion, in his address assured full support to the business community and lauded RCCI's efforts in promoting trade activities in the region and provide platforms to explore new destinations for possible investment

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A three-day business conference on CPEC Central Asia organized by Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) in Gwadar ends on a high note. The moot was organized to explore trade and investment opportunities in Gwadar and to cement trade ties and linkages with Central Asian countries. Governor Punjab Ch Muhammad Sarwar who was the chief guest on the

occasion, in his address assured full support to the business community and lauded RCCI's efforts in promoting trade activities in the region and provide platforms to explore new destinations for possible investment and trade ties with central Asian countries. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is undoubtedly a game changer project. The benefits of CPEC are not limited to any city or province, but its dividends are for the whole region, he added. With the completion of this project, Balochistan will become a hub of economic and trade activities

and thus the dream of becoming a new Pakistan very soon will be realized, he said. Earlier, RCCI President in his address said that the Rawalpindi Chamber understands that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a game changer for the entire region, especially for Pakistan, and will pave the way for enhancing linkages with Central Asian countries. During the three-day conference representatives from Gwadar Development Authority, Gwadar Port Authority made presentations on key topics and also on-the-spot

visits of ongoing development projects. He said that the chamber has always taken the lead in many matters. We want the business community to play its full role. Ambassador of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan also attended the moot. Senior Vice President Osman Ashraf, Vice President Shahraiz A Malik, former President Zahid Latif Khan, Chairman Gwadar Conference Muhammad Badar Haroon, members of the executive committee and members of the chamber were also present on the occasion.



## 'We should get unite'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan committed to resolve challenges of Muslim Ummah with unity of Islamic countries. Bilateral coordination needed to be expedite among Muslim countries to educate Muslim youths against the menace of extremism, terrorism and sectarian violence. Muslim Ummah needs to be get united against the elements and Organizations responsible for making anarchy and wreckage in Muslim world, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Special Representative to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony, Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council.

In a released statement here on Wednesday, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council said that Pakistan aims stable and strengthened relations with all Muslim countries and Pakistan's relations with Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Amman are very exemplary. Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi also felicitated Shah Salman bin Abdul Aziz, Khadim-e-Harman Al-Sharifain on completion of six years of his succession. During the period of Shah Salman bin Abdul Aziz, brotherly relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia witnessed stability and harmony. People of Pakistan prayed for Shah Salman bin Abdul Aziz and Crown Prince Ameer Muhammad bin Salman to serve the Muslim Ummah.

## LCCI terms OLMT project a great achievement

LAHORE: The Orange Line Metro Train Project is a great achievement of the Punjab government that would not only cut the travelling cost of the masses but would also help highlight the country as a good destination for investment.

Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) President Mian Tariq Misbah stated this leading a Chamber's delegation to Orange Line Metro Train Project here Wednesday. LCCI Senior Vice President Muhammad Nasir Hameed Khan, Vice President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry and Executive Committee Members were prominent amongst the other members. Mian Tariq Misbah said that Orange Line Metro Train Service had started to provide great facility to daily commuters in Lahore at an affordable price. It was being widely appreciated that with the beginning of Orange Line Metro Train, the transportation problems near and around its route had been largely addressed. He said that Orange Line Metro Train had added good value to the infrastructure of Lahore and uplifted the face of Lahore as an advanced metropolitan city. The Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry is of the view that the government should announce more mega projects to give boost to the business activities in the country. The employment generation was the need of the hour and the government had to play leading role in this connection. — APP



## Briefs

### Chances of light rain tomorrow in Capital: PMD

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Spokesperson Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Dr Khalid Malik here on Wednesday said that chance of light rain expected in twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi on Thursday including Murree and its adjoining areas. Talking to APP, he said the temperature would also fall down in twin cities which would turned into more cold whereas westerly wave was likely to enter upper parts of the country from today evening and night and would persist for 36 hours. He said fog was likely to prevail in few plain areas of Punjab during morning hours adding that today's lowest minimum temperature recorded in (°C): Kalam -11°C, Leh -09°C, Skardu -06°C, Astore, Kalat -04°C, Gupis, Malamjaba, Dir -03°C, Bagrote and Quetta -02°C.

### 'Govt taking steps to bring down inflation'



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNA Kanwal Shauzab Wednesday said that incumbent government being taken serious steps to control inflation and taking action against sugar mafia for accountable and unmask all mafias involve these practices. Talking to a private news channel, MNA said that PTI government would take all mafias in the country one by one and everyone will be held accountable, no matter how rich or politically powerful. Kanwal has reassured the nation that the Prime minister Imran Khan will soon fulfill his promise to take all mafias to its logical end and no one be spared anymore. She accused that mafia were trying to foil the reforms initiated by Prime minister Imran Khan but they would be failed in their nefarious designs. Replying a Question about Sajjad Mustafa Bajwa, She rejected his baseless allegation and said there should be a reform against those people who was dismissed with their duties and leaking sensitive information and now he blaming government.

### 'Pakistan heading towards economic stability'

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Economic Forum, Hamayun Iqbal Shami said on Wednesday that despite all the challenges, Pakistan is heading towards economic stability. The incumbent government is taking corrective measures to attract the international investors. There is stability and growth in the economic situation of the country, reported by Radio Pakistan. He said it is high time to improve ease of doing business and attract investors. Consistent policies are imperative to improve the economy. The CPEC is a blessing for Pakistan's economy, while power crisis in Pakistan is resolved due to CPEC-related projects, he added. He said the government has taken satisfactory steps under Ehsaas Program in order to facilitate the people especially the people living under the poverty line. He appreciated that the country has successfully overcome the Covid-19 pandemic within a shortest span of time. The country's exports are increasing and imports dependency is decreasing day by day. - APP



PESHAWAR: Charge d Affaires of Uzbekistan embassy Lt Colonel Saadullah Tashmatov and Shabbir Ahmed, Director, Area Study Center (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar along with members of CGSS taking part in a roundtable. (Related news and picture on Back Page). - DNA

## Coronavirus has become more lethal in Pakistan: Dr. Shazil

There is no age limit - children as young as one-year-olds are testing positive," he said. "Coronavirus and the ongoing flu season are a deadly combination"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Leading pulmonologist Dr Shazil Manzoor has said that the coronavirus has mutated and become more lethal in Pakistan. Dr Manzoor said there was a new virus strain that was hard to detect. "It is very severe and lasts longer than the infections in the first wave." The federal capital's most sought after COVID-19 specialist urged the public to observe self-lockdowns, limit interactions, and

follows SOPs. He said an unprecedented spike in the COVID-19 cases was seen in the last three days, noting that hospital beds were filling up fast while ventilators were in short supply in Islamabad. "There is no age limit - children as young as one-year-olds are testing positive," he said. "Coronavirus and the ongoing flu season are a deadly combination." Dr Manzoor said the next eight to 10 weeks were crucial. "It would be a great challenge for the health-care system to bear the brunt of

new coronavirus cases. **Smart lockdown is not a solution:** Criticising the government, the expert said smart lockdowns are not a solution. "Not only would social but physical distancing of three to four metres has to be maintained to contain virus spread. This has to be enforced as soon as possible considering the pace of the virus outbreak." Dr Manzoor lamented the government's decision to allow outdoor wedding ceremonies, stressing that people can easily get pneu-

monia due to the cold weather. "I have received patients who attended a wedding and fell ill." **No schools, work from home:** The pulmonologist was also of the view that the organisations should be encouraged to work from home, carry out virtual meetings and online activities. He also noted that the reopening of academic institutions has contributed to the spread of COVID-19. "Almost one-third of the patients have been found to be young," he said, emphasizing that very small

classes should be introduced only when physical distancing can be maintained. Dr Manzoor said that the only way to protect from the second wave was to avoid attending weddings and other parties, avoid going to shopping malls and restaurants, and not engaging in activities where a lot of people get together. "What is most essential is that masks must be worn and hands should be frequently washed. People who are taking the virus lightly are committing a grave mistake," said the specialist.

## Awareness of lung disease stressed on 'World COPD day'

ISLAMABAD: Health experts on Wednesday urged physicians and media to join hands for increasing better awareness to prevent Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) as it is currently the third leading cause of death globally and smoking was the root cause of this disease, so it should be addressed. Talking to a private news channel, a senior Pulmonologist Professor Dr Anjum Naveed mentioned that World COPD day 2020 was being observed under the theme "Living well with

COPD" to create awareness and ways to reduce the burden. This year's theme to send a positive message to both patients and providers that although there is no cure for COPD, there are many ways to actively live well with the disease, he added. He explained the tobacco smoking, pollution caused by smoke produced by vehicles and industries was contributing to high incidence of chest infections and diseases in the country. "The rate of deaths caused by the COPD has increased 40 percent across the world dur-

ing the last several years," he said. He said breathlessness, breathing difficulty, excessive mucus, chronic cough and fatigue were the major symptoms of the COPD, adding, the disease was preventable if it was diagnosed and treated early. He said that the protection from environmental hazards and quitting smoking would help prevent COPD or stop its further complications. He said that the COPD patients needed to take care of their diet, exercise and regular medicines to control its intensity.

He also stressed that there is need to spread awareness regarding chronic diseases like Covid-19, asthma and COPD so that these diseases could be prevented before happening. "Asthma can happen in childhood, whereas COPD affects the adults after the age of 40," he said. Talking about the signs and symptoms of the COPD, he said shortness of breath, persistent cough, coughing up mucus, wheezing, fatigue/tiredness, weight loss, morning headaches are alarming signs of the disease.

## 18 outlaws including nine drug pushers held

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police arrested 18 outlaws including nine drug pushers and recovered huge cache of narcotics, wine and valuables from them, a police spokesman said. Following the directions of IGP Islamabad Muhammad Aamir Zulfiqar and DIG (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed, he said that crackdown was underway against drug pushers in Islamabad and both officials are reviewing the performance of heads of police stations on daily basis. Owing the efforts, SP (City-Zone) Omer Khan constituted a special police team under the supervision of SHO Bharu Kahu police Station Shokat Aabbasi, Sub-inspectors Muhammad Hanif, Fazaal-Khaliq along with others that nabbed two drug dealers namely Ali Shabbir and Sulman Ali and recovered 4.130 kilogram hashish from their possession. During the interrogation, they confessed their involvement in supplying drugs at various areas of the city, while further investigation is underway from them. SP (Saddar-Zone) Muhammad Sarfraz Virk constituted special police team under the supervision of ASP Rana Abudul Wahab including, SHO Shalimar police station Inspector Arshad Mehmood, SHO Ramana police station Sub-Inspector Tariq Rauf, Sub-Inspector Main Shahbaz, Asghar Naz and Muhammad Wajid nabbed four accused including three drug pushers. They were identified as Shakeel, Khalid Mehmood, Bilal Javed and Azher and police recovered 1.730 kilogram hashish, 25 liters alcohol and stolen mobile phone from their possession, while further investigation is underway from them. Further-more Banigala police arrested two drug pushers namely Muhammad Faizan and Afzal and recovered 117 gram hashish and two wine bottles from their possession. Aabpara police arrested accused Qasir Masih involved in illegally gas filling. Shams Colony police apprehended a drug peddler namely Mir Hakim Khan and recovered 120 gram hashish from him. Sihala police arrested an accused Imran Shokat and recovered 138 gram hashish from him. Karachi company police recovered 120 liters alcohol, four cane, 100 empty bottles from a car registration LF-193. While Golra police apprehended five accused Khan Syed, Muhammad Shafique, Sayal Khan, Muhammad Hayat and Asmat-Ullah involved in theft case. - DNA

## Police launch search operation in Kallar Syedan

The police also checked particulars of various tenants, he added

RAWALPINDI: The police on special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi on Wednesday launched a search operation in Seven Marla Scheme and adjoining areas in the jurisdiction of Kallar Syedan Police Station, said a police spokesman. He informed that heavy

police contingents, Elite Force, Special Branch personnel and Ladies police under the supervision of SHO Kallar Syedan Police Station conducted search operation in the area and searched 22 houses while 54 persons were also interrogated. The police also checked particulars of vari-

ous tenants, he added. According to Superintendent Police (SP) Saddar Zia ud Din, the search operations to net criminals and proclaimed offenders under National Action Plan were regularly being conducted in different areas of the district particularly to ensure law and order. - APP

## Forms submission schedule announced

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RBISE) on Wednesday announced annual 2021 exam forms online submission schedule for Secondary School Certificate (SSC). December 10 will be last date for online submission of admission forms with single fee for SSC exam. - APP

## COMSTech and MoFA launch consortium of excellence

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTech) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan launched "COMSTech Consortium of Excellence (CCoE)" on Wednesday comprising of leading academic and research institutions of Pakistan and OIC member states in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The launching ceremony of CCoE held at COMSTech under the chairmanship of Coordinator General, COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary while Mr. Sohail Mahmood, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan were the chief guest. The Vice Chan-

cellors and senior officials of Quaid e Azam University, Islamia University Bawalpur, National University of Sciences and Technology, Government College University, Lahore, Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology, Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology, NED University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, and University of the Punjab. In his inaugural address, Prof. Dr. Iqbal Choudhary, said the purpose of CCoE is to put our efforts to achieve excellence in partnership. He said that Pakistan has done a lot in the area of science and technology and now its time reap the benefit by showcasing Pakistan. He said that this forum would bring technology to Pakistan and would help in internationalization of the

areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The COMSTech - MoFA collaboration will open new avenues in science diplomacy. Dr. Iqbal mentioned that COMSTech being the apex body in OIC science arena gives Pakistan a leading role in the area of science technology and innovation. He discussed the current state of OIC member states and provided a comprehensive report of COMSTech activities. CCoE is launched under the "Science Diplomacy Initiative" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Government of Pakistan. Mr. Sohail Mahmood, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan said that the higher education institutions are shaping the future of Pakistan. He said that the CCoE initiative is conceived to provide the platform to the leading universities of Pakistan and the universities of the OIC member states to cooper-

ate, collaborate and showcase their achievements. He informed that the MoFA has launched multipurpose science diplomacy initiative to create linkages between partners and popularize science. He said that this forum will help in trade boost. The Foreign Secretary mentioned that COMSTech has responsibility to enhance science, technology and innovation in OIC member states and commended the current efforts of COMSTech and its leadership for initiating new projects like CCoE. Vice chancellors and senior officials of the CCoE founding member universities of Pakistan shared current programmes. They also offered their cooperation and support to collaborate and cooperate under the umbrella of CCoE.

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## 215 criminals held, looted items recovered

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have arrested 215 outlaws during last ten days and recovered looted items worth millions of rupees from them including gold ornaments, cars and bikes. A police official said 24 accused were arrested for involvement in robbery, burglary and car theft while 43 absconders were nabbed during the same period. Police also held 29 accused for involvement in bootlegging and drug peddling activities while 14,200 kilogram hashish, 2,550 kilogram heroin, 612 gram ice and 203 bottles of wine were also recovered from them. Police also arrested 17 persons for having illegal weapons and recovered 16 pistols, one gun and 64 rounds from them. Meanwhile, 102 other accused wanted to police for their alleged involvement in 45 crime cases of various nature were also held. Deputy Inspector General (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed has appreciated the performance and said criminal elements would not be spared.

## IRSA releases 111,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 111,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 53,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1503.80 feet, which was 115.80 feet higher than its dead level 1386 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 28,100 cusecs and outflow as 55,000 cusecs. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1191.20 feet, which was 151.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 6,200 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 74,300, 53,400 and 10,900 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 11,800 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. - APP

## Crackdown against gas compressor directed

RAWALPINDI: The General Manager Rawalpindi Region, Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL), Mukhtar Shah said special teams have been constituted to launch a crackdown against those who are depriving their neighbours of the gas facility by using the compressors. Talking to APP, He said that there is no shortage of gas and pipelines of gas supply are being laid to increase its pressure, however, Mukhtar added that there is dire need to take action against illegal practices of using gas compressors.

He said that efforts are being made to address the gap between demand and supply and admitted that increased demand has crippled peoples' lives. He appealed the public to use gas appliances carefully to avoid unpleasant accidents.

He observed due to prevailing crisis of gas shortage the people indulge in using alternate measures like using cylinder, compressor in their houses. He also added that many residents use fridge compressor to suck in more sui gas to increase its flow and terming it dangerous and advised not to use illegal practices. He urged consumers not to use gas heaters and geysers so that regular supply of gas could be ensured for the domestic users. Meanwhile, the shortage of gas made the lives of the people miserable. The recent rain make the weather chilly and the residents have no option to use alternate resources to meet the gas load shedding. - APP



## Briefs

650 VIPs  
fined during  
2020

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has fined 650 VIPs during the current year including parliamentarians, diplomats and bureaucrats. Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Farrukh Rasheed on Wednesday said elimination of Very Important Person (VIP) culture and equal application of law are the operational codes of the ITP which has become model of excellence for all law enforcement agencies in the country.

He said performance of traffic police personnel is being reviewed continuously and every possible effort would be made to improve it. As per basic objectives defined at the time of inception of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) on January 28, 2006, SSP (Traffic) said personnel are ensuring equal implementation of law and fined 650 VIPs on traffic rules violation during the ongoing year.

VIPs fined during the ongoing year included 39 MNAs/MPAs, 14 Senators, 16 army officials, 114 government officials, 201 senior police officers, 24 diplomats, 88 media persons, 54 Judiciary officers among others. "Whether there is any VIP or common people on the road, everyone is equal to us and it is our responsibility to save his life through ensuring implementation on traffic rules," the SSP (Traffic) maintained. He said ITP will provide maximum facilities to road user and would ensure safe travel to all. Rasheed said tickets were issued not as a punitive measure but to make citizens more law abiding for safety of their own lives. He said ITP personnel would continue their efforts for ensuring safe road environment in the capital and urged people to cooperate with them to make the city accident-free. — APP

Police arrest  
four POs

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Four suspects allegedly involved in an honour killing case were arrested here on Wednesday from the jurisdiction of Wah Cantt Police Station. According to a police spokesman, they were wanted in murder case of Rehman Khan and Mamona on October 12 in apparently an honour killing case. He informed that a police team under the supervision of Station House Officer Wah Cantt managed to net four Proclaimed Offenders (POs) namely Umar Khan, Zubair Khan alias Azmaray, Hazrat Khan alias Bila and Khan Wali alias Lahore Khan wanted in the case registered on the application of father of the victim, Rehman Khan.

He said, two accomplices of the killers, identified as Sher Ali and Kabul Khan, were already arrested. Earlier, CPO Rawalpindi taking notice of this heinous murder had assigned Superintendent of Police Pothohar, Syed Ali to arrest the accused.

'Emigration  
Policy in final  
phase'

ISLAMABAD: National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis is in its final phase and would soon be submitted to the Federal Cabinet for approval, an official of the OP&HRD disclosed on Wednesday. He said the policy draft had been shared with other relevant authorities for their input after it was approved by the National Assembly Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD). The policy envisions promotion of safe, orderly and regular export of manpower to the other countries, improved welfare services for expats and engagement of Pakistani diaspora in the national development, said a copy of the policy draft which is available with APP. The policy entails action plan and policy response, which were evolved after identifying key challenges in promoting the emigration and regulating the welfare process for expats, in addition to the engagement of overseas Pakistanis in the country development. The draft was formed after constituting five thematic working groups and conducting series of workshops and series of meeting with all stakeholders. Under the policy, multiple initiatives would be taken for promotion of manpower including improvement in the Emigration Ordinance and Rules 1979 and overseas employment Memoranda of Understanding with foreign countries, establishment of labour market research cell, skill development of youth and female emigration promotion. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Special assistant to Prime Minister for petroleum Nadeem Babar meeting with Norwegian ambassador to Pakistan, Kjell-Gunnar Eriksen at his office. — DNA

Ehsaas Kafaalat beneficiaries  
to get next tranche: Dr. Sania

Dr. Sania Nishtar visited the HBL branch located at Melody Market Islamabad to assess preparations to improve the quality of cash withdrawal services through ATMs

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Sania Nishtar Wednesday announced that the upcoming Ehsaas Kafaalat tranche for the period of July to December is all set to be released nationwide next week.

The preparations were well underway with partnering banks Habib Bank Limited (HBL) and Bank Alfalah Limited.

The biometrically enabled payment operations will be initiated in the entire country to serve Kafaalat recipients, with the release of Kafaalat tranche. Dr. Sania Nishtar visited the HBL branch located at Melody Market Islamabad to assess preparations to improve the quality of cash withdrawal services through ATMs.

She also interacted with Ehsaas beneficiaries and explained to

them how to check their balance on an ATM. She also reviewed how HBL provides a hospitable ambiance for those marginalized segments who have never used a bank, including their procedures for facilitating beneficiaries through the new system of biometric verification.

Dr. Nishtar issued directions to the banks to make better use of ATMs for Ehsaas Kafaalat recipients. The beneficiaries of the program are the destitute women with no other source of livelihoods. "The Ehsaas digital payment system encourages women to go to biometric ATMs and branches of banks, empowering them through financial inclusion, Dr. Nishtar said.

"I would encourage Kafaalat beneficiary women to withdraw cash through ATM machines of designated partner banks, wherever possible. It will not just



protect them from corrupt financial mistreatment, but bank branches and ATMs also serve them with a receipt detailing transparent record of available cash balance in their saving accounts", she added. Dr. Sania during the meeting with the banks' Presidents earlier this week also urged them to make better use of ATMS so that marginalized segments have an option to access the premises of banks. Dr. Sania also said that she had

been receiving feedback from the field that in many bank branches, officers do not wish to mire themselves in the hassle of serving long queues and therefore indicate that ATMs are not open. She emphasized on the use of bank ATMs in public interest. Ehsaas Kafaalat beneficiaries now have the choice of going to a biometrically enabled ATM, a biometric retail shop or any biometrically enabled branch of the relevant banks. Under Ehsaas, HBL serves cash disbursements in Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan and Bank Alfalah across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Both banks are enhancing services across the country to ensure that women have easy access to their payments in a decent manner. It is pertinent to mention here that Prime Minister Imran Khan, chairing an Ehsaas Kafaalat preparatory

meeting last week, had granted approval to increase the number of Ehsaas Kafaalat beneficiaries from 4.6 million to seven million. The new deserving households will be identified after completing due diligence as per Ehsaas Kafaalat Policy. A poverty survey and analysis of the data is in the process of being completed phase wise across the country. Ehsaas registration desks, as another option, have been built at the Tehsil levels in each district to include any missing households. Opening of registration desks is linked to the completion of poverty survey in that particular district. Ehsaas Kafaalat is the government's flagship social protection programme through which it gives cash stipends of Rs. 2,000 monthly and bank accounts to the most deserving and poorest women across the country. — APP

S-Africa aims to  
further economic  
ties with Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "Pakistan and South Africa enjoy excellent and cordial bilateral relations. This partnership has evolved over the years, expanding to include strong people-to-people links and new and exciting opportunities." This was stated by H.E. Ambassador Mthuzuzeli Madikiza, the High Commissioner of the Republic of South Africa to Pakistan during his Web-Talk on 'South Africa's Perspective on Evolving Geo-Economic Trends and Pakistan South Africa Economic Ties.' The event was organized by the Centre for Middle East and Africa (CMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) today under its Ambassadors' Platform Series. Ambassador

Madikiza welcomed the establishment of CMEA as a Centre of Excellence within the ISSI and stated that he looked forward to closer cooperation and interactions on issues of mutual interest. He said stronger ties and increased collaboration between the African Continent and partner countries in the Asian region have been growing steadily over the years. This has also strengthened the notion of progressive internationalism, which entails opposition to the perpetuation of the legacy of global imperialism, colonialism, racism, the dominance of the global North over the South, as well as global structural inequality and poverty. Talking about South Africa and Pakistan's bilateral ties, he remarked that both sides enjoy excellent bilateral relations.

AIOU Vice chancellor calls on  
Chief Justice Shariat Court

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum called on the Chief Justice of the Federal Shariat Court, Justice Muhammad Noor Miskanzai.

During the meeting, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum briefed Justice Miskanzai about AIOU's plans for promotion of education in the country in general and in Baluchistan in particular. He informed the Chief Justice about strengthening the regional network of the university in Baluchistan by establishment of new regions and construction of new customized buildings in different parts of Baluchistan. He said that besides pro-



viding financial support to the students of Baluchistan, AIOU is taking all other possible steps for promotion of education in Baluchistan so that the province may be brought at par with other

parts of the country. Speaking on this occasion, Justice Muhammad Noor Miskanzai appreciated the role of AIOU in promotion of education in the country and assured Prof. Dr. Zia

Ul-Qayyum about his full support in extending regional network of AIOU across Baluchistan. Director Regional Services of AIOU, Inam Ullah Shaikh was also present on this occasion.

## President for enhanced relations with Ukraine

He underscored the need for frequent bilateral parliamentary and political exchanges that would greatly help bringing the two countries closer. He asked the Ambassador to work for promoting bilateral cooperation in education, culture and tourism sectors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi emphasized the need for enhanced cooperation with Ukraine in the areas of trade, economy and culture. He said that Pakistan highly valued its relations with Ukraine and wanted to further increase cooperation in fields of mutual interest, including defense. He stated this while talking to Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Ukraine, Major General (R) Noel Israel Khokhar, who called on him,



at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The President congratulated the Ambassador on his appointment and expressed the hope that he would make concerted efforts to further expand bilateral cooperation with Ukraine. He underscored the need for frequent bilateral parliamentary and political exchanges that would greatly help bringing the two countries closer. He asked the Ambassador to work for promoting bilateral cooperation in education, culture and tourism sectors.

Clean energy  
cooking  
stoves to  
inaugurate

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Zaraf Gul would inaugurate a project of 'Clean Energy Efficient Cooking Stoves' at Chawan forest rest house, Karore, Dhyanal road Rawalpindi district on Thursday. The minister would also distribute clean energy-efficient cooking stoves among the locals at Chawan forest rest house. The project was aimed to promote climate-friendly cooking in the country, an official of ministry of climate change said adding, more-sophisticated stoves would reduce dependency on rudimentary stoves, helping to combat climate change and improve public health. Conventional stoves that burn solid fuels release black and brown carbon particles, along with gases that are implicated in climate warming (including carbon dioxide, ozone-producing gases and methane).

As super-efficient absorbers of sunlight, these particles also affect agricultural crop yields. Modern stoves with natural convection have solid-fuel use, saving money and collection time, he said. — APP

Police arrest 3  
for possessing  
illegal weapons

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Police in their crackdown against illegal weapons rounded up three persons from different areas and recovered two 30 bore pistols and five liter liquor from their possession, said police spokesman.

He informed that Gujjar Khan, Rawat and Kahuta police on the directives of Rawalpindi City Police Officer (CPO), launched crackdown and arrested three persons namely Muhammad Arslan, Zulfiqar Ahmed and Naveed Qasim for possessing two 30 bore pistols and five liters liquor. He said that the police were conducting operations against law violators on a regular basis without any discrimination. He said, the police would continue their operations against criminals and law-breakers. — APP

SECP  
approves 1st  
P2P lending  
platform

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has granted approval for launch of a Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Lending Platform under the first cohort of Regulatory Sandbox to support and encourage Fintech revolution in the country. P2P lending is an innovative alternative digital platform that connect borrowers with individual lenders, who come together to meet the borrowers' loan requirements. The P2P lending helps the borrowers give out short-term loans that enable the SMEs to scale up their business, eventually qualifying them to take bigger bank loans, says a press release issued by SECP on Wednesday.

This current approval for testing and experimentation of a P2P Lending Platform by SECP is also attributed towards development of an ecosystem for SME financing to achieve higher growth prospects and to create new employment and business opportunities.

During the testing/experimentation stage, the P2P lending platform shall operate within pre-defined parameters and is subject to certain terms and conditions. Furthermore, specific eligibility criteria shall also apply on selection of each lender/borrower on the platform. These terms and conditions have been imposed to address the inherent risks involved in the operation of such platforms in the absence of a regulatory framework. However, these terms and conditions shall be re-considered parallel to the results of the experimentation stage of the subject P2P Lending Platform. This will help the SECP devise the much needed enabling regulatory framework. The SECP regulatory sandbox is the framework to accommodate provision of financial services that leverage new technologies. — APP



## Purchasing power

**T**HE issue of power purchase, and when it is made, has come up before. Recently, PSO said that it bought additional furnace oil to meet a shortfall by K-Electric in Karachi, so that the people of Karachi would not suffer. The question, however, is why furnace oil was bought when a few months before in August and September, LNG was available at far lower costs. Purchasing it at that point and using it in the future could have saved the country millions of rupees. The Ministry of Energy has denied that mistakes were made. However, other experts say that the failure to purchase cheap LNG has cost the country millions.

There's also the issue of setting up a power production plant in the country, with a delay in this leading to at least one company stating it is no longer interested in establishing the power plant in Pakistan; the power plant was to go up next year. However, Minister for Energy and Power Omar Ayub says that two other companies are still interested, and the power plant will be set up indeed. Certainly, Pakistan needs to deal more efficiently with its energy crisis. Already, there is a huge shortfall of energy in Punjab which will soon spread to Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well. Then there is the issue of circular debt – which pops up time and again – regardless of government denial. The figures of circular keep being denied or disputed, leading to even more chaos on the policy front. There also seems to be an attempt to give the prime minister a brighter picture of the performance of various ministries and agencies rather than the true picture of what crisis the country faces. This is unfair – both to the government and to the people of the country.

The circular debt problem has lasted for a very long time. It has to be cared for through sensible purchases at the right time, when gas prices are lower, and the gas can be put to use by power companies or others in need of the commodity. Furnace oil is the most expensive way to produce electricity. It is difficult to understand why we continue to use it when it means huge losses for the country. The ministry has also denied that transmission losses have risen since 2018, but figures by Nepra suggest that this has indeed happened. The problem needs to be sorted out so that everyone is on the same page and correct figures can be put before the public and before the prime minister.

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## Curbing the pandemic

MUHAMMAD OMAR IFTIKHAR

**I**T was expected that the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic will affect Pakistan and the world in the latter parts of 2020. The cases across Pakistan are accentuating that is an alarming situation. Strict SOPs must be followed by the public. Any virus tends to spread during winters. While the first lockdown imposed across Pakistan in March this year was a commendable step, the second version of the lockdown should be implemented. The objective is to break the chain of the spreading of the virus. Doctors had suggested that the second wave will be deadlier than before.

However, the federal government and the provincial government of Sindh are not on the same page now, as they were not on the same page before. Saeed Ghani even went on to say that there will be no winter vacations this year as “students have been given more holidays than usual this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.” Such a response will not bode well for the nation. Parents may not be willing to send their children during such times when the second wave of Covid-19 has mutated and has become fierce.

While the people on the streets are not willing to wear a mask or use hand sanitizers, they must do so to protect themselves from the virus. The reluctance of the government to take concrete measures including implementing SOPs in offices, marriage halls, public places, and educational institutes will only create chaos and confusion as it did during the days leading to the first lockdown in March. The government officials need to stand tall with a resolute mind to implement SOPs that prevent the spreading of the virus.

The people in general have not shown any preventive measures and still consider Covid-19 to be a hoax. The virus is pretty much real and firm steps must be implemented to reduce fatalities.

## China is good – Russia is no less

Dr M Ali Hamza



The skyrocketing price hike of medicine was one of the major causes of exponential increase in deaths. Besides, in the struggle to transform from a state controlled to a market-oriented system, large collective and state farms that were provided with state-guaranteed marketing and supply channel had to contend with the sudden loss of state support. Resultantly in less than 10 years, livestock accounts dropped by half

**I**T is not only Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) where the Prime Minister Pakistan applauded the unmatched progress of China in recent history. And there is indeed no exaggeration. China earned and well deserves the appreciation.

We must not forget another close neighbor who once had crumbled political system, constitutional crises, hyperinflation, monetary overhang, increasing rate of poverty, short of revenue and printed money to finance its debt, almost collapsed economy, bankruptcy of much industry, and a deep credit crunch caused shut down of many industries and brought about a protracted depression. Yes the post-Soviet Russia. In December 1991 after the breakup of USSR, Russia had to deal with multiple challenges. It was the challenge of transition that required political reform, economic restructuring and the redrawing of political boundaries. Once the super-power, sank into deep economic depression by the mid-1990s due to poor reform efforts.

And financial crash of 1998 was never less than a last nail in the coffin. The economic crises were as harsh as of immediate economic consequence of World War I, the fall of Tsarism, and the Russian Civil War. A report by World Bank revealed that population living in poverty raised to 49% in 1993 from 1.5% in the late Soviet era. Due to economic downfall post-Soviet era experienced an immediate depletion in public health, decline in birth-rates due to economic disorder, life expectancy of men and women dropped from 64 years to 57 years and from 74 to 71 respectively. A sharp increase of unnatural deaths: suicides, accidents, and murders, was witnessed among youth.

The skyrocketing price hike of medicine was one of the major causes of exponential increase in deaths. Besides, in the struggle to transform from a state controlled to a market-oriented system, large collective and state farms that were provided with state-guaranteed marketing and supply channel had to contend with

the sudden loss of state support. Resultantly in less than 10 years, livestock accounts dropped by half, feed grains demand declined, and the area planted to grains dropped by 25%.

The reduction in purchasing power affected the purchases of mineral fertilizer and other agricultural inputs and crop yields went down. New machinery got expensive and sources of capital investments shrink. Overall the agriculture sector of Russia suffered the worst of the odds. Moreover, converting the world's largest state-controlled economy into a market-oriented economy was an uphill task. Regardless of the brilliance of policy makers, such conversion was extraordinarily difficult. Being a crisis-wracked country Russia had to ground her policies in the neoliberal Washington Consensus of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and Treasury Department.

There were three main policies opted: liberalization, stabilization, and privatization. Yes it was shock therapy and the outcome was in shape of self-centered greedy Russian oligarchs. These were the businessmen who rapidly accumulated wealth under the shadow of privatization policy of newly emerged state of Russia. The dwindling Soviet state offered state owned assets those had to be sold out to private parties and thus the business magnates pulled out most of the assets and started controlling the rest of the system. The shift from USSR to Russia was only beneficial for the business oligarchs, they tried to hijack, and they did to good extent, but then Putin factor came in. That is quite another topic.

Beside these glimpses of the Russian crises, within 20 years Russia has well-functioning presidential democracy, international prestige has been re-gained, real GDP grew on average 6.7% a year, average income increased 11% annually, and a consistently positive balance of the federal budget enabled the government to cut 70% of the external debt. Today Russia is the 5th largest

national economy in Europe, the 11th largest in the world in terms of nominal GDP, and the 6th largest by purchasing power parity. Moreover life expectancy increased, mortality dropped, health care services covered.

A US-CIA estimate 99.7% literacy rate in Russia and according to a 2016 OECD report, 54% of Russia's adults have attained a tertiary education making Russia the second-highest attainment of tertiary education among 35 OECD member-countries. In 2016 the US company Bloomberg rated Russia's higher education as the third-best in the world. The Guardian reports Russia as the 6th most-popular destination for international students in 2014. In 2016 Russia exceeded Soviet grain production levels, and in that year became the world's largest exporter of wheat. In 2018 Russia was among top ten producers of wheat, barley, sugar beet, potato, oats, maize, lentils, pumpkin, cabbage, pea, onion, apple, flax, rye etc. In the last years Russia has emerged as a big agricultural power again. Pakistan seems to resemble Russia in many aspects. There was Stalinization resulted in rapid industrialization and other developments. We had Ayubization that caused industrialization, construction of dams, power stations, and other developments. Russia lost her land with the collapse of USSR, and we lost our land with fall of Dhaka. Russia converted from one party system to presidential democracy, and we are struggling for the true democracy. Russia came out of the worst economic crises, and we are trying to win-over the economic challenges.

Russia had to crush the business and political oligarchy, and we are yet hijacked by oligarchy. Such similarities provide us the ground to benchmark Russia for socio-economic development as we benchmark China. Present Govt. seems keen to comprehend the method in which China progressed, but there will not be any harm to study additional case of another equally brilliant success story.

## Spark of rigging in GB!

**G**ILGIT-BALTISTAN is a region of natural beauty, rich in resources and spread over a vast area. This area covers 28,174 square miles or 72,971 square kilometers. Due to its mostly mountainous terrain, the population is only 1.8 million. The Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly has 24 seats, on which party-based elections are held. Earlier, two elections were won by PPP and PML-N respectively, this is the third general election, this time in the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly elections, the credibility of all the political parties was at stake. The PTI took the field and kept alive the tradition that in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, the same party that is ruling in the federation wins.

Although the large gatherings of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz had given hope to both the parties. However, only one visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan worked and PTI took the lead. The PPP and PML-N have traditionally accused the government of gross rigging, while PTI leaders say it is in fact a public rejection of the PML-N and PDM statements.

There is no doubt that the victory of PTI is an expression of confidence of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan in the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, but the accusations and protests of the opposition parties cannot be ignored, because election rigging is a new thing in our country nor is it a new thing to make allegations of rigging after the elections. The losers have always made similar allegations against their opponents, but it is a very dangerous trend to steal votes and change the election results at will. Therefore, in view of the sensitivity of Gilgit-Baltistan, a transparent investigation should be carried out instead of keeping silent by declaring the allegations

of the opposition as mere political rhetoric, so that everything becomes clear. Otherwise, the enemy of the country is already waiting for the opportunity, if the noise of protests and rigging increases, the enemy can take advantage.

It is clear that Gilgit-Baltistan is a sensitive area and the decision to integrate it into Pakistan is being taken in view of the security interests of the country. Due to the geographical importance of Gilgit, this area is very important for Pakistan's security. For the completion of the Pak-China Economic Corridor project, the peace of Gilgit and ending the political sense of deprivation of the people here is crucial. During the election campaign in GB, some trends have come to light that there is a special love for Pakistani forces in the region. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan believe that in case of any difficulty or natural calamity, only soldiers come to rescue. In the recent election campaign, PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz has been discussing Nawaz Sharif's statement instead of the problems of the local population. This statement was considered foreign and unrealistic for the people of GB, which is why the PML-N, despite being in power in the past, has failed miserably. The PPP has historically played a key role in the reform process for the region. The local population values these services, but joining the PDM and bad governance in Sindh has played a key role in defeating the PPP.

Some things have proved to be very important in the PTI's victory, including the alliance with dynamic and active groups at the local level. In addition, promises were made to provide new bridges, hospitals and jobs to the local population. Residents of Gilgit-Baltistan have seen the performance of both the old parties and are confident that the PTI will take the process of constitutional reform forward and make GB the fifth

province of Pakistan. The traditional reason for the PTI's victory is that Gilgit-Baltistan is usually ruled by the party that is in power at the center. Given the election results, the PTI government is certain. It is to be hoped that CPEC, along with new economic plans in GB, will make people's lives easier, the PTI will take timely steps to give GB the status of a province in response to the long-standing demand of the local population.

After the peaceful completion of the election process in Gilgit-Baltistan, what seemed to be a flurry of activity or results, was not very local, but the arrival of the major national political parties was a must, but the GB's peaceful and civilized political circles, regardless of party or constituency, have to keep a close eye on it. The opposition should also get out of the politics of accusations and put the interest of the country and the nation before its own political interest. Defeat is part of the election, the opposition should not pave way for unrest in the region under the guise of protests, given the seriousness of the situation, important personalities from Gilgit-Baltistan have demanded the formation of a grand Jirga, so that a middle ground can be found.

The Prime Minister Imran Khan has also called on the opposition to enact legislation to make the elections transparent, so as to ensure the prevention of electoral fraud. If the opposition really wants to address electoral weaknesses beyond self-interest, they will have to support the government in passing legislation in parliament. In this way the spark of iniquity can be extinguished before it ignites or if the spark of this rigging is set on fire instead of being extinguished immediately, then the peace of the country along with Gilgit-Baltistan will be ruined.

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Attiya Munawar



The Prime Minister Imran Khan has also called on the opposition to enact legislation to make the elections transparent, so as to ensure the prevention of electoral fraud. If the opposition really wants to address electoral weaknesses beyond self-interest, they will have to support the government in passing legislation in parliament



## Briefs

## Aggression left us with no option but to respond

From Page 01

Mohammad Abdullah Hamid Gul Director General Measac Research Centre (MRC) introduced the subject. Seminar was attended by Ambassadors and diplomats of Islamic countries, retired Generals and Brigadiers. Brigadier (R) Abdul Rahman Bilal, analyzed all salient facets. Senator Talha Mahmud covered the humanitarian aspect of the conflict. The country of Azerbaijan liberated its occupied territories from Armenia. Arsalan Ayaz was the mediator of proceeding who thanked the participants from different walks of life for their active participation and value inputs in the discussion. On this occasion defense experts including, General (R) Amjad Shoaib, Gen (R) Asad Duranj, Maj Gen Shamriaz, Brig (r) Asif Haroon Raja, media analyst Dr. Shahid Masood, Dr. Zafar Jaspal, were also present.

## UAE halts tourist visas for Pakistanis

From Page 01

In August, Kuwait's aviation banned commercial flights to 31 countries, including Pakistan, regarded as 'high risk' due to the spread of the coronavirus. The number of infections has been rising in Pakistan since late last month and authorities have declared that the country was witnessing the second wave of Covid-19. For the past six days, Pakistan has recorded more than 2,000 daily cases of the novel coronavirus and officials have warned that the positivity rate of the disease has increased, especially in major cities including Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Faisalabad, Hyderabad etc. On Monday, Prime Minister Imran Khan had urged the people to "act as a nation" in order to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. The premier announced new restrictions on public events, including the suspension of his party's political rallies, and stressed the implementation of mask-wearing and social distancing to control the spread of the virus. "This is the time to take precautions. If we do, we can slow down the virus. Just like earlier we were saved due to following precautions, that time has come again," he said, noting that Covid-19 cases in Pakistan had increased by four times in the past two weeks.

## Taiwan grounds F-16 fighter fleet

## MONITORING DESK

TAIPEI: Taiwan has grounded all of its F-16 fighter jets for safety inspections as it continues to search for a plane after it went missing during a training exercise on Tuesday night. The grounding announced on Wednesday involves about 150 planes, which have played a crucial role in Taiwan's efforts to deter Chinese aircraft that have been encroaching into its airspace more regularly in recent months. The air force said a single-seat F-16 flown by a 44-year-old pilot disappeared from radar at an altitude of some 6,000 feet (1,800 metres) two minutes after taking off from Hualien air base in eastern Taiwan on Tuesday night. The disappearance comes less than three weeks after a pilot was killed when he ejected from his F-5E fighter jet during training, prompting a similar grounding. "The rescue mission is our top priority now. The air force has grounded all F-16s for checks and I've instructed an investigation into the cause of the incident," President Tsai Ing-wen told reporters. Tsai in October pledged to modernise Taiwan's military in response to an increasingly assertive China, which claims the island as its own and has not ruled out the use of force to achieve its objective. Without the F-16s, Taiwan's air force fleet consists of the locally-built Indigenous Defence Fighter, French-built Mirages from the late 1990s and F-5E fighters that date back to the 1970s.



MUSCAT: Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman, Ahsan Wagan called on Sheikh Khalid Bin Hilal, chairman Majlis e Shura to convey message of felicitations on behalf of Pakistani leadership on 50th National Day of Oman. He also handed over copy of felicitations message sent by Asad Qaiser Speaker National Assembly. - DNA

# We must continue to live with dignity: President Mirziyoyev

I emphasize once again: this disease does not forgive indifference. At the same time, we must continue to live and work with dignity, relying on the vast experience we have accumulated during the pandemic and comprehensive conclusions, the head of state said

## FOREIGN DESK

Tashkent: Under the chairmanship of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, a video conference is being held on the enforcement of judicial decisions. At the beginning of the event, the situation in the country related to the coronavirus pandemic was analyzed. In particular, it was noted that over the past 8 months, sufficient experience has been accumulated in combating COVID-19, medical workers have acquired the necessary skills for this. As you know, quarantine requirements have been gradually relaxed while maintaining strict control over the virus distribution chain. Howev-

er, given the situation in the world and neighboring countries, the fight against this disease in Uzbekistan cannot be stopped for a minute, because the threat has not yet passed, it was noted at the meeting. To date, the number of detected cases in our country has exceeded 70 thousand, almost 68 thousand people (96 percent) have recovered, and 599 (0.9 percent) have died. Khokims, sector leaders and decision-makers in the health care system have a number of tasks. First of all, one should constantly analyze and react to the situation accordingly. In particular, these leaders must, at least two days a week, deal exclusively with combating coronavirus on their territory, hold headquarters meetings,



and regularly report to the Republican Special Commission. - I emphasize once again: this disease does not forgive indifference. At the same time, we must continue to live and work with dignity, relying on the vast experience we have accumulated during the pandemic and comprehensive conclusions, the head of state said. Today, in 89 institutions

throughout Uzbekistan, 17,500 beds have been allocated for patients with COVID-19. Currently, 6,570 patients are being treated in these institutions. The bed capacity is 16% in Karakalpakstan, 10% in Khorezm, 11% in Kashkadarya, 19% in the Namangan region, and 38% in the republic as a whole. Huge amounts of money are spent on the maintenance of this fund. In this regard, the responsible persons were instructed to thoroughly study the activities of the hospitals designated for the coronavirus and optimize them. As you know, a number of decrees and resolutions were adopted aimed at cardinal improvement of the education system and the development of the health sector, and recently, separate video conferences were

held on these two issues.

I am concerned about the implementation of these decrees and resolutions, how the khokims organize work in this direction. Until the khokims connect to the work of the modern-minded and self-sacrificing heads of public education and health care departments, they will not be able to achieve practical results, the President stressed.

It is indicated that the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the khokims of the regions and the city of Tashkent should set a personal example to the lower-level leaders in the implementation of the reforms begun and twice a week to carry out instructions regarding school education and medicine.

## EU looks at more sanctions on Belarus regime

BRUSSELS: The European Union will look at imposing further economic sanctions on the regime of Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko at a meeting of European affairs ministers on Thursday, diplomats said. The EU already sanctioned Lukashenko, his son and 53 others for the violent repression of Belarusians protesting results of the August 9 presidential election, which the opposition, the EU and Canada called fraudulent. "All options are open. Sectoral sanctions are on the table," one diplomat told AFP. "It will be up to the ministers to decide the nature of the measures to adopt." A spokesman for EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said extra sanctions were being considered after the death a week ago of an opposition activist, 31-year-old Roman Bondarenko, after

he was savagely beaten in detention. No sanctions announcement was expected immediately at Thursday's ministers' meeting because it is being held by videolink, owing to coronavirus measures, which weakens its decision-making authority. But sources said the ministers could launch a procedure with a view to having sanctions adopted unanimously by the 27 member states. The existing sanctions by the EU prohibit the Belarusian officials getting visas and freezing their assets in the bloc. But "nothing has changed on the ground", a European diplomat said. "Pressure has to be maintained and political push is needed." Belarusians continue to demonstrate against Lukashenko despite repression and intimidation by plainclothes police and security forces. - APP



Cristiano Ronaldo of Portugal competes during the UEFA Nations League football match against Croatia at Poljud Stadium in Split, Croatia. - DNA

## England confirms Pakistan tour after 16 years

Due to the non-availability of its top stars during that period as they will be busy in international cricket, the ECB proposed the short tour in October in the lead up to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, which was welcomed by the PCB

## DNA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Cricket Board today confirmed England will make their first visit to Pakistan in 16 years when they will play two Twenty20 internationals in Karachi on 14 and 15 October. England will arrive in Karachi on 12 October, and both the sides will depart for India on 16 October for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup at the end of the series. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) confirmed the tour on Tuesday evening following last month's invite by the PCB for a short tour in January 2021. Due to the non-availability of its top stars during that period as they will be busy in international cricket, the ECB proposed the short tour in October in the lead up to the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, which was welcomed by the PCB. England last toured Pakistan in 2005 when they played three Tests and five One-Day Interna-

## Ehsan Mani says PCB fulfilled another commitment

## DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ehsan Mani today congratulated all participants, officials, local administration and security agencies on the successful completion of the HBL Pakistan Super League 2020 on Tuesday under the National Stadium floodlights.

The subsequent series between the two sides in 2012 and 2015 were played in the United Arab Emirates. PCB Chief Executive Wasim Khan: "I am delighted to confirm that England will be touring Pakistan to play two T20Is in October 2021. This will be their first visit to Pakistan for 16 years and will open the door for both Test and white-ball tours in

While an empty National Stadium for the playoffs took the gloss away from the first homecoming event that saw nearly 600,000 spectators cross turnstiles in the 30 league matches (last four league matches were played behind closed doors after the Covid-19 outbreak in Pakistan) before the event was suspended on 17 March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, there was

no doubt that the HBL Pakistan Super League 2020 had been an outstanding success given the very difficult circumstances. The two Karachi Kings versus Lahore Qalandars' home and away preliminary round matches at the National and Gaddafi Stadium were packed-to-capacity as the fans thronged the two iconic and historic venues to watch the oldest rivalry in Pakistan cricket.

eters to access and examine the world-class arrangements we will put together, which will give them further encouragement and confidence to not only return in 2022-23 but also express their interest in the Pakistan Super League, which has grown to become one of the top leagues in the world. "England's visit to Pakistan for the 14 and 15 October 2021

T20Is will provide further lift to our passionate fans, both in Pakistan and across the globe. The nation has waited patiently for cricket to return sustainably to Pakistan and the 2021 tours by South Africa, New Zealand and England will only ensure international cricket is played uninterrupted. "The enhanced progress made over the last two years has been down to nurturing relationships with various cricket boards and international players, as well as building trust and confidence. "The ECB's confirmation further endorses Pakistan as safe and secure. Importantly, this announcement speaks volumes for the relationship that we have with the ECB and I would like to thank the ECB for their strong will and desire to make this short tour a reality. "England's visit in 2021 is an outcome of the PCB's efforts and hard work to ensure Pakistan cricket continues to move in the right direction."

## EU chief urges capitals to back recovery plan

BRUSSELS: The European Commission's top economic official urged member states to get behind the bloc's 1.8-billion-euro budget and coronavirus recovery plan Wednesday, after Hungary and Poland blocked approval.

"I call on member states to show a strong sense of responsibility to their own citizens and to all Europeans at this crucial moment and to get this recovery plan over the line," Economy Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni said. EU Vice President for the economy Valdis Dombrovskis chimed in that "quick political agreement" was needed on the recovery package "so that it can provide a financial anchor through this storm".

European leaders will meet by videoconference on Thursday. Hungary and Poland on Monday blocked adoption of the recovery plan and the 2021-2027 long term budget over a dispute over the rule of law. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban argued that the EU wants to link funding to a member state's respect for the rule of law in order to force his country to accept immigrants.

After Poland also issued its veto, on Tuesday Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa expressed his own support for the move. Germany, which holds the rotating EU presidency, has vowed to work to convince Budapest and Warsaw to lift the blockade and Thursday's summit promises to be tense.

## Hungary extends state of emergency until Feb

BUDAPEST: Hungary has extended until February a state of emergency that enables partial lockdown measures aimed at curbing a surge in coronavirus deaths, according to a government decree.

Originally mandated to December 11, the decree, published late Tuesday, now makes it possible for the government to maintain the restrictions a further two months until February 8.

The measures - including a curfew between 8 pm and 5 am, a ban on gatherings, mandatory mask-wearing in public, and online tuition for high schools and universities - were brought in as part of a state of emergency in place since November 11. Coronavirus deaths and cases have surged in Hungary since September, with the leading doctors' association warning that understaffed hospitals could soon be overwhelmed. Seven-day rolling average data from the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) show that by Wednesday Hungary had the fourth-highest Covid-19 death rate per million in the bloc - behind the Czech Republic, Belgium, and Bulgaria. Over 4,200 new infections were recorded in the 9.8-million-population country Wednesday, with 7,499 coronavirus patients in hospital including 581 on ventilators. - APP

## PCB announces SL fixtures

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board on Wednesday announced the schedule of its men's national cricket team's tour to England and Wales in July 2021 that will comprise three ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League ODIs and as many T20Is. The ODIs will be played in Cardiff, London (Lord's) and Birmingham on 8, 10 and 13 July, respectively while the T20Is will be held in Nottingham, Leeds and Manchester on 16, 18 and 20 July, respectively. England lead the points table of the qualification league for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 with 30 points from two three-ODI series. Pakistan share second spot with Australia on 20 points following a 2-1 series win over Zimbabwe, while Zimbabwe and Ireland are on 10 points each. The remaining eight sides in the 13-team competition are yet to play their opening fixtures in the Super League from which the seven top-ranked sides and World Cup hosts India will progress directly for the event proper to take place in October/November 2023. - APP



## Briefs

## Quality seed shortage to prolong food crisis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President ICCI Shahid Rasheed Butt on Wednesday said masses will continue to face flour crisis for the third year in a row owing to shortage of quality seed for cultivation. Increasing wheat support price and fixing targets is not enough to ensure food security and the authorities must do something to provide economical fertiliser, loans, subsidized diesel, quality pesticides and certified seed. He said that the issues of farmers should be resolved otherwise, masses will not get any relief. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that country needs at least one million tonnes of seed for the wheat crop but almost half of the quantity is available fanning concerns among the stakeholders. The state-run departments only hold almost three percent of the seed while the rest of the seed is with the private sector with a major part of it has questionable quality. He noted that the quality seed available in the country is hardly 20 to 25 percent of the requirement while the rest is substandard which amounts to playing with the future of the country. The business leader said that rules and regulations in this sector are confusing, vague and not according to the ground realities while the concerned departments lack manpower, will, quality and efficiency while research is almost non-existent in this critical sector on which the whole population of the country depends.

## Pompeo to visit illegal settlement in occupied WB

WEB DESK

JERUSALEM: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's expected tour of a winery in the occupied West Bank this week marks the first time a top American diplomat has visited an illegal Israeli settlement. The Psagot winery, established in part on land the Palestinians say was stolen from local residents, is part of a sprawling network of Israeli settlements in the West Bank that are considered illegal under international law and a major obstacle in peace negotiations. The winery, located in Jabal al-Tawil, just outside the West Bank city of Ramallah, is a focus of Israel's efforts to promote tourism in the occupied territory and a potent symbol of its fight against campaigns to boycott or label products from the settlements. Pompeo's expected visit, reported by Israeli media but not officially confirmed, would mark a stunning departure from his predecessors, who frequently criticised settlement construction. US President Donald Trump has given unprecedented support to Israel and has already broken with his predecessors by recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital and repudiating the decades-old US position that settlements are inconsistent with international law. The administration has also recognised Israel's annexation of the occupied Golan Heights, seized from Syria in the 1967 war, where Pompeo may also pay a visit.

## Turkish troop deployment to Karabakh approved

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkey's parliament approved the deployment of troops to join Russian forces at an observation post in Nagorno-Karabakh after Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a Russian-brokered ceasefire to end fighting over the enclave. The mandate will allow Turkish troops to be stationed at the centre for one year as part of an accord between Ankara and Moscow to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire, which locked in territorial gains by Azerbaijan. Some 2,000 Russian peacekeeping troops are now also deploying to the region. In a letter to parliament asking for the mandate's approval, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday the presence of Turkish troops and, "if needed, civilian personnel from our country, [will] be to the benefit of the peace and prosperity of the regional people and necessary for our national interests".



ISTANBUL: Ambassador Syrus Qazi called on Ahmet Pekyatiymaci, Mayor of Selçuklu Municipality. Both sides discussed establishing sister city relations between Selçuklu Municipality and a matching Pakistani city. Selçuklu Municipality has a large public park named after Allama Iqbal. – DNA

## Iran urges US's Biden to lift sanctions, rejoin nuclear deal

If Mr Biden is willing to fulfill US commitments, we too can immediately return to our full commitments in the accord and negotiations are possible within the framework of the P5 + 1," Zarif said in an interview

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Iran would fully implement its 2015 nuclear deal if US President-elect Joe Biden lifts sanctions on Tehran, which Zarif said could be done swiftly through "three executive orders". Biden has pledged to rejoin the historic 2015 accord – agreed to by six world powers known as the P5 + 1 – if Iran also returns to compliance. But diplomats and analysts have said it was unlikely to happen overnight as the distrustful adversaries would both want additional

commitments from each other. Zarif did not insist on any compensation from the United States – unlike leaders such as President Hassan Rouhani who have demanded it in exchange for the "damages" Tehran has suffered under the renewed US sanctions, implicitly arguing Washington should repay it for the lost oil revenues. "If Mr Biden is willing to fulfill US commitments, we too can immediately return to our full commitments in the accord ... and negotiations are possible within the framework of the P5 + 1," Zarif said in an interview posted on the website of the state-run daily Iran on Wednesday. "We are ready

to discuss how the United States can re-enter the accord," Zarif said. "The situation will improve in the next few months. Biden can lift all sanctions with three executive orders." In the deal with the US and other world powers, Iran agreed to curbs on its nuclear programme in return for sanctions relief. It began breaching the nuclear deal after President Donald Trump withdrew in 2018 and started ratcheting up unilateral sanctions on Tehran. "This can be done automatically and with no need to set conditions: the United States carries out its duties under [Security Council Resolution] 2231 [lift sanctions] and we

will carry out our commitments under the nuclear deal," said Zarif in a video recording of the interview issued by the newspaper. "This needs no negotiation or conditions and it's feasible." Security Council resolution 2231, adopted in 2015, endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which had seen Tehran limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. Zarif voiced hope the sanctions can be lifted "in a matter of months" after Biden takes office. "This may happen in a matter of months considering, as I said, Mr Biden hasn't yet been able to establish his transition team." Trump was

defeated by Biden in the November 3 US presidential election but he has refused to concede and has repeatedly made unsubstantiated claims of electoral fraud. As the United States will soon undergo a government change, Rouhani said the "crimes" of the Trump administration must not be forgotten. In a televised cabinet speech on Wednesday, the president called on his local political opponents to refrain from "abolishing" the outgoing US administration. "This government is criminal. Why do you want to exonerate it? This US administration is a criminal administration, it's a terrorist administration," Rouhani said.

## Europe sees first dip in Covid-19 cases: WHO

GENEVA: The number of new Covid-19 cases declined last week for the first time in over three months, but deaths in the region continued to climb, WHO data showed Wednesday. In total, nearly four million cases of the novel coronavirus were registered worldwide during the week ending Sunday, and almost 60,000 people died from the disease during the same period, the World Health Organization said. Europe, which on Tuesday saw its total number of coronavirus infections climb past 15 million, remained the hardest-hit region. Last week it accounted for 46 percent of the new global cases and 49 percent of the deaths, the UN health agency's weekly epidemiological update showed. With 1.84 million new cases registered, the caseload across the region remained staggeringly high, but WHO noted that "in the past week, for the first time in over three months, the region observed a decline of 10 percent in weekly cases." At the same time though, more than 29,000 new Covid-19 deaths were registered across Europe –

an 18 percent jump from the previous week, it said. The WHO data showed that Austria reported the sharpest increase in new cases on the continent last week, marking a 30 percent hike from the previous week. The Americas, which is the second worst-hit region, meanwhile continued to show surging numbers of cases and a hike in deaths from the novel coronavirus. Case numbers across the region grew by over 40 percent, with more than 1.45 million new cases registered, and deaths were up by 11 percent, with over 19,100 new fatalities during the seven-day period. More than one million of the new cases were seen in the United States, which has counted nearly 11 million cases since the beginning of the pandemic. The only region that saw a decline in the number of new cases and deaths last week was Southeast Asia, WHO said. Worldwide, more than 1.3 million people have died of Covid-19 and over 55 million have been infected with the virus since it first surfaced in China late last year, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP. – APP

## Pakistani students attend WICV Conference



DNA

BEIJING: Pakistani students attended the World Intelligent Connected Vehicles Conference (WICV) and the China International New Energy and Intelligent Connected Vehicles Exhibition (IEEVChina) that were held here, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. Pakistani students of North China Electric Power University (NECPU) visited the exhibition and learnt about advanced techniques such as automatic driving technique and 5G. Muhammad Nasir, one of the Pakistani students, believed that 5G and intelligent connected vehicles are able to change Pakistan, even the world. He said, "Baidu Automatic Self Drive Car is totally according to new energy intelligent connected vehicles. Baidu company said that this

car will soon be on the roads in China. I think these advanced techniques will make our life easy and save time." Students summarized that new energy vehicles and intelligent connected automobile industry are still in its infancy in Pakistan. "However, our nation badly needs to thrive in this industry, both in terms of sustainability and traffic problems. In this field, the cooperation

between Pakistan and China enjoys a rosy prospect under CPEC frame." China has been leading the world in this field, and will further boost the development of intelligent connected automobile industry in the future. "China will take intelligent connected vehicles as an important strategic direction for the transformation and upgrading of the automobile industry.

## Yiwu helps buyers for Pakistani products

As the best wholesale platform in China, Yiwu can also be a platform for Pakistani products to be exposed to more international buyers." Around one or two years ago, we planned to open one Pakistan pavilion for Pakistani products." said Mir Faisal Yaqoob, chairman of Pakistan-China chamber of commerce

DNA

BEIJING: As long as the Pakistani products are practical and cost-effective, we can help them find a market in China," said Huang Yuanli President of Yiwu Import Chamber of Commerce. She was talking with Gwadar Pro during the just concluded four-day China Yiwu Import Commodities Fair, held at the Yiwu International Expo Center in Zhejiang Province. Since its establishment, Yiwu Imported Commodities Fair has become one of the best trade platforms for foreign goods to enter the Chinese market. Huang whose booth

has been very eye-catching in the fair said "Every time we participate in it and we try our best to be the most spectacular booth so that we can attract more high-quality buyers to come, negotiate and purchase." Huang Yuanli said. "There are a lot of long-settled Pakistanis and Afghans in Yiwu. They buy petty commodities suitable for exporting to their own countries. Now they also choose their characteristic local products and export to China." Huang Yuanli said that Yiwu Import Chamber of Commerce also welcomes all potential foreign products. "For companies who want to cooperate with us in the future,

brand is a necessity. "We can provide them some professional advice about building a brand in China according to the products' characteristics. As long as the product has high-cost performance and good quality, there is a big market for it in China," she said. "COVID-19 has a great impact on import and export. Under the unfavorable environment, enterprises from all countries should hold gather and use their respective advantages to help each other and develop," Jin Bowen, president of Import Source Enterprise Alliance said in an interview. "Most of the enterprise with-

in our alliance have their brand. Some have their factories. Others are the exclusive agent of some brands. They all have a firsthand source of goods and have control over the products." In the future, we will follow the Belt and Road route to expand our alliance. Pakistan is also one of our potential partners. We hope they can recommend the best or unique local products to join our alliance. With information sharing and exchanging, we can promote the products together and open the Chinese market," he added. As the best wholesale platform in China, Yiwu can also

be a platform for Pakistani products to be exposed to more international buyers." Around one or two years ago, we planned to open one Pakistan pavilion for Pakistani products." said Mir Faisal Yaqoob, chairman of Pakistan-China chamber of commerce. "Yiwu government has already given us one place for Pakistan pavilion, and we are still working on it. "There are so many manufacturers and exporters from Pakistan in Yiwu. With the pavilion, they can display their samples. Hope they will get the orders from China and then they export more to China," he said.

## Thai protesters mass for new rally

BANGKOK: Thousands of democracy activists gathered in downtown Bangkok Wednesday for a second day of protest, after six people were shot during violent clashes, as lawmakers voted on possible constitutional reforms. Thailand has been rocked by months of protests demanding changes to the constitution, the removal of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha – and even changes to the untouchable monarchy. But Tuesday saw the most violent confrontations since the movement began in July, as police used tear gas and irritant-laced water cannon on protesters trying to reach parliament, and democracy activists clashed with royalists. More than 50 people were injured, six of them with gunshot wounds, according to medical officials, though it is not clear who was responsible for the shooting. Protesters gathered on Wednesday at the Ratchaprasong junction in Bangkok's shopping and commercial heart, after their leaders vowed to step up the movement. Police used dumper trucks, concrete blocks and razor wire to barricade their nearby national headquarters, while many protesters came equipped with helmets, goggles and gas masks. "We don't want any violence but there will be no compromise until they meet our demands," protester Jay, 26, told AFP. National police spokesman Yingyos Thepjamnong warned protesters not to encroach on the HQ, saying more than 2,000 officers had been deployed. – APP

## Iraq, Saudi reopen border after 30 years

BAGHDAD: Iraq and Saudi Arabia on Wednesday reopened their Arar desert crossing, a long-awaited sign of closer trade ties after 30 years of sealed land borders between the two countries. Top officials including Iraq's interior minister and the head of its border commission travelled from Baghdad to formally open Arar, where a line of cargo trucks stood waiting. The Saudi ambassador to Iraq was also in attendance and a delegation from Riyadh was to open the Saudi side of the border. Arar will be open to both goods and people for the first time since Riyadh cut off its diplomatic relationship with Baghdad in 1990, following Iraqi ex-dictator Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Ties have remained rocky ever since, but current Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi has a close personal relationship with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Kadhemi was to travel to Saudi Arabia as his first foreign trip as prime minister in May, but the visit was cancelled at the last minute when Saudi King Salman was hospitalised. He has yet to make the trip, although Iraqi ministers have visited Riyadh to meet with their counterparts and a top-level Saudi delegation travelled to Baghdad last week. – APP

## US to drop drug charges

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States will drop drug trafficking and money laundering charges against former Mexican Defence Secretary General Salvador Cienfuegos and turn the investigation over to Mexico, saying "sensitive" foreign policy considerations outweighed the interest in pressing the case. US Attorney General William Barr and his Mexican counterpart Alejandro Gertz Manero announced the surprise decision in a joint statement on Tuesday. "The United States has determined that sensitive and important foreign policy considerations outweigh the government's interest in pursuing the prosecution of the defendant," prosecutors from the US Eastern District of New York said in a court document that was unsealed on Tuesday. US authorities said the 72-year-old former general, accused of using his power to protect a faction of the Beltran-Leyva drugs cartel in Mexico while ordering operations against its rivals, had agreed to voluntarily return to Mexico if the US case against him was thrown out.



**Briefs**

**Pakistan-Afghanistan PTA by end of Jan 2021**

DNA

ISLAMABAD The Adviser to Prime Minister of Pakistan for Commerce and Investment on Wednesday informed that Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between Pakistan and Afghanistan will be finalized by the end of January, 2021.

The Adviser hoped that Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) also to be signed in last week of January, 2021 and investment-related matters between the two countries would be resolved in the recent bilateral dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan in Kabul.

Razak Dawood maintained that the government will hold extensive meetings with all stakeholders in the coming days in this regard. He said that in the recent post Covid-19 pandemic scenario, tremendous opportunities exist and "I hope that our businessmen will realize them".

He said that during the recent visit to Afghanistan for bilateral trade negotiation for the conclusion of PTA and on Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), he held an extensive round of discussions with the concerned officials in Afghanistan and one on one meeting with the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani in Kabul.

Pakistan and Afghanistan have initiated the discussions on bilateral trade, Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) and Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and investment-related matters between the two countries, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Commerce here. It is worth mentioning that Abdul Razak Dawood led an official delegation to Afghanistan from November 16-17, for discussions on bilateral trade and to enhance the economic integration between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

**Eight killed as roof collapses**

DNA

PESHAWAR: A joyous wedding ceremony in Parachinar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, turned into a mournful occasion on Wednesday after an accident killed eight people and left at least 20 others wounded. According to police sources, the tragic incident occurred when the roof of the mud house where the ceremony was taking place suddenly collapsed. District Headquarter Hospital (DHQ) Parachinar's Dr Qaisar Hussain confirmed that the facility received eight bodies, while at least 20 people are currently receiving treatment for their injuries. The doctor said that most of the victims included women and children who were inside the house for the wedding celebrations. Soon after the roof collapsed, wedding attendees who were gathered outside of the house, together with other local people of the area, rushed to the site to help the victims. Area locals said eight people died on the spot, while the injured were shifted to the hospital by the Rescue 1122 emergency service in Kurram.

**Government disburses Rs 24.42 bln for PSM**

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government has disbursed Rs. 24.42 billion among the retired employees of Pakistan Steel Mill (PSM) in order to clear the pending payments of the employees who have been waiting for their payments since 2013. The retired employees have expressed their gratitude to the Prime Minister and Minister for Industries and Production, Muhammad Hamid Azhar for alleviating the hardships of retired employees in their old age, said a press release issued by Ministry of Industries and Production here on Wednesday. - APP



**PESHAWAR:** Strengthening ties between the Republic of Uzbekistan & Pakistan. Group picture of CGSS Management & experts from University of Peshawar and Area Study Center, University of Peshawar with Lt Col Saadullah Tashmatov, Charge d' affaires, Embassy of Uzbekistan, Pakistan. - DNA

**Pakistan, Uzbek role vital for peace in region: Uzbek envoy**

The Chief Guest for the occasion was Lt Colonel Saadullah Tashmatov, Charge d' affaires, Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Pakistan. He highlighted that Pakistan, Uzbekistan can play a major role for building peace in Afghanistan

**BUREAU REPORT / DNA**

PESHAWAR: Area Study Center (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar & Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad jointly organized a Roundtable Discussion on, "Uzbekistan-Pakistan Joint Collaboration for Peace & Stability in Afghanistan" at Peshawar. The roundtable discussion commenced with the welcome address by Prof. Dr. Shabbir Ahmed, Director, Area Study Center (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar. He stated that as immediate neighbors, Pakistan and Uzbekistan are peace holders for Afghanistan and a peaceful Afghanistan is prerequisite for regional stability. The Chief Guest for the occasion was Lt Colonel Saadullah Tashmatov, Charge d' affaires, Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Pakistan. He highlighted that Uzbekistan and Pakistan can play a

major role for building peace and stability in Afghanistan.

He stated that we have to work on it to diversify economic relations to achieve peace and harmony in the region. He also discussed about the Railway project of Uzbekistan that will connect the three countries which is another big step to enhance connectivity among them. He also emphasized on SCO platform which is important in this regard. Moreover, he appreciated Pakistan rice production which is very famous in Uzbekistan and has huge demand. He also said that trade between Uzbekistan and Pakistan should need to be expanded in all sphere, we have huge potential of trade and also have deep cultural ties which is very essential for both countries for further enhancement. He is also told about the translated book, "Zahir-ud-din Babar" and expressed that such initiatives of collaborations and activities must expand further and

implemented to the next level. Ms. Minahil Shawal Afridi, Research Executive, CGSS presented an overview of CGSS cooperation and collaboration with various Think Tanks in Uzbekistan. She highlighted Pakistan Uzbekistan relations, joint collaborations and future prospect between both countries. She discussed institutional cooperation and how it has remained fruitful in enhancing bilateral ties between Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

Lt. Col Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, CGSS stated that many initiatives have been put forward and implemented by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev for enhancing the stability and prosperity of Uzbekistan's neighboring countries on important bilateral and regional forums during the recent years. Uzbekistan and Afghanistan are immediate neighbors with a common border and have affected each other's internal development on many occasions

in the past. By keeping this regional proximity of both countries in mind, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has devised an excellent far reaching proposal for not only developing and reconstructing the Afghan economy, but to provide the Afghan administration with much needed socio-economic support from important regional countries in Asia as well.

Dr. Minhas Majeed Khan, Head of International Relations Department, University of Peshawar stated that CPEC is one of the easiest way to bring peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan and Uzbekistan are working for a workable solution to win the hearts and mind of the people of Afghanistan through soft diplomacy. The platforms like SCO and ECO must be utilized in this regard. Other panelists highlighted the importance of promoting regional integration and explained about geographically and culturally close ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. They stressed on the need

of strategic and economic partnership for enhanced growth through integration and connectivity. The panelists stated that the exports between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been declined in past years, similarly Afghanistan and Uzbekistan also faced enormous decline in exports. We need to further expand the trade volume between Pakistan and Uzbekistan through collaborations, partnership and joint projects as both countries have great economic potential. The panelists emphasized that Pakistan and Uzbekistan can play a major role in facilitating negotiation between Taliban's and Afghan Government.

Other panelists of the Discussion included:

- Dr. Ahmad Farhan Saeed, Area Study Center (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar.
- Dr. Muhammad Ali, Area Study Center (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar.

**Seven Islamabad schools, FPSC closed**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Seven schools in Islamabad were closed after staffers, teachers, and students reported 27 coronavirus cases on Tuesday.

According to District Health Officer Zaem Zia, over 10 cases were reported at the Federal Public Service Commission after which the administration decided to seal it.

A letter requesting to close down these educational institutions was sent to District Commissioner Hamza Shafiqat.

These are the schools that have been sealed by the government:

- Islamabad Model College Boys H9/5
- Islamabad Model College G7/3
- Islamabad Model College for Girls G8/4
- Islamabad Model College for Girls F7/2
- Islamabad Model College for Girls F6/2
- Islamabad Model College for Girls Malpur

The virus has so far claimed 7,230 lives in Pakistan, while the number of confirmed cases in the country has jumped to 363,380.

The government hasn't taken any decision to close educational institutions so far. The decision to close schools across Pakistan will be taken on November 23, Federal Education Minister Shafiqat Mahmood said Monday morning.

**India demolished scores of houses in IIOJK**

ISLAMABAD: In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), Modi led fascist Indian government has demolished scores of houses, huts and sheds belonging to Gujjar and Bakarwal communities of Muslims in Pahalgam, Islamabad and Bhatandi and other areas in Jammu to grab their land to settle Hindu outsiders.

According to Kashmir Media Service (KMS), the inhuman act against IIOJK Gujjar and Bakarwal communities on part of Modi government was exposed during a visit by former Chief Minister and PDP President Mehbooba Mufti to upper reaches of Pahalgam in South Kashmir.

"Whom do you want to give this land and why are you after these Gujjars and Bakarwals," Mehbooba Mufti asked during an address to the affected Muslim communities in Pahalgam.

She warned Indian government against such anti-people misadventures, saying that "This land belongs to these nomads who are living here for centuries. Whom do you want to give this land and why are you after these Gujjars and Bakarwals. Where they will go in this chilly season? These people are peace loving and anything done to them forcibly will have serious ramifications." - APP

**PPP rejects PM's offer on electoral reforms**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Rejecting PM's offer to the opposition to discuss electoral reforms, Parliamentary Leader of the PPP in the Senate, Senator Sherry Rehman said, "The PTI led government should first accept responsibility for rigging elections in Gilgit Baltistan and then talk about reforms.

This sudden interest in electoral reforms seems extremely dubious when all these years they have done nothing about it".

She said, "The government openly violated election rules. According to the Election Act, 2017, the federal government is not allowed to campaign on the ground. On top of all this, the PM also decided to add to this flagrant rigging and misuse of federal resources by landing in GB to campaign few weeks ago. It is shocking that Form 45s were filled even before polling ending.

**Our vaccine has achieved 95% efficacy, claims Pfizer**

The company also said that it wants the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to approve the vaccine on an emergency basis

WASHINGTON: American pharmaceutical company Pfizer announced on Wednesday that its COVID-19 vaccine has demonstrated 95% efficacy in late trials. The company also said that it wants the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to approve the vaccine on an emergency basis. The company had previously produced a vaccine which was 90% effective. According to a statement issued on the company's website, the vaccine - which Pfizer has developed in collaboration with German company BioNTech SE - turned out to be 95% effective against COVID-19, 28 days after its first dose was administered to volunteers. The statement added that the efficacy of the vaccine was found to be consistent across age, gender, race, and ethnicity demographics. The vaccine also proved to be effective for adults over the age of 65 years. Pfizer/BioNTech plan to submit the vaccine to the FDA for Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) and share data with other regulatory agencies around the globe. The statement said that the companies expect to produce up to 50 million vaccine doses this year on a global level, adding that they would produce another 1.3 billion doses by the end of 2021. Two days ago, another American company Moderna claimed that its coronavirus vaccine is nearly 95% effective in protecting people from the potentially-deadly infection. - DNA



**ISLAMABAD:** Special Assistant to Prime Minister for National Security Division Dr. Moeed Yousuf meeting with British High Commissioner, at National Security Division. - DNA

**ADB reaffirms support for COVID-19 response**

"ADB and Pakistan have a long-standing development partnership having worked together to confront various challenges and emergencies," said Chen

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Vice President, Shixin Chen reaffirmed ADB's support for Pakistan's development efforts and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic response during a series of virtual meetings with senior Pakistan government officials. According to an ADB press statement, in a series of meetings from 27 October to 17 November, Chen met with Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and ADB Governor Makhdoom Khuro Bakhtiar, Pakistan's Minister for Planning,

Development & Special Initiatives Asad Umar, Federal Minister for Energy Omar Ayub, Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Reza Baqir, and Special Assistant of Pakistan's Prime Minister and Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Protection Sania Nishitar, among other senior officials and development partners.

"ADB and Pakistan have a long-standing development partnership having worked together to confront various challenges and emergencies," said Chen. "Our swift and robust response to Pakistan in combating the COVID-19 pandemic has further strengthened this partnership. We will continue to work closely with the government, devel-

opment partners, and the private sector to assist Pakistan, including through our forthcoming five-year country partnership strategy. This will support the post-COVID-19 economic recovery, help to resume and strengthen reform programs, and implement the country's development agenda, he added."

Chen discussed ADB's project portfolio performance, support for COVID-19 response, and development priorities with Shaikh, Bakhtiar, and Umar. They underscored the importance of measures being taken by the government to improve the readiness of processing and implementation of development projects and highlighted the value of ADB's support

for policy reforms and regional cooperation, the statement added. Chen discussed energy sector reforms with Mr. Ayub, while Ms. Nishitar highlighted ADB's swift assistance through the flagship Ehsaas program. Chen also discussed central bank's stabilization measures, ADB's ongoing financial sector programs, and strategies to stimulate economic recovery with Baqir.

Chen also held consultations with key development partners including World Bank Country Director for Pakistan, Resident Representative of the International Monetary Fund, Head of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in Pakistan, Mission Director to Pakistan of US-

AID Pakistan, and representatives of the US Embassy to Pakistan. As part of the series of meetings, Chen also participated in a micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise-themed roundtable and engaged with the regulator, bankers, and entrepreneurs to discuss strengthening business and job opportunities for rapid post-COVID-19 recovery. ADB has provided significant support to Pakistan's COVID-19 response. This includes a \$500 million loan approved in June to help the government deliver social protection programs to the poor and vulnerable, expand health sector capabilities, and deliver a pro-poor fiscal stimulus to boost growth and create jobs.